

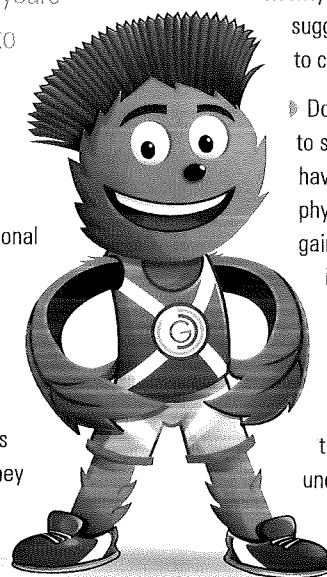
Preparing for the Commonwealth Games Glasgow 2014

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Perform at your best

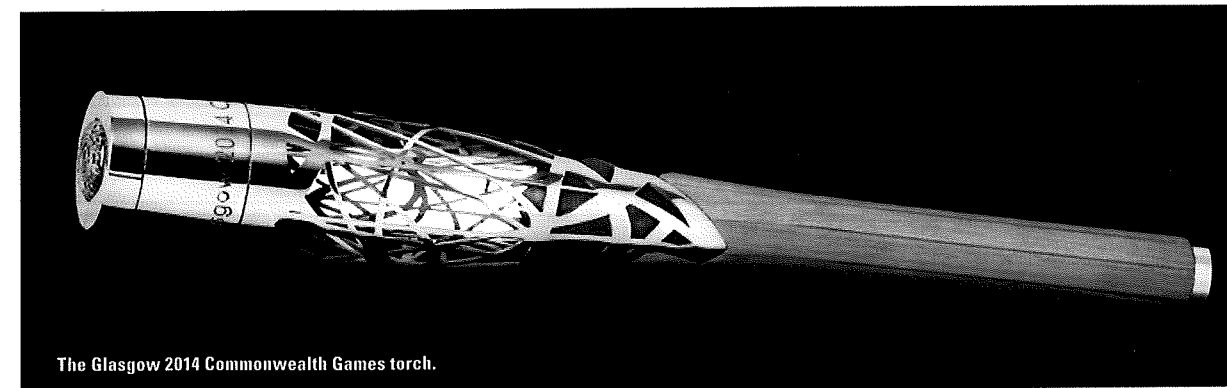
The Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2014 are less than eight months away and many athletes are in their final annual cycle of preparation towards this goal. Whilst in previous articles we discussed training in general and how to prepare in the lead up to such events, there are a number of other factors outside of the training environment that athletes must consider when travelling to competition. By the time most athletes make a Commonwealth Games team, they generally have a number of years of competition experience from which to draw on about how best to train and prepare for an event.

Typically athletes' struggle to achieve their best due to external factors associated with international competition rather than the issues in the sport or the manner in which they compete. For example, in the previous year, a shooter will have prepared for and competed in a number of national events and in team selection trials. This process alone provides valuable experiences that shooters can draw on to improve the way they train and prepare for a more prestigious event such as the Commonwealth Games.



Preparation for such an event will typically include a phase of training where the shooter develops his/her physical attributes to a level that will allow him/her to perform well. Then as the event approaches the focus of training will shift from a physical to a more technical approach. This means less focus on fitness and the amount of shooting practice and more emphasis on the technical aspects and fine tuning for the shooting competition. By the time the Games arrive, shooters will be in a state of preparedness, both physically and mentally, to perform at their best. However, small things can still impact on a shooter's performance, which he/she may not have considered in the time that he/she is preparing for the competition. Over the last twenty years of working with athletes, I would have these suggestions for shooters attending the Glasgow Games to consider.

- ▶ Don't reduce fitness training too early. It's very easy to sometimes lose sight of just how much time you have before the Games. Try not to slow down the physical training prematurely and lose what you have gained before the Games start. I have seen athletes in technical sports such as shooting, focus more on the shooting and less on maintaining good physical shape and then arrive at the competition wishing that they had focussed on maintaining better fitness. The pressure of competition and the physical demands on the shooter's body can't be underestimated and a higher level of fitness provides a better foundation to cope with the stress of a Commonwealth Games competition.



The Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games torch.

- ▶ Beware not to travel in less than ideal conditions. Make sure that when travelling you consider a few key issues. Firstly, consider the length of time you are in transit from the time you leave home until the time you arrive at the accommodation venue for pre-games training or camps. The longer you are in transit, the longer it will take for you to recover from travel fatigue. Try to avoid long stop-overs, flights that arrive at stop-over airports when food outlets are closed and departure times that disrupt your routine before you even leave the country.

A trip to Glasgow will typically include at least one stop-over and take at least twenty-four hours and at times as much as thirty-five hours travel time. An early evening flight will allow you to maintain a normal sleep routine, albeit less comfortable, and perhaps arrive at a stop-over airport early the following morning. Try and arrange flights to suit your normal routine as this will cause less disruption to your sleep cycle thus making it easier for you to sleep on the plane. Further, the body needs time to adjust when travelling to a country that is eleven hours behind. This time difference can take more than a week to adapt to and does require some effort to manage. Going to sleep at local times, even when not tired, is essential. Each day, try and get 20-30 minutes of sunshine without wearing sunglasses and this will help your brain to work out the difference and adjust to it accordingly.

Secondly, be sure to understand the limitations of being in transit with regards to hydration and nutrition. Some food available on planes may not suit your personal needs and in many cases free food and alcohol may tempt you to eat or drink more than you normally would. To deal with this issue, be sure to chat with your dietician before you leave and put in place a plan or submit a request for special meals before you depart.

Whilst Glasgow is not culturally that different from Australia, food choices will not be the same and this will require some adjustment on your part to select appropriate meals when at the Games. Generally, most teams will have access to a dietician and they will have been provided with some information about what is available in the athlete's village and at camps. Again, I suggest that before you leave, you chat to a dietician that

has experience with athletes' nutrition for some insight into how you may need to adapt to suit the new food choices and the new environment.

- ▶ Acclimatise yourself for the northern hemisphere. July in Glasgow averages between 11-19 degrees celcius each day with rain every other day. As this is not outside the normal Australian weather conditions and not that different to most of Australia at the same time of year, it shouldn't take a lot of conditioning to adjust especially if you fly into the country in advance to attend camps or pre-games competitions.
- ▶ Be prepared to take items with you that may be difficult to secure overseas. This may include any medication that you need (WADA approved of course), personal items, spare parts and other equipment and incidentals that make you feel more comfortable and less like you're away from home.

Travelling and competing can be an exciting time, and history has shown that teams and athletes can lose sight of the reasons why they are at the Games and so become overwhelmed with the occasion. Go on a fact finding mission before you leave and talk to athletes who have been to major competitions such as the Commonwealth Games and ask about their personal experiences. Find out what they felt, how they managed the trip, how they approached the competition and also ask and listen for little bits of advice that they might have. This type of feedback is worth its weight in gold and will help ground your thoughts on the big stage. 🌟

