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19-strong swim team ready to suit up at World University Games in Taipei

Commonwealth Games gold medallists Leiston Pickett and Ben Treffers will lead a 19-strong Australian swim team into the 2017 Summer Universiade at the National Taiwan Sport University Arena in Taipei on Sunday.

Treffers, who is completing an honours degree in business at the Australian National University, also owns a Universiade gold medal after taking victory in his pet 50m backstroke event in Kazan, Russia in 2013.

He relocated to the Gold Coast in January to train at Somerset under Sydney 2000 Olympic 4x100m relay gold medallist Ashley Callus – who is one of five coaches on the Uniroos team.

The 25-year-old, who stood atop of the podium after taking gold in the 50m backstroke at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games only just missed selection for the Dolphins team for the recent world championships in Budapest and sees the Universiade as the perfect opportunity to build towards next year's Commonwealth Games in what is now his hometown.

"My experience in Kazan, with the whole Russian team being there, prepared me well to know what to expect here," Treffers said.

"It's more of a developing team, quite a young team for us here, but they are really going to get their eyes opened," Treffers said.

Whilst entry lists are hard to come by and haven't yet been released, Treffers says from who he has already seen around the village, he expects some intense competition.

"I've seen already in the dining hall Olympic medallists and people who raced at the world championships so the level of competition is going to be incredible and it'll provide me with the opportunity to race at the international level and a stepping stone for next year's Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast," Treffers said.

Fellow Gold Coaster Leiston Pickett (Griffith University - Bachelor of Commerce), who won the 50m breaststroke in both Delhi and Glasgow, will make her World University Games debut. After battling injury and a limited preparation Pickett missed the world championships team, but now gets her chance to build toward a three-peat of Commonwealth Games victories.

"I've had a pretty good preparation after the trials and this has been my target event for 2017 so I'm ready to go," Pickett said.

"Although it's not world championships, it's my world championships so I'll treat it exactly the same and get up there and do my best."

Coached by World University Games team coach Glenn Baker at Southport Olympic, Pickett is one of four swimmers on the team from Griffith University.

She will be joined by fellow Griffith students, distance swimmers Kai Edwards and Josh Parrish (TSS Aquatics) and Budapest world championship team member Kiah Melverton, a dual bronze medallist from the Universiade in 2015.

Milverton and her world championships open water team mate Kareena Lee (University of Sunshine Coast - Bachelor of Primary Education) will provide the Australian women's team with a solid middle distance/distance freestyle pair.

Another budding freestyler on the team is 21-year-old Will Stockwell (Commercial/University of Queensland) who was third to Olympians Cam McEvoy and James Roberts in the 50m freestyle at this year's nationals and will also look to improve his 100m as well.

If there is such thing as swimming pedigree Stockwell definitely has it, with two Olympians as parents and his mother one of the best ever to dive into a pool.

The 21-year-old who studies a Bachelor of Business Management majoring in Business Economics is the son of Tracy Caulkins, a powerhouse of world swimming in the 1980s who won three Olympic gold medals for the USA at the 1984 Games in Los Angeles. Over the course of her career Tracey was a five-time world champion, broke five world records and equalled one, set 63 American records and racked up 48 national titles.

Caulkins met fellow Olympian and now husband Mark Stockwell at the 1984 Games where the Australian won two silver medals in the 100m and 4x100m freestyle, and a bronze in the 4x100m medley relay.

If that resume is not enough of a target for Stockwell then he only has to look at his aunty Amy's performance for the USA at the World University Games of three gold medals in swimming at the 1979 competition in Mexico City.

Backstroker Sian Whittaker is another one to watch. The first-year primary education student at Deakin University trains with Craig Jackson as part of the strong Melbourne Vicentre squad. She will line up in the 50m, 100m, and 200m backstroke, plus the relays, with the 200m on the opening day her pet event.

"I had a bit of a disappointing trials so I'm not coming in with specific expectations, other than improving every race," Whittaker said.

Unirooms swim team head coach Rohan Taylor said the Summer Universiade is the perfect environment for the developing a young group to learn more about what it takes to be successful at a major championship event.

"Any environment where you have a multi-sport event and the athletes living and competing in that space is a great experience and a great environment for their learning," Taylor said.

"This is a pretty inexperienced team and this, for most, is their first multi-sport experience. The Games is continuing to grow to a very high standard competition and a lot of countries are taking it seriously."

"Many countries, like us, use this competition as exposure for their athletes to a higher standard of competition, so these guys will get a great experience."

"Those that become familiar with it and understand it will benefit for the Gold Coast and Tokyo."

The honour roll of Australian Universiade gold medal winners in swimming includes Olympic champions Cate Campbell, Alice Mills, Mark Kerry and Jon Sieben and Olympic medalists Rob Woodhouse and Justin Lemberg.

In Gwangju two years ago, the swim team went home with two gold, two silver and seven bronze medals.