

Some we know, most we don't, but all are likely to soar

From a recently discovered 14-year-old surfer girl to a future leader of one of the world's most successful airlines, the faces to watch this year are a varied bunch. *Herald* reporters give their tips for the people most likely to make headlines in 2006.

SPORT

Laura Enever A week ago Enever, 14, was looking forward to watching her favourite pro-junior, the Australian front-runner Jessi Miley-Dyer, compete in the junior world surfing championships at Enever's home beach, North Narrabeen.

Hours after Enever arrived, she found herself competing against Miley-Dyer for the title of girls' junior world champion, having been asked to compete when a number of US entrants failed to show and reserves could not be found. Enever made it to round three in the junior world championships with little or no time to prepare. "She's a really great surfer and so I didn't mind that I lost to her, because I was kind of going for her before I was in the comp," Enever said.

Despite having never competed in a pro-junior event before the world championships, there are suggestions Enever's talent is far from incidental. "You could hear more of her in the future, definitely if she keeps pushing along," the contest's director, Luke Egan, said.

This year Enever will join the pro-junior circuit, which means she will compete against the best in her age group and above. In the meantime her main goal is to enjoy doing what she does best.

"I just want to surf, do my HSC, then keep surfing and hopefully everything will go well. I just want to have fun."

Sophie Gyles

Jason Culina A hugely talented footballer who keeps the ball on a string, the potential of the Soccerros midfielder Culina was identified when he was a teenager with Sydney United and Sydney Olympic, but when he left Australia his career stood still.

Almost five seasons of reserve-team football with the Dutch giants Ajax Amsterdam might have done a lot for his bank balance, but it did not help his ambitions. Still, Ajax is renowned for teaching young players good habits, and when Culina left Amsterdam in 2004 for Twente Enschede, the quality quickly re-emerged.



Ultimate drop-in ... Laura Enever only went to watch the world junior championships - but she found herself battling the competition's front-runner. Photo: James Brickwood

Within months Culina had made his debut for Australia, and a stream of goals for FC Twente made him a target for bigger European clubs. The appointment of the Dutchman Guus Hiddink as the Soccerros coach last August was a circuit-breaker. Within months Culina had joined Hiddink's club PSV Eindhoven. Competition for places in the Soccerros midfield is white-hot, but with Hiddink's support the 25-year-old is poised to star for his country in the World Cup finals.

Michael Cockerill

Ian Thorpe It has been more than a year since Thorpe raced on the big stage after he took a sabbatical following his success at the Athens Olympics. He will be keen to show the break has done him little harm when he spearheads the Australian swimming team at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne in March. Winning Commonwealth Games gold is nothing new for Thorpe. He has 10 gold medallions from the past two Games in Kuala Lumpur and Manchester, and you can expect him to add a few more to his tally. Later in the year Thorpe will take on the Americans, Japanese and Canadians in the Pan-Pacific Championships in Canada, as his build-up for the Beijing Olympics continues.

Michael Cowley



Hot to trot ... the model Ellie Ross, left, is very much in vogue; the Soccerro Jason Culina is expected to shine in Germany; the writer Markus Zusak has made an acclaimed move to adult writing, and the performing arts director Nicole Alexander is importing a major show to Sydney.

ARTS

Nicole Alexander As a student at Ravenswood School for Girls Alexander produced a version of *Les Miserables* with a cast of 110 girls. A decade later she is one of the brightest of Sydney's performing arts producers. Through her company, Alexander Productions, the 26-year-old runs vocal workshops for young people at the Conservatorium of Music, and she has also managed to mount a \$2 million production of Jake Heggie's death row opera *Dead Man Walking*, never before seen in Sydney.

The show, which features 64 musicians, 64 principals and

choristers, 18 supernumeraries and 16 child choristers, will open next year.

Alexa Moses

Markus Zusak The Gyemea author Zusak, the son of German and Austrian immigrants, began writing at 16 and finished his first manuscript at 18, although his first two novels were rejected by publishers.

While writing his early books, he worked as a tutor, a substitute high-school teacher and a cleaner to support himself. He published his first book, *The Underdog*, at 24. Since then, he has written three more books for young adults, and snared the

Queensland Premier's Literary Awards (Young Adult Book) in 2002, the NSW Premier's Literary Award (Ethel Turner prize) in 2003, and the 2003 CBC Book of the Year Award for Older Readers. In September last year his first adult book *The Book Thief* was published to critical acclaim.

Alexa Moses

FASHION

Ellie Ross As Michelle Leslie was walking into Bali's Kerobokan jail on drugs charges, Ross, 16, was walking through the doors of Leslie's former Australian modelling agency Chic Management - and landing several plum assign-

ments. While most modelling neophytes have to wait for the work to trickle in, the North Shore schoolgirl's first job was a shoot for *Vogue*, and in weeks she had landed fashion advertising campaigns for Third Millennium and Sportsgirl.

"The response was immediate ... it is unusual," said the Chic director Kathy Ward. By the time fellow Chic-ite Leslie was back in Sydney - and being scratched from Chic's books - Ross was treading the catwalk for the first time at Stephanie Conley's autumn/winter 2006 parade at the Sydney nightclub The Loft, and doing yet more editorial work, this time for the inaugural

Australian edition of *Nylon* magazine. With Ross entering year 11, the official position is that modelling will take a back seat to her schooling for now. But Ward said: "She's got a huge international career ahead of her."

Patty Huntington

BUSINESS

Alan Joyce The Jetstar chief executive, 39, is being touted as a future Qantas chief executive after heading its successful low-cost counter-attack on its competitor Virgin Blue.

He will have a much larger brief this year when he heads the launch of Jetstar International to long-haul destinations. The airline, with its domestic cousin, is an important part of Qantas's five-year program to slash \$3 billion from its cost base. Jetstar International will also try to counter the growing share of Emirates and Singapore Airlines on international airline traffic into Australia. Joyce will also try to steady Qantas's cash-burning investment in the Singapore airline Jetstar Asia when he joins its board this year.

Qantas's chief financial officer, Peter Gregg, is considered the most likely replacement to Geoff Dixon in mid-2007 but the Irish-born Joyce could be next in line. An Australian citizen, he still has a strong interest in Irish politics.

Scott Rochfort