



## “NO PAIN, NO GAIN”

**T**HE beat of batons on shields and the staccato of boots on concrete sounded as the AFP's Canberra-based Tactical Support Group went through one of its training routines.

“Come on, keep together,” shouted Station Sergeant Mal McGregor across the Weston parade ground.

Station Sergeant McGregor is in charge of discipline and training.

Watching critically from the sidelines was the Deputy Commander of the group, Inspector Mick Richards. For training is crucial for these members who are the frontline of the AFP in the ACT when it comes to civil unrest.

The group comprises 60 officers, specially trained to take control at demonstrations and riots. Their training is based on crowd control methods that have been proved in the United Kingdom and the U.S.

The group's Commander, Inspector John Cooper, was overseas with the Governor-General when we watched the members train for their biggest test yet — providing security at the World Cup Athletics at Canberra's National Sports Centre.

The former Commander, Inspector Graham Taylor, was happy to talk about their achievements.

“The first major tests for the group were the rally by some 40,000 farmers in July, the land rights demonstration in

May when a large group of Aboriginals stormed Parliament House, and the protest at the South African Embassy when several women were arrested,” he said.

“I guess we should thank goodness the group has rarely had to be called out. But in the situations in which the members were involved, they committed themselves very well,” he said.

The group was formed in 1982 for the specific purpose of attending demonstrations that intelligence predicted could become violent.

“They have to be prepared for any possible eventuality,” Inspector Taylor said. “In the case of the World Cup Athletics, they had to be trained to handle anything from a spectator jumping the fence to interfere with contestants to something as serious as an outright attack on overseas athletes.”

The group, like similar groups in all other police forces, has been specially equipped with full-length riot control shields, helmets and American-style batons.

Each member of the group has received strict disciplinary training. The ‘move-stop-standfast’ order reaction can be critical to success in an operation.

Much of their crowd control training has been provided by Inspector Jim Jamieson, who was seconded to the Papua New Guinea Constabulary for a period during the violent riots there.

They also receive training in the martial arts and baton work from First Constable Dick Osborne, of Training Department.

Two policewomen are with the group — Denise Bird and Melita Zielonko. Two others, Nola Robertson and Gerry Morris have had to relinquish their position in the group because of other duties.

The group is divided into four squads under Senior Sergeants Gary Brodie, Dennis Harris, Peter De Britton and Ken Borrow.

In training, the members are urged on by chants such as “Train hard, fight easy”. But their operational motto is “None shall pass”.

“None has passed us yet,” said senior Sergeant Gary Brodie. “Our training sees to that. We are constantly updating methods to suit situations. During the past couple of months we've been doing specific training at the National Sports Centre, Bruce Stadium, to familiarise ourselves with the locality.”

That their training is tough is indicated by the fact that recent injuries received during training include a couple of broken ribs and a leg, as well as sundry damage comparable with that dealt out in a Rugby League final.

They have a chant for that, too: “No pain, no gain.”