

Alison focuses on a bright future

Alison Jones had a promising future ahead of her as a member of the Australian women's cricket squad when an industrial accident in March 2014 robbed her of the one thing she never imagined – her eyesight.

Her world turned upside down as she struggled to come to terms with being blind.

“The biggest challenge for me was the loss of independence,” says the 21-year-old from the Western Downs town of St George.

“I didn't want to sit in the corner of a room. You learn a lot of things in hospital as part of the rehabilitation process, but when things get tough you can always ring that buzzer and the nurse comes. That doesn't happen in the real world.

“I was in a pretty dark place.”

A physiotherapist at Brisbane's Princess Alexandra Hospital knew about Alison's sporting background and suggested a visit to Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association's fitness and rehabilitation centre, The Gym, at Bowen Hills.

“After almost two years in hospital, I'd lost all my muscle tone and fitness. I couldn't walk without getting tired and if I stumbled, I didn't have the strength to save myself from falling,” she says.

“That first personal training session, everyone welcomed me with open arms. I didn't feel like I was being treated any differently and people were having a laugh, paying out on each other. It brought something back – that spark for life.”

Alison met with the Association's LinkUp adviser to find out more about her options for getting active. Gym staff alerted the Association's goalball development coordinator, Robyn Stephensen, that a talented sportswoman with vision impairment was regularly visiting the gym and she swung into action!



“Rob introduced herself and told me about this sport for people with vision impairment and suggested I give it a go. I wasn't sure if I was ready to get back into sport but I rocked up, played my first social game and absolutely loved it.”

Within a few months, a “nervous but excited” Alison played in her first state goalball championships and discovered she had the same old drive to compete and improve. With the support of coaches and senior players, her game developed to the point where she was named in the Queensland women's team for the 2016 Goalball Australia National Championships.

Despite a hip injury late in the national tournament, Alison was stunned to be named in the Women's All Star Team.

“I was overwhelmed by well-wishes from everyone, and not just the Queenslanders. My team-mates were really proud of my achievement, and that made it all the more special.”

Alison's confidence is on the rise as she masters her white cane, becomes more familiar with her environment and travels around Brisbane using her public transport app. She admits that most of the time she's just “winging it, but if you don't try, you're never going to know.”

“You've got to be willing to fail. It's all about patience and persistence.”

One thing she does know is that she can now see a future that wasn't there before.

“Goalball kind of saved my life. If I hadn't found Sporting Wheelies, I don't know where I'd be.”