

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



AUSSI National Swim

The 1998 Australian Masters Long Course Championships were held at an exciting new venue.

With its brand new Aquatic Centre, Hobart has become a valuable new addition to venues capable of running a major Masters event. This year's AUSSI Nationals was well attended and provided those attending with top class facilities as well as an exciting holiday venue.

The 1998 AUSSI Masters Long Course Championships was held in Hobart, the capital city of Tasmania 12-14 March. Hobart is Australia's second oldest city being founded 16 years after Sydney. It is an excellent mixture of the old and the new. It offers a bustling modern maritime city but still retains the old world charm of the eighteenth century. The National Masters Championships was a first for Tasmania and was made possible by the recent opening of the Tattersall's Hobart Aquatic Centre. This magnificent indoor complex, although not up to full Olympic standards, has 50 metre and 25 metre swimming pools, a diving and water polo pool as well as recreational swimming areas. The pool is ideally situated adjacent to a city park and is already in demand by international teams looking for a training venue prior to the 2000 Olympics in Sydney. Access to Hobart is gained from Melbourne either by air or by high speed sea ferry.

The championships attracted some 435 entries from 77 AUSSI clubs as well as swimmers from New Zealand, the United States and the Ukraine. The standard of swimming was a high with 30 AUSSI national records being broken. Outstanding competitors were Jen Thomason (Womens 55-59yrs) of Brisbane who gained five records and Dieter Loeliger (Mens 65-69yrs) of Adelaide with four records. These swimmers were subsequently awarded the Women's and Men's "Swimmer of the Meet" trophies. The "Founders Trophy" for top scoring club went to the local Hobart Masters. Relays, always a major feature of the Auzzi Nationals, were hotly contested with age category honours being equally shared among the Australian States. Among the medal winners were two men in the 90-94yrs age group. These were Alfredo Cherchi from New South Wales and Ernie Webster from

Tasmania. Then there was Nancye Mitchell (75-79yrs) from New South Wales who as a 16 year old had competed in the Australian National Championships held in a tidal pool in Hobart way back in 1939. What a difference she must have noted in the swimming facilities.

In the AUSSI Masters National Swim, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd medals are awarded to all events in each age group. In addition, there is the aggregate championships in each age group for which medals are awarded. Foreign swimmers who are registered Masters are eligible to take part but cannot be awarded AUSSI placings. They are however awarded special place medals according to rankings in their age group. This year, overseas visitors gained success with New Zealanders Barry Young (55-59yrs) and Tom Logan (70-74yrs) both gaining top points in their age groups while Lee McDonald (45-49yrs) from the United States had second highest points.

A feature of the meet was the high standard of the organisation. Officials were largely recruited from the AUSSI Masters own ranks, from the Chief Referee down to the back-up Timekeepers. A local organising committee, led by Pauline Samsom, did an excellent job and is to be congratulated. The championships were officially opened by the Governor of Tasmania, Sir Guy Green, and there was the usual elegant "Presentation Dinner" to wind up a most successful AUSSI Nationals. The next AUSSI National Swim is to be held in Darwin 11-15 May 1999. The date of the meet has been carefully chosen to avoid the extremes of the wet and dry seasons so that visitors will have the opportunity to see this exotic area of Australia at its best. □