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ELITE HOCKEY TRIO TEAM UP FOR BAKER IRONMAN 70.3 GEELONG

What do a former Kookaburra and two Premier League hockey players do when they are nearing the ends of their illustrious careers? They join the growing ranks of elite sports people extending their competitive athletic lives by making the transition to triathlon.

The recently retired Mat Pollard had the idea of getting involved in a new team adventure, so on 23 February, together with brother Josh and mate Rob Zull, the boys from the Burra are trading in the hockey sticks for their first taste of triathlon. And they can’t wait.

“We have a team going to IRONMAN 70.3 Geelong which is essentially built from the Greensborough Hockey Club. There are the three of us, my brother Josh who has played for Australia as a Kookaburra and Rob and I who have each played more than 250 games in the top division in Victoria.”

“The idea of doing IRONMAN 70.3 Geelong came from me because I can’t swim. I love riding and I love the team aspect. So, I thought how can I ride, but stay within the team concept and be with my mates. Rob is a gun swimmer, Josh is a gun athlete, so I thought let’s bring it all together, have a crack and see how we go. We wanted to try something new, different and fun.”

“We had to stop a lot of other sporting interests while we were playing hockey and now we are bringing those interests back and it is stuff we really enjoy. Rob has gotten right back into his swimming and doing all these open water swims and launching back into that. I am probably riding five times a week and really enjoying it and Josh who played for Australia is a gun runner and coaching a top Victorian team.”

As elite hockey players the boys are used to the thrill and full on physical punishment the modern game of hockey brings, and are expecting triathlon to deliver a similar rush.

“Hockey is an endurance type with a real speed element to it, so you have to be very fit to play hockey. The game has gotten quicker and quicker with the changes of the rules. Now have to have endurance and be fast. You have to be good over a short distance but you have to be able to run over a 70 minute period as well. You need short, sharp explosive speed and the ability to run a good 400-1500m as well. It is endurance stop start all the way through, so you need the ability to repeat those efforts over and over.”
“My love of riding a bike has always been there, ever since I was a kid. I was racing cross country MTB when I was younger and I was playing hockey and I had to make a choice of which one I wanted to do over the winter. We could all do the run leg and probably all three of us could do the bike leg, but Josh and I can’t swim to save ourselves in the water. So we have brought Robbie along for the journey and he loves his swimming.”

The boys are all natural competitors and long time team mates, so they will be keen not to let each other down with a below par performance. So, once the gun goes it will be on for one and all.

“We have always played team sports and we wanted to incorporate that into IRONMAN 70.3 Geelong. We wanted to stay together and compete together, but each leg is stuff that we individually enjoy.”

“We are actually training pretty hard with the one discipline each. We are all going well and doing some good times, so we will go okay. I don’t think we will break any records about we will have a good time. I am getting in around 300km a week on the bike, which is enough. I am riding in and out of work, which is all short and sharp and doing a long ride on the weekend.”

“Race pace is different to training, so we are all a little bit worried about that. We are all very competitive people and have done a good amount of training but race day is like game day, you just don’t know how you are going to go. One thing for sure, we will be having a crack, make no mistake,” Mat declared.

Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute IRONMAN 70.3 Geelong is proudly supported by the City of Greater Geelong and the Victorian Government.

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About Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute

Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute is an independent, internationally renowned medical research facility headquartered in Melbourne, Australia, The Institute has a strong, proud history spanning more than 92 years, with its work spanning the laboratory to wide-scale community studies. The Institute’s vision is for Australians to live healthier for longer, free from the burden of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. For more information about the Institute visit www.baker.edu.au. For information about the Baker Institute’s work in Sports Cardiology, visit https://baker.edu.au/research/laboratories/sports-cardiology

About The IRONMAN Group

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Series, the Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon Series®, IRONKIDS®, ITU World Triathlon Series, premier running events including the Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon and The Sun-Herald City2Surf® presented by Westpac, Ultra-Trail® World Tour events including Tarawera Ultra and Ultra-Trail Australia™, mountain bike races including the Absa Cape Epic®, road cycling events, and other multisport races. The IRONMAN Group is the largest operator of mass participation sports in the world and provides more than a million participants annually the benefits of endurance sports through the company’s vast offerings. Since the inception of the iconic IRONMAN® brand and its first event in 1978, athletes have proven that ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE® by crossing finish lines around the world. Beginning as a single race, The IRONMAN Group has grown to become a global sensation with more than 235 events across 55+ countries. For more information, visit www.ironman.com.

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Headquartered in Beijing, China, Wanda Sports Group has more than 60 offices and 1,600 employees around the world.