without compromise
It is with a tinge of sadness that I write this, the final Executive Directors report for Without Compromise.

After a number of years as an important communication tool for WAIS it has been decided to finish with Without Compromise in this written, magazine style format. This winter 2010 edition will be the last.

Without Compromise has played a key role in keeping our stakeholders not just informed but rather improved and expanded with the opportunities that exist through the WAIS website and the technologies it can support.

As you may already have noticed there has been an increased use of exciting multimedia on the site with YouTube videos of pole vault Liz Paton’s preparation for the Youth Olympics, podcasts of javelin thrower Kim Moir’s lead up to the Commonwealth Games and blogs from WAIS athletes around the world including cyclist Sarah Kent and volleyballer Tara West.

It is an exciting time for WAIS as our athletes and staff build up to the Commonwealth Games and the London Olympics inch closer.

We look forward to sharing the journey to New Delhi and London with you via our website and of course our weekly e-newsletter, which you can sign up for on the front page of waiss.org.au.

Steven Lawrence | Executive Director

12 years marks a significant period of time in anyone’s look and for the sport of hockey it’s been that long since their sport had a name inscribed on the WAIS World Champions honour board.

An even dozen years is the time elapsed since legendary Hockeyxox players Rechelle Hawkes and Kate Stare were part of Ric Charlesworth’s world dominating side that took home the 1998 Women’s Hockey World Cup.

Charlesworth is the common denominator between 1996 and the drought breaking AIS-WAIS trip of Graeme Begbie, Kiel Brown and Fergus Kavanagh who secured the sport’s first World Cup since the late 90s success of the women.

The drought was even longer for the men’s team, with their first and only World Cup win prior to 2010 coming way back in 1986.

The addition of Begbie, Brown and Kavanagh to the WAIS honour board is a significant achievement for the trio who all form a core part of Charlesworth’s Kookaburras line up, not least during the tournament which saw the side drop only one match on their way to the title.

That box was a 3-2 result against England in the first game of the tournament, with the team then going on to record six straight victories capped off by a 2-1 triumph over Germany in the final.

Following the final Charlesworth was quick to lay credit at the feet of a team that had exceeded the achievement of a side that he was a player in back in 1986.

“No, please don’t credit me,” he told the Times.

“A coach is nothing if his players don’t perform. They are the ones who have done this. My role has been very minimal.

“I was part of a great team then (in 1986), a team led by current WAIS coach David Bell), and I am in charge of a great team now. Hockey is a team game.”

Forming the defensive core of the team are two rising stars that have come through the WAIS program in Begbie and Kavanagh.

The veteran of the WAIS World Cup winning trio is 24-year-old Begbie represented his country for the first time on the 2009 European tour but has since played more than 40 internationals in the green and gold, building up an impressive record in major tournaments.

The Kookaburras’ record with Begbie in the side at major tournaments currently reads two from two, with gold medals at the 2009 Champions Trophy and the 2010 World Cup.

The veteran of the WAIS World Cup winning trio is merely 26 years of age, with former Queenslander Kiel Brown taking the mantle as the old head of the WAIS group.

Brown’s effort in simply making the team for Delhi was nothing short of outstanding, with the defender overcoming a debilitating groin injury to secure selection. It was an injury that kept him out of the 2009 Champions Trophy winning team and at stages looked like putting his World Cup dream in jeopardy.

Not to be deterred however he fought back to make the World Cup team and in the end proved to be one of the Kookaburras’ better performing players during the course of the tournament ensuring he remains on track to be a dual Olympian come London.

With Begbie, Brown and Kavanagh breaking one honour our board drought following the World Cup championship will now be set on the next – joining 2004 Olympic gold medallist Bevan George on the WAIS Olympic Meritlist honor board as men’s hockey gold medalists in two years time.
The Western Australian Institute of Sport once again took time out from the training field and gym to acknowledge those athletes and staff that embodied the Institute’s values of people and excellence during the preceding 12 months.

In front of an audience of athletes, coaches, staff, partner organisations and the media, WAIS Executive Director Steve Lawrence kicked off the morning by highlighting some of the impressive achievements racked up by WAIS people during 2009-10.

Lawrence was followed on stage by a new initiative designed to encourage the professional development of not just WAIS staff but also coaches and athletes. The concept was fulfilled. The workshop, which was taught by WAIS Chairman Grant Boyce and the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Hon. Terry Waldron, was intended to encourage the professional development of not just WAIS staff but also coaches.

The workshop, which was designed to encourage the professional development of not just WAIS staff but also coaches, was an important cog in the Australian Development System, encapsulated within world athletic circles. The reputation of his program is second to none.

The WAIS Netball Program has continued to go from strength to strength as it builds up to its pinnacle event – the 2011 West Coast Fever and the Australian team. Coach Michelle Wilkins leads the program with aplomb, ensuring service providers are valued for their contribution and that athletes enjoy a good work-life balance. Her interactions with the national coaching staff and those working at the Fever help to ensure that the WAIS program is a critical link in the athlete pathway.

Pole vault coach Alex Parnov took home one of six awards presented by WAIS Chairman Grant Boyce and the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Hon. Terry Waldron, at the annual function.

Joining the pole vault guru on the winners podium were netballer Susan Fuhrmann (Triumph Award), cyclist Cameron Meyer (Chairman’s Award), hockey athlete Tristan Clemons (Athlete Career and Education Excellence Award), Coaching Group Manager Simon Jones (Best New Initiative) and the WAIS Netball Program (Program of the Year).

FULL CITATIONS FOR ALL THE AWARDS WINNERS:

Athlete Career and Education Award
Tristan Clemons: achievements extend beyond his own notable efforts on the hockey field and in undertaking a PhD scholarship at UWA. Showing great initiative Tristan has started to develop an athlete tutoring service with the WAIS Athlete Career and Education department, where by stiller athletes can tutor high school aged athletes, helping them to manage study and sport. He has done this whilst also making his debut with the Thunderbirds in the national league and working on his PhD in the synthesis and characterisation of polymeric nanoparticles.

Triumph Award
Bringing an important cog in the Australian Diamond side took a long way off for Susan Fuhrmann in 2005 after she suffered a serious ACL injury whilst on tour with the national under-21 team. Following surgery she fought her way back to secure selection in the 2006 Commonwealth Games team before suffering another setback when overlooked for the national team for three years, including missing selection for the 2007 World Championships. Despite her knee causing on-going problems and constantly being overlooked by the national selectors the defender was unshakeable in her commitment to achieving her sporting goals. Impressive seasons with the West Coast Fever saw her finally rewarded with selection in the Diamonds line-up for the tri-series against New Zealand and England, capped by winning the player of the match award in the first against the Kiwis.

Chairman’s Award
In a starring 12 months Cameron Meyer performed to an exceptionally high standard in an array of different events around the world, on road and the track and whilst riding individually and in a team. His honour roll for the year included three world championships, numerous national titles and his grand tour debut. He is recognised within the WAIS cycling group as a leader, helping younger riders to develop and providing an example of how to successfully transition from junior to senior ranks. He readily gives of his time to the media to help promote his sport and also rides in events around the city when in Perth to ensure the sport of cycling continues to flourish in WA.

Best New Initiative
Coaching Group Manager of Racing Sports Simon Jones showed significant initiative when formulating the proposal for the inaugural WAIS High Performance Workshop as well as ensuring the concept was fulfilled. The workshop, which was designed to encourage the professional development of not just WAIS staff but also coaches, was an important cog in the Australian Development System, encapsulated within world athletic circles.

Sport Program of the Year
The WAIS Netball Program has continued to go from strength to strength as it builds up to its pinnacle event – the 2011 West Coast Fever and the Australian team. Coach Michelle Wilkins leads the program with aplomb, ensuring service providers are valued for their contribution and that athletes enjoy a good work-life balance. Her interactions with the national coaching staff and those working at the Fever help to ensure that the WAIS program is a critical link in the athlete pathway.

Steve Hooker won both the world outdoor and world indoor titles, the former in dramatic circumstances whilst three other members of his squad also secured national team representation for the Commonwealth Games. Within his squad Alex utilises WAIS biomechanics and strength staff well whilst also encouraging his athletes to contribute to WAIS community activities. The reputation of his program is second to none within world athletic circles.

Without compromise
After the disappointment of capturing a solitary silver medal at the Beijing Olympics, Australian track cycling enjoyed a renaissance at the 2010 Copenhagen UCI World Track Championships, inspired by a dynamic and youthful core of WAIS athletes.

Australia swept the World Championship medal table, netting six gold, two silver and two bronze. Meyer contributed to three world titles, whilst the West Australian duo of Josephine Tomic and Sarah Kent - along with WAIS’s Ashley Ankudinoff - produced the ride of their young lives in capturing a stunning gold in the final of the men’s teams pursuit.

Cameron Meyer came into the World Championships boasting the stripey stripes in the men’s points race from 2009. His ability to snare sprint points and break open fields meant he had a virtual target sign pinned to his back. Yet Meyer’s supreme tactical ability coupled with his unwaivering physical endurance meant he was far too good for the rest, with the Helena Valley product clinching a second consecutive points score title with a monster haul of 70 points.

From the start of the 40 km (160 lap) race it was obvious Meyer was on a mission. “I had a really good night and I was very confident going into it,” Meyer said. “I had very good legs and I kept to my tactics. I knew in the second half of the bike race I was going to one of the strongest there and knew I just had to be confident going into that second half and that’s what I did.”

Meyer won four of the 16 points contested and placed in sixth more which gave him 30 points, but it was laps gained that cemented his win. He took a lap midway through the race with a monster haul of 70 points.

2010 Copenhagen
UCI World Track
Championships

Copenhagen
UCI World Track
Championships

Gold was claimed by the young quartet of Rohan Dennis, 19, Jack Bobridge, 20, Michael Hepstman, 16, and Meyer, 22, combined to set a new Australian team pursuit record of 3:55.654mins, eclipsing the time of 3:56.610mins ridden by Graeme Brown, Brett Lancaster, Bradley McInerie and Luke Roberts to win gold at the Athens Olympic Games in 2004.

The time was just over a second faster than the silver medal time of Great Britain’s Steven Burke, Edward Clancy, Ben Swift and Andrew Tennant.

The Brits went into the final as the fastest qualifiers after posting a 3:56.889mins against the Australians 3:56.190mins in the morning round but the Australians responded to the challenge in the medal race.

Dennis got the team off to a fast start setting them up for a stunning first kilometre of 1:01.919, almost half a second quicker than their rivals.

From there the Australians maintained the pressure hitting halfway with a leading margin of 0.6sec. Great Britain started to fight back in the final kilometre clawing back some ground and keeping the crowd on the edge of their seats. But it was too late and the Australians held on to win.

The win was somewhat bitewitter for Meyer, knowing that his ride in the final came at the expense of teammate Leigh Howard. Even more curiously, Meyer then teamed with Howard to win a third world crown in the madison.

In 2009, the pair claimed silver but went into this year’s championship with a fresh strategy, which proved ultimately a successful one.

“Last year we didn’t actually accumulate many points and we took a lap really late whereas this year we looked at it and thought why not accumulate points early, see ourselves up for the sprint and try and take the lap as well,” said Meyer. The duo in fact won sprint two and three and were second on sprint four to set up a nice points stash early in the race.

“We had about 15 points to halfway and still 10 laps to go,” said Meyer. “Then we took the lap and covered all the moves. We did everything right tonight and it proved we were the strongest bike riders out there and it was just an unbelievable feeling.”

Howard admitted the win was one of mixed emotions after he missed out on selection for the team pursuit final ride.

“If I could have been more happy for one of my best friends (Meyer) to step in and take the rainbow for me. I’ve come in tonight and got the rainbow jersey so couldn’t ask for anything else,” Howard said following the win.

WAIS was also represented in Copenhagen by Meyer’s younger brother Travis and Adelaide based sprint cyclist Scott Sunderland. Travis Meyer has made steady progress in the Australasian scene and has been a revelation over the past few months.

Meyer’s younger brother Travis and Adelaide based sprint cyclist Scott Sunderland rode the team sprint and kids, narrowly missing out on a podium finish in both, with lap ten finishes.

Such is the long term success of WAIS head cycling coach Danny Benson and his team that three world champions and four gold medals came as little surprise.

As Benson describes it though, the job is far from complete.

“The results from Copenhagen were very pleasing from an Australian perspective, and fantastic from a WAIS point of view,” Benson said.

“Any level of competition has stepped up from last year and it will step up again. Now that the Olympic format of events has been decided, you’ll find that athletes will start to prepare for London and it will get harder,” he said.

In the interim however it is reassuring to note that Australian track cycling is back, and that WAIS athletes have played a significant role in that revival.
With just under 100 days till the start of the 19th Commonwealth Games in New Delhi, attention is starting to draw to the 17 sport showpiece.

Australia has a proud history of success in the Commonwealth Games, and 2010 is expected to be another fruitful campaign from our best and brightest athletes. In India, WAIS athletes will again be going for gold. Without Compromise takes a look at which athletes will be lining up in October.

Archery
WAIS Individual Support Program Athlete Deonie Bridger will write a new chapter into her incredible career story in New Delhi when the 38 year-old competes at the Yamuna Sports Complex in October. Bridger represented Australia at the 1996 and 2004 Olympics, before retiring to take up an administrative role in the sport.

Netball
Netball will be making just its third appearance as a Commonwealth Games sport in New Delhi, and Australia will no doubt be one of the teams to beat for gold.

Swimming
19 year-old Blair Evans will be representing WAIS in the Australian swimming team at this year’s Games. The dual national champion will line-up in the 200m and 800m freestyle and will also be in contention to compete in the women’s relay squad.

Athletics
When you think of athletics in Western Australia, it is hard to go past Steve Hooker. 19 year-old Blair Evans will be representing Australia in New Delhi by his WAIS training partners Alana Boyd, Amanda Blok and new national champion Liz Parnov.

Cycling
Australia is well placed to perform strongly for the women’s team competition in New Delhi, with another WAIS-AIS youngster, Emily Little emerging as a serious talent. Little won her first senior international medal, after claiming silver on vault at this year’s Pacific Rim Championships in Melbourne and will be hoping to improve her way onto the Australian team despite currently suffering from an elbow ligament injury.

Hockey
Under national coach Ric Charlesworth, Australia’s Kookaburras have elevated to the world’s number one ranked team, after claiming last year’s Champions Trophy and winning this year’s World Cup, in India.

The Kookaburras will be highly fancied for gold in New Delhi, but through England, India, Canada and New Zealand, face teams that can match it on their day. WAIS-AIS athletes Fergus Khan, Graeme Begbie and Kiel Brown have all established themselves as equals in Charlesworth’s side, but they and other WAIS hopefuls will not be sure of selection until the end of July, when the AGA nomination deadline passes.

The Hockeyroos squad will also fancy their chances of winning a medal in India, and with the squad in development phase for London 2012, places are up for grabs in coach Frank Murray’s squad. Seven WAIS-AIS athletes have been included in Hockey Australia’s 2010 national squad, with Fiona Boyce, Kim Mikael, Katie Mitchell, Ashleigh Nelson, Jayde Taylor, Shelly Lidstone, Kate Hubble and Hope Munro all in contention for a berth.

Van Nus is an experienced campaigner who has represented her country at Olympic and World Cup level, and will be looking to feature in the medal rounds for her rifle events. The shooting events will be hosted at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi.

Without Compromise
“I wanted to play for England, maybe not be Gary Lineker but supply Gary Lineker from left back.”

The World Cup was in full swing when the advice came from the mouth of WAIS Psychologist Matt Burgin so it can be put down to World Cup fever taking hold. Australia’s sporting fans can rest assured that the highly regarded psychologist is no longer dreaming of winning for England, he is doing his utmost to ensure that.

After being born in the United Kingdom and spending his early childhood in South Africa, the burgher has called Perth home since the late 1990s but only after confirming that the capital of Western Australia had no shortage of goals for his beloved soccer.

“Goal” work in Perth so that was when we moved from Johannesburg,” he recounts.

It would be fitting if one of Burgin’s athletes had a win or a loss? So it’s challenging as a coach, so at the end of the day have you been brave, do you see it as a win since you knew you tried your best?

Yeah I like that question because both roles are challenging in different ways. Both are demanding. Both roles are special, but not quite in the way that perhaps intended, both in terms of his sport and his career ambition whilst in high school.

“I love football but wasn’t particularly talented although I still always wanted to be involved in sport,” Burgin says.

“Was there a moment for you that really stands out with young Courtney, she just loves to play. She’s a very exciting talent, very very hard to maintain the strong WAIS youngster Courtney Bruce was loving the game at 27 or 28. Enjoying the game at 27 or 28. Is that the challenge for the athlete and I think that’s one of the reasons why I think we need to have a balance for athletes. We do have to have a balance for training. As much as we like to hammer home the structure, we have to have a balance where we have to help our program. WAIS has been a huge range of benefits obviously for that, particularly as a young player to provide that opportunity for other young athletes. As an elite program and an elite training environment, we can really create a quality elite training environment. Discussing the evolution of English and Jamaican authorities within a sport, we do have to have a balance for training. As much as we like to hammer home the structure, we have to have a balance where we have to help our program. WAIS has been a huge range of benefits obviously for that, particularly as a young player to provide that opportunity for other young athletes. As an elite program and an elite training environment, we can really create a quality elite training environment.

What does it mean for you to be among the top 100 young leaders in Australia in terms of the West Coast Fever experience? How will Australia fare at this year’s Commonwealth Games? How will Australian athletes compete at this year’s Commonwealth Games in New Delhi?

I think we’ll win and I think we’ll win well. The World Cup fever taking hold. Australia’s sporting fans can rest assured that the Wolfe Convention is being inducted into the Commonwealth Games for the sport and the Commonwealth Games for the sport.

It was a move that bore fruit for the budding young soccer star but not quite in the way he perhaps intended, both in terms of his sport and his career ambition whilst in high school.

“Goal” work in Perth so that was when we moved from Johannesburg,” he recounts.

It would be fitting if one of Burgin’s athletes had a win or a loss? So it’s challenging as a coach, so at the end of the day have you been brave, do you see it as a win since you knew you tried your best?

Yeah I like that question because both roles are challenging in different ways. Both are demanding. Both roles are special, but not quite in the way that perhaps intended, both in terms of his sport and his career ambition whilst in high school.

“I love football but wasn’t particularly talented although I still always wanted to be involved in sport,” Burgin says.

A highlight early on would have to be the lead up to the Athens Olympics and our having a heavy-weight men’s four based out of Perth,” Burgin recalls.

That crew particularly was a great one to work with. Also the lightweight men, when they were in Perth, we were great to work with as were young guys like (Stuart) Reside and (Stefan) Szczurowski. We had a massive group of guys that were fantastic to be around and work with and enjoyed a heck of a lot of success in that period.

“For us in gymnastics the build up to Beijing and the achievement of three athletes on a team of six was just superb, with one of them (Sarah Joura) being highly regarded internationally.”

So a journey that started in England and has continued here in Perth, via South Africa, will be a year return to where it all began as London 2012 looms on the horizon for the psychologist and the athletes he assists.

“Now building up to London we’ve shifted our model from a sport basis to an individual basis so I’m looking forward to working with a range of different athletes from Overseas Bridge in Stoney Creek, Sheen, Michelle Wilkins in BMX to Lauren Mitchell in gymnastics.”

It was fitting if one of Burgin’s athletes could complete the round trip by getting one back on the land of his birth, standing tall on the Olympic podium in August 2012.
The London Olympics are now just over two years away and for the new women’s football program at WAS it means that it’s two years until Head Coach John Gibson receives his program’s final report card.

Halfway through the Olympic cycle those making Gibson’s program would be putting pen to paper on progress such as “on track”, “making impressive progress” and “destined for great things.”

In his typical understated way though Gibson himself simply offers “fairly good” when asked to assess the progress of the new program in its first 12 months.

It’s a 12 months that has seen the national team, the Westfield Matildas, win the Asian Cup and secure a successful 2016 report card that Gibson knows is certainly one that’s excelled in this environment. It’s been a fantastic approach by Klap and the results are there for all to see.

Gibson is one of four WAS scholarship holders now entrenched in the national team set-up, and it’s those four that Gibson is aiming to see take the field in the green and gold come London.

“The athletes that are targeted are your Colette McCullam, Lisa de Vanna, Katie Gill and Sam Kerr,” he states.

“All four of those players are in the top 12 and history would show three of those have started in the starting 11. After that we’ve got a few potential internationals that have a bit of work to do before they get to that stage.”

The potential international scholarship holders have only been in their sights but are already showing they have what it takes to make an impact with the Matildas in the coming years.

“We’ve got Marianna Tabain, who is with the Young Matildas, Shannon May who fits between the Young Matildas and the Matildas,” Gibson states.

“And then there is Jayme Gibbons, Sadie Lawrence and Nadine Reid who are all around 17 and others aim to get into the Young Matildas.”

It will be this batch of budding stars that will be the ultimate report card for Gibson come 2016, with this quartet having fully realized the benefit of being in a WAS program as they progress along the athlete pathway.

It is the 2016 report card that Gibson knows is the one that counts.

“Certainly,” he replies when posed the question about 2016.

“They’ve been in the program then for six, seven years so their progression will be interesting to see.”

For the moment though “making impressive progress” will do just fine as an interim mark.

Just days after the release of Ridley Scott’s Rob- in Hood blockbuster, I was privileged to be able to spend some time with Western Australia’s own female version of the right-warding warrior, Deanne Bridget.

Thankfully I caught the jet-setting WAS archer on a brief visit home between trips to Europe for World Cup 1 (in Croatia) and World Cup 2 (in Turkey).

I asked Bridget why she bothered travelling all the way home between the two competitions, hoping she would say it was to meet me for an interview.

“To compete at the National Championships,” was her response.

These National Championships have now come and gone and it’s no surprise that Bridger was again successful in winning the All-Round Recurve competition, a title she has held since 1996.

Bridger, 38, first picked up a bow and arrow at the age of four. And while she obviously had a natural aptitude for the sport from the beginning, a great deal of hard work and years of dedication are the real reasons behind her success.

On the international stage, Bridger’s stand-out achievements include an individual bronze med- al at the 1998 Junior World Championships and team bronze at the 2002 World Championships.

Bridger is also a dual Olympic athlete. But much like the sport of archery itself, which has had an unconventional Olympic history - appearing at the 1900, 1904, 1908 and 1920 Games, before taking a 52-year hiatus and returning to the Olympic stage in 1972 - Bridger’s participation in the five-ringed circus has also been a little alternative.

She made her first Olympic team as a 24-year- old in 1996 (finishing 12th in the women’s in- dividual event), and returned to the limelight in 2004 (finishing 41st in the individual event and 11th in the teams event, after missing selection for the Sydney 2000 team).

And while Bridge was a member of the Austral- ian team at the recent Beijing Games, she was there not as an athlete, but as the Section Man- ager for the archery team.

But thankfully, citing “unfinished business” as the reason for her neglected passion, Bridger has decided to return to top-level competition, and perhaps her topsy-turvy Olympic journey will continue in London in two years time.

For now though, Bridger’s focus is clearly on one thing - the upcoming New Delhi Commonwealth Games, where her goal is to win that elusive gold medal.

Perhaps surprisingly, while many athletes opt for a substantial increase in training duration and in- tension in an effort to improve their performance, Bridger prefers quality over quantity these days.

But that wasn’t always the case.

An elite athlete myself, I spent a number of years living in very close proximity to Bridger - as Black 11 of the old Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) residence in Canberra - and I was constantly im- pressed, inspired and amazed at the amount of time the archers would spend training.

“Six hours a day and that didn’t even include gym work,” Bridger reminded me. Such was the grueling schedule instigated by former AIS and Australian Archery team Head Coach, Koman- born Ki Sin Lee.

But with maturity - and perhaps out of necessity Bridger’s life is more of a balancing act these days as she juggles three hours of daily training with full time work (as an Account Manager for Australia Post), plus the responsibility of being the President of Archery WA.

A change in the hierarchy and structure of Ar- chery Australia has allowed Bridger to make the required adjustments to her life. She now bases herself in Perth, but makes regular trips to Can- berra to train under the watchful eye of current Australian team Head Coach, Simon Fairweather, who took over from Lee in 2000. Interestingly it was Lee who mentored Fairweather to Olym- pic Gold in the men’s individual recurve event in 2000.

And while Bridger admits it took a bit of getting used to to view Fairweather as a coach rather than as a friend (only two-and-a-half years separates the two in age), she says the Olympic champion has inspired her to make crucial tech- nical modifications which could hold the key to her New Delhi dream.

“My performance over the years had definitely reached a plateau, and I realised that if I wanted to improve I had to be prepared to fine tune my technique,” Bridger said. “So once I believed in the changes that Simon was trying to initiate, I ran with them,” she added.

“Following the Athens Olympic Games training started to become a bit too much as I was missing out on a lot of things,” Bridger recalled. “But now I’m motivated to improve, I’ve got a goal in sight and I feel like I’ve got some unfin- ished business to content with.”

And the best news of all?

“I’m getting better with age,” Bridger insisted. “I’m going the best I ever have.”

Program Focus

Women’s Football

Kicks Goals in First 12 Months

Behind the Athlete

by WAS rowing athlete Amber Bradley

Deonne

“I’m going the best I ever have.”
Athlete Profile

Australia’s sprinting stocks received a boost last summer following the blistering form of 400m runners Ben Offereins and Jody Henry.

The Western Australian Institute of Sport scholarship holders both won national titles in Perth last March, and in doing so booked their seats to the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi, India.

Yet neither athlete has followed a yellow brick road to success. Back in 2005, a fresh faced Offereins took the form book to claim a maiden national title over the more fancied Athletics Olym- pic relay squad members of John Steffensen, David Geissler, and Mark Cremona in 48.03.

Claiming a time of 46.37secs much was ex- pected of the mercurial talent, but through a series of injuries and setbacks, it was not until the winter of 2009 that the hard worked Offereins would again show form. He ran a personal best in a meet on the Gold Coast, which gone-crashed him into the Australian relay squad for the World Championships in Berlin later that year, where he ran sub-50 in a relaying event in a race claimed by the USA.

Offereins hasn’t looked back since and sliced Nagoya in 44.44 to follow a Grand Prix meet in Sydney to rebrand himself both a relay and individual birth at the Commonwealth Games.

For Henry, a bold decision to change coach and event paid sweet dividends. A rare-speed 100m slacker was voted a mountainous and consistent exponent of the 400m, 200m, and 400m relay. A shift that now sees Henry hold the mantle of national champion in both events.

Originally from South Australia, Henry will compete in the women’s 400m Australian relay team in New Delhi, but the 25 year-old will not be looking to add an individual birth to both the Commonwealth Games repertoire with an A-qualifying time by no means out of reach for the South Australian.

The common denominator between both cham- pions is an equally gallant coach - WA’s track mentor Lyn Foreman.

Foreman has spent days, weeks, months and in later case years, crafting构建, teaching, and in a very prominent way creating two of Aus- tralia’s premier sprinters.

Foreman’s ability to communicate with her ath- letes appears as a treasure and her loyalty to a training group is endorsed by the inclusions of her champions, which both Offereins and Henry have followed national success. It remains humble, yet honest, as the real hard work is still to come.

Since 2007, Peter Szilagyi has been running the rule over the WAG women’s water polo pro- gram. A glance at the Szilagyi time line draws a path from his home-land Hungary, where he had intentions of learning journalism through to a coaching career that has called South Africa, New Zealand and now Perth home.

Talking to Without Compromise Szilagyi seems almost nonchalant to the set of circumstances that has seen him develop stars such as Gemma Beadsworth, Zoe Arancini and Glenora Ralph through the WAG program here in Perth, yet fate could have taken this man in a completely dif- ferent direction.

As a child in Hungary, Szilagyi competed in gym- nastics and athletics, until his not insignificant frame led him away from those sports and into the more physically suitable swimming and water polo. He joined a water polo club with a friend and had success as a goal keeper - earn- ing national under age representation for Hun- gary and winning national titles with his home town club in Eger.

After graduating from the Dobo Istvan Secondary Grammar School, Szilagyi turned his attentions to a career, with journalism initially an interest, but before he could practise his oratorics or cut a story – Hungary’s diligent military service would take work. 

“In Hungary before you go to Uni, there is service for everyone, men and women,” Szilagyi said. “You get moved from one side of the country to the other, and for a solid month you train, before getting just one afternoon off to see your family. I was very, very strict, Szilagyi admitted.

“It was actually Greg McKfadden who asked me to move to Perth,” Szilagyi revealed. “I had spoken to him previously, of how much I liked Perth, which is what sparked Greg to suggest it to me.”

Szilagyi has a robust coaching style that is blessed through a wealth of experience - which has seen him coach juniors, senior teams, men’s and women’s programs. He has a particular in- terest in developing talent, which he admits, was difficult when he first entered WAGs.

“In 2007/2008 when I started, the senior ath- letes were in preparation for the Olympic Games and were away a lot with the national team. That first year, and year 2 and half I didn’t have a close relationship with the senior athletes because they’d been away and I’d had to follow up the previous preparation, to keep continuity in their preparation,” Szilagyi recounted.

Now, half way through to London 2012, Szilagyi has his own goals and is working with a new generation of WAG athletes, and it’s a challenge he is relishing.

“Gemma Beadsworth is a world class athlete. I like to coach her, I think her coach easily and I think we have a good working relationship,” he said.

“No complaints and I feel she is trying to listen for the things I tell her.”

As a member of the Beijing Olympic team, Beadsworth’s talents come as little surprise, but Szilagyi admits he has been highly impressed with some “outstanding young talent” in his WAG squad.

“Glenora Ralph, I expect a lot here in London. I strongly believe she will be an athlete who can make Olympic and World Championship podiums.”

“Elektra Brown is a young goalkeeper from Geraldton who has become a solid national level player and been selected for the Under 18 World Championships and is one of the athletes who I think I have helped to make.”

“Karen Blythe, I expect a lot in London. She is one of the athletes that I have high expectations in.”

Working with the women’s program, Szilagyi helped New Zealand to a bronze medal in Perth at the Commonwealth Championships in 2006. Szilagyi would briefly return home to work with the women’s senior team in Hungary – earning a bronze in the European Championships before making his move to Perth.

In a sign of Peter’s high standing within Austral- ian water polo, it was the current national wom- en’s coach who asked Szilagyi to move to Perth.

Without Compromise
David Watts’ life changed for the better on the very day I interviewed him for this story.

And while I’d love to be able to claim that his enhanced future was brought about by some profound statement or words of wisdom I offered during our lunchtime encounter, I can’t.

Because the real reason for the improvement in this young WAIS rower’s life was more to do with the prized item he proudly dangled on the coffee table in front of me, the keys to his very first car – a grey Honda Prelude.

Owning one’s first car is a symbol of freedom and independence for all young adults. And none more so than 18-year old Port Kennedy-based Watts.

You see, Watts - who has made a welcome return to the Australian junior team after taking a break from the international scene last season due to personal reasons - in required to attend no less than 12 training sessions a week in Perth (eight at the WAIS rowing headquarters in Mount Pleasant and four at the WAIS Strength and Conditioning facility in Mount Claremont). So a car makes things a heck of a lot easier for him.

“I would leave the house on public transport at 4.5am and most nights I wouldn’t get home until eight o’clock,” Watts told me as he recalled his hectic schedule prior to the 2008 World Junior Championships, when he was combining full-time training with his final year of schooling at Trinity College.

“It was in a zone where I would just do it,” he remembered. “I didn’t really think about it, but it was for months on end.”

The considerable distance between home and training is just one of many hurdles Watts has faced since being discovered by the WAIS Talent Identification Program five years ago.

Much tougher to cope with was the loss of his father to cancer two years ago. And, as if to rub salt into his wounds, life really kicked Watts while he was down; and he continues to suffer the ill effects from a head injury sustained during an accident last year.

But I get the feeling the constancy of rowing has been somewhat therapeutic for Watts. He agrees.

“Rowing takes my mind off everything,” he summarises.

Born in the North East market town of Stockton-on-Tees in England, Watts is a young man of many talents; he’s studying for a Bachelor of Science degree at UWA, he’s a mad-keen surfer and he’s also musically inclined, which became obvious to me when he boarded our Qantas flight to the recent National Rowing Championships with his cherished guitar.

And that’s exactly where his sights are set.

“My goal is to make the 2012 Olympic team,” Watts said. “I’ll do what I can to get there; it’ll take a lot of work, but I’m willing to do it.”

As a group, fruit and veges are particularly rich in vitamins, minerals and contain other important nutrients such as fibre and dietary fibre. So for better health and to reduce the risk of disease, it is best to make a habit to eat fruit and vegetables every day. As a guide, one serve of veges is about half a cup of chopped vegetables, one medium potato, or one cup of salad vegetables. One serve of fruit is one medium piece (e.g apple), two small pieces (e.g plum) or one cup of chopped or canned fruit. It is important that both adults and children become more aware of these serving guides so that it becomes easier to Go for 2&5.

WAIS’s champions of the future powered by...
Hockey (Men)  Men's Champions Trophy  31 July - 8 August
Cycling  Junior Road World Championships  5-8 August
Netball  Three Test Series (Jamaica)  8-15 August
Cycling  Junior Track World Championships  11-15 August
Kayak  Canoe Sprint World Championships  12-15 August
WAIS  Youth Olympic Games  14-26 August
Athletics  IAAF World Championships  15-23 August
Water Polo (Women)  FINA Junior Women's World Cup  17-22 August
Swimming  2010 Pan Pacific Championships  18-22 August
Swimming  2010 Junior Pan Pacs  26-30 August
Netball  Australia v New Zealand  29 August
Hockey (Women)  Women's World Cup  30 August - 12 September
Water Polo (Women)  FINA Women's Water Polo World Cup  31 August - 5 September
Netball  Two Test Series (New Zealand)  2-5 September
Athletics  IAAF World Cup in Athletics  4-5 September
Football  U17 Womens World Cup  5-25 September
Gymnastics  Rythmic Gymnastics World Championships  19-26 September
Athletics  XIX Commonwealth Games  3-14 October

Please visit www.wais.org.au for the latest events calendar.