

Gold medallist using his melanoma battle to inspire teens

I was in a race for life

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IT will go down as one of the most remarkable Commonwealth Games gold medal stories of all time.

Teenage 1500m swimmer Sam Short was on an operating table in Budapest for lifesaving surgery just five weeks before he won gold in Birmingham in the most demanding swim event of them all.

Short is now telling his story to raise awareness for skin cancer.

Short left Australia for the world championships in Slovakia after biopsies on two moles that skin specialists had found on his back.

"I got the results and the bad news as soon as I touched down in Slovakia," he said. "I got a bit emotional."

This was the 18-year-old's first trip to represent Australia overseas. He was told surgery couldn't wait until after the Commonwealth Games.

"Mine was a level 2 melanoma," he said. "It's getting up there."

"The doctors urged me to have it taken out straight away."

The Australian team doctor gave

Short the all clear to swim at the world championships – but then go straight into surgery.

"I literally went from the pool to the operating table," he said.

"It was crazy. I got out of the water after my 1500m race and then got a taxi to the hospital where I met my parents and the professor who was doing the surgery."

The operation took two hours.

He had 20 stitches in his back and was supposed to rest for two weeks but got back in the pool in a week.

Short is telling his remarkable story to make others aware of skin cancer dangers. He is now an ambassador for the Melanoma Australia Institute and addressed the National Press Club on Wednesday.

"I didn't ever think I'd be having a melanoma at 18," he said.

"It's been a massive wake-up call."

"Clearly my sun safety routine during all those years spent at the beach just wasn't up to scratch."

"That's why I have joined the cause – to make others aware it can get you early. It's really important I help spread the message."



Sam Short had a deadly melanoma. Picture: Steve Pohlner