Lessons learned from Glasgow 2014 and what might they mean to WA’s State Sporting Associations?

by

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A few statistics from Glasgow 2014

- England: 58G, 59S, 57B
- Australia: 49, 42, 46
- Canada: 32, 16, 34
Integrating physical, mental and social elements of preparation

• “The Africans have a saying – ‘It takes a village to raise a child’. That should be how you prepare athletes. If the coach and others cannot co-ordinate all aspects of the preparation then you’re just guessing at what the outcome will be. Life is too short for that. Much better to work together from Day One.”

Colm O’Connell, coach to successful Kenyan middle distance runners. Worked with 25 World Champions and 4 Olympic Champions

So what sort of village is Western Australia?
A few statistics from Glasgow 2014

Australian Team Membership

33 HQ Staff
27 Athletics “staff”
99 Athletics “athletes”

0 born in WA
1 born in WA
3 born in WA
A few statistics from Glasgow 2014

- 118 “staff” from the other 17 sports.
  - 3 were born in WA - 1 in Gym, 2 Hockey.
Are the Commonwealth Games important to us at all?

- They are critical for non-Olympic sports such as Squash, Lawn Bowls and Netball.
- For the Olympic sports they can be seen as a “testing ground” for new athletes and staff. They are a great opportunity to prepare for multi-sport environment.
- For some athletes they will be seen as their pinnacle.
- The Australian public still values them.
- Politicians like them and sport gets funding for them.
- Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in April 2018 will be a big thing. 2022 sees Edmonton and Durban bidding so has some future.
The Commonwealth Games as a mini-Olympics?

- Many of the trappings, traditions and sadly the pressures associated with an Olympics are also part of the Commonwealth Games.
“You’d get on a plane at Heathrow with 300 normal people who were excited and you’d arrive in L.A, Seoul or Barcelona with 300 nutcases. They called it Olympic fever and I found it a little scary to be honest.”
"I think there is a lot of emotionality flying around all the time. Then the nature of the village makes it even more like a pressure cooker. It’s a combination of Disneyland, a zoo, a circus, a noisy hotel, a shopping centre and a non-stop party.

We try to warn people about it in advance but I don’t think people believe you.”
“It was an emotional roller coaster. Some people were very happy with performances, some were sad. So many arguments with coaches and managers. I saw a fight between coach and athlete in the dining hall. It was all about highs and lows. Nobody seemed to be normal or average – top of the mountain or bottom of gorge. I couldn’t wait to get away from it all.”
Garcia, CUB, TJ, 2000

“I was scared to leave my room. There were people everywhere. Everything was a queue. Queue, queue, queue. It was noisy all the time. 24 hours a day. I was trying to get ready and no-one seemed to care about me.”
The Secret Olympian

• “During the Games the village performs a gradual metamorphosis from monastery to Club 18-30 holiday camp. The village gets noisier and noisier with more athletes having bugger all to do. They don’t want to leave the village. It’s like a free holiday for two weeks. I felt so sorry for the sports who are on in Week 2 or who have to keep going for the entire 20 days.”
Bob Nideffer, USA Sport Psychologist

“I’ve seen things intensify with every Games. It has been getting worse and worse to my mind. The number of homicide threats and suicide threats has increased alarmingly. The Games have become so large and so commercial that it is easy to forget what we’re here for. I feel sorry for today’s athletes.”
Roslyn Carbon, 6 x Olympic Doctor

• “The village is exciting prior to the OC but you’re nervous and worried if you’ve got everything right. The atmosphere is hopeful but that’s an anaesthetic to reality. The OC is a relief that it’s about to start, but then you wake up to Hell. It’s a veil of unrelenting stress - especially for staff, particularly for those whose sports last the entire Games.”
What Seems To Work?

- Successful Olympians more likely to set themselves daily process goals
- They are better at living in the “Here & Now” or present tense while at the Games
- They tended to have plans and strategies for when things go wrong, or for dealing with distractions
- They kept a diary and took some responsibility for their own planning/training
- They had coaches who empowered them
- They knew about controlling the controllable factors and not getting upset by uncontrollable factors
What Doesn’t Seem To Work?

• Athletes obsessed with Outcome goals rather than focusing on the “doing” part of the Games
• Athletes allow themselves to become distracted by the uniqueness of multi-sport format
• Athletes over-reliant on coach or significant other
• Athletes poorly prepared to deal with “what if...” or “guess what...” situations
• Athletes who go to “transmit only” mode when the pressure came on
• Athletes were not good at accepting responsibility for their performance. Looked to blame others and make excuses.
Resilience or “hanging in there”
Resilience in Sport

• Recoil or spring back after bending, stretching or compressing.
• Resilience Gene
• First wave resiliency research was about identifying qualities to bring positive outcomes when faced with adversity.
• Second wave is about how are these qualities are acquired. Non-sporting environments such as illness, injury, crime, catastrophes.
• Best form is Resilient Reintegration – individual makes it through their adversity and also acquire additional protective factors which will help in the future.
• Team GB called this “Bounce-backability”
Resilience in Sport

• 2 main components – belief and focus
• Creating challenges in training and educating the athlete as to what works and what doesn’t work when dealing with negative situations
• Being competitive in training
• Involving the athlete in the preparation for specific Resilience sessions
• Honest communication
• Frequent re-setting of goals in an annual plan
• Emphasis on Process goals in training and competition
Athletics Australia pre-departure

PLAN:

• Best “off-field” team.
• Sessions in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne
• Mixed ability of management and coaches
• Empowered and resilient athletes
• Monthly phone calls, and being told to concentrate on potential medallists
WAIS Pre-departure - From Perth to Glasgow: Are you prepared...

SAVE THE DATE!!!

• Wednesday 4th June, 2014 at 7:00pm

• Sport Psychologists’ Matt Burgin and Brian Miller will provide a session on strategies to successfully manage the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

• The session will provide athletes and coaches with insights into managing the village, transferring from training to competition, competing in a multi-sport event, and coping with expectations.

• The invitation is open to all WAIS/WA athletes attending the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

• Venue: WAIS and food will be provided.

• RSVP: Please confirm your interest in attending to Chrissie Banwell on 9387 8166 or cbanwell@wais.org.au

• Updates will announce past athletes who attend to provide their personal experiences from Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games.
WAIS pre-departure session

• Workshop run by Matt Burgin and BM, and 2 ex-athletes invited to tell their Commonwealth story

• Coaches, family members, athletes and support staff from Athletics, Gymnastics, Shooting, Netball, and Swimming.

• Discussion re: doing your “PB” at a multi-sport and some of the challenges.

• Working in small groups to discuss and plan for scenarios. If difficulties arise for all nations, then we should be better prepared for them and hence get better performance outcomes.

• Adoption of C.O.P.E model
So what about preparation for the Commonwealths?

• Daily Training Environment
• Holding Camp Environment
• Competition Environment

- it’s about transitioning effectively
DTE to be more relevant

• Too many young Australians seem to think training hard = success, and training harder = more success. Not true.
Preparing for reality
HCE is often unrealistic as well

- Good hotel
- Sole use of facilities
- Easy transport
- Only Athletics
CE is different
The rhythm of the Games
Issues for multi-sport events
Issues for multi-sport events
Issues for multi-sport events
Raising awareness
VIPs in the village
Governor General
So how do we transition?
Awareness and Teaching
Opening Ceremony
Village Life
Personal Glasgow reflections

- Transition from HCE to Village wasn’t slick enough. Then improved.
- Uniform problems
- UK athletes and coaches
- Comments from Chairman of Selectors
- When Eric met Sally – President/CEO/Twitter/Steve Hooker
- NASS funding and outcome focus
- Media preparation & skills
- Opening Ceremony
- Tapering = body parts move faster
- Personal matters? Sleep deprived and family
Medal-Winning Leadership

Canadian research - 12 Winter Olympic medallists from 2010 and their 10 coaches.

“How were the medals won & what qualities do the coaches have?”

Demanding Leadership – directive coaching and decisive conducting

Relational Leadership – coach/athlete relationship and role modelling

Solution-focused Leadership – vision, learning culture, role clarity and analytic tenacity
So what could/should we do to ensure greater WA representation in Gold Coast 2018 (& 2022) and how will we ensure better performances from those athletes and staff once they are there?
There are at least 5 areas of interest:

Athletes
Coaches
Management personnel
Support staff
Governance & structure