

# NEWS RELEASE



Embargoed until 18:30hrs Sunday 30 August 2015

## YOUTH TEAM SCOTLAND DEPART FOR SAMOA 2015

The 28 athletes selected to represent Youth Team Scotland at the fifth Commonwealth Youth Games (5-11 September 2015) left Glasgow Airport tonight on the first leg of their 60 hour journey to Samoa. The team will travel with Emirates via Dubai and Auckland before travelling on and arriving in the Samoan capital Apia on Wednesday (2 September).

The athletes, aged between 14-18 years, will compete for Scotland in eight of the nine sports on the programme (Aquatics, Athletics, Archery, Boxing, Lawn Bowls, Squash, Tennis and Weightlifting) and will take their place amongst 1000 of the best young athletes from the 69 Commonwealth nations and territories taking part in the Games.

The selected athletes have been in fine form in the lead up to departure, with highlights including Inverness discus thrower George Evans taking bronze at the World Youth Championships in July and weightlifter Jason Epton breaking a long standing British record just last weekend, with a 123kg clean and jerk.

Edinburgh born swimmer Tain Bruce (17), who lives in Dalgety Bay and swims for the Carnegie club, has had a great run of results. She won double gold in the 50m and 100m Butterfly at the British Championships in Sheffield last month and has a packed schedule in Samoa, contesting those events plus the 200m Butterfly, 200m and 400m Individual Medley as well as the Medley Relay.

"It's amazing to be part of the team," she said. "I couldn't really believe it because so many swimmers got the qualification standards and it was really nerve-wracking when we knew there were only going to be six of us, but I'm really, really honoured and proud to be able to represent my country.

"I'm so excited, at school I just couldn't concentrate this week, they're giving out homework for next week and I'm like, yeah I won't be here! I love racing so I'm really looking forward to that, it will be good to race different people. I raced in Luxemburg at the start of the year and I've been to Amsterdam as well but I've not raced outside of Europe, this is definitely my biggest competition so it will be good.

"I've been really lucky because I've been to places like Hong Kong, Singapore and California so I've done the travel before but I've never had to do it and still be prepared to compete at my best, so that will be an interesting experience. I definitely feel a lot better that we have so many support staff around us who know what they're doing and have been there before.

"It's really exciting because Craig (McLean) is our flagbearer and he's a swimmer but he's also my team mate, I train with him every day, so I'm really proud of him for that.

"I'm looking forward to experiencing the culture as well and seeing how the people out there live because it's a completely different part of the world. I've never been down that way so I'm really interested to learn about that as well."

Lanark 16 year old William Hutchison has already had a taste of international success with Gold at the 2014 European Junior Championships and the Springhill boxer heads to Samoa full of confidence.

"I can't believe I'm literally going," he said. "I just can't wait, being part of the team means a lot, it means everything, there's nothing bigger than it is there? It's massive.

"I've competed in Russia, Kosovo, Serbia and I've been on training camps over in Portugal but it will be slightly different with all the different sports, I've never done that before. The team camp was good to get to know everybody and hopefully make some pals out of it, they're all nice, friendly people.

"I'm mostly looking forward to just getting in the ring and doing what I do best. I'm feeling good and I'm very confident. We've had a camp with the Russians and we've been sparring with them and training hard. I feel I've done everything right and I'm feeling good. I can't wait to get over there and just do well and bring back a medal."

Banchory sprinter Alisha Rees has been in record breaking form, taking a Scottish Schools' 100m record that had stood for 45 years on route to selection for the Youth Games. She lines up in both the 100m and 200m in Samoa in what will be her first venture outside of Europe.

"I'm a bit nervous about it but I think it will be a really good experience and I just can't wait to get out there now and compete and be with the rest of the team.

"I think it's good that we all got the chance to get to know each other before we go out so we have a bond before we get on the plane. We will go out there as a team and support each other as a team.

"I'm pretty excited, I've never been out of Europe so it'll be a good experience. I've competed in Ireland but that's as far as I've gone. I feel like I'm ready to go and perform my best out there and all my performances this year have just been getting better and better so hopefully this will be the peak race.

"I just want to get out there and make finals and see where it takes me. It means a lot to me because only six athletes from athletics in Scotland have had the opportunity to go, so I feel really special that I am one of those people. I've managed to get here, so hopefully I can go and justify my place and do well."

Elinor Middlemiss will lead Youth Team Scotland in Samoa as General Team Manager, aided by an experienced coaching and support team.

Wishing the team luck for the Games she said: "Today is a really exciting day for all of our athletes as they depart on their Commonwealth Games journey. Whilst we hope that many of our athletes will return with medals, the major benefit of the Commonwealth Youth Games is the opportunity it gives to expose young athletes to this level of international competition in a multi-sport environment.

"The chance to engage with people their age from other sports and from all around the Commonwealth is something I know they are all looking forward to and even the journey to Samoa will be a learning experience as many will not have competed so far from home before. The opportunity to learn from the expertise of the staff travelling with them will stand them in great stead for future events overseas.

"I am sure Youth Team Scotland will compete to the best of their ability and that we will see a number of future stars emerge, who will go on to represent Team Scotland in Gold Coast in 2018 and beyond. I wish them every success and I look forward to cheering them on over the five days of competition."

On arrival in Samoa the athletes will have a chance to train and familiarise themselves with the venues before swimmer Craig McLean leads Youth Team Scotland out at the Opening Ceremony on 5 September. This will be followed by five days of hotly contested competition 7-11 September.

The Youth Games will also feature a cultural programme which will run throughout the Games to enable athletes to mix and learn about other cultures, before an informal Closing Ceremony. The team will return to Scotland on Monday 14 September 2015.

## **ENDS**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- Photographs of the team departure will be available from Jeff Holmes at approximately 1900hrs on Sunday evening - Mobile: 07802 610085.
- The time difference between the UK and Samoa is +12 hours.
- Athlete profiles for all team members can be found at:  
<http://www.goscotland.org/meet-the-samoa-2015-team.aspx>
- Our latest version of Countdown newsletter which is a special Youth Games preview edition, including competition schedule and athlete profiles can be found here:  
<http://www.cgcs.org.uk/news-and-media/countdown-newsletter/>
- For the latest news and results: [www.goscotland.org](http://www.goscotland.org) and @Team\_Scotland
- The Youth Team Scotland media officer in Samoa will be Gillian Cooke who can be contacted at [gillian.cooke1@cgcs.org.uk](mailto:gillian.cooke1@cgcs.org.uk) UK mobiles will not work in Samoa so telephone enquiries should be directed to Katriona Bush on 07971 782662.
- The fifth Commonwealth Youth Games will be held in Samoa, 5-11 September 2015.

- Samoa is a group of islands in the Central Pacific with a population of just over 187,000. Sports and games are important aspects of island life and culture and they look forward to extending a very warm welcome to all athletes and visitors from across the Commonwealth.
- Scotland will take part in eight of the nine sports on the programme (not Rugby 7s) at the Youth Games: Aquatics; Archery; Athletics; Boxing (Men); Lawn Bowls; Squash; Tennis and Weightlifting. The competitions will be held at two main precincts: the Apia Park Sports Complex and the Tuna'imato Sports Facilities.
- The total athlete number is set at 1000 with the Team Scotland quota of 28 athletes allocated by the Samoa 2015 organising committee.
- The first Commonwealth Youth Games were held in Edinburgh in 2000; followed by Bendigo, Australia in 2004; Pune, India in 2008; and Isle of Man in 2011.
- To date Scotland has won a total of 124 medals at the Commonwealth Youth Games. However it should be noted that the number of sports and allocated athlete places has varied significantly from Games to Games making direct comparisons difficult. More important is the number of athletes who progress to compete with distinction for Team Scotland at future Commonwealth Games.
- Swimmers Hannah Miley and Robbie Renwick, athlete Lynsey Sharp and boxers Charlie Flynn and Josh Taylor, gymnasts Daniel Keatings are some of those who have made the transition from the Youth Games.
- The Games start and end with Opening and Closing ceremonies. Swimmer Craig McLean has been selected as Scotland's flagbearer for the Opening Ceremony on 5 September

**For further information please contact:**

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The Youth Team Scotland media officer in Samoa will be Gillian Cooke who can be contacted at [gillian.cooke1@cgcs.org.uk](mailto:gillian.cooke1@cgcs.org.uk) UK mobiles will not work in Samoa so telephone enquiries should be directed to Katriona Bush on 07971 782662.