

**5<sup>th</sup> PAPUA NEW GUINEA GAMES  
KOKOPO November 2012**

**REPORT ON THE ATHLETICS COMPETITION**

With so many athletes, coaches and officials travelling to Kokopo for the Games it was an ideal opportunity for Athletics PNG to stage two important courses for coaches and technical officials in the days leading up to the commencement of competition.

James Goulding from Fiji was brought in to help conduct the Oceania Basic Athletics Course (OBAS Course). This course was convened by Bernard Manau, with the help of John Baining . An Oceania Technical Officials Course (OTOS Course) was also conducted with Lazarus Bureng and Sophia Marai being the presenters.

James Goulding was also used to advise Athletics PNG on its talent identification programme for throwers. James is the coach of Leslie Copeland who has thrown the Javelin in excess of 80m and finished in 13<sup>th</sup> position in this event at the recent London Olympic Games. He was the only Pacific Island athlete to have qualified by right to participate in the London Olympic Games Athletics Competition.

Two officials were brought from Australia to help with the Auto-Timing and Hy-Tek Meet Manager computer programme. They were Tom Brandt (long time PNG resident, former long distance runner and NSI-based National Athletics' Coach) and Trish Kinnane, who has strong links to PNG and has visited the country many times. They also helped train a small group of PNG officials in the use of the equipment necessary to run a fully-automatic timing and results service.

The Athletics Programme consisted of events for both able-bodied athletes, and Athletes With a Disability (AWD). Experts flew from Australia to help with AWD coaching clinics and to train those who will in future be responsible for classification of AWD athletes. With in excess of 360 AWD athletes participating in the Games this is surely the largest competition of its type in the Pacific Islands.

Also in operation on Day Five of the Athletics was the drug-testing team under the direction of Ilaita Gigimat. This is an important education tool for all of the teams to ensure that they remain drug-free and do not embarrass PNG at major overseas competition.

There were 22 provinces taking part. The abbreviations for the provinces mentioned in the report are -

- ENB - East New Britain, the host province
- ENG - Enga
- ESP - East Sepik Province
- EHP - Eastern Highlands Province

ARB - The Autonomous Region of Bougainville (formerly known as North Solomons Province)  
MAG - Madang  
MOR - Morobe  
NIP - New Ireland Province  
NCD - National Capital District  
SIM - Simbu Province  
WNB - West New Britain  
WES - Western Province

### **Competition Day One - Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2012**

Competition started with the Women's 400m Hurdles. Nouméa bronze medal winner, **Donna Koniel** (ENB) was the favourite and won handily in the time of 65.89 seconds. The rain had already started to make the grass track slippery and difficult for the athletes.

With nineteen men entered in the 400m Hurdles, it was necessary to hold three heats. The first and second heats were run under difficult conditions with many athletes falling due to the slippery track, which deteriorated as the rain got heavier. After two of the heats the rest of the hurdles, sprints, field events and Men's Octathlon programme were suspended with the events to be re-scheduled on Monday morning. The two completed Men's 400m Hurdles heats will be re-run on Monday to ensure an equal and fair playing field for all nineteen of the hurdlers.

The two distance races were held however and the mid-afternoon weather improved with the rain holding-off. The large field in the Men's 5000m saw the field seeded and held in two timed-finals. Winner of the first of these finals was **Bernard Kikile** (ENB). The second race saw the favourites from Morobe, **Kupsy Bisamo** and **David Georasi** fight out the honours with Eastern Highlands' **Simbai Kaspar**. Kupsy proved to be too strong and won easily (16:10.91) from Simbai (16:23.57) and David (16:37.77). In fourth place overall was the winner of the first race, Bernard Kikile (16:45.27). Had Bernard been in the main race he would almost certainly have run faster and possibly been in contention for the bronze medal or better.

In fading light the Women's 10000m event saw 12 athletes line-up at the start. The overwhelming favourite, **Cecilia Kuman** (SIM), worked her way to the lead and was never headed once he hit the front. The second place getter, **Anna Goir** (SIM) is a newcomer to the scene and her slight figure impressed all as she appeared to effortlessly run lap after lap in pursuit of Cecilia. **Josepha Tapilas** (NIP) was also a newcomer to this level of competition and although she ran a very uneven race, and at times looked to be almost ready to step of the track, she kept on finding a new lease-of-life and ended up defeating more favoured Simbu runner, **Anna Pius**.

The winner ran just a little slower than her personal best run in the National Championships in Lae in April, but on the heavy grass track at Ulapila, it was a better performance. Cecilia's time was 41:10.60 would have placed her in

4<sup>th</sup> position in the 2011 Nouméa Pacific Games. Newcomers Anna Goir (42:17.60) and Josepha Tapilas (42:54.11) made good inroads into the All Time Best List for this event.

### **Competition Day Two - Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2012**

The Sunday was a rest day, and work was begun on the measurement of the Half Marathon Course, which will start near Vulcan volcano and finish in the main Sports' Complex at Takubar.

With a huge backlog of events from "rainy Saturday" an early start was in order. Rain was again going to interrupt proceedings, but we had to continue. Poor conditions - the wet track and the strong negative wind, meant that performances were not as good as had been hoped.

The Octathlon began with the favourite, **Reginald Monagi**, going to an immediate lead winning three of the four disciplines on offer.

The 100m events had Preliminary Heats to select the unseeded runners for the First Round Heats held later in the day. After the Round One Heats the leading contenders for the 100m were **Venessa Waro** (MOR) and **Adrine Monagi** (MOR) for the Women, and **Kupun Wisil** (MOR) and **Theo Piniau** (ENB) for the Men. (Seven of the top 10 in the Men's 1<sup>st</sup> Round had run for their country before. They represented Morobe, NCD, ENBP and EHP).

The heats of the 400m indicated a possible clean-sweep for the ENB Women with **Donna Koniel**, **Tehilah Womola** and [newcomer] **Annie Muria** being well clear of the rest of the field. In the Men's, NIP's **Herman Tobeno** was the fastest qualifier from ENB's **John Rivan** and **Theo Piniau**.

The 1500m Heats saw **Jenny Albert** (SIM) clearly the fastest (5:09.47) from **Kalama Towarap** (WNB) and **Poro Gahekave** (ENB). Favourite, **Tuna Tine** (ENB) was content to just qualify with a slow time. The Men's Heats, however, saw one of the big finds of the PNG Games, Western Province's **George Yamak**, run the race of his life to qualify in the excellent time of 4:12.41 and go to #36 on the All Time Best List. The manner of his heat run, with an explosive last 300m sustained drive impressed everyone. Early favourite, **Andipas Georasi** was 9 seconds slower. The final was one to be eagerly anticipated.

Morobe's **Reginald Monagi** (17.73) marginally edged ENB's **Rex Kuam** (17.92) in the heats of the 110m Hurdles. **Manuai Kenas** of NCD was the fastest in the re-run of the Men's 400m Hurdles Heats, with a time of 58.74.

The Men's Long Jump Qualifying saw **Norman Tse** (ENB) with 6.29m leading Morobe's **David Jessem** (6.14m) and Enga's **Ben Levi** (6.02m). **Mong Tavol** from Morobe, the National Record Holder, headed the qualifiers for the Triple Jump with 13.23m.

The Women's Long Jump saw **Eunice Steven** (MOR) leap a creditable 5.16m to edge ahead of teammate **Helen Philemon** (5.07m). They were the only competitors over 5 metres. The condition of the runway and the strong negative wind made quality jumping very difficult.

The distance events finished Day Two of competition. In fading light **Cecilia Kuman** (SIM) won the 5000m event with a time of 19:06.47, from **Mary Kua** (SIM) in 19:32.40 and **Ongan Awa** (EHP) in 19:58.70.

With the light gone, and car headlights needed to shine a light on the race, the Men's 10000m saw **Kupsy Bisamo** (MOR) complete the distance double with an exhausting effort in 34:56.37, which saw him temporarily hospitalised after the race. Kupsy did not want to be beaten again by 14-year-old **Abel Siune** (SIM) who had defeated him in the Highlands Regional Championship the previous month and he ran like his life depended on victory. Here Abel came third in the time of 35:44.12. In second place was **Bernard Kikile** (ENB) showing that the host province could also produce good distance runners, when he clocked the time of 35:15.68 in his first-ever 10000m track race.

### **Competition Day Three - Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2012**

With most of the backlog of events being cleared the day before, the programme was back on track and with better weather for the rest of the week, things were looking up.

The Women's High Jump saw **Nellie Leslie** (ENB) claim the gold medal with a jump of 1.56m. She won on a countback from **Naomi Kerari** (ENB) who jumped the same height and better her personal best in the process. In third was **Delilah Kami** (MAG) with 1.53m.

The Semi-Finals of the Women's 100m indicated that **Venessa Waro** (MOR) and **Shirley Vunatup** (ENB) were the ones to beat in the Final. The favourites for the Men's event were **Kupun Wisil** (MOR) and **Solomon Kaiap** (NCD). Times were again slow because of the track and the strong negative wind.

The Semi-Finals of the Women's 800m saw **Tuna Tine** (ENB), **Poru Gahekave** (ENB) and **Jenny Albert** (SIM) ease into the final with controlled runs.

With no big names in the Men's 800m, **Jerry Herman** (MOR) , **Freddie Hongoworie** (NCD) and **Kaminiel Matlaun** (ENB) qualified fastest for the final with modest times.

The Women's 3000m was won by **Marianna Peter** (SIM) in 11:39.51 from **Maria Kuanduma** (SIM) 11:44.50 and **Ongan Awa** (EHP) with a time of 11:53.00. Most of the in-form distance runners had opted for the 5000m and 10000m races.

The Women's Triple Jump Final saw ENB's **Annie Topal** win with 11.15m (to go to third on the All Time Best List) ahead of teammate **Relly Kaputin** (10.92m). **Nicole Lee** made it an ENB sweep with her third place jump of 10.01m. This is not a strong event in the Pacific and Annie and Relly could be useful additions to the Triple Jump squad, joining Nouméa gold medal winner Betty Burua. Annie's jump would have given her 4<sup>th</sup> place in Nouméa.

The Women's Shot was won by Simbu's **Barbra Nicholas** (9.47m) from ENB's **Jane Pulu** (9.27m) and NCD's **Bonnie Moiya** (8.63m).

Tuesday was a tough day for the sprinters with the Preliminaries of the 200m events. In the Women's the leading lights after this round were **Venessa Waro** (MOR), **Shirley Vunatup** (ENB), **Helen Philemon** (MOR) and **Tehilah Womola** (ENB). The leading contenders in the Men's 200m were **John Rivan** (ENB), **Joe Matmat** (MOR), and the NCD duo of **Paul Pokana** and **Nazmie-Lee Marai**.

The 400m events had their Semi-Finals today with the picture of the likely medal winners becoming a little clearer. It was a potential ENB trifecta in the Women's with the fastest three being **Donna Koniel** (58.88), **Annie Muria** (62.52) and **Tehilah Womola** (63.43). Donna looked to be unbeatable. In the Men's 400m the field was a lot more open. **Paul Pokana** from NCD had the fastest time (50.18) with the two ENB runners, **Theo Piniau** and **John Rivan** both recording 50.78. A good close final was on offer.

The Octathlon came to a conclusion with favourite, **Reginald Monagi** (MOR) taking the gold with a total of 4151 points. In better conditions at the National Championships last year he scored 4992 points. **Robson Yinambe** (NIP) was second with 3667 points.

**Reginald Mongai** (MOR) won the Discus Throw with a personal best distance of 38.73m, to move to 5<sup>th</sup> on the All Time Best List. A foul throw of 41m+ indicated that with a bit more maturity and strength this Junior Athlete will seriously challenge the NR held by Erich Momberger (45.62m from 1990). Second was **Camilus Gigmai** (SIM) with 32.42m.

#### **Competition Day Four - Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2012**

With no water jump, the times for the 3000m Steeplechase were only of minor importance. It was all about the medals.

**Marianna Peter** (SIM) won the Women's Steeplechase with a time of 12:07.66 ahead of ENB's **Catherine Taule** (12:15.70) and **Maria Kuanduma** (SIM – in 12:20.90).

The Men's Steeple was won, as expected, by Nouméa bronze medal winner, **Skene Kiage** (SIM) in 9:58.60 from WNB's **Gravien Sigela** (10:22.89) and ENB's **John Mulai** (10:27.73).

The heats of the Relays were held today and it was obvious that those Provinces that had regular Athletics competition would be the ones fighting it out for the medals. Morobe, NCD and ENB looked to have the field to themselves, except in the Men's 4 x 400m where New Ireland put up a strong showing.

The rounds of the 200m continued with the athletes identified in the heats emerging as the favourites for the final. In the Women's 200m Semi-Finals **Venessa Waro** (MOR) was fastest with a time of 26.82 seconds ahead of **Helen Philemon** (MOR) 27.19 and **Shirley Vunatup** (ENB) 27.27 seconds. The Men's **Paul Pokana** (NCD) was the fastest qualifier with a time of 23.06 from **John Rivan** (ENB) 23.15 and **Joe Matmat** (MOR) 23.19 seconds. A fierce final was on offer.

The Finals of the 800m produced an expected result in the Women's with favourite **Tuna Tine** (ENB) winning in the very good time of 2:18.78 from Simbu's **Jenny Albert** (2:22.52) and ENB's **Poro Gahekave** (2:25.14). The Men's race was open with **Jerry Herman** from Morobe a narrow winner (2:03.50) from ENB's **Allan Taman** (2:03.76) and NCD's **Freddie Hongoworie** (2:04.55). Tuna Tine's win stamped her as one of the quality athletes of the Games. She had another chance to enhance her reputation the following day in the 1500m. (Although she was representing ENB, she is another in the Simbu production-line of good middle and long distance runners).

The Women's Combined-Event, the Heptathlon, started today with experienced **Eunice Steven** (MOR) the likely winner. Eunice ended up winning six of the seven disciplines over the two-day event and emerged as a clear winner. Her Javelin Throw of 34.49m was superior to the gold medal throw in the individual event. All told Eunice amassed 3672 points, as compared to her personal best of 3927 points from Townsville in 2011. Given the conditions, this PNG Games performance was quite good.

Competing in his second Middle-Distance/Long Distance race of the day, **Skene Kiage** (SIM) narrowly won the 3000m Final with a time of 9:42.23 from **Andipas Georasi** (ENB) in 9:43.00 and his brother **David Georasi** (MOR) 9:44.83.

### **Competition Day Five - Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2012**

A day of finals with medals on offer for all of the sprint events (100m, 200m, 400m), the sprint hurdles (100mH for Women and 110mH for Men) Men's 400m Hurdles, the 1500m, Men's and Women's Javelin, Men's High Jump, Men's Shot and the four Relays. Non-stop action.

The Hurdles were always going to be of great interest as many athletes had been introduced to the event for the first time at these Games. It takes years of practice to perfect technique and achieve good times, so expectations were not high. It was all about looking for potential.

The Women's 100m Hurdles was won by **Helen Philemon** (MOR) the only experienced hurdler in the field. Her time was 17.26 seconds. Second was **Naomi Kerari** (ENB) in 19.52 and third was **Damaris Parom** (ESP) in 19.64 seconds.

The only experienced hurdler in the Men's 110m Hurdles was **Reginald Monagi** (MOR), but he lost concentration at the last hurdle, fell and then scrambled across the line in 3<sup>rd</sup> position. His time was 18.79 seconds. Surprise winner was ENB's **Rex Kuam** with a time of 17.45 seconds, which sneaks him on to the All Time Best List. With Rex also being a competent jumper, might he be approached with a view to the Decathlon? Worth a thought. In second place was New Ireland's **Wesley Logorava** (18.75 seconds).

The Men's 400m Hurdles was won by **Manuwai Kenas** (NCD) with a time of 57.97 seconds, good enough to elevate him to 16<sup>th</sup> on the All Time Best List. Second was NIP's **Raymond Koniel** (58.14) and third ENB's **Jeffrey Luveana** (58.98). Obviously all would have run much faster on an All-Weather Track as the uneven track made it almost impossible for the runners to achieve any form of regular rhythm.

The Final of the Women's Javelin was won by ENB's **Sharon Toako** (33.00m) from **Jane Pulu** (ENB – 32.73m) and **Joan Asanga** (MOR – 32.49m).

The Men's Javelin was won by **Simon Benari** (ENB) with a throw of 51.48m, from **Jeffrey Leki** (EHP) 49.07m and **Nickson Fred** (ENB) 48.72m.

The Men's High Jump was won by Morobe's **David Jessem** (1.93m) from Madang's **Liebert Kirakar** (1.90m) and ENB's **Norman Tse** (1.85m).

**Norman Tse** (ENB) then went on to win the Men's Long Jump with a distance of 6.48m, defeating **Wesley Takap** (ENB) with 6.23m and Morobe's **David Jessem** with 6.10m. Again, conditions for the Long Jump were very poor.

The Men's Shot Put was won convincingly by Morobe's **John Tom** (11.76m) from defending champion, **Semi Vuia** (ENB) with a throw of 10.63m. In third was Morobe's **Jacob Mania** (10.53m).

The Women's 400m Final saw the expected ENB medal sweep. Winner was **Donna Koniel** in the fast time of 58.93 seconds - very good on this track. In second position was **Tehila Womola** (62.38) and third was **Annie Muria** (63.20). Things looked good for the ENB Women's 4 x 400m with Betty Burua to be added to the team. (The "elite" runners were only allowed to compete in the Relays).

The Men's 400m Final was a bit of an upset, with ENB's **Theo Piniau** being the clear winner in 49.49 seconds from NCD's **Paul Pokana** (49.97). Pre-race favourite, **John Rivin** (ENB) was third in 50.14 seconds. John had redemption in mind later in the day with the 200m Final and the Relays.

The 1500m races went as expected. **Tuna Tine** (ENB) was a convincing winner in 5:07.69 from teammate **Poro Gahekave** (5:08.09) and Simbu's **Jenny Albert** (5:13.24).

New face on the scene, **George Yamak** from Western Province, had stunned all with a withering 300m sprint at the end of his heat. Here, however, he went out from the start - a bold experiment in front running. His different tactic confused the field and they seemed to make no serious attempt to reel him in – or maybe they just could not! [The changed tactic was well-thought out by his handlers, Goa Koiti and Iroa Pamoā SPG medal winners in the 1970's]. George stayed in front the whole way and was rewarded with a 1/100<sup>th</sup> of a second improvement on his personal best - which is now 4:12.40. Second was ENB's **Andipas Georasi** (4:14.83) and third was EHP's **Simbai Kaspar** (4:21.95). Now we must see what George can do with more regular competition and on an All-Weather Track.

The 100m Finals saw no real upsets, although the disqualification (for a false start) of fancied ENB athlete, Theo Piniau, did take a small amount of gloss off the Men's race. It was won by Morobe's **Kupun Wisil** (11.61), from the NCD duo of **Nazmie-Lee Marai** (11.73) and **Solomon Kaiap** (11.92). The slow times were a testament to the track and the weather conditions.

The Women's 100m was won emphatically by Morobe's **Venessa Waro** (13.12) from ENB's **Shirley Vunatup** (13.68) and Morobe's **Adrine Monagi** (13.88).

The Women's 200m Final saw many of the same athletes medal again. **Venessa Waro** (MOR) won convincingly in a time of 26.61 seconds from ENB's **Shirley Vunatup** (27.11). In third was Morobe's **Helen Philemon** (27.43).

The Men's Final saw a determined **John Rivin** (ENB) easily win in the time of 22.91 seconds. Second was NCD's **Paul Pokana** (23.45) and third was Morobe's **Joe Matmat** (23.49).

And the scene was now set for the grand finalé - the Relays. Following on from the finals of the 100m, 200m and 400m it proved to be a full day for the sprinters, but they rose to the occasion.

The Women's 4 x 100m looked to be a race between ENB and MOR. The Morobe Team were probably stronger on paper, but all relay races are about the ability to get the baton around the track in the fastest and most effective manner – without dropping the baton or getting disqualified. **East New Britain** (Jacklyn Tika, Betty Burua, Shirley Vunatup, Donna Koniel) did that and relegated **Morobe** (Eunice Steven, Helen Philemon, Adrine Monagi, Venessa Waro) to second position - 49.54 to 50.49 seconds. A distant third was **NCD** (Orivia Maniana, Yvonne Nelson, Gwen Pokana, Priscilla Samuel) in 52.13 seconds.

The Men's 4 x 100m Relay pitted three fairly equal teams together. Morobe, with four International runners, were marginally ahead of NCD (who also had four Internationals, including elite runner Nelson Stone), and ENB (with three International athletes). The form guide, however, had to take back seat to the slick passes of the host team and **ENB** (Abel Kennedy, Kevin Kapmatana, Theo Piniau, John Rivan) won narrowly, but clearly, over **Morobe** (Reginald Worealevi, Kupun Wisil, Henry Ben, Joe Matmat) - 42.43 to 42.60 seconds, with **NCD** (Nazmie-Lee Marai, Nelson Stone, Paul Pokana, Solomon Kaiap) in third position - 43.05 seconds. In the 4 x 100m Relay it is all about the quality of the baton changes.

The 4 x 400m Relays are an ever-changing roller coaster as 400m runners of varying standards take the baton and make-up lots of ground on weaker opponent, or lose ground to those who are stronger. In the Women's race the **ENB Team**, (Donna Koniel, Tuna Tine, Shirley Vunatup, Betty Burua) though, did not give the other teams a chance as they quickly went to a huge lead on the first leg, and maintained it all the way. They beat **Morobe** (Trisha Gamini, Eunice Steven, Adrine Monagi, Venessa Waro) by more than 13 seconds - 4:03.56 to 4:16.83, with **NCD** (Gwen Pokana, Carol Ephraim, Leeanne Kwarula, Oriva Maniana) narrowly defeating **NIP** (Martina Martin, Stephanie Kager, Kathlees Tukasau, Esther Simon) for the bronze medal - 4:22.14 to 4:22.53.

The Men's 4 x 400m Relay saw a different medalist sneak into the mixture. **New Ireland** (Herman Tobeno, Mesulam Tingiram, Elison Tuvi, Robson Yinambe) proved to be much stronger than the more fancied NCD and **Morobe** (Werna Kalin, William Marum, Brendan Johnson, Jerry Herman) Teams, and they won the silver medal (3:30.12) ahead of the **NCD** (Nazmie-Lee Marai, Freddy Hongoworie, Manuai Kenas, Paul Pokana) Team (3:30.16). Way out in front, however, was **East New Britain** (Kevin Kapmatana, Theo Piniau, Kaminiel Matlaun, John Rivan) who had ensured that all their best available runners were ready to go for the gold, and they crossed the line first in the time of 3:25.60 to complete a Relay sweep for the hosts.

### **Competition Day Six - Friday 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2012**

The Road Run started near Vulcan volcano and finished in the Sporting Complex at Takubar. The exact length of the course is yet to be determined, but it is very close to the Half Marathon distance of 21.0975 kilometres.

The winner of the Men's Race, and winning his third gold medal of the Games, was **Kupsy Bisamo** (MOR) in the time of 1:19:58. In second was **Skene Kiage** (SIM) 1:21:50, and followed by **Jorden Wallington** (EHP) 1:23:10 and **Bernard Kikile** (ENB) 1:24:12. There were 29 athletes who finished the race.

The winner of the Women's Race, also winning her third gold medal of the Games, was **Cecilia Kuman** (SIM) with a time of 1:43:58. Following her were **Jacinta Iamu** (ARB) 1:46:11, **Susan Kai** (EHP) 1:58:03 and **Joy Aringana** (ARB) 1:58:13. All told six athletes finished the race.

