

Media Release**22nd October 2009****Strict embargo: Not for release before the Thursday 22nd of October
Until 21:30 (Australian Eastern Daylight Savings Time)****Barassi, McMahon and Ashby shine at the 2009 Victorian Sport Awards**

Ron Barassi, Sharelle McMahon and Glenn Ashby were among Victoria's most elite sportspeople recognized at the 2009 Victorian Sport Awards in an exceptional year for Victorian Sport, with nearly every National title held by a Victorian Team, the 2009 Victorian Sport Awards proved that Victoria is home to some of the very best athletes, coaches, officials and administrators the nation has to offer.

This prestigious event, held at the Sofitel Melbourne on Collins, was attended by both **The Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs**, James Merlino MP and the **Deputy Lord Mayor** Susan Riley, and attracted more than 200 representatives from the sport, recreation and health sectors in Victoria.

Ron Barassi, won the Outstanding Contribution to Sport Award for his 50 years of service whereby he has been one of the most influential people in the AFL game and a role model in the community, which was recognised earlier this year when he was named the 2009 Victorian of the Year.

Sharelle McMahon received both the Victorian Female Athlete of the Year and also the Sportsperson of the Year award after a stellar season which saw her become the first Victorian, and only the third Australia to play 100 games for Australia. She also won the Melbourne Vixen's best and fairest and was named Best on Court in the ANZ Championship final.

Glenn Ashby was named the Male Athlete of the Year, capping off a decorated season in which he was also awarded the Victorian Male Sailor of the Year award for the sixth time, and became the International A Class Catamaran Champion for the sixth time, a feat which has never before been achieved.

Presenting the Athlete of the Year Awards to Glenn Ashby and Sharelle McMahon, Minister Merlino said it's the amazing passion; commitment; determination; and team leadership qualities shared by all of tonight's award recipients that have seen them stand out from an elite field of nominees.

“Most importantly, their outstanding performances throughout the year have helped to encourage others to get active and involved in sport,” Mr Merlino said.

“That’s why the Victorian Government is a proud supporter of these awards. By honouring our sporting heroes we hope to inspire a new generation of Victorians to get active, healthy, and strive to take their passion for sport to the next level,” he said.

The Victorian Bushrangers were named the Victorian Team of the Year, after winning the Weet-Bix Sheffield Shield for the second year in a row, while the Melbourne Vixens won the Women’s Team of the Year for their domination throughout the ANZ Championship.

These two powerhouses were also represented in the coaching division with the Bushranger’s Greg Shipperd narrowly defeating Vixen’s coach Julie Hoornweg for the honours as the 2009 Coach of the Year.

In the youth categories, the Junior Athlete of the Year was won by Leigh Howard (cycling) who won the Omnium World Championships at the 2009 UCI World Track Championships in Poland.

The Junior Team of the Year was won by James Sly and Andrew Gillies (sailing) who are the current Australia National Champions and Youth Champions and were a standout in this field.

The Victorian Sport Awards however, are designed to recognize more than just sporting prowess rewarding those in the community who play a significant role which benefits the wider sporting community.

The award for “Best Reporting of an Issue relating to Victorian Sport” was won by Peter Hanlon of The Age for his article, “Out of Africa, into the team” which focused on what was being done by the AFL to help refugees and other migrants feel part of their communities, and focused on the experiences of Ahmed Dini, a 22 year old Somalian refugee, who is a youth leader in Melbourne’s inner west.

Ray Allsopp was the winner of the 2009 Sport Leadership award winner, after contributing over 50 years of service to Australian Rules Football in Victoria and whose most noteworthy achievement was the establishment of the Victorian Primary School Clinic Scheme, which was the pre-cursor to the establishment of VickKick, which is now the popular NAB AFL Auskick program and has been replicated by other sports worldwide.

It was inspirational stories like this that shaped the evening and led to vicsport CEO Mark McAllion stating:

'Victorian Sport currently has a great deal to celebrate with outstanding performances by teams, individuals and sporting organisations over the past 12 months. I congratulate all nominees and award winners and excitedly look forward to another successful year ahead for Victorian Sport.'

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