

**8<sup>th</sup> S.K.I.F. WORLD CUP**  
**DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA**  
**26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2003**

**“PASSION – COMMITMENT – SUCCESS”**

The Australian Team was selected and announced at the S.K.I.A. National Championships in Sydney, October 2002.

Unfortunately, in the following three months we had 3 withdrawals with Tachelle Mandich being the first followed by Kara Moore (together with our Assistant Coach, Kim Pringle) and Jai Coker. Brandt Cogill replaced Jai and, Laura Walker and Katia Krilov filled the two female vacancies.

Despite the set backs it proved as always that in every negative there is a positive and, that was it gave other keen competitors the opportunity to fulfil their dreams to be a member of the Australian Team and compete in a World Championship.

We arranged a training camp in Brisbane on the weekend before Shotokan week commenced and unfortunately had another withdrawal in Angelo Falcone who suffered a knee injury some weeks before. It was too late to select a replacement so we were without a second reserve for the male team Kumite .

We commenced that weekend as individuals sharing not much more than a common goal and mutual respect for each other (some had never spoken to each other before). By the end of the weekend we had all formed a strong bond, deepened respect and a Team Spirit that all agreed and felt they had never experienced before. The “eye of the Tiger” was evident in every team member and this became our motto. The training camp proved a great success and something I strongly recommend be done before every future World Cup.

This set a great foundation which continued to grow up to the time we rejoined forces in Durban. On our first day the team met in the foyer of the Hilton and it was very encouraging to observe that their focus and intensity (the “Tiger”) was still beaming in their eyes. We walked to registration together with their family of supporters and following registration we held our first team meeting and motivational talk. This included each supporter that was present and I emphasised the importance of their involvement too. So, our team was extended – strengthened! Each one of the supporters volunteered their services to arrange training venues, shopping for the team during the week and, food and drinks on competition days to name a few.

Unfortunately, we learned of the loss of the South African Team Captain who was killed in a car crash when making his way to Durban for the World Cup.

On the second day we had our first training session at the Institute of Technology after enduring a “hairy” taxi ride and some (deliberate) interruptions from some South African Team Members. This did not deter the Australian’s focus or spirit and there was no evidence of anyone suffering jet lag. As I observed the team going through their preparations with confidence and controlled emotions (spirit) it became increasingly more obvious to me of our medal chances.

Wednesday (3<sup>rd</sup> day) was a public holiday in Durban and the team was given the day off but in true Aussie spirit the team met for some visualisation techniques headed by Gery Karantzias and ended the day with a team dinner.

Thursday after breakfast we met for team photos on the pool deck of our hotel then moved on to training at Virgin Gymnasium which was arranged by Luisa Megale. On arrival at the gym we were greeted by a very embarrassed manager who said she had received instruction not to allow us to train there (or any other team). After some persistent “sweet talking” the manager submitted and agreed to honour her original invitation. The team fine tuned techniques in the top class facilities and in our motivational talk we included the experience encountered by quoting, “man is the maker of his own destiny” - if one wants achieve something, it is up him/her to make it happen. We then walked back to the hotel but not before visiting the competition venue for familiarisation. After lunch and some “R & R” by the pool we met again for another visualisation session with Gery. The stage was set and everyone had done everything possible to prepare themselves for the main event.

Day one, Amanda Coon stepped onto the competition mat with the composure and confidence of an experienced International competitor. Amanda reached the finals and performed a beautiful Kanku-sho and became Australia’s first Junior World Champion! Needless to say the Australian’s were overwhelmed and “Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi” echoed through the arena. The bush telegraph was so efficient that Amanda received a call from her Instructor, Malcolm Kadow before she had even warmed down. Amanda’s Dad, Randall came a close second and the competition standard had been set.

Joshua Rabinovitz then blew away his opposition in the eliminations and also performed Kanku-sho in the final. He was beaten on a count back to secure Silver and once again the Aussie war cry echoed through the arena.

The two Juniors had now instilled confidence in the seniors that the seniors had previously instilled in them leading up to World Cup. The rest of the team was eager to compete but due to some organising problems we experienced lengthy delays between events.

On the second day the “Masters” (Veterans) events, Female Kata & Kumite as well as Male Kata took place.

Zivko Delevski, Mike Kubicek, Dennis Livotto all performed brilliantly but in the case of Zivko & Mike (who both performed Gankaku-sho) their performances were clouded with some controversy in a lack of understanding and/or differences in opinion of the techniques by the judges. I lodged a protest but it was over ruled and the lesson learned was Gankaku-sho (and Seienchin, Seipai and now Niju-Hachi-Ho all of which no one performed) should not be performed at future Internationals until they become more "Internationally" practised.

Georgette's performance was a "world" class above the rest winning by a full point to earn her second world title and our second Gold.

Mike Kubicek fought with his usual bold spirit putting his opponent on the back foot on several occasions but unfortunately was beaten in the end.

Samantha Short, Ingrid Yuile & Katia Krilov all stamped their presence in the world arena with solid Kata performances. Katia's elimination Kata was very clinical and of much higher standard than her opposition but she stepped out with the wrong foot into Yoi at the end and the judges penalised her heavily which resulted in her being eliminated. Another protest was lodged as her opponent made an error which was missed by all judges but without the opportunity to review the video immediately it was overruled. Ingrid performed with good timing, complete technique and contrast between fast and slow but the judges preferred her opponent's shorter/clipped techniques and she too was eliminated. Samantha demonstrated her potential in Kata by making the finals which has made her realise that she can be a dual champion in the future both Nationally and Internationally.

Samantha, Katia and Laura Walker then went on to fight brilliantly in Kumite but were all eliminated on split decisions. One of the most pleasing performance was Laura who's hard work after late selection on the Team paid off when she stunned her opponent with a sharp Kizami x Gyaku tsuki combination. The bout went down to the wire but as stated above a split decision which should at least have been ruled "ai uchi" went in favour of her opponent.

Joshua then tried his best in Kumite to make amends for just missing out on Gold in Kata and despite applying constant pressure he lost with some quick counter punching from his opponent.

Steven Meek, Gery Karantzas & Brandt Cogil created history being the first time 3 Australians have all met in the Kata final 16. It was a great opportunity and reward for Brandt in his first World Cup and he saved his best Kanku-sho for this performance but the judges were harsh in their scoring. Gery put on a very professional and polished Unsu and narrowly missed the final 8. Steven peaked at the right time and leading into the final he was well focused and up with the top 4 which included Suzuki and Tanaka. After a count back there was a draw for 8<sup>th</sup> place so, Steven had to perform another Kata (Gojushiho-dai) and his opponent

chose Enpi and, to our amazement grasped 8<sup>th</sup> place from Steven. I sympathised with the judges who had to sit through 16 Kata (many of whom chose Gojushiho-dai) and it was obvious they had trouble remembering/scoring the first Kata from the last. But, I sympathised more so with the better competitors (including Steven) who should have made it into the final 8 and missed out because scoring was inconsistent and erratic. I recall my first World Cup in Japan when I made the final 16 in Kata but the “wiser” officials at that tournament ran two courts which made scoring for the judges much easier. I did not make the final 8 but knew I had been given a fair go and the best 8 in the World then deservedly battled for 1<sup>st</sup> place.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final day Darren Brailey, Kevin Brady, Pablo Moderana and Brandt Cogil all of whom had gone through several false starts for Kumite finally had the opportunity to perform.

Kevin was exceptionally sharp and controlled the fight showing his experience. Unfortunately, he released a chudan mawashi-geri which caught his opponent's elbow and he could not continue with a suspected (later confirmed) fractured tibia. Kevin refused to go to hospital and he endured the pain to remain and support his team mates – a great demonstration of courage and team spirit. But, this was not all Kevin was prepared to do – read on....\*

Pablo displayed his good footwork & evasive skills together with with arms & legs attacking combinations. This was Pablo's first World Cup as too was Brandt who also fought with spirit & commitment. Both left the mat winners although losing to their opponents on points and am sure both will be back again with more experience under the belt.

Darren demonstrated his prowess by picking off his opponents with precision and progressed through to the semi-finals with only a couple of points scored on him. It was noticeable that when Darren was fighting other competitors in his division & coaches (especially the Italians) watched him closely. When Darren beat one of Italy's top competitor's and then faced the second Italian in the semi-final the whole Italian Team and their supporters converged around the court. It was a close fight with the Italian winning by one wazari and Darren received a well deserved Bronze.

Darren set aside his disappointment to focus on the team event but the officials decided to take the top 4 from each division into the Grand Champion event. With little time to warm up he came up against the eventual winner.

In between the above events our Female team fought their way to Bronze losing narrowly to England who came second to Japan. Our Mens Team then came up against the Italians but not before some drama in the warm up. Brandt injured himself twice and he was in doubt of being able to compete. \*In true Warrior spirit Kevin walked up to me and said, “I will fight”. It was obvious he was suppressing

the pain but amazingly standing on the injured leg and then bounced around to prove its stability and his commitment to the Team!

It is hard to find the right words to describe not only Kevin's willingness to put his body "on the line" but, also the whole team. In all my years of competing I can only recall one World Cup Team that I was fortunate to be a part of that matched this level of passion, commitment and Team spirit.

**Passion – Commitment – Team Spirit** was one of my goals for this Team. The other was to ensure each member realised their true potential and rating in the World arena. I am proud to say that both were achieved and I encourage anyone who reads this to take the time to speak with any or all of the team and hopefully their words will inspire you to strive for a spot on the next Team.

In closing I can honestly say that Australia's standard is one of the best in the world. We have earned respect through our past competitors and now the current team members have done S.K.I.A. proud. I would also like to congratulate Sensei Zivko for his professionalism as a judge & referee – but, we need more officials in this capacity in the future to "balance the scales" and give Australia more presence. Well done to our Team Manager, Rob Mansberg (& his manager, Gill) for fighting their way through the administrative nightmares.

I take this opportunity to thank each Team Member for their support and that includes every supporter who made this a memorable journey. Let's do it again!!!

**Ossu!**  
**Doug Rouessart**  
**Australia Coach, 2003**