

'DARK HORSE' ON SKIS

DETECTIVE Constable Craig Stephens has just cut his teeth in the world of international skiing at the World Police Games in Trento, Italy last March. The only AFP member in the six-strong Australian team at this "police winter olympics," Craig put in creditable performances in both his events — the slalom and the giant slalom.

He finished 41st in a field of 110 competitors in the giant slalom event, in front of all other skiers from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Britain and Japan. A good performance in a sport dominated by the Swiss, Austrians, Germans and Italians.

"The Europeans allow their police skiers to do policing duties for one month a year and ski competitively for the other eleven months," Craig said.

"The first 15 or so place-getters were really world-class calibre so I was quite pleased with my performance in the giant slalom."

Craig unfortunately caught a flag and spilled during his third run in the slalom event. He had been sitting in the leading 20 positions after his first two runs.

In the slalom a racer skis downhill through a series of gates or flags aiming to record the fastest time. The giant slalom is a longer course, the flags are further apart and the skier can travel faster.

"This year's showing puts the Australians in a good position for the next games in Canada," Craig said.

'Dark horse'

He first showed what he can do when he won the main events — the slalom and the giant slalom — in the Australian Police Ski Olympics held during August 1988 at Perisher Valley in the Snowy Mountains.

He was the only competitor from Queensland in the events which were contested by about 60 skiers from police forces all over Australia — predominantly New South Wales, Victoria and AFP members from Canberra.

"I was the dark horse and I think most of the other competitors wrote me off because coming from Queensland they didn't think I'd seen snow before," Craig said.

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Craig Stephens in action.

"They weren't really happy when I took out the two main downhill events of the competition and I'm told the organisers may be asked to handicap me next time!

"My success was particularly surprising because Perisher was the first time I had ever competed in a skiing championship."

Craig, 24, who hails originally from Narrandera in New South Wales, moved to Canberra at a young age and joined the AFP in the national capital in 1983. He worked in uniform and in the CIB before transferring to Queensland in 1986, where he worked in Intelligence and General Crime. He is returning back to Canberra in June.

"I lived in Canberra for 14 years without ever going to the snow and

I only started skiing about four years ago," he said. "I now ski about four to five weeks every year and got my instructors' certificate in Canada in March 1988."

At 186 centimetres, or just under six feet two, and 16 stone, Craig says he wants to continue to make a mark for the AFP in downhill racing.

"It helps if you have suicidal tendencies," he said.

And how does a skiing champ practise in Brisbane?

"I do a lot of water and grass skiing because there's not a great deal of snow. Grass is as close as you can get to snow but still a poor substitute for the real thing, though I managed to put in a fair bit of practice on the artificial skislope inside the Swiss Pavilion at Expo.

WAIST-DEEP IN THE US SNOWFIELD CIRCUIT

ON the other side of the world, AFP ski club stalwart Mike Doroshenko has been experiencing the excitement of the North American police skiing circuit.

He returned to Canberra early in April after a holiday that took 19 weeks.

"It was a trip not to be missed," he said.

After visiting Los Angeles, New York, Washington DC, Pennsylvania

and Toronto, Canada, he arrived in Calgary, site of the 1988 Winter Olympics.

"The idea was to get my ski legs at various race camps in Alberta province in preparation for the Canadian Police Alpine Games," he said. "I finally arrived in Vancouver on the weekend before the competition where I was looked after by several members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. They couldn't

believe I had travelled all the way from 'down under' to compete in their race."

His visit proved worthwhile. He was awarded a gold medal in his category in the giant slalom and the following day, a silver for the slalom. But then the temperature dropped to minus 26deg. overnight and the rest of the competition was abandoned.

He headed for the International Police Winter Games at Lake Tahoe, California, where he managed only a 4th place medal.

"This was the fastest course I had done, with many competitors travelling warp factor 6 down an icy slope, taking nearly 2 minutes to finish," he said. "Two minutes feels like two hours under those conditions and by the time you finish your legs have turned to jelly. It was an exciting competition."

The next stop on the police ski circuit was Mammoth Mountain, California, for the Police-Fire winter olympics. However, officials would not let him race because he was not a California Police officer.

Mike flew on to Colorado where he competed in the Colorado State Police race. Although he was allowed to take part, he wasn't permitted to take medals from local competitors.

The following week was to be the biggest and best for Mike. It was the 1989 Saab National Peace Officers ski race, with police from all walks of life in the US and Canada competing.



Mike Doroshenko ready for the 1989 National Police Officers ski race.

The first day of competition he was placed 51st out of 360 racers in the seed race. This qualified him for the slalom race, an international world cup standard event.

"Most of the racers crashed and burned, not being given a second run because of the official rules," he said. "The main aim is to finish and not worry about times, so consistency won me a gold medal."

He celebrated that night.

"The next day's race was an afternoon one and by the time I was in the starting gate for the giant slalom

I was ready," he said. "Winning second place by only 1/100th of a second wasn't too bad, considering."

Mike said that spring skiing in Colorado was unsurpassed anywhere in the world but that night it snowed. A metre of snow fell overnight and the competition was cancelled.

"It was a unique experience to ski in waist-deep powder," he said.

Mike left the US with many contacts, great memories and a hole in his bank balance. But it was worth every cent, he says. •

A PHOTOGRAPHIC FLAIR

It has been claimed the happiest people in the world are those who have been able to convert a hobby to their day-to-day professional activity.

One such example is Constable Michael Dunn (Crime Scene Unit, Southern Region) who recently took out second prize in the General Category of the 14th Exhibition of Police Photography of Australasia and the South-West Pacific Region in Melbourne. It was the first time he had entered the Exhibition.

Michael first displayed an interest in photography during his school days and after completing his education, he served with the Royal Australian Navy as a photographer. Since joining the Federal Police in April, 1986, he has been heavily involved with photography in the Crime Scene Unit.

His prize-winning photograph 'Bar room corner' was displayed for public viewing with other prizewinners and entries in the chambers of a central Melbourne bank last month.



Michael Dunn's "Bar room corner".