

David Thomson - A Determined & Inspirational Journey - From Cancer to World Championships

It isn't often that an athlete can celebrate competing for Australia at the world level and especially after a serious life threatening illness in their teen years. If there is anyone who deserves the accolades and celebrations of success it's David Thomson.

I enclose a recent article about David who just made the Australian team for the world junior T&F championships after an amazing string of PB's in the under 20 men's decathlon at Nationals. David had a battle with cancer in 2011 resulting in partial removal of a lung and another scare soon after that was luckily not cancer (but which was diagnosed as such). His cancer was initially misdiagnosed (as was his subsequent false diagnosis) and David could easily have been in even worse straits if treatment had been delayed further. And of course if a correct, early diagnosis and surgery had been made he would have been much better off and not lost half a lung - the coughing up of blood was just thought from a bad cold/flu!

Congratulations David on your successful journey so far. We all wish you further success and a long career. It's amazing when you coach a young child the journey that sometimes unfolds.

I coached David for several years at the start of his career where he won 2 State multi-event titles in Little Aths competing for Knox LAC in the Bayswater Bullets. David and another young athlete were the first 2 athletes in my tiny squad. I later passed him on to Bryan Neighbour at Mentone to further his athletic career for specific event coaching. Unfortunately Bryan is not here to enjoy the medal and national selection as he did much of the necessary technical work and advanced training to get David to where he is now. David has now moved onto other elite coaches in seniors and also trains himself. Other coaches were of course involved in David's junior career : Steve Cowburn, Frank Bathgate, Rob Williams and others more recently that I don't know personally. Apologies if I missed anyone. We all celebrate David's perseverance and dedication to stick with it through extreme challenges. Virtually no one makes it on their own and especially not at decathlon where many coaches must have input.

But coaching is just one aspect of an athlete's performance - without hard work over many years, often through hard times and lean periods, athletes can't & won't succeed. Innate physical talents are of course important but it's the mental aspect that is the most important. And this must come from the athlete.

Champions come from within. Compete as best you can and take your chances as they present in the arena of life and the track. David always had that ability to pull out his best performances at big events. If you have a look at David's Athletics profile, all his PB's are very recent - and most are on the 3rd/4th of April at nationals in decathlon (note to coaches - don't over train leading into major events!) :

<http://www.all-athletics.com/node/497043>

Personally I have always thought that multi-event is the true test of an athlete as to compete in many events and be consistently good across them all is a difficult task indeed. Event specialists just have to do one thing - but multi-event athletes are the true champions of the arena in my opinion. Run, jump, throw, hurdle : 10 events - it's a 2 day marathon in itself and the ultimate test of versatility, talent & hard work over years. David was good at all sports - AFL, cricket and others but T&F has been his enduring passion.

I wish every child had David's drive, dedication & will to succeed. It just shows what can be done with determination and never giving up. Thank you David & your family for continuing to inspire us all. I now have a great story to tell any athletes who aren't prepared to stick with it or put in the hard work.

Attachments : *Some early photos of David (he used to stick his tongue out when hurdling and I caught it on camera). And I hope Collingwood beats Geelong in the Grand Final next time.*

PS : *There will be some fund raising events to support David to assist in the cost to get to World Championships which I will pass on as they become available.*

Best Regards
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Inspiring athlete can take a breather and enjoy his moment

• GRANT MCARTHUR . HERALD SUN .
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David Thomson will be throwing a discus after qualifying for the decathlon in the world junior athletics competition in the US, despite having only one lung. Picture: Jake Nowakowski *Source: News Limited*

DAVID Thomson has stunned and inspired all around him after rising to top of Australian athletics, despite having lost a lung to cancer.



The super-determined 18-year-old last week earned a place in the World Junior Athletics Championships and in July will take his place among the world's best in the most gruelling event, the decathlon. Less than three years ago Thomson was fighting for his life when a large carcinoid tumour was found in his right lung.

Doctors were able to save his life by removing most of the lung — but without the ability to fully breathe, it seemed Thomson's promising athletics future had also been cut away. It took Thomson a year to recover from the surgery and a secondary scare when it appeared he may lose his leg.

But the Bayswater teen refused to concede defeat and restarted his athletics dream, focusing on the lower-impact pole vault and hoping sheer guts would make up for a missing lung. Despite being one of the favourites in pole vault Thomson had a poor meeting in Sydney last month and missed national selection.

Again refusing to give up, Thomson spent three weeks returning to his pre-cancer love of decathlon and last week in Melbourne stunned all when he pulled out personal best after personal best to easily pass the world qualifying score of 7090 points.

It is still sheer agony for Thomson to run the 1500m while the effects of surgery have left him leaning to the right in the shorter running events, but he said having overcome cancer meant he knew nothing could stop him.

"If I had it another six months I wouldn't have even made the operation," Thomson said.

"It shows that anything is possible. I like to laugh when people say things are impossible, because I was told that quite a bit."

"I have a lot more relaxed outlook to my athletics than I used to and it allows me to enjoy it and not take it too seriously.

"I don't enjoy running the 1500, I don't look forward to it, but I know I just have to get through it."

Thomson is now hoping to place in the top 10 at the Junior World Championship in Eugene, Oregon, before breaking into the senior ranks.

Athletics Australia junior high performance manager Sara Mulkearns said Thomson had always been very talented, but his success created emotional scenes trackside and warmed the hearts of all who knew what he had been through.

"It's pretty bloody impressive — what an inspiration."

"One of his strengths is his never-say-die attitude and his mental reliance.

"Regardless of whether you like sports or even athletics, everyone should be able to draw inspiration out of this."

