



COMPETING FOR TEAM JERSEY IN THE DISCUS AND JAVELIN IS LAUREN THERIN, PICTURED HERE WITH ANDREW WINNIE, TEAM MANAGER. INSET IS HIGH JUMPER SIMON PHELAN.



Hitting the heights

Martyn White meets Andrew Winnie in the third of our profiles on Jersey's Commonwealth Games athletes. As athletics team manager he's hoping Lauren Therin (discus and javelin) and Simon Phelan (high jump) perform well in the pressure cauldron of Melbourne

How have the preparations been for Simon and Lauren?

It's been quite difficult for both of them actually, as they've come out of their winter season and they'd normally now go into their winter training until the spring. So, because of the Games, they haven't had a lot of winter training. Simon has started to compete in indoor competitions, but Lauren can't compete in the discus or the javelin, as there are no competitions in this country until April because it's too dangerous.

However, we are going to Australia a week before the rest of the team and have arranged to get a couple of competitions under our belt before the Games start.

How different has the training been because it's a major Games?

Normally, a peak time for the athletes will be July or August. This year they will have to peak in April and then at the end of the summer, so their training has been geared around that.

How closely do you work with the pair?

Lauren spends her time in the UK with her personal coach, although I supervise her while she's here. I do coach Simon, even though he also works with Colin Jackson's ex-coach, Malcolm Arnold. On the technical side I'm heavily involved and I travel to the UK to see Simon every six weeks.

What are your expectations of the Games?

As team manager and coach I'd like them to go out there and perform to the level and standard that is set, which is the qualifying standard. If they achieve that they'll both have personal bests and you can't ask for much more than that.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the athletes?

Physically, Lauren is very small for her sport, but she more than makes up for it in speed and technique. Simon hasn't competed at this level before, while Lauren went to the Commonwealth Youth Games last year and won two bronze medals. I imagine that, on the inside, Simon will be hoping and praying that he does well. As a high jumper, it's difficult as they only get three attempts at a height. If he fails he goes home straight away. He's under some pressure and he's got to see if he can withstand that pressure, which we'll work very hard on before he goes.

How do you see your role in Melbourne?

I'm there as someone who will try to make the Games as simple for the athletes as possible. I'll try to take away any anxieties and stress, especially concerning the bureaucracy of the Games, and there's a massive amount of bureaucracy. I'll try to relieve all that to allow them to perform. So I see me as being a shield for them so they can achieve their personal bests.

What do you know about Melbourne and the facilities?

I went to the Youth Games in Bendigo with Lauren and the facilities are simply fantastic. We also have some great contacts in Australia, a number of young athletes who have visited us in Jersey, so we'll be staying with their families before joining up with the main team in the Games Village.

What's your ultimate dream scenario for Lauren and Simon?

It would be fantastic for both athletes to make the top eight. I think top eight is a bit of a dream and perhaps top 12 is more realistic, but you never know.

And will you be holidaying after the Games?

No chance. I have to come back to take a team to a UK final (hopefully), and then in May I'm off to Sicily with an U18 team. So I won't get any time for a holiday!

