

QUARTER BY QUARTER



**GLEN
QUARTERMAIN**
VETERAN
SPORTS
WRITER

BROOKE'S ROAD TO RECOVERY

Every kilometre mental health advocate Brooke McIntosh takes on her journey as an ultra-distance runner is a reminder of a second chance at life. Of why she is here.

In 2022, McIntosh made the decision to end her own life.

A FIFO worker driving trucks at a Pilbara mine site on a four-week on, one-week off swing, she was stuck in a cycle of anxiety and depression.

"My depression was at an all-time high from February up until August. Every time I was going to site the anxiety was eating away at me," McIntosh, 28, said. "I was talking with a lot of the guys on site and it was a massive issue."

McIntosh said over 200 people a year are lost to suicide on site in the mining and construction industry and "we lost 322 young adolescents in 2021 and that doesn't sit right with me at all".

During her swing weeks off, McIntosh would speak to groups about mental health and mind-set, despite her always present black dog.

Then came the accident.

McIntosh was in a mental fog driving south down the Mitchell Freeway on her way to a presentation. It wasn't part of her plan. It just happened. And everything flipped.

"I was driving down the freeway saying to myself 'How can I present a talk about confidence when I am not even confident in myself?'" she said. "That week leading up, I was planning to take my own life and had the exit strategy that I would take to make it look like an accident."

She missed her freeway exit and then "looked left to make sure I was clear to go".

"And then I forgot to look right and I smashed into a concrete bollard going at 100km an hour. Then a triple semi-trailer smashed into me. I was banged up, double-hit, double whammy. That was the point where my life flashed before my eyes," she said.

"As soon as I jumped out of my car, I rushed over to the truck

driver and asked 'Are you OK?' I rushed over to other people involved in the accident and asked if they were OK. They were but that was the point where I realised I had been putting everyone else before me. Everyone else before my own mental health. Thankfully everyone else was all right, but that day in the hospital bed I thought to myself 'What are you doing?' That's when I realised I didn't want to die, I just wanted to find myself.

"That's where I made a commitment, to seek help around

the mental challenges I was facing, around my anxiety, my depression. That was my biggest wake-up call. I thought 'This is your second chance at life, what do you want to do with it?'"

What McIntosh "did with it" was extraordinary. When she was a teenager, running was McIntosh's "escape". "It made me feel so free when I started running," she said.

So she started running again. 5km at first. 8km. She started stretching it out. Then she got serious. Got a running coach and

quit her job. In August 2023, a year and two days after her accident, McIntosh embarked on a 1600km run from Dampier to Perth to raise awareness and money for 20Talk and the Blue Tree Project with a focus on youth and regional mental health: an average of 60-70km a day.

She ran through communities and passing mine sites on the way, sharing her story on social media and encouraging those suffering to seek help and start the conversations.

It took her 27 days, running through the extreme Pilbara heat and at one stage with a bout of food poisoning courtesy of a dodgy Thai meal. She raised \$74,000.

"I was running along the north-west coastal highway, but I was traumatised by the big trucks because of my accident, but for me it was also a massive moment of facing my fears head on. Because I had literally been hit by one," she said.

"By day three I had faced my fears with the truckies and was actually making best friends with them. I had a walkie-talkie and was talking to them on the two-way and they would give me words of encouragement and they would pass it down the chain as well. At the finish line in City Beach there was a few truckies there waiting for me."

Next Sunday, McIntosh spreads the message east in Victoria's Great Ocean Road Running Festival's 60km ultra marathon from Lorne to Apollo Bay.

"My goal this year is to run a marathon in each State. Although the Great Ocean Road run is more than a marathon, but I want to push myself," she said.

She will be raising awareness and money for the Blue Tree Project.

"My biggest message is it is not weak to ask for help," she said.

www.brookemcintosh.com.au
Lifeline 13 11 14
www.lifeline.org.au



NAUGHTY CORNER (Inspired by Nick Kyrgios)

All those AFL fans who are confused about the holding the ball rule put your hands up.

Actually, don't, because the umpire won't blow his whistle anyway.

Geelong coach Chris Scott had good reason to question the controversial manner in which umpires are interpreting holding the ball this season in the wake of the Cats' shock six-point loss to Port Adelaide at GMHBA Stadium on Friday night.

A decision to not pay advantage to the Cats in the dying minutes left the premiership coach frustrated.

And he raised a good point. The umpires are giving players an inordinate amount of time to get rid of the ball when they are tackled.

In many cases they are spun around after they have been given prior opportunity.

Is it because the AFL wants to reduce the amount of stoppage?

"Players are really clear that they've got to be careful taking a player to ground in a tackle and at the moment you can be spun 360 (degrees) and still get time to get rid of the ball after having prior opportunity," Scott said.

FIRST QUARTER

Margaret River's Jack Robinson, currently number 2 on the World Surf League rankings, is headed to the Olympics.

Robinson will make his Games debut, alongside Ethan Ewing, while Tyler Wright and Molly Picklum will surf for Australia in the women's.

They secured their place by finishing in the top five of the WSL season rankings for 2023.

The surfing event of the Paris Olympic Games will take place at the Teahupo'o break in Tahiti.

SECOND QUARTER

West Australians Zoe Arancini and Genevieve Longman are among the 13-strong Stingers women's water polo team for the Olympic Games.

Arancini will captain the team at her third Games.

The Stingers, who are coached by Olympic bronze medalist Bec Rippon, finished fifth at Tokyo 2020 and were fourth at last year's world championships.

THIRD QUARTER

Two WA teens, Hannah Slyth and Daniel Marsh, have been selected in the Australian squash team for the world junior championships later this year in Houston, Texas.

Slyth is contesting the tournament for the third straight year having also competed in France in 2022.

The world junior titles will be held from July 12-23.

FOURTH QUARTER

A Vasily Lomachenko-George Kambosos "stare off" at Thursday's press conference ahead of their IBF world lightweight title fight at RAC Arena today officially lasted three minutes and 26 seconds.

That's a long time to be in the face of someone you are about to trade blows with over 12 three-minute rounds.

The conference had its lighter moments though, such as Ukraine three-division world champion Lomachenko describing his first encounter with a koala.

"It is like cat with a dog," he said.

Kambosos was not interested in cuddling an arboreal marsupial.

"I've not thought about koalas.

I've never held a koala in my life and I'm Australian," he said.



Brooke McIntosh on her Dampier to Perth run to raise awareness for mental health and inset, in hospital and the remains of her car. Pictures: Brooke McIntosh, RaceAtlas