



15 JUN, 2023

GOING FOR GOLD

My Weekly Preview, Sunshine Coast



Page 1 of 2

GOING FOR GOLD

Runner Jack Craig-Daley is jetting off to Germany this month to compete in the Special Olympics World Games. WORDS: Caitlin Zerafa.

Beerwah's Jack Craig-Daley is set to hit the world sporting stage this week, proudly wearing the green and gold as he represents Australia.

The 20-year-old has qualified to compete at the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, which are taking place from June 17 to 25.

A speedy runner, with a particular passion for the 400-metre distance, sporting has made a world of difference to Jack's life.

Living with autism and an intellectual disability, it was when he was in his final year at Currimundi Special School that he first found out about the Special Olympics.

Jack's mum, Tessa Craig, says running has given her son a sense of focus and self-awareness.

"Jack went through some stages when he started to realise he was a bit different and during that teenage 'self-searching' stage he had some blue days," she says.

"When he found what he was good at – and I was delighted it was something sporty – he has become much more self-aware and much more comfortable in his own skin.

"I think he is really proud of himself too and his achievements.

"It has given him some focus and energy. His health is brilliant at the moment, he is eating well and exercising. It's really great for the neurological connections as well."

To qualify for the Special Olympics World Games, Jack made it through the state round, and then the national round in Tasmania in October last year.

At the national event he came home with a gold in the 400-metre sprint and silver in the 200-metre and relay races.

Jack is the only athlete from the Sunshine Coast to make the world games,

and one of 64 Australian athletes heading to Berlin. He has been training under Tony Doherty at the University of the Sunshine Coast track, who Ms Craig says is a "fabulous driver and coach".

"Tony has given Jack a few tips and he has followed those and his form has improved so much, and his coordination has improved too."

Looking ahead, Ms Craig says Jack has his sights set on distance running, and is enjoying regular Parkruns at Golden Beach every Saturday.

"With sprinting, he is aware that he will eventually get older and grow out of it and he is hoping to move into distance running. He is looking at possibly running marathons in the future."

About the Special Olympics

The Special Olympics is a sporting organisation for people with intellectual disabilities that has grown from a backyard camp in the United States 50 years ago into a global movement. It began in Australia in 1976 and there are now more than 700 participants nationwide.

About Team Australia

Australia will send **64 athletes** with an intellectual disability to Berlin for the Special Olympics World Games, beginning on **June 17**. Aussie athletes will compete in **nine sports**, including athletics, basketball, bocce, bowling, equestrian, golf, gymnastics, swimming, tennis, alongside **7000 athletes** from **170 countries**.



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