

Official Publication of the Victorian Institute of Sport

# PINNACLE

December 2020  
Issue 96

**A NEW  
NORMAL**

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# FROM THE CEO

Anne Marie Harrison

Given everything this year has thrown at us why not just acknowledge it and publish our magazine with a focus on how the VIS has adapted to COVID-19! You will read about the extraordinary people who make up the VIS family in particular our athletes and staff.

However, we are also surrounded behind the scenes by a supportive group including; the VIS Board, our NSO/SSA partners, our colleagues at SRV and the NIN, all who have provided leadership, guidance and encouragement which has enabled us to respond to the ever-changing circumstances.

Whilst it is stating the obvious to say it has been challenging for everyone in so many different ways, what will come through is the creativity, resilience and determination of all to make the best of the situation and respond to those challenges.

The leadership from the VIS Taskforce in navigating our way through these times has been outstanding and our thanks are expressed to Dave Crosbee, Dr Susan White, Steve Hawkins, Dr Harry Brennan, Simon Gardam and Bill Tait, with support from Rob Leeds. Together we have had to become "overnight experts" on a range of areas way outside of high performance sport, dedicate significant time to discussions, often at short notice, and make some tough calls. Always with the primary concern being the health and wellbeing of athletes and staff and our role in and responsibility to the community. Supporting us, has been everyone at the VIS who in their own way have played an important role, either in their direct support to athletes, or keeping the business ticking over,

without fuss and just getting on and doing it. Our COVID-19 infographic just gives a snapshot of the activity that has been taking place for the most part, behind closed doors.

We cannot begin to imagine the impact on our athletes, from those already selected or preparing for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, those rehabilitating from injuries, to those who have just started their journey on the high performance pathway. Every circumstance is different and their stories are compelling. What we do know is that each has found a way to keep training and motivated, with some ups and downs and will have learnt so much from this unexpected interruption to their career.

In amongst all this, the mighty Melbourne Vixens left us in July following a less than ideal preparation, for an experience they could never have imagined and demonstrated grit, determination and world class netball, which enabled them to secure the SSNL premiership and in doing so brought so much joy to so many. We extend our congratulations to the team and Netball Victoria on wonderful season and thank them for keeping our spirits up, when we needed it most.



# TOKYO POSTPONED

**Article Sourced: Australian Olympic Committee**

**The International Olympic Committee (IOC), the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Government of Japan have agreed new dates for the Games of the XXXII Olympiad, in 2021.**

The Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 will be celebrated from 23 July to 8 August 2021, and they also agreed on new dates for the Paralympic Games, which will be celebrated from 24 August until 5 September 2021.

The leaderships of the key parties came together via telephone conference in March, joined by IOC President Thomas Bach, Tokyo 2020 President Mori Yoshirō, Tokyo Governor Koike Yuriko and Olympic and Paralympic Minister Hashimoto Seiko, and agreed on the new schedule.

This decision was taken based on three main considerations and in line with the principles established by the IOC Executive Board (EB) on 17 March 2020 and confirmed at its meeting. These were supported by all the International Summer Olympic Sports Federations (IFs) and all the National Olympic Committees (NOCs):

- To protect the health of the athletes and everyone involved, and to support the containment of the COVID-19 virus.
- To safeguard the interests of the athletes and of Olympic sport.
- The global international sports calendar.

These new dates give the health

authorities and all involved in the organisation of the Games the maximum time to deal with the constantly changing landscape and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new dates, exactly one year after those originally planned for 2020 (Olympic Games: 24 July to 9 August 2020 and Paralympic Games: 25 August to 6 September 2020), also have the added benefit that any disruption that the postponement will cause to the international sports calendar can be kept to a minimum, in the interests of the athletes and the IFs. Additionally, they will provide sufficient time to finish the qualification process. The same heat mitigation measures as planned for 2020 will be implemented.

In a call on Tuesday 24 March 2020, based on information provided by the WHO at the time, IOC President Thomas Bach and Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō concluded that the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 would be held in their complete form and not later than summer 2021. The Prime Minister reiterated that the government of Japan stands ready to fulfil its responsibility for hosting these successful Games. At the same time, IOC President Thomas Bach stressed the full commitment of the IOC to successful Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

Following the decision, the IOC President said: "I want to thank the International Federations for their unanimous support and the Continental Associations of National Olympic Committees for the great partnership and their support in the consultation process over the last few days. I would also like to thank the IOC Athletes' Commission, with whom we have been in constant contact. With this announcement, I am confident that, working together with the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the Japanese Government and all our stakeholders, we can master this unprecedented challenge. Humankind currently finds itself in a dark tunnel. These Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 can be a light at the end of this tunnel.

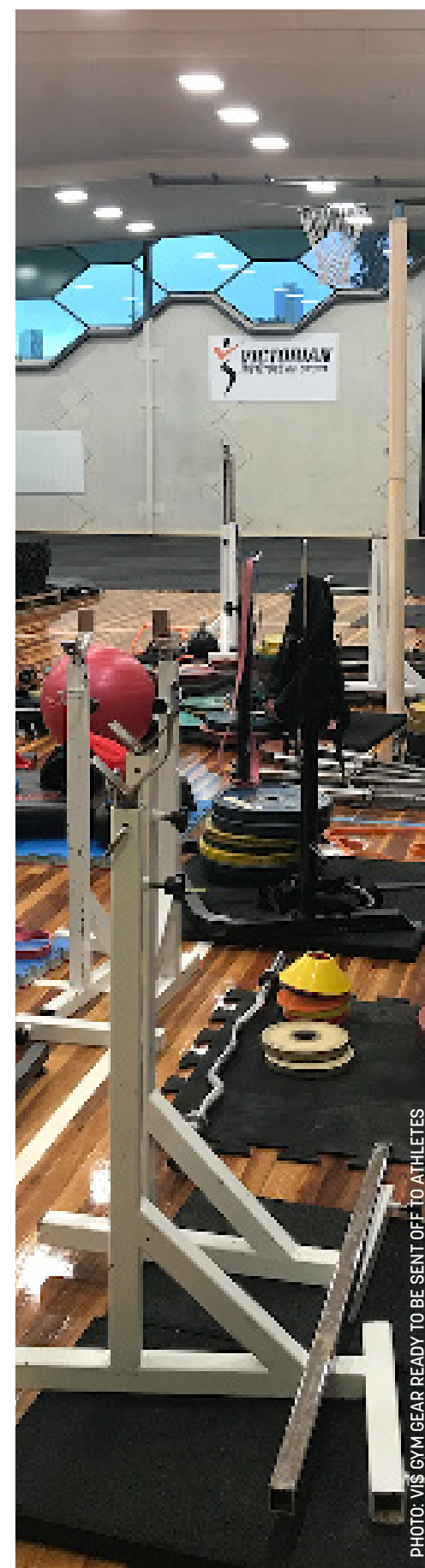


PHOTO: VIS GYM GEAR READY TO BE SENT OFF TO ATHLETES

# VIS CLOSED

**In order to safeguard athlete and staff health, the VIS took the decision to close its high-performance facility and significantly modify all service delivery to athletes, effective March 24, 2020.**

The VIS ceased delivery of face-to-face athlete services and started implementing remote service delivery and support. Athletes were provided training programs to undertake at home and where possible, portable training equipment was made available to enable them to continue their conditioning sessions remotely.

This followed the AOC announcement on Monday 23 March that they were no longer preparing teams for Tokyo 2020 and Paralympic Australia's support for this decision, along with the SSNL postponing their season. Whilst this decision was understandably disappointing for athletes and coaches. It did provide them with clarity and an ability to reset their planning and training goals.

The decision to shut down operations was made in collaboration with the National Institute Network with all members working to provide a consistent and appropriate response to the COVID-19 pandemic impacting our local, Australian and world sporting communities.

The VIS' immediate focus turned to athlete and staff health and wellbeing, ensuring that everyone had the right support to assist their transition into the best possible mindset and physical state to manage the broader societal impacts of COVID-19. Many of our athletes based interstate, returned home to be with family and VIS provided support to them through this period.

VIS CEO, Anne Marie Harrison insisted that we had been planning for this scenario when COVID-19 first made its way into Australia, to ensure a quick implementation of remote operations.

"I was so impressed by the resilience, proactivity and creativity that was displayed by many in adapting, whilst also maintaining a sense of routine. We were truly all in this together, and stayed connected, ready to return to day-to-day operations as soon as it was safe to do so."

The VIS facility at Lakeside Stadium, Albert Park closed, and sport specific training ceased at other training locations.

**"The high-performance sporting system is well equipped to deal with adversity. Our leaders, athletes and administrators continue to be role models for the Victorian community."**

Anne Marie Harrison



PHOTO: JARYD CLIFFORD





PHOTO: JOSH BOOTH

## BOOTH SHIFTS FOCUS

With Josh Booth

Victorian Institute of Sport rower, Josh Booth, was gunning for a third Olympic Games when the developments of COVID-19 shifted his plans. With a degree in medicine, Booth wanted to help where it was needed most and so started his medical internship at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. We caught up with Booth in March for his reaction on the situation.

**VIS:** What does the postponement of the Olympic Games to 2021 mean for you?

**JB:** There is so much uncertainty in the world right now and I feel that everyone on earth will be faced with a gamut of decisions once this current wave of COVID-19 passes; whole economies, whole industries, whole societies will be changed. Obviously, the postponement of the Games has altered my plans for this year and the next, so I will need to see what is possible with my studies and my career - how I can rearrange things, how I can balance them. For now, we have been given equipment to take

home: a rowing machine, watt bike and some weights. My training will involve a lot of makeshift training in the comfort of my garage!

**VIS:** What made you decide to shift your focus to your medical career at this stage?

**JB:** With the increased demand on hospitals and for medical staff due to COVID-19, I considered how I could help. I heard there was a need for junior doctors in Melbourne and I approached the Royal Melbourne Hospital. I have been able to take up an internship, as they had positions to fill. To me it also feels like a really positive move - to feel helpful and useful. So, in a sense regardless of Olympic aspirations or having a successful medical career, it felt like the right decision.

**VIS:** What plans do you have for Tokyo next year and when things return to normal?

**JB:** I haven't made any hard decisions about the future. I want to have every option I can when the time comes. Although Tokyo was always the plan and I have dedicated a fair amount of energy and hard work into qualifying and preparing for it. When things return to normal and things start back again, I hope I can and will be in a position to compete at Tokyo.



PHOTO: ALEX VUILLERMIN

## A NEW WAY TO EXERCISE

Victorian Institute of Sport physical preparation and sport science manager, Harry Brennan, said that as soon as he learned the VIS would be ceasing delivery of face-to-face athlete services early in 2020, his team's first priority was to ensure all athletes still had access to equipment and programs to enable them to train from home.

"Knowing that some of the athletes would have limited space to train at home, we had to work out what would be the minimum equipment an athlete would need to do a program, and if we needed to source anything additional" he said.

With over 250 athletes on scholarship at the VIS, it was a logistical challenge to ensure that everyone was looked after. Whilst some of our strength and conditioning coaches were sorting out take-home packs for athletes, the others were phoning local suppliers to find out what they had in stock and how soon equipment could be ordered.

"We ordered resistance bands, skipping ropes, dumbbells, TRX / gymnastics rings, and medicine balls." Brennan said.

A professional removalist company was hired to help with the distribution and delivery of the bigger items, such as treadmills, elliptical trainers and indoor rowing machines (ergos).

Staff members went above and beyond in such difficult circumstances, and some even completed their own personal equipment deliveries. Physical preparation coach Farhan Juhari travelled to several destinations to deliver ergos for the rowing athletes, one which included a trip from Albert Park to Mornington onto Sunshine.

Once equipment had been delivered to athletes, and home gyms were operational, Brennan and his team commenced the task of coaching and programming athletes virtually. One of the tools they used is the 'Teambuildr' application which allows for coaches to post programs with videos clips for each specific exercise.

It was quickly realised that the feeling of training in teams and squads was dearly missed. However, this problem was quickly solved, with athletes and staff moving online to video communication platforms.

Sport scientist Sylvie Withers, and physical preparation coach Ben Willey, were a couple of the first to pull together online training sessions for the sailing athletes. This enabled the group to join a live video conversation and all work out simultaneously online.

"The Coaches have been using video apps to coach sessions and interact with the athletes. This has also allowed athletes to continue training with their squads and stay connected." Brennan said.

“Ultimately we still wanted to make the session's fun and engaging, considering the difficult mental space for many of the athletes.

Harry Brennan

VIS rowing athlete, Alex Vuillermin was "very thankful" for the equipment and the effort the staff went to in order to help her exercise from home. But, says that whilst lockdown was a great chance to take a step away from it all, nothing beats the mateship you get from being around your teammates.



# WE'RE BACK

The likes of Scotty James, Mack Horton and Liz Watson all returned to the Victorian Institute of Sport gym in June to resume training.

Divided into specific time slots and socially distanced, athletes from a range of sports were able to get back into the gym, reconnect with coaches and get going again. To keep up with social distancing restrictions the VIS physical preparation team turned the netball court into an extension of the gym, spreading equipment over a bigger area.

One of the athletes who was pleased to be back in the VIS gym and training with teammates for the first time in months was Melbourne Vixens mid-courter, Liz Watson.

"It felt so great to be back at our home to continue training and get ready for the upcoming season. There is no garage gym as good as the VIS," Watson said.

VIS strength and conditioning coach, Jono Wallace Smith, said he was happily surprised with the work that the swimming athletes had done in isolation and admits that "most came back in better condition than expected." Wallace Smith also noticed that the athletes had returned with a "renewed hunger" to get better and improve.

With the announcement of the new date for the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, Mack Horton resumed his physical preparation at the VIS gym under the guidance of Wallace Smith.

“It's so nice to be back at home and back on the Tokyo grind.”

Mack Horton



PHOTO: HARRY BRENNAN & JONO WALLACE SMITH HELPING PREPARE SPRUNG FLOOR INTO SECONDARY GYM



PHOTO: VIS DIVING TEAM





# FASTER, STRONGER & MORE POWERFUL

Victorian Institute of Sport long jumper, Brooke Stratton, spent the first eight weeks in lockdown improving her physical capacity from the garage. Under remote guidance of strength and conditioning coach, Cory Innes, she was able to improve on her weaknesses and set new personal bests when she returned to the VIS gym in June.

When the VIS gym was shut down in March, Stratton moved her physical training into her home garage and was completing three strength and conditioning sessions a week.



**The time allowed me to really focus on building my strength and power via a very effective program requiring minimal equipment and machinery.**

Brooke Stratton

Innes said that COVID-19 created an opportunity with the track and field athletes that they otherwise would not have had: "A long training block, completely dedicated to training with no outcome goals at the end, such as competitions and training camps."

"We [the VIS physical preparation team] saw this as an opportunity to focus on athletes' weaknesses and so we pushed through as much testing as we could before COVID, and set programs to reflect those weaknesses." He said.

Innes said that for some track and field athletes they set goals away from strength and conditioning such as technical improvements, study, life or rehab goals, but for Stratton the time was a perfect chance to work on her physical capacity.

"Brooke has very little limitations in programming as she has a great home set-up and the fact she did so well in her first block of lockdown was simply down to her motivation, dedication and application towards improving those weaknesses we identified," he said.

Whilst he did admit that there were still areas to improve

and build upon in her Tokyo preparation, he said that "she has certainly done a wonderful job in trying circumstances."

During isolation, Stratton and Innes worked together over Zoom and this allowed Innes to provide specific technical feedback between exercises and help monitor progression and load.

"I was very thankful to have coordinated some S&C sessions over Zoom with Cory." She said. Despite the Zoom sessions proving very successful, both Stratton and Innes agree that it felt "amazing" to be back in the VIS gym and there's nothing like the motivation you get from training in a high-performance environment.

"I feel we've done a good job in isolation, but nothing can replace being there with them and coaching in 3D!" Innes said.

"The technical details, angles and sense of how they are feeling just can't be replaced by Zoom or videos."

Innes said that he really missed being able to coach athletes in person, and to see the application of training and comradery of the group together again is "awesome."

"I'm very much looking forward to welcoming all VIS athletes back into the gym and to a big year leading into the Olympics next year."



PHOTO: BROOKE STRATTON  
PHOTO CREDIT: MICHAEL DODGE / @MICHAELDODGEPHOTO





PHOTO: GRAEME FRISLIE

## BACK INTO LOCKDOWN

When Victoria went into a second lockdown on July 9, it was hard for the whole community. However, we still continued to see numerous examples of how VIS athletes and staff overcame the challenges that COVID-19 presented.

The VIS cycling program continued their weekly Zoom sessions but started to call upon a 'mystery guest' to teach their athletes about balancing sport and life. The program was led by track sprint coach Shane Kelly OAM, endurance coach Vanessa Bof and sport scientist Nick Owen.

The coaches felt it was important to use this time to dive into the education on having a healthy balance in life and sport, living up to the VIS' motto Success in Sport and Life.

Kelly explained that he believed the most effective way to get the message across was to invite special guests into their weekly Zoom meetings.

“Hearing a message from a third party that the athletes don't already know was really powerful.”

Shane Kelly

### Frislie wins from his own garage

Graeme Frislie (left) took out the first stage of the National Road Series from his own garage. Due to restrictions across the country, Cycling Australia moved their National Road Series to a virtual format via the online cycling platform Zwift.

Throughout the whole lockdown period, they were visited by guests inside and outside of the sport, providing athletes new insights and perspectives on life.

Guests included former VIS cycling head coach Dave Sanders, former cyclist Anna Wilson and one of the most decorated cyclists in Australian history, Simon Gerrans.

It was not only household cycling names that joined these sessions, former AFL player Lance Picioana surprised cyclists sharing his experience with anxiety and depression whilst being in the spotlight of AFL. Famous chef, Ian Curley, who sits at the helm of some of Melbourne's most iconic restaurants shared his experiences of working in high pressure environments and some of the similarities this shared with high performance sport.

The VIS sailing program adopted a similar approach, with director of VIS sailing, Malcolm Page creating a forum for sailors in all stages of their careers to dive into the education around sailing and decision making.

Decision making in sailing is a major component of the sport, and being out of the water for months, the sailors turned their attention to sailing-specific curriculum-based learning online.

According to dual Olympic gold medalist, Page, the sailors were able to deep dive into some topics that would normally take years to grasp.

Some of the topics were, strategy, starting and turning, which are all integral parts of sailing. The athletes also had an opportunity to review their races, discuss risk management and learn about recovery processes with VIS sport scientist Sylvie Withers.

Page also brought in some guests to the online sessions including London Olympic gold medalist, Nathan Outteridge, and Rio Olympic gold medalist, Tom Burton. Athletes were able to quiz the champions about their learnings and what it took to be the best.

## HOW OUR STAFF ADAPTED TO COVID-19

“I was so impressed by the resilience, proactivity and creativity that was displayed by many in adapting, whilst also maintaining a sense of routine. We truly are all in this together.”

Anne Marie Harrison, VIS CEO







PHOTO: SYLVIE WITHERS

# SHIFTING FOCUS

With Sylvie Withers

During 2020, we caught up with sport scientist, Sylvie Withers, to see how she was adapting to these challenging times.

**VIS:** How have you been servicing athletes from home?

**SW:** Fortunately, technology has come a long in way terms of remote servicing. The availability and quality of tech such as smart phones/watches, heart rate monitors and power meters mean we can still monitor and prescribe sessions with accuracy in most circumstances. I use TrainingPeaks as a prescription and monitoring tool for the sailing program which enables me to keep track of how an athlete is training. I use this even when we are not in isolation so that part of servicing hasn't changed.

With competitions postponed for the year, a lot of work went into shifting the training focus and getting creative with prescription so that each athlete has a purpose to their training. In a lot of respects we have had to shift our servicing back to the foundations, rather than focusing on those 19/ers that can make all the difference at the pointy end of the season.

**VIS:** What have been some of your biggest challenges as a sport scientist in lockdown?

**SW:** As scientists we do tend to spend a lot of time crunching numbers on a computer, but it's getting out in the field that drives the work we do. We have had to adapt sessions depending on what equipment each individual athlete has access to. Conducting virtual exercise sessions and virtual racing, like Zwift, offer some level of personal interaction for the athletes but it's not

the same as sweating out with your team standing beside you. Not having face to face contact with colleagues has been another challenge. We work in an open plan setting at the VIS so we are constantly bouncing ideas around and learning from each other.

**VIS:** Have you used this time to trial new things?

**SW:** Now that we have settled into the remote servicing routine, it does open up some extra time to explore areas that have been put on the back-burner during the manic final push toward the Olympics. I have a real interest in female athlete considerations and menstrual impacts on performance, so it has been a great opportunity to put some extra time getting stuck into the research. We have also had greater opportunity to provide more education and virtual workshops that would normally be difficult to conduct due to time and availability constraints. From sleep to recovery practices to menstrual tracking, it's a great time for athletes to try new strategies and fine tune their routines.

There has also been a lot more collaboration across different sports and the entire National Institute Network in terms of sharing learning's and experiences throughout this period. We now have a second run at preparing our Olympic athletes for Tokyo so have taken the time to evaluate what we were able to achieve over the past 12 months and configure a new plan for the second take.

**“We usually have to wait 4 years for the opportunity to do things differently, so it's exciting to have that second chance now.”**

Sylvie Withers

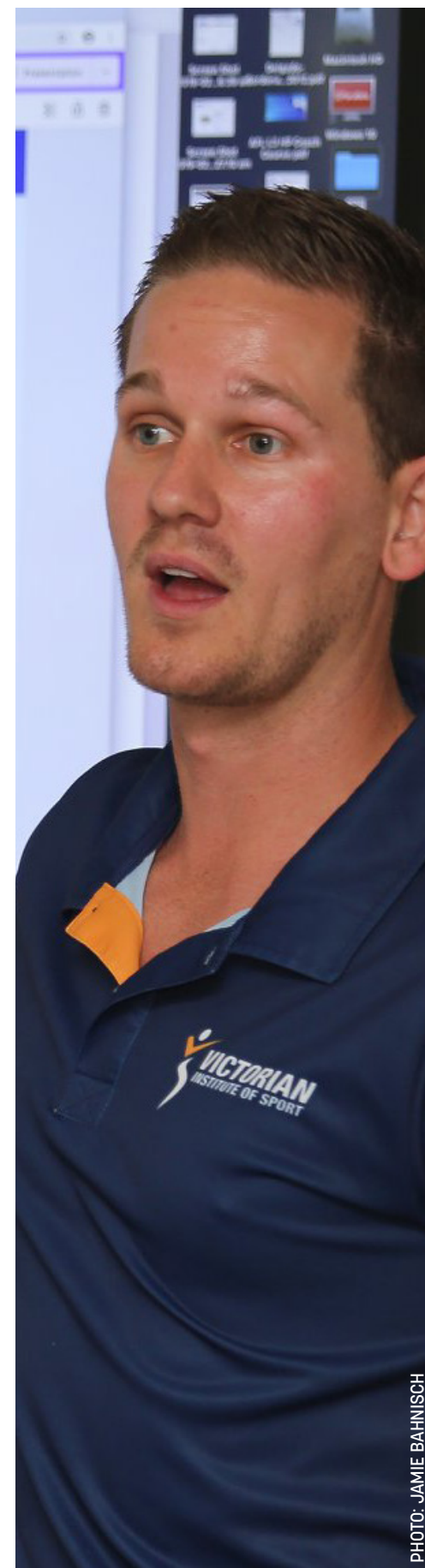


PHOTO: JAMIE BAHNISCH

# TRIALLING NEW WAYS

With Jamie Bahnisch

We caught up with lead performance analyst Jamie Bahnisch, who works closely with the Melbourne Vixens and Hockey programs, to see what he got up to under trying circumstances.

**VIS:** How did you go servicing athletes from home?

**JB:** We were still able to service athletes in a few different ways in the remote working period.

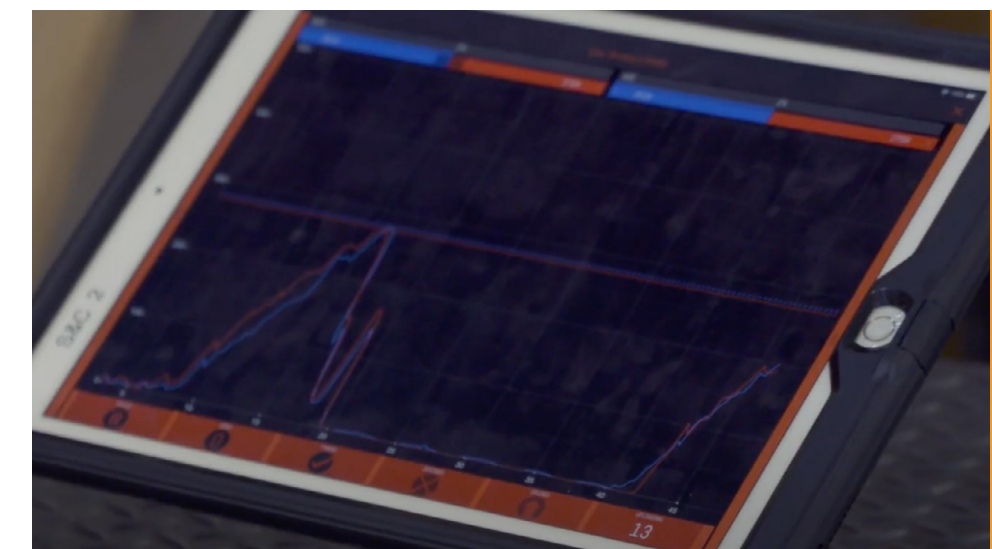
In Hockey, we were able to utilise some of the latest technology from Catapult with our GPS monitoring to assess what athletes were doing in isolation. Their latest product allows their data to be synced with a training app which we've been able to collect with our Athlete Management System (AMS) to view their data. Previously, you we weren't able to access data without physically downloading units which we couldn't do with lockdown restrictions. This process has been able to help us immensely in our monitoring during isolation but also enabled us to plan around what

returning looked like on-pitch and how to safely build training capacity back to full-training.

In Netball, we were able to shift focus to the performance analysis side of things in promoting self-learning and group work. Hudl, a cloud based platform allows us to store our video data and has allowed our staff and athletes to review training and games. We set some tasks for them to undertake during the lockdown period to help develop the players Netball IQ but also to keep group connection with the athletes. It's also not every day you get an opportunity to run a second preseason with Melbourne Vixens.

**VIS:** Did the lockdown period allow you to trial new things?

**JB:** Lockdown allowed us to use GPS units in a way we never have before. Athletes for the first time, had to enter all their data themselves, where we would normally do this process. This helped develop greater athlete independence and sparked more curiosity in what the data meant and how we used the data. This also allowed us to do more education pieces around this for athletes. Without this opportunity, we most likely wouldn't have had the time to really investigate why we have done certain things in the past and how we can innovate for the future.





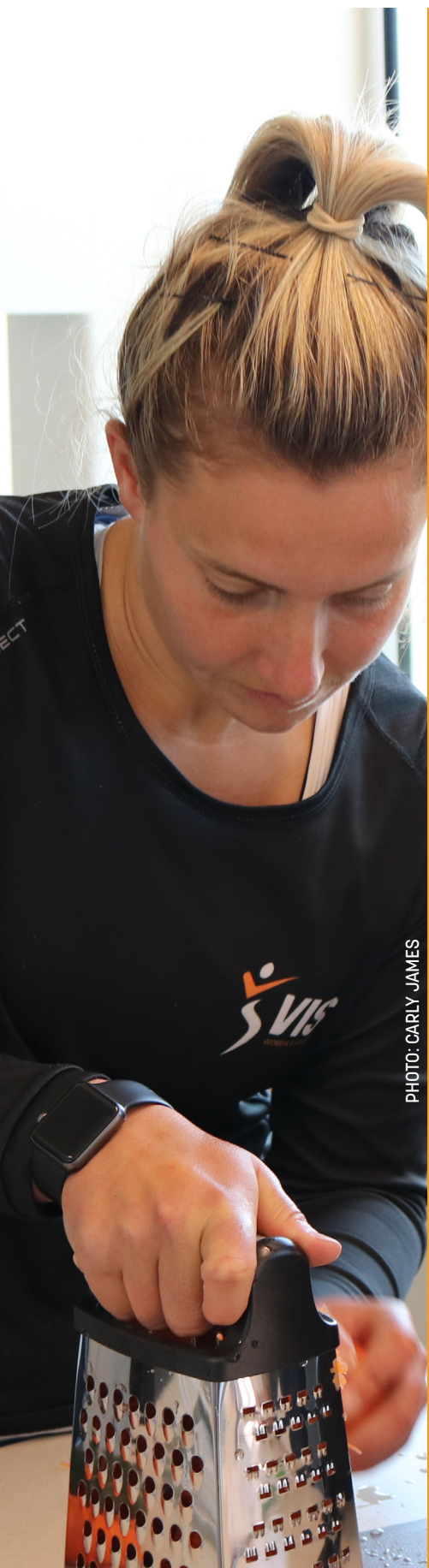


PHOTO: CARLY JAMES

## COOKING AT HOME

With Kylie Andrew

The VIS Nutrition team has been able to conduct online cooking sessions and workshops in the comfort of the athlete's own kitchens. We caught up with nutrition coordinator, Kylie Andrew, to see how her team has been able to provide nutritional advice virtually.

**VIS:** How are you able to still continue servicing athletes from home?

**KA:** The nutrition team were able to continue servicing athletes from home using Telehealth. Like other services, video meetings allowed regular follow ups and conversations to occur. In addition, the various tools used for communicating with squads allowed us to share information, fact sheets and recipes. We were also able to run cooking sessions and workshops online from the comfort of our and the athletes' own kitchen and homes.

**VIS:** What advice have you been giving athletes during isolation?

**KA:** We're always working with athletes on periodising their diet. During this time of reduced and different training, it has provided a great opportunity for us to chat more with athletes about better understanding their bodies' energy needs and fuelling appropriately. The advice given has been individualised - some athletes adjust their intake inherently based on appetite and other factors, whereas others have to stop and reflect about it and consciously make changes. Reflecting and being more aware about internal hunger cues helps them to understand what their body needs rather than eating mindlessly.

**VIS:** Has there been anything that you've noticed isolation has helped with from a Nutrition point of view?

**KA:** With increased time available, athletes had the opportunity to pause and reflect on their nutrition goals and take the time to work on areas that may have been neglected or put off before. Like others we certainly felt the benefits of regular team meetings within the sports and the increased effort by all staff and service providers to communicate and engage.

**VIS:** Did you use some of this time to try any different/new things with the athletes?

“In many instances it's been a case of getting back to basics, and doing those things well, rather than experimenting with new things.”

Kylie Andrew



## MORE TIME

With Sara Heasly

Athlete wellbeing is a constant priority for the VIS Performance Lifestyle team, and during a pandemic it was more important than ever to ensure everyone was coping okay.

We caught up with Performance Lifestyle adviser, Sara Heasly to see how she and the PL team were still able to provide advice and support remotely without face-to-face communication.

**VIS:** What advice have you been giving athletes during isolation?

**SH:** My advice has been to be patient with themselves and their loved ones. To keep close to their coaches and performance staff and complete their training as best as they can. To embrace other opportunities that came their way and to dig into any study they were undertaking. Keep connected with family and friends and seek help whenever they felt it was needed.

**VIS:** Has there been anything that you noticed isolation helped with from a Performance Lifestyle point of view?

**SH:** Isolation required us to jump online and this has worked well for many athletes. To be able to talk, learn and join in on webinars from home has been time efficient and an easy way for athletes to engage. Some athletes went back to university or picked up another subject due to the postponement of sport and added time at home. Everyone has had to change routines and our athletes stayed really open to opportunities that presented to them.



PHOTO: COL PEARSE  
PHOTO CREDIT: RIVERINE HERALD

## POOLS CLOSED

With Elaine Tor

With swimming pools closed for over two months, we caught up with Lead Biomechanist at the VIS, Dr Elaine Tor who works closely with the swimming program to see what they have been doing?

**VIS:** Did the isolation period have any benefits for the athletes from a biomechanics point of view?

**ET:** It gave us time to reflect on the past season so that we could learn and tweak different things for the new season.

We essentially have gone back in time and get a second run at an Olympic and Paralympic Games campaign, so it's about learning from what we did in the previous prep and tweaking what we need to make it better.

**VIS:** Have you been able to use some of this time to complete extra research?

**ET:** Yes. I have 2 PhD students and 3 practical students, and we were busy churning through old data.

For the swimmers, I put together a long list of drills and skills they could do in a small pool. We have also discussed race modelling, which is about knowing exactly what each athlete needs to do in order to achieve their goal time.

We have also gone over race analysis reflections where we have asked athletes to input on what their favourite races were.

**VIS:** How did swimmers keep in shape with pools closed?

**ET:** From a biomechanics point of view, we tried to think of ways they could still be in contact with the water without being in a pool, so it varied from open water swimming (some on the ocean and some in local dams), back yard pool swimming, tethered swimming, board paddling and kayaking.

For their skills I worked very closely with strength and conditioning coach Jono Wallace Smith and the physio to ensure that the dryland and pilates programs match with what they needed to work on in the water.





PHOTO: MILLY TAPPER PRESENTS VIRTUALLY

# ENGAGING STUDENTS ONLINE

The Victorian Institute of Sport moved all of its community programs online during 2020, ensuring our leading experts and elite athletes could continue to connect and inspire Victorian students wherever they were across the State.

Teachers were forced to think creatively around their online learning for students, and the Be Fit Be Well program and Victorian Institute of Sport Advancement Series offered a suite of opportunities to motivate students, with powerful stories of resilience and educational enrichment.

In partnership with School Sport Victoria, Olympic and Paralympic table tennis player, Milly Tapper delivered the 'Be Fit. Be Well' program to students from an athlete development program in Melbourne's South East, encouraging them to stay active.

Tapper spoke to the students at Silverton Primary School in Noble Park North via a live video call, after the students had watched her pre-recorded video.

Physical education teacher, Mark Blundell, said that the presentation "was a real hit with the students" and added "they were really surprised and just thought it was brilliant to hear from an elite athlete rather than a teacher".

During the live chat with Tapper, the students asked pre-prepared questions of Tapper, interested in knowing everything about her athletic career and life; from why she started playing table tennis, to what motivated her and if she had ever been bullied for doing things her own way.

Tapper had her doubts about doing live video chats but was much more comfortable with it after she had participated in a couple of different live chats with schools.

"It is a different experience for sure, but the fact you can still see one another is so important, and my technology skills have definitely improved." She said.

It meant a lot to Tapper that she was still able to engage with school students through the Be Fit. Be Well virtual program.

“It still gives me the opportunity to positively impact students' lives in some aspect and for me that's a win!

Milly Tapper

During lockdown the VIS, with the support of the Victorian Government, kick started a new program called the Advancement Series. Delivered by leading VIS experts in sport nutrition and sport science, the Advancement Series provides free education sessions to Government secondary schools to extend the nutrition and sport science knowledge of Victorian students. When the program launched at the beginning of term 3, the bookings came flying in and within weeks the program was booked out for the term.

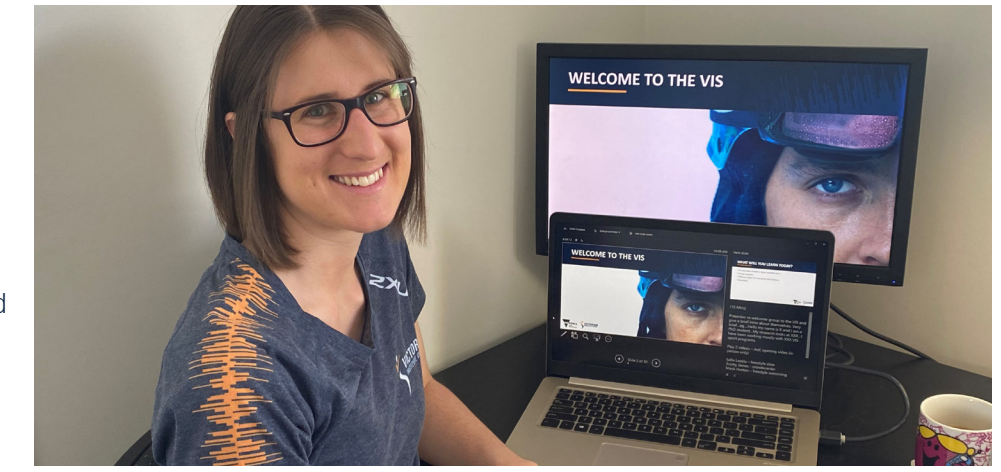
Mernda Central College teacher, Zac Anderson immediately jumped on the opportunity to extend his students' understanding of health and physical education concepts and signed his students up for both the Nutrition and Sport Science sessions.

"During remote learning it was fantastic for our students to engage with sports science professionals who provided students with fantastic insights into key concepts in the areas of sports science and nutrition and share their experiences working with elite athletes," Anderson said.

The students were blown away by some of the behind-the-scenes information that the VIS experts provided. "I could not believe the amount of Weet-Bix Mack Horton eats before and after training," one of the Mernda Central College students said.

They also learned the importance of having the right diet. "The nutrition session reminded me of how important post training eating is and making sure I am eating the right foods including carbohydrates and protein," a student said. Other students enjoyed learning about the different sports science staff that work with VIS athletes and teams.

The content for the Sport Science Advancement Series is created by VIS Lead Biomechanist Dr Elaine Tor, and the Nutrition Advancement Series is created by VIS Nutrition Coordinator & Advanced Sports Dietitian Kylie Andrew.



School Sport Victoria (SSV), as part of the Department of Education and Training, delivers an extensive school sport program to Victorian primary and secondary students. In celebrating SSV's 10th anniversary in 2020, participation and performance outcomes have been released with over 6 million participation opportunities provided across the decade which highlights SSV's integral role within the Victorian sports system.

SSV is the proud partner of the VIS' Be Fit. Be Well. program which sees VIS athletes share their stories of overcoming adversity, building resilience, and ultimately, athletic and personal triumph. The program, delivered online this year, was the perfect antidote to support, encourage and inspire students Victorian students. The Be Fit. Be Well program has been inspiring students for 25 years. [www.ssv.vic.edu.au](http://www.ssv.vic.edu.au)



SUCCESS IN SPORT AND LIFE

# VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT DURING COVID-19

## INNOVATING TO HELP VICTORIAN ATHLETES THRIVE

### PERFORMANCE SERVICES



**644** TELEHEALTH CONSULTATIONS

**97 HRS** VIRTUAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS DELIVERED TO ATHLETES, STAFF AND SCHOOLS

### PHYSICAL PREPARATION

**131** PIECES OF TRAINING EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTED TO ATHLETES

**500 KMS** COVERED BY VIS STAFF DELIVERING TRAINING EQUIPMENT

**2ND GYM** CREATED TO ALLOW FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING

### SPORTS PROGRAMS



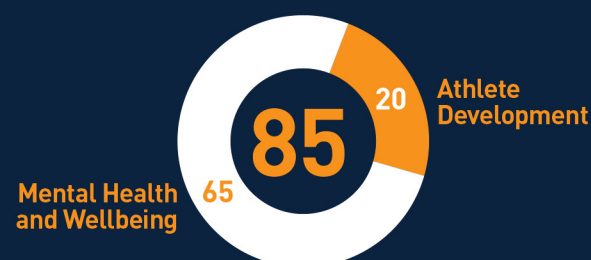
**926** ONLINE TRAINING SESSIONS

**297** ONLINE ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

**183** ATHLETE PB'S ACHIEVED IN EVENTS AND PHYSICAL TESTING

## SUPPORTING ATHLETES TO SUCCEED IN SPORT AND LIFE

VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS DELIVERED BY PERFORMANCE LIFESTYLE TEAM



**925** ENGAGEMENTS BY ATHLETES IN INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS

**75** VIS PARENTS ENGAGED IN PERFORMANCE LIFESTYLE SESSIONS

## ENGAGING AND INSPIRING THE VICTORIAN COMMUNITY



### ADVANCEMENT SERIES SESSIONS WITH VIS EXPERTS

#### VICTORIAN SECONDARY STUDENT PARTICIPATION

SPORT SCIENCE ADVANCEMENT

**651** STUDENTS

NUTRITION ADVANCEMENT

**511** STUDENTS

### VIRTUAL ATHLETE SPEAKER PROGRAM

**3278** STUDENTS PARTICIPATED

**38** SCHOOLS ENGAGED

**12** ATHLETES FROM 8 SPORTS





ARTICLE: MELBOURNE VIXENS PREMIERS  
PHOTO: MELBOURNE VIXENS PREMIERS  
PHOTO CREDIT: NELSON KAHLE

# CHAMPIONS AFTER 93 DAYS AWAY

After 93 days away from home (including 14 days in quarantine), the Melbourne Vixens were crowned the 2020 Suncorp Super Netball Premiers after an absolute thriller of a match against the West Coast Fever.

It was a nail-biting encounter from the get-go in what is sure to go down as a Grand Final match for the ages.

A fitting way to cap off the careers of Melbourne Vixens shooting superstars, Tegan Philip and Caitlin Thwaites, who announced that the 2020 season would be their last.

In March, the Vixens were gearing up to head to Ballarat for a pre-season match, about to converge on Federation Square to celebrate the Vixens Fan Day, and excited to celebrate the launch of the 2020 netball season. Then COVID hit, and all events fell victim to the pandemic.

Training went from in person to over Zoom, just like the rest of our lives, and the pre-season felt never-ending.

Would the Suncorp Super Netball (SSN) season go ahead? It was a great unknown. Postponed from its original start on May 2, there were so many moving parts - could the Vixens get away with a season as normal, just later in the year? What about hubs?

In July, the news everyone was waiting for had finally been confirmed, the SSN season would commence on August 1, hub life was about to become a reality. The Vixens packed themselves up

and headed for the sunshine state, not knowing how long they would be gone, and their first game of the season to be played behind closed doors in quarantine.

From there, we saw two matches per week, and at one stage the Vixens had played 3 matches in 7 days. But, through all the unknown, the girls continued to get on with it and did the job they needed to do. A key highlight of the year, was when the Vixens finally got to host their first ever SSN Indigenous round against the QLD Firebirds, in Cairns. Another twist to add to the season, was when the Vixens played a home semi-final against the Sunshine Coast Lightning, in their stadium.

Throughout it all, the VixensLIVE was launched as a way to keep its community connected and informed in a year they weren't able to watch a single match live at Melbourne Arena

and cheer on their beloved team. The podcast, Hear If You Need, provided insights from players during lockdown and hub-life, with a lot of laughs along the way. Train Like a Vixen went online, a way to help budding netballers stay active and hone their skills whilst they couldn't get out and play the game

## Season Highlights

- 100 Games:** Kate Moloney & Liz Watson
- 50 Games:** Emily Mannix
- Debut:** Kate Eddy (Vixens), Tayla Honey, Jacqui Newton, Elle McDonald & Allie Smith
- Retirements:** Tegan Philip & Caitlin Thwaites
- SSN Premiers:** Melbourne Vixens
- Grand Final MVP:** Mwai Kumwenda
- 2020 Sharelle McMahon Medal MVP:** Kate Moloney
- SSN Coach of the Year:** Simone McKinnis
- SSN Team of the Year:** Kate Moloney, Liz Watson

they love. The way fans interacted with their Vixens heros also changed, with countless Zoom sessions taking place, offering a chance for people to hear directly from the players they admire. But ultimately, it was that day in October that gave everyone home in Victoria something to cheer about. With the words "Doing it for VIC" etched into the Vixens' netball dress, they truly did when they defeated the Fever in a two-goal thriller and became SSN Champions.

The win secured the Vixens maiden SSN title, and broke the hoodoo of SSN minor premiers' inability to lift the Premiership trophy at season's end.

Melbourne Vixens Head Coach and VIS employee, Simone McKinnis OAM, couldn't be prouder of her team's performance to finish off what will arguably be the most unique season her sport will ever see.

"It was just exhilaration that moment when the game was over, and pride and relief and everything in between and around that...and now it's just satisfaction for what's been a really full-on season and a full-on year," McKinnis explained post-match. "I'm just proud of the girls [and] we can now actually breathe and enjoy what has been a well-and hard-earned Championship."

Co-Captain, Liz Watson, echoed her coach's sentiments, saying that the 2020 season would be truly remembered as one like no other.

"I think in my career so far all the seasons seem to merge into one, but this one's definitely going to stand out, not just because of this Premiership but because of the whole year...we've become super close on and off the court, and to finish it off - like Simone said - it's satisfaction, relief, you can breathe and then we can kind of just relax now...so it's been unreal."



# VIRTUAL AWARDS

For the first time in its 30 year history, the Victorian Institute of Sport presented its 2020 Awards celebration online and to a public audience. The event ran over three days with a different award presented each evening, recognising the outstanding achievements by VIS supported athletes.

The event kicked off on a Monday evening with the 2XU Coach Award, presented to one athlete from each of the 14 VIS programs, who is most deserving within the last calendar year. Among the winners were Tokyo-bound ace walking star Jemima Montag from the athletics program, recognised for her commitment to the pursuit of success in sport and life.

Currently studying a Bachelor of Science at The University of Melbourne (Immunology major), Jemima hopes to specialise in public health and is passionate about reducing the burden of non-communicable disease in disadvantaged communities.

In her speech she thanked her coach Brent Vallance and VIS performance services staff members for their ongoing care and support.

“As athletes we are taught to turn set-backs into set-forwards, and that is a really good skill. However, this year for me has been all about developing self-awareness, allowing myself to slow down and feel all the feels.

## Jemima Montag

World number one ranked aerial skier, Laura Peel, took home the Open Universities Australia Performance Lifestyle Award. The award is presented to the athlete who has achieved excellence in their studies, career ambitions, and/or work setting whilst pursuing their dual sporting career. A panel of judges chose Peel as this year's winner based on her impressive results both on but especially off the slopes.

Although spending much of her time overseas, Peel still managed to complete a Bachelor of Health Sciences and is now undertaking a Diploma of Modern Languages. The dual Winter Olympian had an extraordinarily successful 2019-2020 winning two World Cup events

## 2XU COACH AWARD WINNERS

Aerial Skiing: Laura Peel  
Athletics: Jemima Montag  
Cycling: Ruby Roseman-Gannon  
Diving: Laura Hingston  
Golf: Blake Collyer  
Hockey (Men's): Jayshaan Randhawa  
Hockey (Women's): Krissy Bates  
Netball: Gabby Coffey  
Rowing: Rohan Lavery  
Sailing: Casey Imeneo  
Shooting: Elena Galiabovitch  
Swimming: Matt Temple  
Future Talent: Laura Paeglis (Archery)  
Individual Scholarship: Rowie Webster (Water Polo)



and being presented the Crystal Globe for World Cup Overall Champion. She is also the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia 2020 Athlete of the Year.

Peel is a role model for, and mentor of, young athletes. She also contributed to the AOC Wellbeing series, completed an online yoga program for people in lockdown and even donated her prized Olympic uniform to the bushfire appeal.

“I was a bit surprised to be nominated for this award but of course very honoured. The VIS is full of some of the most amazing athletes and amazing people, so to win this award is something that is very special to me.

## Laura Peel



The 2020 VIS Awards concluded with the presentation of the very special Sarah Tait Spirit Award to joint winners: Jenna O'Hea and Caitlin Thwaites.

Like the Award's namesake, O'Hea and Thwaites were recognised for being inspirations in life as well as in their sports and are both fantastic role models to past and present athletes. The judging panel was impressed by the athletes' exceptional work to raise awareness for athlete wellbeing.

Thwaites's glittering 18-year career reached a dazzling finale in 2020 when she helped the Vixens to a very special Suncorp Super Netball Premiership. She has spoken publicly about mental health issues and has gone further to explore topics including inclusion, diversity and anti-violence campaigns. Thwaites has this year helped and motivated young people with her contributions to the Netball Victoria Talent Academy, Bushfire Relief Appeal, Lifeline and the Confident Girls Foundation.

“It is an absolute honour to receive this Sarah Tait Spirit Award. It has been an incredibly tough year and for me personally. It has taken the support of so many for me to get through an incredibly hard but very successful season.

## Caitlin Thwaites



I would like to thank the VIS, Melbourne Vixens, Netball Victoria, my teammates and my family for all the support they provided not only to our team but especially to me personally,” Thwaites said.

2020 has been an extraordinarily difficult year for elite athletes but it was even tougher for Australian Opal's Captain O'Hea. She worked through injuries during the WNBL season and while facing the disappointment of the postponement of the Olympics she still found time to think of others as she is passionate about raising awareness of and support for mental health.

Her pledge to personally donate \$100 to Lifeline for each 3-point shot scored quickly gained support, and was picked up by all 8 WNBL clubs and the WNBL organisation, raising \$15,000 and thus demonstrating an impact beyond herself to the community.

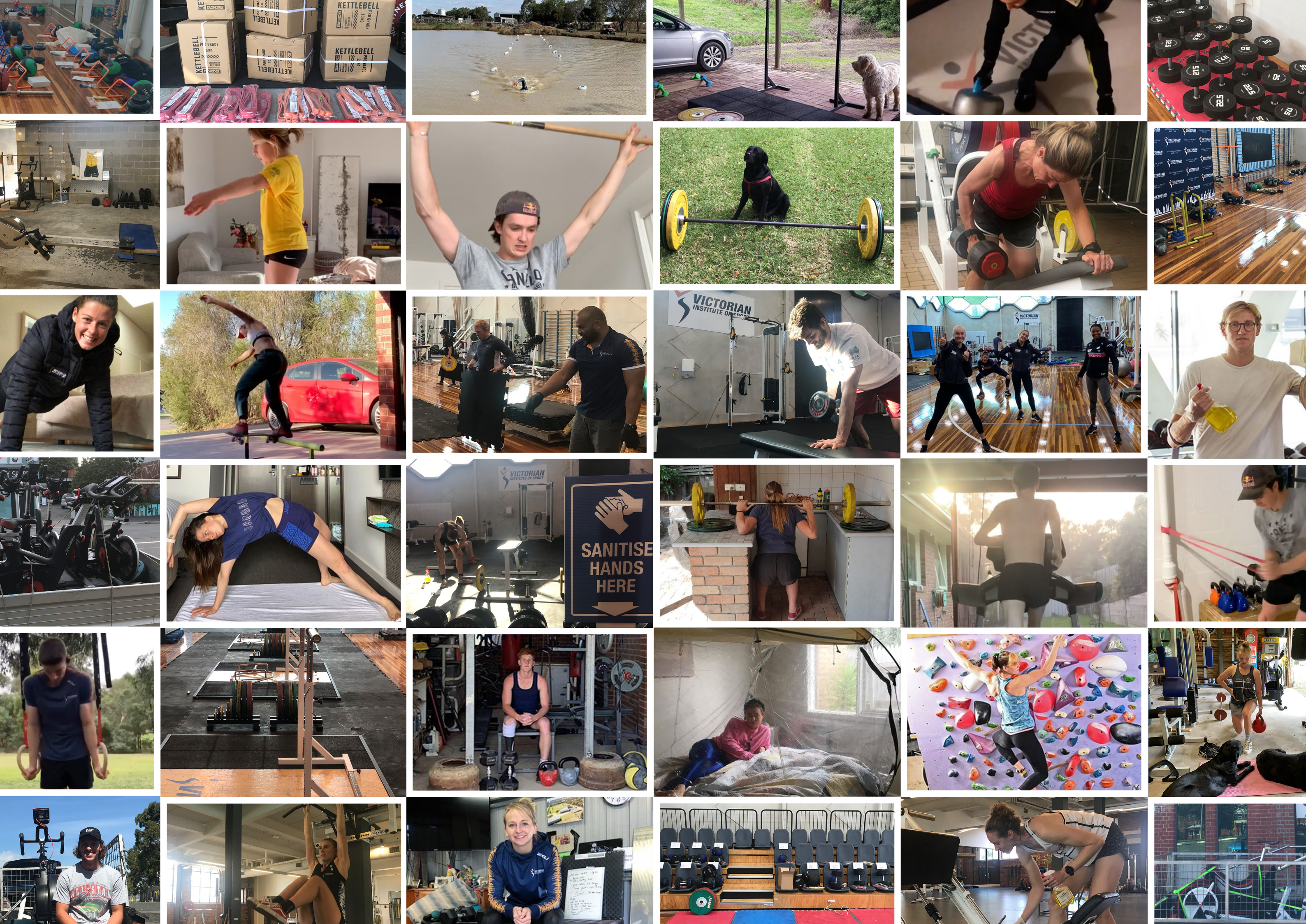
“It is an honour to have Renae Ingles present this award and an even bigger honour to share this award with Caitlin. 2020 has been a rough year, so to win this award is extra special this year.

## Jenna O'Hea

She continued to thank VIS physiotherapy lead, Steve Hawkins, and VIS strength & conditioning coach, Ben King, for their help this year.

The Sarah Tait Spirit Award, named after the late rower Sarah Tait, was presented by 2019 Award winner and former netball star Renae Ingles and Dr Larissa Trease, Sport & Exercise Physician and Medical Advisor to ASADA. Dr Trease was formerly the Chief Medical Officer to Rowing Australia and a close friend of Sarah Tait.







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[www.sportsacademy.maribsc.vic.edu.au](http://www.sportsacademy.maribsc.vic.edu.au)

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