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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Triple Gold Weekend Launches North West Sydney Athlete onto Australia's Elite Pathway

After winning three major gold medals across one remarkable weekend, North West Sydney athlete Natalie Craig has earned a place in Australian Taekwondo's elite Pathways Program and is now pursuing selection for the Virtus Games in Bangkok and the World Taekwondo Poomsae Championships.

For most athletes, one major victory would define a season.

For 25-year-old North West Sydney athlete Natalie Craig, it took just one extraordinary weekend to announce herself as one of Australia's emerging elite Para Taekwondo athletes.

Across three consecutive days of competition, Natalie won gold at the Oceania President's Cup, Australian Open Taekwondo Championships and Oceania Taekwondo Championships before earning selection into Australian Taekwondo's elite Pathways Program.

Her performances have earned selection into Australian Taekwondo's Pathways Program, recognising her potential to progress through the nation's high-performance system and represent Australia at the highest levels of competition.

For Natalie, selection is about more than recognition. It provides the opportunity to learn from some of Australia's best athletes and coaches as she continues developing towards international competition.

"I'm really surprised and happy with how this year has gone. I didn't expect to win all three competitions, so it was very exciting. I'm really grateful to my coaches, my family and everyone who has supported me. Being invited into Australian Taekwondo's Pathways Program means a lot because I get to train alongside some amazing athletes who represent Australia. I'm looking forward to learning from them, working hard and seeing how far I can go," Natalie said.

The Road to the World Stage

Natalie's immediate focus is the NSW Taekwondo Championships, where she will compete for qualification to the Australian National Championships in Canberra.

A strong performance at the national championships will secure selection for the Virtus Games in Bangkok. She has also qualified for the World Taekwondo Poomsae Championships, should the event proceed, with the location and dates yet to be confirmed.

While Natalie competes in the P23 Para Poomsae classification for athletes with autism, success at the national championships will also provide the opportunity to represent Australia at the Virtus Games, one of the world's premier international sporting events for elite athletes with an intellectual impairment.

More Than Medals

Natalie competes in the P23 Para Poomsae classification for athletes with autism. Like every elite Taekwondo athlete, her success is built on years of technical training, discipline and dedication. Her achievements demonstrate how high-performance sport can create opportunities for athletes to excel while inspiring greater understanding and inclusion.

"Natalie's results this year are no accident. They are the result of years of dedication, discipline and a genuine commitment to improving every time she steps onto the competition floor. What has always stood out is her work ethic—she listens, learns, adapts and never gives up. Those are the qualities that define high-performance athletes. Earning a place in Australian Taekwondo's Pathways Program is recognition of the work she has put in, and I believe she has the potential to achieve even more as she continues her journey representing Australia," Master Di Carn of Irontiger Taekwondo says.

Success Comes With a Price

Behind every medal is countless hours of training, travel and personal sacrifice.

While selection into Australia's elite athlete pathway is a significant achievement, competing at this level requires substantial financial support. Interstate competitions, international travel, coaching, uniforms, specialist training and accommodation are largely self-funded by athletes and their families.

As Natalie progresses towards representing Australia on the world stage, partnerships, sponsorship and fundraising will play an important role in helping her continue her journey.

"Watching Natalie develop from someone who simply loved Taekwondo into an athlete on Australia's elite pathway has been an incredible journey. Every medal represents years of perseverance, resilience and the unwavering support of her coaches, training partners, family and friends. We couldn't be prouder of what she has achieved, but this is really just the beginning. As Natalie takes the next step towards representing Australia internationally, we hope our community and local businesses will come on the journey with her. Elite sport is a team effort, both on and off the mat," said Natalie's parents, Jay and Jamie Craig.

Natalie's journey is helping shine a light on the growing opportunities for autistic athletes to compete and excel at the highest levels of international sport. As she continues her pursuit of representing Australia, she hopes her story will inspire others to believe that with dedication, support and opportunity, barriers can become pathways to success.

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About Natalie Craig

Natalie Craig, 25, is a North West Sydney Taekwondo athlete competing in the P23 Para Poomsae classification for athletes with autism. In 2026, she won gold at the Oceania President's Cup, Australian Open Taekwondo Championships and Oceania Taekwondo Championships before earning selection into Australian Taekwondo's Pathways Program. She is now preparing for the NSW Championships with the goal of qualifying for the Australian National Championships, the Virtus Games in Bangkok and future World Taekwondo Poomsae Championships.

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