

SUCCESS, DRAMA, RECORDS, ENTERTAINMENT, AT THIS YEARS ARAFURA GAMES AND OCEANIA CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2009 Arafura Games and Oceania Championships for Seniors and Juniors were held in the Australian city of Darwin. A city, rich in aboriginal culture and wonderfully warm weather. Unique in its environment. The Arafura Games was opened on the 9th May in colourful opening ceremony with over 50 countries taking part from 26 sports.



The venue for the 2009 OWF Congress

The Oceania Congress was held at the luxurious Holiday Inn Resort Hotel in the heart of Darwin, on Tuesday, 12th May. Due to the President of the OWF, His Excellency Marcus Stephen not being able to attend as a result of prior commitments, Mr. Ronald Frere from New Caledonia, Vice President of the OWF and newly elected IWF Executive Board Member, chaired the meeting. Twelve countries took part in weightlifting.

Due to financial constraints, quite a few countries of the Pacific were not able to attend and quite a few others reduced the numbers in their teams. Consequently the Championship program had to be altered. Nevertheless, the three day event still produced great battles, excitement and drama.



The beautiful Darwin Entertainment Centre was the venue for this year's weightlifting event



The first day of lifting, 13th May, saw 19 year old Manuelli Tulo from Fiji winning the 56kg category quite comfortably. Whilst in the 62kg category, former Cameroon lifter but now Australian citizen Daniel Koum Koum won his category quite comfortably.

On the second day, the 69kg category produced some excellent competition, particularly between New Zealand champion Mark Spooner and another former Cameroon but now Australian citizen, Francois Etoundi who won by a mere 1kg over the New Zealander.

In the 77kg category, Yukio Peter of Nauru was in brilliant form. He clean & jerked the Commonwealth record of 196kg and in the process of doing this, he damaged the stage of the entertainment centre which was the beginning of a chain of events which caused the championships on the third day to be relocated to the warm up room.

On the final day of lifting Simplice Ribouem from Australia won the 85kg category with a great total of 341Kg, whilst the 94kg category went to David Katoatau from Kiribati. By the time this division finished, it was decided by the management of the entertainment centre to stop the competition and relocate it to the warm up room. The stage by the end of the 94Kg category was ready to fall.

So it was decided to keep the crowd in the main auditorium watching the competition on a large screen, using the IWF competition system thanks to the Australian Weightlifting Federation, whilst the actual competition was being relocated in the warm up area. After the relocation to the warm up room the referees had no choice but to revert to the old physical hand signals as there was not enough time to rewire the whole IWF system. So here it was, the stage and auditorium had results and people were watching the competition on large screen, yet the warm up room was cramped with lifters, coaches, officials and a lot of people standing up watching the event. It was certainly something to see.

The organizing committee was very lucky in having Mr. Lyn Jones as the MC. Lyn was able to revert from the latest electronic system to the good old manual system of running the competition. In fact the change did not make any difference at all to Lyn the master of MC's.

Nor did this situation stop the big boys and big girls from performing at their best with world class results. Itte Detenamo from Nauru had a great battle with Damon Kelly from Australia. Itte did 380kg whilst Damon did 362kg. Damon cleaned 223kg to try and beat Itte on bodyweight but unfortunately missed the jerk.

In the 75kg and 75+kg of the women, which was also conducted in the warm up room, the conditions did not stop the two girls from Samoa, 16 year old Mary Opeloge winning the 75kg category with an outstanding total of 203Kg, whilst Ele Opeloge who missed the bronze medal in Beijing by 1kg when she totaled 269kg, easily won the 75+kg category here in Darwin with a fantastic result of 277kg setting up new Commonwealth and Oceania records in the snatch of 123kg, in the clean & jerk with 154kg and a world class total of 277kg

Male best lifter was **Yukio Peter** from Nauru.

Female best lifter was **Ele Opeloge** from Samoa.

Paul Coffa
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