



GAMES END ON A GOLDEN HIGH

Australia's 2009 Maccabiah Games campaign has ended on a huge high with the Open Rugby team defeating Great Britain 19-16 in a thrilling gold medal match.

The magnitude of the achievement, which will go down as one of the more memorable in Australia's Maccabiah history, became evident at the final whistle as hundreds of passionate supporters joined a side, locked arm in arm, in celebrating the win with a spine tingling rendition of 'Advance Australia Fair.'

The bumper crowd of passionate Aussies easily outnumbered their British counterparts in support of a team that had captured the imagination of all who have come to follow Australia during the games in Israel.



Ranked as outsiders going into the tournament behind the Brits and South Africa, the comourful 26 strong squad along with coach Andrew Hendry, hard working managers Ben Einfeld and Zelman Nissen and physio Jeremy Benko was galvanised from the moment they landed in Israel.

They inspired not only themselves but the entire Australian camp with their respect for both one another and the rest of the Aussie team along with a passionate desire to achieve their goal.

Captain Alex Lehrer, who led his team brilliantly both on the field - with a string of sublime performances - and off it with his calm demeanor, says the win was 4 years in the making. "I remember sitting in the changerooms after beating Canada in the 5th-6th playoff at the last Maccabiah and thinking something needs to change if we wanted to turn things

around."

"So we re-formed the Maccabi Rugby Club and it has improved every year. We have been training incredibly hard."

As tight knit as any team could want to be, Lehrer says it was that support of one another that was the crucial difference between them and the other nations.

"The camaraderie was the main factor. We were an incredibly close group of boys. We are a group of very dedicated individuals. Our heart got us over the line. It's really unbelievable, I honestly never thought we'd get here."

Fly-half Steve Cohen, who was simply magnificent scoring the crucial try of the match and kicking accurately under enormous pressure says having their pool draw changed to the group of death only weeks before the games also had a huge impact on the teams success. "Our attitude was that if you want to be the best you have to beat the best, and we did," he said.

The early stages of the match were very cagey as the Aussies tried to get their running game going which had served them so well in the wins over Israel and South Africa. But while the Brits were managing to nullify the backline's dash they gave up too many penalties in dangerous territory. With his confidence sky high after a superb kicking display against Israel, Cohen landed two shots at goal early to give his side a 6-nil lead.

Not content with merely kicking his side ahead, Cohen then gave Australia the early initiative in the contest with some quick thinking. The Sydneysider was first to react to a loose ball from a scrum near the British line, bringing home the opening try which he duly converted to give Australia a 13-nil buffer. Up against an experienced British front row, the Aussie pack was simply remarkable in the first half, driving on the scrum to help their side win control of the ball as the half wore on.

Both sides landed penalties as the first period drew to a close with the Australians going in 16-3 leaders.

Tensions boiled over in the second half with a huge melee breaking out as the Brits tried to use aggression to get themselves back into the contest.

A drop goal and a penalty then had GB within a converted try from drawing level and Australia needed to alter the momentum of the match to avoid being over-run. And just like he did against Israel, Jarred Shein was the man to win a penalty when Australia was up against it after being held attempting a chip and charge. Cohen stood up to once again convert the chance and give the Aussies back a 12 point break.

The Brits weren't done with yet though, constantly pressuring the Aussie defence which refused to tire in their pursuit of gold.

Lehrer made a desperate tackle on the British flyhalf who had broken free and had a winger out wide with a free run to the tryline, preventing a certain 5 pointer to inch Australia closer to the win.

The pressure eventually told though, with Great Britain able to get over the line with 2 minutes to go for a converted try, resulting in an excruciating wait for the final whistle. But when Cohen took the ball from under his heroic forward pack and heaved it high into the stands, the feeling of anxiety was quickly transformed into jubilation for both players and fans who were able to celebrate the perfect end to the 18th Maccabiah. Alex Lehrer was declared player of the tournament by the Rugby Union Selection Panel.

MORE TENNIS MEDALS

Michelle Rubin battled illness to win her silver medal taking on the might of the Israeli number one. She went down 0-6, 2-6 in the final of the Women's Open 40-45 age group.

Meanwhile veteran Bert Rosenberg took out bronze against his Estonian opponent. The 77-yr-old from Sydney worked hard for his gong in a match which saw him win the first set 6-2 and come back from 4-1 down in the second to win a tie-break 7-3 after almost three hours of tennis.

Caron Stein took out Bronze in the 40-45 age group beating her American opponent 6-2, 6-0.

John Gering failed to defend his gold-winning performance at the 2005 Maccabiah going down to an American 6-2, 6-3 in the final of the 65+ event.

A well-earned Silver in a very tough and hard-fought match.

JUNIORS PLANT TREES FOR JNF

from the Maccabiah media team

The entire Junior team was bussed today to the JNF Kennedy Forest where each and every member planted their own tree in Israel.

The planting was arranged by the JNF and Australian Ambassador to Israel, James Larsen spoke. *pic Tennis stars David Sofaer and Alex Sanders are helped by Head of Delegation, Tom Goldman.*



NETBALLERS NET A PAIR OF GOLD

Australia's open netballers have completed the traditional gold medal double for the green and gold, following on from the juniors yesterday to easily account for Great Britain 45-23 in the final.

Unbeaten throughout the round robin group stage, the Aussie girls were red hot favourites to once again overpower the Brits in the decider.

A much slicker team with the ball in hand, it didn't take long for Australia to build a first quarter lead with Nat Mizrachi and Elise Kausman finding their range early from inside the circle.

The defensive combination of Nat Miller and Lisa Paneth have been far too good for any opposition shooters throughout the tournament and once again they managed to repel a series of British attacks while building some dangerous move from the back themselves.

Australia broke out to an 18 point lead at half-time with Talia Silbermann, Kylie Grynberg, Nat Ritterman and Lainie Bejer moving the ball far too quickly through the middle of the court for their British opponents to handle.

The second half had a strong feeling of inevitability about it as the girls continued to build their lead and prove once again that Australia is easily the strongest netball nation in Jewish sport.

MACCABIAH MEET GETS JEFF SHER WORLD RANKING

Top swimmers in the Masters in the pool have earned 50-yr-old Jeff Sher world ranking.

In the pool yesterday it was GOLD in the 50m Freestyle, it was GOLD in the 100m freestyle, it was GOLD in the 200m freestyle and it was GOLD in the 400m freestyle. Add silver for the Victorian's participation in the 4x50 medley and it was one huge day for Sher. His swims in the 50m and 100m saw him 2nd overall against all ages and he was the fastest in the pool over 200m. Sharing Jeff's medley Silver were Brian May, Warren Kotkis and Clive Aaron who won gold in the 50m breaststroke.

Brian May went on to win Gold in the 50m backstroke in the 45-49 age group and backed that up with another Gold in the 50m breaststroke and a Silver in the 100m butterfly. Trevor Waistein added to the tally by taking out Silver in the 60-65 50m breaststroke.

The women were represented by Margo Mann who will take ten medals back to New York where she now lived. She added to her tally by taking out Silver in the 100m butterfly and 100m freestyle and a Bronze in the composite medley swimming with athletes from Venezuela, Brazil and Puerto Rico. Bronze medals were won in the 4 x 100 medley race both at Men's and Junior Boys levels.

The Men's team was David Schnabl, Greg Shein, Yuri Buruniv and Michael Goldstein while the junior boys were represented by Julian Kowal, Joshua Blumberg, Joshua Balsim and Avi Bart.



MEDALS OUT OF THE BLUE

The golf team was stunned to learn only hours before the medals ceremony that there were three medals in store for the Aussie women golfers.

The Ladies Seniors Teams Bronze went to Aussies Barbara Cohen, Raewynn Doff and Ros Fischl and in the individual net scores Ros Fischl, who had already left Israel without knowing she had won, took out Gold with Raewynn Doff capturing the Silver.

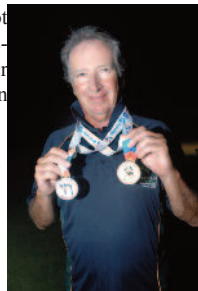
Roy Vandersluis has at last picked up his elusive gold medal. He has been competing in the Maccabiah since 1977 and has been ever so close



to Gold. He finally got it this year in the Masters teams...the Silver is for second place in the individual results,

l Barbara Cohen, Raewynn Doff

r. Roy Vandersluis shows his medals



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SQUASH TEAM BRINGS IN THE GOLD

It was a watershed day for Australian Squash at the Maccabiah Games with the



Masters squad winning a whopping four individual gold medals.

Irwin Gordon, Dan Mossenson, David Alperstein and Anthony Shear all won the finals in their respective age groups to complete Australia's most successful squash campaign since the 1993 games.

Alperstein, who doubles up as section manager, says the large haul made up for a disappointing teams event.

"We really didn't do well in the teams but to make up for it in the individuals competition like this is just fantastic," he said.

"The guys all pulled together and there was a terrific camaraderie within the entire team which was just great to be apart of."

HOCKEY GIRLS MISS OUT ON BRONZE

The lottery of a penalty shootout is the cruelest way to decide any sporting contest and the Australian hockey team found that out the hard way, losing their bronze medal playoff to Germany 4-2 on penalties.

The fightback from a team with only one substitute in the searing Israeli heat has been highly admirable as they earned draws against Argentina and Germany in the group stage to force their way through to the semi-finals.

They again had chances to win the battle for third but as has been the case throughout the tournament, a lack of firepower up front proved costly. 0-0 at full time, both sides had chances to clinch the game in extra-time both opportunities were missed at both ends.

Both sides converted their first penalty strokes but while the German girls were accurate the whole way through, our Aussies missed two crucial shots to give the Europeans third place.

Defensively the girls were again sound with goalkeeper Mikki Hofbauer, Nikki Sosenberg, Kate Horin, and Jodi Goldsmith solid at the back, while Toni Hamilton was outstanding marking out Germany's most dangerous player to round out a solid tournament from the 18 year old.

Penny Stern had an excellent game both helping out the defence and pushing forward down the right flank while Hannah Court and Carly Bogatin were at their usual high standard.

LAST MINUTE LUCK IN BOWLS

Australia's Barbara Shortland received a trophy for the best display of sportsmanship in the Women's division.

The vote was cast by all participating countries.

FINAL MEDAL TALLY

As team heads off to the Closing Ceremony, the updated tally is

GOLD 24 SILVER 27 BRONZE 30

Maccabi Australia included medals involving composite teams

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