

MEDIA RELEASE
Victorians to represent Australia at INAS World Championships in Portugal

Sport Inclusion Australia announced today the team to represent Australia at the 2018 INAS World Half Marathon Championships in Coimbra, Portugal. The team of 6 athletes and a coach all hail from Victoria and will be Australia's first representatives at the Championships.

Harry Mezger, Carlo Manolitsas, Montgomery Cooper, Georgia Powning, Chloe Turner and Montana Whiteley are coached by Liz Gosper in Melbourne and will take on the gruelling 21.1km event wearing the Australian uniform for the first time.

The championship for athletes with an intellectual impairment is being run in conjunction with an annual mass participation event that is expected to see a field of over 7,000 competitors running through the historic city of Coimbra. A large number of athletes from 8 countries (Australia, Brazil, Italy, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Spain and the USA) are expected to compete in the INAS World Championship events. Australia has sent Athletics teams to all INAS Athletics World Championships but has not competed in the winter cross country and road running events. The 2018 INAS Half Marathon Championships will be run on Sunday 21 October.

"It is very exciting to see these athletes selected to represent Australia in this World Championship." said Sport Inclusion Australia CEO Robyn Smith.

Athletes will not only be competing for individual honours, but with 3 male and 3 female athletes they will also be competing in the team competition as well.

All athletes compete for the Old Xavier's Athletics Club in Cross country and track events in Australia as well as some cross training in triathlon and swimming events. At the recent Australian Cross Country Championships on the Sunshine Coast Mezger (19) and Powning (19) finished second in their respective events.

A fitness teacher at Ashwood School and founder of Inclusive Sports Training, Gosper has been working with athletes with an intellectual impairment for a number of years, through her training group she has introduced athletes to a range of sports and competition pathways. Gosper has been appointed as Head Coach for the team. "Since we identified the opportunity to compete in this event and represent Australia all of the athletes have been focussed on just one thing, their commitment to training, competition and preparation has been outstanding" Gosper said.

Mezger is a current member of the Athletics Victoria talent id program as a middle distance runner. During the off season he runs cross country and competes regularly in triathlon and swimming events. Mezger also medalled on the track at the Australian junior Championships earlier this year in Sydney. When the opportunity came up to represent Australia Mezger grabbed it with both hands and has been focussed on the half marathon event ever since. "I love running and I have loved every training session, even the long dark wet runs through winter. We just called them adventure runs which gave us a great attitude to just keep pushing rain, hail, puddles whatever was thrown at us." Mezger said.

Powning also a medallist at the Australian Junior Track and field Championships and Australian under 20 5000m record holder has stepped up her training in preparation for the Championships, "I have been training six days a week, running and cross training with my coach and my friends. I have learnt to eat the right kind of food and cannot wait to represent Australia for the first time." Powning said.

Turner started her sporting career as a Basketballer representing Victoria and was enticed into running when she heard of the opportunity to run long distance for Australia. "I have completed a half marathon before and could not wait to get into the team for this International event. I am sure I will smash my previous time as I have trained so hard with the team." Turner said

For Montana Whiteley and Montgomery Cooper it will be a family affair as Montana's father and Montgomery's mother are also travelling and will be taking part in the Open Half Marathon event run by Global Sport.

The athletes preparation under Gosper's guidance has not only seen them complete a gruelling training program that includes cross training in swimming and duathlon but they have also undergone physiological testing and strength training to ensure that each athlete is in the best physical

condition for the event. That visited a 3D running lab at the start of training to check their shoes and gait. This was very beneficial and the athletes are confident they are in the correct shoes.

While this will be the first half marathon for each athlete (other than Turner), they will go into the event full of confidence having committed to a lengthy training program that has left no stone unturned.

Australian Team

Harry Mezger (19) South Yarra
Montgomery Cooper (18) Beaumaris
Carlo Manolitsas (19) Malvern East
Georgia Powning (19) Kew
Chloe Turner (24) Albert Park
Montana Whiteley (19) Glen Iris

Coach: Liz Gosper

The team departs on the 14th of October and competes on Sunday 21 October.

Contacts

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Athletes – on request.

Photos

Georgia Powning and Harry Mezger competing at the Australian Junior Championships in Sydney over 1500m in March.

Higher Res version available here:

Powning: <https://sportinclusionaustralia.sharepoint.com/:i:/g/Ea-iBXzQSGpltviNMKPHzG8BnF5hDOjOX4cvPfB2cn1uWg?e=uKpung>

Mezger: <https://sportinclusionaustralia.sharepoint.com/:i:/g/EchNjPCE3kVDgpTM14KvKikBh7lXhdbcF97K4VaB3ZbN3g?e=sp1nwX>