

SASCHA NEWMARCH – AUSTRALIAN LACROSSE CHAMPION

Sascha Newmarch was introduced to lacrosse at just 6 years of age when her brother Callen started playing for the Glenelg Lacrosse Club. Callen was eager to improve his skills so he would ask Sascha to be the back yard goalie. He would tape a pillow to her chest and put an oversized helmet on her most days after school. Sascha learned pretty quick that it was more fun to catch a ball than to be hit by one, so she mastered the art of catching at an early age. She joined GLC when she was 7 years old in 1980.

Growing up Sascha also loved playing netball, and juggled both sports for several years with her father racing her between the two every Saturday morning. When she was 12 due to both sports schedule conflicts Sascha had to make the tough decision on which sport to drop and which one to continue with. As most of her school friends were playing netball, she too chose that sport, but only for a few hours as Rodney Greaves, her Glenelg junior lacrosse coach, phoned her and said that he wouldn't let her quit and that he would be swinging by in an hour to pick her up for U'13 lacrosse training.



To this day, Sascha cannot thank Rod enough for intervening because the life experiences that lacrosse has gifted her she is forever grateful for.

Growing up, Sascha would try and play in every age group possible – some Saturdays playing in U'13s, U'16s and then C grade – with the occasional B grade

appearance, all on the same day. She could not get enough of the sport and when she wasn't playing or training with Glenelg she would be outside doing wall ball from the time she got home from school until it got dark.

Sascha was 14 when she made her first South Australian state team in the U16's. When she was 16 she started training with the SASI lacrosse development program under the guidance of Peter Koshnitsky. It was through SASI and their sports psychologists that Sascha learned the importance of goal setting. Sascha set 3 long term goals: 1. To play for Australia, 2. To play in the U.S.A. collegiate system and 3. To become a travel agent.

Two years later in 1992 at the age of 18 Sascha had achieved all 3 goals.

Sascha played for Glenelg juniors from 1980–1989 and seniors from 1986-1994. Her first senior game for South Australia was in 1991 in Tasmania and her debut in the senior Australian team was in 1992 as an 18 year old. Sascha remained on the Australian Squad until 2005.

In 1992 Sascha toured the USA with the Australian senior national team. She and her good friend/WA rival Sarah Forbes were the youngest two players on the team. Coach Peter Koshnitsky was very passionate about exploring opportunities for Australian players to play in the USA, so he introduced Sarah and Sascha to Cindy Timchal, the head coach at the University of Maryland. "It was in her office at our very first meeting that Cindy asked if we would like a scholarship to play at Maryland. Before we knew it, we were playing in the 1993 World Cup in Edinburgh and then Sarah headed to Maryland straight after the World Cup and I followed the year after due to administrative complications with the subjects I had completed in year 12."

Sascha played 79 games for the University of Maryland Terrapins from 1995-1998 in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division 1 women's lacrosse competition, where they won all 4 national championships. This marked the first time in history any lacrosse team had won 4 national championships in a row. Sascha was a three-time All-American and was named the Division 1 national midfield player of the year in 1998.

During her 4 years at University of Maryland Sascha completed a Bachelor of Science double major in Marketing and Logistics. After graduating from University of Maryland in 1998 Sascha stayed on in the USA to put her degree to use in corporate America and played lacrosse during this time for Team Toyota. Shortly after the September 11 attacks took place in 2001 she resigned from her job and moved back to Australia - but not before travelling around Central America for 6 months.

While Sascha missed 8 seasons of local lacrosse due to playing and living in the U.S.A (1994-2002) and having 2 children (2009 - 2011) she played approx 100 games in A grade for Glenelg Lacrosse Club, 135 state league games for Wilderness Lacrosse Club, 90 games for South Australia and approximately 50 games for Australia.

When Sascha returned to Australia permanently in 2002 she was recruited by Graham Hobbs to play for the newly formed Wilderness Lacrosse Club, which consisted of all former Glenelg players who had graduated from the Wilderness School (With the exception of Sascha). "As GLC was such a powerhouse in the early 2000's it made sense for me to play for Wilderness to help grow the game, rather

than re-join an already dominant team. It was essentially a Glenelg team anyway, so I didn't feel as though I was betraying my club".

Sascha took a break from lacrosse altogether from 2009 following pregnancy until her children were old enough to play in the Glenelg Under 8's in 2016, when her youngest turned 5, and Sascha returned to playing lacrosse at Glenelg as well, and where she and her 2 children still play today.

Sascha has recently taken on the Junior Development Chairperson role. Her recent highlights are convincing several former state and Australian team mates to come out of retirement to help develop and mentor the Glenelg juniors by playing alongside them in the Division 2 competition. This resulted in instant success with the Glenelg Blackhawks winning back to back premierships in 2022 and 2023.

By far the biggest achievement Sascha has had with lacrosse is being part of winning the 2005 World Cup on U.S. soil. "Yes winning 4 national championships with University of Maryland and being coached by Gary Gait was pretty cool too, however there is nothing more satisfying than silencing a loud and passionate crowd who were chanting U-S-A nonstop for the first half of the World Cup final. Considering 10 of the 16 Australian players had salmonella poisoning a few days prior to the World Cup starting, to then put on a massive performance all week and then beating the USA 14-7 in the final to win back the World Cup after 19 years of U.S. dominance is something I will never forget. I am so proud of the entire team and coaching staff for overcoming so many challenges."



Sascha above with Fiona Clark after receiving her MVP award in the 1995 semi-final

Why wasn't Sascha in the 1997 World Cup? "The 1997 World Cup was held a few weeks before the USA collegiate lacrosse finals. Sarah and I were the only Australian players who were overseas at that time, and while we had expressed interest to play in the 1997 World Cup, we didn't hear anything. Mind you, I don't think I had an email account at that point in my life so it was much harder to communicate back then. The USA ended up winning the 1997 World Cup in overtime against Australia."

NATIONAL REPRESENTATION

- 1992 U.S. tour playing against U.S. college teams and Team U.S.A.
- 1993 Women's Lacrosse World Cup in Scotland – bronze medal
- 2001 Women's Lacrosse World Cup in England – silver Medal
- 2005 Women's Lacrosse World Cup (Vice Captain) in the U.S.A. – gold medal

AWARDS

- 2001 World Cup game MVP vs USA (Round robin match)
- 2003-2008 Wilderness best and fairest/MVP/best team player
- 2005 World Cup game MVP vs Canada (Semi-final)
- 2007 SALA State League best&fairest
- 2018 Member of the SA senior women's lacrosse team inducted into the South Australian Sports Hall of Fame
- 2022 Inducted into the Maryland Athletics Hall of Fame

BEST PLAYERS YOU HAVE SEEN?

Growing up at Glenelg I had the opportunity to train with Wendy Greaves (now Walsh) and Tracey Rehn (now Robb) who were 3 years older than me. I was so impressed by their skill level and competitiveness and would emulate whatever they would do in training to continually improve my game knowledge and skill.

My first exposure to Australian lacrosse was watching the 1989 World Cup in Perth – my favourite players to follow were Justine Hurst, Jenny Williams and Sue Sofarnos. Justine was incredibly fast and relentless in her pursuit of the ball. Sue Sofarnos was determined and competitive and had stick work that was not seen in women's lacrosse at the time. Jenny Williams was a natural leader and play maker and incredibly vocal. All 3 were very different players and were the reason I was inspired and determined to wear the green and gold.

My absolute favourite lacrosse players to play with were Sarah Forbes (Maryland and Australia), Sarah Aston (Falcione) (S.A., Australia and Wilderness) and Jen Adams (Maryland and Australia). Both Sarah's were incredibly strong and fast. "Azzo" could run through a whole team so skilfully, and "Forbsie" just created so many opportunities for her team mates through fast breaks and creative play. She never stopped running and always had a massive smile on her face. Jen Adams was a mastermind in deception - so agile and graceful with the ball - she could change direction with ease and her stick skills and shooting accuracy were phenomenal.

TOUGHEST OPPONENTS

My toughest opponents were from the Victorian state team in Marg Barlow and Colleen McVeigh. Despite them being at least a decade older than me, they both played hard and were relentless in pursuit of the ball. I just remembered that no matter how bruised or battered they became, they just kept on playing hard. It was terrifying but inspiring at the same time. I was so grateful and honoured to play alongside them on the Australian team.

From S.A, Jenny Williams and her College teammates were always tough to play. The team consisted of PE teachers and amazing athletes from basketball, soccer and touch football (Just to name a few sports) who broke down the lacrosse fundamentals and basic movement around goal. Jenny really understood how to wear a player down through a mix of foot positioning, defensive pressure, communication and baiting players to go in the direction she wanted. She certainly kept me on my toes at all times, and was another player I was grateful to play in the green and gold with.

TESTIMONIALS

SARAH FORBES (Former Australian champion and USILA Hall of Famer)

Sascha's impact on the growth and development of lacrosse in Australia, particularly for female athletes, is profound and far-reaching. She was a pioneer and paved the way for Australian female lacrosse players to take advantage of the opportunities available within the prestigious U.S. college system. Without her vision, I would not have had the incredible opportunity to attend the University of Maryland, an experience that shaped my life both on and off the field. For the Australian lacrosse team, Sascha drove the standard of performance and her commitment to excellence ensured the highest standard was achieved. Sascha's vision, dedication, and relentless pursuit of success for the team resulted in a Gold medal for Australia in 2005.

SARAH ASTON (Former Australian champion)

Sascha paved the way for so many South Australian and indeed Australian lacrosse players as she was the second to travel to the U.S. on a scholarship. Sascha was a strong, determined midfield/centre whose skills, pace and height gave her that extra key to achieve greatness. A tough player and opponent who took every game as it was and played her hardest to the final whistle.

She was determined to improve every aspect of her game and work tirelessly on her skills and fitness without fault. As a result, she motivated all those around her to strive for the same perfection and excellence. As a result, Sascha's inclusion in the 2001 and 2005 WC teams ensured we were able to secure the greatest accolade in lacrosse being the 2005 World Championship GOLD.

A motivational player who continues to share her passion and knowledge of lacrosse with so many lucky South Australian lacrosse players to this day.

CONCLUSION

Sascha Newmarch was lucky in that she was one of the first women to be given the opportunity to accept a lacrosse scholarship to a very prestigious college in the U.S., thanks to her coach, Peter Koshnitsky, who facilitated the interview to put her in front of the head coach, which Sascha grabbed with both hands and thrived in that very competitive environment.

But as they say the more you practice and work hard, the luckier you get, and while many people get opportunity they don't always grab it with both hands or take full advantage of it. Sascha Newmarch did, she got the very best out of her ability and in doing so, did her country proud and succeeded on the biggest stage for women's lacrosse, and was a member of a World Cup Gold Medal team that defeated the very best that the U.S. could offer. Well played Sascha!