



NETBALL

is the most popular women's sport in Australia with an estimated one million players nationwide

'Female athletes rode the crest of a sporting wave in 2015, and the Australian Netball Diamonds were at the forefront of that group.'

In 2015, The Australian Netball Diamonds rode the crest of a successful sporting wave to become **World Cup Champions** and be voted the **Australian Team of the Year**. However, the World Cup win was only part of the story.



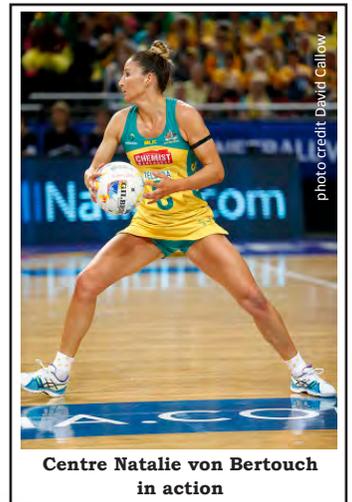
Captain and vice captain Laura Geitz and Bianca Chatfield celebrate winning the Constellation Cup against NZ

For the first time sports writers Megan Maurice and Jenny Sinclair go behind the scenes of the Diamonds to take you on an in-depth journey through the four-year lead up to the World Cup.

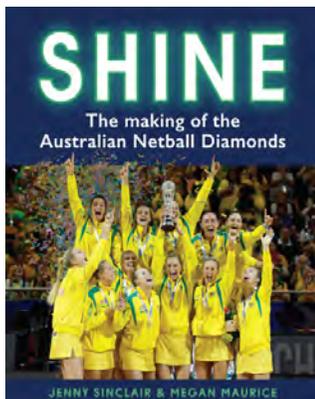
You will read about the players' fight for greater media coverage, their battles with injury and non-selection, and how they've overcome self-doubt or a drop in form, or gone from living in a tiny country town to winning a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games. Family members also give insights about what it is like to share their lives with an elite athlete.

Of course, the story would not be complete without hearing from other less high profile members that make up the Diamonds team. The authors were given unprecedented access to the coaches and support staff, their thoughts and their roles in the Australian team, offering a fascinating glimpse inside a high-performance sporting environment.

Netball has a long and proud history in Australia. The current success of the Diamonds flows from the work of previous generations of brilliant athletes, coaches and administrators.



Centre Natalie von Bertouch in action



- SHINE released in October 2016, coincides with first test in major annual Trans-Tasman competition, the Constellation Cup
- 70+ pages of player profiles
- 2015 World Cup winning journey
- Low-down on drug-testing, injury and working conditions
- FANfest 2015 attracted 65,292 people at All Phones Arena
- Australian Netball Diamonds Social Media profile includes over 50,000 Twitter followers, 126,428 likes on Facebook and 12,800 followers on Instagram followers

WELCOMING A NEW PLAYER

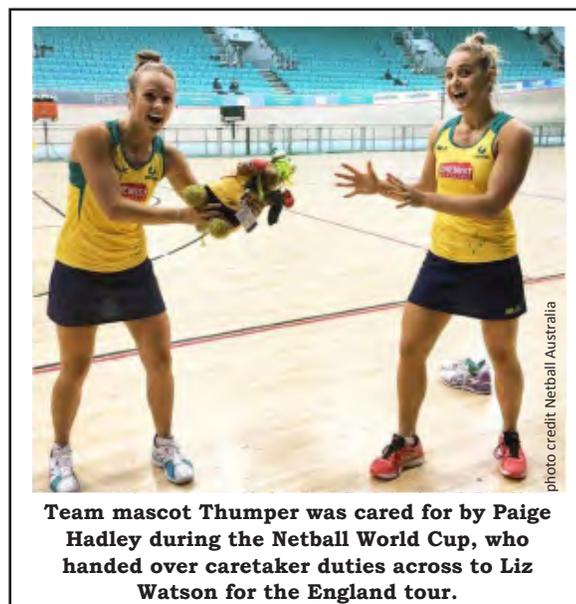
and taking care of Thumper



New players can feel very nervous about going into the Diamonds environment. A lot of thought is put into making sure that new players feel welcome, and also understand what it means to play for Australia. The team captain will usually phone them beforehand to say hello, and the leadership group will induct them, which includes their expectations, their roles, and the meaning behind the Sisters in Arms trademark.

On tour, they usually share a room with a more experienced team member who will help ease them into daily life. **Julie Richardson**, the team manager, says, 'This group is particularly good at making sure the younger players feel part of things. I think they remember what it was like for them so they take that responsibility on. I know it has been pretty daunting at times in the past.'

Their playing dress is presented to them by a former Australian representative at a team dinner, and the youngest player is also given Thumper, the team mascot, to care for. The little kangaroo joined the team in 2004 after their previous mascot, Pita the koala, went missing. Thumper sports a vivid outfit that is added to by each rookie that carries him. He has to go to each training session and event, and is carried onto court before every game. He's been left at hotels and at airports, and every time he goes missing or is left behind his minder is fined so he is the perfect target for abduction, practical jokes and breaking the ice.



Team mascot Thumper was cared for by Paige Hadley during the Netball World Cup, who handed over caretaker duties across to Liz Watson for the England tour.



Catherine Cox welcomed many new players to the Diamonds. She earned 100 test caps & scored 2,000 goals for Australia

The tradition behind the presentation of the dress started during **Liz Ellis'** captaincy, when she sought a way to make it into a meaningful event. It is usually done by a former Australian player, who is then also a guest speaker at dinner and shares some stories and memories from their own playing career.

Lisa Alexander, head coach of the Diamonds, said, 'I love them to talk about their feelings when they represented Australia. They are all very, very different in what they have to say. I distinctly remember **Kath Harby**, a former captain of Australia, saying, "We just don't lose in this team." That really rang in the girls' ears. They knew that past players were challenging them not to take the opportunity for granted. It was a very powerful message. I think it is very important for us to have that link with the past, and to appreciate those players and what they have done for netball in this country.'



The 2015 World Cup-winning squad

MEET THE SUPPORT STAFF

Angie Bain, Wellbeing Manager

In 2013 Angie was appointed as the Diamond's Wellbeing Manager, with a brief to build personal relationships with the players and their families, learn about their lives away from netball and give them tools to help deal with the stresses involved with being an elite athlete. Although Netball Australia started the role on a trial basis, it was quickly recognised as being of vital importance to the players...



The extreme highs and lows of elite sport are generally uncontrollable, and very testing situation for the players. **The adrenalin-charged euphoria of a brilliant performance can turn to dust through injury, missing selection or losing an important game.** Living and working closely with friends and teammates for weeks at a time finishes abruptly and anticlimactically when a tour is over, and can be a lonely time that many players struggle to adapt to. Angie tries to help them cope with the emotional roller-coaster that is part of sport...

She says, 'We do a lot of work to help players adjust their expectations, look at what they can control, and put things into perspective. For example, they might catastrophise, saying, "The last time I played on this court I was shocking, so I'm going to be shocking now!" So **we intervene to help the player help themselves** so that these things don't become bigger.

THE DIAMONDS ON DOPING

The random urine tests that all elite players go through are a necessary but invasive process for female athletes.

According to one player, 'pH is also checked to make sure that the urine isn't too diluted. If it is, you have to go again, which can take hours. The biggest trick is not to go to the toilet at halftime during a match. Just hold on! If you do go you can get dehydrated, and then it can take a long time to give a sample. If I get picked after the match I'm basically ready to go two minutes after my warm down - it's like, let's get on with this!'

So careful is the process that ASADA testers turned up at one Diamonds camp and randomly asked to **test the first five players down the stairs for dinner.** They'd just been to the bathroom before dressing, so no-one could oblige. The testers followed the players out to dinner, sat in a corner of the restaurant and waited for nature to take its course.



2016 CONSTELLATION CUP TEST SCHEDULE

Sun 9 Oct	Australian Diamonds	Silver Ferns	TBC	TBC
Wed 12 Oct	Australian Diamonds	Silver Ferns	Silverdome	Launceston, AUS
Sat 15 Oct	Silver Ferns	Australian Diamonds	Vector Arena	Auckland, NZ
Thurs 20 Oct	Silver Ferns	Australian Diamonds	ILT Stadium Southland	Invercargill, NZ

EXCERPT FROM LIZ ELLIS PLAYER PROFILE

Fighting for better conditions

Early on in her captaincy, Liz was presented with the opportunity to do something really ground-breaking that would benefit current and future generations of elite players. She recalled, 'I got a phone call from one of the girls saying she'd met the head of the Australian Workers' Union. She'd treated him as a physio, and they got talking. He was floored by the conditions for netballers, especially for a sport that was on television.'



Former captain Liz Ellis (right) is now a television commentator

That was Bill Shorten and as the new national captain, Liz was the person to speak to him and help netball make its first real steps into the professional era... Liz set about organising meetings with Shorten and arranging for representatives of the various teams in the (now defunct) Commonwealth Bank Trophy to be involved...

'It created a huge issue between me and the CEO at the time,' Liz recalled... **'The negotiations culminated in a mini-strike by the players.'** When the whistle blew for the start of the round at each game around the country, the players huddled together around the centre circle and read a statement about what they wanted for elite netballers, both now and in the future. It was only a three-minute thing, but it was enough to make the bosses furious! There was also a divide and conquer mentality, but we thought, "No, we're all in this together – and we're serious."

'The big thing for us at the time wasn't so much money, because we knew there wasn't much around. It was actually **player welfare**. One of my teammates worked full-time, trained and lived a two-hour drive away in Newcastle. On the way back from training one night she fell asleep and ran off the road. Thank Christ it was into an open paddock, but they are the things that worried us that could have been tragic if not addressed. For me, it was a pivotal moment to say to the AWU: 'The first thing we need to do is sort out welfare!'

'You know, things that don't cost anything, like the clubs giving players eight weeks off. Training sessions couldn't go for longer than two hours. They couldn't be called earlier than a certain time. They couldn't go later than a certain time. So all that stuff didn't cost a cent, but it made a huge difference to the lives of players. We wouldn't have got it if we hadn't stood strong together.'

BOOK INFORMATION

Title: *SHINE*
Sub-title: *The making of the Australian Netball Diamonds*
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Kim Ravaillion on the attack