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Kiwi Stanley and Kent finish 1-2 in 200m free at Oceania Swimming Champs

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Competition is good, even among friends as Commonwealth Games teammates found out on the opening night of finals at the Mayfair Pools Oceania Championships in Auckland, New Zealand, on May 20, 2014. National record holder Matthew Stanley came from behind to pip the fastest qualifier Steven Kent by just six hundredths of a second in the final of the 200m freestyle at the West Wave Aquatic Centre in Henderson.

The 10th Oceania Championships has attracted 175 competitors from 14 nations for the pool and synchronised swimming competition from May 20-23.

New Zealand won six finals on the opening night to five by Australia from the 11 events.

Kent and Stanley are training mates and friends at Swimming New Zealand's High Performance Centre, with a third member of their Glasgow team, Ewan Jackson taking out the B final only one second slower than Stanley's winning effort.

Their rivalry and close bond is a key to their chances of a medal in Glasgow, Scotland, in July in the 4x200m freestyle relay.

"You don't only want to go there and just swim. We want to give it a real go and see what happens," said Kent.

"The environment at the High Performance Centre is massive. It is amazing training with guys you race against and race with. Looking ahead to the Commonwealth Games record we are trying to push each other to be better."

Kent, the fastest qualifier, was pleased with his second placing in 1:49.84, close on his personal best, despite competing in full training load.

"I had a big week last week. It has been good to get up and race for New Zealand," he said. "Last year, in season when I was thinking about making these teams, I was only hitting 1:50s all season so I am pretty pleased I am under that looking forward to Glasgow."



New Zealand's Matthew Stanley (right) and Steven Kent after the 200m freestyle final - *credit: BW Media*

The young Australian team made their mark, led by three prodigious teenage talent in Kyle Chalmers, Brianna Throssell and Ami Matsuo.

Chalmers, 15, took just a few minutes at the start of the meeting to show his class in winning the 50m butterfly in 24.95, a new personal best time. He won the silver medal in the 50m butterfly at the Australian Open Championships recently.

Throssell claimed the honours with a dominant performance in the women's 50m butterfly in 26.51s to claim a new Oceania Championship record. The 18 year old headed home New Zealanders Laura Quilter (27.02) and Sophia Batchelor (27.84).

Pocket battleship Matsuo, 17, took out the title in the women's 200m freestyle in 2:00.19 to go under the 2008 Oceania Championship record set by Olympian Helen Norfolk.

After a fast start she held off the fast-finishing Kiwi Samantha Lucie-Smith (2:00.70) with 15-year-old Shayna Jack (Australia) third in 2:01.45.

In other finals top rating Australian 16-year-old Nicholas Groenewald was all class in winning the 100m backstroke in 56.68, while Glasgow-bound Quilter added a further strong to her bow with a win in the 100m backstroke in 1:02.13.

New Zealand's Shaun Burnett held on in a dogfight with Australia's Nicholas Brown to win the 200m butterfly in 1:59.23; national champion Samantha Lee took out the women's final in 2:13.39 and compatriot Nathan Capp distanced rivals to win the 1500m freestyle in 15:38.72 with a dominating display.

Both mixed relays proved intriguing entertainment with Australia choosing to swim their male swimmers first, opening up a telling advantage in both races.

Australia's Shayna Jack clung on in her final leg of the 200m freestyle relay to hold out fast-finishing New Zealand sprinter Cameron Simpson by 13/100ths of a second.

The tables were turned in the 400m mixed medley relay with Kent powering home to overtake Matsuo in the final five metres to win by 22/100ths of a second.

(Courtesy of Swimming New Zealand)
