**May 2019**

**Daniel Campbell**

My name is Daniel. I am 16 years old, and I am in Year 10 at Christian Community High School in Coffs Harbour. When I was younger I used to fall over a lot, I always walked on my toes and I used to have lots of muscle cramps. I was 4 years old when I was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy which affects both my legs. I have had lots of intervention with physiotherapy / AFO’s / serial casting and Botox treatments. It has helped in enabling me to play the sport that I love. I have been playing football since I was 5. I played local club football and was also involved in the Junior Development Programme and Skills Acquistion Programme for North Coast Football. When I was 12, I missed selection for the Representative Team which was very disappointing for me.

Missing selection in able-bodied football steered my interest toward Paralympic Football. My first introduction to CP Football was when the National Championships were played in my hometown, and I met the NSW team. They were really encouraging and made me feel really welcome. I attended my first NSW camp in 2016, and was selected for the NSW team for Nationals in 2017. At 14, I was the youngest member of the squad, but my coaches and teammates were very supportive of me and I learnt a lot from them at that tournament.

In early 2018 I attended my first Pararoo camp and was selected for the Squad that travelled to the USA in June to play USA and Canada in three friendly matches. Representing my country was something I had always dreamed of, and it was an amazing experience. To pull on the Australian jersey was a huge honour and responsibility.

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In October I represented NSW in the National Paralympic Football Championship. We had a strong team and great guidance from our coaches and were successful in maintaining our title as National Champions. I was also awarded the Player of the Tournament. In November I travelled to Iran to play with the Pararoos in the Asia Cup. Australia performed really well. We came second in the Tournament which was a wonderful result. Our second place in the Asia Cup also gave us automatic qualification to the 2019 World Cup.

Another major highlight to an amazing year – was when I was awarded the 2018 Young Pararoo of the Year. To receive such a prestigious award and in my first year playing for the Pararoos was very humbling.

I feel so fortunate to have been introduced to CP Football . I am so grateful to have had the guidance of my State and National coaches and to meet so many inspirational players who have been my mentors and my friends. We are a family. My focus now is the World Cup and to hopefully be selected for the Pararoo squad that will travel to Spain in July. I continue to train hard to maintain my fitness and continue my skills training. I am also playing NPL with North Coast Football which helps with my game training.

My advice to young players – don’t give up. Keep going, keep training , never give up.