

Sarah Davis

North Bondi

When I moved to Australia in 2003 I knew very little about the Surf Life Saving movement. It wasn't until 2007, after moving from Melbourne to Sydney, I thought about joining a surf club. The surf club seemed like the perfection option - I believed it would be a great way to meet people, allow me to volunteer and enable me to embrace my love of sport, being outside and in and by the ocean.

I was living in Rose Bay, so Bondi beach was the closest. As a Brit, to be a Life Saver at iconic Bondi Beach, seemed pretty cool too! I wanted to join to have a go at getting my bronze, and having grown up on the pebbly beaches in England, with no surf, doing my bronze was a mix of exciting and terrifying! I emailed North Bondi and there was the swim assessment happening soon after. I signed up for that and the rest is history, it ended up being one of the best decisions of my life.

After completing my bronze, I went on to teach the bronze, SRC and ARTC and became the assistant to our Education Director. I attained my gold medallion and had a couple of years as Club Vice Captain before taking on the Competition Director role. I became involved with so much around the Club – but for everything I put in, I've got so much more out of it.

I found myself surrounded by people doing and achieving so much. It drove me to become a better version of myself and push me and get me out of my comfort zone with the support of everyone around me.

The surf club also gave me new sports. One of them, ski paddling, which really was life changing. It became the sport I loved and one that took me on some incredible adventures. Surf ski paddling went to ocean ski paddling. From there I got to represent Australia in my age group at the World Championships in Hong Kong and compete in the US. Then I completed a self-organised and led expedition down the Nile, which included 3,000km of kayaking on top of 1,100km of rafting. I also completed a 2,500km descent of the Murray River.

None of this would have happened if I hadn't joined North Bondi. I never expected to feel part of a community in a large capital city, but joining the surf club did exactly that. It gave me a sense of belonging, of being part of something worthwhile, an incredible group of friends and endless support for all my endeavours.

We asked Sarah to answer a couple of questions and here are her answers.

1. Proudest/greatest achievement in Life Saving?

That's a hard one! Can I pick two?! The first was just getting my bronze. I'd come really close to pulling out as during the bronze course we had some big days in the surf and I didn't think I had it in me to get my bronze. It was one of my instructors (and now great mate), Debbie Midwinter, who encouraged me to keep going and gave me the self-belief. Putting on the red and the yellow for first time was a very special moment. The other was finishing the Coolangatta Gold long course and being the first woman to compete in the long course in the masters category. There were some challenging conditions, it took forever and I came close to pulling out. Approaching and crossing the finish line with team mates cheering was incredible. And I swore never again!

2. Any words of wisdom or advice for females when joining the surf club?

My advice to anyone joining the Surf Life Saving movement would be - If you can, find a mentor. I had one – Debbie Midwinter, she encouraged me to get into teaching and taking on roles in the Club and everything evolved from there. Definitely get involved in different areas of the club - try the sports, teaching, taking on roles. The more you put in, the more you get back and you'll have a lot of fun on the way!



