

# Opportunity Knocks

*There are different opportunities awaiting all swimmers the year after an Olympic Games.*

PAN PACIFIC



Photo by Darrin Braybrook,  
Sports-The Library

CHAMPIONSHIPS

**By Rob Woodhouse**

FUKUOKA, Japan—The post-Olympic year provides different opportunities for swimmers.

For the successful Atlanta Olympians, the opportunity to continue their Olympic form still remains, or they can take a back seat with a hard-earned break from international competition.

For those who turned in disappointing results in Atlanta, there was the opportunity to atone for their disappointment and return to world-class form.

And for others, the post-Olympic year provides the opportunity to break into respective national teams and world ranking lists while gaining valuable international racing experience.

The 1997 Pan Pacific Championships Aug. 10-13 saw Olympic champions such as Claudia Poll, Susie O'Neill and Brooke Bennett continue their dominance of their respective events.

The meet also saw the likes of Samantha Riley, Kurt Grote, Michael Klim, Kristine Quance and others atone for less than satisfying Atlanta results with world-leading times and wins.

Finally, the meet provided the opportunity for the Pan Pac na-

tions' exciting new talent to showcase its potential. Neil Walker, Lenny Krayzelburg, Mai Nakamura, Grant Hackett, Ian Thorpe and others served notice to the swimming world that they will be a force to be reckoned with leading up to the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The meet was dominated once again by the U.S. and Australian teams, who between them took home 31 of the 37 gold medals. Japan (2), Costa Rica (2), China (1) and Puerto Rico (1) all won gold, while charter nation Canada failed to win an event.

The increasing gap between the top two nations and other competing countries must be a concern for member federations in an era when most major international competitions are seeing a more even spread of success among nations.

## Day One

Arguably, the best swim of the first night of competition came from Costa Rican Poll in the women's 200 freestyle. The Olympic champion swam a 1:57.48, a championship record which was just 7-tenths shy of the world mark and three seconds ahead of China's Le Jingyi.

Photo by Al Bello, Allsport

*Winning medley relay: Krayzelburg,  
Basing, Walker, Grote.*



## PAN PACIFIC

Photo by Al Bello, Allsport



## CHAMPIONSHIPS

The opening event of the night saw 17-year-old Australian Hackett continue his emergence as a legitimate challenger to countryman Kieren Perkins' distance freestyle crown.

Hackett won the 800 free in an outstanding 7:50.30, more than seven seconds ahead of nearest rival, Chad Carvin (7:57.82).

Hackett's time makes him the third fastest swimmer ever over the distance, behind only Perkins and another Australian, Daniel Kowalski. Hackett shows great respect for Perkins, but refuses to be drawn into debate that he is the next distance king. "I am not the

Quance (2:09.29) and Misty Hyman (2:11.55). The Australian Olympic champion was a little disappointed with her time, but is obviously on track to win this event at the World Championships in January, the only major international title to elude her.

American Ugur Taner (1:57.35) had a breakthrough win over countryman Tom Malchow (1:57.71) and Australia's Olympic bronze medalist Scott Goodman (1:58.34) in the 200 fly. Taner, who broke the meet record, trailed Goodman at the halfway mark, but won the race with a strong third lap.

Bennett was untroubled in winning the women's 1500 free (16:10.24) over teammate Diana Munz (16:17.06) to complete the opening day of the meet.

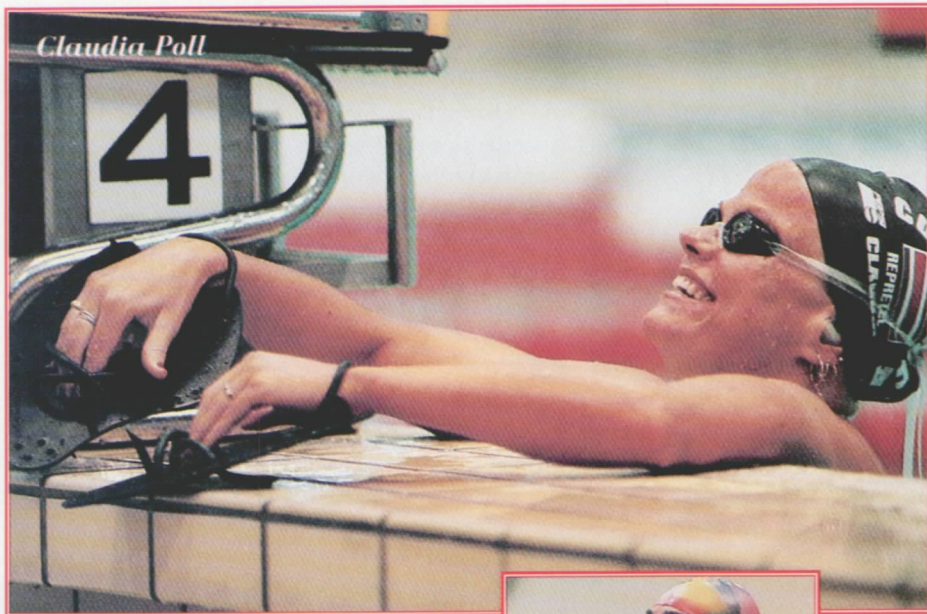


Photo by Darrin Braybrook, Sport•The Library

next Kieren Perkins; I am the first Grant Hackett," he said.

Michael Klim went into the Atlanta Olympics ranked first in the world in the 200 free, yet failed to final in that event, perhaps due to lack of top-level racing experience.

Since Atlanta, the Australian has traveled the world and raced in over 100 international events. That experience helped Klim to a breakthrough championship record in the 200 free in 1:47.60.

American Josh Davis (1:48.17) and New Zealand's Trent Bray (1:49.27) followed, while Olympic champion Danyon Loader (1:51.68) could manage only third in the consolation final.

Japan's Nakamura thrilled her home crowd with an all-the-way win in the women's 100 backstroke. Nakamura split 29.63 at the 50 and held that lead to win in 1:01.13 from Americans Lea Loveless-Maurer (1:01.35) and Catherine Fox (1:01.83).

In the men's event, American Lenny Krayzelburg swam a blistering 54.97 in the prelims. In the final, teammate Neil Walker led the field through the first 50 meters (26.48) before Krayzelburg motored off the turn to win in an impressive 54.43 from Walker (55.27) and Canadian Mark Versfeld (55.55).

Susie O'Neill continued her dominance of the women's 200 fly with a world-leading time of 2:08.59 to win from Americans

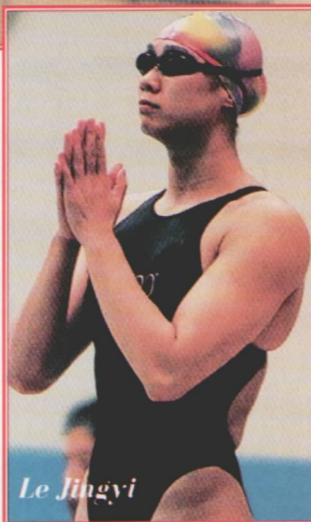


Photo by Al Bello, Allsport

## Day Two

Jenny Thompson gets great satisfaction from winning international events. A close win over arch-rival Le Jingyi of China in the women's 100 free was no exception. Thompson held off a fast-finishing Le to win with a championship record in 54.82 to Le's 54.86.

In the men's event, a bad start from Australia's Klim allowed Neil Walker to claim a half body length lead at the 50. Klim powered home to win in a Commonwealth record 49.46 from Walker (49.57) and Puerto Rico's Ricardo Busquets (49.94). Klim and Walker are both exciting young swimmers with enormous potential. Their duels in this event and the 100 fly will be great to watch next January at Perth.

Former world record holder Samantha Riley had a point to prove in the women's 100 breast. South African Penny Heyns took Riley's world mark en route to winning her country's first-ever Olympic gold medal in swimming at Atlanta.

The Olympic bronze medalist extracted some revenge by winning the title in a smart 1:07.81, a championship record, from Heyns (1:08.65) and American Kristy Kowal (1:09.18).

Kurt Grote, who finished sixth in the 100 breast final at Atlanta, also set a championship record in the 100 breast. A fast opening lap set Grote up for his biggest international win in 1:01.22 from Australian veteran Phil Rogers (1:01.85) and American Jarrod Marrs (1:02.64). One to watch in this event is 16-year-old Australian Simon Cowley, who

clocked 1:02.74 to finish fifth.

Kristine Quance, the 200 fly silver medalist from the previous day, continued her impressive meet with an all-the-way win in the 400 IM. Quance (4:39.61) was particularly impressive in the fly (1:02.16 split) and breast (1:19.30) legs, and will challenge the long-standing world record of 4:36.10 with improvement in the backstroke and competition in the freestyle legs. That competition may come from American Maddy Crippen, who finished second in 4:43.20, and from Canadian Joanne Malar (4:44.17).

The men's 400 IM was overshadowed by the late withdrawal of

Jenny Thompson

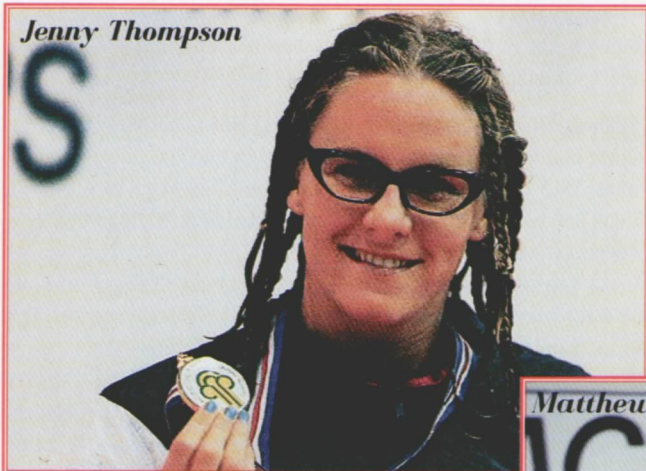


Photo by Al Bello, Allsport

Olympic champion Tom Dolan after an asthma attack, but the enthralling duel between Australian Matt Dunn and Canadian Curtis Myden was the best race of the night.

While the pair were challenged early by China's Wang Wei, it was Myden who held a body length lead over Dunn until the freestyle leg. Dunn, fourth at Atlanta, proved too strong for Myden, bronze medalist at Atlanta, to win in an impressive 4:16.11 to Myden's 4:16.30.

In the 800 free relays, the Americans proved too strong in both men's and women's races to win comfortably. The American men were particularly

impressive, their winning time of 7:13.99 a championship record and faster than the gold medal time from Atlanta. The U.S. women clocked 8:07.82.

### Day Three

Claudia Poll had her sights set on Janet Evans' long-standing world record in the 400 free on Day 3.

Poll attacked the race from the start, splitting 2:01.72—almost a half-second faster than Evans' halfway split (2:02.14). While Brooke Bennett stayed within a second of Poll over the first half, neither could maintain the pace. Eventually, Poll won in 4:06.56 with Bennett second in 4:09.77.

Hackett, who won the 800 free opening night, claimed his second gold in the 400 free with an outstanding 3:47.27, a championship record and fast enough to win gold in Atlanta.

While the media continued their comparisons between Hackett and Perkins, it was silver medalist Ian Thorpe who provided, perhaps, one of the greatest swims of the meet. At 14 years of age, the Australian clocked an amazing 3:49.64, overtaking American Chad Carvin (3:50.40) in the final 75 meters. Thorpe has taken more than 14 seconds off his personal best in the past 12 months. While he certainly cannot continue that rate of improvement, Thorpe still has a lot of



Photo by Darrin Braybrook, Sport-The Library

## PAN PACIFIC



Photo by Darrin Braybrook, Sport-The Library

## CHAMPIONSHIPS

# PINE CREST SWIM CAMP

**"A Training Camp For Competitive Swimmers"**

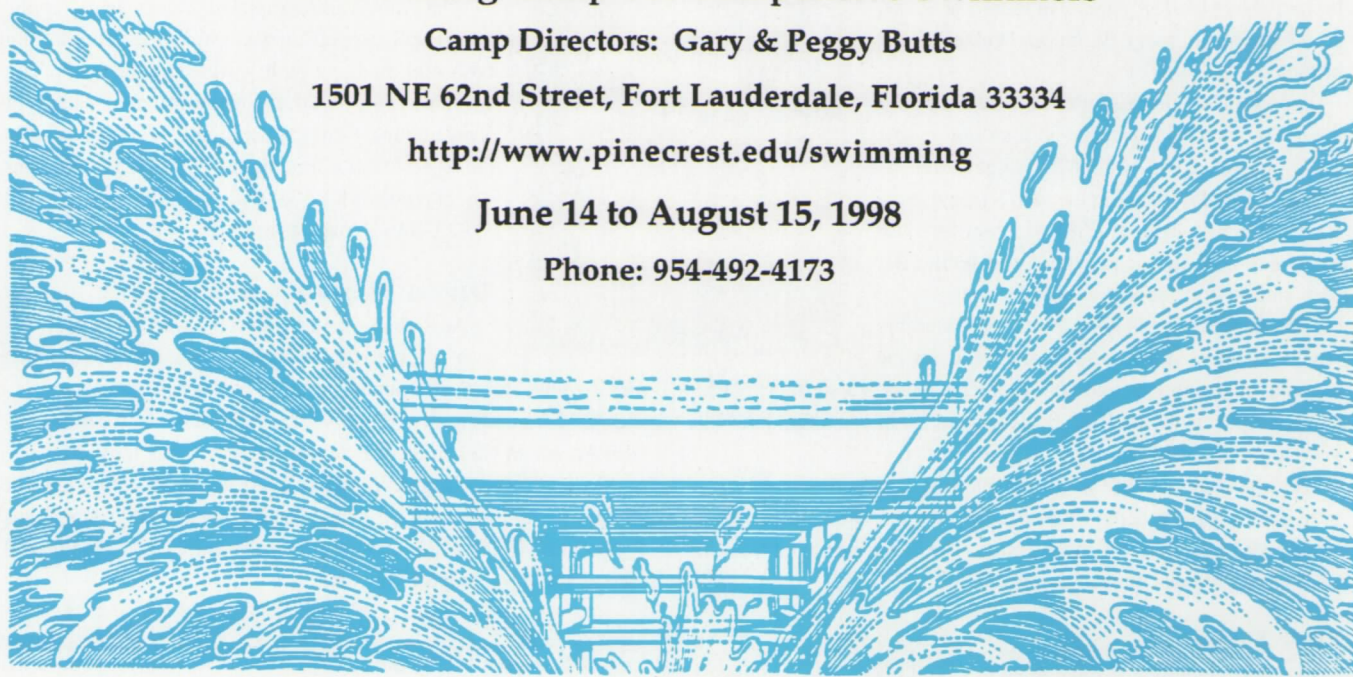
**Camp Directors: Gary & Peggy Butts**

**1501 NE 62nd Street, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33334**

**<http://www.pinecrest.edu/swimming>**

**June 14 to August 15, 1998**

**Phone: 954-492-4173**



## PAN PACIFIC



## CHAMPIONSHIPS

growing to do and is not putting any limits on how fast he can swim.

Jenny Thompson continued her great form to win the 100 fly in a championship record 59.00 from Japan's Ayari Aoyama (59.35) and China's Cai Huijue (59.64).

Thompson seems to have found a new lease on life since Atlanta, and her results here reflect her relaxed attitude to swimming.

In the men's event, Neil Walker clocked 52.76 to win from Australia's Klim (52.94) and American Nate Dusing (53.26). Walker won the race in the first 50 meters (23.89) and could challenge



Russian Denis Pankratov's world mark at January's World Championships. His winning time broke Pablo Morales' American record of 52.84, set 11 years ago, two days before Walker's 10th birthday.

Japan's Nakamura secured her second gold medal in the 200 backstroke with an impressive 2:11.40, again ahead of the USA's Lea Loveless-Maurer (2:12.25), while in the men's race, Lenny Krayzelburg clocked 1:57.87 to lower his own two-week-old American record and secure the men's backstroke double.

Krayzelburg led at every turn and paced his race beautifully, splitting 58.26 and 59.61 for the respective first and second 100. Canadian Mark Versfeld (1:59.61) and Olympic champion Brad Bridgewater (2:00.04) captured the silver and bronze medals.

As expected, the U.S. won both 400 free relays comfortably, the individual highlight being Michael Klim clocking a Commonwealth record 49.15 leadoff for the Aussies. The American men won in 3:18.18, while their women finished in 3:43.77.

## Day Four

Olympic champion Brooke Bennett led all the way to win her favorite event, the 800 free, with a time of 8:26.36. Costa Rican

Poll (8:29.05) was a surprise silver medalist, defeating American Diana Munz (8:29.06) by the narrowest of margins. The top three times were the fastest in the world this year.

In the 200 IMs, American Kristine Quance and Australian Matt Dunn both completed medley doubles. Quance (2:13.79) beat Atlanta silver medalist, Canadian Marianne Limpert (2:14.91), while Dunn defeated Atlanta bronze medalist Myden (2:01.83), winning in a personal best of 2:01.14.

Le Jingyi finally had some revenge on Jenny Thompson in the 50 free, winning in a slow (compared to her world record) 25.24 from Thompson (25.42) and Nicole De Man (25.66).

Puerto Rican Ricardo Busquets won his country's first-ever Pan Pac title when he tied American William Pilczuk in the men's 50 free. They hit the wall together at 22.42 ahead of American David Fox (22.69).

Samantha Riley and Kurt Grote completed breaststroke doubles with impressive wins in their 200 meter events. Riley looked on track to break the world record, missing the mark by less than a second in 2:25.34 over Japan's Masami Tanaka (2:28.66) and Canadian Lauren Van Ogsten (2:29.83). Grote, who turned in a world-leading 2:12.35 at the U.S. nationals two weeks earlier, won the Pan Pac title with a 2:14.05 over Japan's Yoshiaki Okita's 2:14.59.

Australian Hackett completed the distance freestyle table with a relatively slow 15:13.25 win in the men's 1500. Hackett, suffering from a virus, did just enough to win comfortably from Americans Tyler Painter (15:17.01) and Carvin (15:17.18).

The Americans completed a clean sweep of the relays and capped a successful meet by winning both 400 medleys with world-leading times. The women won in 4:04.27, while the men's team of Krayzelburg, Grote, Dusing and Walker turned in the second fastest time in history, tying the previous world record of 3:36.93, set by both the 1988 and 1992 USA Olympic teams.

## Open Water

Australian Grant Robinson swam the fastest ever recorded 25 kilometer race to easily win the men's event. Robinson stopped the clock at 4 hours, 40 minutes and 38.67 seconds to beat Canadian Liam Weseloh by 12 minutes, with American Nathan Stooke a further five minutes back.

Shelley Taylor-Smith completed an Aussie double, winning the women's event in 5 hours, 1 minute and 12.69 seconds. Americans Tobie Smith (5:05:08.21) and Bambi Bowman (5:13:04.20) finished second and third, respectively. ■



### About the Author

**Rob Woodhouse**, a 1984 Olympic bronze medalist for Australia in the 400 IM, is *Swimming World's* Australian correspondent. He is also director of Elite Sports Properties in Victoria.