

Report to Australian Swimming on the
MARE NOSTRUM SERIES 2004-06-22
From Head Coach Scott Volkers.

The group of 20 came together at the Sydney airport, and eventually boarded the plane at around 11 o'clock pm. This seemed like an unusual time to be leaving to be travelling to Europe. Some 36 hours later we arrived in Nice France with no misfortune experienced except the loss of a few bags. Mine included. (And it was damaged.)

The extraordinary thing about the trip was that no one suffered from any jet lag to speak of. I believe the fact that we left so late everyone sleep well on both flights and arrived ready to go.

On our arrival we were welcomed by the news that a bomb went off across the road the night before. It did not seem to worry the team at all.

My job for the tour was not to tell the athletes how good they are but to see how good we could get them to go in full training, remembering that the Olympic games were only a few months away.

I believe the athletes did a good job of getting themselves ready for competition, and raced well under the circumstances.

I believe this series is one that only should be attended by athletes who are fit and ready to perform. I think it was a mistake to allow Sophie Edington to travel, as we found out she had had a month out of the water following trials and had her appendix removed. It was not that she caused any trouble, but she was just not ready to race. This should be scrutinised more in the future.

The Olympians on the tour travelled, behaved and performed reasonably well. But I advised Leigh Nugent that it would be important for him to keep an eye on Elka Graham as it appeared that she was not in a state of readiness for the Olympics. Mentally and physically she does not seem ready for the 400 especially. (This should be kept confidential, and left in the hands of Leigh Nugent.) I believe it has a lot to do with Brian Sutton retiring after this period.

The racing went well with a lot of valuable lessons being learned, and corrections being made by athletes and coaches alike.

The coaches performed quite well and stuck to the task at hand, with only a couple of exceptions.

The coaches were open to advice and interested in learning.

The support staff, were very good as always.

Tim Brown worked hard on the 20 athletes to make sure that they came home injury free. I believe this was an important position on the team. We have never taken a physiotherapist in the past to this series, but I think it was very successful on this occasion.

Tim Kerrison did his usual excellent job with the feed back to the swimmers and coaches being first class.

Karen Stephenson did a great job with the team. She could make special arrangements and deals for our team that were extremely difficult to attain. She has made some good contacts over the years, used them well and as you all know Karen would never give up on a task or challenge. If it was good for the team then she would make it happen.

Don Talbot brought his experience to the touring party, with several athletes and coaches including myself, benefiting from it. Don's passion for swimming will never be surpassed.

As for myself I would like to thank Australian Swimming and Leigh Nugent for the opportunity you gave me to be able share, learn and experience this series. I gave what I could to the team and I believe they responded appropriately to the challenge.

To be head coach of any team is an honour and comes with many responsibilities, of which I hope I have performed them to your expectations.

If I can be of any further assistance to Australian Swimming in the future, then I will be very willing to help out.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Volkers
Head Coach. Mare Nostrum series 2004.