October 2020

The Australian Paralympian

Official magazine of Paralympics Australia





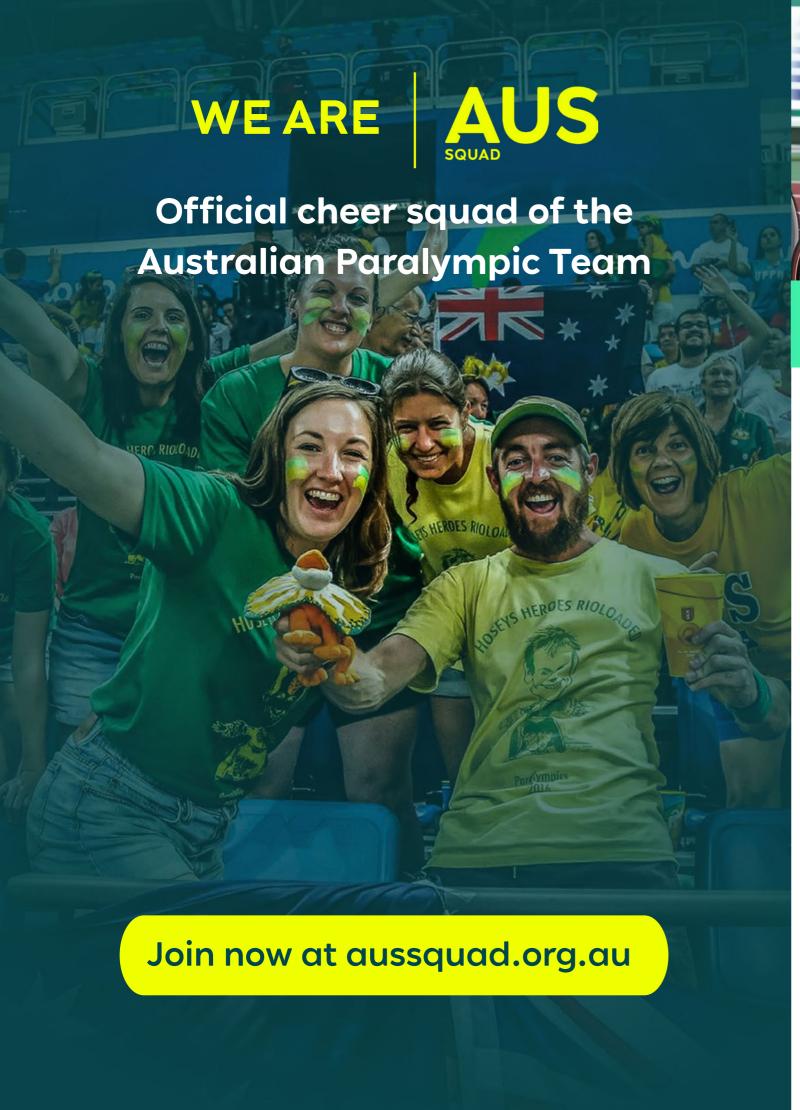




The Great Privilege Louise Sauvage **Kept Secret**

It's Been A Rocky Road, **But Siobhan Paton Feels Proud Once Again**

Kurt Fearnley: The Sydney Paralympics Changed My World





CONTENTS

- 05 Message From Our Chief Executive Officer
- 06 Louise Sauvage: The Great Privilege Sauvage Kept Secret
- 10 Greg Hartung: Out Of The Pigeon Hole And Into The Mainstream
- 12 Fast Facts
- 14 Brendan Burkett: We Felt Like We Could Take On The World
- 16 Paul Bird: How A One Team Approach Transformed Our Sporting Psyche
- 18 Athlete Honour Roll: 2000 Australian Paralympic Team
- 22 Neil Fuller: The Dream Run Of A Paralympic Champion
- 24 Siobhan Paton: It's Been A Rocky Road, But Paton Feels Proud Once Again
- 26 Road To Sydney 2000
- 28 Lois Appleby: The Moment That Made The CEO Weep
- 30 Kurt Fearnley: The Sydney Paralympics Changed My World
- 34 Libby Kosmala: A Remarkable Legacy In Which Sydney Shines Brightest
- 36 Danni Di Toro: How A Brutal Sydney Experience Re-Shaped Athlete Welfare
- 40 Tim Matthews: Golden Day Brings Back Memories Two Decades On
- **42 Australian Medallists Honour Roll**
- 46 Brendan Flynn: Mayhem And Magic Of A Frantic Home Stretch
- 48 Liesl Tesch: How Sydney 2000 Prepared Tesch For Life In Politics



Anderson

20 years on, the Paralympic flame continues to burn bright.

Donate now and support the next generation of stars.



DONATE NOW



A Message From Our **Chief Executive Officer**

Welcome to this very special edition of The Australian Paralympian magazine, which celebrates the 'best Paralympic Games ever' in Sydney 20 years ago.

While COVID-19 has disrupted our efforts to stage a public event and Australian Paralympic Team reunion to mark the occasion, it is our hope that this magazine in some way still captures the magnificent achievements from the Sydney Paralympic Games that set the standard for all future Games to follow.

Sydney 2000 positively changed the course of the Paralympic movement forever.

A record number of spectators - 1.16million attended the Games and for many, it was the first time they had seen Paralympic sport.

Our nation showed the world how Paralympic athletes and Paralympic sport should be recognised, and that legacy continues to be felt

Having broken through in Sydney, Paralympic sport is now an integral and permanent part of how nations define their sporting status.

It was also the Games in which Australia became the world's leading Paralympic nation. The Australian Paralympic Team finished on top of the medal tally for the first time by winning 149 medals - 63 gold, 39 silver and 47 bronze.

The performances of our Para-athletes were spectacular and, with their help, we managed an extraordinary transformation in public support and in the approach and recognition of our political leadership toward Paralympic sport and, more generally, toward people with a disability.

Progressively, national sport federations and the commercial sector became empowered to support athletes with a disability at unprecedented levels.

There has been no turning back and, in fact, our movement has only accelerated.

We wholeheartedly believe the Paralympic movement is uniquely placed to be a major influencer for positive social change, and to be able to do that, we humbly recognise and celebrate the incredible achievements from Sydney 2000 and those who paved the way.

It has been wonderful to relive so many memories while compiling this magazine. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my most sincere thanks to all of our Sydney 2000 Team members athletes and officials - and Games administrators who were interviewed and particularly for sharing your experiences with us. I also want to acknowledge my colleagues at PA and the contributors to the Australian Paralympic History Project, led by Tony Naar. Without their research and story-telling, this publication would not have been possible.

I really do hope you enjoy reading this magazine as much as we did producing it.

The Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games certainly was an achievement and it is a 20th anniversary worthy of celebration.

Sincerely.

Lynne Anderson **Chief Executive Officer**

The Great Privilege Sauvage Kept Secret

BY DAVID SYGALL

2000 20 Year Anniversary Issue

ome time around blind swimmer Tracey Cross taking the athletes' oath and equestrian referee Mary Longden taking the officials' oath, Louise Sauvage told her nearby teammates she was off to the loo.

Hardly a soul among the near-100,000-strong crowd knew where she was really going.

The Para-athletics superstar had been announced as one of the last six torchbearers for the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney Paralympics that memorable night 20 years ago. But not even those closest to her knew she'd also been bestowed an even greater privilege.

"Being one of the final torchbearers was a massive honour in itself," Sauvage said.

"But, when I was told I was going to be lighting the Cauldron, I don't know, it was just beyond belief really. I was sworn to secrecy, couldn't tell anyone, so it was a big surprise even for my family. I got to march out with the team, then I ducked off - going to the bathroom, of course - just nearing when the torch was going to be lit."

The official opening of the 11th Summer Paralympics, featuring 3,843 athletes representing 123 delegations, heralded the start of 11 days of competition which were to change the face of sport in Australia and attitudes towards people with a disability nationwide and beyond. However, for Sauvage, the Games were part celebration and part expectation.

"For me, it was a very stressful time," she said.



"I was the favourite for all of my events and the first final I had I didn't win, so a lot of people were stressing out. There was a lot of pressure on me but, at the same time, it was a fantastic event. To have my family and friends there for the first time to see what I really did and what my sport was all about was very special. It was a once in a lifetime event to have at home."

Apart from Sauvage's performances - she won gold medals in the 5,000 metres T54 and 1500 metres T54, and a silver medal in the 800 metres T54 - the thing that sticks in the 46-yearold's mind about the Sydney Games was the impact it had on the wider Paralympic movement. Atlanta in 1996 had been deflating and there was ground to make up. The Sydney Games did it spectacularly.

"There was such a vast difference between Sydney and Atlanta," Sauvage said.

"More than anything, it brought Paralympics to the forefront and it's really gone on from those Games. Sydney really set the standard and I was very proud that we were able to do that.

"The way it was embraced within the country, the way we were perceived by Australians and the crowds that came to see us... The media really took hold of it and it was such a huge event.

"The education they did prior to the Games, between the schoolchildren and the general public, they did such a fantastic job to make sure

the Paralympics were not just the event after the Olympics, but that they were going to be something in their own right and would have their own presence.

"IT WAS **A BIG** SURPRISE, **EVEN FOR MY FAMILY**"

"I didn't think much of it back when Australia was announced as hosting the Games seven years earlier. But, definitely having seen what went on in Atlanta in 1996, knowing Sydney was going to host next, I was so enthused and excited that we could do a great job and I was very determined that we were going to have the best Paralympics ever. I think the people's reaction to the Games was great. They were so amazed it was staged so well and received so well."

Sauvage's recollections are of a Games that brilliantly showcased the abilities of athletes with an impairment. She remembers big crowds and a positive atmosphere, including the palpable enthusiasm of thousands of schoolchildren.

"They came out in their droves for the morning sessions and, if you happened to be in a final in the morning and the anthem was played, all the schoolkids would sing with you, which was quite

cool," she said. "It was actually quite deafening with all of them screaming!"

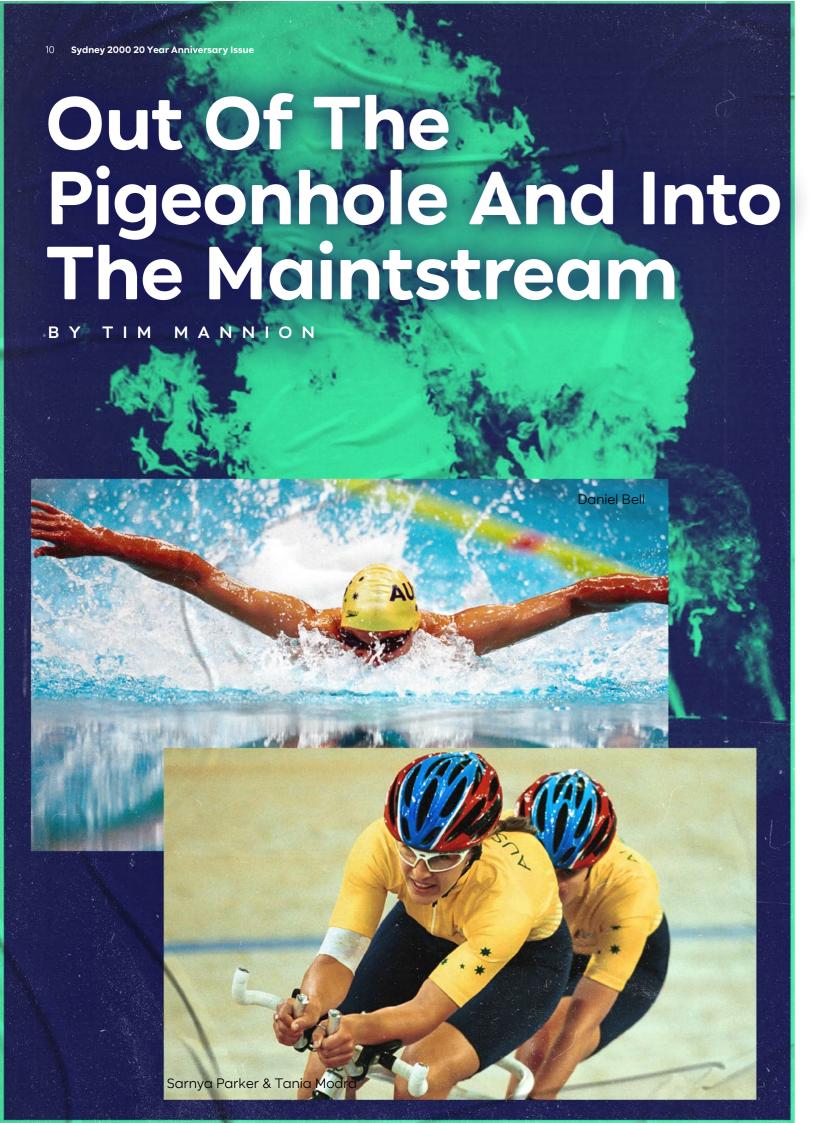
Sauvage continued to the 2004 Athens Paralympics, where she carried the Australian flag for the Opening Ceremony and won another two silver medals. In total, she competed at four Paralympics and won nine gold medals and four silver medals. She won 11 gold medals at World Para-athletics Championships and claimed victory in marathons in Boston, Los Angeles, Honolulu, Berlin and in Japan.

Recognition for Sauvage's outstanding feats included an Order of Australia, the Australian Paralympian of the Year in 1994, 1996, 1997 and 1998 and the inaugural Laureus World Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability in 2000. She was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame in 2007, the Australian Paralympic Hall of Fame in 2011 and named a Sport Australia Hall of Fame Legend in 2019.

Amid all her achievements, the Sydney Paralympics will always hold a special place.

"I think the Paralympic movement has really carried forward since then," she said.

"We've now got commercial television covering the Paralympics, something that was unheard of back in the day. The presence we had and being able to maintain that momentum has been fantastic. Having the Games here signalled a big change in the way athletes with a disability are seen."



It was much more than success on the medal tally that made Sydney 2000 so momentous in the history of Australia's Paralympic movement, according to one of its most influential figures.

Greg Hartung was President of Paralympics Australia from 1997 until 2013 and Vice-President of the Sydney Paralympic Organising Committee.

For more than 1.16 million spectators who attended the Games from October 18 to 29, it was the first time many had seen Paralympic sport.

"The Sydney Paralympic Games changed attitudes and mindsets of Australians and people worldwide towards athletes with a disability," Hartung said.

"Until that point in time, Paralympians were not always recognised as equal to their Olympic counterparts. It became obvious that that mindset changed during Sydney 2000.

"Australia showed the world how Paralympic athletes and Paralympic sport should be acknowledged and the positive impact of the Sydney Games continues to be felt today."

The Sydney Games set records in almost all areas including athlete and delegation attendance, ticket sales, broadcast rights, media coverage and merchandise sales."

It was also the Games in which Australia became the world's leading Paralympic nation. The Australian Team finished on top of the medal tally for the first time by winning 149 medals - 63 gold, 39 silver and 47 bronze.

It was a stunning achievement from the Australian Team, according to Hartung, who also served on the Governing Board of the International Paralympic Committee between 2001 and 2013, including a four-year term as Vice-President (2009-13).

"It was a privilege for me to play a part in lifting the status and profile of Paralympic sport and to use the Sydney Games as the catalyst to establish the South Pacific Paralympic Committee, later to be renamed the Oceania Paralympic Committee," Hartung said.

"But, of course, the job is never done; it is a race without a finish line. Continuing vigilance is required to ensure that the principles of equity and fairness are made rock solid, and extended to areas around the world where they do not exist or are under threat. Going forward with confidence, the Paralympic movement is uniquely placed to be a major influencer for good.

"The performance in Sydney justified Paralympics Australia's ground-breaking preparation of the Australian Team through the Paralympic Preparation Program," Hartung said.

"The performances of the athletes were spectacular, and, with their help, we managed an extraordinary transformation in public attitude and in the approach and recognition of our political leadership toward Paralympic sport and, more generally, toward people with a disability.

"This has stayed with us as a permanent legacy. Paralympic sport was seen as serious sport and was lifted out of its welfare pigeonhole and into the mainstream.

"Progressively, national sport federations were encouraged to support athletes with a disability in the same manner as Olympic athletes. There is no turning back.

Twenty years on, Hartung believes the Sydney Paralympics continues to be seen as the benchmark for staging the Games.

"The Paralympic movement continues to evolve as one of the world's great humanitarian movements and Sydney can be proud of the contribution it made."

"From the volunteers, to the many supporters in attendance, and the countless people who played a role in helping to stage the Games, Australia set the standard for staging a successful Paralympic Games which all future host cities will be measured by."

ydney 2000 Fast Facts

General Games

3,852 athletes





340,000



920 torchbearers

Cost



Australia at the Sydney 2000 Games









278 athletes



SIOBHAN PATON

LISA LLORENS

3rendan Burkett (swimming) **Neil Fuller (athletics)** Closing Ceremony

Medal Tally



































Tickets





\$25.1 million



We Felt Like We Could Take On The World

BY TIM MANNION

As flag bearer, he led the Australian Team into the Sydney Games and this week he will reflect on the 20th anniversary of what he believes is still the greatest Paralympics ever.

For Brendan Burkett, the Sydney Games was the perfect way to cap off a stellar career in the pool that spanned four Paralympic campaigns and included one gold, three silver and one bronze medal.

Burkett's path to Sydney was not always so certain. After several years of doubt over whether he had peaked, the boy from central Queensland pushed his body over the line to break the world record for the S9 50 metres freestyle at the 1999 European Championships.

"And after that I remember thinking 'the old bugger's still got it'," Burkett said.

"My father had passed away earlier that year and that race was my turning point. After years of wondering whether I had peaked, it gave me the confidence I needed to get me to the home Games in Sydney.

"And to be honoured as flag bearer in the Opening Ceremony was absolutely amazing. It was a great Team to be part of and walking out there we felt like we could take on the world and we did."

Reflecting on his Sydney experience, Burkett remembers that the incredible highs he felt during the Games were matched by debilitating lows.

"I felt the extremes of emotions – the highest of highs during the Opening Ceremony and disasters when I didn't defend my title in the 50 metres freestyle. Obviously it was awesome to compete at a home Games, to carry the Australian flag at a home Games and I felt extremely patriotic and proud of the fantastic Games our country staged. But, at the same time, it was heartbreaking to not defend my title in front of all my family and friends."

Affectionately known as 'Beaver', Burkett maintains a close connection to the Australian Paralympic movement. In addition to being a Professor of Sport Science at the University of the Sunshine Coast, he is current Head Coach of the Australian Paralympic Swim Team.

His influence is still substantial. Earlier this year, Burkett helped deliver an inspirational rallying call to 2020 Australian Paralympic Team after the Tokyo Games was postponed for 12 months.

A poem crafted by Burkett in 1999 is a celebration of what is means to be an Australian, to wear the green and gold, and to represent the Australian Paralympic Team. It's about loyalty, pride, teamwork and above all else, doing your best when times are tough.

"After years of wondering whether I had peaked, it gave me the confidence I needed to get me to the home Games in Sydney."





The enormous roar that greeted Australian athletes as they entered the stadium for the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney Paralympics meant more to Paul Bird than perhaps anyone else.

Bird was Chef de Mission of the Australian Team, a post he held also for the 2004 Games. He'd been Deputy Chef de Mission in 1992 and 1996 and was again in 2008. In 1988 he'd been a section manager after having competed at Arnhem in 1980, where he won a swimming gold medal. In New York in 1984, he added another gold and silver to his ledger.

Throughout those years Bird experienced an array of Paralympic ups and downs. But, of all the injustices and inefficiencies he'd encountered, none seemed as wrong as the earliest.

At the 1980 Games, Bird was part of the

amputee section - which was separate from the wheelchair section, which was separate from athletes with vision impairment, which was separate from the cerebral palsy section.

"We flew to Holland as 'a team' but I didn't know anyone else in the team," Bird said.

"When we arrived we were housed separately. Our amputee group was in a building by ourselves, we were looked after by our manager and a coach and that was it. We never really joined the other athletes.

"The really terrible thing was that we weren't included in the Opening Ceremony because the only athletes allowed to march were those in

wheelchairs. We were a divided group of athletes pulled together by disability, not by sport."

A similar dynamic existed in 1984 when athletes with spinal cord injuries competed at Stoke Mandeville in the UK and athletes with other impairments competed in New York.. Bird later became involved in management, but only for the amputee group. For Seoul, Barcelona and Atlanta, there were four section managers for each Games, each representing a disability, rather than the Team as a whole.

Even at Paralympics Australia Board level, Bird's role was confined to representing amputee athletes. Things needed to change, he believed. and the way to do it was to bring sports in as members, rather than maintaining a split between the groups.

"Rather than just wheelchair sport or amputee sport or blind sport or cerebral palsy sport - the goal was to bring together 'one Team'. We are one Team and we have one culture," he said.

"We started putting that in place in the three years before Sydney. We did it with a range of educational opportunities and groupings together of managers, coaches, section managers and others. We wanted to make it about sport, not about what kind of disability an athlete had.

"As we worked towards it, it began to rearrange the way the athletes saw themselves - you are an athlete first, not someone with a disability. Let's have you be judged as an athlete.

"It transformed things at other levels, too, in that it put sport at the forefront of decision making, rather than things being dictated by particular impairments. The result put us on track to be where we are now, with Para-sport firmly situated in the Australian psyche."

The fruits of Bird's toil were displayed for the first time at the Sydney Opening Ceremony. But the benefits of his one-team approach continued throughout the event, perhaps no more clearly than at Ansett House, a tent which was set up across from the then-recently built Novotel Hotel at Sydney Olympic Park.

It was where Australia's Para-athletes and their families could meet and relax. Press conferences and other media events were staged there in what became a daily ritual during competition.

"We set up a table outside, where our athletes were signing autographs for the public," Bird said.

"Something I'll never forget is that no matter what time of day it was there was a massive line of people - kids, families, parents - all waiting to meet the athletes. They were getting their autographs on anything, shirts, programs, anything they had with them. It was amazing. We were absolutely gobsmacked.

"Then you'd come around the corner, look down the corridor between the main stadium and the other venues and it was a sea of people every day. I'd never seen anything like it."

At Ansett House and far beyond, the public's hunger to learn about the athletes' stories and sports was unceasing. The media responded with an insatiable appetite for interviews, results and information.

"We knew ticket sales had gone well but, beyond that, there was really no indication this was coming. You couldn't get into the venues. I remember wheelchair rugby, even for the preliminary rounds you couldn't get a seat. Same with swimming. We'd never experienced that anywhere in the world.

"Previously it was more rent-a-crowd. In Seoul, for instance, there were lots of people, but they weren't really paying customers, they were bussed in, given flags and told to make noise. They weren't the general public wanting to come to the Games.

"Barcelona enjoyed some good crowds but in Sydney everything gelled and the public couldn't get enough of it.

"It was a great outcome and a big learning curve for everyone in our Team. But I think that was the key thing for me, that we were really one Team."

The Athletes of the 2000 Australian Paralympic Team for the Sydney **Paralympics were:**

Lee Cox



Roy Daniell Mark Davies Michael Dowling Stephen Eaton John Eden Madelyn Ehlers Don Elgin **Kurt Fearnley** Rebecca Feldman Anton Flavel Patricia Flavel **Heath Francis** Neil Fuller Terry Giddy Murray Goldfinch Gerrard Gosens Adrian Grogan **Brian Harvey** Lynda Holt Bill Hunter Clayton Johnson

Lisa McIntosh Jeffrey McNeill Paul Mitchell Andrew Newell Paul Nunnari Alison Quinn Sharon Rackham Allyson Richards Sam Rickard Ed Salmon Louise Sauvage Russell Short Christie Skeleton Greg Smith Frances Stanley Meaghan Starr Tim Sullivan Claire Summersaill Steve Thorley Darren Thrupp Geoff Trappett Dean Turner Bruce Wallrodt Katrina Webb Debbie Wendt Jodi Willis Stephen Wilson **Amy Winters**

Basketball -

Intellectual

Disability

Tim Devine Simon Ishac Bradley Lee Tyson Lynch Nicholas Maroney Adam Meredith **Brett Phillips** Peter Willoughby **Brett Wilson** Justin Wrbik Boccia Warren Brearley Lyn Coleman Scott Elsworth Angie McReynolds John Richardson Karen Stewart Cycling Greg Ball Paul Clohessy Christine Fisher Matthew Gray Steven Gray Darren Harry Eddie Hollands Peter Homann Paul Lake Mark le Flohic Lyn Lepore Kerry Modra Kieran Modra Tania Modra David Murray

Paul O'Neill Noel Sens Sue Haydon Julie Higgins Marita Hird Judy Hogan Sue-Ellen Lovett Anne Skinner David Barber Miguel Marcelino Mark Morris Andrew

Panazzolo Christopher Pyne Jason Rand Goalball -

Archery

Natalie Cordowiner Arthur Fisk

John Marshall Tony Marturano

Athletics

Shayne Allen Kieran Ault-Connell

Angela Ballard Lachlan Jones Wayne Bell Norma Koplick Malcolm Bennett Tanya Krome Anthony Biddle Holly Ladmore Russell Billingham John Lindsay Fabian Blattman Lisa Llorens Joanne Bradshaw Hamish MacDonald Damien Burroughs John Maclean Rick Cooke Tim Matthews

Frank Arratia Lee Collins

Lynette Nixon Sarnya Parker Daniel Polson Christopher Scott Russell Wolfe

Equestrian

Rosalie Fahey

Football 7-a-side

Shaun Fedele Eric Haddrick Beau Menzies Jeremy Thorpe George Tonna

Women's

Penny Bennett

Kerrie-ann King

Jo Ruba

Robyn Stephens

Goalball -Men's

Rob Crestani Kevin Frew Paul Harpur Troy King Warren Lawton Robbie Vogt

Judo

Anthony Clarke

Powerlifting

Shaun Cavuoto Darren Gardiner Steve Green Paul Hyde Vicky Machen

Deahnne McIntyre Kim Neuenkirchen Richard Nicholson Kahi Puru Julie Russell Wayne Sharpe

Melissa Trafela

Sue Twelftree

Sailing

Jamie Dunross Graeme Martin Michael McLean **Noel Robins**

Peter Thompson

Shooting

Ashley Adams Stephen Guy Elizabeth Kosmala Stan Kosmala Jeff Lane Steven McCormack James Nomarhas Paul Schofield Peter Shannon

Peter Tait

Peter Worsley

Edward Bray Paul Croft Darren Gay Albert Lee **Brant North** Glenn Pyne Kevin Price **Brett Roworth** Greg Sobczak

Sitting Volleyball

Bruce Thompson

Mark Whiteman

Standing

Daniel Byrne Nick Coburn Japhy Duldig Joe Egan Greg Hammond Brett Holcombe Nick Kaiser Adam Lusted Bill McHoul Steven Neal **Grant Prest** Nigel Smith

Swimming

Alicia Aberley Mark Altmann Ben Austin Katerina Bailey Petrea Barker Paul Barnett

Denise Beckwith Daniel Bell Tom Bridge Scott Brockenshire Kingsley Bugarin Brendan Burkett Melissa Carlton Kate Church **Dominic Collins** Priya Cooper **Tracey Cross** Paul Cross Gemma Dashwood

Nicole Davey Cameron de Burgh Patrick Donachie Justin Eveson

Janelle Falzon Amanda Fraser Megan Grant

Jeff Hardy Alex Harris Sarah Houlbolt Alicia Jenkins

Judith Green

Marayke Jonkers

Dianna Ley Karni Liddell

Tamara Nowitzki Kirra O'Cass

Michael Palfery Siobhan Paton Stewart Pike

Casey Redford **Brett Reid**

David Rolfe

Alastair Smales

Christian Stafford

Ellen Steele

Brooke Stockham

Shane Walsh

Lucy Williams

Stacey Williams

Melissa Willson

Elizabeth Wright

Table Tennis

Bill Medley Ross Schurgott

Wheelchair Basketball - Rollers

Troy Andrews Sandy Blythe David Gould

Shaun Groenewegen

Gerry Hewson

Adrian King

Michael McFawn

Nick Morris

Brad Ness

Shane Porter

Brook Quinn

Troy Sachs -

Wheelchair Basketball - Gliders

Julianne Adams Amanda Carter Paula Coghlan Mellissa Dunn

Karen Farrell

Alison Mosely Lisa O'Nion Donna Ritchie Nadya Romeo Sharon Slann

Liesl Tesch Jane Webb

Wheelchair Fencing

Michael Alston Robert Goodwin

Wheelchair Rugby

Bryce Alman Brett Boylan Cliff Clarke Garry Croker



Brad Dubberley Nazim Erdem

Peter Harding George Hucks

Tom Kennedy

Craig Parsons

Steve Porter

Patrick Ryan

Wheelchair Tennis

Daniela di Toro

David Hall

David Johnson

Branka Pupovac







It was a Saturday night, 60,000 people were in the stands and Neil Fuller was channeling Cathy Freeman.

It was Fuller's last race of the Sydney Paralympics, his ninth across six events, and he was looking to add to the three gold medals and a bronze medal he'd already won. His confidence was high. This was his pet event, the 400 metres T44, in which he was the reigning world champion and world record holder.

Minutes earlier, Fuller had been on the warm-up track, listening to the roars of the crowd inside the main stadium, the muffled speaker announcements and chants of 'Aussie! Aussie!' Next thing he was in the tunnel and then in the call room, where he did his final stretches. The nerves began to set in.

"I reckon I knew exactly how Cathy Freeman felt," Fuller said. "Of course, the whole nation was on Cathy's journey. But, for me, like Cathy, I went into that 400 expected to win and it put a huge amount of pressure on me."

The starter's gun fired and 52.26 seconds later, when Fuller crossed the line in first place, rather than jump about in ecstasy, he dropped to his knees.

"I'd won but all I could feel in that moment was a massive weight being lifted off me," he said. "It was a completely different feeling to when I won the 200."

In the 200 metres, Fuller had been the outsider. American Roderick Green had broken the world record in the semi final and, coming off the bend, held a five metre lead over the Australian.

"I couldn't hear anything except what was going on in my head. There was just a voice saying, 'Keep going, keep going, you've got him!' With every step, I was narrowing the gap, focusing on the finish line.

"We hit the line together and it seemed like an eternity, bobbing my head between the replay screen and the results screen, waiting for the result to

"When it brought my name up as first ... even speaking about it now 20 years on, it brings those feelings back to me. 'Oh my God, I've won' "

The 200 metres was Fuller's first individual Paralympic gold medal and it came in the third of his four Games. In total, he won 15 medals, six of

them gold, four of which came in Sydney. He said of the 2000 Games: "nearly all my cards fell in place" - he missed out on a medal only in the 800 metres, despite bettering the then world mark. Yet, for all his success on the track, the 51-year-old Adelaide school teacher said the Games were about so much more than the competition.

"It goes back to when Sydney was awarded the Games, the growth of the movement, the ambassador program which I was fortunate to be involved in, there were media and advertising opportunities... I was involved in a Toyota ad which was rewarding and enjoyable," he said.

"There was a test event 12 months out, which was another big step. You could even gauge then, coming from interstate, the atmosphere building in Sydney, the infrastructure, changes to the airport, transport, everything was accessible, which was a first. You could tell it was going to be something

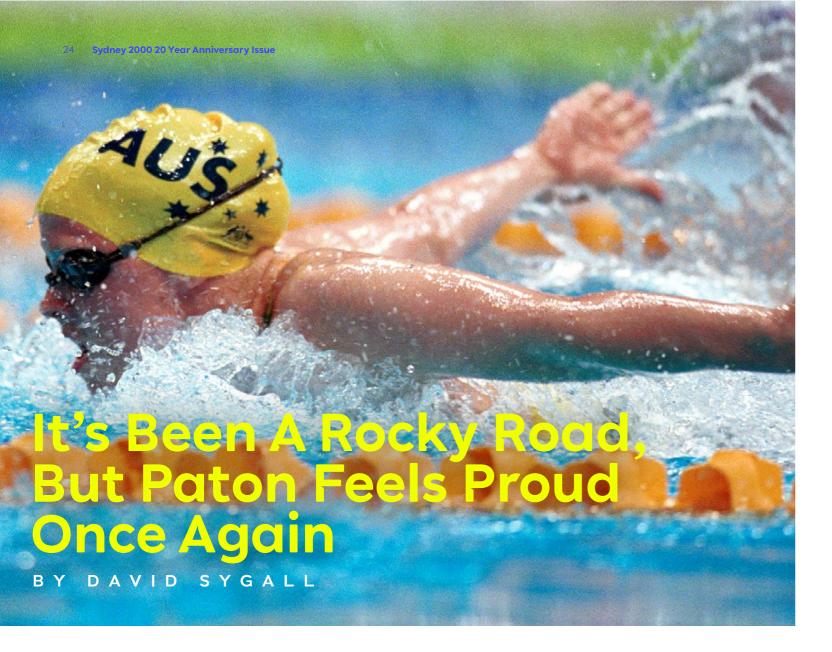
"Then, when it all got underway, for it to be in your home country and to perform at your best at the highest level... I'd been all over the world and won but, in Sydney, I had friends and family there. I was working at a school and they had a competition to fly a teacher and three students to watch me race over a couple of days. Those sorts of things were unique."

Perhaps Fuller's greatest honour came right at the end when he was named Australia's flag bearer for the Closing Ceremony.

"It's one of those things you can never expect to happen because there were that many outstanding athletes," he said.

"It certainly took me by surprise but it's certainly something that's sat well in my resume, being selected from Australia's biggest ever Team to have that honour of carrying the flag.

"The only disappointing thing about it was, the flag bearers came in from the tunnel and some veered left and some veered right. I went left but the Australian contingent were all sitting on the right. So I didn't actually get to walk past the Australian Team!"



It's been a long time coming - far too long - but, finally, Siobhan Paton can say wholeheartedly she feels proud of her incredible achievements at the Sydney Paralympics.

Paton, then just 17, was the most successful Australian athlete at the Games, sweeping the pool to win six gold medals in the S14 classification for athletes with an intellectual disability (ID).

However, what should have been the start of a wonderful career turned into an ordeal in which Paton became an innocent casualty of a shocking cheating scandal and a system unprepared to cater for her needs.

It's only through her strength, the support of loved ones and significant improvements to athlete welfare that Paton has felt comfortable reclaiming her rightful place as a star of Australian Paralympic sport.

"I didn't know anything about the Paralympics until 1997 when my coach at the time got me

tested to see my IQ and all that. They found that I did have an ID, I'm a slow learner," she said.

Once her classification was completed, between 1997 and 2000 Paton dominated at the National titles, IPC World Championships and racing in the UK, winning scores of gold medals and setting numerous world records. She seemed destined for greatness at Sydney 2000 and those indicators proved true. Each of her wins in Sydney was in an individual event across a range of strokes.

"I just had a natural talent for swimming," she said. "I'm not taking away that other people did well, I just happened to be the best on the day and the night. That's all I can say.

"If I wouldn't have won my races I wouldn't have been upset because I knew I'd done the best I could. It wasn't, 'I'm going to win gold' and that's what I did, it was that each gold was a surprise because someone could have beaten me out of left field. If I got silver, that would have been OK.

"I'd done so many races at Homebush before. It just felt so normal and natural that the pressure didn't get to me. I just thought of it as another swim meet where I had to perform. And I did perform."

Paton finished the Games by celebrating with her family at the Closing Ceremony.

"I HAD TO LEARN TO TALK, TO SAY 'I NEED HELP'."

"My mum pointed me out to the security guard and said, 'She's my daughter' and the security guard let her and my sister and cousin onto the field. We were all dancing and having a party.

"Nowadays, they wouldn't be allowed down. But they were allowed down, I was able to sit with my grandmother, my aunt, my friends that were there as well. We got our photos taken and everything. It was lovely."

The joy of that night soon took a sour turn. During the Closing Ceremony, Paton said, she "started hearing rumours" but "wasn't fully understanding of what everything was". Within weeks of the Paralympics ending, the rumours turned into a scandal when it was revealed that several players in Spain's ID basketball team were not impaired. The team was disqualified and ordered to return their medals.

The implication for Paton and other ID athletes was severe. The IPC announced in 2003 that all events for intellectually impaired athletes would be suspended for Athens 2004.

"It was extremely hard," Paton said. "The IPC were waffling, saying 'Yes, you're going to go back in. No you're not. Yes you are, no you're not'.

"By 2003 I wasn't training much because I'd had enough. Everyone was pulling me in front of the media, asking me questions, asking what I thought. I just didn't like it.

"I packed it in in 2005. It was double standards because we weren't in the Paralympics, they just kept us holding on to hope. It got my nose out of joint and I'd had enough of the crap.

"It was hard because, after the Paralympics, I did interviews, I did charity dinners, I did all those things. But when the ban happened because of what the Spanish basketball team did, everything dried up, even though I was cleared."

Paton became depressed and spent six weeks in hospital. During that time, she learnt the importance of expressing her emotions to understand and deal with them.

"I had to learn to talk, to say 'I need help'," she said.

Front and centre of her recovery was her mother, Judith, for whom Paton is now a carer at their home in Canberra. She credited Tony Naar, a PA staff member from 2000 to 2015 and currently the facilitator of the Australian Paralympic History Project, and Danni Di Toro, PA's Athlete Welfare and Engagement Officer, for their support. She said she felt happy to have been invited by Paralympics Australia to the launch of the Team for Rio and enjoyed being on the Paralympic Team Facebook page.

"It's all helped me to feel good again about what I did in Sydney," Paton said. "Everybody has helped. I wouldn't be here without them. They had the patience and time to let me come out and be myself. I have a lot to be proud of."



DID YOU KNOW?

Powerlifting was opened up to female Paralympians for the first time in 2000.

19th January

Paralympian David Hall is

announced as the first Torchbearer



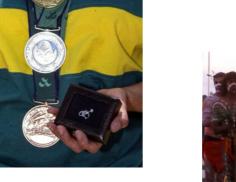
DID YOU KNOW?

Sailing and wheelchair

rugby were contested

for the first time at the

as full medal sports



6th April

The design of the medals is unveiled at the Sydney Opera House





5th October

The flame is lit during a traditional fire-lighting ceremony at Parliament House, Canberra. The Torch commences its 14-day journey around Australia





12th October

The Torch Relay reaches NSW for the first time



19th October

Competition of the XI Paralympic Games begins



DID YOU KNOV

In the lead-up to the 2000 Sydney Paralympics, the then Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) saw the need to create a team logo to nurture a strong team identity and culture.



3rd November

The Paralympic Village officially closes



ROAD TO SYDNEY 2000



13th March

The ABC announced as the Australian broadcaster for the Games



9th August

The Athlete's Village for the Olympic and Paralympic Games is unveiled to the public



11th October

The Paralympic Village officially



18th October

Opening Ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games





29th October

Closing Ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Games

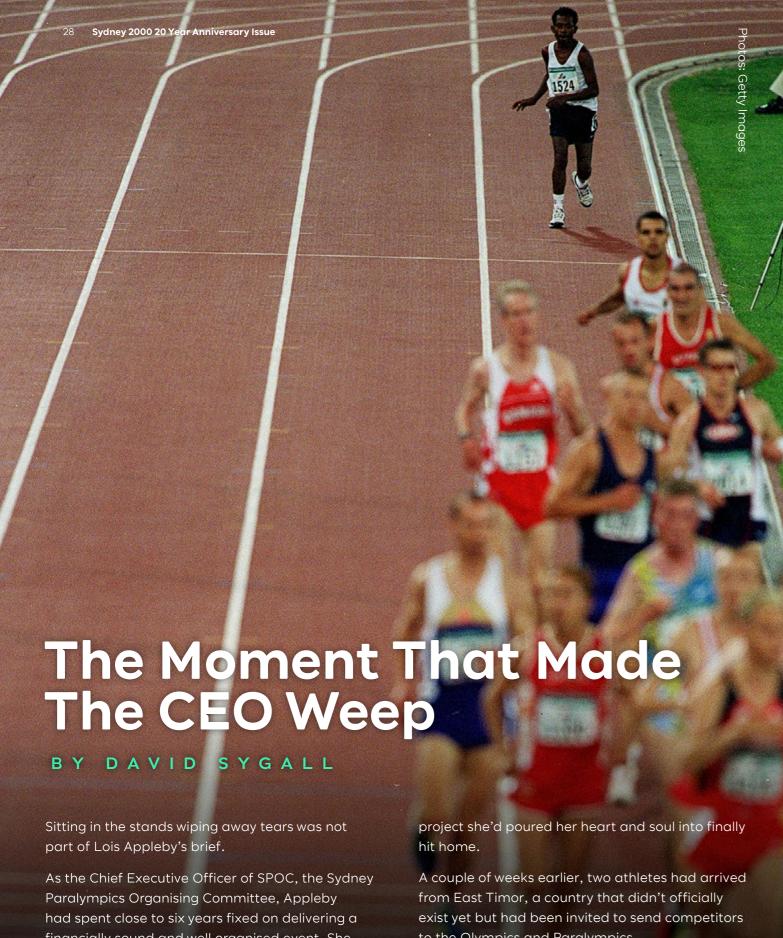


DID YOU KNOW?

Actors Bryan Brown, Jack Thompson and pop stars Vanessa Amorosi, Christine Anu, Yothu Yindi and Kylie Minogue were among the strong cast of Australian and international performers at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony.







financially sound and well organised event. She had no experience with disability and, though she respected the athletes, her focus was purely on the business of the Games.

That all changed when, watching a day of athletics at Stadium Australia, the emotional reality of the

to the Olympics and Paralympics.

Powerlifter Mateus Lukas and 5000 metre runner Alcino Pereira flew into Sydney Airport with empty bags. They had no running shoes, no sports gear and no spare clothes. Lukas was using a piece of timber as a walking crutch.

Within days, some police officers from the Parramatta area kitted out the pair so they could compete at their best. But their involvement was never really about athletic excellence.

"I remember being in the stadium and there's Alcino, probably for the first time in proper running shoes, about to start his race in front of 65,000 people," Appleby recounted.

"He's not a good athlete, he's in his 40s, he's got no real experience, and he gets lapped. And lapped again. And again. As he would come down the straight, he'd look at the crowd.

"You could see he was so overwhelmed by the moment. He's there in his new shoes, all these people cheering him, then he'd start again - and get lapped again."

With the next event due to start, officials had to pull Pereira out of the race. As a warm gesture, an official presented him with a bouquet of flowers.

"So, there's this East Timorese athlete doing another final lap, carrying these flowers, with the crowd on their feet cheering him on," Appleby said.

"He had a big smile, he kept stopping and waving to the crowd... We were all in tears. That said it all about what we were trying to achieve."

Appleby achieved plenty at the Sydney Paralympics. Apart from staging an event the athletes and public loved, she said she was proud of having made the Games more professional, largely based around the operational integration of SPOC and SOCOG. meaning challenges such as sponsorship and staffing we met by the organising committees in tandem, rather than separately. It was an approach sparked by the failures an Australian observation team saw in Atlanta in 1996.

"Our people were walking around the Atlanta venues between the Games there and they were appalled," Appleby said. "Power cords were cut, the venues were filthy... It was a disaster.

"One of the SOCOG guys said, 'Well, we can't let this happen in Sydney'. That's when we knew we had to do things differently.

"We started looking at how we could integrate policy back-of-house and we decided there were some areas best kept separated, but others best

Staffing was an area of great success. For example, Appleby said, the manager of basketball for the Olympics became the assistant manager of basketball for the Paralympics, and vice versa. Such decisions spilled over into other areas of Games delivery.

Sponsors who wanted to be involved in the Olympics were told the two Games came as a package deal.

"They complained and said they didn't want to," Appleby said.

"Then, after the Games, they'd say, 'Why didn't you tell us? Why didn't you tell us it was this good?' Since then, a lot of sponsors have been so keen to be involved in the Paralympics. They were dragged to the table in 2000, but it all changed after Sydney."

Not that integration came problem-free. Appleby remembers one of the transport organisers saying, 'If we can do this for the Olympics, the Paralympics should be a walk in the park'.

"I said, 'Do you realise we need to transport 340,000 schoolchildren? Do you realise we're going to need nearly every disabled access bus in Australia?' So, there was a scurry at the end to get the transport in place. But, mostly, things worked well. What that did was show the IOC that these two Games could sit together successfully.

"It wasn't easy. We were always fighting for our market share. But, by the time we got to Beijing, people were talking about the Olympics and Paralympics in the same breath. Sydney could take a great deal of pride in that."





Well before Kurt Fearnley established himself as one of the nation's greatest athletes, he humbly and excitedly began his Paralympic career in the midst of legends.

They were around him on the podium at his first Games and they were littered throughout Australia's Sydney 2000 Para-athletics Team.

"It was incredible to get a medal in the 800," Fearnley said of his first Paralympic success, a silver in the 800 metres T54.

"I was on the podium with [Canada's] Jeff Adams and [Mexico's] Saúl Mendoza, who were legends of the sport. I wanted to get up on the podium at those Games, but it was all a big unknown for me. It was a challenging classification, a very challenging competition. I was 18 years old and you never really know how it's going to go. You get kind of caught up in a whirlwind, seeing all these incredible athletes nail their sport.

"It never felt like it was real, getting that medal. But it was a moment that sprung me forward for the next 20 years."

Australia won a world-beating 63 Para-athletics medals at the Sydney Games, more than half of them gold, to comfortably tally ahead of Great Britain and the United States. Fearnley won two silver medals.

Across the next four Paralympics, Fearnley would win a further 11 medals, including three gold. He also claimed multiple world championships, international marathons and Commonwealth Games triumphs.

Away from competition, Fearnley established himself as a strong advocate for people with disabilities, particularly through ambassadorships and board representation, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme's Independent Advisory Council, Australian Volunteers International and the Australian Day Council of NSW.

While Fearnley more closely resembled a kid in a Iollie shop than a future star of Australian sport

at Sydney, a large part of his future direction can be attributed to what he learnt during those 11 days and the months leading up to them.

"There was no pressure whatsoever for me at Sydney, it was just exciting. Everything felt so exciting. I was just a kid rolling with it," he said.

"When you're 18, at your first Games, you're just bouncing from room to room and event to event. It's just a blur.

"The key thing for me was that I was learning to be a Paralympian around people who expected more of themselves. I was part of an extremely driven team, an extremely professional team and you felt you were taking things to a different

"We were chock full of stars that had won at previous Games. They had lots of experience and success. It was such a big year. You had Neil Fuller, Amy Winters, Lou Sauvage, Greg Smith ... there were so many gold medals among them, so many great athletes in our Team, and I was just a young fella enjoying the whole thing.

"It was incredible, we were winning gold medals every day. It was massive. Greg Smith won three, Louise won two or three, Tim Sullivan won a few, Neil won a couple, Tim Matthews ... we had a massive number of athletes perform at their best at those Games. It's impossible to replicate."

Beyond the quality of the athletes, Fearnley said a big reason for Australia's success was the way the Team and associated staff set about reaching its potential years before the Games.

"When we won the right to host the Paralympics, we ran with it," he said.

"We developed a more professional team, a more professional outlook, our athletes were more committed to what it took to be a professional athlete. We probably jumped into it a couple of years before the rest of the world. We were definitely a bit ahead of the curve.

"In the six months leading up there were team camps. I didn't know any better, I'd never been to anything like it before, but I just remember thinking everyone knew those Games were coming up and everyone was holding each other to account. There was a really intense feel to the whole thing well before we even took to the track. Everyone was in the zone. Everyone knew we were going to have a lot of support and everyone knew we needed to be committed. There were a lot of our athletes who wanted that moment in front of their home crowd and to do really well."

On the reasons for Australia's Para-athletics success at Sydney 2000, Fearnley is certain. However, he is less sure of the wider outcomes of those Games.

"It would have been good to have invested in surveys to find out what the Australian public thought of disability before and after the Games, so then we could really know if it was an inflection point," he said.

"I know that the word 'Paralympic' meant more to the wider community in this country because we got further into the Australian sporting conscience. I think that, especially for Australia, it did raise the profile of the Paralympic movement and athletes with disabilities and gave a voice to a lot of strong advocates in different parts of the community. But, to say that we changed the lives of lots of people with disabilities, I don't think we're able to do that.

"We're still here with train stations that aren't accessible, buildings that aren't accessible, shops that aren't accessible, stadiums that have limited accessible seating - I don't think we were really focusing on that at that time.

"What I do know is that the Games changed my world and was one of the most incredible experiences of my life."



A Remarkable Legacy In Which Sydney Shines Brightest

BY DAVID SYGALL

There are many reasons national treasure Libby Kosmala counts the Sydney Paralympics as the peak of her astounding 12 Paralympic experiences.

There were the fans who lined up for her autograph day after day and wanted to ask her questions about her impairment. There was the unbridled joy - and pressure - of performing in front of crowds bathed in green and gold. There was the unique experience of competing at the highest level alongside her husband, Stan (and finishing ahead of him).

Yet, the first thing Kosmala mentions when asked for her favourite memory of Sydney 2000 has more to do with utility than the magic that seemed to envelop the city between October 18 and 29 that year.

"We were very honoured, the Australian Team, to be placed in the Games Village very close to the dining hall," Kosmala said.

"To me, it made the Games so much more enjoyable. We didn't have to push up hills or anything like that, like in Rio, where I had to push 1.5k's to get to the dining room to have a drink or some dinner. So that was a really big thing for

"It was also lovely to be very close to the transport. And, it was just nice not having to travel thousands of miles to get to a competition."

For a standout memory, being close to the buffet might sound trivial. But for 78-yearold Kosmala, having competed at every Paralympics between 1972 and 2016, it's an indicator of how far the Games and respect for Paralympians had developed by the turn of the century.

"Well, you have to remember, in the early years the accommodation for the Paralympians was in a very different place," she said.

"At my first Games, in 1972, although it was in Germany, our competition was in a completely different city. We were in Heidelberg, but the Olympic Games were in Munich, so there wasn't any such thing as a Village for us to stay in.

"In Beijing the accommodation was very good. But, before Sydney, things were quite different for the most part, and not as good."

Despite being housed close to the dining hall, Kosmala's shooting competition was at Cecil Park, about half an hour's drive west of Sydney Olympic Park. It was there that the nine-time gold medallist savoured some of the other wonders of Australia's first Paralympics.

"The stands were filled up with people, unlike at the other Games I went to," she said.

"I remember at some of the Paralympics, there were our athletes circling around the track and no one was clapping or cheering, no one was there to watch, which I always thought was sad. The atmosphere in Sydney was totally different. It was amazing, every single day.

"I think it was very smart the way the transport was organised. They had all these busses go out and pick up school children from all over NSW and shift them back to the venues so they could all have a little look at what disabled people could do in sport.

"It was a great educational idea and it was

a great feeling for us to be competing with them all watching on. It really gave a wonderful atmosphere for the participants.

"Some of those children would get up at 4 in the morning, get on busses and come to the arenas for 9 o'clock, stay all day and then be shipped back home late the same night. It happened day after day. It's the first time I could recall that happening. It was a very clever move.

"I'd do my competition and then I'd be signing autographs for the kids, saying hello to them, answering their questions. 'Why are you in a wheelchair? What's wrong with your legs?' They wanted simple answers and I gave them that. I thought it was great that they wanted to talk to people who were disabled and learn about it and get to know us."

Kosmala didn't add to her personal medal tally at Sydney. But she did manage to beat her husband Stan when they competed in the air rifle prone, the first time they had competed in the same event.

"He'd been to two other Paralympics, but he was in different events to me," Kosmala said

"Still, they kept us apart. Stan was at one end of the range and I was on the other, which was probably a smart move by the organisers! When it was all over, naturally, we got together. Stan had shot the best he'd ever shot, so he was very happy. Unfortunately, I missed out on a medal by a close margin. But it was great to compete with him."

In fact, by the Games' end, the whole Kosmala family was involved. Son James had finished school in 1999 and wanted to travel from Adelaide to be part of the Olympics and Paralympics. Kosmala was acquainted with the venue manager for the archery, Terry Reilly, and contacted him to see if there was an opportunity for her son to volunteer.

"He said, 'I need someone like James over here now'," Kosmala recalled. "So, James went across and stayed for six months and had a wonderful time. He really enjoyed organising and running the archery with everyone else. He really grew up during that time and learnt a lot.



"Then, my other son, Luke, who's four years older than James, came across for the Closing Ceremony, so all four of us were there. It was a wonderful night."

Kosmala retired from competition in September this year, leaving a remarkable Paralympic legacy. When she looks back on her career, the Sydney Games shine brightest.

"People still talk about it all around the world. We certainly did blow their minds. They all thought it was unbelievable.

"People came from all around Australia, too, and they all said the Paralympics was much better than the Olympics. They loved it. It was a feather in everyone's cap, all the athletes, officials, judges, everyone."



How A Brutal Sydney Experience Re-Shaped Athlete Welfare

BY DAVID SYGALL

There was every reason to believe Danni Di Toro would reach the gold medal match at the Sydney Paralympics.

However, not only did Di Toro herself know it wasn't going to happen, the wheelchair tennis star had to endure her inevitable defeat in a very lonely place.

Di Toro had been the world's No.1 ranked women's singles player for most of the three years leading into Sydney, losing only the final of the US Open shortly before the Games to drop back to No.2. Still, with massive home support, she was expected to at least be on the podium by tournament's end.

"I'd been playing about 20 tournaments a year, doing four international tours and then the Australian tour each summer, all back-to-back," Di Toro said.

"I was training through Christmas and New Year and then playing from early January through to November. I was flying around constantly, which is challenging, particularly with a spinal cord-injured body like mine, and it had an impact mentally too.

"I knew I was burnt out and struggling. It all came to a head, unfortunately, at the Sydney Games. I knew I wasn't going to make the final."

Exiting in the quarter finals was hard enough. But what happened afterwards left an indelible mark on Di Toro, sparking a 20-year campaign by the Victorian to change the way organisations, including Paralympics Australia, understood and catered for the welfare of Para-athletes.

Di Toro had studied for a degree in Behavioural Sciences, so mental health was on her radar. She'd seen her sporting colleagues "quickly discarded" as they passed their peak or retired. She knew how burdensome the pressure to perform could be and the challenges that came with failure and even success. After her personal experience at Sydney, she became determined to ensure athletes' mental health be viewed as equally important to their physical health.

"I was honest and vocal about where I was at being open is a pretty vulnerable place to be - but it was pretty much ignored by my team. I think they kind of hoped I'd just get over it and sort it out." Di Toro said.

"What I experienced was 'If we don't speak about it, it'll just go away and be fine'. But, of course, it wasn't.

"When I got knocked out, the tennis team had no words for me, didn't know how to respond to me as a human being losing in front of 10,000 people in Sydney, in front of an incredible Australian crowd that had come to celebrate us.

"When I went back to the Village it was like I had leprosy. It's like everyone knew, but no one was saying anything, no one even asked me how I was. I ended up having to leave because it was so intense and I went and hung out with a mate. It felt like it was the only safe place for me."

Shortly after arriving at her friend's place, Di Toro suffered a fall which left her concussed. She underwent an MRI scan back at the Village the next day and was cleared to play in the doubles with her partner Branka Pupovac.

"I could barely function," she said. "But Branka and I had played a lot of tennis and winning that silver medal in the doubles was such a beautiful and proud moment. That took a bit of sting out of everything."

Di Toro, 45, won a bronze medal at the 2004 Paralympics and has competed at six Games. After London in 2012, she switched to table tennis and gained selection for Rio in 2016, where she was also named Australian Team Captain alongside Kurt Fearnley, a post she will hold also for Tokyo 2020.

Di Toro has been recognised for her achievements, including being named Australian Paralympian of the Year, Young Victorian of the Year and receiving the Australian Sports Medal. However, it's her work as Paralympics Australia's Athlete Engagement and Wellbeing Officer, a new role to which she was appointed in 2017, that is improving the lives of her sporting peers.

"My story of what happened in Sydney might not have been the same for others, but what I found was that, instead of asking, 'How can we support you?', they'd say, 'Oh, I didn't realise you were that weak'. It was pretty brutal.

"In the match I lost, the crowd could see that I was struggling. Even though I had nothing in the tank, I felt incredible support from the crowd. I felt more cared for by the general public than I did by my team. So, I think when the match was over, I actually felt relief. The thing I knew was coming happened and the sky didn't fall in.

"I remember my good friend, who was one of the media people at the time, came into the pit before I exited the court and that allowed me to be a bit protected from the cameras and the questions and all that, and centre myself for a moment.

"She went and told the media that I'd do my press conference in half an hour. Even a little thing like that was so important."

Di Toro believes progress has been made to the extent that her experience in 2000 would not happen today.

"If we had an athlete now speak about the kind of things I did - or say they were struggling in any way - I have no doubt that every single sport would put some support around that athlete, whatever that looked like," she said.

"Sports are a lot more aware and ready to see the athlete as a whole person and appreciate that a Paralympic Games is a high-pressure environment. Every Para-athlete works their arse off and there's this brief window once every four years when everyone sees what you're able to do. If you do well, a whole bunch of doors open. There are huge expectations and an immense amount of pressure.

"We've worked really hard to let all our athletes know they are more important than their performance and it's important to get around your fellow athletes when things don't go well for them. And, it's not just when things go wrong, success also brings challenges and opens people up to horrible things that others can say and do to them.

"Leading into Rio, Kurt and I and Kate [Chef de Mission Kate McLoughlin] wanted to embed this sort of thing within the team and make sure the whole Paralympics Australia organisation sees how important it is. All the things I've been saying for 20 years are now being heard in a different way and it's great.

"There's still a shift to go. But, on so many levels, I think we do this stuff a lot better. Paralympics Australia now has a whole welfare team. We've got two athlete liaison officers, an embedded psychologist and a pastoral care person. They're all very good at what they do and what we're learning from them is filtering right through the team. I'm really pleased about that."



Kit yourself out in the latest AUS Squad merch and support the Australian Paralympic Team!



SHOP ONLINE NOW





Golden Day Brings Back Memories Two Decades On

BY TIM MANNION

With the roar of thousands in his ears, and only the finish line in sight, Tim Matthews pounded down the track, baton in hand, and made history on the final day of competition at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games as part of Australia's victorious 4x100 metres relay team.

Tasked with running the all-important last bend, Matthews passed the baton to anchor Heath Francis, who flew down the final straight to seal the world record for athletes with an amputation/limb deficiency, and victory for Australia in the same final for the third consecutive Paralympics.

It was one of the 12 Australian track and field gold medals won that day and ensured Australia topped the medal tally with 63 gold, 39 silver and 47 bronze.

"It was the highlight of my competition," Matthews said

"I'd had a long competition and it was just phenomenal to end four years of training and hard work with a gold medal on the last day. It seemed like the Australian anthem played nonstop and I was incredibly proud to be part of just one of those golds."

For Matthews, the Sydney Paralympic Games were his most successful, winning two gold medals and two bronze medals on the track.

"Competing against the best in the world in front of my family and friends for the first time was pretty special and something I'll never forget," Matthews said.

"The Games were fantastically organised and embraced by the whole city – it was an amazing experience."

Two decades later, Matthews continues to oversee the development of the next generation of talent. As Senior Manager of Para-sport for Paralympics Australia, an organisation he has given 15 years of meritorious service to, it's fair to say his opinion of the Sydney 2000 Games is well-aualified.

"Competing against the best in the world in front of my family and friends for the first time was pretty special and something I'll never forget."

"Having been to the Atlanta, Sydney and Athens Games as an athlete followed by the Beijing Games as a commentator, the London Games as a coach and Rio as a spectator, it's safe to say Sydney changed everything," He

"The Atlanta and Sydney Games were chalk and cheese. In Sydney, great crowds came to see Paralympic sport and they liked what they saw, which was elite competition by some of the best athletes in the world and they kept coming back for more. This followed through to Athens, Beijing, London and even Rio.

"The greatest thing to come from the Games though was the introduction of minimum qualifying standards. It gave the Sydney Games and all future Paralympics competition more credibility, gave the Paralympic movement the recognition it deserves as elite sport and that's exactly what people want to watch."

42 Sydney 2000 20 Year Anniversary Issue

SYDNEY 2000 HONOUR ROLL AUSTRALIAN MEDALLISTS

GOLD MEDALS

Athletics

Fabian Blattman: Men's 400 m T51

Joanne Bradshaw: Women's Shot Put F37

Stephen Eaton: Men's Discus Throw F34

Rebecca Feldman: Women's 400 m T34

Anton Flavel: Men's Javelin Throw F20

Heath Francis: Men's 400 m T46

Neil Fuller: Men's 200 m T44, Men's 400 m T44

John Lindsay: Men's 100 m T53

Lisa Llorens: Women's Long Jump F20, Women's High Jump F20, Women's 200 m T20

Lisa McIntosh: Women's 100 m T37, Women's 400 m T38. Women's 200 m T38

Paul Mitchell: Men's 1500 m T20

Alison Quinn: Women's 100 m T38

Louise Sauvage: Women's 5000 m T54, Women's 1500 m T54

Russell Short: Men's Discus Throw F12, Men's Shot Put F12

Greg Smith: Men's 800 m T52, Men's 1500 m T52, Men's 5000 m T52

Tim Sullivan: Men's 100 m T38, Men's 200 m T38, Men's 400 m T38

Geoff Trappett: Men's 100 m T54

Jodi Willis-Roberts: Women's Shot Put F12

Amy Winters: Women's 100 m T46, Women's 200 m T46

Darren Thrupp, Adrian Grogan, Kieran Ault-Connell, Tim Sullivan: Men's 4 × 100 m relay T38

Stephen Wilson, Neil Fuller, Tim Matthews, Heath Francis: Men's 4×100 m relay T46

Darren Thrupp, Adrian Grogan, Kieran Ault-Connell, Tim Sullivan: Men's 4 × 400 m relay T38

Stephen Wilson, Neil Fuller, Tim Matthews, Heath Francis: Men's 4 × 400 m relay T46

Cycling

Greg Ball, Matthew Gray, Paul Lake: Mixed Olympic Team Sprint LC1-LC3

Paul Clohessy, Darren Harry: Men's tandem sprint open

Matthew Gray: Mixed 1 km time trial LC1

Sarnya Parker, Tania Modra: Women's individual pursuit tandem open. Women's 1 km time trial tandem open

Peter Homann: Mixed bicycle road race CP div 4

Daniel Polson: Mixed bicycle road race LC2

Christopher Scott: Mixed bicycle time trial CP div 4

Lyn Lepore, Lynette Nixon: Women's tandem road race

Mark le Flohic: Mixed tricycle 5.4 km time trial CP div

Equestrian

Julie Higgins: Mixed dressage Championship grade III, Mixed dressage Freestyle grade III

Sailing

Noel Robins, Jamie Dunross, Graeme Martin: Three person Sonar

Swimming

Paul Barnett: 100 m breaststroke SB9

Kingsley Bugarin: 100 m breaststroke SB12 , 200 m individual medley SM12

Jeff Hardy: 400 m freestyle S12

Siobhan Paton: 50 m backstroke S14, 50 m butterfly S14, 50 m freestyle S14, 100 m freestyle S14, 200 m freestyle S14, 200 m individual medley SM14

Judith Green: 100 m breaststroke SB6

Priya Cooper: 400 m freestyle S8

Gemma Dashwood: 400 m freestyle S10

Brett Reid, Paul Cross, Patrick Donachie, Stewart Pike: Men's 4×100 m freestyle relay S14

Wheelchair Tennis

David Hall – men's singles

SILVER MEDALS

Athletics

Heath Francis: Men's 200 m T46

Kurt Fearnley: Men's 800 m T54

Fabian Blattman: Men's 1500 m T51

Bruce Wallrodt: Men's shot put F54

Lee Cox: Men's pentathlon P13

Lisa Llorens: Women's 100 m T20

Rebecca Feldman: Women's 100 m T34

Katrina Webb: Women's 100 m T38 Women's 400 m T38

Sharon Rackham: Women's 200 m T20

Alison Quinn: Women's 200 m T38

Louise Sauvage: Women's 800 m T54

Norma Koplick: Women's javelin F20

Lynda Holt: Women's shot put F55

John Lindsay, Paul Nunnari, Kurt Fearnley, Geoff Trappett: Men's 4 × 100 m relay T54

Cycling

Paul O'Neill: Mixed bicycle road race LC1

Lyn Lepore, Lynette Nixon: Women's 1 km time trial

Paul Lake: Mixed individual pursuit LC2

Powerlifting

Richard Nicholson: Men's 60 kg

Shooting

Peter Tait: Mixed sport pistol SH1

Swimming

Alex Harris: Men's 100 m freestyle S7

Cameron de Burgh: Men's 100 m freestyle S9 44 Sydney 2000 20 Year Anniversary Issue

Ben Austin: Men's 200 m individual medley SM8

Stewart Pike: Men's 200 m individual medley SM14

Kingsley Bugarin: Men's 400 m freestyle S12

Tamara Nowitzki: Women's 100 m breaststroke SB7

Melissa Carlton: Women's 100 m freestyle S9

Melissa Carlton: Women's 400 m freestyle S9

Tracey Cross: Women's 400 m freestyle S11, Women's

100 m freestyle S11

Alicia Aberley: Women's 100 m freestyle S14, Women's

200 m individual medley SM14

Gemma Dashwood: Women's 200 m individual medley

Elizabeth Wright: Women's 400 m freestyle S6

Scott Brockenshire, Brendan Burkett, Cameron de Burgh, Shane Walsh, Alex Harris, Justin Eveson: Men's 4 × 100 m freestyle relay 34 pts

Wheelchair Basketball – Women

- •Julianne Adams
- •Jane Webb
- •Paula Coghlan
- ·Lisa O'Nion
- •Amanda Carter
- •Donna Ritchie
- •Sharon Slann
- Liesl Tesch
- Nadya Romeo
- •Karen Farrell
 - •Mellissa Dunn
 - •Alison Mosely

Wheelchair Rugby - Mixed

- •Bryce Alman
 - Patrick Ryan
 - Garry Croker

Steve Porter

Tom Kennedy

Brad Dubberley

•Clifford Clarke

Brett Boylan

Peter Harding

Craig Parsons

•Nazim Erdem

George Hucks

Wheelchair Tennis

Daniela di Toro, Branka Pupovac: Women's doubles

David Hall, David Johnson: Men's doubles

BRONZE MEDALS

Athletics

Andrew Newell: Men's 100 m T20, Men's 400 m T20

Neil Fuller: Men's 100 m T44

Tim Matthews: Men's 100 m T46, Men's 200 m T46

John Lindsay: Men's 200 m T53

Fabian Blattman: Men's 800 m T51

Roy Daniell: Men's Marathon T13

Brian Harvey: Men's discus F38

Murray Goldfinch: Men's shot put F20

Don Elgin: Men's pentathlon P44

Rebecca Feldman: Women's 200 m T34

Katrina Webb: Women's 200 m T38

Amy Winters: Women's 400 m T46

Trish Flavel: Women's 800 m T20

Jodi Willis-Roberts: Women's discus F12

Equestrian

Rosalie Fahey: Mixed dressage Championship grade I

Marita Hird: Mixed dressage Freestyle grade III

Cycling

Christopher Scott: Mixed bicycle road race CP div 4

Peter Homann: Mixed bicycle time trial CP div 4

Mark le Flohic: Mixed tricycle 1.9 km time trial CP div 2

Paul O'Neill: Mixed 1 km time trial LC1 Mixed individual pursuit LC1

Paul Lake: Mixed 1 km time trial LC2

Eddie Hollands, Paul Clohessy: Men's 1 km time trial tandem open

Lyn Lepore, Lynette Nixon: Women's individual pursuit tandem open

Swimming

Mark Altmann: Men's 50 m butterfly S7

Alex Harris: Men's 50 m freestyle S7

Ben Austin: Men's 100 m butterfly S8

Scott Brockenshire: Men's 100 m freestyle S10, Men's 100 m butterfly S10

Alicia Aberley: Women's 50 m breaststroke SB14, Women's 200 m freestyle S14

Amanda Fraser: Women's 50 m freestyle S7

Tracey Cross: Women's 50 m freestyle S11

Casey Redford: Women's 100 m backstroke S9

Lucy Williams: Women's 100 m breaststroke SB6

Stacey Williams: Women's 100 m breaststroke SB7

Brooke Stockham: Women's 100 m breaststroke SB8, Women's 200 m individual medley SM8

Katerina Bailey: Women's 100 m butterfly S9

Priya Cooper: Women's 100 m freestyle S8

Dianna Lev: Women's 400 m freestyle S9

Cameron de Burgh, Paul Barnett, David Rolfe, Alex Harris, Ben Austin, Daniel Bell, Justin Eveson: Men's 4 × 100 m medley relay 34 pts Denise Beckwith, Elizabeth Wright, Melissa Willson, Karni Liddell: Women's 4×50 m freestyle relay 20 pts

Melissa Carlton, Priya Cooper, Amanda Fraser, Gemma Dashwood: Women's 4 × 100 m freestyle relay 34 pts

Priya Cooper, Brooke Stockham, Katerina Bailey, Melissa Carlton : Women's 4 × 100 m medley relay 34 pts

This list has been compiled by contributors to the <u>Australian</u>
Paralympic History Project.



Mayhem And Magic Of A **Frantic Home Stretch**

BY DAVID SYGALL

On the night the Games ended, Brendan Flynn grabbed a bottle of wine and quietly stepped out of a function where singer Vanessa Amorosi was performing to a room full of Australian Paralympic and Olympic athletes.

The Paralympics Australia Chief Executive Officer had just finished an epic stretch of work, which included being on the road for 100 of the 104 weekends leading up to the Paralympics. He was exhausted but elated.

"I took the bottle, went to a bus stop and poured a glass," Flynn said. "I sat there and thought to myself, 'Oh my God, what have we just done?'

"I spent about an hour there reflecting on what had been achieved, what the athletes had achieved. It was amazing. It had been the best period of time in my working life, without a doubt."

That's saying something. Flynn had been involved in cycling and basketball at five Olympic Games before starting as PA's General Manager of Sport in 1998 and advancing to CEO the following year. When the PA role first came up, he wanted to acquaint himself with what he was getting into.

"I took a Paralympic athlete out for breakfast. I don't want to mention his name, but he made me feel like a real idiot. He was a downhill skier, a Paralympic champion. He didn't have any arms, but he chopped up his breakfast with his knife and fork. He was an accountant, had a wife and two kids ... I was sold after that."

Over the next two years, Flynn oversaw the final manic stretch of preparations for Australian Paralympic sport's greatest opportunity. But, far from most of his previous experiences, much of it was done with the barest of resources.

When Flynn started, he said, there were fewer than 10 permanent staff. What they did "was the work of 100 people".

"Everyone was required to do a mammoth job. We had very little money - the funding we received in those days, compared to able-bodied sport, was chalk and cheese - so I was constantly running around chasing sponsors, going to functions, making sure every training camp was well organised.

"We would talk to the athletes, talk to the managers, the coaches, the medical staff. We were very hands-on. We had to be. There was no choice. The small group of people who worked on this project really gave their lives up for the cause. And boy oh boy, were they good. These were people who would just about die for you.

> "The results were on show in 2000. To get the Team to that Opening Ceremony was an unbelievable amount of work. Those final two years were mayhem."

Flynn had read the reports from Atlanta in

1996 and was stunned to discover that the athletes had been "treated like second class citizens". He felt the only way was up and set about working with Chef de Mission Paul Bird and Assistant Chefs de Mission, including Robyn Smith and Tony Naar, to raise the standards of performance and, in turn, make sure the athletes were treated with respect.

"When I started, for instance, our wheelchair rugby team was awful," Flynn said.

"The 1998 World Championships were in Canada, I went there with my coaching hat on and had to report back to the Board about what I thought.

"I sat through something like 50 games in five days, our team came last - they were a rabble - but I saw who I thought was the best coach in the world, a guy called Terry Vinyard, coaching the American team. I took Terry out to dinner, ploughed him with wine and beer and suggested he come to Australia and help our program.

"When I came back, I told the Board about the offer I'd made and they nearly killed me because I was going to spend money on coaches. But Terry said yes and the rest is history.

"The team were just closely beaten for the gold in Sydney and since then, with supercoach Brad Dubberley, they play with immense pride and skill. That was the kind of thing we did with pretty much every sport."

A Message From The Lord Mayor Of Sydney, Clover Moore

"Australian Paralympians have a very proud track record. We've taken part in every Paralympic Games since the first, held in Rome in 1960, and since the Atlanta Games of 1996, we've finished in the top five in every medal tally. Our Paralympians continue to show us what can achieved with vision, courage and willpower.

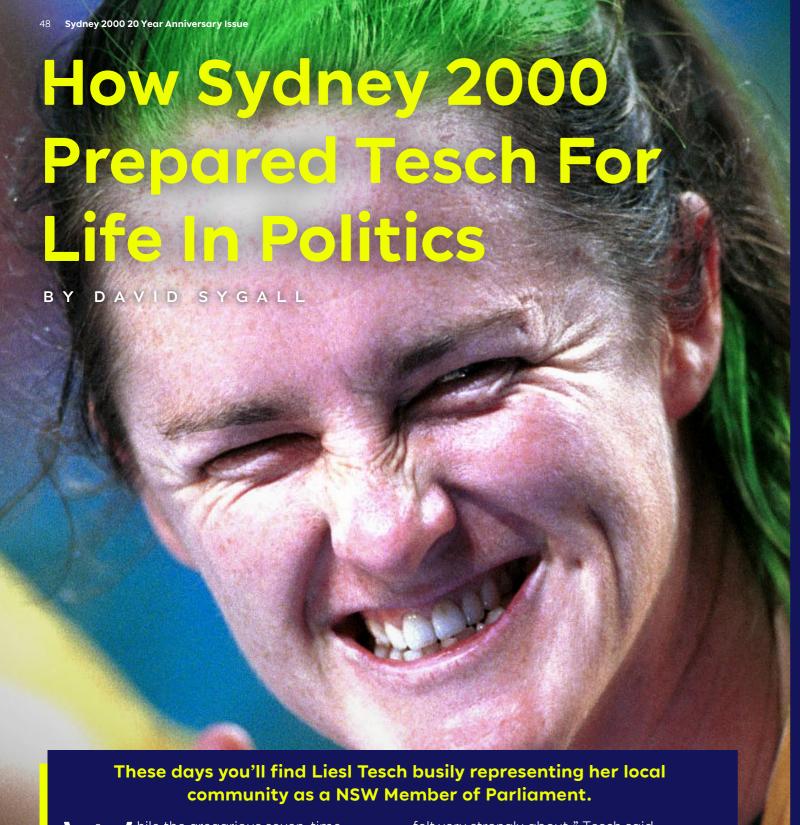
"The City has been a proud supporter of the Team since the 2000 Paralympics. As well as financial support, we work with Paralympics Australia to promote the Games and to celebrate the achievements of our athletes publicly and proudly. We work with Para-athletes to promote positive community attitudes towards people with disability - a key objective of the City's Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan.

"The year 2000 was an incredibly exciting time in our city's history and it's worth stopping to reflect on and commemorate the achievements of those who participated in the Sydney Games, 20 years on.

"We will once again support the Paralympic Team as they prepare for Tokyo - support that is perhaps more important than ever given the additional preparation challenges presented by the pandemic.



"For our part, we will continue to increase awareness of both the needs and the contributions made by people living with a disability and to make our City as accessible and inclusive as possible."



I hile the gregarious seven-time Paralympian's determination to make an impact in politics is an extension of her 24-year sporting career, her ability to advocate effectively in the seat of Gosford is a skill she traces back to her work tirelessly promoting the Sydney Paralympics and what came next.

"Bringing as many people as possible with us on the Sydney 2000 journey was something I

felt very strongly about," Tesch said.

"You name it, I spoke to every community organisation I possibly could to get them attached and be part of it. We educated people and put the word 'Paralympics' in their vocabulary.

"I've got encyclopedias' worth of training diaries and all those speaking engagements are in there. Being part of the team of

athletes that provided that level of education across the board was amazing. Taking our communities on that journey, to help make those stadiums full, was the experience of a lifetime. I never predicted it would lead to the career I have now, but I do believe it played a significant part."

By the Sydney Paralympics, Tesch had competed at two Games as part of the Gliders women's wheelchair basketball team. The team won the silver medal in Sydney, silver in 2004 and bronze in 2008. Tesch then switched to Para-sailing, where she and her sailing partner Dan Fitzgibbon won back-to-back gold medals in 2012 and 2016 in the SKUD18 class. Tesch, now 51, retired after Rio and was elected to parliament in the Gosford byelection in 2017.

Tesch remains involved in Para-sport through her work running the Paralympic Mentoring Program, which currently has 12 mentors working with 19 athletes around Australia to help them achieve their goals in and around sport.

"My life in politics is like my life in the Paralympic movement," she said.

"I've taken the determination I had as an athlete into the political world. I was pretty bloody determined then to make an impact and it's the same now.

"The experiences I had leading into Sydney gave me a voice in the community as someone who could achieve good outcomes for people with a disability. Not many people get an opportunity like that, to use their voice, to become a spokesperson for the Games. It really was a privilege."

Playing at the Sydney Paralympics was also a privilege. However, Tesch admitted, coming away with silver, while being the Gliders' first Paralympic medal, was "horribly anti-climactic".

"Memories of that final game against Canada, for me, is like trying to claw my way up a cliff," she said.

"I remember the game sliding away from us and we weren't able to do what we needed to. We just didn't have enough international experience. We were so isolated and, at that stage, international opportunities weren't there."

It was a different story after the Games, leading to the next way in which Sydney 2000 helped prepare Tesch for her political career.

"After we won our silver, we had a big party and one of the Italian guys said, 'Do you want to come and play in Europe, Liesl?' I said, 'But I'm a girl'. He said, 'Well, you're good enough'.

"I never predicted it would lead to the career I have now, but I do believe it played a significant

"A week later they rang me and said to come to Italy. I said no, but then I moved to Spain a year later to play professional men's wheelchair basketball. Never in a squillion years did I think that playing wheelchair basketball at the Sydney Paralympic Games would open doors like that."

Tesch played in Spain for a year, Sardinia for three years and Paris for a year.

"Having played sport in those men's leagues in Europe, then going into that male orientated parliament, it's just like playing in the Italian men's team," Tesch said.

"It's about tactics, strategies, working out where you can get your wins, how you can achieve the goals you want to achieve and balancing your short term and long term goals. There's so much from the sport I played that I apply to my job now.

"It's also about just being part of a team. A political party is like any team - it works best when you're working together."





THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

Major Partners









Official Partners























Official Supporters

























Government Partners



















Address: Building A, 1 Herb Elliott Avenue, Sydney Olympic Park, NSW 2127
Postal Address: PO Box 596, Sydney Markets, NSW 2129
P +61 2 9704 0500 E info@paralympic.org.au W paralympic.org.au

ABN 41810 234 213 | ACN 061 547 957

CONNECT WITH @AUSPARALYMPICS









#MySydney2000