

No Snowflakes Here

Snowflake Generation – defined by the 2016 Collins English Dictionary – Young Adults viewed as less resilient and more prone to taking offence

The Call Room – No one likes the Call Room. It's normally hot and crowded, you are sweating from your warm up, despite your best attempts to remain calm, you are hyped up and ready to go and yet there is this necessary process to go through first. You nervously check in with the officials, you nervously chat to someone you know about something unimportant. You nervously wait to get the hell out of there and into the sunshine, to your event

The Call Room is where everything you have been dreaming about and training for becomes all too vivid reality....Champions are made and unmade in the Call Room. Snowflakes are found out in the Call Room



In Wellington, in December 2019, around 25 tall, powerful young men will strive to take their place in New Zealand's Secondary Schools Sporting History in the Senior Boys Discus. The Discus is one of Athletics oldest disciplines, with no less than 2,700 years of history

I doubt very much that any of them will ponder the prospect of this particular competition beyond their own hopes and dreams. These young men will simply put their all into converting the months or even years of training and experience, into throwing a 1.5kg discus from here to eternity

Discus training usually consists of 3 facets. Weight Training, normally Olympic Lifting, Plyometrics & Stretching and of course, Throwing....hundreds and hundreds of Throws...it's hard grinding work where improvements are measured in centimetres

The pondering, prediction and discussion is the domain of old people, like me. One of the great pleasures of Sport apart from participating surely is watching, admiring and talking about it?

A Brief History

The New Zealand Secondary Schools Athletics (NZSSA) Championships began in 1973 and quickly grew to become the Nation's most popular Athletics event, both in terms of numbers of competitors and numbers of spectators. Over a thousand athletes now take part with several thousand watching. It is a fantastic event which is a great advertisement for one of the few truly Global Sports

Some analysis of the Senior Boys Discus competitions, almost all of which are listed on the excellent archives section of the NZSSA web-site, reveals some Sporting Greats and also reveals the growth of Throwing in particular

The very first Senior Boys Champion was R Smith of Reporoa College who threw 46.98m

1978, only 4 Throwers took part with the winner throwing 46m

1981, Grant Chapman set the record at 52.60m with 2nd and 3rd at 52m and 51m respectively – early promise of things to come

1987 – the first name which stood out, Courtney Ireland (who went on to compete at the 1990 and 1994 Commonwealth Games) won in a record 54.66m, then again in 1988 with 57.5m, with Pat Hellier 2nd in 53.4m and Simon Read 3rd in 52.98m...a standout year

1989 – Courtney won his 3rd title in succession in his final year at school with a mighty throw of 56.44m, Chris Mene (watch that name) 2nd in 55.02m and Pat Hellier 3rd in 51.94m

These performances need context. The IAAF provides World Rankings each year with U18 as the youngest year group. The minimum threshold is 48m with the 1.5kg Discus. Throwing over 55m normally ranks in the top 50 in the World and top 8 in Oceania (NZ, Australia and the Pacific Islands)

1990 – Chris Mene throws 61.76m to set a new record which stands for an amazing 27 years until 3 December 2017. An outstanding performance. Ian Winchester is a distant 2nd, over 10m back. Ian Winchester is the current NZ Senior Men's Discus record holder with 65.03m. Ian wins the following year with 55.52m

1995 – Shaka Sola – 2004 Athens Olympian – wins his first major crown. Shaka is now one of NZ's top Throw Coaches and Athletics personalities. Walk with Shaka around the track at an Athletics meet but only if you are not in a hurry, it takes over an hour as he stops to talk to another friend he hasn't seen in months

2000 – I spot Thomas Waldrom's name – Hurricane loose forward and English Rugby International

2003 – All Black Great Victor Vito's name appears

2006 – Marshall Hall at 18 threw 50.79m, in 2017 Marshall Hall went to the World Champs after throwing 64.55m in the USA

2008 and **2009**, World Champion Shot Putter, Tom Walsh's name appears with a best of 3rd in 49.71m

Which brings us to **2013**. Throw Coaches in NZ become misty eyed when they talk about this competition – one for the ages they say

If there was a competition which demonstrates the Grand Canyon like abyss between where the competition started and what it has become, it was the Senior Boys Discus in 2013

Sam Ulufonua won with 58.60m. Sam is a strapping 6 foot 6 inch giant and has gone on to great things in Representative Rugby

Nelson Asofa-Solomona 2nd in 58.47m. Another giant of similar stature. Now playing in the NRL with the Melbourne Storm and rumoured to be earning \$1M a year

Benedict Chong Wong 3rd in 51.81m

Matthew Bloxham 4th in 50.66m – Matthew went on to set a NZ age group Hammer Record which still stands

As if this was not enough, another 7 throwers all threw in excess of 40m

Astounding ! Amazing ! Never to be repeated ? Well, there's a funny thing...

2015 – depending on how you look at it, this competition also ranks highly due to the amazing depth in the field and the performances themselves

Nathaniel Sulupo first in 56.74m – Nathaniel recently represented Samoa at the Pacific Games and medalled in both Shot and Discus

Scott Gregory 2nd in 54.80m – Scott still holds the NZSSA Junior Boys Hammer record. Scott has recently represented NZ in Rugby Sevens

Ben Power 3rd in 53.62m. Ben is playing Representative Rugby for the Wellington Lions

The depth of this field continued with an unprecedented 10 other throwers throwing over 40m

Back to the Present

A preview is dangerous work....so many factors can ruin the outcome. In Discus, the weather is crucial and of course, we are dealing with Young Men, some of the most accident prone creatures on the planet

My prediction is that the 2019 edition will eclipse those 2 magnificent competitions in 2013 and 2015

It is likely to be the strongest field ever assembled and with kind weather and good fortune, will deliver an unmatched World Class spectacle to those lucky enough to assemble on the steep dusty banks of Newtown Park

The Four Main Protagonists

Connor Bell – Westlake Boys High School – aged 18 and half



Current record holder with 65.63m set in Hastings in 2017. The wind denied him the chance to improve the record in 2018. Connor is bound to be targeting 70m or more. Connor's PB is an incredible 69.67m – this is an Unofficial World Record for a 17 year old (<http://age-records.125mb.com/>)

Another prediction – watch anyone throw an implement of any sort over 60m and you will let out an involuntary gasp and find yourself uttering the name of the Son of God

Connor's other Discus achievements include

2017 Youth Commonwealth Gold Medal & Unofficial World Record of 63.66m as a 15 year old

2018 Youth Olympics Gold Medal

IAAF U18 World Rankings – 1st in 2018 and 2nd in 2017

Current NZ U18 and U20 record holder

Nik Kini – formerly of Whangarei Boys High School and now at Shirley Boys High in Chch – aged 17 and half



Nik is 2019 NZ U18 Discus Champion. Nik has a current U18 IAAF world ranking of 9th and is number 1 in Oceania & NZ

Nik's recent PB is 60.60m from 26 Oct 2019, hence my safe prediction is that Nik will throw over 60m

Nik is also one of the top Shot Putters and Hammer Throwers for his age in Oceania and will be targeting Gold in both

Nik has also played age group Rep Rugby for North Auckland

Zion Trigger-Fautele – Scots College – turns 18 in Jan 2020



Zion won Silver in U18 Discus at the 2019 Australian Champs with 56.80m, his PB

Zion currently holds almost all age group records in Wellington from age 14 onwards for Shot Put and Discus

Zion's U18 IAAF world ranking is 32 and he is ranked 5th in Oceania and 2nd in NZ

Zion will also compete in Shot Put where he will push Nik Kini for Gold. Zion is also a Rep Basketballer

Liam Ngchok-Wulf – Manurewa High School – 16 and half years



Liam's improvement in 2019 has been astonishing. Liam has a recent PB of 55.92m from 26 Oct 19 which see's him ranked 44th in the World, 7th in Oceania and 3rd in NZ

Liam is 2019 North Island Secondary Schools Intermediate Discus Champion & won a Bronze in U16 Hammer at the 2018 NZSSA Champs

Liam is currently ranked 2nd in Shot Put and 4th in Hammer in NZ in U18 grade where he will push hard for a medal in both events

The 11 amazing athletes below all have current PB's over 40m with some incredible talent in other events and some are bound to surprise

James Coates, St Bedes College – 47.36m – Consistent improver over the last 4 years in both Shot and Discus. 2nd Senior Boys Discus 2019 South Island Schools Champs

Laycian Leaso, St Peters College – 46.66m – Discus specialist. 3rd U18 2019 Auckland Champs and CSW Regionals in Intermediate grade

Max Abbot, Wellington College – 46.61m – Silver medallist 2018 NZ Schools U16 Discus. 2nd 2019 North Island Champs Intermediate Discus. Rapidly improving in both Discus and Hammer this season. Related to the Author

Joseph Ford, Nelson College – 46.43m – Discus specialist. 2019 Senior Boys South Island Schools Champion

Louis Northcott, Kapiti College – 46.33m – Sub 50 second 400m runner and Decathlete. 3rd Senior Boys Discus at 2019 North Island Schools Champs. Bronze medallist at 2019 NZ U20 Decathlon Champs

Jayden Williamson, Rosmini College – 44.90m – Gold Medallist in 2018 U16 NZ Schools Discus, Hammer and High Jump. Current NZ Schools U16 High Jump record holder. Represented NZ at 2019 Oceania Champs winning Silver in U18 High Jump. Ranked 45th in the World in U18 High Jump

Tamatoa Tepai, Auckland Grammar – 44.03m – Discus specialist. Has featured in a number of Schools and Club events in the last 2 years

Liam Johnson, Timaru Boys – 43.39m – 3rd at 2019 Senior Boys Discus, South Island Schools Champs. Outstanding Hammer Thrower currently ranked 2nd in NZ in U20

Joshua Bull, Catholic Cathedral College – 43m – Decathlete. Bronze medal at 2019 U18 NZ Decathlon Champs. Gold Medal at 2019 NZ Track and Field Champs in U18 Pole Vault

Jordyn Hetaraka, Whangarei Boys High – 42.99m – 2019 Bronze medal at NZ Track and Field Champs in U18 Discus. Outstanding Hammer Thrower winning Silver at 2019 NZ Track and Field Champs in both U18 and U20 grades

Tama Bartlett, Wairarapa College – 40.88m – 2019 Wairarapa Senior Boys Champion. Also capable performer at Javelin and Shot Put

By my calculations we could see someone throw 50m, which would achieve a good IAAF U18 World and Oceania ranking and “only” get 6th in this competition – shades of the Historic Men’s Shot Put at the 2019 World Champs in Doha

The Stage is set – come and see the show, **2pm Sunday 8 December, Newtown Park, Wellington** – and see if you can spot a Snowflake – I very much doubt it

Finlay Abbot

Dad, Sports Enthusiast & Bottle Washer at Sola Power Throwing Academy, Wellington

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