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RIO WRAP

Mack Horton





Timothy Disken

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO	03
MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR SPORT	04
MACK HORTON – OUR GOLDEN ROLE	05
CATHERINE THE GREAT	06
STEELERS STEAL VICTORY	07
ALCOTT CREATES HISTORY	08
“DISKO” DANCES TO HIS OWN BEAT	09
SOCIAL MEDIA PHOTO COLLAGE	10
SPRING IN STEP FOR SMITH	12
POTT LUCK	13
TRIPPS LONG JOURNEY	14
LATEFUL EIGHT	15
RUNNING AND ROMANCE	16
BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH - LACHLAN MCKINNON	18

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ANNE MARIE HARRISON

CEO, Victorian Institute of Sport

As always the Olympic and Paralympic Games did not let us down, providing that blend of breathtaking performances, admiration, utter disappointment, new stars emerging with compelling stories and repeat performers with equally compelling stories. All of this happened on the world stage and the microcosm that we operate in at the VIS was no different. This edition provides an insight to our athletes and their experiences of Rio 2016 and the many years of preparation which brought them to their moment of destiny.

From a VIS perspective the following gives a quick overview of our performances against KPIs.

	Target	Outcome
Olympic Games		
Representation	>15%	14%
Medals	25%	21% (gold 25%)
Paralympic Games		
Representation	>15%	21%
Medals	25%	24% (gold 32%)

These were backed up by some great Top 8's/Finalists and PB's. Of course statistics don't tell the full story! We can ask no more of our athletes that they arrive fit, healthy and in good form to compete; the performances then take care of themselves. I extend our thanks and congratulations to the 57 Olympians and 36 Paralympians for their endeavors over the 4 year cycle. Behind these athletes has been great support provided by VIS coaches and performance services staff, contracted experts, along with personal coaches, clubs, SSA/NSO's and of course their families.

The observations regarding performances and the commentary on Australia's Winning Edge (AWE) strategy which was played out in the media, was unedifying and disrespectful to Australian athletes. They have a right to expect administrators will be calm and measured in our deliberations and

leave no stone unturned to review all aspects of high performance sport and make the necessary adjustments to enable them and future generations to be successful in their careers. Let's hope with the pressure and emotion now dissipating we can get on with constructive conversations.

Away from the Games, Jacinta Carroll continues to dominate the waterskiing world, breaking the world jumping record twice in September and becoming the first woman to jump over 60m, a barrier many thought was unbreakable! Jacinta did this whilst undertaking a Masters degree in Physiotherapy full time and taking up a new sport of weightlifting, epitomising our motto of "success in sport & life".

So we look to Tokyo and of course the road for our winter athletes to PyeongChang and then the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast in 2018.





THE HON JOHN EREN MP

Minister for Sport

On behalf of the Victorian Government and all Victorians, I would like to commend the VIS and your entire list of athletes, coaches, support staff, officials and administrators on your recent Rio campaign.



The performances of our VIS Olympic and Paralympic representatives was inspirational and gave all Victorians great joy.

Under the watchful eye of the VIS, some 30 Victorian athletes featured on the winner's podium, bringing home a swag of medals from Rio.

Who could forget Mack Horton's 400m freestyle swim, pipping Chinese rival Sun Yang for gold? And then there was Dylan Alcott's gold medal double, acing the wheelchair tennis singles and doubles.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Congratulations also to:

- ▶ Anabelle Smith – bronze, synchronised diving
- ▶ Catherine Skinner – gold, trap shooting
- ▶ Alec Potts – bronze, archery (team)
- ▶ Karsten Forsterling – silver, quadruple sculls rowing
- ▶ William Lockwood, Joshua Dunkley-Smith, Joshua Booth – silver, coxless fours rowing
- ▶ Carol Cooke – gold, T1-2 cycling road race and time trial
- ▶ Timothy Disken – gold, 100m S9 freestyle, silver 50m S9 freestyle, bronze 200m S9 individual medley
- ▶ Alistair Donohoe – silver, C5 cycling time trial and 4000m individual pursuit
- ▶ Jessica Gallagher – bronze, B 1km track cycling time trial

- ▶ Isis Holt – silver, 100m and 200m sprint, bronze 4x100m relay
- ▶ Todd Hodgetts – bronze, F20 Shot Put
- ▶ Ashleigh McConnell – gold, 4x100m 34 points freestyle relay
- ▶ Monique Murphy – silver, S10 400m freestyle
- ▶ Stuart Tripp – silver, H5 time trial
- ▶ Amanda Reynolds – silver, 200m KL3 canoe
- ▶ Nazim Erdem, Ben Fawcett, Andrew Harrison, Josh Hose, Jason Lees, Matthew Lewis and Jayden Warn – gold, wheelchair rugby

The achievements and performances of all our VIS Athletes are extraordinary. As a state we are so proud of them.

We love watching our athletes fly our nation's flag in the green and gold. That's why the Victorian Government proudly donated \$775,000 to support our athletes at the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Victoria has some of the highest sporting participation rates in the nation and I have no doubt even more Victorians will be donning their sports gear and signing up to local clubs after watching their heroes in action at Rio.

I look forward to joining all Victorians in celebrating even more inspiring sporting achievements thanks to the VIS.

OUR GOLDEN ROLE

Mack Horton's sensational 400m freestyle victory, early in the afternoon on that first Sunday of Rio action, lit-up Australia's Olympic campaign.



The 20 year old from Melbourne became a household name "overnight".

Of course coaches and staff at the VIS weren't as surprised as the rest of the nation because they realised that the "overnight success" had been many years in the making.

Horton was still at school when he turned heads on the international stage by sweeping all four freestyle titles from 200m-1500m at the World Junior Swimming Championships in Dubai in 2013.

Barely out of his teen years when he was selected for Rio the feeling was he might win gold in 2016, but he should be swimming quicker in Tokyo four years later.

Well, we didn't have to wait for Tokyo to see the young man come of age. Australians were still settling in to their Rio TV viewing patterns on day one at the pool when Mack stormed home in a thrilling finish to snatch the gold medal from the favourite, China's Sun Yang.

He joins an illustrious list of Australian champions to win the Olympic 400m title, including Murray Rose, Brad Cooper and Ian Thorpe.

Rose defended his 1956 Melbourne crown at the following Olympics in Rome and Thorpe famously went back to back in Sydney and Athens.

Interestingly, while Victorians have enjoyed great success in other sports such as rowing, cycling and track and field, we haven't won many swimming golds. Perhaps it's related to the climate!

When Leisel Jones was based in Melbourne she became the only VIS athlete to win an individual swimming gold medal at the Olympic Games.

During the 18 months prior to the Games "Mack the Knife", as he was invariably dubbed by the media, spent one day a week at the VIS working on his technique in the pool and his strength in the gym. Five days a week he was across the road at MSAC.

A number of VIS staff helped Coach Craig Jackson prepare Mack for his Rio campaign, in particular, Strength and Conditioning Coach John Tascone, Sport Scientist Nick Owen and Biomechanist Dr Elaine Tor (see sidebar).

Tascone spent hours working on Mack's strength so that he would have maximum rebound when he turned, while Owen has been in Mack's corner for the last few years.

Each of them rightly feel in their own way that they contributed to a victory that has already found itself a niche in Australian sporting folklore.

Dr Elaine Tor - An Extra Kick at Rio

VIS Biomechanist, Dr Elaine Tor, worked closely with Mack in the lead up to the Australian Championships in Adelaide and the Rio Olympics four months later.

Between that Adelaide meeting, when Mack swam the third fastest 400m in history, and the Games Elaine and coach Craig Jackson came up with a secret weapon.

After drilling down into the performances of Mack's main opponents they identified key opportunities emerging for the 20 year old VIS scholarship holder to gain water on the others.

They planned carefully where he would change gear whilst holding his stroke and, perhaps most important of all, they decided to add an extra kick to his final turn.

Mack would kick three times, instead of his usual two.

Check out what happens at that last turn - go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_I mX-YmyrY.

You'll see arch rival Sun Yang narrowly leading as they approach the wall but when Mack surfaces after the turn he's clearly in front and it was a lead he never relinquished.

It took four months to perfect that extra kick!

Elaine and the team also focused on other aspects of the turns. Mack's turns were too shallow and he was pushing off into a "wall of drag". The team worked with him to turn deeper so he was travelling faster while using less energy because he wasn't fighting against the drag. They even developed a world first App with Victoria University and Superinteractive which gave instantaneous readings of wall contact times.

So can we quantify the success of the turn improvements?

Mack's longer race, the 1500m, provides more opportunity for broad analysis. He was ten seconds off his PB in that final race but incredibly the race analysis showed his turn times were quicker than ever. Clearly there were other factors at play in the 1500m final.

When millions of Australians tuned in to watch Mack win gold on that first Sunday, they thought the swimming gods were smiling again on a country blessed with aquatic talent. What they didn't realise was the relentless application to analysis and improvement, which helped make it possible.

The Training Schedule of an Olympic Champion

Monday	6.00-8.30 am, 3.00-5.15 pm	MSAC
Tuesday	6.00-8.30 am, 3.00-5.15 pm	MSAC
Wednesday	10.00 am-12.00pm biomechanics	VIS
Thursday	6.00-8.30 am, 3.00pm-5.15 pm	MSAC
Friday	5.30- 7.45 am, 3.00- 5.15pm	MSAC
Saturday	5.30-7.45 am	MSAC

CATHERINE THE GREAT

Catherine Skinner's unforgettable gold medal in Rio speaks volumes for her attitude to competition and to life.



"Never Quit. Never Lose Hope" is a motto that has affixed itself indelibly to the trap shooter from Mansfield in North East Victoria.

Skinner twice came from the brink of defeat on the first Monday of the Games to become the second VIS scholarship holder to win gold at the 2016 Olympics (Mack Horton had already won the 400 metres freestyle the previous day).

But the 26 year old did it the hard way, she had to beat the Canadian Cynthia Myer in a shoot off just to make the semi-final, and then in the gold medal clash she fell behind early against New Zealand's Natalie Rooney.

Skinner at one stage was down by a significant amount, two targets, when some technical issues kicked-in at the Deodoro range. The microphone wasn't working properly and the targets were malfunctioning.

Sure it would have been easy at that stage to let her frustrations win and to settle for silver which would have given Australia its first shooting medal since Beijing.

Instead, Skinner channelled her anger and managed to "steady" while at the same time Rooney began to struggle.

Skinner ended up winning the gold 12-11.

In retrospect, Skinner felt that she had been in the pressure cooker environment so often that she knew how to handle the diversions. In similar situations in the past, such as the Glasgow Commonwealth Games where she finished fifth, Skinner hadn't been able to hold it together for long enough.

She brings a similar "don't quit" ethos to life.

Ask any VIS coach about the young athletes who "give it away too early" and each of them will have stories to share with you.

Catherine began shooting when she was 12, after her father and brother took her to a range. Over the last 14 years there have been numerous occasions when she's seriously considered simply walking away from the sport as she watched her young friends leading a more carefree lifestyle or struggled to complete units for her Degree in Chemical Engineering.

But, as we know, she's not a quitter which is why she's become the first Australian shooter to win Olympic gold since Susie Balogh way back at Athens in 2004.

Golden Child

Prior to Rio the VIS contacted many of the athletes' families to find out who would be at the Games and who would be staying home. We knew that if a son or daughter had Olympic success there could be media mayhem.

Ken Skinner is Catherine's father, he's a Mansfield farmer who decided not to go to Rio because there would possibly be too much excitement.

Well the excitement followed him to Mansfield.

At 5.30 in the morning, an hour after his daughter won gold, his phone started ringing, and it wasn't just his phone. There's another Skinner family in Mansfield and their line was also ringing off the hook before the sun came up.

Soon Ken had his landline in one hand, and his mobile phone in the other as he answered calls from radio stations around Australia.

Unable to get through to him, one radio station asked a local journalist in Mansfield to get out to the farm with her own mobile.

The radio program calls were followed by the TV stations, which sent crews to the Skinner farm, and then came the newspaper journalists and photographers.

It didn't stop, and Ken didn't eat, until five o'clock that afternoon.

The most embarrassing moment came when one radio station told him they



had Catherine on a Skype call and he could talk to her if he wanted to. Ken says he didn't realise they were going live to air and, to this day, is unsure of "what rubbish I told her".

Ironically while the media could offer him an opportunity to talk to Catherine it was more than three days until he could actually get hold of her in Rio for a quiet chat.

By the following morning there was not a single call, the media had moved on.



STEELERS STEAL VICTORY

They went to Rio as the defending Paralympic champions with the intent to win back-to-back gold. And after an epic final, the Aussie Steelers claimed the historic murderball victory with a thrilling 59-58 double overtime win against fierce rivals, the United States.

It marked the first time any nation had won back-to-back wheelchair rugby Paralympic titles and a world championship in a four year stretch.

Eight of those London gold medallists formed part of the team returning in Rio, including VIS athlete Naz Erdem, remarkably competing in his fifth consecutive Paralympic Games. Fellow VIS athletes Andrew Harrison, Josh Hose, and Jason Lees also returned to win their second gold, while Matt Lewis, Jayden Warn and Ben Fawcett enjoyed a winning debut.

Team USA were always going to be one of the toughest challenges for the Australian side. While the Steelers were the reigning champions in Rio, team USA entered the Games as the No. 1 ranked team in the world.

Furthermore, the USA hoodoo hung over the Aussies as they had avoided a clash against the defending champions in London and they knew they had to refine their tactics in order to triumph against the three-time winners.

Both the Aussies and team USA were undefeated in the lead up to the final, qualifying on top of their respective pools. But Australia had been forced to work hard, narrowly edging Great Britain 53-51 in their opening game, before a tense 63-62 escape against Canada.

The final lived up to the hype with the scores level at 49-all after the fourth quarter.

In a tense goal-for-goal overtime, it looked as if USA were going to reclaim their Beijing title, but the Aussie Steelers held on to force a double overtime, with Chris Bond equalising the score 54-a piece with 1.4 seconds to go.

The second overtime was equally nail biting. But the Steelers managed to claw ahead 59-58, with Ryley Batt notching up his 27th score to put the Australian team in front by one point with 49 seconds remaining.

With the clock ticking down, the pressure mounted on the Aussie defence to stop USA from levelling the score. The Steelers prevailed to snatch gold and go back-to-back for the first time.

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"As a past VIS Scholarship Holder, I see strong synergies between Unlockd and VIS particularly in the values of passion, courage, respect and the '+1 factor'."

MATT BERRIMAN, Unlockd CEO and past VIS Scholarship Holder (Cricket Program, 2001 – 2005).



ALCOTT CREATES HISTORY

Triple gold medallist Dylan Alcott first represented Australia at the Paralympic Games playing wheelchair basketball - winning gold in Beijing and silver in London. But he returned to his first love of tennis to compete in Rio.

Alcott and childhood playing partner Heath Davidson worked their way from the brink of defeat to claim quad wheelchair doubles gold, upsetting three-time reigning Paralympic champions David Wagner and Nick Taylor of the United States 4-6 6-4 7-5.

Alcott then claimed his first Paralympic individual glory in the singles the following day, defeating Britain's Andy Lapthorne 6-3, 6-4.

VIS Marketing and Media intern, Alyssia Varricchio, caught up with Dylan to talk about winning the double gold in Rio and what the future holds:

Describe the moment when you won your first individual Paralympic gold.

I went to Rio to win the singles gold medal. That's what I thought about every day for three and a half years when I was training. I really enjoyed the doubles but if I left Rio without that singles gold medal, I would have been hugely disappointed, so it was amazing. In that moment it's just a massive feeling of relief because you think more about "I don't want to lose" than "I want to win". It's not like if you lose a grand slam, three months later you've got another chance. You have to wait four years, so to have that gold medal is just such a massive weight off my shoulders.

You now join just a handful of athletes to have won two gold medals across two different sports. What does that mean to you?

To join that list I think is an incredible feat but also it just does it justice to all of the people who have supported me including the VIS, Tennis Australia and Basketball Australia. When I decided to make the switch everybody backed me in wholeheartedly and to come away with the gold in Rio is just a hugely satisfying feeling and one that I'm humbled and honoured to say I could achieve. These gold medals are pretty much for everyone who's supported me over my ten year career or so. Without their support I wouldn't be able

to be the person I am today or the sportsman that I am. I'm pretty lucky that I've got two gold medals from Rio because one gold medal I take out with me and absolutely trash, and it's definitely seen better days, but I love sharing the medals with everybody. Then I've got the other gold medal that I keep in pristine condition!

What would you say to your bullies now given how much you have achieved?

I'm not spiteful in one bit. I think I just realised that for everyone that gives you a hard time, whether you're eight years old or you're 30, there are tens of thousands of other legends that are worth hanging out with. They probably made me a better person I guess in the sense that it made me realise that and it made me not want to say hurtful things to other people. I'm sure they feel silly about what they said. They were just kids saying dumb things.

What does the future hold? Do you have your sights set on defending your titles in Tokyo?

I've got absolutely no idea at the moment. I'll defend my title at the Australian Open next year in Melbourne to try and win three in a row and then after that I'll reassess. I really want to work in the media, in TV and radio. I love the Paralympic Games because every four years people with disabilities rule the world for two weeks. I think that's absolutely awesome but I think there needs to be more positive role models in mainstream media with disabilities on a regular basis. That would be really powerful in continuing to break barriers and change stigmas against people with disabilities, so maybe I'll do that. If that means I quit sport, I don't know. But if I'm going to go to Tokyo I think it probably will be the tennis and I think Tokyo will put on an absolutely incredible show like we've never seen before. I think we'll have robots walking around and giving us our medals and things like that so who knows. It's a long way off but I think Tokyo will be a cool Games so I'm definitely not ruling it out.

A big thank you to the VIS they've been massive supporters of me ever since I got my first scholarship when I was 15-16 years old. I can't thank them enough for all of the support and I'm glad I could do everyone proud and do them justice!

"DISKO" DANCES TO HIS OWN BEAT

There were as many amazing stories at the Rio Paralympics as there were athletes so when the Paralympians themselves talk about a guy who's a "bit special" you certainly take notice.

"Disko", as he's known to his mates, was born early at 24 weeks with cerebral palsy and a host of other issues including feeding problems which meant he took nutrition through a gastronomical feeding tube. He used this until he was 17 years of age.

Tim also had to live with a condition common in cerebral palsy children - shunted hydrocephalus - which meant that extra cerebrospinal fluid in the brain can lead to blurred vision, balance problems and other issues.

These setbacks haven't prevented Tim living a very full life, he's completed secondary school, he produces house music and also drives a very hot Mitsubishi Magna Ralliart car which he has christened "The Ninja". But most importantly of all, he swims for Australia and he does it incredibly well.

He got his water wings when he was just four years of age, and by 10 he was already competing. Since then it's been a slow build culminating with an Australian title in 2014 and two years later, selection in the Australian Paralympic team at 19 years old.

We could stop the story right here and people would still rejoice at Tim's achievements, however, it looks like it's just the beginning for this young man from Melbourne.

He brought home three medals* from Rio including a gold in the 100 metre S9 freestyle. Australia went "one-two" in that event with Tim beating a dual London gold medallist, Brenden Hall from Queensland.

Both swimmers pushed each other in a desperate final 30 metres of the race and Tim says it certainly "stung a bit" but the pain was all worth it.

That victory was extra sweet because one of Tim's idols, the great Matt Cowdrey triple treated in this event winning in Athens, Beijing and London. Tim says to now "own" that Paralympic title seems a bit surreal.

Prior to Rio Tim thought just wearing the green and gold was incredibly special, but now, with three medals in the trophy cabinet at Glen Waverly, he has set his sights on backing up in Tokyo in 2020.

It is indeed a great story and it's still only young.

*Disken's medals- gold S9 100 freestyles, silver S9 50metre freestyle, bronze SM9 200metre IM



Photo Credit: Australian Paralympic Committee



SOCIAL MEDIA



SPRING IN STEP FOR SMITH

A clutch dive from VIS athlete Anabelle Smith and partner Maddison Keeney on their final attempt gave Australia a bronze medal in the women's synchronised three metre springboard final at the Rio Olympic Games.

Smith and Keeney were in fifth place going into the final round at Maria Lenk Aquatics Centre but posted a score of 71.10 to overhaul Canada and Malaysia, who were third and fourth at the time.

They endured a nervous moment as the Canadian had their final dive but 67.50 was not enough to edge out the Australians.

Now a dual Olympian, Anabelle spoke to VIS Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Ashley Carr, about her Rio experience:

How does it feel to be an Olympic Bronze Medallist?

It feels so surreal! It is so rewarding to know that all the hard work over so many years has culminated in an Olympic medal!

How did you celebrate?

Maddi and I spent the whole night doing media and interviews but then treated ourselves with a well-deserved McDonald's for brekkie the next morning!

At one stage in the final, you were last in the field of eight. How did you settle your nerves before your final dives?

I think being 8th after the first couple of rounds made us think that we had lost any chance of winning a medal so we totally switched to relax mode and tried to enjoy ourselves. So we weren't really nervous because we weren't aware we were still in with a shot going into the last round! It worked in our favour!

What was your best moment from the Games?

Apart from standing on the podium, I would have to say meeting new

people within the Australian team and cheering on other athletes. The last night the whole team had a big celebration in the village which was a great way to finish off the Games.

What "wowed" you the most?

Seeing Usain Bolt win the 100m and 200m final with a smile on his face as he crossed the line. He is the most phenomenal athlete in the world and is a prime example of being able to deal with pressure but also enjoying yourself and soaking up the moment.

Tell us about village life...

The village was great. It had everything we needed and the Australian 'Hub' was my favourite place to hang out. We played some serious table tennis matches and also shot some hoops on the basketball courts. It was great to be amongst so many athletes from around the world...I often get stars struck!

How did Rio differ from your London 2012 experience?

Rio was completely different - mainly because we had to be more concerned with our personal safety. We were unable to just roam around the streets of Brazil! We also competed in an outdoor pool in Rio which made the atmosphere much less intense, plus I felt calmer during my competition as I had the London experience behind me.

What next....?

I've enjoyed some time off and had a great time at the welcome home parades around the country. Eventually it will be time to dust off the bathers and get back in the pool! I now know 4 years flies by!

Loudy Wiggins



Long term VIS scholarship holder and two time Olympic diving bronze medallist, Loudy Wiggins, delivered expert diving commentary on Channel 7 in Rio. She spoke to the VIS marketing team about her experience:

My last Olympic competition dive was a little over 4 years ago and I remember thinking "that can't be it, I want to go to Rio!"

Arriving in Rio felt a lot like the Athens Olympics - including the media build-up of the city not being ready, but there was a difference. In Athens it was still all systems go with workmanship until the Opening ceremony commenced. In Rio, not so much...

The diving program was spread over 2 weeks of competition. It wasn't a crazy schedule, but I had my own little personal goal - I wanted to call an Australian Olympic diving medal. I got that opportunity on day 2 with Anabelle Smith and Madison Keaney sneaking onto the podium in the 3m synchro event. Thanks girls!

Overall, Australia did well in the diving - our target was 1 - 2 medals and we came away with a bronze, two 5th places and a 6th. I was on the edge of my seat in most of the finals, shed a few tears of joy (that hopefully) I disguised and realised what a diehard sports fan I really am.

The diving program at the Olympics always causes major upsets and Rio was no exception. We saw failed dives, a few near misses, world champions not proceeding to finals, but there were a few surprises that caught everyone off guard; including a green pool (all publicity is good publicity, right?!) and a Great Britain diving gold medal that didn't involve Tom Daley!

Rio as the host nation certainly had its challenges from transport issues, accessibility to good food, accommodation and my favourite hashtag #smellsofrío, but despite all that I was so grateful to have sat in a diving pool, fully clothed and dry and still able to learn from, and enjoy, my Olympic experience.

Bring on Tokyo!



POTT LUCK

There was yelling and jumping around in the Potts household of Mount Eliza when archer son Alec Potts won a bronze medal at the Rio Olympics, Australia's first at the Games.

Alec's mother Shona said the family's dog "Sunny" fled in fright at the ruckus they made when Alec, aged just 20, and teammates Taylor Worth and Ryan Tyack finished in third place.

Alec took up archery as a child when the family was living in the English town of Orpington, Kent, near castles and a Roman villa. His mum took him to jousting tournaments and he also learned fencing. On return to Melbourne in 2007, he joined the AIM archery club in Cheltenham and loved it. He is now an Olympic medallist.

Alec spoke to the VIS marketing team about his debut Olympic experience:

How does it feel to be an Olympic Bronze Medalist?

It feels great to be a bronze medallist! I went into these Games hoping to do well but I didn't expect to come home with a medal from my first Olympics. So it really motivates me to see how much more I can do in 4 years time.

How did you celebrate?

I didn't really have too much chance to celebrate because our individual event was so soon after the team competition, but I did allow myself a sneaky Maccas run between the events...!

What was your best moment from the Games?

My best moment from the Games would have to be

finishing both my team and individual campaigns with a ten, this is something that I really wanted to do, to make sure that I had left everything I had out on the field.

Who gave you the most support leading into the Games and how?

The most support I had leading into the Games was probably a combination of the help from VIS and also my parents. The VIS was great as being on an individual scholarship, I was able to go in and manage my own times for gym and psych, massage etc. and I found that I work better when given this kind of independence.

Tell us a little about your brush with the Brazilian authorities?

The accreditation scandal was an unfortunate end to the whole experience, it was especially disappointing to see how the Australian media originally portrayed us as "troublemakers" before all the facts were released. But I'm just glad now that the public can see exactly what really went on and in a few years' time it'll make a great story!

What next....?

Now I have a few domestic tournaments for the remainder of the year, and although I won't be "training" as such, I'll still be shooting regularly but will have more of a focus on running my business, Eliza Archery, and working with school groups etc. through the next 12 months to teach archery to a wider audience.



TRIPPS LONG JOURNEY

One of the most poignant photos to emerge from the 2016 Olympics and Paralympics featured hand cyclist Stuart Tripp with his face crumpled into tears when he phoned his biggest supporter, his wife Gillean, after winning the silver medal in the H5 time trial.



They were tears of joy and relief as Tripp's long journey to Paralympic success reached a sensational finale.

That journey began 22 years ago when the car he was driving ran off the road and wrapped itself around a tree leaving Stuart fighting for his life.

Tripp lost a leg in that accident and for many years lost hope whilst self-medicating with alcohol and smoking himself towards a probable early grave.

"Sport" turned his life around, initially through swimming and then hand cycling which he took up in 2003.

A year later he proved to himself that he had something special to offer when he rode a circuit which started and ended in Bright, at the foothills of the Victorian High Country.

Over 10 days Tripp hand cycled through 1077 kilometres of the steepest terrain in Australia. At times he was in tears as he willed himself up muddy roads that would have been a challenge to a four wheel driver. But he refused to quit and ticked off the

towns as he pushed through them - Falls Creek, Mitta Mitta, Khancoban, Jindabyne, Bombala, Cann River, Metung, Omeo, Bright.

He's been ticking off goals ever since and achieved one of the biggest of all when he rode off first in the 20 kilometre time trial in Rio.

Tripp pushed himself to the limits and knew his time had set down a challenge to the other nine riders.

He watched with a growing sense of excitement as the next six riders fell short and when the seventh rider also failed to make a dent on the leader board he knew he had won, at a minimum, his first Paralympic medal!

The time trial is surely one of the cruellest of Olympic/Paralympic events in that the early riders have to wait anxiously to see if their time is to be bettered by those who follow and it can be easy to start believing you're in medal contention only to see your name wiped from the leader board at any stage of the event.

No sooner had Stuart allowed himself the luxury of thinking he might be a gold medallist than Alex Zanardi, the last rider, pipped his time by the desperately small margin of 2.74 seconds.

Still, in the context of Stuart's overall journey, it was a stunning result.

At 47 he was four years older than the London Paralympics when he had finished fifth. He had also been

troubled by severe injuries in 2015 which at one stage raised doubts about his team selection.

Then, after he'd been selected in the Australian team, he spent five days in bed at the pre-Paralympic training camp in Rome because of a severe reaction to his Yellow Fever injection.

Eventually, when he got to Rio, he faced the biggest challenge of them all - actually competing to the best of his ability. Stuart says the VIS played a huge role in helping him produce his best at the right time.

Strength and Conditioning coach Luke Mackey, Dietitian Kylie Andrew, master masseur Arnaud Domange and Dr Greg Hickey all helped him build a strong base from which to launch his medal assault. Then, on the day of the time trial, he was able to set a sizzling time because of the speed and performance work Sport Scientist Nick Owen had done with him.

Now that he finally has some Paralympic "bling" to sit alongside his 2014 World Championship silver medal perhaps that marks the end of Stuart Tripp's journey?

"No way" he replies. Instead of closing a chapter on his life, the Paralympic silver has only made him hungrier for the gold at Tokyo in 2020.

Our tip is to never write off a guy who has hand cycled across the Australian Alps from Bright to Bright via Cann River!

LATEFUL EIGHT

Finishing dead last in their opening heat at Lagoa Stadium wasn't enough to wipe the smile off the faces of the self-styled "Lateful Eight" crew in Rio.

The Australian women's eight only touched down in Brazil midway through the Opening Ceremony after getting a late call-up to replace Russia in the field, who were banned in connection with the country's doping scandal.

With only two weeks preparation under their belts, the Aussies had to borrow a boat and oars to compete and had just two days in Brazil to acclimatise!

VIS athlete Fiona Albert, who was training for a marathon when she got told to "pack your bags, you're going to Rio", spoke to Ashley Carr about her debut Olympic experience:

There's no easy answer to the question "what was the best thing about the Olympics?" The experience as a whole was so phenomenal that it's hard to distil it down to one thing. The opportunity to represent my country at the pinnacle of all sporting events in the world was incredible. Lining up against the most talented athletes and racing down the course under the outstretched arms of Christ the Redeemer was amazing. But what has stuck with me most since coming back was simply being at the village, surrounded by thousands of strangers, but instantly knowing something about them. Knowing that whoever they are, wherever they come from, they have put in years of hard work to get to this point, and they are here to produce the best sporting performance of their lives and to do their country proud. That common goal transcended any cultural or language barriers and created a global community vibe in the village that I haven't experienced anywhere else.

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RUNNING AND ROMANCE...

Long distance runners Ryan Gregson and Genevieve LaCaze live together, train together and travel the world together. They are the glamour couple of Australian athletics and both competed at the Rio Games in the peak of their powers. The dual Olympians spoke to VIS Marketing and Media intern Tom Robertson about their standout seasons.



Gen:

Personal bests stretched from January to September this year; what was the key to maintaining this world-class form for a nine-month period?

The main thing I put my success down to this season was consistency. I remained injury free for a year and a half and did everything I could to keep my body as healthy as possible. My coach didn't change much (if anything) this year. We kept the same formula but I was able to layer so many uninterrupted months of training to continue to build and show form for a longer period of time.

History shows it's very difficult to double-up at an Olympics and perform. You managed PBs in both the 3000m steeplechase and 5000m finals. How did you effectively manage the work load in Rio?

Honestly I didn't know how it would all play out so I made sure I kept all my focus only on the task immediately ahead of me. I took each race day by day and gave everything I could to produce the best result. I think after a few solid performances I was racing on a lot of adrenaline for the last few!

Talk us through that special race at the Paris Diamond League where

you broke the Australian 3000m steeplechase record...

Paris was a special race that I'll never forget. Not just because I ran well but mainly because I thought I may have given all I had a week earlier in Rio. I had just completed 6 days of racing 40 laps of the Olympic stadium and wasn't sure if there was much left to give. I felt amazing the whole race and just kept attacking every barrier and taking more and more people. I wasn't aware of my time until about 200ms to go I thought "wow I'm on for a big PB here!".

You ticked countless boxes in 2016, were there any that remain at large?

I would like to lower a few more PBs in some events but the biggest thing for me is now readjusting those boxes I ticked this season and make new goals for 2017.

Originally from Queensland, the prospect of competing at a home Commonwealth Games must be appealing?

Yes! I can't wait. I have been talking about the Comm Games on the Gold Coast for a few years now. I will have so many family and friends close by that will be able to watch me compete. It will be a dream come true.

Ryan:

Undefeated throughout the Australian domestic season, how important was this to give you confidence for the remainder of the season?

It gave me a great deal of confidence. The only other year I started off just as good as that was the start of 2010, and I had a great year that year. After a good start I had high expectations.

Were you at all concerned when an Olympic qualifier didn't eventuate in Australia?

No. My aim in Australia was to get the training done and win races. I had a lot of fun during the domestic season but I knew the big opportunities were going to come from May onwards. I ended up qualifying about 6 times I think, so as long as I was fit in May, I wasn't worried.

First Australian to make an Olympic final in the 1500m in 40 years, that must be pretty special?

Being the first man in 40 years to qualify for the Olympic 1500m final shows how tough the event is. I understand that it's a good achievement, but I also left Rio knowing that simply making the final was no longer the benchmark.



The Olympic final was a slow, tactical affair... How do you best prepare for this when there is so much on the line?

I was well prepared, but I obviously needed to learn this lesson. I'm human, I made a mistake, but the guys who got medals showed they knew how to race in absolutely any type of race. I know it was a big opportunity missed, but I know if I'm ever in a championship final again, I'll be much better prepared because of this experience.

2016 was arguably your best in many years, largely due to consistent training under the belt. During the difficult times of injury after injury, trusting the process must've been vital?

I always had total faith in what I could do if I had a good preparation. I just had to master my training and strength until I could get this preparation. What helps is having a team around you who back you all the way, no matter how grim things may seem.

Both:

Now dual Olympians, what did you take from London to ensure you improved in Rio?

Ryan: Work ethic. I thought I trained hard before the London Olympics, but I wasn't anywhere near as disciplined or dedicated as I am now. I was just a boy who didn't have much idea.

Gen: Experience. I learnt in 2012 that I never wanted to just make up numbers on the team ever again. In London I was happy to get the uniform and walk in the opening ceremony. In Rio, I knew what I had to do because I came prepared. It was all business and I left a two-time Olympic finalist.

How has the Victorian Institute of Sport assisted you to achieving such great heights this season?

Ryan: I've had great support with my strength and conditioning program from Nathan Heaney at the VIS, and weekly massage through Gillian Niven at the VIS. I use the gym at the VIS most days, and I regularly use the hot tub too!

Gen: The VIS has made life a lot easier for me as a professional athlete. I have the track, gym, medical and recovery facilities all in close proximity making my training day as efficient as possible. I love our months in Melbourne because we are definitely spoilt when training there.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Former VIS rower turned media professional, Lachlan McKinnon, was fortunate enough to be able to work at the Rio Olympic Games as a videographer with the Australian Olympic Team. He spoke to the VIS marketing team about his experience behind the scenes at the greatest show on earth.



It was a phenomenal experience to play a (minute) part at the preeminent sporting event in the world and witness so many awe-inspiring, wonderful and emotional moments at close range.

It's hard to single out my favourite moments of the Games when there were just so many to choose from but here are some that spring to mind:

1. Watching the Refugee Olympic Team press conference prior to the commencement of the Games. These ten displaced athletes are literally without a home country yet come together to compete under the Olympic flag. Their individual stories of survival are heart-wrenching but they haven't let it affect their hopes and dreams and inspire even the most hardened sports fan with their perseverance and optimism. Pierre de Coubertin would be proud indeed.
2. Seeing an Australian win an Olympic medal live: whether it was gold, silver or bronze, it was a proud moment to witness a fellow countryman or countrywoman stand on the dais in the green and gold with a beaming smile or tears streaming down their face. Seeing the reaction of fans from other countries to their successes was wonderful too, and it highlighted the positives that can arise from national pride.

3. The crowds at the Equestrian jumping event must maintain silence during each round as the rider and horse go over the course. All you can hear are the clicks of photographic cameras and the distant sounds of media commentators in the grandstand. Yet the moment they cross the final jump and manage to go through without any penalties is a sight to behold with a deafening roar of celebration. Amplify that by ten when it's a Brazilian.

Many people have asked me what the city of Rio was like and how the local people responded to the Olympic Games: I believe they handled it very well and should hold their heads high. It may not have had the beauty of Sydney 2000, the organisation of Beijing 2008 or the popularity of London 2012, but it had its own laissez faire style that reflects the South American continent. As a media colleague pointed out, if the Games are to maintain their social & cultural relevance they need to reach all corners of the globe and strive to overcome issues rather than simply avoid them.

I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to work at an Olympic Games and witness VIS and Australian athletes give their all in pursuit of success in sport and life. Your turn Tokyo 2020.

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