Wendy Braybon

Physio therapy is huge for athletes, we’re very involved with not only treating injuries that might occur, so we’ll very commonly have acute injuries that occur like when someone sprains an ankle or tears a muscle, then physiotherapy is involved in that treatment but we’re also very involved in over use injuries as well, so when athletes are training at such a high level they’re really balancing on a fine line between staying really fit and just tipping over that line to that they start to have some problems and therefore their ongoing management and treatment is really important to help them stay at that very top level.

I treat a lot of different Olympic sports and different athletes, and therefore get to know them very well so you become a big support person as well and therefor you get to know their strengths and their weaknesses and we’re just there in that supportive role to help them. Often their strengths are the things that can get them through and that is why they become an Olympian it is that determination and strength that take them just above your other elite athletes but also that can push them a bit too hard and they start to get some injuries because of that. So it’s helping them find the balance when to push through and ignore things that could become a problem, and when yo really respect that injury and say “ no, I really need to back off a little at the moment. I need some help in treating this so that I can then become stronger to push on again.”

I’m very lucky, I’m a fifth Olympic physio, five times I will have been to the olymnpics. And I’ve worked at the elite level in sport with many different athletes for many, many years. I’ve also done a postgraduate qualification in sports physiotherapy and in muscular skeletal physiotherapy and then two years ago became a specialist physiotherapist as well.

I’ve got a lot of experience in a lot of different areas, and I love teaching and helping others to just climb the physiotherapy ladder really and there are many young physios who’d love to be doing what I do, and I really enjoy helping them to get towards that goal so that they too can become Olympians at some stage. The sports postgraduate masters course in many different areas but particularly sports physiotherapy at La Trobe helps those physiotherapists become titled sports physiotherapists and only then are they qualified to go to an Olympic games.

Every Olympic games has been so exciting. I love working as a team, I love working with everyone else I’m with. People say “I’m I nervous about going?” I know I’ve got a fantastic team of physiotherapists working alongside me, I know we can achieve anything we have to achieve at this games and it won’t be me doing it, it will be the whole team doing it and I’m lucky enough to be the person leading that team.

What is so interesting is that it’s like a family, and they talk about the Olympic family and you go to the Olympics and everyone is welcoming, everyone is pleased to have you there, you’re so much part of a team and for any physiotherapist wanting to do sports physio I would say that is the most exciting thing for me. I’m more passionate about what I do today than I ever have, it’s never ho-hum it’s never why am I still doing this, if I wasn’t as excited as I am I wouldn’t be there and the only way to be there is to be really passionate about what you do, or you’re not helping the athletes you’re not helping anyone else. But I go home each night thinking what a great day that was, how lucky am I?