



PHOTOS: JAN BIRKELAND

# Flipping out at the Winter Games

BIG AIR: Lee Rowlands achieves lift-off on the slopes of Cardrona.

Lee Rowlands, a student at AUT's Akoranga campus, won the overall national best male snowboarder title at the University Winter Games last week. This followed wins in boarder giant slalom and boardercross and second place in the big air.

Otago University won the overall title of best university, with AUT finishing fourth.

"I was stoked to take out the overall title, but just being here was the main thing for me," says Rowlands.

The games were held in Wanaka with more than 400 competitors from around the country competing in both snowboarding and skiing. The competitors contested events such as giant slalom, boarder cross, slope style and big air.

Steve Wright, manager of the AUT team, called the event a huge success.

"We are very happy with the games this year. We had a big turnout and took a dedicated team down with us from Auckland."

Team sizes ranged from 65 from Otago to just four competitors from Lincoln University.

"AUT had 16 competitors. There would probably have been more, had the games happened in our semester break as it did with most of the other universities," says Wright.

The games took place at Cardrona Mountain, lodged in the ranges between Wanaka and Queenstown.

"We are very happy with our placing and how our competitors did at the games. I can assure you we will go back next year to repeat the success."

The games were organised by University Sports New Zealand, as well as volunteers from the different universities.

Some competitors are likely to move on to the World University Winter Games, being held in Torino, Italy, next year.

— Jan Birkeland



PHOTO: NICHOLAS MOODY

WORLD CHAMP: Drysdale at Auckland Airport.

## Rower outfoxes his rivals on way to gold

by Nicholas Moody

One of New Zealand's newest world champions, rower Mahe Drysdale, was welcomed back by a loyal group of friends and supporters at Auckland International Airport on Tuesday morning.

Drysdale says he was confident he could win the single scull final after employing some game tactics in his close semi-final battle with Czech Ondrej Synek.

Synek had beaten him in the Lucerne World Cup regatta in July and Drysdale let his opponent win the semifinal.

"I thought, 'let him have it, he'll think he's better than he is'. I was pretty confident after that, I was like, 'I've got him'," Drysdale says.

Drysdale also beat Norway's Olympic champion, Olaf Tufte, by almost two seconds on his way to victory in the final. He said his win was unexpected by the international rowing community.

"Everyone at the race course said they hadn't expected it. They thought I could get a medal but they didn't think I could win it."

Drysdale only has a few days in New Zealand before he returns to Britain on Saturday. In October he will head to Boston for the Head of the Charles rowing race where the organisers are paying his expenses.

He says he's enjoying being a world champion. "I haven't bought many drinks since I won. In fact I've come back with the same amount of yen that I started with!"

## Bartercard Cup changes meet mixed response

by Marvin France

Canterbury Bulls coach Phillip Prescott is concerned about Auckland's possible domination following changes to rugby league's national competition next year.

The competition currently consists of 12 teams but the New Zealand Rugby League wants that reduced and is cutting the number of Auckland teams from eight to five.

"Five teams out of Auckland will make the competition a lot stronger," says Prescott.

"The rest of the country will have to get their act together if they want to compete."

Canterbury has won the Bartercard Cup twice since it began in 2000 and regularly features in the semifinals.

Chairman of the Wellington franchise Peter Mellars has welcomed the changes to the competition and is confident Wellington will be competitive.

Mellars says the development programme run by coach Paul Bergman was crucial.

It saw the under 18s side win the National Junior competition in 2004.

"Down here we have a development programme that enables us to more than compete, and we're light on resources.

"As long as resources are distributed around the country, that's a step in the right direction."

Rugby League general manager Peter Cordtz is adamant the changes are necessary for the development of the sport in this country.

But he is aware of the possibility of a few teams dominating the competition.

"The obligation is on us to ensure we don't get super-clubs that have all the best players.

"The biggest risk we face with super-clubs is finance – clubs that are cashed up will be able to attract the best players."