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AUSTRALIA BUILDING STEADILY AS PYEONGCHANG 2018 COUNTDOWN HITS ONE YEAR TO GO

PYEONGCHANG 2018: The countdown is well and truly on to the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games with only one year to go until Australia take on the world's best in South Korea.

A strong start to the World Cup season has seen a number of Australian athletes claim podium finishes and confidence is growing that the sunburnt nation can add another successful chapter to its Winter Olympic history book.

"We're exactly where we want to be a year out from the Games," Australian Winter Olympic Team Chef de Mission Ian Chesterman said.

"We have a wide range of athletes who are having success on the world stage and we would love to find ourselves in the same position in twelve months' time."

Australia will look to send a team of approximately 60 athletes to PyeongChang where they will compete against athletes from close to 100 nations in 12 venues across the region.

The Organising Committee is well on track to deliver an exciting and efficient Games and will host a number of test events throughout February and March.

"PyeongChang has an excellent set of venues to showcase all of the Olympic sports," continued Chesterman who has just returned from a planning visit to PyeongChang.

"The Organising Committee has pulled together a compact Games that will provide a great stage to perform on which is exactly what you want.

"Many of our athletes will get the chance to get accustomed to the Olympic venues over the next few weeks as they continue to build towards success in a years' time."

Australia continues to grow in stature on the world stage in winter sports with a number of athletes now becoming regular medallists in world class competitions.

Among those who've had a strong start to the Winter Olympic season is dual Olympic Moguls skier Britt Cox who currently leads the world standings.

"I am really happy with my skiing at the moment and stoked on my results so far this season," said the 22-year-old who is currently in PyeongChang preparing for the test event.

"There is always something to work on though so I'll be busy developing those skills over the next 12 months in the lead up to PyeongChang.

“We always have an excellent culture in the mogul team and I also love seeing the Aussie athletes from different disciplines laying it down at various locations around the world.

“We see aerials or snowboard-cross athletes have a great event and then we’re like ‘we have to match it in our competition this week’.”

Four-time Olympian and dual Olympic aerials medallist Lydia Lassila recently returned to competition following her bronze medal performance at the Sochi 2014 Games and has already added another World Cup gold to her impressive resume.

Having achieved just about everything in the sport the lure of a fifth Olympic appearance was just too much to pass up for the 2010 Olympic Champion.

“Time away from the sport always brings perspective and for me, it was clear, I just missed it and still have the love and drive to do it which is why I’m here,” Lassila said.

While she has been focused on getting back to her best Lassila has kept a keen eye on her Australian teammates competing across the world.

“It’s been really motivating and inspirational for me to see so much success within winter sport this season.

“I think we are in the best position we’ve ever been in. We may not be a large team but we have a broad range of high quality athletes.”

Lassila and her teammates continued success has helped elevate winter disciplines into the mainstream of Australian sport and Chesterman believes this can only help strengthen Australia’s standing in the future.

“We have a highly credentialed team across a broad range of sports which provides motivation to the athletes coming through the ranks to continue in their sport.

“It is important for our current athletes to continue to be role models as without that aspiration for the younger athletes we wouldn’t be where we are today.”

Australian athletes are likely to feature in alpine skiing, biathlon, bobsleigh, cross country skiing, figure skating, freestyle skiing (aerials, moguls, ski cross & slopestyle), luge, skeleton and snowboard (slopestyle, halfpipe, snowboard cross & big air) in PyeongChang.

It is in these competitions where Australia will look to continue their Winter Olympic medal winning run that has seen Aussie athletes stand on the podium at every Games since Lillehammer 1994.

After winning three medals at the most recent Games in Sochi, Australia has now won 12 Winter Olympic medals with Lassila, Steven Bradbury, Alisa Camplin, Dale Begg-Smith and Torah Bright all becoming Olympic Champions.

The 23rd edition of the Winter Olympic Games will run from February 9-25, 2017.

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