

...soccer and rugby were the main team sports to be involved in at primary school. Lots of friends from kindy and school were also starting to play and it was fun to play alongside your mates. Sport in these early years was more like social time for kids and then parents' forged friendships on the sideline and enjoyed watching us learning new skills and developing our love for sport. Mum and Dad wanted me to join soccer to get a taste for team sports and to meet and make new friends. I had fun but really wanted to play rugby...played rugby until the age of 14. I was fast but I wasn't confident in getting involved in the thick of it so played on the wing...broke my foot...by a boy twice my size. After that I was less confident, felt small and vulnerable...

The sports I have played such as soccer, volleyball, rugby, water polo and tri-athlon are all linked together because they have structured, organised training which is what motivates me to participate. I like the discipline of doing drills, fitness, competing against others in modified games and drills and so on. I also like the commitment to a team, feeling you are part of a bigger picture and a sense of belonging to a group with similar needs and interests as yourself. And the fact that a coach leading the way means you are less likely to slack off...

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...my family has supported me financially and have transported me to games and trainings. Now I have my license I can do this myself, although am happy that Mum and Dad have still chosen to watch and support me too, and they continue to help me pay my way through my sport as I think they like the fact I am involved in team sports, benefiting in more ways than just physical...I have also been lucky that my environment inspires me to be active. I am lucky that we live so close to the beach...great off road tracks for running and mountain biking, and unlike bigger cities the roads are even safe to train on...triathlon was getting more media coverage and support after Hamish Carter won Gold at the 2004 Olympics and was becoming more recognised in the community by young and old. Development events were introduced such as the weetbix tri, which after competing in my first one, got me hooked. All these economic and environmental influences are what to continue my involvement in the activity.

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...was making the most of the range of sports college had to offer ...but really wanted to excel in one sport. I was having fun and enjoying the multi-sport scene so was committed to putting effort and training into the sport. I have set goals for the next 5 years to keep my passion for triathlon alive. Setting goals in all the sports I have done gives me something to work towards. While I do like a social environment with my friends it also needs to be competitive.

...I train with a squad so it is very social and gives me the opportunity to meet people with similar interests and also to challenge myself against them to help me work to my potential to reach my goals. The training keeps me fit and healthy and by training with others, even if the load and intensity is hard they motivate me to push myself harder. The endorphins released from this exertion give me a strong mind set and make me feel confident and happy.

I see a clear relationship between times when I am enjoying my physical activity experiences, or succeeding in them, and the positive influence on my wellbeing. I love how triathlon training helps keep me physically fit and healthy. For example I feel great when I am doing my swimming, cycling and running training as well as competing. I feel like I have got my body to a state where it can cope with the demands of the triathlon training and racing. Knowing it is my hard work and commitment to keeping to my triathlon training schedule that has made this possible makes me feel happy. I think this determined attitude and commitment from my triathlon training carries into other parts of my life, like school work. In this situation, I think because my body is so fit and prepared, that so too is my mind. For example, I can concentrate and focus in class and I am organised with my studies and extra-curricular activities. I think this puts me in good stead for the future.

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Triathlon has more of a positive influence on me than other forms of physical activity. When I was going to the gym I found it hard to commit and stay focused. I needed to set myself goals to ensure I stay motivated...just doing a weights circuit did not inspire me like when I am in a competitive team environment with others to train with, compete against and inspire each other to do our best...have also found I gravitate toward activities with a low chance of injury...when I was injured and feeling vulnerable in Rugby in my earlier years it really knocked my confidence...I like the relationship triathlon has with my total well-being by providing me with a good set of skills, such as, goal setting, how to improve my fitness and keep healthy. Also values like determination and perseverance to keep up with my training. I have definitely improved my interpersonal skills by learning how to deal with different personalities and how to relate and get along with others. These are definitely skills which are transferable to other aspects of my life.

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While I think it does help to set the scene early in terms of being active, being involved in a competitive team situation from the very early years could run the risk of burn out or boredom in later years. I think to ensure the relationship between physical activity and wellbeing remains a positive one, we need to select activities that are appropriate for the development of our body and our mind...

...it is as much mentally good for me as it is physically. I feel good about how I am going in sport and am excited about what potentially lies ahead. I am sure that participation in physical activity has helped me to develop the real sense of belonging and identity that I have. I feel a part of the triathlon community where people have similar goals and aspirations as me.

... I have a long term goal to represent NZ at the 2013 World triathlon champs in my age group in London. I have short term goals over the next year building towards the qualifying time in April. The air force which I am entering next year also supports keeping fit and active due to the fitness requirements of the basic air force training course. The basic fitness training in the air force will contribute to improving my fitness for the running component of my triathlon training. It will also give me motivation to meet my goals as I will have other people to run with. This will tie in nicely with who I am and where I want to go...eventually I will go back to team sports as I enjoy the social side. This will also help me keep up my friendships as often I train myself...

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