



Snowsill shines in spite of shoe blue

Julian Tomlinson
Women's Triathlon

EMMA Snowsill looks a great chance of turning Saturday's Commonwealth Games gold medal into Olympic gold at Beijing in 2008 and erase some bitter memories.

The 24-year-old was the second Gold Coast gold medallist at these games after gymnast Hollie Dykes helped Australia win the team artistic event on Friday night.

Snowsill won the 2003 International Triathlon Union world championship but was a controversial exclusion from Australia's 2004 Athens Olympic Games triathlon team.

She has since won the 2005 world titles and overcame several negatives on Saturday to become Australia's first triathlon gold medallist at any Games.

The overcast and cold weather on Saturday meant competitors were required to wear wetsuits – something which did not suit the Australian contingent – and then Snowsill made a blunder at the bike-to-run transition.

"I put my shoe on the wrong foot but I fixed it very quickly," she said.

"We only found out just before the race it would be a wetsuit swim and I wasn't really happy because me and the other girls haven't had much experience in them."

An emotional Snowsill said the Commonwealth Games had been great preparation for Beijing.

"The Beijing Olympics are definitely the next step and I'm looking forward to it," she said. "Being here at these Games has given me a lot of experience and I know what to expect if I get to Beijing."

Apart from a raucous Aussie crowd at St Kilda Beach, Snowsill had a large group of close support in dad Garry, mum Maureen, 20-year-old sister Amy

and boyfriend and coach Craig Walton. Her former Trinity Primary Year 7 teacher Bobbi Stapleton and her first swim coach Bill Richards were also there cheering her on.

Snowsill had such a big lead coming into the finish she was able to stop and give her father a hug.

"I stopped and kissed my dad because he doesn't get to come to many races," she said. "The whole crowd atmosphere was like nothing I have ever seen."

After the race and while wrapped in an Australian flag Snowsill hugged Australian performance director and head coach of the team Bill Davoren and cried on his shoulder.

She did not break away from the minor-placed Kiwis in Samantha Warriner and Andrea Hewitt until halfway through the 10km run, saying the cold conditions meant it took her a while to warm up.

"I just couldn't feel my legs and feet after the transition – my legs were so cold, and being from the Gold Coast I felt the cold a bit and my body just started shutting down," she said.

"It took me a while to get my legs going but once I found my rhythm I felt really good."

Snowsill said her win was a dream come true but she had not thought much about being Australia's first triathlon gold medallist.

"I'm glad to have broken the (Australian) drought and I hope I did everyone proud," she said.

"I just tried to forget the fact the whole of Australia wanted me to do it. I've fantasised about this since I was a kid and now it's a dream come true."

Snowsill returns to the Gold Coast on Wednesday and will head to Mooloolaba for the World Cup Triathlon event next weekend.

She does not yet know if she will compete or just relax with her family.

