

# *Captain of Australia: Have the dream .. Live the dream*

## Netball: Preparation for Competition

In 1993 I attended the Australian U17 Netball Championships at Royal Park, Melbourne. My main purpose (since my knowledge of netball was/is limited) was to show interest in the performance of Sharelle McMahon, a young lady involved in the DFK Athletics program. (Sharelle was a multiple AIS Debbie Flintoff-King Track & Field Camps participant, and I still retain many photographs and video images of her performances as an athlete throughout these foundation years .. in a special interview at the AIS a young Sharelle reveals a great deal about herself as an athlete and person.) I learnt much, my respect for the sport reinforced.

Sharelle's background and interests were first and foremost, netball, but, she had a high level of skill in a range of track and field activities, most notably jumps, sprints and hurdles. It's no surprise that comments today often reflect on her explosiveness and athleticism, as Sharelle explored many opportunities to develop her skills, fitness and experience.

Sharelle remains the most versatile female athlete I have ever been associated with, one of the most "explosive", and a **super-fast learner of skills**.

As a country athlete (Bamawm, near Echuca in north central Victoria) Sharelle and her family realised the important contribution that skills developed in a variety of contexts, and though association with significant role models, (e.g. Olympic Gold medallist Debbie Flintoff-King), could make to her development as an athlete and as a person.

I wrote the following in the Newsletter of North West Athletics, my country-based track and field group of which Sharelle was a member ..

After weeks of regular, Melbourne-based practice, Sharelle was selected in the 10 player, Victorian U17 squad; a fine achievement in itself, since she retains eligibility for that age-group in 1994.

Despite a slight thigh strain, Sharelle played a dominant role in the Victorian performance, the team being beaten by New South Wales in the Grand Final.

The disappointment of being runner-up was in large part made up for by Sharelle being selected in the All Australian U17 Squad, scheduled to train at the AIS in October under the direction of National Coach, Joyce Brown.

A significant aspect of the Victorian team (and Sharelle's) preparation for each competition, was the disciplined, highly structured, yet individual warm-up before each match.

(Apologies to netball experts for my lack of expertise with netball terminology in the next few paragraphs .. I enjoy watching elite sport, but freely plead ignorant to much of the training terminology of netball .... but, that's not the point ....)

Over a period of **35 minutes** the girls (Victorian Team) meticulously completed the following warm-up sequence:

- 6 laps of the court—easy jogging, striding, easy side stepping;
- Stretching — 10-12 stretches (30 seconds hold on each);
- Specific drills: sprints; side stepping; single hand—double hand—overhead passing; switch-about passing; high leap passes ... and many more;
- Team drills: run out—back; simulated centre breaks.

At **12 minutes** to go: tactical talk with the coach ... drink; final uniform adjustments.

**9 minutes** to go: Team Drills .. cross-overs; high-low passes.

**6 minutes** to go: coach instructions .. followed by faster team cross-over drills.

**4 minutes** to go: final instructions-reminders.

Impressive .. a sequence repeated (with minor but specific variations) every game.

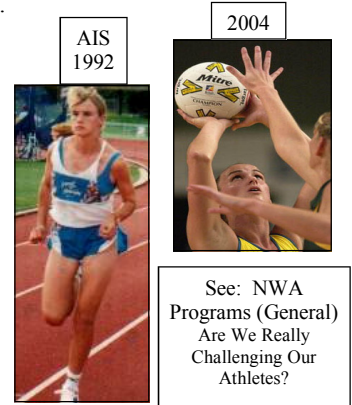
The importance of an appropriately structured warm-up cannot be over-emphasised. It not only helps the body prepare for the intensive, explosive and sustained efforts associated with competition, it reduces the risk of injury, and, gives the athlete a focus at a time when distractions, nerves, and just plain fear have the potential to take over.

**Well done Sharelle** ... we can all learn from your example.

I found it interesting (but not surprising) that many of the individual drill activities, and certainly all of the stretches, were appropriate for Sharelle as a multi-event athlete, high jumper and hurdler.

Try to do something every day to enhance your well-being, your performance as a person and as an athlete, e.g. train, stretch, walk, read, reflect, view, rest ... The only really important (valuable) thing in life is **time** .. the time you spend doing something is time you can NEVER have again.

**Don't waste your life** .. Make every moment count !!  
Choose how you will use your time .... then act: **JUST DO IT**



**The Quitter: never wins**  
**The Winner: Never Quits !!**

Russell Parsons, NWA