



*who will it be?*

Media Release – “The Big Shot’s big day comes to Christchurch”

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For immediate release

The day Canterbury athletics fans have been waiting for is almost here, with double World Indoor Champion Ryan Whiting (USA) in town to take on local favourite Tom Walsh and Australian champion Damien Birkenhead in a revolutionary central city event.

The Big Shot – an international shot put competition to be staged in the midst of the rebuilding Christchurch CBD – will be held tomorrow, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, at the Retro Sports Facility, the Gap Filler project site on the footprint of the former Crowne Plaza Hotel, opposite the Christchurch Casino. A drop-in circle has been constructed specially and installed at the site, which will be transformed into a customised shot put arena for the day with temporary grandstands and “ringside” corporate tables.

Whiting has won the last two World Indoor Championships, winning most recently at Sopot, Poland in March, an event which was Walsh’s international breakthrough when he took a surprise bronze medal. The 27-year-old successfully defended the title he first won in Istanbul in 2012, and between those titles also won the silver medal in the 2013 World Championships outdoors in Moscow.

Walsh, a double international medallist in 2014 at the World Indoor Championships and Commonwealth Games, and five-time New Zealand champion, should give the world champion a strong test with the vocal Canterbury crowd behind him. Birkenhead, twice Australian champion and a bronze medallist at the World Junior Championships in 2012, is a fast-improving dark horse, throwing a personal best of 19.84m last month.

Betting on the event is available through the TAB – the world champion is rightly installed as favourite, but some strong support is being shown for the local hero, and Birkenhead is surely worth a longshot bet at odds of \$10.00.

Event director Paul Coughlan was very pleased with how the event had come together, and described it as an exciting new development for Christchurch. “I think it’s great that we can use spaces like this to bring people into the central city and get them engaged in something a bit different” he said today. The event is being staged by the charitable International Track & Field Trust, which was established in 2011 for the purpose of running the popular International Track Meet and similar such events, with a view to developing and showcasing the sport of athletics.

There is also a Future Stars shot put event, with the region’s best 11-year-olds showing the crowd and their heroes what they can do, in the hopes of one day following in their footsteps. Entertainment between the two events will include Oceania and New Zealand Freestyle Football champion Olly Bowman.

General admission is free to the public from 4pm, with very limited space available in the corporate hosting areas. The Future Stars shot put will commence at 4.30pm, with The Big Shot scheduled for 6.00pm. Further information is available on the website [thebigshot.co.nz](http://thebigshot.co.nz) or on the Facebook page of the International Track Meet.

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