Olympians confirmed for Mitchell Street Mile

2 September 2015

The elite competition in the Mitchell Street Mile is hotting up with two of Australia’s greatest distance runners signing up to compete as well as other first class runners.

Australian 1500m record holder Ryan Gregson and dual Olympian Collis Birmingham have confirmed they will take their place at the starting line for the elite men’s category on Sunday 20 September.

Gregson currently owns the Australian 1500m record at an incredible 3:31.06 and was a semi-finalist at the 2012 London Olympics. Birmingham is also an Olympian and widely regarded as Australia’s most versatile distance runner. He has been a holder of the Australian 10,000m record, Oceania Half Marathon record holder and a World Championships finalist in the 5,000m.

Both athletes will head to the Mitchell Street Mile in peak form, after representing Australia at the IAAF World Championships in Athletics just last week.

“These athletes are currently two of Australia’s best male runners and the fact they will be travelling to Darwin is a fantastic coup for the event and evidence the Mitchell Street Mile is becoming a drawcard for top athletes around Australia in only its second year,” Sport and Recreation Minister Gary Higgins said.

The Mile has been made possible by the Northern Territory Government through its $100,000 sponsorship of Athletics NT to conduct the event and is part of the Festivals NT Calendar of Events.

Other elite male athletes competing include Philo Saunders, who was second in last year’s event, Josh Wright who sits third on this year’s Australian 1500m ranking list, Jordan Gusman who is fifth on this year’s 1500m list and national finalist Nick Toohey, “As well as the serious business of the elite race, there are races for juniors, teenagers, just for fun in fancy dress and the open race as well as defence and services. Everyone is covered and I encourage Territorians and visitors to get on board,” Mr Higgins said.

Athletics NT General Manager John Bowden said that with $7500 on the line to win in the elite men’s and women’s races, the event is garnering strong interest as the richest non-marathon road race in Australia.
“We have been speaking with some of Australia’s best athletes and we will be announcing more confirmed names very soon, including some top female athletes for the women’s elite section,” Mr Bowden said.

“It’s fantastic to showcase the talents of some of Australia’s best runners here in Darwin, and also to encourage more people to lace up their runners and have a go as part of a healthy lifestyle in the other categories.”

Olympian and Commonwealth Games athlete Ryan Gregson said he was looking forward to testing himself on Mitchell Street in the humid September conditions, as well as taking on his high level contemporaries in the elite section.

"I've only been to Darwin once before when I was 13 and I had to abandon my session halfway because I was about to pass out because of the humidity," Gregson said.

"I love racing on the road as it offers much more variety than the track. The Mitchell Street Mile has a very strong line up with Australia's best so that makes it a prestigious race to win."

"I love street miles that go through the city because instead of making the people come and watch us race, we come to them. People who are just going about their day in the city might stumble across the road mile and then be impromptu spectators."

Go to www.mitchellstreetmile.com.au for more information and to sign up.

**Athlete profiles**

Name: Ryan Gregson
Age: 25
From: NSW
1500m/Mile Personal Best: 3:31.06/3:52.24

- Current Australian 1500m record holder
- 2015 World Relays bronze medallist in distance medley relay and 4 x 800m
- 2010 Australian 1500m champion
- 2014 and 2015 Australian 1500m silver medallist

Name: Collis Birmingham
Age: 30
From: Victoria

1500m/Mile Personal Best: 3:35.50/3:54.30

Accomplishments:

- 2009 World Championships Finalist – 5,000m
- 5 x Australian Champion in 5,000m/10,000m
- 2015 World Relays bronze medalist in distance medley relay
- 8th at 2013 World Cross Country Championships
- Former Australian 10,000m record holder

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