

Dani Stevens (nee Samuels)

D.O.B. 26/05/1988

Coach: Denis Knowles

P.B. Discus throw 69.64, Shot put 17.05

Occupation: Professional athlete

Club: Joined Westfields A.C. in 2001, Awarded life member in 2010

Progression:



| Year / Age | Discus | Shot |
|------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1997 9 | - | 7.20 2kg |
| 1998 10 | 30.50 500gm | 9.93 3kg |
| 1999 11 | 31.02 750gm | 11.20 3kg |
| 2000 12 | 36.46 750gm | 12.74 3kg |
| 2001 13 | 39.37 | 14.01 3kg |
| 2002 14 | 45.52 | 15.03 3kg 13.93 4kg |
| 2003 15 | 47.18 | 13.83 |
| 2004 16 | 52.13 | 15.50 |
| 2005 17 | 58.92 | 15.53 |
| 2006 18 | 60.63 | 15.98 |
| 2007 19 | 60.44 | 16.19 |
| 2008 20 | 62.95 | 15.68 |
| 2009 21 | 65.44 | 15.76 |
| 2010 22 | 63.61 | - |
| 2011 23 | 61.79 | - |
| 2012 24 | 63.97 | 16.65 |
| 2013 25 | 62.42 | - |
| 2014 26 | 67.99 | 17.05 |
| 2015 27 | 64.44 | - |
| 2016 28 | 64.57 | - |
| 2017 29 | 69.64 | - |
| 2018 30 | 68.26 | - |
| 2019 31 | 65.93 | - |

Honours

Westfields Sports, Blue and Athlete of the year

Westfields AC life member

World Championships – 2007, 2009 Gold, 2011 10th, 2013 10th, 2015 6th, 2017 Silver.

World Junior Champion 2006 - Gold discus

World Youth Champion 2005, - Gold Discus, Bronze Shot Put

Commonwealth Games - Bronze 2006, 2010 – declined, Gold 2014, Gold 2018.

World University Games - 2007 Silver, 2019 Gold

16 Australian Open Titles, 16 Australian Junior Titles

Australian Athlete of the year – 3 times, NSW Athlete of the year - 9 times

Olympic Games – 2008 Beijing 9th , 2012 London 12th, Rio de Janeiro 4th, Tokyo

International Championships:

- 2003 World Youth Championships (Canada) - shot put qualifying (11.59m)**
- 2004 Commonwealth Youth Games (Bendigo Australia)- Gold medal shot put (15.50m), Gold Medal discus (49.92m)**
- 2005 World Youth Championships (Morroco) - Gold Medal discus (54.09m), Bronze medal shot put (15.53m)**
- 2006 Commonwealth Games (Melbourne Australia) – Bronze medal discus (59.44m), 12th Shot Put (14.91m)**
- 2006 World Junior Championships: (Bejing China) – Gold medal Discus (60.63), 7th shot put (15.71m) 2006 World Cup: - 6 th discus (59.68m)**
- 2007 World University Games – Silver medal discus (60.47m), 2009 - discus 1st (62.48m)**
- 2007 World Championships (Osaka Japan) - discus qualifying round (60.44m)**
- 2008 Olympic Games (Beijing China) – discus 8th (60.15m)**
- 2009 World University Games – Gold medal discus (62.48m)**
- 2009 World Championships (Berlin Germany) – Gold medal discus (65.44m)**
- 2010 World Cup (Split Croatia) – Discus 4th (61.34m)**
- 2011 World Championships (Daegu South Korea) – Discus throw 10th (60.05m qual, 59.14m final)**
- 2012 Olympic Games (London England) – Discus 11th (63.97m qual, 60.40m final)**
- 2013 World Championships (Moscow Russia) – Discus 10th (62.85m qual, 62.42m final)**
- 2014 Commonwealth Games (Glasgow Scotland) – Gold medal Discus (64.53m qual, 64.88m final)**
- 2015 World Championships (Beijing China) – Discus 6th (62.01m qual, 63.14m final)**
- 2016 Olympic Games (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) – Discus 4th (64.46m qual, 64.90m final)**
- 2017 World Championships (London, Engalnd) – Discus Silver (65.56 qual, 69.64 final – Australian Open record, Commonwealth record)**
- 2018 Commonwealth Games (Gold Coast, Australia) – Discus Gold 68.26 – Commonwealth Games record**

Australian Championships:

- 2000 Australian All Schools (Adelaide) – U14 Bronze medal shot put (12.74m), U14 14th Discus (24.08m)**
- 2001 Australian All Schools (Melbourne) – U14 Gold medal discus (39.37m), Gold medal shot put (14.01m)**
- 2002 Australian All Schools (Hobart) – U16 Bronze medal discus (45.62m), U16 Bronze medal shot put (12.73m)**
- 2003 Australian Youth (Sydney) - U16 Gold medal discus (47.18m), U16 Gold medal shot put (13.47m), U18 Bronze medal discus (44.81m), U18 Gold medal shot put (13.83m)**
- 2003 Australian All Schools (Brisbane) – U16 Gold medal Discus (44.74m), U16 Gold medal shot put (13.50m), U16 Gold medal hammer (42.82m), U18 Bronze medal discus (44.51m), U18 Bronze medal put (12.72m), U18 Bronze medal hammer (41.97m).**
- 2004 Australian All Schools (Sydney) – Gold (52.13)**
- 2004 Australian U20 – 6th discus (44.20m)**
- 2005 Australian Open (Sydney) – Gold medal discus (58.52m), Gold medal shot put (15.53m)**
- 2005 Australian U20 (Sydney) Gold medal discus, Gold medal shot put**
- 2005 Australian All Schools (Sydney) – U20 Gold medal U20 discus (53.05m), U20 Gold medal shot put (14.67m), U18 Gold medal discus (52.96m), U18 Gold medal shot put (14.20m)**
- 2006 Australian Open (Sydney) – Gold medal discus (60.63m), Gold medal shot put (15.98)**
- 2007 Australian U20 (Hobart) – Gold medal discus (58.48m), Gold medal shot put (16.19m)**
- 2007 Australian Open (Brisbane) – Gold medal discus (60.40m), Gold medal shot put (16.17m)**
- 2008 Australian Open (Brisbane) – Gold medal discus (62.95m)**
- 2009 Australian Open (Brisbane) – Gold medal discus (64.44m)**
- 2010 Australian Open (Perth) – Gold Medal discus (63.61m)**
- 2011 Australian Open (Olympic Park Melbourne) – Gold medal Discus (61.79m)**
- 2012 Australian Open (Lakeside Stadium Melbourne) – Gold medal Discus (62.34m), Gold medal Shot put (16.65m)**
- 2014 Australian Open (SOPAC) – Gold medal Discus (66.81m)**
- 2015 Australian Open (QSAC Brisbane) – Gold medal Discus 64.44m**
- 2016 Australian Open (SOPAC) – Gold medal Discus 63.44m**
- 2017 Australian Open (SOPAC) – Gold medal Discus 65.07m**
- 2018 Australian Open (Gold Coast) – Gold medal 65.30m**

2021 Australian Open (Sydney) – Gold medal 62.74

NSW Championships

- 1997 NSW LA State – U9 Bronze medal shot put 7.20
- 1998 NSW LA State – U10 Gold medal shot put 9.93, Silver discus 30.50
- 1999 NSW LA State – U11 Silver medal shot put 11.20, Gold discus 31.02
- 2000 NSW LA State – U12 Silver medal shot put 12.43, Gold discus 36.46
- 2000 NSW CHS – 12 years Gold medal shot put (11.81m)rec
- 2001 NSW LA State – U13 Gold medal shot put 11.44, Gold discus 43.52
- 2001 NSW CHS 13 years Silver medal javelin (39.12m), 13 years Gold medal shot put (12.91m)rec, 13 years discus Gold medal (36.42m)
- 2002 NSW U16 – Silver medal shot put (11.82m)
- 2002 NSW LA State – U14 Gold medal shot put 13.57, Gold discus 39.74
- 2002 NSW CHS – 14 years Gold medal shot put (15.03m) rec, 14 years discus 12th (27.45m)
- 2002 NSW All Schools – 14 years Gold medal shot put (14.74m), 14 years Gold medal discus (43.84m)
- 2003 NSW U18 – Gold medal shot put 12.21, foul discus
- 2003 NSW U20 – Silver medal shot put (13.52m), 5th discus (42.13m)
- 2003 NSW LA State – U15 Gold medal shot put 14.12, Gold discus 45.62
- 2003 NSW CHS – 15 years Gold medal Shot put (13.35m), 15 years Gold medal discus (42.92m)
- 2004 NSW U20 – Gold medal shot put (13.73m), Silver medal discus (45.07m)
- 2004 NSW CHS – 16 years Gold medal Shot put (14.38m), 16 years Gold medal discus (48.12m)
- 2004 NSW All Schools – Gold medal shot put (14.92m), Gold medal discus (47.43m)
- 2005 NSW Open – Gold medal discus (53.02m), Gold medal shot put (14.72m)
- 2005 NSW U20 – Gold medal discus (51.35m), Gold medal shot put (14.88m)
- 2005 NSW 18 – Gold medal discus (50.42m), Gold medal shot put (14.70m)
- 2005 NSWCHS - 17+ Gold medal shot put (14.71m), 17+ Gold medal discus (52.60m)
- 2005 NSW All Schools – Gold medal shot put (14.51m), Gold medal discus (51.72m)
- 2006 NSW CHS – 17+ Gold medal Shot put (14.73m), Gold medal discus (57.68m)
- 2006 NSW Open – Gold medal shot put (14.63m), Gold medal discus (50.68m)
- 2006 NSW U20 – Gold medal shot put (14.36m), Gold medal discus (56.18m)
- 2007 NSW Open – Gold medal Shot put (15.01m), Gold medal discus (54.82m)
- 2008 NSW U23 – Gold medal shot put (15.43m), Gold medal discus (59.87m)
- 2008 NSW Open – Gold medal shot put (15.68m), Gold medal discus (61.38m)
- 2009 NSW U23 – Gold medal shot put (15.76m), Gold medal discus (60.40m)
- 2010 NSW Open – Gold medal discus (62.21m)
- 2011 NSW Open – Gold medal discus (58.10m)
- 2012 NSW Open – Gold medal shot put (15.83m), Gold medal discus (61.01m)
- 2013 NSW Open – Gold medal shot put (16.82m NSW open record), Gold medal discus (60.77m)
- 2014 NSW Open – Gold medal shot put (17.05m), Gold medal discus (65.59m)
- 2016 NSW Open – Gold medal discus (64.57m)
- 2017 NSW Open – Gold medal discus (66.78m)
- 2018 NSW Open – Gold medal discus (66.02m)

RECORD(S):

Commonwealth Record – discus: 69.64m Gold Coast 2018

Oceania Record – discus 69.64

Australian Open Record – discus: 69.64m Gold Coast, 2018

Australian & NSW Under 20 record - shot put: 16.30m - Sydney, 16/02/08

Australian & NSW Under 20 record - discus: 61.92m - Melbourne, 21/02/08

Australian & NSW Under 18 record - discus: 58.52m - Brisbane, 26/11/05

Australian & NSW Under 18 record - discus: 55.94m - Gold Coast, 5/07/05

Australian & NSW Under 18 record - discus: 55.78m - Sydney, 5/03/05

NSW Open record – discus – 65.84m – Sydney Track Classic 27/02/10

NSW Open record – discus – 67.99 – Wiesbaden Germany 10/05/2014

NSW Open Record – discus: 69.64m Gold Coast, 2018

NSW Open record – shot put – 16.82m – NSW Open SOPAC 02/03/2013

NSW Open record – shot put – 17.05m – NSW Open SOPAC 02/03/2014

Westfields AC records -52 school and club records (the most number by any athlete)

Brief history

Enrolled at Westfields Sports in 2000 being accepted into the Basketball program. By end of year 7 successfully reapplied for acceptance into Athletics program and has remained a member of the Westfields Athletics Club ever since. Has been coached by Denis Knowles since 8 years old although was initially coached by Denis' son Hayden who later for a time became her Strength & Conditioning coach and general manager. In Senior Athletics and School Athletics Dani's first Gold medal was the NSW CHS 12 years shot put for which she broke the state record and repeated this for the next two years. Dani won her first ever National shot put title at the age of 13 at the Australian All Schools, Melbourne (she won both shot and discus from standing throws) and continued to be undefeated in shot put in her age group for the rest of her career. Her discus success would be more gradual with frequent wins at State, however infrequent wins at National titles until 2003 after which she was never again defeated.

Her early shot put success became somewhat of a stigma which would carry over into her latter teens. Selectors for both National Grand Prix's and Australian youth teams would regularly fail to choose Dani for the discus. In fact her first selection in a National Grand Prix event saw her throw the shot put despite her coach's protestations she was entered for the Discus and the programmers had got it wrong. Her first International selection was the 2003 World Youth Championships in Canada and even though she qualified for both discus and shot put, the selectors gave her only the shot. Dani threw only in the preliminary rounds. Her initial media attention was mistakenly centred on the shot put. Denis observed that even though she would go on to be undefeated at Australian Championships in shot put, including 4 out of 4 Australian Open titles, that Dani has never thrown the full size shot in a training session. Instead on occasions when a National title was approaching he would have her throw one or two sessions with a lighter implement. Denis quipped "she never trains for shot put". Yet, the media and AA would continue to talk about her shot put talent when she became the youngest female in more than 50 years to win the Australian Open title at 15 years of age.

Dani would soon change the media's perception of her future when shortly after missing the final at the World Youth Championships she would throw in both shot put and discus at the 2004 Commonwealth Youth Championships in Bendigo against the reigning World Youth Champion. Dani would come from behind to win the shot put in her latter throws and led the discus from start to finish. Dani validated her omission from the discus in Canada by demonstrating to all that she was more than a shot putter by winning both titles. Ironically during the next three years when Dani became World Youth Champion, World Junior Champion and Commonwealth Games Bronze medallist, the two major local Grand Prix's (Sydney and Canberra) would not offer the womens' discus and Dani would year after year be asked to throw the shot put in front of her local supporters. One year when Dani indicated she was unavailable due to a prior commitment for the Sydney Grand Prix, pressure was put on her to throw the shot because AA had flown USA's number one shot putter into Sydney to compete. Several weeks later Dani was verbally reprimanded for not competing in Sydney. It was frustrating that the discus was not included in the Grand Prix's in NSW and Canberra where the locals could support their World ranked performer. Thankfully the organisers saw the error of their ways and after three years the womens' discus was finally added to the program.

After Bendigo, Dani appeared to gain the confidence and dedication that would become one of her leading characteristics. Denis and Dani then set their sights on the bigger picture and long term goal setting (2005 World Youth, 2006 World Juniors etc.) became the key to their preparation. Denis recruited son Hayden for her strength & conditioning, Alex Mackellar for her Gymnastics training at Westfields and several sponsors and supporters that would help ease the costs of being a professional athlete. Dani went on to win discus at the World Youth Championships in Morocco and Bronze in shot put (remember she doesn't train!), Bronze at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, and then probably one of her biggest wins the World Junior Championships in Beijing breaking the magical 60 metre barrier.

Morocco was an interesting experience and major culture shock. Besides the obvious cultural problems, both Dani and Denis had difficulties. Dani with the food which at the best of times for any western world person is generally unpalatable. Dani recalls she survived mainly on a supply of tins of baked beans in between the occasional pickings at plates of local delicacies. Meanwhile Denis faced technical issues. They had 12 months earlier established from the IAAF which brand and specification implements were to be used and accordingly acquired and began training with the correct discus. In Morocco at the technical meeting Denis was assured that the specified implements would be brought out for athlete access at both training and competition. This was not the case as the local organising committee had not purchased the designated implements. One of the key pre-requisites of being awarded an IAAF event is that the necessary equipment is supplied. It was a crucial issue because Dani had spent a whole year learning how to 'flight' the special discus. When the competition commenced it was to the horror of most of the athletes that the discus was not in the pool of supplied implements. Fortunately Dani had checked-in her private implement and it was the one that

the entire group used in the preliminaries and final. Dani of course won her first World title and Dani's discus used by most at the 2005 World Youth Championships now hangs behind glass on show at Westfields Sports.

The 2006 Commonwealth Games became Dani's first senior International Championships. But it would present some difficulties for Denis who was not given access to the Olympic village nor the training facilities. A separate training facility outside the village at a local school was provided for the duo. Denis tells the story of having to retrieve a discus which had sailed over a fence. He stuck his head over the fence and politely asked the passers-by "can I have my discus please?" Denis would also have to 'rough-it' with all available accommodation in Melbourne booked up years in advance. Denis stayed at various places. Receiving no financial support, Westfields came to the rescue and organised a Hire vehicle and helped with expenses. Denis ended up boarding in a room of a nice lady's house and for a few nights Denis agreed to sleep on the floor until the room was available. Of course Melbourne would be a fantastic success for Dani coming from behind on her final throw to take Bronze and knock out the former Olympic Champion from the medals. Dani became the youngest Australian ever to medal in a throwing event. Olympic 100m Champion Linford Christie was asked in a television interview "who impressed him most at the Games?". He replied "that 18 year old Aussie girl who came from behind to snatch the Bronze medal in the discus". Later after the closing ceremony at the official Commonwealth Games party Linford went up to Dani and spoke to her about how impressed he was. She politely thanked him and later asked someone "who was that?". When told she was obviously impressed.

Dani would later in 2006 compete in Beijing for the first time at the World Junior Championships. Considered by most to be as difficult, if not more so, than the Comm. Games it would be the biggest test of Dani's ability thus far. Monsoonal rains interrupted the competition and rendered the conditions non-conducive to P.B.'s. Denis also recalls they had similar equipment problems to those in Morocco with the promised discus nowhere in sight. However Dani threw a P.B. and convincingly won. Dani would miss the closing ceremony when called upon for drug testing. It took hours to provide an acceptable sample. Beijing was so hot and humid that Dani had to drink more than her normal amount of water. This rendered the PH value of the sample too weak and it would take several hours before a sample was usable. By the time the testing was complete Dani missed the closing ceremony. Weeks later Dani would contest her first 'full-world' Championships when she was selected to represent Oceania at the 2006 World Cup in Athens. Dani finished a creditable 6th place against her best ever opposition.

By 2007 throwing over 60 metres became an expected target by the media and Dani would not disappoint taking out the National Junior and Open titles with 60-plus performances. Then a well earned silver medal at the World University Games produced a season best of 60.47 metres. The year would finish with Dani's biggest yet tournament the 2007 World Championships. Claimed to be harder to win than the Olympics Dani would learn much and gain competitive experience. Dani would later say that she was no longer intimidated by the psyching-out tactics of the older competitors. She now knew they were beatable. Dani was very unlucky to miss the final being bumped out on the very last throw of the competition into 13th place. Dani was the youngest competitor and the winner from Germany was twice Dani's age.

The 2008 Athens Olympics became the next focus and the required 'A' standard was 61.00 metres. Dani threw a P.B. of 61.92m at the Sydney Grand Prix (remember my protestations about not holding the discus – this was the first time they held it and Dani finally had a chance to perform in front of her home crowd). Then another 'A' qualifier at the NSW Open Championships of 61.38 metres. Now all she needed to secure automatic selection was a win at the Australian Open in Brisbane. Dani threw a personal best of 61.95 metres on her first round attempt and retired from the competition. She had felt a twinge in her hamstring muscle and safely withdrew. As fate would have it I missed her throw with the 110m hurdles being over at the warm up track. Next Dani would travel to Beijing for the Olympic test event which doubled as the National Championships of China. I was there with Dani, but unfortunately would miss her throw again whilst warming up my 110m hurdler and even though I nearly had a heart attack racing through security to catch hopefully her last throw, alas it was all over. However I was told that even though she finished third with an impressive 62.65m she had put out three fouls that were around the 65m mark (two of them just to the right of the sector and one a foot foul).

Upon returning home Denis and Dani decided to prepare for the Olympics. When it came around they flew over for a four week training and competition schedule. Dani competed at the British U23's and a meet in Switzerland where she put out a 66m foul. An unfortunate death of a close family member brought Dani back home and then she suffered a bout of tonsillitis. Still requiring the pre-departure throw of 59 metres she was advised to go to Brisbane to achieve this. Denis, in his own words, responded with "I decide what is in Dani's best interest" and they went to the Australian pre-Olympic base in Hong Kong instead where she performed the standard. As the Australian media reported at the time, the Hong Kong base had some major issues. First there was the accommodation which split the Australian team. Some were in comfortable hotel facilities and some was in University dormitories. One group of athletes and coaches refused to stay in the dormitories, got their way and accordingly others were moved out of the hotels and had to swap with them. Denis was again on the 'outer'. Denis had struggled for months to be given information about the athlete's accommodation details so he could book himself close to Dani. He was kept out of the communication loop long enough so that when he was finally given the relevant details it was too late to book close to them. Denis' access to Dani was once again difficult. Dani went on to finish 9th at the Olympics, just missing the top eight and another three

throws. Commentator Ray Hadley had called her third round throw “up there with the medals (about 65 metres)” but it landed centimetres to the right of the sector. Despite Dani’s earlier setbacks she had once again proved the big throw was in her and it would only be a matter of time before it happened.

2009 would bring the World Championships and all of “team Dani” knew she had the capability of medalling. The media didn’t have the same level of confidence simply because Dani was only ranked in the top 20 in the World, but we knew what she was capable of and the number of 65m+ throws that were fouls. The World Champs. are tougher than the Olympics and accordingly the ‘A’ qualifier was bumped up to 62.00 metres. Once again the home ground advantage of the Sydney Grand Prix produced a 62+ throw as did the Melbourne Grand Prix. A win at the Australian Open cemented Dani’s spot in the team. Dani once again won both the Discus and Shot Put titles which made it 9 out of 9 National open titles. Dani would go to Belgrade to win the World University Games with 62.48m and both her and Denis would stay on in Cologne as a training base. This would make her stay for the World Championships in Berlin a very long 10 weeks. At the University Games, Denis had accreditation to the training area but not access to the village or the athlete transport. Denis stayed in a hotel that he described as ‘early industrial’ in design. Each room had a portrait of a World leader. Room 51 had a portrait of Hitler. On the day of the final Denis’ taxi got caught in a rain storm and got lost. Denis had to walk the last kilometre to the stadium in the pouring rain. The event was delayed and a late arriving and drenched Denis got to warm-up Dani. He observed travelling to the main arena that the stadium was covered in graffiti and falling apart. Dani won the event and in doing so defeated the World number 4 from Poland. Denis had to rush off back to England for a wedding and missed the medal ceremony.

Denis and Dani met up again in Cologne. The following weeks would see Dani at her finest when she would defeat the current World Champion. In fact during the year Dani had defeated both the Olympic and World Champion and various medallists on five occasions. Denis would finally gain his deserved status and moved into the athletes’ village as the official Australian coach. Denis had held this title in the past at Youth and Junior events, but this was his first time with the ‘big boys’. Finally Denis would not be ‘locked out’. And finally Dani and Denis would take on the best in the World without worrying about access to each other. Dani threw the automatic qualifier with her first throw and walked away. On the day of the final it poured rain and the warm up was delayed. Dani commented “there’s no way a bit of rain was going to spoil all the hard work we’ve put into this”. Denis would later say at that point he knew she was bullet proof. He also said consider this: “The local favourite and reigning World Champion Gerd Kanter was considered talentless at the age of 21 and she was now defending her title at 42. Dani was about to win the title at 21” ... the youngest ever to do so. The final was about to start, but as always there were dramas. Dani was signalling to Denis she needed a towel. The small one she had was drenched and the large one had the ASICS logo so heavily taped over by the officials it was unusable. Denis couldn’t understand her signals and finally the New Zealand team sitting near Denis told him what she wanted and they lent him a towel. Denis scrunched it up into a ball and hurled it over the crowd, over the mote, over the photographers and into Dani’s hands (after all he is the best throws coach in the world!). Despite some of us in Australia scared that after 2 throws Dani would again miss the final, she was never in doubt producing 3 personal best throws all in succession and winning the title with her 5th round effort of 65.44 metres.

Those Australians that hadn’t stayed up to witness this awoke that morning to the news that Dani had become the Champion of the World. As an interesting side story, the betting agencies had Dani at 65 to 1. One of our club parents had put \$10 on Dani and won \$650. We later learned that one of the Australian athletes in the crowd cheering for Dani had put \$500 on Dani to win. He came home with over \$20,000.00 in his pocket. Dani would later say “I didn’t know you could bet on me?”

Dani has contested 3 Olympic Games (Beijing, London and Rio de Janeiro), 3 Commonwealth Games (Melbourne, Glasgow and Gold Coast), 2 World Youth, 2 World University, World Junior Championships and 6 World Championships. She has been victorious in all these Championships excepting the Olympic Games. However her 4th placing at the 2016 Rio Olympics was a milestone having contested the title as the number 4 in the world at the time and coming very close to Silver or Bronze on her 6th round foul which just went out of the sector. The 2017-2018 season would become Dani’s finest when she would compete at her 6th World Championships in London. Once again competing against the best in the World Dani almost snatched her second World title when she threw just a metre short of Perkovic. Dani’s throw was her life time best 69.64, just centimetres short of the 70m mark and grabbing her the Silver medal. Then at the 2018 Commonwealth Games Dani won the Gold again with the longest throw on Australian soil; a massive 68.26m.

In her career to date Dani has won a total of 32 Australian titles, including 16 Australian Open Titles. Dani is one of only nine athletes (along with Valerie Adams, Usain Bolt, Veronica Campbell-Brown, Jacques Freitag, Yelena Isinbayeva, Kirani James, Jana Pittman, and David Storl) to win world championships at the youth, junior, and senior level. It is believed that in the World history of female discus throwing Dani has the longest throw (69.64) by any nonsanctioned athlete. In other words all athletes having thrown further have at some stage of their career received bans for illegal drug abuse; making Dani probably the greatest ‘clean’ discus thrower in History.

At the time of writing Dani had made the decision to miss the 2019 World Championships. She needed to rest a recurring back injury and other minor issues, preferring to put all her energies into preparing for the 2000 Tokyo Olympics. In December of 2019 after her brilliant victory at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games Dani decided to have her first competition throw in 14 months, it was her way to test "where she was at". Requiring 63.50 for the Olympic A qualifier, Dani easily topped that with 4 throws; 60.78m, 64.23m, 65.93m and 65.23m. Look out Tokyo!

A few interesting facts:

- Only 5 Australian women have ever won the World Championships; Cathy Freeman (400m), Jana Pittman (400m hurdles) Sally Pearson (100m hurdles) and Dani Samuels (discus) Kelsey-Lee Barber (Javelin). In fact there are only four men; Rob de Castella (marathon), Dimitri Markov (pole vault), Nathan Deakes (50km walk), and Steven Hooker (pole vault).
- Dani has won 32 Australian titles which includes 16 Australian Open titles Dani has won all 16 out of 16 Australian open titles she has contested.
Australian Athlete of the year – 3 times, NSW Athlete of the year - 8 times
Olympic Games – 2008 Beijing 9th , 2012 London 12th Rio de Janeiro 4th.
- The Tokyo Olympics will be Dani's 4th Olympic Games
- Dani has never been defeated at National level in Shot Put at any age (despite never training for the event) – one exception when at the age of 12 she competed in the Australian U15 All Schools at the age of 12 when she won Bronze.
- Most people wouldn't know that Dani has won an Australian Hammer throw title (2003 U16)
- Dani became the youngest ever female to win the Australian Open Shot put title (aged 15)
- Dani became the youngest ever Australian female to win a Commonwealth Games medal in throwing events (2006 Comm. Games Bronze in Discus at the age of 18.)
- Dani became the youngest ever thrower in the world to win a throwing event at a World Championships (2009 aged 21)
- Dani is one of only nine athletes (along with Valerie Adams, Usain Bolt, Veronica Campbell-Brown, Jacques Freitag, Yelena Isinbayeva, Kirani James, Jana Pittman, and David Storl) to win world championships at the youth, junior, and senior level.
- One of Dani's difficulties is to be able to deliver throws in training on a regular basis. In 20 years of training a conservative estimate would be she has delivered almost 100,000 throws. This inevitably causes soreness in the hands and wrist. So in order to change the accent of these forces Dani requested short round steel bars of varying weights. The different hand grip on these bars allows for muscles and tendons to be stressed in a different manner thus relieving the overworked ones. These bars we have made for Dani over the years in the Westfields Sports workshops.
- Dani has attended the Westfields Athletics Presentation Night since 2001. The only times she has been absent was when she was overseas or interstate at the time. A life member of the Westfields Athletics Club, Dani withdraws herself from inclusion in the major awards, allowing younger athletes to accept.
- Dani has on several occasions been advised by Athletics Australia to be coached by their appointed coach. She has on all occasions respectfully declined. She has recently indicated that she will never leave Denis Knowles. Denis and her form a special partnership that cannot be replaced or duplicated.