



AUSTRALIAN DIVING HISTORY

Australia, per capita, is perhaps the most successful diving country in the world! With a population of only 18 million, our international ranking has never been lower than 10th in the world and has been as high as 2nd following the 1999 FINA World Cup. The 1980's and 90's are Australian Diving's most successful decades - excluding the single Olympic Gold medal won by Dick Eve in the 1924 Paris Olympic Games.

The following is a snapshot of Australian Diving history noting major milestones in relation to divers, coaches and points of interest.

Above all the Australian diving is a community of people who have a passion for everything the sport of diving offers.

FIRST AUSTRALIAN DIVING COACH: Most believe it was Alex Gauter, who began instructing young divers in 1915. One of the first officially appointed to an Australian team was Allan Mott, who coached our Commonwealth Games divers for Auckland, 1950.

Among the first to set up as full time professional diving coaches were Jack Barnett in Sydney and Tom Donnet in Melbourne. Jack is still the Duraflex diving board agent for Australia. His son Steven is Godson of Ron O'Brien, coach of Greg Louganis. Jack introduced the first versions of dry land harness training to Australia in the 1960's.

FIRST WORLD DIVING RECORD IN AUSTRALIA: In 1918, Solomon Islander, Alex Wickham dived for a fee of \$200 from a 100 ft tower at Deep Rock on the Yarra River, Melbourne. When he arrived he found that a tower 100 ft high had been erected on a cliff of the same height. Worried more about hitting the bar bank of the river than about the height, Wickham plunged into the river before a crowd newspapers estimated at 60,000. The impact of hitting the water ripped the three costumes he wore from his body and he had to signal for a blanket before he climbed out. For days he was in a semi-coma and cried with pain if anyone touched his body. Claims that the height from which Wickham dived was 205 ft 9 ins, has never been substantiated. The Guinness Book of Records says the height was 96 ft 5 ins.

FIRST AUSTRALIAN COMPETITIVE DIVING: Although the sport had been practiced many years earlier by small, dedicated groups, the first Australian Championships were not held until 1921.

Swimming competitions developed earlier than diving. One of the earliest divers was Lil Beaurepaire, sister of Frank. In 1923 the first Victorian Diving Championships for women was held.

Greta Mott won the Victorian Diving Titles in 1925, 26, 28, 29, 30 and 32. In 1927 she was second to Irene Quinlan and in 1931 was unable to compete owing to a back injury.

It should be pointed out that Irene Donnet (Jenny Donnet's aunt) began competing at the age of seven in 1925, at which her 4 year old brother Tom (Jenny's father) gave an exhibition of swimming.

The early women competitors were encouraged and helped by the men. Enthusiastic voluntary officials worked hard, as many unsung heroes still do, to organise and control competition. In those days diving was part of all swimming programmes, and not held separately, as now. Divers regarded themselves as swimmers and took part in everything from sprints to 3-mile races as well as diving.

In those days, Australia had very few facilities for diving anywhere, while the sea coast provided baths. There was no mixed bathing and men wore full one-piece neck to knee swimming togs. Women's garments were of balloon type long knickers with a loose frilled knee length top, up to World War I times. Only in the twenties did mixed bathing come to be accepted and more realistic costumes worn.

Around Port Phillip Bay a number of Sea Baths were open daily for men, with certain hours during the week set aside for women only. In the open sea there were fixed platforms provided by various councils, and on these, as well as in the Baths, there were mounted fixed plank boards about 4" thick, sometimes covered with coir matting, provided for "Diving". They varied in height and were subject to further variations by the tides. Then council indoor pools were built such as Richmond, City Baths etc. where similar boards were provided.

Surrey Dive at Box Hill was a unique swimming venue with cliffs for spectacular high diving displays at carnivals.

Jetty diving had become the natural birth place of diving in South Australia.

At Paris in 1924 Australia had tremendous success in swimming and diving to date when Andrew (Boy) Charlton won the 1500m and was third in the 400m. The men's team of Frank Beaurepaire, Andrew Charlton, M Christie and E Henry were second, and R C (Dick) Eve won the tower diving.

AUSTRALIA'S GREATEST DIVING SUCCESS - Dick Eve at the 1924 Paris Olympic Games.

Eve, who had learned to dive "playing around" with other kids at Manly Baths and at the Spit Baths, Sydney tidal pools, won the gold medal for plain diving by an unprecedented margin of three full points, our first and only Olympic diving medal.

Eve went through a tiring day of preliminary diving in which he executed 12 dives from varying heights for judges assessing divers from 20 countries. In the final he beat famous American diver Peter Desjardins, thanks largely to one swallow dive in which Eve secured the maximum of 10 points.

DICK EVE DISQUALIFIED: Such were the standards of the roaring twenties that when Dick Eve accepted the job of manager of the Manly Baths in 1926 he was disqualified from all amateur events. This decision sits oddly against the background of current Olympic champions. Dick Eve could hardly be blamed for saying in 1969 at the age of 68 that he had no interest in present day divers and had not been near a pool for 20 years.

In February 1925, Noel Monks dived from the top rung of Hobart Fire Brigade's 98 ft scaling ladder into the Tamar River, a feat later repeated by Owen Trappes, Len McCarthy, Harry Morris, Cecil Healy, Alex Wickham (Prince Sukiami) and others dived from the 60 ft tower in Sydney's Domain Baths. The height of the Domain tower was later reduced because of foolish, dangerous feats by divers who did back somersaults from it in the dark.

ADVENT OF DIVING TROUPES: T H (Harry) Morris formed Australia's first diving troupe in Victoria in 1926. In 1928 when American Pete Desjardins won both the springboard and high board events at the Amsterdam Olympics, diving emerged as a popular spectator sport. Diving spectaculars were presented from a 45 ft tower at Prince's Bridge, Melbourne, firstly by the Royal Lifesaving Society and later as part of the Herald's Learn-to-Swim campaign. Up to 25,000 spectators watched lunch hour displays. In 1933 the male divers for the display were TH Morris, A Mott, E Horsnaail, L Warner, L Robertson, D Studeman, V Leveson, L Coombes, T Donnet.

Female divers were L Thompson, E Hurd, I Donnet, V Stranger.

In the 1930's and 1940's the New South Wales Diving Troupe, featuring men like Clive Barrass, Harry Tickle, Jack McCann and Arthur O'Connor gave many thrilling displays.

In South Australia in 1948, the Amateur Diving Troupe consisted of Tom Herraman, John Archer, Ern Beatty, Val Barnes, Dave Burchell, Don Mitchel, Bill Forrest and Don Brown. The Troupe dived into the River Torrens off the City Bridge. The Troupe's most famous stunt was the firing of Ern Beatty out of a cannon off the Glenelg Jetty.

In 1928 the Australasian Games were held in Australia and this brought all the States together as well as New Zealand competitors. These became the Australian Games in 1932 and 1936, but were discontinued during the war and never revived.

About 1928/29 the Brunswick and Richmond Baths were rebuilt to Olympic standards and for the first time divers were properly catered for. Soon tapered and fibreglass boards with fulcrums, set at metric heights, were provided. Laminated boards were provided in 1949.

In 1930 the first ever Diving Championships of Australia for women was held in Hobart in the Derwent River open air baths and the result was Greta Mott, first. Great public interest was displayed in this new event for women and there was much discussion as to whether men or women were the better divers. A mixed handicapped competition was held with four men and two women competing from springboards and tower. The results were: Greta Mott (scratch) first; Harry Gates (4 points) second; Edna Hurd (2 points) third. There has been no mixed competitions held since.

Before 1930 women ran their own swimming and diving titles. Some women officials opposed the merger with men for the Australian Championships and refused to hand over records prior to 1930 when the merger went through with the unfortunate outcome that some of our pioneer divers and swimmers have never been given credit they deserve.

The first time Australia sent a woman competitor to compete in diving overseas was when Lesley Thompson was sent to the Empire (now Commonwealth) Games in Britain in 1934. Australian women champions have been sent to compete in all Games since then.

Whereas divers in the twenties and thirties depended upon gymnastic training to aid their diving skills, modern divers began to gain great benefit from trampolines and harnesses.

CHAMPIONSHIPS IN DISPUTE: In 1932 an Australian Games was held at Melbourne in which athletics, swimming and diving events were combined. Athletics officials have always acknowledged winners of events at these games as Australian champions for that year but swimming officials - perhaps because of their difficulties with the women administrators who opposed the men and women merger - have not given swimmers and divers who won titles at the Australian Games the honour of being national champions. Understandably, divers and swimmers who won at the Australian Games are upset that they are not given titles in the official Australian Swimming Union Handbook.

VISITS FROM INTERNATIONAL STARS: In the 1930's visits from France's Emil Poussard and America's Frank Kurtz stimulated public interest in the sport. Apart from the talented NSW Diving Troupe, Queenslander George Johnston, Victorian Ron Masters and the women Lesley Thompson (nee Thickness), Laurie Hawe and Irene Donnet emerged as future stars. Equipment was primitive and most divers competed in tidal pools, qualified coaches being almost non-existent. Australian visits by Olympic champion Bob Clotworthy after the 1956 Olympics, and in 1964 by Hobie Billingsley, coach to the US Tokyo Olympic champions, also improved our standards.

FIRST AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH GAMES WINNERS: Australian R Masters (men's tower), L Hook (women's tower), and I Donnet (women's springboard) won gold medals at the 1938 Commonwealth Games in Sydney. B McAulay (women's tower, 1954), Susan Knight (women's tower and springboard, 1962) and Don Wagstaff (men's high board and 3 metre springboard, 1970).

THE DONNET'S: 1936 saw the start of a 50 year era where the Donnet family has had an ongoing involvement in Australian diving, Irene Donnet winning the 1936 Empire Games. The Donnet history is set out below.

- Grandfather Tom Coached many swimming and diving champions including John Marshall, Tom and Irene Donnet
- Aunt Irene 1936 Empire Games Champion
- Father Tom Coached Olympians in 1956, 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976
- Mother Barbara 1954 Commonwealth and Empire Games Champion and silver medallist.
1956 Olympian
Coached Olympians 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992
- Sister Beverly 1974 Commonwealth Games diver
- Sister Barbi 1979 Australian representative

The most famous Donnet - Jenny - became Australia's first woman to compete in four Olympic Games, 1980,84,88 and 92 when she being chosen as the Australian team flag bearer in in Barcelona. Jenny was also in three Commonwealth Games and a multiple national champion.

1950-1970: The 50's, 60's and 70's saw many names enter the diving scene most of whom followed the progression of athlete to coach and coach to administrator. People, such as Frank Murphy, Robyn Bradshaw, Bill Richards, Madeleine Barnett, Bruce Prance, Ian Nichols, Elizabeth Jacks, Jack Barnett, Dot Gamble, Ivy Datseres, Daryl Hocking, Peter Panayi, Jim Foley, Sue Knight, Don Wagstaff, Jack Sanders, Barry Holmes, Ron Faulds, Arthur Winter, Joe McCann, Graham Deuble, Glenise Jones, Adele Price, Ros Barton, Clive Morton, Kevin Jack, Anniella Plowman.

A diver who stands out in the period was Ken Grove. Ken was regarded by many as years ahead of his time as a diver. Ken, a known rebel, who often didn't see eye to eye with sports bureaucracy is one of only two known Australian Olympians to compete for Australia in any sport at the Olympics and then go on to compete for another country at the Olympics. Ken represented Australia in the Munich Olympics and went on to represent Austria (after marrying an Austrian girl) at the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

DON WAGSTAFF: Don was a vital stepping stone between the early 60's and late 70's in Australian diving. His overall ability as a springboard and platform diver as well as matching the DD of leading international divers was rewarded with outstanding results including domination of men's diving throughout his career (eventually to be succeeded by Stephen Foley).

In the Commonwealth Games he won the double winning gold in both events in 1970 and 1974. He also went to three Olympic Games 1968/72/76 reaching finals in Mexico in 1968 (8th).

Don certainly opened the door for the late 70's and early 80's divers to step through - as they eventually did.

STEVE FOLEY: 1976 was the first Olympics for Stephen Foley, arguably Australia's greatest male diver when measured by his national and international results in his era. Steve was a natural athlete who would have excelled at any one of five sports. Steve represented Australia in three Olympic Games, 1976, 80 and 84, as an athlete and went on to coach in the Olympics and win numerous national titles.

ADA FORMED: 1977 was possibly the most significant year for the sport of diving. In 1977 the Australian Diving Association was formed (ADA). Diving separated from the Australian Amateur Swimming Union in August 1977. This enabled diving to no longer be the second poor cousin to swimming and set its own direction. Until 1984, it was a requirement for Australian divers to dive both platform and springboard at the Olympics.

VALERIE BEDDOE (McFARLANE)

ADA ran its first national championships in February 1978 in Brisbane which also saw the beginning of perhaps the most successful diving career since Dick Eve in 1924. Valerie McFarlane (Beddoe) launched her career by winning all three open boards when she was still a junior. Later that year she won a silver medal at her first Commonwealth Games in Edmonton (1978) and also went top 8 in both events at the World Championships of that year in Berlin.

Valerie went on to be Australia's only gold medallist (male or female) at world elite level since Dick Eve, winning the 1979 FINA World Cup on the three metre springboard. She won a second World Cup medal in 1981, a combined boards World Championships gold medal, Commonwealth Games gold medal (1982) and over 50 national junior and open titles. She was coached by Ian Nicholls whose uncle was the legendary Percy Cerutti, coach of Herb Elliot - Olympic 1500m gold medallist).

Beddoe contributed significantly to put Australia on the international diving map. Today, (1999), she is Australia's High Performance Manager (elite programmes) and has coached at World Championships and Commonwealth Games.

Politics: In 1980 the ADA supported the AOC by attending the Moscow Olympics despite Australian pressure to withdraw. Likewise in 1982 there was pressure from the Australian Sports Commission not to attend the World Championships in Ecuador because they felt it may affect performances at the 1982 Commonwealth Games.

ADA went to both and was successful at both.

AWESOME FOURSOME: The era from 1982 - 1984 was arguably Australia's most successful, culminating in the only Olympics where Australian divers finalled in all events. The common denominator was a crop of aggressive competitors Valerie Beddoe, Stephen Foley, Julie Kent and Jenny Donnet.

These four divers stamped Australia as an international diving force. Between them are 11 Olympic Games as divers, 11 Commonwealth Games, 8 World Championships and almost 200 junior and open national titles. Their results have perhaps only been matched internationally since by the 1990's Michael Murphy and Chantelle Michell.

Julie Kent, Australia's first World Junior Champion followed in the footsteps of Elizabeth Jacks being herself overseas (Canada) to access coaching expertise which seemed to be lacking in Australia in the numbers necessary to cope with the demands of international diving.

Elizabeth Jacks subsequently coached Canadian Olympic gold medallist Sylvia Bernier and in 1998 was appointed the Deputy Competition Manager of Diving for the Sydney Organising Committee of the Olympic Games. Divers like Carol Boots, Raelene Lyon, Andrew Jackamos, Shaun Panayi, Nathan Meade, Jane Bognar and John Pendall all contributed to this era.

AIS DIVING PROGRAMME COMMENCED: The international results of Australia's 82-84 foursome and aggressive lobbying for more facilities and coaching support by the then Executive Director of ADA, Jack Sanders, saw the then sports minister, John Brown announce the inclusion of diving in the Australian Institute of Sport in 1984.

The first head coach of the AIS was Bruce Prance who was able to lay the foundation for today's world known AIS diving unit. Stephen Foley became the AIS first assistant coach and Valerie Beddoe the first scholarship coach. The programme is based in Brisbane at the 1982 Commonwealth Games Chandler pool.

NATHAN MEADE: October 1987 saw ADA's most tragic event - the death of Nathan Meade - killed in a 10m training accident only a few years after a Russian diver was killed in similar circumstances. The only international Grand Prix meet held annually in Australia is now know as the Nathan Meade Memorial (Southern Cross) International.

CHINESE INFLUENCE: Divers were now pushing the limits. Higher degree of difficulty was required to win at the international level. The Chinese had by now become the world's No 1 diving force - surpassing the previously dominant USA. This was largely due to the advent of dry land diving training, huge talent identification programmes and relentless training.

The Chinese training techniques and associated equipment have revolutionised the sport world wide and soon Australia was to follow.

Chinese coaches were in demand throughout the world and Australia was no different. In 1989 Wang Tong Xiang, a national coach of China, arrived in Australia and became a coach at the AIS in 1990. Wang today, (1999), is the AIS senior coach.

The 1990's

The 1990's saw a new breed of Australian divers. Medals at world junior championships were more frequent. Increased funding meant more access to international competitions which led to more finals, more top 12 performances, and top 3 placings.

These athletes included Olympians Rachel Wilkes, April Adams, Simon McCormack (still rated as perhaps the greatest ever twister), Graham Banks, Russell Butler, Craig Rogerson, Vanessa Baker, Jodie Rogers and Kelly Stevenson.

The early 90's saw the retirement of Jack Sanders after 23 years as ADA Executive Director and Australia's first appointee to the FINA Technical Committee. 1994 saw the appointment of Australian diving's first female Executive director - Mary Godden.

STATE INSTITUTES: The 1990's also saw the growth of Australia's State based sports institutes. Australia's first was the South Australian Sports Institute (SASI) which also formed the first state institute diving programme. This was closely followed by the Western Australian Institute of Sport (WAIS), the New South Institute of Sport (NSWIS) and Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS).

COACHING: In the late 90's, SASI adopted the AIS strategy and sourced a second Chinese coach, Chen Wen, from Beijing, who moved to Adelaide and was subsequently recruited to the AIS.

The international coaching influx continued with Mexican national coach Chava Sobrino moving to the AIS and subsequently relocating to Sydney to take up the position of head coach at the NSW Institute of Sport. In 1999, Mike Martens was recruited from Texas Aquatics, Austin, Texas, USA to take the position of SASI head coach in Adelaide.

MICHAEL MURPHY: The 1990's also saw the emergence of perhaps Australia's greatest chance at winning an Olympic medal since Dick Eve. Michael Murphy "The Cat" placed fourth on the 3 metre springboard at the Barcelona Olympics. This was the best result by an Australian at the Olympics since Dick Eve, one place higher than Valerie Beddoe's fifth in Los Angeles. Michael was the total package and often referred to as the next Louganis. He maintained top eight placings until Atlanta 96 where he also finalled but not as highly placed as in 1992.

Plagued with back problems, Michael retired after long attempts at rehab and several come back attempts, prior to really ever reaching his full potential.

CHANTELLE MICHELL: The 1990's also saw Chantelle Michell, an awesome competitor, win Australia's first ever individual event World Championship medal in Perth in 1998. From 1997 to 99 Chantelle has consistently been in the top 5 on both springboards and is perhaps Australia's best chance of an individual medal at 2000. Chantelle and Beddoe are the only two Australian divers to win all six gold medals at a national championships (junior and open).

VYNINKA ARLOW

Another 1990's champion, also plagued by injury in the twilight of her career, Vyninka Arlow won Australia's third ever World Cup medal and continues to perform on tower winning gold in the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games and is another medal hope for Australian in 2000.

REBECCA GILMORE: The 1999 World Cup in New Zealand saw Rebecca Gilmore win Australia's fourth World Cup medal by winning bronze in the 10 metre platform.

Until the 1990's, the majority of Australian divers aimed to make international finals - now they aim to win medals.

SYNCHRONISED DIVING: The introduction of synchronised diving (2 divers diving together at once) has given Australia immediate success with our first international synchronised medal going to Shannon Roy and Dean Pullar at the 1998 World Championship. Australians also featured strongly in synchro at the 1999 FINA World Cup where Tony Lawson teamed with Mathew Helm and Rebecca Gilmore with Philippa Tosh to win silver in their respective 10 metre platform events.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: Degree of difficulty continues to rise on the world diving scene and Australia, in the 1990's has been able to match the world in this regard. In the men, Robert Newbery has the highest DD ever of any Australian diver and equal to any in the world on all three boards. His repertoire includes a forward 4½ somersault on 10 metre. In the women's, Lynda Folauihola, was the first Australian female to perform the inward 3½ and back 3½ somersault.

2000 OLYMPICS: The 2000 Olympics in Australia has been the focus of all Australian sport and government funding beyond 2000 will be dependent on 2000 Olympic results.

A key to ADA's success in 2000 is the creation of the current National Selection Policy that has shifted its focus from national results to international results.

SPORTS SCIENCE AND MEDICINE: Another key element has been ADA's embracing of sports science and medicine along with injury prevention and rehabilitation strategies necessary to deal with the increased training demands placed on Australian divers trying to be competitive on the world stage.

The long term future of ADA is dependent on coach development and education, effective talent identification programmes and sustainable funding streams.

2000 SHADOW OLYMPIC SQUAD: The hopes of ADA's 2000 rests on the current 2000 Olympics shadow Olympic Squad: Vyninka Arlow (WA), Chantelle Michell (Vic), Lynda Folauhola, Rebecca Cooney (SA), Loudy Tourky, Rebecca Gilmore, Philippa Tosh, Krystle Delaforce (NSW), Dean Pullar (Vic), Shannon Roy, Scott Weeks, Robert Newbery (SA), Mathew Helm, Steven Barnett (NSW) and Tony Lawson (Qld).

Arlow, Michell, Pullar, Newbery, Helm, Barnett and Lawson all train at the Australian Institute of Sport in Brisbane, Folauhola, Cooney and Weeks train at the South Australian Sports Institute and Gilmore, Tourky, Delaforce and Tosh train at the New South Wales Institute of Sport. Shannon Roy currently trains at the University of Tennessee (USA) and has ongoing support from SASI.