

January 15th 2010



Introduction: Hello readers we hope you have had a safe and happy festive season! Welcome to our newsletter. After my introduction in the last newsletter I have been requested to include a 'commentary' section – I will call it the 'Soapbox' as these views are mine and readers can draw their own conclusions. If you have comments or issues about my 'soapbox' contributions, they would be most welcome.

Soapbox:

With the winter Olympics just around the corner, let me pose a question to you: In random order, do you know who Matt Cowdrey is? What about Michael Milton? And last but not least Kurt Fearnley? If you don't know who they are, then why not? I'll answer that question in a minute. So for your information:

- Matt Cowdrey is a Paralympic swimmer (in photo) and has won 8 Olympic gold medals over the last 2 Olympics and is the Young Australian of the year 2009.
- Michael Milton has won 6 Olympic gold medals for downhill skiing and holds a world record speed for skiing 213 kms an hour down a snowy slope. He has also transferred now to summer Olympics in cycling and reached a top ten rating after only one season's training. He has climbed Mt Kilimanjaro and participated in the Mark Webber Challenge which involved a grueling 250 kms triathlon trek, mountain bike racing, kayak and trekking across rugged terrain and thrown into the mix was abseiling and white water rafting.
- Kurt Fearnley, if you have read my newsletters before you will have heard of him, has won 3 Chicago marathons, 4 New York marathons, has 3 Olympic gold medals, has recently crawled the Kokoda track on his hands to raise the profile of mental illness and is the Australian Ambassador for "International day of people with a disability".



Why is it that someone who has won 8, 6 or 3 Olympic gold medals is not a household name, set for life with endorsements and hero worshipped for the rest of their lives? The rich rewards and celebrity status has happened for Ian Thorpe (5 gold), Dawn Fraser (4 gold), Cathy Freeman (1 gold) to mention a few and even Steven Bradbury (remember him - he won a medal in speed skating because all the other racers fell over and he was the last man standing?) – We love our sporting heroes and I am not taking anything away from their achievements but I need to make a comparison.

So back to the question of why these heroes are not household names. Where do we get most of our news? We get it through the media. The media responds and reports the news that they think will be of interest to the viewers, readers or listeners. What does that say about their perception about the wishes of the general public? Does it mean that because these people have a disability they are not as deserving of our hero worship as Thorpie? Are people still so awkward about watching or hearing about disabilities? I don't believe so.

We don't hear about them because we, the public don't demand to know about it and the media need to be told. The ABC has probably the best coverage but there's always room for improvement – (see more about the ABC in the Paralympic article below). Some coverage that I have witnessed depicts a tokenistic version about how 'brave' or 'courageous' disabled athletes are – get over the patronization and recognise that they are athletes with abilities, great talent, determination and train hard - same as any other elite athlete. Forget their disability, they are

extraordinary athletes. I put it to you as a valued subscriber to ask the media why there is not more coverage of these talented athletes.

Our news:

We are proud to announce that the City of Ballarat has engaged us as the disability access consultant to ensure that the access provisions in the new 'Australian Centre for Democracy @ Eureka' are appropriate and compliant. It's a great comfort to me personally that access provision has been considered as a priority in the planning stage for this \$10 million project and not as an afterthought at the 11th hour. If nothing else, my work at the Council for eight and a half years has altered some attitudes to the importance of pre-planning for accessibility. Well done Ballarat!

Last December we undertook 5 consecutive workshops with a local health service provider to address some communication issues. The workshop is called "Effective Communication" and looked at the different levels and modes of communications, how to give and receive feedback and assertiveness training thrown in. There are testimonials on the website if you are interested in hearing more about it. If you believe your workplace could do with something like this, we are happy to tailor it to suit your needs.

This year is already shaping up to be very busy, so please give us plenty of notice so that we don't disappoint.

Other articles:

Keeping in with the Paralympic Olympic theme of this newsletter:

Live Coverage and Replays of the 2010 Paralympic Games Events

Canada will shortly be seeing visitors arriving for the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. The 2010 Winter Paralympics, also known as the X Paralympic Winter Games, events will be held in Vancouver, Canada, with some events held in the resort town of Whistler nearby, between March 12 to March 21, 2010. The Paralympic Opening Ceremony will take place in BC Place Stadium, Vancouver.

The Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympics Winter Games (VANOC) acknowledges the importance of Paralympics games media coverage, particularly through television, and is leading the Paralympic rights negotiations with all broadcasters worldwide. VANOC are focused on increasing their commitment to both live and extensive coverage. The television signals of the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games will be produced fully in High-Definition Television (HDTV), a first for the Paralympic Winter Games, and a step which allows broadcasters to bring the highest quality coverage to their viewers around the world. VANOC will continue to work with broadcasters to expand coverage of the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games so the widest possible audience can watch live coverage of Paralympic events on television.

If you are not among the lucky visitors to the 2010 games, how do you get to see the Paralympics live?

Paralympic games TV coverage in Australia:

ABC TV plans to broadcast daily coverage of the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games from the 12 - 21 March bringing you all the thrills of the 2010 Winter Paralympics from Vancouver. ABC TV received the International Paralympics media award for outstanding coverage of the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games making it the second Paralympic Games in a

row that ABC TV's coverage has won Gold for its broadcast. (ABC TV won the IPC Broadcast Media Award for its coverage of the Turin 2006 Winter Paralympic Games.)

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