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Reality time for Maine in Oz



SWIMMING: WOKING swimmer Anna Maine's dream of competing in the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games will finally become reality tomorrow (6 April), writes Andy Fitzsimons.

The promising 17-year-old Woking Swimming Club athlete will take to the 50m Optus Aquatic Centre pool in Queensland on Friday (02.18 BST) in the heats of the 100m women's backstroke event, in hope of reaching the semi-finals later that afternoon. The final will take place on Saturday (7 April).

Maine will also be looking to register a new personal best time when she returns to the pool in the heats of the women's 50m backstroke on Monday (01.49 BST) – again seeking to reach the semi-finals later that day (9 April). The final will take place on Tuesday (10 April).



It's the first time that the reigning 50m backstroke British Junior Champion bronze medallist and 100m backstroke World Junior Championships finalist will have the opportunity to compete on the global stage, and against the best swimmers in the world.

But Maine is taking it all in her stride, allowing her nerves to fuel her adrenaline to help her progress through the heats.

Speaking exclusively to the *News & Mail*, the young Team England backstroke hopeful has no intention of letting the furore of the occasion pass her by.

She said: "I've never been to Australia before, so it's very exciting to have the opportunity to be here and compete for my country."

"It's a busy itinerary for all the athletes, training at the holding camp, before being transferred to the Commonwealth Athlete Village ahead of the competition itself."

"I was pretty nervous going into the Games, as it's my first senior race meeting, but I usually swim at my best when I am nervous; it's a positive way to channel my energy. "I think the Australians and the Canadians will be my biggest competition, as they both have some really fast backstroke swimmers."

"I also think the Scottish and the Welsh swimmers will fare well too, so it will be interesting competing against them," she added.

Prior to arriving in Queensland two weeks ago, Australia-born

Woking Swimming Club lead coach Mark Staiger took Maine through a vigorous training and conditioning programme, in both the gym and the pool, to help execute her race plan.

"Mark has certainly helped to push me to be the best that I can be," said Maine.

"It's been hard work, but it has paid off."

"Before I left with Team England for Australia, Mark's advice to me was to make the most of the experience and the opportunity to race against the best athletes in the world."

Due to the competition schedule, Team England swimmers were unable to take part in the spectacular opening ceremony at transformed Carrara Stadium football stadium, but were still able to watch the celebrations, which depicted unity and diversity to epitomise the spirit of sport.



CHALLENGE – Woking swimmer Anna Maine



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Chapple at the helm

Cards' board side with experience over youth

FOOTBALL: AFTER a 15-and-a-half-year absence from the dugout, stalwart Geoff Chapple has once again taken over the managerial reins at Woking, writes Andy Fitzsimons.

The board's decision to reinstall Chapple over boss Anthony Limbrick was made on Tuesday when the club and Limbrick parted company following The Cards' 2-1 defeat against lowly Torquay United on Easter Monday.

After a tremulous past couple of months, Woking's odds to get relegated from the National League have been slashed to 4/1 (Betway), prompting the board to take action.

In a bid to steady the ship for the next five games, Woking's director of football Chapple will take control of first team affairs and will be aided by assistant Jason Goodliffe.

In making the announcement, Woking chairlady Rosemary Johnson added that Chapple and Goodliffe "will have access to whatever support they require."

Chapple, 72, who led the club into the Football Conference in 1992 and won three FA Trophy finals at Wembley in the 1990s, will take the helm for the third time.

The former Woking and Kingstonian boss hasn't managed at any level of the non-league game



CHANGES – Interim manager Geoff Chapple, left, and ex-boss Anthony Limbrick



since stepping down at Kingfield in October 2002, but has retained strong links with players and managerial peers alike.

With only two wins from their previous 20 National League matches, Woking have gone from play-off hopefuls to being just three points above the drop-zone.

And unless The Cards can pick up some points away to Dagenham & Redbridge this Saturday (7 April) and Maidenhead United next Tuesday (10 April), they may need to rely on other results to go their way to help preserve their league status.

Speaking to the *News & Mail* prior to this announcement, Limbrick again cited "costly

individual errors" as the reason why Woking side have been in freefall since the turn of the year. However, he has no doubt that Woking still have enough quality to stay up, reinforcing the need for the current squad of players to regroup and refocus ahead of the next match.

"There's no denying that results of late haven't been good enough, but it's not throughout want of trying, as I can't fault the players for their effort. It's a testing time at the moment, but there's pressure at all levels of management, whether you're up the top, middle or foot of the table, there's no getting away from it.

"Geoff (Chapple) has been brilliant with me offering advice; he has a lot of experience in this league."

"We talk regularly; he's top drawer."

"I am confident that Woking can get out of this situation – if the players and staff keep working as hard as they have been," he added.

In a statement on Tuesday afternoon, Limbrick thanked the board, staff and players at Woking.

"The hard work and brilliant support I have received during my time as manager I will always be grateful for," he said.

"Last but not least the fans – I appreciated your passion and dedication to the team and also towards myself that you showed throughout my time at the club."

With plans still afoot to see Woking gain promotion to the English Football League by 2025, the club is under no illusion of the inordinate task at The Laithwaite Community Stadium; not least of all with one of the lowest operating budgets in the division.

The board's decision to part company with Limbrick has already sparked rumours that former boss Garry Hill could be in line for a return to the club he managed for six years.

