

# HIGH HOPES

## Athletes enter a bubble to hit the heights



### MICHAEL SAUNDERS

IT is the latest craze among AFL clubs and costs thousands in travel and accommodation fees but one Melbourne company is looking to bring high-altitude training to the Gold Coast at a fraction of the price.

While the Gold Coast is just 13.1 metres above sea level, the Runaway Bay Sports Super Centre could become the next hot spot for elite athletes and sporting clubs wanting the unique form of training and conditioning.

The centre has begun trials of a \$60,000 altitude pool tent, which is designed to simulate swimming in altitudes up to 3000 metres.

The tent was donated by Melbourne-based Altitude Services, who also hope to build a specialised five-star altitude lodge — also at Runaway Bay — that could accommodate 32 athletes at one time.

Sports Super Centre director Brendan Flynn said the facility could offer the same training as camps in Colorado and Arizona but at a quarter of the price tag.

"AFL clubs are spending up to a million dollars to travel to these camps in America and what we want is for them to come stay here for much less," Flynn said.

"Teams will also have the opportunity to return mid season for a 'top up' if they need to."

Altitude training is believed to increase cardiovascular and respiratory systems with many, in-

cluding Gold Coast half-ironman athlete Matt Whitehouse (pictured), swearing by the program.

"It helps your oxygen level and helps run your body more effectively," Whitehouse said.

"Therefore on race day you have that extra gear to push your body."

This year some AFL clubs have decided to pull the plug on overseas-based high-altitude camps.

The Brisbane Lions and Carlton have cancelled their end-of-season altitude training camps, claiming the financial costs of the trip outweigh the performance gains.

The Gold Coast Suns have made the journey to the US for high-altitude training for the past five seasons and fitness boss

Stephen Schwerdt said the club would continue to invest in the trips.

The club is planning to travel to the University of Wyoming in Laramie in December.

"We obviously consider (high-altitude training) to be a pretty important part of pre-season training," Schwerdt said.

But Schwerdt said that while the club would investigate the possible facilities at Runaway Bay, he believed a permanent high-altitude environment had better results for the players.

"The players live in high altitude all day every day whether it be walking around or training and we believe this has better a better effect," he said.

The Sports Super Centre has already begun its trial of altitude

training with Altitude Services donating an altitude tent for its 50m swimming pool.

Altitude Services general manager Rod Cedaro is hoping the accommodation facility can be finished within 18 months and be used by athletes preparing for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

He said there were also plans to build a simulated altitude exercise room at the facility.

"There is nowhere in Australia for altitude training," Cedaro said.

"We're putting \$2.5 million on the table and we're asking the Gold Coast City Council and State Government to give us the land to build the lodge.

"This has the possibility to attract teams and athletes from Australia and around the world."

### BY THE NUMBERS

#### Elevation heights above sea level

Flagstaff Arizona: 2104 metres  
Boulder Colorado: 1655 metres  
Park City Utah: 2103 metres  
Laramie, Wyoming: 2184 metres  
Gold Coast, Queensland: 13.1 metres

**BUBBLE BATH:** Runaway Bay Sports Centre now has a high-altitude tent.



### HOW IT WORKS

- Simulated altitude is created by decreasing the percentage of oxygen in the air.
- Simulated heights between 2200 and 4400 metres produce best outcomes.
- Training increases red blood cell concentration, endurance, power, respiratory systems and lean body mass.
- Best results are achieved between nine and 14 days after altitude camps with benefits persisting for about three to four weeks.
- A consistent six to seven days exposure per week for four to six weeks for 10-12 hours per day is enough to produce the desired effect.