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Weightlifting record breaker Ben Ward lands former Wallabies star Tim Horan in scholarship and mentoring program

Record breaking weightlifter **Ben Ward** from the Gold Coast is on a mission to compete at next year's Commonwealth Games, which will be held in his hometown.

The 17-year-old has only been competing in his sport for about three years and will continue his development as part of the **2018 Sport Australia Hall of Fame Scholarship and Mentoring Program** that provides support and funding for five of Australia's brightest young sports stars.

Awarded annually as part of the **Sport Australia Hall of Fame Induction and Awards Gala Dinner** – proudly presented by **Etihad Airways** – the successful recipients will be presented their scholarships by their respective mentors on **Thursday, 12th October 2017** at Palladium at Crown, Melbourne.

Ward will prepare for Commonwealth Games qualifying with the help of former rugby great and 2006 Sport Australia Hall of Fame inductee **Tim Horan AM**.

Ward previously played rugby league and competed in surf life saving before making the switch to weightlifting where he has already broken a number of national and state junior records.

"I'm really excited to be a member of the scholarship and mentoring program, it's a great acknowledgement to the work I have done so far," Ward explained.

"Having access to someone like Tim Horan is invaluable and I will make the most of the time I can spend with him, and learn from his experiences."

Horan played 80 games for Australia winning two World Cups in 1991 and 1999, later being inducted into the World Rugby Hall of Fame and Australian Rugby Union Hall of Fame.

"I'm very much looking forward to working with Ben, offering advice and support he can take with him as he develops as an athlete," Horan said.

"He is an impressive athlete and has a strong determination to succeed, hopefully I can play a part in him achieving his goals."

Sport Australia Hall of Fame Chairman **John Bertrand AO**, who was a mentor to 2013 scholarship holder and Olympic silver medallist sailor Olivia Price, said the mentor program is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

"These scholarship and mentoring programs are designed to give our young athletes a turbo boost into the real world of high-end performance on the world stage," Bertrand said.

"It is a truly money can't buy experience and the success rate has been a phenomena."

Successful recipients receive one-on-one personal mentoring by a current member of the Sport Australia Hall of Fame, in what is a unique and life changing experience. Recipients will also be awarded a \$5,000 sporting expenses grant, as well as one international return economy flight thanks to major sponsor Etihad Airways.

2018 Sport Australia Hall of Fame Scholarship and Mentoring Program

Athlete	Sport	Age	Location	Mentor
Riley Day	Athletics	17	Josephville, Qld	Debbie Watson OAM Water Polo
Nia Jerwood	Sailing	19	Shelley, WA	Liane Tooth OAM Hockey
Poppy Starr Olsen	Skateboarding	17	The Junction, NSW	Layne Beachley AO Surfing
Ben Tudhope	Snowboarding	17	Manly, NSW	Nick Farr-Jones AM Rugby
Ben Ward	Weightlifting	17	Upper Coomera, Qld	Tim Horan AM Rugby

The star of Nitro Athletics Melbourne, **Riley Day**, who recently competed at the world championships in London as a 17-year-old will be mentored by Olympic water polo gold medallist **Debbie Watson OAM**. The high school student's personal bests over 100m and 200m are world-class for her age, highlighted by a silver and gold medal in respective events at the 2017 Commonwealth Youth Games. Watson, who was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame in 2006, is known as Australia's greatest ever female water polo player who came out of retirement to help the team win gold at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Poppy Starr Olsen is an elite skateboarder who at just 17 travels the world to compete and wants to skate at the Tokyo Olympics. She was thrilled to be paired with 2011 Sport Australia Hall of Fame inductee and seven-time surfing world champion **Layne Beachley AO** who turned professional at the age of just 16 and will have so much advice to offer young Olsen.

Nia Jerwood has followed in her parents' footsteps in the sport of sailing competing at the 2017 470 World Championship staged on the Bay of Thessaloniki. The skilled sailor, who competed in the women's two person dinghy 470W in northern Greece, will receive advice from the first female hockey player to compete at four Olympics, **Liane Tooth OAM**. The two-time Olympic women's hockey gold medal winner from 1988 and 1996, was inducted in 1996.

Para-snowboard athlete **Ben Tudhope**, who was born with cerebral palsy, competed at the 2014 winter Paralympics in Sochi at just 14, making him Australia's youngest ever Paralympian. Tudhope, who was not even five foot tall at the time and finished tenth in the men's para-snowboard cross, will be mentored by **Nick Farr-Jones AM**. The former Australian rugby union player was inducted in 1992 and was known as one third of the Wallabies' "holy trinity" along with David Campese and Michael Lynagh.

Sport Australia Hall of Fame Scholarship and Mentoring Program Background

Since the introduction of the program in 2006, 71 scholarships across 35 sports have been awarded ([view full list](#)).

Such is the success of the program that 20 past and present scholarship recipients represented Australia at the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio, including dual Paralympic wheelchair tennis gold medallist **Dylan Alcott OAM**, Paralympic swimming gold medallist **Maddison Elliott OAM**, cycling team pursuit silver medallist **Alex Edmondson**, archery team bronze medal winner **Alec Potts** and synchronised 3m springboard bronze medallist **Anabelle Smith**.

Other notable graduates of the Sport Australia Hall of Fame Scholarship and Mentoring Program include **Patrick Mills** (basketball), **Lauren Mitchell** (gymnastics), **Jessica Schipper** (swimming) and **Caroline Buchanan** (BMX).

Scholarship holders have been privileged to be mentored by such Australian sporting greats as; **Catherine Freeman OAM**, **Susie O'Neill OAM**, **Rechelle Hawkes OAM**, **Adam Gilchrist AM**, **Robert de Castella AO MBE** and Sport Australia Hall of Fame Chairman **John Bertrand AO**.

The scholarships will be formally presented at the sold out **Sport Australia Hall of Fame Induction and Awards Gala Dinner**, proudly presented by **Etihad Airways** – on **Thursday 12th October 2017** at Palladium at Crown, Melbourne.

2017 will mark the 33rd edition of this event, with a further eight Australian sporting icons, from on and off the field, to be inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame.

In addition to the eight inductees, Australian sport's 'night of nights' will see the elevation of one current member to Legend status, becoming the official [39th Legend of Australian Sport](#). The night will also celebrate '[The Don' Award](#)' which is widely regarded as Australia's most prestigious contemporary sporting award.

Established in 1985, the Sport Australia Hall of Fame plays a vital role in preserving and perpetuating Australia's rich sporting heritage, whilst promoting the values of courage, sportsmanship, integrity, mateship, persistence, and excellence, all underpinned by generosity, modesty, pride and ambition.

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