

Still falling to earth

LOCAL primary school pupils were inspired by the amazing stories of five Beijing Olympians at a special meeting in Castle Hill last week.

Gold-medal winning pole vaulter Steve Hooker was joined by five-time Olympic kayaker Clint Robinson and the Australian Yngling Sailing Team at USANA Health Services which has recently moved to Castle Hill. The group is sponsored by the company that supplies them with health supplements.

Pupils from St Agatha's Primary School in Pennant Hills and Our Lady of the Rosary in Rouse Hill were able to try on Hooker's medal for size and asked questions of the athletes.

Hooker spoke about the difference between Athens and Beijing.

"It's been an interesting four years," he said. "In Athens, I finished 28th and was a long way off the pace. I didn't think that four years later I'd be the Olympic champion."

He talked about the luck involved in his sport and of the moment he crossed the bar.

"With pole vault, there are so many variables so you need luck. To have everything come together on the day is incredible," Hooker said. "That realisation as you're going over the bar and falling to earth from six metres in the air, I was celebrating. It's still hard to believe."

Mother-of-three and champion



sailor Karyn Gojnich said she had spent about four weeks at home this year, but the work was all worth it when they returned to the parade last Monday.

"It was amazing how many people came out," she said. "It did make us feel like part of the team. To see all those people, it was very, very special."

Robinson encouraged the aspiring athletes in the room to work hard, regardless of their natural ability.

"I love to win, but I know that if I don't get up and train, another athlete will," he said. "People who are naturally gifted don't always do as well as people who have to fight hard."

Caitlin Wilde, 6, with Olympic pole vaulter Steve Hooker and Josh Wilde, 8 of West Pennant Hills USANA Health Sciences in Castle Hill.

Picture:
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