Aussies Ready for Ian Thorpe and Susie O'Neill will lead Australia's Olympic team into Sydney, as the two set four world records between them at the Australian Olympic Trials and National Championships. By Steve Thomas Photos by Robb Cox, Sport The Library

SYDNEY, Australia—The Australian Olympic Trials and National Championships, May 13-20, saw five world records broken at the Sydney

International Aquatic Center, venue for the Olympics in September, bringing the total to 19 in this pool since the Pan Pacific Championships last August.

Interest in the sport of swimming is at an all-time high Down Under. The meet dominated the Australian media and with it generated enormous pub-

lic interest. A record crowd of just over 100,000 people attended the eight days of competition. National free-to-air

television and radio covered the finals live in prime time with cable TV covering all the heats. One Sydney newspaper had up to seven pages each day

> featuring the meet much of it to do with teenage sensation Ian Thorpe.

> Just when you thought Thorpe had not surfaced for awhile, the mighty 17-year-old made sudden impact on the first three days of competition. He repeated the amazing feat achieved at Pan Pacs, with three

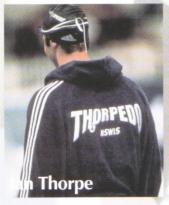
world records in three days!

On the first night, he took exactly half a second off his old 400 meter

freestyle mark, touching in 3:41.33, after turning in 1:49.14, almost two full seconds under the pace he set here last August. On the second day, "The Thorpedo" sank his second world record in the semifinal of the 200 free with a time of 1:45.69, slashing 31-hundredths off his mark from last August.

Susie O'Neill

In the final of the 200 the next day, Thorpe did it again, trimming his time by another 18-hundredths to 1:45.51. The race was the fastest 200 freestyle field in history, with six swimmers clocking 1:48.15 or better. Michael Klim, the current world champion over the distance, finished in 1:46.89, with former world record holder, Grant Hackett, third in 1:47.81. Daniel Kowalski finished fifth in 1:48.13—faster than his bronze medal swim in Atlanta.



Surprisingly, Klim has since announced he will not swim the individual 200 free at the Olympics in order to concentrate on the 100 free and 100 fly. Grant Hackett will now step up to the blocks to swim the 200, together with the 400 and 1500 free in Sydney.

Hackett, who took second in the 400 in a slow 3:51.05, beat the dual Olympic gold medalist, Kieren Perkins, in a two-horse race over his favorite 1500 distance. Hackett finished 4.39 seconds ahead of his older rival, touching in 14:56.35, the fastest time in the world this year. Perkins was just over the 15-minute mark in 15:01.14, his best time since winning in Atlanta, and the second fastest in the world this year. A mistimed taper had hampered Hackett's performance over the shorter distances, after a viral infection upset his training schedule four weeks before the Trials.

More Outstanding Times

The Aussie men recorded outstanding times in several other events. Geoff Huegill set a new world mark in the 50 fly with a 23.60, breaking Russian Denis Pankratov's 1996 record by 8-hundredths of a second. Later in the week, his form translated into a thrilling victory over world record holder, Michael Klim, in the 100 fly.

Huegill led Klim at the turn, with both men under Klim's world record pace. Huegill held on to touch in 52.19, the fourth fastest time in history and only one-hundredth of a second ahead of Klim. It was sweet revenge for Huegill, who lost to Klim at the Pan Pacs by



two-hundredths of a second. Scott Miller, the Atlanta silver medalist, failed to qualify for the team, finishing fourth in 52.83.

Klim made some amends for his narrow defeat, clocking the fastest time in the world this year in the 100 free. In setting a new Commonwealth and Australian record time of 48.56, Klim turned one-tenth of a second under Alex Popov's world record pace. Veteran sprinter, Chris Fydler, swam a personal best 48.85 to take the second individual place on the team and record the third fastest time in the

world this year. In the 50 free, Fydler (22.42) was a close second behind training partner Brett Hawke (22.29), with both men clocking personal best times.

Dorsal specialist
Matt Welsh clocked
54.14 in the 100 back to
break his Australian
record by
almost
three-

quarters of a second—the fastest time in the world this year. Pan Pac bronze medallist, Josh Watson, also qualified for the team, recording 54.82 for second place. Welsh also won the 200 back with another personal best 1:59.22, the third fastest time in the world this year, over Cameron Delaney (2:00.68).

Matt Dunn made his third Olympic team when he qualified in both individual medley events. He won the 200 IM in a very solid 2:01.28, ahead of Robert van de Zant (2:01.47), and he took second place in the 400 IM in 4:16.50, behind Justin Norris (4:16.23), soon after swimming a semifinal of the 200 freestyle.

Teenagers Heath Ramsay and Justin Norris took the two available places on the Olympic team in the men's 200 fly with strong performances. Ramsey touched in 1:57.49 to beat the fast-finishing Norris by one-hundredth of a second.

The biggest disappointment in the men's events was the failure of Pan Pac breaststroke dual gold medalist, Simon Cowley, to make the team. He finished second in the 100 behind veteran Phil Rogers (1:02.59), but missed the Olympic qualifying time. He then finished fourth in the 200, won by Ryan Mitchell in 2:14.42.

O'Neill Leads the Ladies

Susie O'Neill was the star of the women's events, as she finally broke the great Mary T. Meagher's 19-year-old 200 meter butterfly world record.

Kieren Perkins

With a capacity crowd of over 10,000 willing her on, the 26-year-old finally got the monkey off her back to touch in 2:05.81. O'Neill's time was 15-hundredths under the oldest record in the book, set in Brown Deer, Wis., on Aug. 13, 1981.

She had the perfect foil in her record-breaking swim, as Atlanta silver medalist, Petria Thomas, pushed her all the way. O'Neill and Thomas were both under the world record splits at every turn. O'Neill was able to hold her form to the wall to take the record and beat Thomas, who swam a world-class 2:07.21.

O'Neill also swam the world's fastest time for the 200 freestyle in almost three years and the fifth fastest in history, with a 1:57.47 in a semifinal. She won the final in 1:57.70, well ahead

of Giaan Rooney, whose time of 1:59.50 was the second fastest all-time by an Australian. O'Neill broke another Australian record when she clocked 54.86 seconds for the 100 free in the first leg of a club relay and swam a personal best 25.83 in a heat of the 50 free.

In the absence of O'Neill, Sarah Ryan won the 50 and 100 freestyle double, clocking personal best times of 25.90 and 55.46 to qualify for her second Olympic team.

Petria Thomas broke her own Commonwealth and Australian record in a semifinal of the 100 fly in a world-class 58.05 and went on to beat Susie O'Neill in the final. O'Neill recorded a personal best time of 58.71.

Dyana Calub showed she has the potential to be a force in the women's backstroke when she won all three backstroke titles. She won the 100 in 1:01.71, with Giaan Rooney taking second in 1:02.58. Calub also won the 200 in a personal best 2:13.35 over Clementine Stoney (2:13.58) and the 50 sprint in 28.86.

Breaststroker Sam Riley was nowhere near her best at Trials, having only partly recovered from a serious kidney infection. She failed to qualify for her third Olympic team, finishing seventh and fifth, respectively, in the 100 and 200 breast.

Leisel Jones, the 14-year-old rookie, became the youngest member of the team when she won the 100 breast in 1:08.71 over Queensland teammate, Tarnee White (1:09.05). Jones has had a sudden rise to potential stardom after clocking 1:08.30 at the National Age Championships in April.

In a surprise result, Caroline Hildreth held off a fast-finishing Rebecca Brown and Leisel Jones to win the 200 in a personal best time of 2:27.69. Brown's second place in

2:28.98 put her on the team and capped a remarkable comeback for the former word record holder.

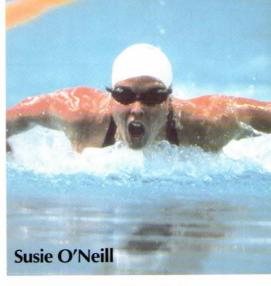
Hayley Lewis, the 1992 Olympic silver medalist for the 800 freestyle,

made her third Olympic team, leading from start to finish. Lewis had retired following the Atlanta Olympics after a disappointing performance. Now married with a two-year-old boy, she had only returned to serious training in November last year. Her winning time of 8:35.56 was the fifth fastest in the world this year, but still a long way off her best of 8:26.86. Rachel Harris qualified in second place in 8:38.73.

Twenty-two-year-old Sarah-Jane D'Arcy swam a controlled race to win the 400 free in a personal best 4:11.60. She beat Kasey Giteau, who also qualified for her first Olympics in 4:12.27.

Elli Overton, the University of California Berkeley-based Aussie, qualified for her third Olympics with a solid performance in winning the 200 IM. Her time of 2:14.66 was only 15 hundredths shy of her own Australian record. Atlanta Olympian, Anna Windsor, also made the team in finishing second in 2:16.66. Jennifer Reilly (4:44.20) and Rachel Harris (4:45.98) both qualified for the team in the 400 IM.

Steve Thomas, Swimming World's Australian correspondent, is a former editorial consultant to Australian Swimming and Fitness Magazine.



2000 Australian Olympic Team

WOMEN	
Rebecca Brown, 23	20
Dyana Calub, 24	10
Sara-Jane D'Arcy, 23	40
Melanie Dodd, 27	40
Kasey Giteau, 17	40
Sybilla Goode, 18	40
Elka Graham, 18	80
Rachel Harris, 21	80
Caroline Hildreth, 22	20
Leisel Jones, 14	10
Hayley Lewis, 26	80
Susie O'Neill, 26	20
Elli Overton, 25	20
Jennifer Reilly, 16	40
Giann Rooney, 17	10
Sarah Ryan, 23	50
Clementine Stoney, 18	20
Petria Thomas, 24	10
Kirsten Thomson, 16	80
Jacinta van Lint, 21	40
Tarnee White, 19	10
Anna Windsor, 24	20

	200 breast
	100-200 back, 400 MR
	400 free
	400 FR
	400 free
	400 FR
	800 FR
	800 free, 400 IM
	200 breast
	100 breast, 400 MR
	800 free
	200 free, 100-200 fly, 800 FR
	200 IM
	400 IM
	100 back, 400-800 FR
	50-100 free, 400 MR, 400 FR
18	200 back
(/.	100-200 fly, 400 MR, 800 FR
	800 FR
	400-800 FR
	100 breast
	200 IM

risine canas, 21
Cameron Delaney, 19
Matt Dunn, 26
Chris Fydler, 27
Grant Hackett, 20
Regan Harrison, 21
Brett Hawke, 24
Geoff Huegill, 21
Bill Kirby, 24
Michael Klim, 24
Daniel Kowalski, 24
Ryan Mitchell, 23
Justin Norris, 19
Todd Pearson, 22
Kieren Perkins, 26
Adam Pine, 24
Heath Ramsay, 19
Phil Rogers, 29
lan Thorpe, 17
TOTAL TRANSPORT

Josh Watson, 22

Matt Welsh, 23

Rob van der Zant, 25

MEN Ashley Callus, 21

ZUU DACK
200-400 IM
50-100 free, 400 FR
200-400-1500 free, 800 FR
200 breast
50 free
100 fly
200 fly, 800 FR
100-200 free, 100 fly, 400 MR
400-800 FR
800 FR
200 breast
400 IM
400-800 FR
1500 free
400 FR
200 fly
100 breast, 400 MR
200-400 free, 400-800 FR

400 FR

200 back

100 back

200 IM

100-200 back, 400 MR