



AIS

**SPORT
PERFORMANCE
AWARDS**

PROGRAM OF EVENTS
10 DECEMBER 2019
THE STAR, SYDNEY



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PROUDLY SUPPORTING OUR EMERGING ATHLETES



Commonwealth Games Australia is proud to support the 2019 Emerging Athlete of the Year Award.

Supporting our young and emerging athletes is very important to Commonwealth Games Australia.

As has been the case for athletes such as Anna Meares, Petria Thomas and Cathy Freeman, the Commonwealth Games are often the starting point for a long and successful international career.

We congratulate all finalists for this year's award and wish them well with their future sporting careers.

Join in the conversation on social media via @CommGamesAUS



A MESSAGE FROM

SENATOR THE HON. RICHARD COLBECK

Welcome to the 2019 AIS Sport Performance Awards.

For many of Australia's athletes, their families and supporters, coaches and high performance staff, the next seven months leading into Tokyo 2020 represents the culmination of years of training, competing and dreaming. For everyday Australians, athletes in the green and gold on the international stage play a crucial role in motivating and inspiring us to get active and involved in physical activity.

That's why 'achieving sporting excellence' is a key priority of the Federal Government's National Sport Plan, Sport 2030.

Built around the pillars of participation, performance, integrity and industry, Sport 2030 is our clear and bold vision for sport in Australia — to ensure we are the world's most active and healthy nation, known for our integrity and sporting success.

Australia's success on the international stage depends on a united and collaborative high performance sports system. Last month, I joined with Ministers of Sport from around the country to approve the historic National High Performance Sport Strategy 2024 (NHPSS). Approval of the NHPSS signals the first time all states and territories have agreed to an aligned high performance strategy and is recognition of a unified Australian system. With input from across sport led by the AIS, along with State and Territory Institutes and Academies of Sport, the NHPSS demonstrates the value of collaboration between the various governments of Australia to foster a shared approach to investment, responsibility and accountability.

This strategy builds on the close to half a billion dollar investment the Australian Government has made through the AIS over the past four years to prepare our Olympic team for Tokyo.

We continue our strong commitment to the wellbeing and personal development of athletes in areas such as mental health, engagement with communities and transition support for retiring athletes. The AIS Athlete Wellbeing and Engagement program, and 25 Wellbeing Managers embedded within NSOs, are able to provide even greater support for athletes so they are equipped to enjoy life success as they contribute to their communities and not just podium success.

One of the guiding principles of the NHPSS is the system working to develop and nurture emerging young athletes. Developing medal contenders for major international events requires long-term planning and commitment; it's an investment in our sporting future. Our Government was pleased to commit \$54.1m over two years in this year's Federal Budget to athlete pathways and wellbeing, enabling the AIS, in partnership with sports and the National Institute Network, to place a greater focus on developing talent and broadening our specialist coaching support for young athletes.

Every gold medallist starts somewhere. Our champions all kicked off their sporting careers at the grassroots level and that's why we need to keep building from the ground up. We must continue to grow the pool of talent, not only to improve our chances of success on the international stage, but to increase participation and opportunities for every Australian.

Congratulations on all you have achieved this year, and the very best wishes for Tokyo 2020 and beyond. All of Australia will be cheering you on.

The Hon. Senator Richard Colbeck
Minister for Youth and Sport



WELCOME

This marks the sixth edition of the AIS Sport Performance Awards and while the event is focused on celebrating the achievements of the past 12 months, tonight is also an opportunity to connect, to reflect and to look ahead.

This year has been one in which our high performance athletes have enjoyed significant success at benchmark events. In 2019, Australians claimed 56 gold medals at World Championships and World Cups, with a total of 256 podium finishes. The results bode well leading into next year.

In 227 days, Tokyo's lights will burn even brighter when the Olympic and Paralympic flames come to life. We know that the entire high performance system is working hard for podium success in Tokyo, but we're also focused on Beijing. And Birmingham. And Paris. And beyond.

The AIS' purpose is to build sustainable winning systems for Australian athletes. The focus is on excellence and performing when it matters most. And we are in this for the long game.

Last month we were delighted that every State and Territory Minister for Sport and the Federal Government Minister agreed on a single strategy to support high performance sport in Australia, led by the AIS. Approval of the National High Performance Sports Strategy 2024 is significant because it is – for the first time we believe – a genuinely unified approach across all of our Institutes and Academies of Sport. In simple terms, this means we can be more effective together in supporting our athletes. The NHPSS is aligned with a key goal in the Federal Government's Sport2030 plan – achieving sporting excellence – as part of the vision for national pride and inspiration through international sporting success. This is underpinned by three key criteria; podium success, a world-leading system and instilling national pride and inspiration.

The long game is not a simple game. It requires sustained investment in high performance sport and it requires focused and agile leadership. Following the rebrand of the Australian Sports Commission to Sport Australia in 2018, the ASC Board recognised earlier this year that a new operating model was required to help ensure the unique high performance needs and goals of the AIS are being met as well as the different needs and goals of Sport Australia.

A long-term approach is also about developing the gold medallists of tomorrow, and about ensuring athletes and coaches are supported during their competitive careers, and beyond. The AIS now has funded 25 Athlete Wellbeing Managers embedded in national sporting organisations – the custodians of the long game, if you like. The Athlete Wellbeing team has also been key in connecting athletes with our community in several ways, such as the AIS Lifeline Community Custodians program. The initiative has reached over 30,000 Australians, and our 21 athlete custodians have helped to raise more than \$850,000 for Lifeline. The AIS is also opening up opportunities for the voice of athletes to be amplified through several initiatives – ten diverse athlete leaders from a range of sports were last month named on the inaugural AIS Athlete Advisory Committee; Champions in Chairs brings together leaders from across the sports; and another initiative is preparing NSO Athlete Commissions to have greater impact in their sport.

Nurturing and developing emerging talent continues to be a key focus for our whole system. The AIS Athlete Pathways strategy is being rolled out following a funding boost as part of an initial \$54.1m commitment over two years in April's Federal Budget. This also includes an additional \$7m to athlete wellbeing and we thank the Commonwealth Government and Minister for Sport the Hon. Richard Colbeck for that additional funding. Our current athletes and medallists of the future need sustained support.

We look forward to gathering again in 12 months' time to celebrate what is certain to be a significant year in Australian sport. Bring on 2020.

John Wylie AM
Chair, Australian Sports Commission

Peter Conde
CEO, Australian Institute of Sport

PARTNERS

BROADCAST PARTNER



AWARD PARTNERS



1. **MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**
presented by 2XU
2. **FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR**
presented by Berlei
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THE AWARDS

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presented by A.H. Beard

MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

presented by 2XU

Tom Burton — Sailing

The Rio Olympics gold medallist remains the world's top-ranked sailor in the Laser class, winning his first Laser Men's World Championship in Japan by just four points over fellow Australian Matt Wearn after carrying a substantial lead into the final day. Burton, 29, had been runner-up at the 2014 and 2017 world titles, but was rewarded for his consistency in a variety of conditions throughout the six-day event. He was also crowned the Laser Standard Rig champion at the Oceania and Australian Laser Championships in Tasmania and placed second in the Olympic Test event in Tokyo in August.

Kyle Chalmers — Swimming

It was not the 100m freestyle gold medal Chalmers had wanted, but the Olympic champion's effort in finishing second behind American rival Caeleb Dressel in a dazzling final at the FINA World Championships in South Korea was one of the highlights of the meet, as well as an appetite-whetter for Tokyo in 2020. In the blue ribbon sprint, Dressel's time of 46.96 was the fastest ever in a textile suit, with Chalmers just 0.12 seconds behind. The South Australian also won gold in the 4x200m freestyle relay, silver in the 4x100m mixed relay and bronze in the 4x100m freestyle relay.

Rohan Dennis — Cycling

From the start to the finish line, 54km later, Dennis dominated the time trial at the Road World Championships in Yorkshire, defending his title in emphatic style. Having not raced since a premature finish to his Tour de France campaign, Dennis rode like a man with a point to prove, his time of 1:05.55 was over a minute faster than Belgium's European champion Remco Evenepoel. The 29-year-old from Adelaide was also second overall in the Tour de Suisse, and won silver in the time trial at the Australian Road Championships.

Scotty James — Snowboard

James enjoyed another exceptional snowboard season, winning every event he entered — including an unprecedented third consecutive halfpipe title at the FIS World Championships in Park City, Utah. There, if a 94.25-point first run was not outstanding enough, a massive subsequent score of 97.50 sealed the most important victory in a stellar year for the triple Olympian and 2018 Winter Games bronze medallist. A young veteran of 25, James finished the season with wins at The Dew Tour, X Games, US Grand Prix, Laax Open and the US Burton Open.

Matthew Wearn — Sailing

Wearn completed another highly successful year on the world Laser sailing circuit that included podium finishes at nearly all the major international regattas. His season included victories in the Laser Europeans in Porto and the Europa Cup in Hyeres as well as runner-up finishes at the Sailing World Cup and World Laser Championships in Japan. A member of the national sailing team since 2004, the 24-year-old has been confirmed as Australia's sole representative in the Laser Standard Class in Tokyo, where, after narrowly missing selection for Rio, Wearn will make his Olympic debut.

Aran Zalewski — Hockey

2018 was always going to be a hard act to follow for the Kookaburras' co-captain, considering it included Commonwealth Games and Champions Trophy successes, as well as the award as the Australian men's player of the year. Zalewski and his team also delivered in 2019 by winning the inaugural FIH Pro League — the new home-and-away competition for the world's leading hockey nations. The Kookaburras regained the No.1 ranking with a 3-2 win over Belgium in a thrilling final in Amsterdam, Western Australian Zalewski taking out the highest individual honour as the Pro League's best player.

FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

presented by Berlei

Kelsey-Lee Barber — Athletics

By claiming gold in the women's javelin at the 2019 World Athletics Championships in Doha, Barber became just the 9th Australian — and only javelin thrower — to win a world title since the event's first edition in 1983. In fourth place coming into the final round, the 28-year-old launched the winning throw of 66.56 metres to move into the gold medal position with three athletes to come — but none could overtake her. The achievement was the highlight of an outstanding season in which the AIS-based Barber also won the 2019 Australian and 2019 Oceania championships, both with personal best performances.

Ash Barty — Tennis

While a big year had been predicted for the supremely-talented Barty, what unfolded was truly momentous. The popular Queenslander's breakthrough French Open singles triumph was the first by an Australian woman since Margaret Court in 1973 and, two weeks later, the 23-year-old became just the nation's fifth No.1 since rankings began. Top spot was where Barty would finish 2019, too, as the first Australian woman to do so, having earned four titles, including the prestigious season-ending WTA Finals in Shenzhen, a staggering \$16.5 million in official prizemoney and worldwide acclaim.

Jessica Fox — Canoe Slalom

At only 25, Fox is already the most successful female canoe slalom paddler of all time, and in 2019 she added one team gold and two individual silver medals from the world titles in Spain to secure Australian quota spots at what will be her third Olympic Games. Fox finished second in both the C1 and K1, and combined with sister Noemie and Ros Lawrence for victory in the C1 team event, to bring her world championship medal tally to 15. At World Cup level in 2019, she added another seven medals, while defending her overall K1 and C1 crowns.

Stephanie Gilmore — Surfing

Victory in the 2019 World Surf League event in Bali was the 17th ASP contest win in the 31-year-old's remarkable career. Competing for Team Australia, Gilmore also took out the 2019 ISA World Surfing Games title in Miyazaki, Japan — thus satisfying World Championship Tour ranking requirements for provisional qualification for surfing's long-awaited debut at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Her haul of seven world titles is unsurpassed (equalled only by Layne Beachley), while her reputation for fair play and integrity ensure her continued standing as a respected role model and leader.

Hannah Green — Golf

The 22-year-old West Australian became the first Australian to win a women's golf major since Karrie Webb in 2006 — and, with Jan Stephenson, just the third ever — when she took out the LPGA Championship at Minnesota's Hazeltine National in June. Needing to save par from a bunker on the final hole, an unexpected victory was sealed by a clutch 1.5m putt for a closing 72 and nine-under total of 207. Green's previous best finish at a major was 16th; she would go on to win her second LPGA tour event in Portland in September.

Ariarne Titmus — Swimming

Undaunted by the fact that American superstar Katie Ledecky was unbeaten in middle-to-long distance freestyle events at major international meets since 2012, the Tasmanian-born Titmus completed a remarkable upset in the 400m at the FINA World Swimming Championships in South Korea. Titmus triumphed in the Commonwealth record time of 3:58.76 to become the first Australian winner of the event since Tracey Wickham in 1978. She would take home four medals from Gwangju, including a second gold as part of the women's 4x200m freestyle relay team that broke the world record.

MALE PARA-ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

presented by International Day of People with Disability

Dylan Alcott — Wheelchair tennis

At the same joyous moment Alcott became the inaugural wheelchair quad singles champion on Wimbledon's famous lawns, the high-profile Victorian held all four major quad singles titles simultaneously at his first opportunity. Having swept his fifth Australian Open title in January, then added the debut versions at Roland Garros and the All England Club, Alcott was denied a calendar grand slam and 10th career major in the US Open final by Britain's Andy Lapthorne. But what a season; one in which the world No.1 in singles swept the Australian, French, Wimbledon and US Wheelchair Quad doubles titles.

Curtis McGrath — Para-canoe

The Afghanistan war veteran hailed as the "soldier turned sporting superstar" lived up to that lofty billing in 2019 by successfully defending his KL2 200m and VL3 200m world titles at the 2019 ICF Para-canoe World Championships in Hungary. The fact that these were his ninth and 10th consecutive world titles augur well for McGrath's KL200 Olympic gold medal defence in 2020, as the 31-year-old drew the curtain on 2019 with gold in the VL3 200m and silver in the KL200m at the Olympic test event in Tokyo.

David Nicholas — Para-cycling

Whether on the road or the track, the two-time Paralympic champion again starred in 2019. Nicholas became a triple UCI Para-cycling World Championship gold medallist, claiming the men's C3 Individual Pursuit — his favourite event — and the Men's C3 Scratch Race on the track as well as the C3 Individual Time Trial title on the road in the Netherlands. The Queenslanders know as "Diesel Dave", has already tasted Paralympic success in London and Rio, and is well on target to achieve more glory at Tokyo 2020.

Grant Patterson — Para-swimming

Patterson won a silver medal in the 50m breaststroke (SB2 class) and bronze in the 150m Individual Medley (SM3 class) at the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships in London. He was also a finalist in the 200m freestyle (S3 class). A former backstroke world record-holder, the versatile athlete is seeking selection for a second Paralympics, having made his debut in London in 2012. Patterson is nicknamed "Scooter", due to the non-motorised wheels that carry him around — including to the pool edge during the competitions in which he continues to excel.

Michael Roeger — Para-athletics

The fact the London Marathon was just Roeger's second proved to be no barrier for the South Australian, who smashed the world record in the T46 class along the historic route. The event that doubled as the World Para Athletics Championship was a singular triumph for Roegers, 30, the triple-Paralympian now combining a fine track career with one that looks to be similarly promising on the road. His time in London of 2hrs 22min 51sec easily bettered the previous world record — his — set in Melbourne last October.

Ben Tudhope — Para-snowboard

Having become Australia's youngest-ever Paralympian when chosen for the 2014 Sochi Games at the age of just 14, Tudhope's last season as a teenager was his best to date. The Sydney-sider won nine World Cup medals, was awarded World Para-snowboarding's Crystal Globe for the most points won in the men's Banked Slalom over the season, and a second-placed finish in the overall Crystal Globe standings was just reward for his consistent performances throughout a year highlighted by a silver medal in the men's Snowboard Cross LL2 at the 2019 World Para Snowboard Championships in Finland.

FEMALE PARA-ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

presented by International Day of People with Disability

Paige Greco — Para-cycling

A promising track-and-field athlete before switching to cycling, Greco's decision has already been vindicated by some outstanding early results. Her major international debut, at the 2019 UCI Para-cycling Track World Championships in the Netherlands, came little more than 12 months later and, stunningly, garnered two gold medals/world records in the space of 24 hours in the C3 Individual Pursuit and Time Trial. Greco, 22, claimed another title in the women's time trial C3 at the Road World Championships in what was also the grandest of entrances. Remember the name.

Lauren Parker — Para-triathlon

A serious training accident in 2017 necessitated Parker's switch from triathlon to para-triathlon — specifically, the PTWC-class for wheelchair athletes. She has made an immediate and quite remarkable impact, building on the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games bronze medal in her new career's earliest stages with a stellar 2019 that climaxed with a gold medal performance at the 2019 ITU Para-triathlon World Championship. Other victories came in Oceania Championship and World Cup competitions, as well as a third placing in the 2019 Yokohama ITU World Para-triathlon Series.

Melissa Perrine — Para-alpine skiing

A triple Paralympian and dual medallist from Pyeongchang in 2018, Perrine partnered with sighted guide Bobbi Kelly to deliver a stand-out international season. Together, they earned 12 medals on the Para Alpine World Cup Circuit competing in the B2 visually impaired category, while finishing second on the overall Para Alpine Standings for the year. At the 2019 Para-alpine World Championships in Slovenia, they won four medals — gold in the Super Combined, silver in the Giant Slalom and Super G, and a bronze in Slalom.

Emily Petricola — Para-cycling

At the age of 39, the former English teacher is, in any language, in the prime of her late-starting career. Having not made her major international debut until 2018, Petricola's 2019 blossoming culminated with World Championship gold medals on both the track and road. At the UCI Para-cycling Track World Championships, she won the 3km C4 Individual Pursuit in world record time and placed third in the C4 Scratch Race. That was followed on the road in September by success in the Individual Road Time Trial in Belgium.

Susan Seipel — Para-canoe

A former elite swimmer and equestrian, Seipel turned to para-canoeing in her mid-twenties and continues to make her mark internationally. The 33-year-old won a pair of medals at the 2019 ICF Canoe Sprint and Para-canoe World Championships — silver in the VL2 200m and bronze in the KL2 200m kayak event. She wrapped up a successful year with another duo of podium finishes: second place in both the women's KL2 200 at the Tokyo Test Event and at the ICF Para-canoe World Cup in Poland.

Tiffany Thomas Kane — Para-swimming

At the World Para Swimming Championships, Thomas Kane shaved almost three seconds from her personal best to break the championship record in the 100m breaststroke (SB7) heats, before going on to win gold. By the end of a demanding program, the 18-year-old had also logged fifth placings in the 200m Individual Medley (SM7) and 50m Butterfly (S7), and reached the final of the 50m freestyle (S7) plus two relays. Her sights are now on Tokyo, four years after Thomas Kane won the Rio 100m breaststroke gold in Paralympic record time, along with a trio of bronze medals.

EMERGING ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

presented by Commonwealth Games Australia

Paige Greco — Para-cycling

Greco won her first selection in an Australian world championship team at the 2019 UCI Para Cycling Track World Championships in the Netherlands. She won two gold medals and set two world records in the C3 Individual Pursuit and Time Trial. She also represented Australia at the 2019 Road World Championships claiming another gold medal and a world title in the Time Trial. Based in Adelaide, Greco is currently completing a degree in Exercise and Sports Science.

Amy Lawton — Hockey

Recognition comes early, sometimes, and the national selectors had clearly identified a special talent when they chose the 17-year-old high school student to make her debut for the Hockeyroos in the Pacific leg of the FIH Pro League. Having scored a goal in that Anzac Day match in New Zealand, the VIS scholarship-holder was then selected for the Oceania Cup Olympic qualification event, and later played against Russia in Perth, where, in the opening match, Lawton continued an impressive run of scoring. Lawton is an active club member and volunteers by umpiring, serving in the canteen and running the BBQ.

Keegan Palmer — Skateboarding

Before his 17th birthday, Palmer was already Australia's highest-ranked skateboarding athlete, having finished the season as the world No.4. He placed fourth at the 2019 World Championship (Olympic discipline) and was third in the first Olympic Qualifying Event of 2019. Having demonstrated his own resilience while rehabilitating from a badly broken leg suffered in 2015, Palmer's reputation for sportsmanship was enhanced during the world championship final when he was the first to the scene when a fellow competitor was seriously injured, then remained by the athlete's side while medical treatment was administered.

Ria Thompson — Rowing

Thompson won the women's single scull title at the under-23 World Championships in Florida in July. In a perfectly-timed surge to the finish line, the Queensland-based Victorian overhauled American favourite Emily Emily Kallfelz in the final 40 metres to head a field that also included scullers from Canada, Italy, France and Bulgaria. Earlier in 2019, Thompson had captured the Australian U/23 women's single scull and quadruple scull titles. The 22-year-old has a Bachelor of Science (majoring in Neuroscience) from the University of Melbourne and is completing her Honours in Anatomy at University of Queensland.

ATHLETE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARD

Dylan Alcott — Wheelchair tennis

Alcott has used his profile to become a leading disability campaigner and activist. He has established two foundations, including the Dylan Alcott Foundation, and created the Abilities Fest music festival. Having represented his country at Paralympic level in two sports, Alcott was, in 2016, the first athlete with a disability to be awarded the Newcombe Medal that recognises Australia's most outstanding tennis player. A TV host, commentator and motivational speaker, Alcott is determined to change the perception of people with disabilities and break down barriers to inclusiveness. His autobiography is the aptly-titled *Able: gold medals, grand slams and smashing glass ceilings*.

Katie Kelly — Para-triathlon

Kelly has made an enormous contribution to communities, including as the founder and director of the Sport Access Foundation, and as a Deafsport Australia board member. Kelly has delivered pro-bono speeches to Cricket Australia's national inclusion camps and to the INAS Global Games Sports Summit. She also supports and mentors parents as well as young aspiring Paralympians through Sport Access Foundation and names the disability advocate, the late Stella Young, as one of her greatest role models, due to Young's efforts to dismantle misconceptions about people with disabilities.

Jenna O'Hea — Basketball

The late-2018 suicide of her uncle took a huge toll on O'Hea's family, but it was also the genesis of the WNBL's "Lifeline Round". In what will become an annual event, each three-point shot made by every team prompted a \$100 donation that was matched by the league. The result: over \$15,000 was donated to Lifeline Australia to assist in the training of crisis staff. Determined to raise suicide awareness and de-stigmatise mental health issues, O'Hea is also an AIS Lifeline Community Custodians program and has delivered messages about suicide prevention and mental health around Australia.

Dylan Pietsch — Rugby Sevens

Far from the adulation he receives playing rugby sevens for Australia, Pietsch has been volunteering at Ronald McDonald House in Randwick up to three days a week. This, it must be stressed, is not glamorous work; it involves scrubbing floors, emptying bins, cleaning bathrooms and walking the dog, but all with a big smile on his face. Pietsch has also supported the Waves of Wellness Foundation and volunteered for Jarred Hodges' Dream Big Time Tour where he mentored young indigenous players from remote communities as they sought Rugby Sevens contracts.

COACH OF THE YEAR

presented by Melbourne Business School

Colin Batch — Hockey

Batch guided the Australian men's team, the Kookaburras, to victory in the inaugural FIH Pro League. The team topped the ladder at the end of the home-and-away rounds and continued on to beat the top-ranked Belgians in an outstanding final in Amsterdam. The result ensured the Kookaburras would reclaim the No.1 world ranking, while they would also plunder four of the five individual awards. Batch is also a mentor to the two national assistant coaches and the men's national junior coach, providing leadership and direction to not only the national programs but the Hockey Australia talent pathway programs as well.

Michael Blackburn — Sailing

As head coach of the Laser Class for the Australian Sailing Team, Blackburn leads a squad of five athletes, including Tokyo-bound soon-to-be Olympian Matt Wearn and celebrated Rio Olympic Laser gold medallist Tom Burton. Within a small group resides vast talent, though, for both Wearn and Burton's results have been world-leading. At least one of the pair, who filled the top two placings at the 2019 world championships in a rare Australian quinella, has featured on the podium at the majority of international regattas over the past 12 months.

Tim Decker — Cycling

Following a successful stint as men's high performance track endurance coach that included the world-record-breaking team pursuit performance at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, the task of overseeing the equivalent women's program was added to Decker's duties in 2019. Since then, titles won have included a world championship (plus corresponding world record) in the men's team pursuit, along with a second gold in the scratch race. Gold, too, has come courtesy of the women's team pursuit at the titles in Poland in February-March. The Tokyo Olympics beckon.

Tom Westgarth — Rowing

Appointed to the Penrith-based Rowing Australia team in 2016, Westgarth coached Australia's Women's Four to victory at the 2019 World Championships in Austria in August, thus qualifying the boat for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and prompting his gong as Coach of the Year at the 2019 Hancock Prospecting Rower of the Year Awards. Westgarth had previously coached Australia's Women's Quadruple Sculls at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, and spent three seasons as the Head Rowing Coach at the Queensland Academy of Sport.

AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP

presented by Melbourne Business School

Lynne Anderson — Paralympics Australia

As CEO of Paralympics Australia since 2015, Anderson has led a management team that has made significant progress addressing organisational reform, including rebuilding its financial strength and consolidating its position as Australia's peak body for disability sport. Indeed, the beginning of a new era was hailed in 2019 with the rebranding of the organisation formerly known as the Australian Paralympic Committee. A passionate professional, Anderson has driven the new strategic direction which, in combination with enhanced governance, has created an environment to expedite the organisation's overall performance and results.

Layne Beachley — Surfing Australia

Since being elevated to the chair of Surfing Australia in 2015, three years after she was first elected to the board, Beachley has driven change while inspiring others as a past legend. The first former female world champion of any sport to become chair of a national sporting organisation, Beachley has provided oversight across board governance, the digital space and partnerships, high performance and participation/community programs. The seven-time world champion also demonstrated her capacity for strategic initiatives through the creation of Surfing Australia's High Performance Centre, a venture funded largely by government and corporate capital investment.

Robyn Smith — Sport Inclusion Australia

Smith has been CEO of Sport Inclusion Australia (formerly AUSRAPID) since 1991, working to assist the inclusion of people with an intellectual disability into the mainstream community using sport as the medium. She was also the chief executive of the 2019 Global Games Organising Committee for the successful INAS Global Games in Brisbane. The Games attracted more than 1,000 athletes and saw broadcast and corporate partners affirm their commitment to celebrating diversity and inclusion and bring a different perspective of sport to Australian audiences. The Games showcased the power of sport to break down barriers and stigmas around intellectual impairment.

Craig Tiley — Tennis Australia

The Tennis Australia CEO since 2013 and Australian Open tournament director for the past 14 years is recognised as an innovative and forward-thinking administrator. He has had a long-term focus on transforming the Australian Open into the players' favourite grand slam and Australia's biggest and most successful annual sporting event, while overseeing the \$900 million redevelopment of Melbourne Park. A member of the Sport Male Champions of Change group since 2015, South African-born Tiley has long been an advocate for gender equality across all levels of tennis and is committed to diversity and equal opportunity.

SERVICE TO SPORT AWARD

Tim Oberg

Oberg has been the CEO of Parkrun Australia since 2011, bringing the largest running movement in the world to Australian shores. Fast-forward to 2019 and Oberg has worked to establish 378 free timed 5km events each week across the country with more than 600,000 registered runners. He has recently taken on the new challenge of Strategic Director — Asia Pacific for Parkrun International to help ensure that parkrun is available to every community that wants to be involved. He is passionate about promoting healthy lifestyles, improving social cohesion in local communities and getting the nation moving — and Parkrun checks all the boxes. Parkrun is 100% run by volunteers and encourages participants of all ages and abilities to run, walk or jog every week without any financial commitment.

Robyn Smith

Smith has been CEO of Sport Inclusion Australia (formerly AUSRAPID) since 1991, working to assist the inclusion of people with an intellectual disability into the mainstream community using sport as the medium. In 2019, Smith also took on the role of chief executive of the 2019 Global Games Organising Committee for the successful INAS Global Games in Brisbane. Smith's drive and ability to deliver assisted the games to attract more than 1,000 athletes and saw broadcast and corporate partners affirm their commitment to celebrating diversity and inclusion and bring a different perspective of sport to Australian audiences. The Games showcased the power of sport to break down barriers and stigmas around intellectual impairment.

SPORT AUSTRALIA AWARD

presented by Nestlé

First introduced in 2018, the Sport Australia Award recognises the value of fair play and integrity in connection with a sporting endeavour. The award acknowledges athletes, coaches, support staff or industry figures who have demonstrated the spirit of sport during the previous 12 months, and highlights the inspiring impact sporting role models can have on all Australians.

TEAM OF THE YEAR

presented by AthletesVoice

Men's Team Pursuit — Cycling

Australia has a celebrated history in the event in which Leigh Howard, Kelland O'Brien, Samuel Welsford and Alex Porter smashed their own world record by nearly two seconds on the way to reclaiming the rainbow jersey at the 2019 UCI Track World Championships in Poland, after Cameron Scott helped to secure the team's place in the final. The winning time of 3:48.012 easily eclipsed that set by the Australians at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, which had in turn topped the previous world record set by Great Britain — beaten into second place this time — at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Australian Kookaburras — Hockey

The Kookaburras won the inaugural FIH Pro League, finishing first at the end of the home-and-away season before defeating world No.1 Belgium 3-2 in the final. The team regained the number one world ranking at end of the FIH Pro League and scooped the individual awards, winning four of the five on offer — best player of the Pro League (Aran Zalewski), top scorer (Blake Govers), best player in the final (Jacob Whetton) and best goalkeeper in the final (Tyler Lovell).

Australian Women's Four — Rowing

Under the guidance of coach Tom Westgarth, the team comprising Lucy Stephan, Katrina Werry, Sarah Hawe and Olympia Aldersey was crowned 2019 World Rowing Champion at the prestigious regatta in Austria in July, thus regaining the world title after a silver medal-winning performance in 2018. By making the A-Final the Australians also qualified the boat berth for next year's Tokyo Olympics. Elsewhere, the quartet claimed gold at World Rowing Cup 3, bronze at World Rowing Cup 2 and their strong performances helped Australia to win its first ever World Rowing Cup title.

Mat Belcher and Will Ryan — Sailing

Belcher and Ryan continued to re-write the history books with another dominant year in the 470 Class to maintain their world No.1 ranking. At the 2019 Open 470 World Championship in Japan, Mat notched his eighth world title and Will his fifth in what was the pair's fifth crown as a team — the most ever in the 470 class. The Rio Olympics silver medallists were pre-selected in the team for Tokyo 2020, and are now happily well-acquainted with the waters of Enoshima, which will host the Olympic events next July.

HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAM OF THE YEAR

presented by Elastoplast

Australian Hockey Program — Hockey Australia

The Kookaburras re-claimed the No.1 world ranking after winning the inaugural FIH Pro League Champions title, with the finals victory against the top-seeded Belgium the last of the Kookaburras' 12 victories from 16 matches, both at home and away. The Hockeyroos, too, featured on finals day in the new international teams competition, finishing runners-up to the Netherlands. The 4-3 result in a penalty shootout came after scores were tied at full-time.

Australian Rowing Program — Rowing Australia

Australia won 15 gold, 13 silver and nine bronze medals during the 2019 season, including world championship-winning performances from Lucy Stephan, Katrina Werry, Sarah Hawe and Olympia Aldersey in the Women's Four in Austria, and from Kathryn Ross, who returned from a post-Rio break to win the Para PR2 Women's Single sculls on the same course in August. Australia's overall performances at the two 2019 World Cups delivered the coveted 2019 World Rowing Cup for the first time.

Australian Surfing Program — Surfing Australia

Stephanie Gilmore won the 2018 women's world title (decided in December 2018) and Julian Wilson finished runner-up in the corresponding men's event. With surfers ranked among the top 10 in both World Surf Leagues, Team Australia enjoyed collective success by winning the ISA Aloha Cup gold medal at the 2019 ISA World Surfing Games in Japan, and is certain to field a strong team when the sport makes its Olympic debut in Tokyo in 2020.

Australian Para-table tennis Program — Table Tennis Australia

Australia won 17 gold, five silver and 10 bronze medals across four international Para events in 2019. Rio Paralympics silver medallist Samuel von Einem (class 11 singles), was undefeated while winning gold in the Japan Para Open and the 2019 Global Games, while women's star Melissa Tapper has the unique distinction of being the first Australian athlete to be selected to compete in both the Paralympic Games and Olympic Games. Tapper is currently ranked No.2 in women's class 10 singles, just ahead of compatriot Qian Yang.

THE ABC SPORT PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR



presented by ABC

Dylan Alcott — Wheelchair tennis

It had long been Dylan Alcott's dream for quad Wheelchair Tennis to be granted full-event status at Wimbledon and, in July, the tireless disability campaigner and inclusion warrior became the first champion at the All England Club. Alcott, 28, had already won the Australian and French Opens to become the first player to simultaneously hold all four quad singles majors and bring his career tally to nine, even if a US Open finals loss would deny him an historic calendar-year grand slam.

Ash Barty — Tennis

While a big year had been predicted for Barty, this was truly momentous. The Queenslander's breakthrough French Open singles triumph was the first by an Australian woman since Margaret Court in 1973; two weeks later the 23-year-old became the world No.1, joining a national honour roll completed by Evonne Goolagong Cawley, John Newcombe, Pat Rafter and Lleyton Hewitt. All of this just three years after Barty's return to tennis. All of it, too while winning admiration for her sportsmanship, grace and humility, as well as her exceptional all-court game.

Caleb Ewan — Cycling

Almost halfway through his Tour de France debut, Ewan was feeling the pressure. As the winner of four stages in previous Grand Tour races, the diminutive Sydneysider knew he had been hired by Belgian team Lotto Soul to do likewise at the most prestigious of all. Ewan responded by claiming the 11th and 16th stages as well as the famous finale in Paris on the Champs-Élysées, while the unassuming 25-year-old also fell just short of claiming the coveted sprinters' green jersey.

Sally Fitzgibbons — Surfing

Fitzgibbons has seemed destined for world championship success since winning multiple world junior titles and bursting into senior ranks with a trio of second places from 2010-2012. This year started exceptionally, with the Rio Pro crown among four podium finishes and the No.1 spot hers at the World Surf League's half-way point. Ahead of the final two contests in Portugal and Hawaii, the athletic 28-year-old remains strongly in contention to finally succeed countrywoman Steph Gilmore on the podium's top step.

Nat Fyfe — Australian Rules Football

Motivated by questions over his ability to return to his “absolute best” after multiple injuries — including two leg fractures — Fyfe’s is not just a story of resilience and brilliance but of numbers. With 33 votes, the 2015 Brownlow Medallist became the 15th multiple recipient in VFL/AFL history. Having logged a 17th surgery following a 20-game season in which the 13th-placed Dockers won just nine times, Fyfe is now one of only two players with more career Brownlow votes than games.

Hannah Green — Golf

Remarkably, the West Australian’s first victory on the USLPGA tour was a major: the Women’s PGA Championship at Hazeltine. Green, 22 became the third wire-to-wire winner, joining Karrie Webb and Jan Stephenson as Australia’s female major champions. Her final-round 72 featured a clutch save from a greenside bunker on the 72nd hole; a nine-under total of 207 enough to win by one shot from defending champion Sung Hyun Park. Her hero Webb was nearby, the baton seemingly safely passed, and a rankings jump from 114th to a career-best 29th ensued.

Scotty James — Snowboard

Another world championships year, an unprecedented third consecutive halfpipe title for the champion snowboarder. The ultimate Olympic glory may have so far eluded the Australian flag-bearer and bronze medallist from Pyeongchang in 2018, but his big-event consistency is unquestioned. The latest gold, in Utah, was effectively secured on his 94.25-point first run, and cemented by a monster subsequent score of 97.50. James’ exceptional season included a gold medal in the X Games and championships across Europe and North America.

Patty Mills — Basketball

If Mills’ successful eight-year career with the San Antonio Spurs counts as the most lucrative and prominent of his multiple hats worn, then 2019 was also about the Boomers. After starring in the historic defeat of Team USA in Melbourne, Mills was surprisingly overlooked for the All-Star five at the subsequent FIBA World Cup, despite being the tournament’s second highest scorer — by one point — with an average of 22.9 ppg, including a competition-high 34 points in the semi against Spain.

Ellyse Perry — Cricket

Having recorded an Australian women’s record score of 213 not out in last year’s inaugural day-night Sydney Ashes Test, Perry’s dominance of England continued on UK soil. The women’s Ashes player-of-the-series was the leading scorer (378 runs at 94.50, including 116 and 76 not out in the only Test) and wicket-taker (with 15, including 7-22 in the third ODI). The all-rounder also became the first woman to achieve the Twenty20 double of 1000 runs and 100 wickets.

Steve Smith — Cricket

A hostile sandpaper-waving Birmingham crowd was the backdrop to Smith’s emotional Test return after a 12-month ball tampering ban; what followed was one of the great individual Ashes series. After a 496-day absence, Smith plundered 144 and 142 in a crushing first Test win that laid the foundations for Australia’s Ashes retention. Despite missing the third Test with concussion, Smith’s dominance was such that he scored 35.5% of his team’s runs: 774 from seven innings at the astonishing average of 110.57, including one double-century, to break his own record for the most runs in a Test series by any player this century.

James Tedesco — Rugby League

Tedesco’s stunning season ticked all boxes. On top of consecutive titles in his first two years with the Sydney Roosters, including scoring the winning try in the 72nd minute against the Raiders, the talismanic fullback secured a first Dally M Medal with a 34-vote tally the highest since Johnathan Thurston’s in 2007. The NSW State of Origin star also claimed the Wally Lewis Medal for the best player in the 2019 series.

Ariarne Titmus — Swimming

Legendary American Katie Ledecky had been unbeatable in the middle-to-long distance freestyle events at major international meets since 2012. Until, at the World Swimming Championships in South Korea, Titmus completed an extraordinary upset in the 400m, beating Ledecky in the Commonwealth record time of 3:58.76. The Tasmanian-born teenager would leave Gwangju with another three medals, including anchoring the women’s 4x200m freestyle relay team to a world record. Tokyo 2020 beckons.

SPORTING MOMENT OF THE YEAR

presented by A.H. Beard



Ash Barty's Double Triumph

With clay her least favoured surface, the French Open was never Barty's preferred major, yet the world No.8 progressed irresistibly through a wide-open draw to become Australia's first singles champion at Roland Garros in 46 years. In her maiden grand slam singles final, the Queenslander dominated unseeded Czech teenager Marketa Vondrousova 6-1, 6-3. A fortnight later, on grass in Birmingham, another Barty Party would celebrate the crowning of the new world No.1.

Ashes glory in England (men)

The series may have been drawn 2-2 but, with a dramatic last-session victory in the fourth Test at Old Trafford, the famous Ashes urn was retained on English soil for the first time in 18 years. As captain Tim Paine set the example, the insatiable Steve Smith set the standard, starting with that crucial first innings 144 at Edgbaston and ending with 774 runs at 110.57. Leading wicket-taker Pat Cummins was another to enhance his reputation as, gradually, Australia's is restored.

Ashes glory in England (women)

A multi-format points system decides the Women's Ashes, and a rather anti-climactic Test draw ensured they would remain in Australian hands. Yet an emphatic overall 12-4 series result was the most decisive of the five since the current system was introduced. Highlights included the 93-run T20 thrashing of England at Chelmsford that featured captain Meg Lanning's record 133 not out off 63 balls, with all-rounder Ellyse Perry both the leading run-scorer and wicket-taker.

Australian Boomers beat team USA

An exhibition game? Ah, details, details. What mattered to the Boomers on the historic August afternoon in Melbourne was a scoreboard showing Australia 98, Team USA 94. An occasion witnessed by a record local basketball crowd of 52,079 was the hosts' first over the superpower that had not lost in a major tournament or exhibition since 2006. While the Boomers' long quest for a World Cup/Olympic medal would subsequently fall just short in China, those who walked tall against Team USA included Patty Mills, Joe Ingles and Andrew Bogut.

Hannah Green's major moment

Karrie Webb and Jan Stephenson were the only to major-winning Australian woman in golf history as Hannah Green stood over the 1.5 metre putt that would deliver a surprise Women's PGA Championship at Minnesota's Hazeltine National. Needing to save par from a bunker on the final hole, Green's closing 72 for a nine-under total of 207 was enough to seal a maiden victory on the LPGA Tour and better her previous best major finish of equal 16th.

Kelsey-Lee Barber, World Javelin Champion

It was a clutch throw. It was also Barber's last. As the javelin sailed 66.65 metres in the world championship final in Doha, the Australian who had barely scraped into the top 12 was catapulted from fourth place to first — the gold medal soon to be hers. At 28, Barber is the ninth Australian to win a world athletics title and just the second — after former discus star Dani Samuels — to do so in a throwing event.

Kookaburras win Pro League

The inaugural FIH Pro League title for national men's hockey teams was a triumph for the Kookaburras before a capacity crowd at Amsterdam's Wagener Stadium in June. The climax of a round-robin competition played home-and-away over six months by nine countries was Australia's 3-2 defeat of Belgium in a thrilling final that regained the FIH world No.1 ranking for Colin Batch's squad and carried the nine-time Olympic medallists a step closer to qualification for Tokyo 2020.

Marlion Pickett's fairytale AFL debut

It had been 52 years since a player had debuted in a VFL/AFL grand final, and another half-century may pass before we see a repeat of Pickett's unlikely tale. If it hadn't just happened it would be scarcely believable: a 27-year-old father-of-four going from jail time as a teenager in WA to the big-time on the MCG. New Tiger Pickett starred — finishing third in the Norm Smith Medal with 22 possessions, nine score involvements, eight inside-50s, a stunning blind turn and one memorable goal.

Matildas' World Cup comeback for the ages

Two-nil down just before half-time is not the place to be in a crucial World Cup game — and certainly not against football powerhouse Brazil, who had not conceded even one goal in group play in the four previous Women's World Cups. But Caitlin Foord scored just prior to the break, and a long-range Chloe Logarzo strike levelled things after it, before a 3-2 victory came via a controversial own goal. Only once before had a team retrieved a two goal deficit to win a World Cup match; the sequel was worth the 24-year wait.

Michael Roeger wins London Marathon

Rarely does an athlete who has completed just one marathon break the world record in the second, but so it was at the London Marathon. The event that doubled as the World Para Athletics Championship was a singular triumph for Michael Roeger, 30, the triple-Paralympian now combining a fine track career with the brilliant beginnings of one on the road. His time of 2:22:51 bettered by 40 seconds his own world record (set in Melbourne last October) in the T46 class.

NSW Swifts win maiden Super Netball title

The NSW Swifts had not qualified for the first two years of Super Netball finals, nor won a championship since the old trans-Tasman league days in 2008. They had lost top spot late in the season to the surging Sunshine Coast Lightning, having suffered multiple injury losses, then a heavy semi-final defeat. They came to play when it mattered, though, eliminating the Melbourne Vixens before crushing the Lightning 64-47 in the decider in Brisbane. Shooter Sam Wallace was named MVP.

Rare swimming double at the World Championships

If the theory holds that the 4x200m freestyle relay is a barometer of a nation's swimming depth, then Australia's stocks are buoyant. At the world championships in Gwangju, South Korea, the Dolphins completed the double for the first time — Ariarne Titmus, Madison Wilson, Brianne Throssell and Emma McKeon breaking a 10-year-old world record set by China in the controversial supersuit era, before Clyde Lewis, Kyle Chalmers, Alex Graham and Mack Horton also won gold.

Roosters win consecutive NRL Premiership

The scenario: the Sydney Roosters were seeking to become the first team to win back-to-back titles since 1993; the Canberra Raiders's last flag was in 1994. The result: a thrilling 14-8 Roosters' win that was unfortunately overshadowed by the "six again" refereeing controversy. Still, like the decision, the facts stand: one try, was the difference in a riveting contest in which Raider Jack Wighton won the Clive Churchill Medal, and retiring Rooster Cooper Cronk was sent off in style.

Sailing World Champions — again

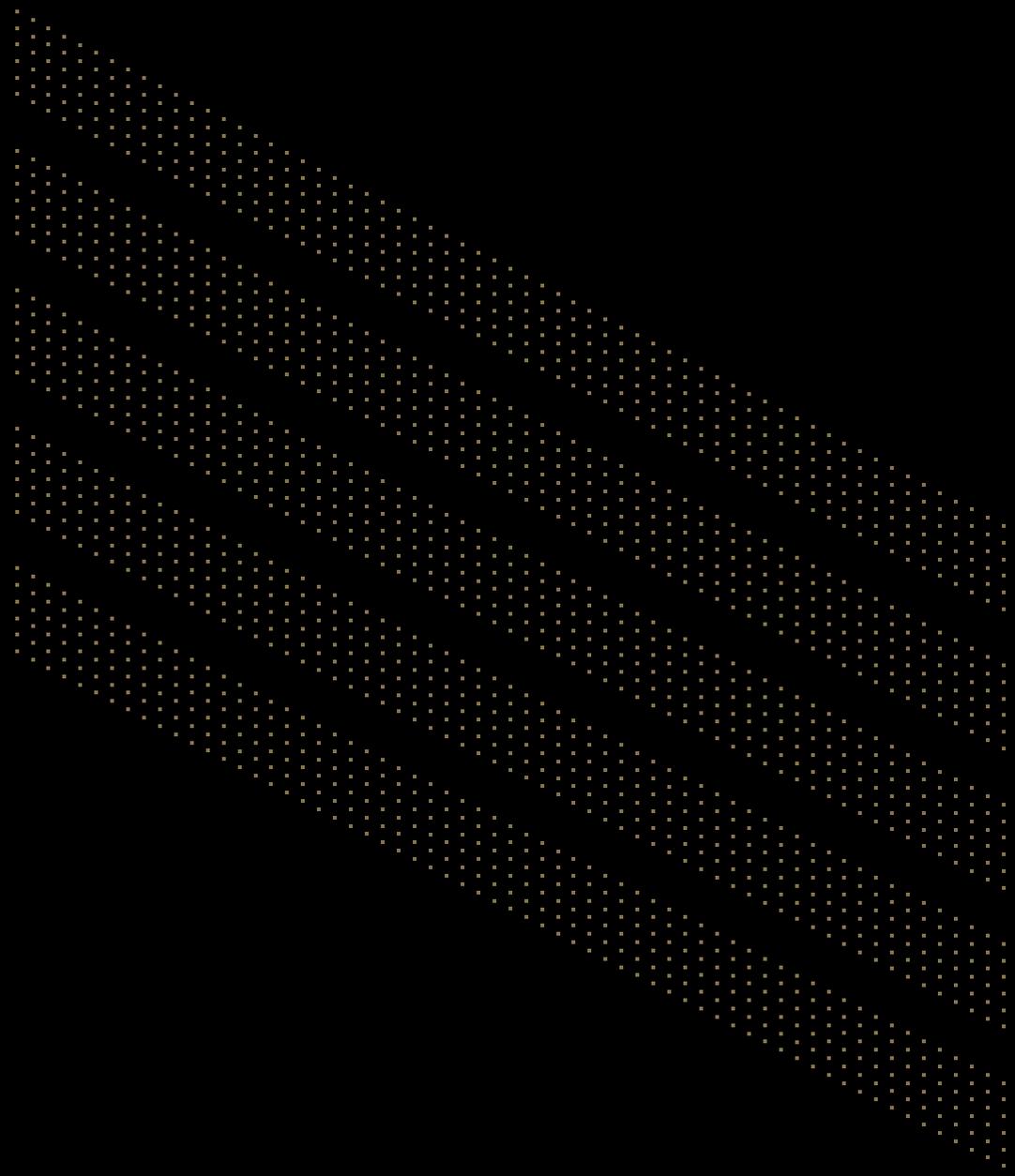
Rio Olympics silver medallists Mat Belcher and Will Ryan were already the reigning men's 470 world champions when 2019 began. By the time it finished, they had defended their title amid five successive international victories — several on the waters of Enoshima, which will host the sailing events at the Tokyo games next July. Having punched an early selection ticket, Belcher's third Olympics will be his second with Ryan as crew. Watch this space.

Three more majors for Dylan Alcott

Moment? Which moment? Alcott had three. What started with a fifth Australian Open quad singles title on his home court continued at Roland Garros and Wimbledon, where the event's debut produced an identical result. Holding all four of the game's major titles as he chased a third US Open crown, the 28-year-old was upstaged by Britain's Andy Lapthorne to be oh-so-narrowly denied a calendar grand slam. Still, one suspects Alcott's first chance will not be his last.







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