

Best of the Best in the West

March 26, 2014

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SKY HIGH: Northcliffe, with Courtney Hancock and Shannon Eckstein will be chasing the club's 10th straight Aussies pointscore

The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships 2014, The Aussies, will kick off in Scarborough next week with seven action-packed days between March 31 and April 6, featuring 5,000 surf lifesaving competitors and the who's who of surf sports.

Names like **Shannon Eckstein, Ky Hurst, Kendrick Louis, Courtney Hancock, Liz Pluimers and Naomi Flood** will come from every State and Territory in Australia with a small contingent from overseas and they will converge on the Western Australian capital for the 11th staging of the event in WA.

This year will celebrate the 99th year of Surf Sports in Australia – since the first “Championship” carnival at Bondi which saw the host club win the only two events contested – the Senior R and R Premiership and the Open surf race won by J. G. Brown, the only competitor not disqualified.

The Aussies, organised by Surf Life Saving Australia, is the largest event of its kind in the world - in the same magnitude as the Commonwealth Games.

Over the seven days competitors will chase prized Aussies medals on the beach and in the ocean with craft, swimming, rescue and lifesaving events that hone the skills and ability of our surf lifesavers to protect the community, and ensure they are rescue ready.

A snapshot of entry numbers and a look at each State's finest is below:

Previous Australian Championships held in WA – 1951 (Scarborough); 1958

(Scarborough); 1965 (Scarborough); 1971 (City of Perth); 1979 (Trigg Island); 1987 (Scarborough); 1991 (Scarborough); 2007 (Scarborough); 2008 (Scarborough); 2009 (Scarborough); 2014 (Scarborough).

Entry Stats:

Total number of competitors: 5,028

Total number of clubs: 190

Total number of Masters competitors: 1,293

Total number of Masters clubs: 137

Total number of Open Competitors: 3,735

Total number of Open Clubs: 156

Open Clubs Per State: NSW [62], QLD [27], WA [21], VIC [18], SA [12], TAS [4], NT [2], International [10]

Masters Clubs Per State: NSW [59], QLD [29], WA [18], VIC [16], SA [10], TAS [2], NT [1], International [2]

New South Wales

NSW will field the most number of clubs travelling to this year's Aussies with 62 including 59 of those clubs that will also contest the Masters. A total of 1,377 open competitors and 424 Masters will make the trek across the Nullabor. The NSW clubs will be led by new State Champions, Newport, who last year started the Newport Surf Racing Academy. The Maroon and Golds will be led by champion ironman Kendrick Louis, along with Max Brooks, Jake Lynch, Luke Morrison and Mitchell Trim. Manly, with Olympian Naomi Flood and rising star Georgia Miller will be a force in the women's events after 18-year-old Miller won 10 gold medals at the NSW State Championships.



MILLER TIME: Manly's rising star Georgia Miller shows her ability on the ski that won her the NSW Open/Under19 Ironwoman double.

Queensland

Nine times Australian champion club Northcliffe will be gunning for SLSA history when they hit the sands of Scarborough, one of 27 Queensland clubs who will field 813 open competitors and 259 Masters at this year's Championships. Northcliffe has won the Overall pointscore for nine years since 2004, with 2010 not contested and will be out for a record 10th title. Northcliffe were comfortable winners of the Queensland pointscore ahead of Mooloolaba and the emerging young Currumbin Vikings (Champions in 1977, 1998 and 1999). Northcliffe will be spearheaded by champion Ironman Shannon Eckstein going for his sixth Australian Ironman crown where he will try and emulate the great Trevor Hendy and Ironwoman Courtney Hancock chasing her third title. Throw in Olympic gold medallists Tate Smith and Murray Stewart in the ski area and it's a formidable team. Kurrawa will have Ky Hurst chasing his fifth ironman title and his 10th open surf race while "Queen of the Sand" Melissa Howard will be out for a remarkable 10th Australian beach flags title.

MAJOR EVENT PARTNER



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Western Australia

The WA clubs will be represented by 1022 open competitors and 385 Masters from 21 clubs with State Champions City of Perth leading the charge alongside arch rivals Trigg Island and emerging club Sorrento. City Beach, on the back of their “water babies” and their “beach girls” were the talk of WA State Championships with Kirstie Hardstaff, Jade Mickle and Heidi Gan leading the way in the water and Gabrielle Murphy, Brittany Houghton and Brittany Brymer on the sand. City filled the top six places in the women’s surf race and first five in the open beach sprint. In the end it was City [1168] ahead of Trigg [1068] and Sorrento [757]. The local sandcrabs will welcome the home beach advantage under “The Doctor’s” orders.



BEST OF THE WEST: WA’s finest Simon Huitenga, Jade Mickle, Kirsty Hardstaff (all City of Perth) and Brendon Sarson (Trigg Island).

South Australia

The famous Grange club in SA, responsible for developing outstanding competitors like Australian board champion Gavin Hill, beach flags guru David Brenan and more recently Australian beach sprint champion Jordan Caldwell have unearthed another star of the sand in Tjimarri Sanderson-Milera who won the open sprint and flags and helped the club take the open beach relay as Grange continued its decade long SA State Pointscore domination with 744 points ahead of West Beach [533] and Brighton [430]. Grange will be one of 12 SA clubs with over 300 Open and Masters competitors. Hayley Openshaw again dominated on the beach for Brighton winning the open beach sprint and flags and spearheading the red caps to gold in the beach relay.

Victoria

Powerhouse clubs Anglesea, Torquay, Lorne and Half-Moon Bay will headline the 18 strong Victorian contingent into the West with over 360 competitors. Anglesea, with their strong contingent of R and R teams, will again be a force to be reckoned with while Torquay will field a strong team in the water events with sisters Millie and Kimberley Holding dominant in craft events while it was good to see former Australian belt champion Cameron Dixon on the winners list in the Rescue Tube Rescue at the State Championships at Ocean Grove and he will also line up in the open belt in the flat conditions of Scarborough. While it won’t be hard to keep tabs on the Lorne surf boat crews namely the Victorian Reserve Grade winners the Lorne Bowlers and the Open Women’s winners Lorne Order, who will be kept honest by their other crew the Lorne Rangers.

Tasmania

The Apple Isle will be represented by a small but select band of competitors from Tasmania’s champion club Devonport, Burnie, Ulverstone and Carlton Park with the Norton family spearheading the family tree with Popular Burnie High school teach Jeremy Norton lining up in the Masters and the Opens with sons State single ski champion Sam Norton and bronze medal winning brother Tom Norton. The brothers Norton combined to win the double ski from Devonport’s well known Wiseman brothers Jarrad and Adam who won’t be making the trek west. Also keep an eyes on the evergreen old Tassie salt in Don Marsh in the Masters and his girl power trio of Ali Britton, Kaitlin Petrie and Briana Huxley.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory will have two clubs in Perth, Darwin SLSC, which patrols Casuarina Beach and Mindil Beach [of Mindil Sunset markets fame], with 13 competitors led by Chad Blenkinship from Darwin in the men’s open surf race and Jody Hall from Mindil who will contest both Masters and Open surf races with Mindil fielding a strong team of age groupers in Mitchell Hardy and the Marcroft brothers Luke and Noah with Tahni Gordon and Zoe Nibbs in the girls.

Internationals

Among the 10 internationals is Brazilian Malibu Long Boarder Leandro Lanzoni from Salvamar Paulista GBMar who will contest the Masters Malibu event and if his **Vimeo footage** is any indication then he may well become the first Brazilian to take an Aussies medal home. He will be joined by a strong group of Kiwis from Mt Maunganui, Omanu and Paekakariki with a lone ranger from Royal Canadian Lifesaving in Scott Southwood who is in for a busy week. He is one of 229 entries in the open surf race, one of 140 in the open 2km run and beach sprint where he will come against Japan’s Kasunari Noguchi from Oiso Lifesaving Club.

Hashtag **#Aussies14** and like us on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

Visit the event website at www.sls.com.au/aussies

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