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VANUATU PARATHLETES RETURN WITH BIG PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS FROM AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH GAMES TRAINING CAMP

If an athlete trains hard at a high level sport, has good equipment, great coaches and quite a bit of good luck, then chances are results will improve by a few seconds or a few centimetres. When you see results where the improvements are measured in metres and full seconds, then you are seeing really amazing outcomes!

This has been the case with Vanuatu parathletes Friana Kwevira (javelin), Marcelline Moli (javelin) and Dephunny Naliupis (100 metres ambulant). Last week, at the GAPS EQUIP training camp on the Gold Coast organized to provide Commonwealth Games training for parathletes already pre-selected by performance in November last year, the Vanuatu team provided some significantly improved performances.

Friana (a right arm amputee) threw 19.45 metres, a 2m improvement in Javelin since November, 15 year old Marcelline Moli (a right arm amputee) threw 12.96 metres, a 2 m improvement and Dephunny (competing in the Cerebral Palsy category) ran 27.9 over 100 metres, a 2.4 second improvement.

On last year's world rankings, this would see Friana ranked as 3rd in the Commonwealth! However, many other athletes will be invited to attend the Games we have not seen competing as yet. However, with the Games still two and a half months away in April and with a strong coaching program now planned for Friana, further improvements are more than possible.

Para-athletes from Vanuatu attended on the Gold Coast last week in preparation for the Commonwealth Games in April. This EQUIP GAPS camp saw parathletes from several other Pacific island countries receiving training and competitive opportunities to hone their skills and improve their athletic performance, lifting confidence through familiarity with sophisticated venue, facilities and equipment. The athletes were tested and their results compared to those achieved during the previous camps. Having previously attended the GAPS camp which was specifically designed for para-athletes, this final camp was integrated with able bodied -athletes from athletics, swimming, lawn bowls, and boxing.

A partnership between the Griffith University and the Commonwealth Games Federation has resulted in this series of camps which focused on educating the athletes and coaches in preparation for major competitions. The integration of para-athletes is a concept which Griffith University Associate Professor Clare Minahan believes provides mutual benefits for both para-athletes and their able bodied peers and is a model which should be adopted for future opportunities.

“Integrating the para-athletes has been a very rewarding experience and the improvements they have made have affirmed the approach we took to ensure the education we provided was able to be replicated in their training environments,” explained Professor Minahan.

Supporting the athletes during the camp was Mr Chris Nunn, the Oceania Paralympic Committee (OPC) project coordinator and former Commonwealth Games competitor, “Having been involved with the three girls since the Vanuatu Paralympic Committee held a Talent Identification Program in Santo only in April last year, I have been immensely proud of the efforts the girls have made to replicate and implement the learning which took place in the previous camp. The results from the testing have shown them what is possible with regular training.”

It is anticipated that the participation in the Commonwealth Games in April by the Vanuatu para-athletes, will provide the incentive for young people with disabilities throughout Vanuatu to participate in sport, targeting healthier lifestyles and recognition for their efforts from their families and communities.

Perhaps their local supporters can also anticipate continuing improvement on their path to the Commonwealth Games!



Caption: (L-R) Friana Kwevira, Dephny Naliupis, Dr Clare Minahan, Marcelline Moli and Chef D’Equip Dorian Tari at the Griffith University track in Queensland for Commonwealth Games Training.

