

## ATHLETICS

# Australia's MacFarlane too fast in steeple

By LEN JOHNSON

FOR the second time in a week an Australian woman has won a hurdles event at a World Athletics Tour meeting. Last Saturday in Osaka, it was Sally McLellan setting a national record in the 100 metres hurdles.

On Friday night, with the circuit having moved on to Doha in the Gulf, it was Donna MacFarlane in the 3000 metres steeplechase.

MacFarlane, from Hobart, won in nine minutes 34.47 seconds, good running on a warm and humid evening.

The Commonwealth Games bronze medallist had almost 20 metres to spare over Jamaica's Korene Hinds, second in 9:37.01, and Ethiopia's Mekdes Bekele, third in 9:37.64.

MacFarlane is ranked in the top 10 in the women's steeple, along with fellow Australians Melissa Rollison, the Commonwealth silver medallist who is injured, and Victoria Mitchell, who finished seventh in Doha in 9:45.20.

MacFarlane won a national under-20 1500 metres title before a break in her career. Returning after the birth of her two children, she has prospered in her "second" career.

She also won on the World Athletics Tour last year, taking the 3000 metres flat at the pre-Commonwealth Games meeting in Melbourne.

McLellan also ran in Doha. The 20-year-old from the Gold Coast produced her second-fastest career time of 12.90 seconds in finishing third in the 100 metres hurdles.

Virginia Powell of the US, who did not run in Osaka, won in 12.66, displacing McLellan as the fastest in the world this year. Another American, LoLo Jones, beaten by McLellan in the Japanese meeting, was second in 12.78.

McLellan's performances have her on top of the IAAF World Tour standings with 42 points and she is now virtually guaranteed a start in the lucrative World Athletics Final in Stuttgart, Germany, in September. She will now return to the Gold Coast to prepare for a return to Osaka for the world championships.

In other Australian results in Doha, Australian discus champion Benn Harradine finished ninth. Harradine's best of 58.54 metres trailed Lithuanian Virgilius Alekna's world-leading 68.51.

Harradine had competed in several meetings in the US before Doha, recording a best of 62.59 metres on this tour.

Queensland's Alana Boyd cleared 4.25 metres in the pole vault to finish seventh. Russian Yuliya Golubchikova won with 4.54.

The meeting produced a string of world-leading marks, the highlight Blanka Vlasic's display in the high jump. The Croatian set a new national record of 2.04 metres before having three solid attempts at a world record 2.10.

Kenyan athletes dominated the other middle-distance events. Wilfred Bungei won the 800 in 1:44.14, Viola Kibiwot Jelegat the women's 1500 in 4:05.43.

The men's 1500 was a virtual sprint with Commonwealth Games 5000 champion Augustine Choge of Kenya clocking 3:31.73, a world leader, with compatriot Suleiman Simotwo second in 3:31.98.