

John Devitt

Australian freestyle champion and Olympian

Swimming has been my life, my devotion, my passion and my dedication. Since the age of six, when I began chasing my friends around Granville baths, I've lived and grown in the sport.

John Devitt (born 1937) grew up in Blaxcell Street, Granville and spent every afternoon at the pool. From the age of seven, John was coached by schoolteacher Tom Penny, then with Clyde Amateur Swimming Club. John also spent ten years participating in winter training sessions at White Bay and Bunnerong power stations.

John Devitt's achievements include 14 world records (four individual and ten team) and 13 Australian titles (three individual and ten team). John won his first western Sydney championship aged nine, his first State championship at eleven, and his first Australian championship at fifteen. In a swim meet at Granville in 1956, Devitt won his first race against champion Jon Henricks, in the 55 yards freestyle event.

Devitt considers his most rewarding experience was being made swim team captain at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. Devitt won the gold medal for the 4 x 200m freestyle relay, and a silver medal in the 100m freestyle. He won a further three gold medals at the 1958 Empire and Commonwealth Games in Cardiff, Wales. At the 1960 Rome Olympics, Devitt was again team captain, and won gold in the 100m freestyle, and bronze in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay.

After retiring from competition Devitt has been actively involved in the administration of Australian swimming for over forty years, and has attended almost every Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games since 1956.

Above: John Devitt swimming at the 1960 Australian championships and Olympic trials, North Sydney pool, February 1960
www.newspix.com.au

Centre: John Devitt at the Australian championships and Olympic trials, North Sydney pool, February 1960
Photographer Jack Hickson. APA collection, State Library of NSW

Below: John Devitt competing at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics
www.newspix.com.au

Below right: *Sport Magazine*, December 1957

