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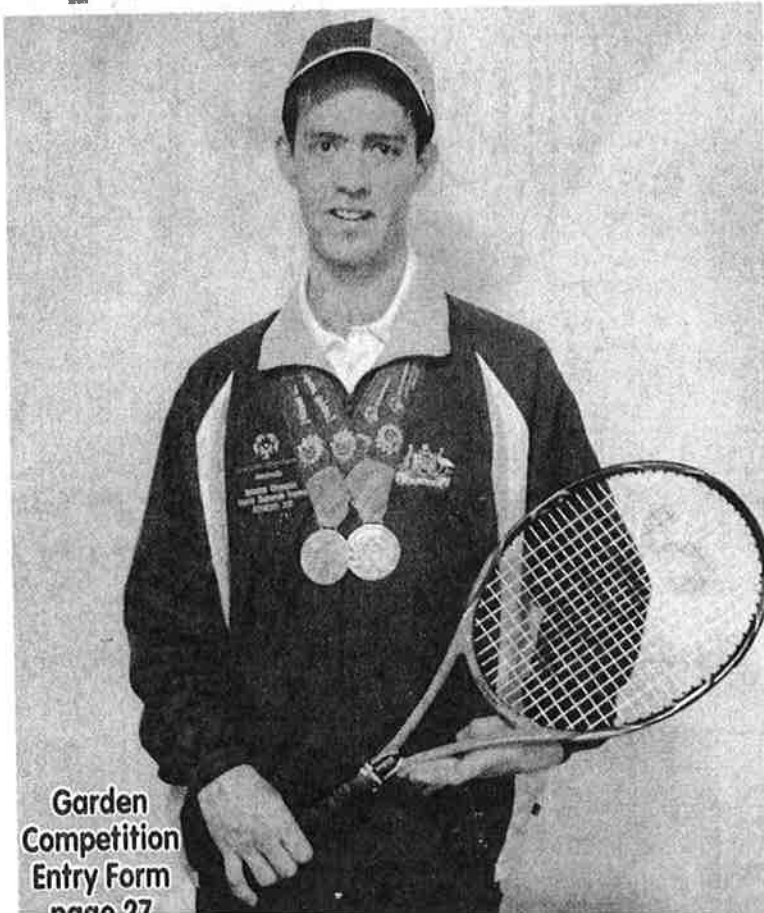
PHONE: 3851 0894

Postal Address: P.O. Box 91, Ferny Hills, Q. 4055

Follow us on Twitter @thehillsecho 

Email: rpk@hillsecho.com www.hillsecho.com

Special Olympics Tennis Champ



Ferny Hills tennis player Neil Forster returned from the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Athens last month as a gold medallist in singles and doubles.

Australia sent a team of 10 tennis players as part of their team of 131 athletes. Over 7,500 athletes from 185 countries competed in 24 sports at the Athens games. Australia competed in eleven sports.

Neil has been playing tennis for four years and is presently coached by local tennis coach Daphne Bale. To gain entry to the Athens Games, Neil first went to the State Games gaining selection for the Nationals where he earned his spot in the Australian team for the World Games. His trip to Athens as part of a national team was an experience Neil will never forget.

"Every time I wore an Australian tracksuit, I was so honoured and very proud to be an Aussie," explained Neil. "I played on the Centre Court, Olympic Stadium in Athens. I can't believe that I won against Switzerland 4-1, 4-1. That got me into the singles final for gold or silver where I defeated Japan 4-0, 4-1. I was so proud and excited!"

Neil also played Mixed Doubles partnering Chloe Johnston from the Gold Coast.

"Neil's contribution in the Mixed Doubles was outstanding," said Daphne Bale. "Chloe had both feet injured and was unable to move on the court. So, after her great serving, Neil had to play all the court for her and they defeated the USA in the final 4-2, 4-1."

The Australian team of ten players came home with 8 gold, 2 silver, 4 bronze and one fourth placing. They won 14 medals from a possible 15 events.