

# Junior on the rise

by Melanie Allan

An AUT podiatry student is the only junior representing New Zealand at the world mountain running championships in Turkey this month.

Aaron Jackson, 18, is part of the 10-strong New Zealand team that will run up Mt Olympus in pursuit of the World Mountain Running Association Trophy.

"I'm really looking forward to it. It will be my first overseas trip with the New Zealand team."

The September 10 race will be just the fourth major event for the national junior champion.

Jackson made his international debut at the world championships in Wellington last year and finished first of the New Zealand competitors with 19th place.

In May this year, he secured his title as New Zealand's number one junior mountain runner at the national championships in Blenheim.

His coach, Don MacFarquhar, says being selected for the New Zealand team is an "outstanding" achievement.

He says the New Zealand selectors only choose people who have proved they are capable of achieving at the top.

Jackson has been running cross country since he was 14, but it was his last coach, Eric Cross, who encouraged him to try something new.

"He got me into mountain running because he thought I was strong enough for it."

Jackson says mountain running is different to cross country because there is "more of a point to it".

"You're actually going somewhere, as opposed to cross country running when you're sort of running around in a circle."

Mountain running can be hard on the body though, he says.

"Mt Victoria was really steep, so I found that pretty hard. I don't really know how steep Mt Olympus is."

The Glen Eden athlete has been training with Angus Bell, the only other Auckland in the New Zealand team.

Also in the team are the five-times world champion Jonathan Wyatt and former champion Melissa Moon.

While mountain running is not yet a well-followed sport in New Zealand, it is much more popular in Europe, especially in countries like Switzerland and Austria.



PHOTO: CHRIS RASMUSSEN

AARON JACKSON: At the 2005 world champs in Wellington.

# Maori sides 'not racist'

by Brenton Vanisselroy

Maori representative teams have been called racist in the past. But those in charge say the teams are no more discriminatory than teams selected on age or gender.

New Zealand Maori Rugby Board chairman Paul Quinn believes the national Maori rugby side exists in much the same way as a women's side does or an age group side.

"I can't play for the under 19 team," he says.

Sports broadcaster and *Radio Sport* host Brendan Telfer also takes this stance.

He says the New Zealand University teams and New Zealand Marist teams are based on a very similar approach but they are never criticised by large sectors of the public.

Despite this, some sections of New Zealand society believe race-based teams such as New Zealand Maori rugby should not exist.

Telfer sums up the opinion of a group of his talkback callers.

"Some callers question what is the difference between the New Zealand Maori side and the South African side during apartheid," Telfer says.

New Zealand Maori Rugby League chairman Howie Tamati acknowledges that a proportion of the country's population don't support Maori rugby.

Tamati says those who don't believe the New Zealand Maori team is a good idea hold the view that we should all assimilate and that "we are one people".

But Tamati says New Zealand is a country of many peoples, which should all be celebrated uniquely.

Tamati says some New

Zealanders don't understand the importance that Maori place on achieving selection for New Zealand Maori.

Players who represent New Zealand Maori enhance their tribal identity and they are seen as people with mana and status by their iwi, hapu and whanau, Tamati says.

New Zealand Maori rugby coach Donny Stevenson believes Maori sports teams are important to showcase Maori culture and success.

"Sport is an avenue where they can succeed and get recognition for their success," Stevenson says. "There is a very powerful team dynamic based on the core principles of Maori culture, especially whanau values."

Tamati believes Maori sport is unique in New Zealand and agrees with Stevenson's perspective.

"The fact that Maori are able to celebrate their ethnicity, culture and prowess in itself allows the opportunity to be proud in whom they are," Tamati says.

Quinn believes the New Zealand Maori team is an important part of rugby in this country.

"It recognises that Maori contribute enormously to rugby in New Zealand and that they are the cornerstone of New Zealand rugby," Quinn says.

Despite only making up 15 per cent of the population, Maori make up 22 per cent of all rugby players and 34 per cent of professional players.

Tamati stresses that teams like New Zealand Maori should be celebrated rather than criticised.

He says they provide an opportunity to showcase different cultures.

"At the end of the day, it is only a game; we are not going to war or anything like that."

# Meet Auckland sport's napolis man

by Froilan Gomes

Peter Rasmussen thinks the Auckland NPC team, the Blues, the Warriors and the All Whites are a dirty bunch of players.

And he should know. As their laundry man he has to clean their dirty jerseys after every game.

Rasmussen has been in the laundry business for 20 years and owns Top Team Sports Laundry.

"I named my company 'top team sports' because I do the laundry for the top teams here in Auckland," he says.

Rasmussen says he takes care of all the laundry needs for any team that comes through the rugby union.

"I do the jerseys for the All Blacks, and all other international teams, plus the national and local teams and the clubs."

He says cleaning the players' jerseys is a tough job and he only does it well because of a secret recipe he made a few years ago.

"I compare it to the 'Colonel's secret recipe' that cleans the jerseys and makes the whites really

white and the colours really bright and crisp, because that is the way the team management want it."

Warriors football manager Don Mann agrees.

"The jerseys after a game have not just grass, sand and dirt on them, but even the paint that is put on the grass to show the various markings on the field. Plus, you have blood stains as well," he says.

"When we give it to the laundry we expect not just that the whites get really white and the colours are kept intact, but even that corporate logos have their original colours and the plastic numbers on the jerseys are in good shape, when we get them back.

"In the past five years that I've been working here, I've noticed that Peter does an excellent job and fulfils all these criteria and even exceeds our expectations at various times."

Luck and good connections have helped in Rasmussen's success in the Auckland region.

"I was lucky to have a friend

working at the Auckland Rugby Union and he recommended me. I've had the contract with Auckland since 1987.

"I got the Warriors contract because the club executives used to dryclean their suits at my laundry, and so when they began the club, I carried on doing the laundry for their players as well," he says.

"And then a couple of years later, the Warriors gear manager left and went to NZ Soccer and recommended me and now I have the contract to clean their jerseys as well.

"I thought I'd semi-retire, and concentrate on winter sports laundry, so I could have six months off in the summer to go fishing.

"But the rugby season goes for 11 months of the year. So I concentrate exclusively on sports laundry now."

Rasmussen plans to keep the business going until the 2011 Rugby World Cup in Auckland.

"Hopefully, I'll hang on till then as there will be many teams, many bags of dirty jerseys to

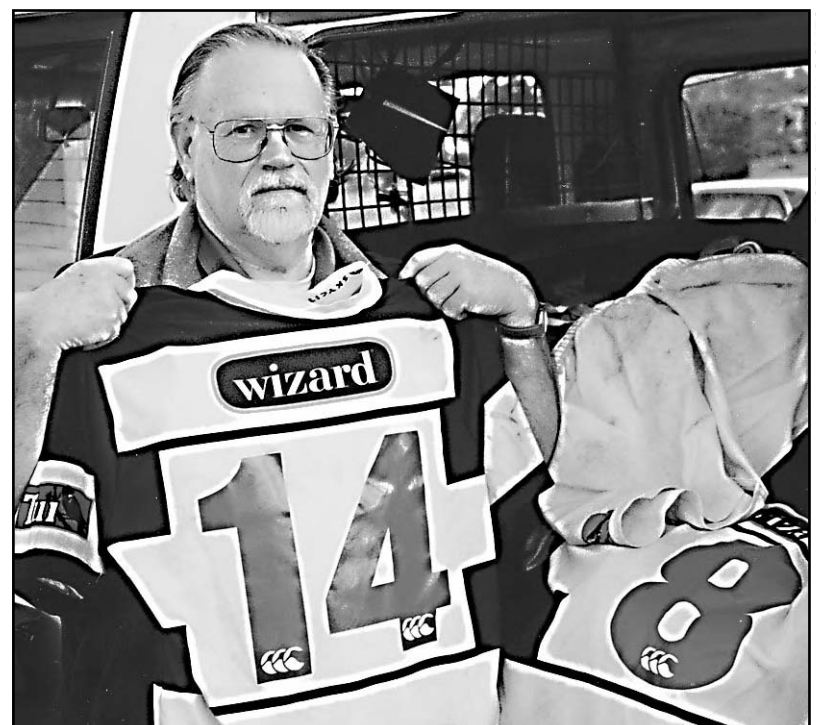


PHOTO: FROILAN GOMES

BRIGHTER THAN BRIGHT: Peter Rasmussen keeps the jerseys clean.

clean. So, it's going to be a really fantastic time."

When asked if he's ever found anything interesting in a rugby

player's dirty jersey, Rasmussen replies with a sly smile.

"Oh, only the opposition's blood."