

Freya dives head first into her fear

By Steve Box

sportsdesk@shropshirestar.co.uk

AS A child, Freya Anderson was scared of water.

Fast forward a few years and she's about to dive into a pool representing her country at a huge global sporting event.

The 17-year-old is one of two Ellesmere College Titans swimmers competing at the Commonwealth Games with Cassie Wild, also 17, part of the Scotland squad.

While it may be a surprise that Anderson is in Australia considering her early fears, it's certainly not a shock on recent form.

Just last month she warmed up for the trip to the Gold Coast by defending her 100m freestyle title at the British Championships in Edinburgh.

The teenager is planning to make the most of her first trip Down Under, although a paddle in the ocean looks out of the question.

Altitude

"I think I was scared of water as a child and I'm still scared of the sea - it's because you can't see what's in there!" said Anderson, who hopes to race in some relay events for England as well as the 100m freestyle.

"I've no expectation going into it, I just want to enjoy it. Training has gone well.

"I've never done a multi-sport event before so it will be interesting to meet with other athletes and be around the team.

"I'm coming off a back injury so it's been about getting my fitness up. I went to an altitude camp in Colorado with British Swimming a few months back and had physio there where the facilities were fantastic."

Anderson has already travelled the world for competitions, winning gold at the 2017 World Junior Championships in Indianapolis, and says being around superstars like Adam Peaty is inspiring.

"It's insane how Adam has gone to the top and stayed there. Being around him and watching what he does is inspiring and motivating," she added. "But everyone is really genuine and happy to help me with anything, they're just normal people."

Wild will take to the pool in the 50m and 100m backstroke, and also hopes to be selected for the relays.

"The biggest concern is it's an outdoor pool and with it being really sunny it will be hard to see where I'm going (backstroke swimmers use the lines on the roof for orientation), but hopefully I'll get used to it," she said. "Being a home



Freya Anderson and Cassie Wild. Below. The Team Scotland kit for the Games

games for them, the Australians are trying to do what they can to give them an advantage and it's something they will be used to.

"I was over in Australia in January and really liked it there. I loved the weather - obviously - but Australia seemed really easy-going and relaxed, I liked the atmosphere.

"This is my first senior team that I have made so I don't have massive expectations, but I want to get a personal best and I hope to make the Europeans at the end of the year.

"It's good being out with people who have done Commonwealths before because they are helpful and supportive if you are struggling with anything."

Being selected has meant Wild being kitted out in tradition attire and the 2018 tartan re-

flects the Team Scotland colours of blue, purple and magenta, with a tinge of green to reflect the Games' hosts.

"I think it's better than the Glasgow kit, I much prefer this one!" she said.

"It's my first time wearing a kilt as well but it all fits great."

While Anderson and Wild regularly race for the same team at Ellesmere, Anderson admits it will be a strange feeling to see her close friend as a foe.

"We're always together all the time, even at school, so it will be strange for us to be on opposing sides," she added.

"It makes it more exciting but I'm sure we'll see each other poolside and stay in contact over the phone."

However they get on over the next 11 days, they'll certainly have plenty to catch up on when they return to Shropshire.

