‘WORLD-CLASS’ ATHLETES ‘INSPIRATIONAL’

ACU National Olympians were welcomed back from Beijing by enthusiastic staff and students. Three current students and one graduate competed, while another student worked closely with the equestrian team.

ACU National Elite Athlete Friendly University Network coordinator John Saunders, pictured above right with some of the University’s Olympic Games competitors, said the program offered promising young people the chance to excel in their chosen sport as well as in their study and social ambitions.

“We offer flexibility with their studies,” Mr Saunders said. “Most take longer than usual to complete their courses, and take advantage of online and distance study options. The high achievers show that they are very well organised.”

He described the University’s Olympians as “inspirational to their classmates”.

“We help them by keeping them grounded, and they tell us how much they enjoy coming back and being treated as one of the boys or girls, and being able to chill out in the friendly environment at the University.

“They are positive, and proudly represent ACU National, and we benefit from having their achievements associated with us. It’s a great partnership. It’s a model for flexible support of students in all sorts of ways. These students and graduates are showing us what they can do at a world-class level.”

SMOOTH SAILING

Olympic sailor Krystal Weir, 23, completed a Bachelor of Sports Science degree at the Melbourne Campus in 2007.

“I decided I wanted to study at ACU National when I was 15 after having a fitness assessment for sailing on campus,” said Krystal, pictured above.

“ACU National was flexible with my training and competition schedule, which made it easier for me to juggle my sport and study. I really enjoyed the course content as it helped me to keep balanced. All the lecturers were very helpful, provided I was organised and pre-planned with them when I would get the work done.”

Meeting the challenges of working, studying, sailing and competing before being selected for the Australian team provided plenty of challenge for Krystal, but winning world championships in 2004 in Brisbane gave her a real boost. “It was great sailing into the harbour with the Aussie flag flying.”

Krystal also enjoyed taking part in the 2008 Olympics. “It was great to meet all the athletes from ACU National,” she said. “It was pretty impressive to find out how many there were of us.”

Krystal, along with teammates Karyn Gojnich and Angela Farrell, competed in the women’s yngling team. They put in some good early scores to get them through to the medal race. However, a late disqualification left them 10th overall.

Krystal, who sails with Sandringham Yacht Club, offered special thanks for School of Exercise Science senior lecturer Paul Callery and Head of School Dr Wayne Maschette.
Riding High

A passion for horse riding took exercise science student Jessica Barton, 21, of Warrnambool, to the 2008 Olympics as a stable hand for Laurie Lever, one of Australia’s top riders competing in Hong Kong.

Jessica, who also spent a month and a half training in Germany and two weeks in Holland while the horses were in quarantine before the games began, has been able to transfer her studies from the Strathfield Campus to the Melbourne Campus.

With the ultimate dream of becoming an animal physiotherapist and Olympic equestrian in her own right, Jessica received some credit for earlier studies at the Australian College of Sports Therapy before enrolling at ACU National.

“Because I was training so hard during Year 12, I didn’t really get the results I wanted for studying physiotherapy, but the flexibility at ACU National has been fantastic,” said Jessica, pictured above.

“Being at the Olympics was really amazing. There was so much to take in all at once. Being part of the eventing, cooling the horses down after the cross country and then being there when we got the silver medal, was really exciting.”

Making a Splash

Synchronised swimming Olympian Coral Bently, pictured above right, who graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor of Exercise Science degree, is grateful to ACU National for allowing her to study and train at the same time.

“ACU National allowed me to do a lot of my exams at different times and hand in my assignments when I could so I could keep my swimming as a huge priority in my life,” Coral said. She described walking in to the “Birds’ Nest” stadium during the opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games as the most exciting moment.

Coral’s teammate, third-year exercise science student Bethany Walsh, 22, of Cheltenham in Melbourne, pictured above, second from right, has always loved swimming and took up synchronised swimming at the age of 11.

She, Coral and seven other teammates trained for nine hours a day in the lead-up to the Olympics, finishing 7th overall.

Kick-start for Carmen

Taekwondo Olympian Carmen Marton, pictured above left, began studying visual arts at the Melbourne Campus in 2006, deferred her studies during hectic training and competition, and is now considering transferring into exercise science.

“Ever since I started Taekwondo when I was eight, I knew that I wanted to be the best in the world, and I still have that personal ambition,” said Carmen, who advanced to the quarter finals in the Olympics.

Carmen described the experience of being at the Olympics. “It was amazing to see athletes from every single country imaginable, so strong and fit,” she said.

“The village was constantly buzzing with competitive feeling. I couldn’t help but appreciate the greatness sport has in its ability to bring so many people together.

“We participated in the Opening Ceremony and what a moment that was! As we waited to walk out, we were running around trying to find famous people to take some photos. After a few hours of sitting around, waiting for Australia to be called out, the excitement and anticipation started to build. The energy was pumped up. Everyone was smiling, laughing, taking photos and filming.

“We walked under the stadium to the entrance and before you knew it, we were dancing under the stadium lights as the Chinese crowd roared!”

“We walked under the stadium to the entrance and before you knew it, we were dancing under the stadium lights as the Chinese crowd roared!”
UNI GAMES ‘GREAT’

Second- and third-year exercise science students (from left) Ashleigh Scott, Rebecca Newbert, Candice Gregory and Meagan Simpson, pictured right, were excited to join more than 7,000 other students from all over Australia in Melbourne this year at the biggest Australian University Games to date.

They represented ACU National in the mixed touch football competition and were among close to 100 fellow students from all six campuses to take part.

“It was so much fun,” said Rebecca. “I’d never even played touch football in my life before. We made friends with the people from other campuses and have added each other on Facebook. We all got pretty close. It was great.”

ACU National ‘unique’

Representing Australia’s only national university, the ACU National team had a unique presence at the games. Students enrolled in an events management unit at ACU National’s Melbourne Campus were given the opportunity to manage and host social events for their counterparts from other cities.

“While other students were meeting and making friends with people from other universities, we were also making friends with people from ACU National,” said Meagan. “It made us unique. Because we were all from different areas, we brought different things to the team.”

Winners

ACU National won medals in Australian rules and men’s touch football. Students from the Melbourne Campus took home all but one of the individual medals, with exercise science students Scott Dowling, Lisa Stanton-Smith and Thomas O’Shaughnessy winning in athletics. Teresa Branca, also from exercise science, took one home for taekwondo, while nursing and arts student Tara Arnold won a medal in swimming. North Sydney nursing student Marcio Dos Santos won a medal in athletics, while second- and third-year exercise science students Megan Mail and Krystal McCluskey, both from Melbourne, received Green and Gold medals for outstanding performance in the competition.

CELEBRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Nursing students from Nepal, pictured above, were among the performers at a popular concert held recently at the North Sydney Campus to celebrate cultural diversity. In a similar vein, Strathfield Campus students attended an International Pizza evening, hosted jointly by the International Office, Student Services and the Student Association, followed by a successful Bollywood night. Earlier in the year 360 students from both campuses celebrated the end of first semester with a cruise on Sydney Harbour.