

BLUNDELL INSPIRES

By **LAWRENCE MACHADO**

For Australian and Hills champion Jenny Blundell, focussing on the basics of athletics is as important as preparing for major events.

The former Cherrybrook Little Athletics star is back home after competing at the Tokyo Olympics but is already setting her sights on two big championships.

Blundell, 27, one of the several Hills locals to compete in Tokyo, has returned to her first running coach, Valme Kruger from Cherrybrook Athletics, for a change of pace and also to encourage the new crop of local athletes. Blundell finished 11th in the women's 5000m at Tokyo. At the 2016 Rio Olympics, Blundell finished 11th in the semi-finals of the 1500m.

The former Cherrybrook Technology High School student is aiming to compete in two demanding events next year, the IAAF World Championships in Oregon (US) from July 15-24, and the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, England, from July 28 to August 8.

"It's such a quick turnaround which is why we are trying a new training routine of a 10-day cycle rather than seven days,"

Blundell said. "I'm really enjoying it. It's been good getting back in touch with Valme who is letting me do some sessions with her squad. I love running with a mixture of abilities, everyone has different strengths and weaknesses. I can be a world-class runner, but I can still be getting a good training effect running with up-and-coming teenagers. I am really, really enjoying that. It's also good for the younger runners to see someone who is world-class and see that they don't train hard every session."

Cherrybrook athlete Idris Burkhardt, 14, said it was "really inspiring" having the track star join their training sessions. "It encourages us to be more engaged in training, and also knowing that Valme helped train Jenny to become an Olympian inspires us that we can do it too," Burkhardt said.

Blundell, who is keen to give back to the local club, also attends Cherrybrook Little Athletics competition nights, prompting one excited boy to come running up with a photo of Blundell in action in Tokyo to ask: "Is this really you? I saw you on TV at the Olympics!"



Jenny Blundell trains with Matthew Conway, left, and Idris Burkhardt at Cherrybrook.

Blundell said it's important for young athletes to see that they are no different than she was at the same age. "I was lucky through Little Athletics to be exposed to people who had done what I have done now, and to realise we are all human," she said. "When I was a kid, I couldn't wait to come to Cherrybrook every day to train – I loved training and I loved the friends I made while training."

Blundell said she is enjoying "recovery" runs around The Hills, where she grew up. "The 5000m is still quite a new event for me and it's still exciting."

"If the Tokyo Olympics had gone ahead in 2020, I would have been running the 1500m but with the extra year of training I got fitter and my event naturally gravitated to the 5000m."

"But I am still wrapping my head around the laps and my strengths and weaknesses in the event ... but it's good, I like a new challenge. I just feel like I have a new lease on my running life by changing events, which is really cool."