

## BRITS DOWN UNDER , PART TWO.

Due to a lack of snow on arriving in Australia, the season started slowly. There was almost no snow base on the majority of the mountain and what little snow there was, was man made. With endless sunny days and crazy temperatures there was little we could do to entertain ourselves. We seemed to do an endless amount of work on the flat focussing on all the technical aspects of our performance to prepare us for when the snow did arrive and we could ski moguls. The highlight of our days would be if we could find a spot that had enough snow for us to build a jump that we could wing off. More often than not this was impossible as every time we built one, within a few jumps it would be bombed out and bushes and rocks would be coming through. With no other means to practice our airs we spent lots of time on an old trampoline situated in an old bus depot, much to the amusement of all that witnessed it.

With the scheduled dates of the comps coming ever closer, the situation showed no sign of improving with the mountain looking like Scotland on a bad year. Everybody's spirits got low. It was as frustrating as being a nymphomaniac in a convent. Every time it looked on the weather forecast as though it would snow, it rained. Finally the weekend before the first comp was due it snowed. We received about 60 cm in the space of two days. There was just enough snow to make the comp run. On the Friday the day before the event we got to ski moguls for the first time since we had arrived, almost five weeks earlier. The course was very flat and short, however, we were all very relieved to have it at all.

The first day of competition went well for all the brits who put in a good showing against some of the worlds best. Our two most experienced athletes Olympic qualifiers Sam Temple and Jo Bromfield skied well and both narrowly missed out on podium places. Simon Bates and Laura Donaldson, two further prospects for the 2002 games both skied very well and easily made finals. Martin Nankoo had the run of his career to date as he skied his way into the top sixteen to make finals. All the other Brits in the field finished close on Martin's heels but narrowly missed the cut off for the finals.

The second day of the event saw a step up in the level of the skiing as the real opportunity for the athletes to compete on the same slope as on the previous day meant that everyone would step it up a gear. It turned into a real spectacle as people started to charge down the bumps and run the airs with a lot more speed. The airs that resulted were world class as such skiers as Laury Lassela, Finnish team member, two time Olympian and former Junior World Champ layed down blistering runs containing 720s and various other spins with positions. Again the Brits had a good day the highlight being a third place for Jo. Simon and Laura continued their rich vein of form again making finals. Another highlight had to be the outstanding performance of young Andy Bennett, who skied the run of his life to make the finals in 13th place. His Finals run was even stronger as he layed down a very fast run with two huge360s that any of the world class participants would have been proud of. With the first comp out of the way we then settled back into our training program with confidence high and enthusiasm restored. The training period proved to be a real bench mark in the season, as everyone started to make good gains and big improvements. It looked as though all the hard work from the flats in the previous weeks were starting to pay off.

However at the second comp at Mt Buller, things were to take an unexpected turn for the worst. This was largely due to a mishap that happened on the way to the comp. The old car that we bought to get us to the comps decided to mess up our plans as it blew its head gasket , leaving us stranded in the middle of nowhere. The outcome was that we did not arrive when we needed to and so we missed out on the training day and course inspection. After a nervous night of not knowing what to expect we finally arrived at the course just before it was due to start. Not having had time to ski the run and prepare, the outcome was inevitable as most of the Brits crashed out.

Two of the fortunate people to have had the opportunity the day before to train on the course were Simon and Jo, who continued their run of good form. Simon finished in 7th place narrowly missing out on the top 5 spot which is required for the Olympic qualification, and Jo won the junior section and finished in 4th place. Andy Bennett managed to put the car experience behind him finishing in 20th closely followed by Chris David in 26th. Not to be perturbed by the whole affair we all returned to Mt Hotham to prepare for the Australian Nationals, and to show off our brand new courtesy car that we have been given till our own car has been fixed. The next day returning from a long cold and wet day's training we arrived home to a real surprise. Young Martin Nankoo had taken the day off as he was suffering from whiplash from his crash in the comp at Mt Buller. When we walked in instead of seeing him laying on the couch feeling sorry for himself, as we expected, you would not believe what we found him doing.

Have a guess? Choose one answer from the following.

1. Cleaning the kitchen? (Hum!!!)
2. Cooking us all a nice meal as we had been out all day? (I don't think so)
3. or cooking kindling sticks on the electric stove top, in a resourceful effort to dry it so as to be able to start a fire.

The answer will follow in the Brits Down Under Part 3.

See ya soon!

Andy David