



The Golden Glow of Australian Triathlon

2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games
March 18, St Kilda, VIC
1.5km swim, 40km bike, 10km run

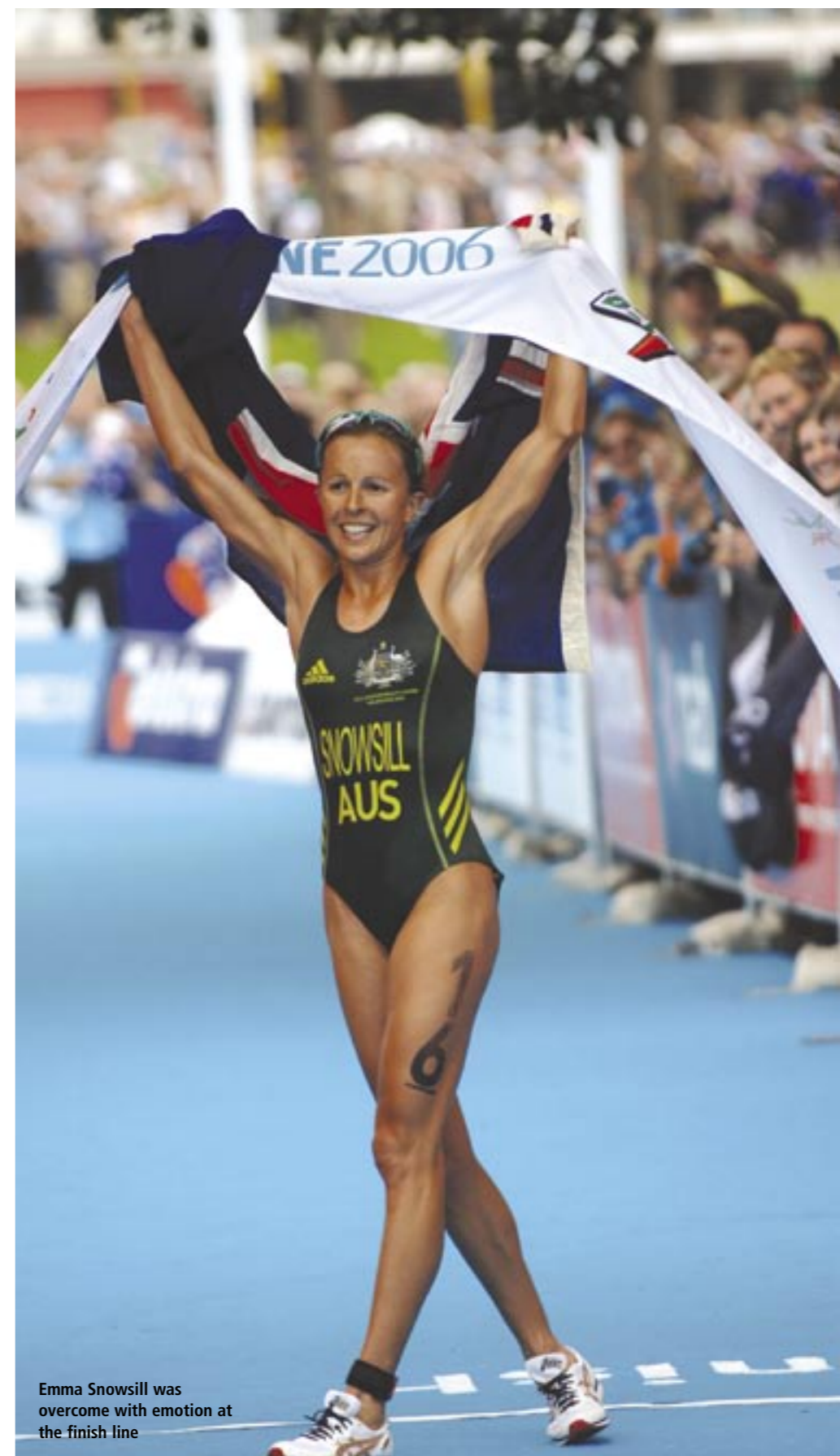
There were a lot of expectations on the Australian Commonwealth Games Triathlon team, given the nation's dominance world-wide. But with the 'major event' medal cupboard looking bare, sans Loretta Harrop and Michellie Jones' Olympic silver, it was time for things to change. Golden girl Emma Snowsill and Wagga hero Brad Kahlefeldt put paid to that at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

March 18 was the day we'd all dreamed of. Two races, two gold medals, and brimming national pride. Australia's knack for producing triathlon talent has long been admired, but until now, on a Commonwealth or Olympic stage, we've never been able to assert that dominance from race start to finish.

24-year-old Queenslander Emma Snowsill began Australia's triathlon medal quest in style. The pint sized champion is a favourite of many, and she showed why when she took control of the women's race at the six kilometre mark of the run, and absolutely hammered her way home, to take the gold medal in 1:58:02. Her gap on the rest of the field was so large that Snowsill began to celebrate 500 metres out from the finish line and had time to stop, greet her family and grab an Australian flag before crossing the line and creating triathlon history.

"I am so overwhelmed by it, that I got to race on home territory and it's such a big event, it's just a dream come true for me," said Snowsill at the finish line.

"I think I've been told a few times that I don't show emotion and I don't like to take things out of my control but today (as I neared the finish line), I had to acknowledge the crowd and say thank you



Emma Snowsill was overcome with emotion at the finish line



Snowsill leads while Blatchford, Warriner and Luxford lurk behind

for bringing me home, and having me here, and celebrate this with them. They were a big part of my win and it's something I wanted to acknowledge."

A patriotic crowd of approximately 200,000 lined the St Kilda course to see Snowsill emerge from the water with a group of 13 athletes. Also in the group was her teammate Annabel Luxford, the three British representatives, Liz Blatchford, Julie Dibens and Andrea Whitcombe, the Kiwis, Samantha Warriner, Andrea Hewitt and Debbie Tanner, and Wales athletes, Leanda Cave, Helen Tucker and Anneliese Heard.

The group remained together for the entire 40 kilometre ride, with the English athletes the only ones who attempted any form of a breakaway – which proved to be

unsuccessful. Queenslanders Snowsill and Luxford suffered in the cool, early morning conditions, as did Felicity Abram, who took Loretta Harrop's position in the team. Abram had a slower swim and was forced to ride in a chase pack of six, which never really stood any chance of bridging the gap.

As the women raced in and out of T2, it was New Zealand's Samantha Warriner who was in the desperate hunt for a medal. A school teacher by trade, she had taken time off in the lead up to the event, and confessed post-race she'd had an 'ideal preparation'. Warriner, Snowsill and the young Hewitt looked the goods as Blatchford, Tanner and Luxford dropped away at varying paces.

At the six kilometre mark, shortly after the run turnaround, Snowsill put in a surge

and broke her opposition's spirit, both physically and mentally. Snowsill later commented that until that point, she was not feeling herself, and had concerns over her where her race was headed.

"I like to go out hard from transition, that's where I feel comfortable, and extend my lead, but today I was pretty worried in the first five k's. I was really cold when I got off that bike, my toes and my quads, I couldn't get my legs going," she said. "But as soon as I warmed up and I kicked into gear, I got my rhythm and my heart rate to where I was comfortable and I could really motor...I really felt myself."

With her victory assured, Snowsill headed for the finish line, where Warriner took the silver medal and 23-year-olds Hewitt and Tanner sprinted for bronze. "The crowd support was unbelievable," said Hewitt, who won by a split second in the medal stakes. "When I came into the home straight I saw my sister and I put everything I had into the sprint. To win is just amazing."

The feeling of euphoria from the women's race, and what the result meant for triathlon in Australia, carried through the crowd as all eyes turned to the men's event. With Olympic champions Hamish Carter and Bevan Docherty in the field, the racing was red hot, and the pressure was on our guys to perform. They did not disappoint.

The swim saw Britain's Tim Don, Canada's Paul Tichelaar and Kiwi Kris Gemmell emerge from the water first. A pack of 16 athletes headed out onto the five lap bike course, containing Kahlefeldt, Thompson and Robertson, the three swim leaders, Olympic duo Carter and Docherty, Canada's Marc Jenkins and Brent McMahon, and England team members Will Clarke and Stuart Hayes.

The pace was fast and furious for the first two laps, which saw South Africa's Brad Storm attempt a breakaway, only to be reeled in by the pack. Simon Thompson, a last minute addition to the Australian team following Greg Bennett's injury, turned out to be our shining light on the bike, as he pushed the tempo, burnt the Kiwi athletes' legs, and generally chased down any attempts at a breakaway.

Racing out of T2 at lightening pace however was Carter, who completed the bike leg in his racing flats. A little presumptuous one might say, since any advantage Carter

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The St Kilda course provided a majestic backdrop to the race

had was run down by a rocket-fuelled Robbo, who stormed to the lead within a kilometre of exiting T2. Kahlefeldt, who hails from a family of runners, was also clearly in contention, duelling with Don, Docherty, Gemmell and Clarke.

As the race progressed it came down to a race of four – Robbo, Kahlefeldt, Docherty and Don. Whether by fate or intention, it

was Kahlefeldt who made a decisive surge just before the six kilometre mark, as had Snowsill earlier in the day. At the run turnaround Kahlefeldt received the thumbs up from Robbo, who was in a real tussle with Docherty for second and third.

The race was playing exactly into the Australian pair's hands, as they had hoped. Kahlefeldt commented after the race, "the

goal was for Robbo and myself to really go out hard and make Tim Don and the Kiwi's chase us, and that's what happened, they really had to surge up. Then we just sat on them into the wind, and with a lap to go I just had to really open it up and go for it.

"I went for it, and didn't look back for a couple of kilometres. When I looked back I had quite a lead, kept it going and the crowd just really brought me home."

Bring him home they did, as Kahlefeldt streaked clear of the field. Four bus loads of Wagga Wagga supporters came to Melbourne to see their boy race, and as the finish line was in sight, Kahlefeldt pumped the air and mouthed the word 'one' to everyone who could see. The reality of two Australian gold medals was almost too much for the crowd, who screamed and yelled for Kahlefeldt, and then Robbo, who was still surging forward, shoulder-to-shoulder with Docherty. In the end the Kiwi won out, but Robbo couldn't contain his excitement at finally clinching one of the 'big' medals.

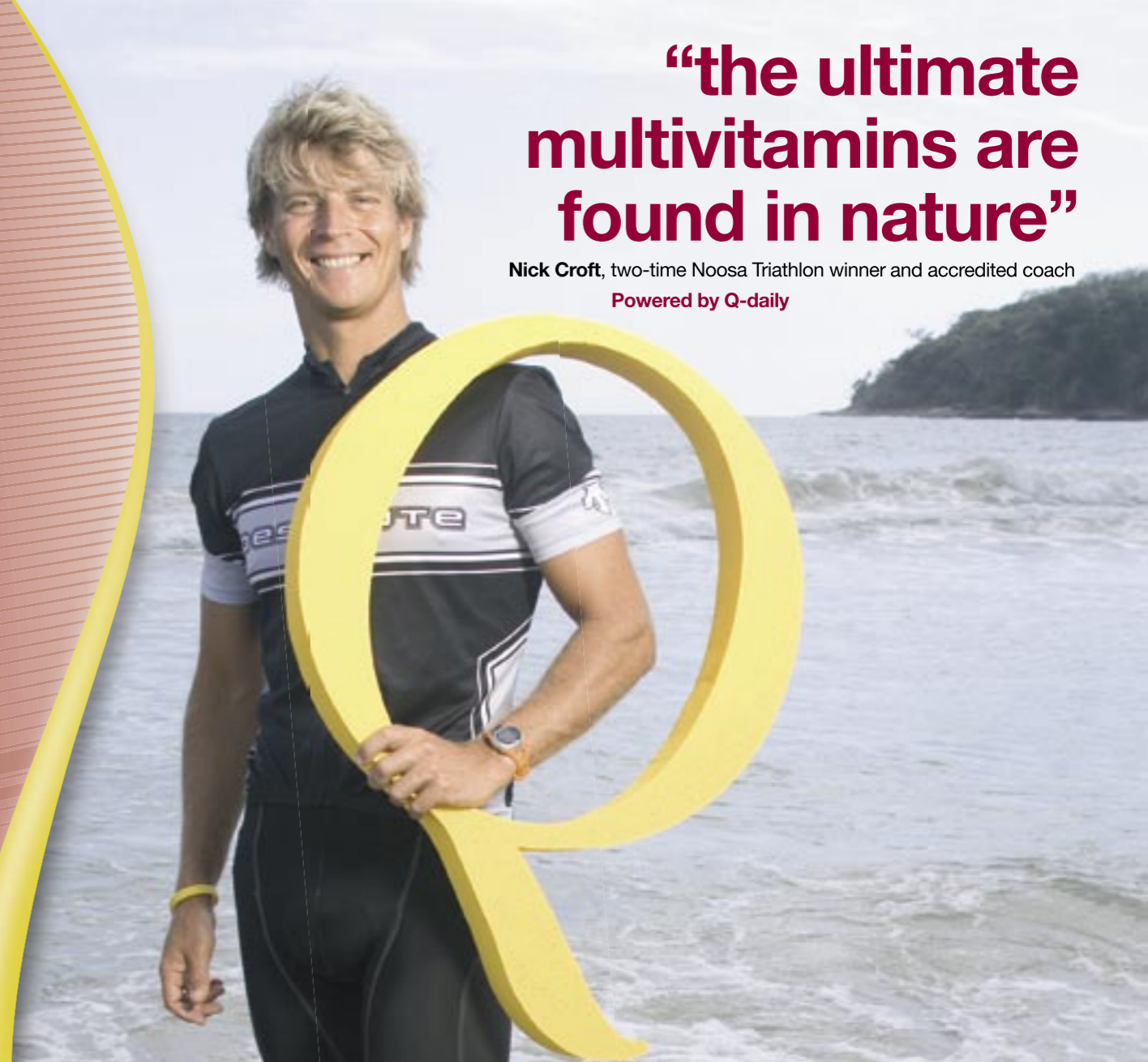
"Wow... I never thought I'd be so excited to win a bronze medal. It's just awesome



Happy faces on the men's podium

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Nick Croft, two-time Noosa Triathlon winner and accredited coach
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for Australia. We came out here with a plan today and it couldn't have worked much better. We had Simon out there controlling the bike and we knew we had the runners, and we've come home with the goods, finally," he said.

"We really backed ourselves and we controlled that race, and it couldn't have worked any better... The result means there's a huge monkey off our backs, that's for sure. We've showed so much promise over the years and everyone's always waited us to deliver. We couldn't deliver much more today with two gold and a bronze."

As the results began to sink in, and the athletes revealed their race tactics and thoughts to the press, 11th placed Simon Thompson emerged as the Australian men's hero. While the European nations have been racing as a team for many seasons, Australia's athletes have maintained their individualistic approach. But not any longer. Thompson was the designated work horse, sent out there to flog the Kiwi's and get his teammates off the bike in the best possible shape. There was no look in at a medal for him, his race was a self-sacrificed affair.



The frenzy of transition

"What we did today was a first for Australian triathlon, controlling the race and working as a team. We sat down before the race and said this is what we want to do. 'You've got a job, you've got a job and you've got a job'. And we all did our jobs to perfection," said Robertson.

"Simon is as much a medallist today as Brad and myself. He set us up, he controlled the breaks, there were a lot of packs out there and Simon was chasing them all down (on the bike). He really gave Brad and myself the best opportunity of a good run."

Kahlefeldt echoed Robertson's sentiments. "The goal was to push the pace in the swim to try and get a lead out of the water, keep up the pace on the bike, which Thomo certainly did, he closed a lot of gaps for us and kept our legs reasonably fresh. We're all running very strong, Robbo and myself, but all credit to Thomo, he's such a team player, he was very strong out there today and he really got Robbo and myself off the bike in a great position.

"The individual attitude of the past has definitely changed, it has to. If we want to

win, we have to be team players. Thomo raced for the team today, so all credit to him."

And while the athletes were quick to heap praise on their teammates, the entire Australian Triathlon team, from coaches to medical and support staff were acknowledged, and will continue to be as we bask in the warmth of two long awaited gold medals. **TMSM**

Top 10 Results

WOMEN

1. Emma Snowill (AUS)	1:58:02
2. Samantha Warriner (NZL)	1:58:38
3. Andrea Hewitt (NZL)	1:58:46.08
4. Debbie Tanner (NZL)	1:58:46.64
5. Annabel Luxford (AUS)	1:59:19
6. Liz Blatchford (ENG)	1:59:30
7. Andrea Whitcombe (ENG)	2:00:11
8. Flora Duffy (BER)	2:00:35
9. Jill Savege (CAN)	2:00:54
10. Julie Dibens (ENG)	2:01:02

MEN

1. Brad Kahlefeldt (AUS)	1:49:16
2. Bevan Docherty (NZL)	1:49:26
3. Peter Robertson (AUS)	1:49:32
4. Tim Don (ENG)	1:49:38
5. Kris Gemmell (NZL)	1:50:10
6. Hamish Carter (NZL)	1:50:35
7. William Clarke (ENG)	1:50:42
8. Paul Tichelaar (CAN)	1:50:51
9. Stuart Hayes (ENG)	1:50:53.18
10. Hendrik De Villiers (RSA)	1:50:53:96



Brad Kahlefeldt has every right to call himself number one

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