

AMAZING GIR ACE

Grace Musgrove is tipped to be the new poster girl for Australian triathlon – and hot property in the sport in the lead-up to the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Photography by **Michael Leadbetter**



Those who recognise marketable talent as it flashes past are predicting Grace Musgrove – a 20-year-old tyro with ability, youth and good looks on her side – will be the face to watch in triathlon in the run-up to the Rio Olympics in 2016.

Musgrove, from Wollongong, NSW, announced her credentials with victory in the Australian sprint-distance championships (750m swim, 20km bike and 5km run) in Geelong on February 10. Eleven seconds behind visiting New Zealand ace Sophie Corbidge at the tape, Musgrove was crowned national champion as the first Aussie to cross the line. She continued the streak with two more podium finishes in March – grabbing third at the Oceania Championships in New Zealand, then winning the big Mooloolaba Triathlon on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

Although this is only her second year in triathlon, Musgrove's sports prowess as a teenager has served her well – as a Year 12 student she was the Australian under-20 cross-country champion in 2010, and also competed for NSW at the Australian

open water swimming titles in the 5km (from 2007 to 2010) and 10km events (2009).

Discovered while still at school by Triathlon Australia National High Performance coach Jamie Turner at the 2010 Australia Day Aquathlon in Wollongong, Musgrove went on to study Medical and Health Science at university for a year before deciding to step away from the books and devote herself to triathlon. She now trains with Turner as a member of a talented young NSW squad that includes Natalie Van Coevorden, Tamsyn Moana-Veale, Ashlee Bailie and Charlotte McShane.

In her new sport, Musgrove is bursting to follow in the footsteps of big guns of Australian women's triathlon – Emma Snowsill, Erin Densham and Emma Moffatt – and put herself on a trajectory to make the Australian team for the 2016 Games.

Coach Turner sees a bright future for his charge and believes she has the right stuff to put herself in the frame for Olympic selection. "The Olympics are definitely on the horizon for Grace," says Turner. "She's fortunate that she's come on board [triathlon]

● The new golden girl of Australian triathlon is setting herself on a trajectory for the 2016 Olympic Games.



● Grace heads for the finish line – and the 2013 Australian sprint-distance title – at the Geelong Triathlon in Victoria in February.

with the business end of the race – the run – being her strength. On the bike she has some development ahead of her, but being given constant exposure to competition, and to a strong daily performance environment with athletes that rival her, will all combine to give her the ability to perform on race day. Grace's accelerated rate of development would lead us to believe there's a lot more to come."

Triathlon Australia's National Performance Director Bernard Savage is another keeping a keen eye on Musgrove's progress. "It's sometimes hard to believe Grace has been doing triathlon seriously for only 12 months," he says. "She has obviously come into the sport with fantastic talent. Her development is being well managed by Jamie and the Triathlon Australia National Talent Academy program and I'm sure we'll see her pushing up the ranks and getting more podium finishes in the not too distant future."

MF decided to ask Grace some not-very-hard questions.

● **What have you learned so far about the sport – and yourself?**

To get the best out of yourself you need to find what works for you – which might be very different to what works for your competitors. About myself, I've learned I don't like doing anything half-heartedly, which is why I decided to put aside my uni studies and focus solely on triathlon.

● **The bike discipline is new to you – how are you improving your abilities there?**

Most people told me the bike was the

easiest of the three to pick up, which I doubted in the first few months, as I struggled in training and in some races. Having said that, my bike skills and strength have improved out of sight in the past 12 months, which I'm putting down to excellent coaching – and hard work, of course!

● **What has being part of Jamie Turner's squad meant to you?**

All the athletes in the squad have strengths and weaknesses and we use each other to improve. Jamie ensures our training environment is of the highest standard, setting us up to exceed the demands of competition at each race. As a group, we all get along extremely well – constantly working hard, yet having fun at the right times to balance out everything. Jamie has a wealth of knowledge and constantly does everything in our best interests.

● **Who do you admire in the sport?**

We're lucky enough to have a high-calibre athlete such as Erin Densham [bronze medal winner at the London Olympics in 2012] based with us in Spain at times during the European season, which allows us to see how the best in the world approach daily life – I admire her focus and determination. Outside of triathlon, I admire Sally Fitzgibbons [world-ranked Australian surfer]. I was lucky enough to do a bit of run training with her before I started triathlon – all athletes could learn from her down-to-earth attitude.

● **Got a food you can't go past?**

I know chocolate is a common answer, but for a fun fact, I haven't eaten any since January 1, 2008.



"Somehow my training partners came up with the nickname 'Migga G' for me, which became my Twitter user name too. I'm not 100 percent sure why I'm called that but it caught on pretty fast."

My brother stopped eating it for a year in 2007 and I wanted to outdo him, so decided to go for two years. Since then I've never really craved it. My favourite foods are breakfast ones: muesli, yogurt and fruit. And the night before a race I'll always try to seek out a nice pizza, which proves pretty easy in most countries.

● **How would you like to celebrate your 21st birthday in June?**

I'll be in Vitoria-Gasteiz in the Basque country in Spain with our training squad, so I'm looking forward to a surprise dinner or celebration (though I haven't actually told them they need to organise one yet). My parents will also be coming to Europe a few days after my birthday, so maybe they can organise a surprise for me too! 🍷

Tri training Three of Grace Musgrove's favourite triathlon-training sessions.

THE SWIM

● "My favourite session would have to be a heart-rate set, which involves 1500-2500 metres of swimming your best average time for the distance with about 20 seconds' rest per 100 metres."

THE BIKE

● "I have a love/hate relationship with motor pacing, where we sit behind Jamie's motorbike, riding at high speed with various accelerations throughout. It's usually at Lake Illawarra [near Wollongong]. I've yet to complete a motor-pacing session I'm happy with, but when I do I'll know my bike strength has improved."

THE RUN

● "Coming from a running background, and running being my favourite of the three legs in triathlon, I tend to enjoy most run sessions. 1km or 2km reps are always fun (when you're feeling good!) and are a great way to pinpoint your running fitness."



Grace is making giant gains on the bike.

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