

BEN HOPING TO TAKE THE SHORT COURSE TO LONDON

Nineteen-year-old Ben Edmonds is proud of the relay medal he picked up in the in the PanPacs game in Hawaii last year. “We came in behind the Yanks but the medal weighed about three kilograms,” he laughs. Good stuff, but it appears, only the beginning.



Chatting two days after his astonishing victory at the Australian Short Course Championships in Adelaide, his positioning had turned to gold, the Saturday night 200 metres backstroke belonging to the now Olympic prospect from Pasadena, South Australia.

A long way off, Ben knows, but it’s a start. His new medal, hidden away in a sports bag until enquired about, evident of the mix of modesty, belief and pride requisite in all athletes hoping to make the pane to London next year.

In common with all top athletes it hasn’t come easily, though the transition from schoolboy to potential Olympian has been relatively seamless, with significant moments and moves ticked off at all the right times to-date.

The move to Norwood swimming club, in 2008, was one.

“Me and my mum went for an interview with coach Peter Bishop and I got accepted into the squad,” he relates, before 10 seconds were dropped from his 200 metre time in just one year.

“I didn’t expect to improve that much that fast. You can feel a humungous difference.”

And the next big marker?

“When I made my first Open final in Sydney in 2009.” He came eighth but it was enough for him to realise his star was on the rise.

The 2010 Youth Olympics in Sydney were pretty big for Ben too. “Seeing people from Canada and other places gave it a different perspective, great atmosphere. All the Australian team stayed in the same place and we were all cheerleaders for each other,” he says.

Onto the short course on 1-3 July this year and the new SA Aquatic Centre in Marion, just 10 minutes drive away and a home advantage he made the most of.

Friday was fine, seventh place in the 50 metres backstroke and a personal best . Job done.

Saturday though was better. Fourth fastest in the morning qualifiers, Ben headed home for a break. A bit of Astroboy on TV and ‘Call of duty’ on the PS3, not classic relaxers maybe, but perfect to a tee.



Arriving back 90 minutes before the race, “my parents had already left home to get some good seats,” the routine was as ever. A 400 metre swim “to loosen the muscles”, then eight 50 metre reps and a total of about one kilometre in the water.

“I try to get thinking of race plan my mind. It helps focus, I just keep to one thought,” he says.

It worked.

Last at the first turn, “lane five was ahead at 125 metres and I really started mowing him down. My race plan was good, I’m more of a back ender. I couldn’t go too hard in the first 100.

“Peter Bishop really worked on my underwater work, a key component of short course swimming and it has certainly improved since last season.

“When I touched I didn’t know I had come first but the best moment of my career to-date. A personal best was my main goal for the race and I thought I’d done that. I honestly had no idea what was coming.”

“The crowd were really up for everyone from SA. We all got a massive cheer”.

And the Olympic trials?

“It brings money into SA and into swimming. I’m looking forward to it. It’s going to be huge and it’s going to be hard to make finals.”

