

Official Publication of the Victorian Institute of Sport

PINNACLE

JULY 2014
WINTER EDITION
ISSUE 89

Melissa Tapper

READY,
STEADY,
GLASGOW!





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**ANNE MARIE
HARRISON**
CEO, VICTORIAN
INSTITUTE OF SPORT

So another Winter Olympic and Paralympic cycle is over with the conclusion of the Games in Sochi. While those gold medals proved elusive, again highlighting how tough it is to win one, we were proud and delighted with the performances of Dave Morris (silver), Lydia Lassila (bronze), Toby Kane (bronze) and Jess Gallagher (bronze), returning with four medals, and the remainder of the VIS scholarship holders, many of whom produced Top 5 and Top 10 results. Our congratulations are extended to all athletes, their coaches and the great support team who work with them both in Australia and overseas. The VIS has great partnerships with the Olympic Winter Institute and Australian Paralympic Committee which deliver our winter sport programs efficiently and effectively, working with the strengths of each organisation.

The year also started positively with Michael Gallagher winning his ninth career world title at the 2014 UCI Para-Cycling Track World Championships in Mexico and Simon Gerrans becoming the first Australian to win the Liege-Bastogne-Liege after a dramatic finish to the 100th edition of the storied monument in Ans. In an Olympic-class field, VIS shooters Laetisha Scanlan and Catherine Skinner rewrote Shooting Australia's history after winning gold and bronze respectively in the women's trap at the first World Cup event of the year in Tucson, USA in April, and Paralympic shooters Luke Cain and Jason Maroney have also achieved success in World Cup events. Water skier Jacinta Carroll has now extended her undefeated record to 14 months following her win in the US Masters Jumps with a leap of 56.1m.

We now focus our attention on the XXth Commonwealth Games in Glasgow with selections well underway. Having lived in Scotland for seven years I have no doubt these will be fabulous Games with excellent facilities and a focus on the athletes. The competition will be fierce with the GB Home Countries (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) coming off the success of London; Canada will again have a significant presence and it will be interesting to see if India can maintain their improvement from Delhi. Enjoy our preview of the Games in this edition and get to know some of our athletes who will be representing Australia; their journeys are as interesting as their performances.



DAMIAN DRUM MP
MINISTER FOR SPORT
AND RECREATION

The Victorian Coalition Government is a proud supporter of the VIS and the hard work it undertakes to nurture our State's top talent.

As the Minister for Sport and Recreation it is particularly exciting for me to recognise the success and work of so many VIS athletes across a wide range of sports gaining worldwide recognition over the last few months.

Aerial skiers David Morris and Lydia Lassila top the list with their standout performances in Sochi delivering two of the three medals from Australia's Winter Olympics medal haul.

David was the first Australian male to win an Olympic aerial medal and Lydia has been a trail blazer internationally with gold at Vancouver and bronze at Sochi, as well as being the first woman to land the huge quad-twisting triple somersault.

Congratulations also to our giant slalom world-beaters, Jess Gallagher and Toby Kane, who took home Australia's only medals at this year's Winter Paralympics. Jess claimed a bronze in the women's vision impaired giant slalom event and Toby's bronze came in the standing super combined.

To all our 15 VIS winter Olympians and Paralympians you've done us proud.

Outside of Sochi

- VIS athlete Michael Gallagher won his ninth career world title at the 2014 UCI Para-cycling Track World Championships, hurtling past the second and third place getters Ukraine's Yehor Dementyev and Great Britain's Jon-Allan Butterworth to take out first place.
- VIS cycling legend Simon Gerrans became the first ever Australian to win the 263 km Liege-Bastogne-Liege after a dramatic sprint to the finish. A significant moment for Australian cycling made more momentous with it being the 100th anniversary of the famous event.

These many achievements highlight the world class quality of Victoria's elite athletes and I applaud the VIS for its ongoing support and commitment to these individuals.

I look forward to continuing our important partnership with the VIS and will watch with interest as the next generation of champions takes to the international stage at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in July.



DAVID MORRIS – SOARS TO SILVER

If Lydia Lassila's Olympic bronze was a win for the brave, then David Morris' silver medal was a success for the shrewd.*

The VIS scholarship holder played the percentages brilliantly in the aerial skiing competition at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park to claim Australia's first men's aerials Olympic medal.

Going first in the four-man final he put down a neat quad-twisting triple somersault (110.41 points) but then Australian hearts sank as he was blown away by Anton Kushnir (134.5) with a quin-twister the very next jump.

However the Belarusian's high-end marker put immense pressure on the two Chinese jumpers, Jia Zongyang (95.06) and Qi Guangpu (90) who failed to nail their landings and handed Morris the silver.

The beaming 29 year old, who was fist pumping and smiling all the way from qualifying through to his podium place, was reasoned from the get go.

His qualifying jump was "the best one I've done all year" and he came through in second place, but the nerve-jangling really came in the first final where he downgraded his jump in the hope of saving his better tricks for the last two finals.

"Strategically that was the right move and I was questioning at the time: do we really want to do this," he admitted.

He was the last man to qualify for the eight-man final.

And he was the last man to qualify for the four-man final.

Yet it mattered little as he lifted again to take second spot in the decider.

It has been a remarkable journey for the effervescent Morris. For years he was a lone male wolf in the sport of aerial skiing, which was dominated by women in Australia. Kirstie Marshall. Jacqui Cooper. Alisa Camplin. Lydia Lassila. David Morris? He finished 13th in Vancouver four years ago and then walked away from the sport for a year, but persevered and came back to compete in Sochi.

David Morris, a guy with exquisite judgement and timing.

Ed - It goes without saying that anyone who does a triple backward somersault off a ramp at 70 kilometres an hour needs more than a modicum of courage!





LASSILA MAKES QUADRUPLE LEAP

If they awarded Olympic medals for guts, they would have handed Lydia Lassila the full set — gold, silver and bronze — at the Sochi Winter Olympics.

In an extraordinary performance at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park, the defending Vancouver gold medallist snared bronze after taking an incredible risk on her last jump.

In one of the boldest decisions ever seen by any Australian athlete at a summer or winter Olympics, Lassila committed to the most difficult aerial jump ever attempted by a woman at the Olympics - a quad-twisting triple somersault that was perhaps as dangerous as it was exciting.

The jump was so difficult that it had never been so much as attempted in competition — let alone landed. But Lassila had nailed one in training and decided to give it crack.

However, as hundreds of thousands of Australians watched with baited breath the long term VIS scholarship holder missed the gold by a whisker, unable to execute a clean landing, and settling for the bronze.

As it unfolded, Lassila could have won with a lesser jump in a final where the scores didn't reach the heights of earlier rounds. But that's not the Australian way. And it's definitely not Lassila's way.

"I've left my mark forever and made history with that trick. It would have been great to land it, but I was stretching for my life and I was really trying, believe me," she said.

"I hope I've inspired some other athletes and in particular the female skiers to keep pushing on."

Lassila's result in Sochi equals the Olympic efforts of former VIS scholarship holder Alisa Camplin, who won gold in 2002 in Salt Lake City and collected bronze four years later in Turin.

Belarus skier Alla Tsuper took gold while Chinese skier Xu Mengtao took silver.

In a signpost to the future fellow VIS athletes Laura Peel, Danielle Scott and Sam Wells finished 7th, 9th and 18th respectively.



Photograph courtesy of
Australian Paralympic Committee

KANE AWARDED TOP HONOUR

VIS Paralympic alpine skier Toby Kane spent the early years of his life in and out of hospital, having numerous operations and being constantly surrounded by doctors.

He was just two when he lost his right leg following a car accident, and through his young eyes, the men and women who helped piece him back together were the ultimate superheroes.

That's when his journey to becoming Dr Kane began, and at the end of the year when he completes his medical degree it will become official.

The 27 year old hopes that whatever area of medicine he ends up in, he can spread the Paralympic word around hospitals, visit kids with disabilities and people with newly acquired disabilities, encourage them to get involved in sport and tell them about the many opportunities to be seized.

Such opportunities have been gratefully grasped by the VIS scholarship holder over his 15 year skiing career. It started with bronze in Torino in his Paralympic debut and finished with another bronze in Sochi, at his final Games.

In Sochi, Kane produced an amazing Super-G run to jump from fifth place after the slalom to third on the overall standings, holding on by just 0.22secs to break Australia's medal drought at the Games and win the second bronze medal of his career.

But medals do not make the man, his courage and determination do.

And Kane was recognised for his role in spreading the Paralympic message by winning the Whang Youn Dai Achievement Award, the first Australian to be honoured with the prestigious award.

The WYD Achievement Award is named after South Korea's Dr Whang Youn Dai, who has dedicated her life to the development of Paralympic sport. It is presented to one male and one female athlete at every Paralympic Games who best exemplify the Paralympic spirit.

GALLAGHER LANDS BACK-TO-BACK BRONZE MEDALS

VIS athlete Jessica Gallagher ensured Australia's Paralympic team had a spring in its step departing Sochi, claiming a bronze medal on the final day of the Paralympic Games.

Gallagher and her guide Christian Geiger took the bronze in the women's vision-impaired giant slalom to secure her country's second medal, and complement Toby Kane's bronze in the standing super-combined.

And with that, the dual winter and summer Paralympian showed she still has the special 'something' that helped her create history four years earlier with bronze in Vancouver.

Jess shared her Sochi experience with us below:

"Sochi. Hot. Cool. Yours." No one really understood the Games' motto! With Sochi's coastal location, the weather certainly was 'hot' and it felt more like my time at the summer Paralympics in London than being at a winter Games!

Riding the chairlift, there was the sound of birds happily chirping but with no visible snow anywhere until you reached the race hill; certainly a unique experience!

The warm temperatures unfortunately created dangerous conditions and athletes were unable to really showcase their abilities. One slight mistake and not only were you out of medal contention but usually

left tumbling down the hill and with an injury. To be honest, it wasn't fun to watch or ski on and a real shame because aside from the snow, Russia held an amazing Paralympics.

Personally I was ecstatic to win another Paralympic medal, this time in a new event after my guide Christian and I faltered under tough circumstances in our main event (slalom). The vast array of uncontrollable variables meant those who stood on the podium were truly grateful for their accomplishment; many incredible athletes left empty handed.

Sochi was without a doubt the most challenging Paralympic Games I've been involved with. We had been warned by the Olympic team to expect the worst, and luckily for us they had fixed the majority of the issues including the dining hall food, but you never could be certain when getting into a lift that you could end up in there for a while! The opening and closing ceremonies were spectacular, the people and volunteers incredible, and in the case of alpine skiing we attracted more spectators at times than the Olympics. However my favourite part by far was getting to ski amongst some of the most spectacular mountains I have ever seen. They truly took my breath away.



Photograph courtesy of:
Australian Paralympic Committee

SIOBHAN CRAWSHAY: A DAY IN HER LIFE AT THE SOCHI OLYMPICS

VIS dietitian Siobhan Crawshay was the dietitian for the Australian Olympic Team at the Sochi Games. She shares a typical day in her life at the Sochi Olympics:



"Привет" (Hello)

It's 6am. I am in the bathroom which is doubling as the makeshift kitchen for our Australian Olympic team in Sochi, and I am in charge of the athlete lounge, the space reserved for Australia's winter Olympians.

I'm preparing breakfast for those hitting the slopes early; boiling eggs, whizzing fruit smoothies, cooking porridge on the 'camping stove', laying out cereals, slicing bread and attending to the nutritional needs of the athletes.

In the calm between breakfast sittings, I turn my attention to lunch; 50 sandwiches and wraps containing whatever I'd found at the various supermarkets that hadn't been swept off the shelf by the other visiting nations.

The lunch preparation rush finished by 11am, it was time for the dreaded "cleaning with a difference" – rinsing and scrubbing in the bathroom sink, washing the suds off in the shower with the kettle-boiled water, and stacking the dishes for drying pyramid-style on a desk! Then off to the supermarket for a small shop to replenish supplies.

The afternoon is taken up with preparing packs for the evening onslaught – athletes training on the course or heading out for competition, and those people arriving into the village for the first time. Being processed, accredited, searched (by sniffer dogs) and cleared to enter takes an excruciatingly long time and it's nice to have a sandwich and a muesli bar to get you through.

In the evening, I try to take the opportunity to cheer on our athletes on the slopes or in the lounge with members of the Australian Olympic Committee staff. Tonight, I'm on the chairlift, making my way to the half-pipe. Some nights I can stay for the whole competition, but tonight I need to head back after the first run to plan out what to put on for the next day...

Such was a day in my life at the Sochi Winter Olympics. Days were long, but went quickly. Work was tough, but rewarding. Athletes were constantly hungry, but extremely appreciative of the opportunity to have a small slice of normality in an otherwise unfamiliar environment.

There were plenty of challenges along the way, including getting food and utensils into the village. In light of the attacks in central Russia and concerns about athlete safety, the organisers initially banned all movement of non-IOC food and utensils into the village, but after advocacy from several nations, they eventually relented.

The dining hall proved to be another test. Food temperatures, lack of labelling, issues for people with allergies and the usual hygiene concerns that you encounter in a large space were all worked through with the chefs and dining hall organisers, who were very willing to try and tailor things to our needs.

On reflection, however, what a magical experience Sochi was. It is such a beautiful part of the world, as anyone who has been there or seen a photograph can testify, with people to help at every step of the way – the Russian volunteers were always eager to help and showcase the best of their nation. I had so much support from all of my colleagues, and I am very grateful to have been given the

opportunity. Plus, the athletes were fun, eager, chilled out, thankful and a great bunch of people to work for. I learnt, if I didn't know already, the big role food plays in the life of the athlete. Aside from the fuelling and recovery aspects, it is a great way to bring people together, to lift the mood, to make an athlete feel special, to make a team feel at home.



GAME ON SCOTLAND!

The Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games promise to be the best Commonwealth Games ever. 6,500 athletes and officials from 71 nations and territories will compete in 17 sports over 11 days from 23 July to 3 August.



From the precision of lawn bowls to the exciting combat of wrestling and judo, from the high adrenaline of track events to the grace and beauty of gymnastics, Glasgow will be the stage for a fantastic display of sport in 2014.

WHAT IS THE COMMONWEALTH?

The Commonwealth is a unique family of 53 developed and developing countries, but in Glasgow 2014 there will be representatives from 71 nations and territories. This is because some countries, like the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), are made up of a number of territories or dependencies, in this case England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which will all compete as separate entities.

The Commonwealth has more than two billion people – almost a third of the world's population – and over half of them are young people under the age of 25.

These nations and territories work together to promote peace, democracy, sustainable development, human rights and health, and to share ideas, knowledge and experience. And of course, every four years they all come together to take part in the Commonwealth Games.

HISTORY OF THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

The Commonwealth Games, often referred to as the Friendly Games, have a unique place in sporting history.

The first Games were held in 1930 in Hamilton, Canada where 11 countries sent 400 athletes to take part in six sports and 59 events. Since then, the Games have been

held every four years (except for 1942 and 1946 because of World War 2).

The event has seen many changes, not least in its name. From 1930 to 1950 the Games were known as the British Empire Games and from 1954 until 1966 they were called the British Empire and Commonwealth Games. Later, from 1970 until 1974, they took the title of the British Commonwealth Games. Finally, at the 1978 Games in Edmonton, Canada this multi-sport event changed its name to the Commonwealth Games.

The 2002 Games in Manchester saw for the first time medal events for elite athletes with a disability (EAD) in a fully-inclusive sports program. This will be continued in Glasgow.

SCOTLAND'S GAMES

This will be the first time that Glasgow has hosted the Commonwealth Games, although it will be the third time Scotland has played host to this spectacular event; the Games have been held twice before in Edinburgh, in 1970 and 1986.

Most sports will be held across the east, west and south of Glasgow, but some events will occur outside the city, including shooting, which will take place at Carnoustie (Angus), while Edinburgh will host the diving and Strathclyde Country Park (North Lanarkshire) will host the triathlon.

People from across Scotland have always supported the Commonwealth Games and the excitement during the Games will be unique!



SIMPLICE RIBOUEM – GOING FOR GOLD IN GLASGOW

When Simplicie Ribouem fled the Cameroon Commonwealth Games weightlifting team eight years ago and slept in a Brunswick park with just a small bag and a pair of shoes, there's no way he could have foreseen the twists and turns that life had in store for him.

At the time, Ribouem knew very little about Australia, and even less about Melbourne when he sought and was granted political asylum.

Fast forward eight years and these days he calls St Kilda home and with partner Roni has two bubbly young boys, one year old Nathan and Samuel who'll soon turn three. Ribouem says the best thing about Australia is "being able to live life how you want to live".

Sadly that's not the case for his mother and sister who have been unable to leave Cameroon and join him in Melbourne. He says he still misses them every day.

Ribouem is now a proud Australian Olympian and the reigning Commonwealth Games champion in the 85 kilogram class.

His focus is crystal clear; he wants another gold medal in Glasgow.

To do that, to be at his best, he must be injury free. Ribouem says he's had some "back problems" this year which have been impacting on his lifting speed which is just as important as power in this sport.

Another problem he's facing will look after itself as soon as he gets on the plane to Glasgow. This ripped and

powerful elite sportsman has a soft heart and climbs out of bed at 2am every morning to help with Nathan's feeding and again at 5am when Samuel greets the new day. Sleep is a valuable commodity in the Ribouem household!

Looking towards Glasgow Ribouem says he's had previous wins over all of his likely opponents except one and is very much aware "once you step on the platform it all starts again".

Knowing that he can lift the big weights, and has twice won medals at this level (he took bronze in Melbourne) gives him a mental advantage.

Of the many people who have helped him make a new life, and continue to excel in his weightlifting career, he singles out VIS Dietitian Kylie Andrew for praise. Simplicie Ribouem is a huge guy with a huge appetite and he says Kylie has been with him over the journey helping him to make the right choices.

At 32 years of age Ribouem is looking forward to building a career outside weightlifting, however he says there's no reason he can't be striding onto the platform at the Gold Coast in four years time if he's still the best in Australia and, hopefully, the Commonwealth.

MELISSA TAPPER – A CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Paralympic table tennis star Melissa Tapper hopes her qualification for the able-bodied Commonwealth Games team launches a new era in Australian sport.

To her immense delight, the 23 year old VIS athlete secured the third spot on the national team for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games at an eight-woman round robin tournament on the Gold Coast in February.

No stranger to representing her country on the world stage, having played in the bronze medal play-off at the 2012 London Paralympics, Tapper said she wants to inspire a changing of the guard in the sport.

Melissa spoke to VIS Communications and Marketing Coordinator, Ashley Carr:

What were your first thoughts when you realised you'd made the able-bodied team for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games?

After my final match on the Gold Coast, I thought I had actually finished fourth, one position outside automatic selection and was quite shattered; but still fourth would be the best result I'd ever had and still a good chance for selection. I had performed so well over the three days and had some great results but knew the scores were neck and neck. It wasn't until I walked back to my coach to shake his hand that he pulled me into a hug and whispered in my ear that I finished third! My heart thought he was joking and it felt like a little bit of torture that he would play such a joke on me, so it wasn't until he explained that even though I lost my final match, another match that was being played at the same time took an unexpected turn and left me a clear win ahead of everyone else and in third position!! I can't actually explain the happiness, pure joy and excitement that I felt – it was such a surreal feeling! I wasn't actually sure if it was real! All the dreaming for the past 16 years, the sweat, the tears and the fun of it all was so worth it for the feeling I had right there!!

Is there any one person who has helped you more than anyone else in the last few years?

My fiancé and coach has been an absolute rock! He has stood by me my entire career; worked me to breaking point and guided me through low points that really made the high points, like the trials and other successful events, feel so much better. He is the person that sees the good along with the bad... and he still hangs round.

What's your program between now and Glasgow?

Between now and Glasgow it's about getting in some good quality competition; therefore we (have been) competing in the Team World Championships in Japan at the end of April, and the Australian Open and Australian Closed events before heading to China in early July for a training camp. After that it's on to Glasgow for final preparations for the Games!



What are you expecting at the Games?

At the Games I'm not putting any expectations on myself. It's going to be incredibly tough competition but if I can pick up some good wins and help boost my world ranking I would be incredibly satisfied for the future. However, in the team's event we have a strong standing and are medal potential. The Australian team boasts some world class females so I think it's going to be a great test for everyone.

How do you settle your nerves before big competitions?

The best way for me to settle my nerves is to talk with my family – just talk about what's going on with them and hearing how my little nephews are doing and the mischief they get up to is the perfect way to take my mind away from what's ahead. It isn't until about 90 minutes before I play that things take a whole different turn and I put fear into myself which motivates me to become focused on the job. The fear of failure is something I've found that drives me – strange, but works!

Have you set any goals for Glasgow?

My main goal is to get the opportunity to get out there and perform the best I can on the world stage. Events like this are great for experience and for the future, as I would love to qualify in 2016 for both the Rio Olympics and Paralympics!!



PERKINS PRIMED FOR GOLD

To Australian sports fans it seems like Shane Perkins has been around for a long time. To the man himself it sometimes seems like they're right; Perkins says it only hit him this year that he'll be riding at his third Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Incredibly, despite boasting an outstanding record that has produced two World Championship gold medals, an Olympic bronze and Commonwealth Games gold and bronze, "Perko" is only 27 years old. In the cycling world he's in his prime.

Perkins says he is extremely proud to have been wearing the green and gold year in and year out since the Melbourne Games in 2006 when the then 19 year old became the youngest Aussie to win a track cycling medal at the Commonwealth Games.

However he says he'd be lying if he didn't notice the production line of exciting young riders which seems to

deliver fresh talent and present fresh challenges for his place on the team, every year.

The upside of this process, according to Perkins, is that it keeps him focused and continually looking at ways to improve the output of his extraordinarily powerful body.

His Glasgow build up has included the national titles and the World Championships earlier this year. Either side of Glasgow he'll be working hard day in and day out on the tough Japanese keirin circuit.

While he can make a good living riding in Japan Perko, these days, misses his family more than ever. He moved to Adelaide with wife Kristine, son Aidan and daughter Mischa a couple of years back and every time he has a seven day break in Japan he flies home to spend time with them.

He also uses that "down time" to recharge his batteries at Cycling's High Performance Centre in Adelaide. Perkins is quick to thank the HPCU and VIS for providing such strong support over the last decade. In particular he pays credit to a sport psychologist he was referred to by the VIS in 2007 who has been instrumental in helping him mature as an athlete and a person.

Looking towards Glasgow Perkins says people are wrong to view track cycling as a showdown between England and Australia. The Aussies might be looking for some "pay-back" after the drubbing they received at the London Olympics, but Perko says there's plenty of cycling strength throughout the Commonwealth and in particular there are a couple of Kiwi cyclists he's got his eye on.

It seems the Commonwealth Games are playing a dual role in Perkins' career. Although they are an end in themselves, where he'll be desperately chasing success, they're also another stepping stone to a major goal now only two years away - the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

And what about after Rio? Well it's too far away to speculate but his family will be demanding more of his time and five year old Aidan is already off his training wheels on a bike, and it's not just any bike, it's a BMX!

Considering that Kristine is the sister of another track star, Ryan Bayley, Aidan certainly has the genes to be a winner on a BMX and Perko suspects that Mischa won't be too far behind.



COLMAN EYES GLASGOW GLORY

Born with spina bifida, VIS athlete Richard Colman has always wanted to do the very best in everything he attempts. It turns out his very best is world beating and the track specialist has spearheaded the Australian athletics team for the past ten years.

Although he was born in Norway Richard moved to Australia at a young age, and is passionate about all sports including AFL, basketball and swimming. He was the first wheelchair AFL goal umpire in the Geelong League and is described by friends as strong willed and positive in everything he undertakes.

In 2010 Richard competed at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi India in the T54 1500m winning a silver medal; he is hoping to go one better in Glasgow.

What were your first thoughts when you realised you'd made the team for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games?

It has been a long build up to the Glasgow Commonwealth Games since last year's World Championships where I achieved an 'A' qualifying time (which made the season a little less stressful!). I had a good summer on the track; I claimed a second 'A' standard early in the season and two 'B's' while winning the Sydney Track Classic. The last part of selection was to win nationals – which I did! To win was a great relief and showed that all my hard work is paying off. There is still plenty of work to do before the Games, but the first hurdle of being named on the team has been reached and I am very happy to make my second Commonwealth Games team.

Is there any one person who has helped you more than anyone else in the last few years?

My coach Mandi Cole has been the most influential person in my career and has been there all the way; she has been there when things have been going good and when things have been going bad – she has always helped me through the tough times and I wouldn't have achieved what I have without her.

How has the VIS supported you on your road to Glasgow?

From media and physio to the gym and sport science testing, the VIS has been crucial and will always be an integral part in my career. The invaluable team in the ACE department has also helped and supported me with everything off the track and given me lifelong guidance. Everyone at the VIS has had a crucial role to play and I couldn't thank you all enough for the help – and I look forward to sharing many more successes in the future.

What's your program between now and Glasgow?

I am in the final weeks of training at home in Geelong before I head to my winter training base in Townsville with Mandi before heading to Europe. In Europe I will be competing in a number of 1500m races against some of the best athletes in the world at the Lausanne and Paris Diamond League meets and another high quality event in Newcastle, England in early July.



What are you expecting at the Games and have you set any goals?

I expect the competition at the Games to be very tough. I will be competing against fellow Aussie and reigning Commonwealth champion Kurt Fearnley as well as the former World Record holder from South Africa, Ernst Van Dyke. English Champion David Weir will also be competing and is in great shape, he is another red-hot challenger for the win.

My training has been going well over the past two years so hopefully with a bit of luck all will go my way in Scotland. It's a very strong field and anyone is a chance, but I just want to be competitive and if that is good enough for a medal then so be it. We will just have to wait and see!

You will come up against some world-class athletes in Glasgow - how do you settle your nerves before big competitions?

I have been racing for almost 20 years against the best athletes in the world, so I have quite a bit of experience. I race against my competitors several times a year at various competitions in different countries, so we know each other on and off the track, which ultimately helps with the nerves. But the key is to just relax, enjoy the experience and have fun no matter where you are in the world!

Following Glasgow, what's next on the horizon for Richard Colman?

After the Commonwealth Games I will be taking an end of season break before a long build up to the Australian summer; the base training will include a few races and hopefully a few marathons. Next year we have the IPC World Championships in November followed by the Rio Paralympics in 2016. So there is plenty of training and racing to be done over the next two years! I will also continue to build on my interests outside of sport including my coaching and mentor work with new and developing athletes while continuing the disability awareness movement and motivational speaking.



DIAMONDS MINING FOR GOLD IN GLASGOW!

It has been 12 long and painful years since Australia last stood atop the Commonwealth Games netball podium...

Arch rivals New Zealand claimed gold in Melbourne in 2006 and again in Delhi in 2010 in a final that became the longest official game ever, with Australia suffering a heartbreaking 64-66 defeat in double overtime. It's a memory that's hard to shake.

Revenge against main rivals, the Silver Ferns, will fuel the Diamonds' desire for gold at the Games in Glasgow and Australian coach Lisa Alexander is confident she has picked a team that will end the golden drought in Glasgow.

VIS scholarship holder Tegan Caldwell was the surprise selection in Australia's netball team for Glasgow; the dynamic shooter is the only member of the team yet to make her international debut.

Fellow Melbourne Vixens athletes Bianca Chatfield and Madi Robinson were also selected in the team to compete in Glasgow.

Vixens skipper Chatfield, who is also the Australian vice-captain, returns to the Australian Commonwealth Games team for the first time since 2006. Madi Robinson also missed selection in the 2010

Australian Netball team and said she was looking forward to representing her country in Glasgow.

The Diamonds are so determined to prevent a repeat of the heartbreaking loss they have been training for 85 minute matches – 25 minutes longer than standard games – so they are fit enough to survive any eventuality.

Australia opens its 2014 Glasgow campaign against Wales on Thursday, 24 July before the remaining pool matches against England (26 July), Barbados (27 July), Trinidad & Tobago (28 July) and South Africa (30 July).

“\$7,500 or just 11 cents a day!”

“I got ambulance cover just before a snowboarding trip. I broke three ribs, collapsed a lung and ended up in an air-ambulance to the Royal Melbourne. My trip would have cost \$7,500. That's over two lifetimes of membership fees. But I didn't even see a bill.”

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HOCKEYROOS HAVE LEARNT THE HARD LESSONS OF LONDON

The Hockeyroos have been on an upswing since the London Olympics in 2012, winning gold medals at the Oceania Cup and World League tournaments along with a silver medal at the World Cup in The Hague in 2014; and it is not by accident.

The return of the Hockeyroos to the forefront of the sport globally began with a council of war between the coaches and staff who had presided over the team's fifth-place finish at the London Olympics.

For a team with a history as glittering as the Hockeyroos – three Olympic gold medals between 1988 and 2000 – bowing out before the semi-finals of the last two Olympic Games was not acceptable. But it did prove to be the catalyst for a shake-up of the elite women's program that is now reaping rewards.

The Hockeyroos had not had a fulltime training program in Perth (outside of Olympic years) since before the Sydney Olympics because funding dried up in the wake of the home Games.

But the team's brains trust, headed by Coach Adam Commens, decided it had to become a priority again and cobbled together funding from several sources to provide enough financial security to bring their full squad to Perth for up to 48 weeks each year.

The coaches and staff have used that time well. It hasn't just been about more training, but more innovative training. They have concentrated their efforts in several areas: building a team culture of daily striving for excellence, physical improvement, technical improvement and a renewed use of psychology.

Recent results prove that the Hockeyroos are back on the path to international success and they are slowly moving up the world rankings; they will aspire to show the world how much they have improved at the Commonwealth Games.

VIS athletes Rachael Lynch and Georgia Nanscawen have been selected in the team for Glasgow; Rachael is set to compete at her second Games having won gold at the 2010 tournament in Delhi, while Georgia will make their maiden Commonwealth Games appearance.



Photograph courtesy of Grant Treeby – Treeby Images

KOOKABURRAS LAUGHING ALL THE WAY

The Kookaburras retained their World Cup title with a dominant and outstanding display, winning the final 6-1 over home team, The Netherlands, in The Hague in June 2014.

What trick to VIS athlete and penalty corner specialist Chris 'The Big Dog' Ciriello was the icing on the cake of an exceptional performance from the Australian team.

The Australians had to come from behind for the first time in the tournament after the Dutch drew first blood through a sizzling shot from the top of the circle after 14 minutes; but that was one of the few highlights for the home team.

The opposition goal galvanised the Kookaburras into action and they earned their first penalty corner after 20 minutes. The Big Dog stepped up to the edge of the circle and sent a low drag flick hurtling into the goal, the first of his three successful corners.

Australia outclassed every opponent throughout the tournament amassing 30 goals, while conceding just three – a feat coach Ric Charlesworth modestly described as "convincing".

Charlesworth was scheduled to end his glittering coaching career after the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, but he decided to go earlier in the wake of his Kookaburras' triumphant World Cup campaign.

The Kookaburras are near unbackable favourites to win a fifth consecutive Commonwealth gold medal and VIS athletes Ciriello and youngster Andrew Philpott have booked their tickets to Glasgow.

Ciriello is one of eight survivors from Australia's Commonwealth Games success four years ago in India, while Philpott will compete in his first Commonwealth Games.



OUR PARTNERS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | Ashley Carr, Rick Wall, Deirdre Boyd



www.vis.org.au

Victorian Institute of Sport
Lakeside Stadium, 33 Aughtie Drive
Albert Park, 3206, Victoria, Australia

T +61 3 9425 0000

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