

“MEDIA RELEASE”

VICTORIA'S BEST ATHLETES HONOURED AT SPORT AWARDS

12 November 2008

A HOST OF SPORTS STARS NOMINATED FOR THE 2008 VICTORIAN SPORT AWARDS

Melbourne, VIC – the 2008 Victorian Sports Awards, held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre tonight, Thursday 30 October, will showcase Victoria's finest athletes and recognise the most outstanding sporting achievements of 2008. In this Olympic year, the calibre of award recipients is undeniably world class.

The Master of Ceremonies, **Gerard Whateley** will provide attendees with an insight on the Beijing Olympics after recently returning as a Commentator for ABC Radio. Gerard will then initiate proceedings through a number of high profile awards. Winners are outlined below:

Australian swimming champion and eight-time Olympic medallist, **Leisel Jones**, will be in attendance to receive the **Female Athlete of the Year Award**, capping off an exceptional year in which she broke the Olympic Games Record to win Gold in the 100m Breaststroke at the recent 2008 Beijing Olympics.

For the second consecutive year **Cadel Evans** will be awarded the **Male Athlete of the Year Award** following his courageous performance in this year's Tour de France which saw him finish second place overall. After fighting back from a crash in the ninth stage, Evans claimed the race lead after stage 10 and held leader's famous yellow jersey for five stages.

Five times Aerial Skiing World Cup Champion **Jacqui Cooper** is indeed the worthy recipient of the **Governor's Award for Victorian Sportsperson of the Year**. Cooper produced the best season of her career in 2007/08, winning five events and collecting an additional silver medal on the way to a fifth World Cup aerial skiing title. No other aerial skier - man or woman - has ever won five titles before.

Doug Fox from the **Victorian Golf Association** will receive **Lord Mayor's Award for Outstanding Contribution to Sport**. Enjoying everything about sport, Doug has been Executive Director of Victorian Golf Association since 1986 and is a Board Member of the VIS for the past 17 years.

While Evans is unable to attend the Awards due to commitments in Europe, Jones and Cooper will be on hand to accept their awards and share their most recent sporting achievements.

Additional winners of the night include:

- **Rohan Taylor** as the **Victorian Coach of the Year** for achieving outstanding coaching performances with the Australian Olympic Team for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and individually coaching Leisel Jones, Shayne Reese and Hannah McDougall.
- **Victorian Fury Netball Team** will be granted winners of the **Victorian Women's Team of the Year Award** for exceptional performances at a National level, ending 2008 as Australian Netball League Champions.
- The **Victorian Track Cycling Team** have been recognised as **Victorian Men's Team of the Year** for their superior results on the track at a National level, defending their title for the best performing state in Elite Men's events.
- The **Victorian Junior Athlete of the Year – Dame Mary Herring Award** has been divided into Male and Female categories. Winners are both under 21 and have achieved outstanding results in respect to their performances at a State, National and International level.
 - o **Male Junior Athlete of the Year** awarded to **Dylan Alcott** for Wheelchair Basketball winning gold at the 2008 Beijing Paralympics and MVP at the U20 Nationals in 2007
 - o **Female Junior Athlete of the Year** awarded to **Grace Loh** for swimming, winning gold in the 2008 FINA World Youth Championships in the 50m and 100m backstroke.
- **The Victorian Junior Diving Team** will be presented as the **Victorian Junior Team of the Year** for their outstanding results in Diving at a National and State level, winning half of all medals available at the Australian Junior Elite Diving Championships in 2008.
- **Neil Morarty** from **Life Saving Victoria** will receive the **Victorian Sports Leadership – Eunice Gill Award** for outstanding contribution and commitment to the management and administration of Surf Lifesaving for more than 44 years.
- **Michael Alyen** as the **Victorian Official of the Year** for his demonstrated excellence as a Basketball official. Michael was a Referee for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and NBL competition.
- **Elizabeth Randall** receives the **Victorian Masters Sports Award** for achieving as an athlete outstanding cycling results at an International scale including 2008 UCI World Masters Champion 60+ Time trial and Road Race in Austria.
- The **Victorian Community Club Award** is awarded to the **Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club** in recognition for their community efforts through member services, activities and club practices and hosting state events.

Over 300 guests will join the cream of Victorian Sport to help celebrate what has been a truly memorable year for sporting achievements. Host and MC, **Gerard Whateley** will be joined on stage with other notable VIP's such as; **The Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs Mr James Merlino** - presenting the Male and Female Athlete of the Year Awards, **The Right Honourable Marilyn Warren Lieutenant Governor** - presenting the Governor's Award and Olympic Rowing Gold Medallist, **David Crawshay** – will share his Olympic triumph and present the Official of the Year Award.

Photos and limited interview opportunities will be available immediately following the awards ceremony.

The awards will take place **Thurs. 30 October** at: **The Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre Auditorium (Level 2)**
2 Clarendon St, Southbank
7.30pm - 9pm

For further details and background information please contact Anthony Bowd or Jennifer Matthies at VicSport on (03) 9926 1376