

Silver Medal at First International Competition



Deane Whitehead (14) Western Australia's leading female Modern Pentathlete, recently competed in Sweden in the 2008 Baltic Youth International Championship. Despite suffering asthma and being confined to the hotel only days before the competition, Deane showed true grit, finishing with a silver medal in the under 18 age group. She even made the Swedish press.

Dee competed in her first international Modern Pentathlon competition (swimming, fencing, shooting and running all in one day). There were 28 competitors from 4 countries (Spain, Poland, Sweden and Australia). Her Youth A (under 18) score was 3292 and her Youth B (under 16) score was 3568 which would have won her the under 16 gold medal. This was a mammoth effort for her, as she was badly affected by her asthma before the run even started – she struggled to even walk the course – but insisted on finishing the job she came to do. She elected to compete as an under 18 competitor to try and see what she could achieve. Two days prior to the event, she was bed ridden in the hotel and it was doubtful if she would be able to start. At that point, she could not walk or swim without continually coughing.

During the competition, she fenced all the other competitors, with 12V-14D (784 points). She won the 200m swimming discipline; her swim was about 4 seconds off her planned swim, but it was the best she could do being very asthma affected and 1 second outside her personal best of 12 months ago. Given her medical circumstances, her coach is extremely happy with the result, achieving 1180 points. She was 4th overall in the shoot (20 shots with an air pistol), with her best ever competition result of 162 (scores for other competitors ranged from 174 down to 132) or 880 points. Her coach is very happy with this. Dee was leading the competition after the first three events, going into the final run discipline. Due to her medical condition, she did what she could with the 3km run and although she was in the lead, was not quite able to hang on. She took home silver.

The following day, the organisers ran a fun modern pentathlon relay competition. Dee caused quite a stir! As team captain, she went last in the shoot – run. This was held outdoors, in quite windy conditions. The shoot – run was held under the new trial rules just released from the international body (UIPM). Dee ran 40m to the shooting line and took 1 min 08 to complete the first five targets and then ran 500m. She came back and took 44 seconds to complete her second series of five targets (which was the fastest time by any competitor by a LONG way) and then ran 500m. Her total time was 6 min. This had to be done without any asthma medication, as her medication gives her “the shakes” and she would not have been able to shoot! The national Spanish and Swedish coaches were really stunned by her 44 second effort. This has not been done any faster, anywhere! In fact, it is doubtful if it could be done any quicker, with a single shot air pistol (due to reload time). Less than 9 seconds a shot, including reload, is pretty fast and very accurate!

Dee has secured invitations to compete in Spain and Sweden next year. She has been invited to attend the national Swedish Modern Pentathlon training camp (invitation extended by their senior national coach). Whilst in Sweden, she was also lucky enough to be able to attend one of their fencing training sessions; this was an excellent, eye opening experience for her, as the standard of fencing in Europe is a lot higher than in Australia. This was a fantastic opportunity, of which she took full advantage.

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