Hectic lead-up to national titles on NW

By Rod Morris

DEVONPORT woman Kathy Smith affectionately refers to her husband Steve as "Tag".

Later this month, Kathy and "Tag" will be among 350 swimmers competing in the 16th annual AUSSI national swimming championships, which are to be held at the Devonport Olympic Pool and Lake Eugenana.

Kathy competed in last year's Australian championships in Brisbane and Steve tagged along.

But this year, while Kathy will be defending her Australian 100 m and 200 m butterfly titles as well as the 5 km long distance championship, Steve, who modestly describes himself as a mug swimmer, will compete in five events — the 50 m backstroke, freestyle and butterfly, 100 m backstroke and 200 m breaststroke.

Kathy will also swim in the 50 m butterfly, 200 m medley and 400 m freestyle.

The lead-up to the titles has been a particularly busy time for the pair, who are members of the Devonport Devils Swimming Club, which is the host club.

"It has been very difficult, trying to wear two hats, both as a competitor and an organiser but the club is very strong and everything is falling into place," Mrs Smith said yesterday.

Devonport Devils swimmers (from left) Kathy Smith, Trish Beveridge, Camelia Newey and Richard Colbeck proudly display their banner for next week's AUSSI national swimming championships.

"I'm really looking forward to the championships this year because we only had three Devonport members that swam in Brisbane last year.

"With about 30 taking part this year, the Devonport club should get quite a number of medals," she predicted.

A fitter at Wesley Vale's APPM mill, Steve has been training nearly as hard as his wife.

"I've been out in the water about three or four days a week and Kathy is out training about six days a week," Steve said.

"I competed in the Devonport Triathlon last weekend and enjoyed that but for the nationals, I'll concentrate on the pool only — I'm not an open water swimmer."

Kathy, a part-time teacher and part-time computer operator with the Education Department, is quietly confident of a successful defence of her titles, although she was quick to add: "I don't know all the dangers in the programme, because of the swimmers coming up from last year into a different age division."

Both have been heavily involved with the organisation of the week-long titles which start on Tuesday, in particular the social side.

"There are a number of night time social activities planned. It is the best time to get to know swimmers from other states," she said.