

# Media Release

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## COLES ANNOUNCES NEW ATHLETICS AMBASSADORS TO INSPIRE LITTLE ATHLETES

Four Aussie track and field champions will inspire the next generation of Aussie athletes in the lead up to Brisbane 2032 after being announced today as new Coles Little Athletics ambassadors.

The new ambassadors are world champions and Tokyo 2020 medallists **Kelsey-Lee Barber** (QLD – javelin) and **Jaryd Clifford** (VIC – middle/long distance runner), 2018 Commonwealth Games silver medallist and two-time Olympian **Mathew Denny** (QLD - discus) and 2018 Commonwealth Games bronze medallist and Australian record holder **Nina Kennedy** (WA - pole vault).

They join Australian athletics legend **Sally Pearson** and 2018 Commonwealth Games high jump champion, **Brandon Starc** (NSW) as Coles ambassadors and will visit Little Athletics centres, conduct coaching clinics and provide training and nutrition tips to kids across Australia.

Kelsey-Lee Barber said she was delighted to join Coles as an ambassador and to help foster a love of athletics and sport among kids in the community.

"I'm thrilled to be joining Coles as an athletics ambassador this season to help inspire the next generation. I know how important it is for athletes like myself to support Little Athletics so that our sport can continue to grow and thrive," she said.

"It's an incredibly exciting time for athletics in Australia after Tokyo 2020 and with Brisbane 2032 on the horizon."

The new ambassadors, alongside Brandon Starc, are some of Australia's brightest prospects for gold at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, United Kingdom.

Coles Group General Manager Corporate Affairs Sally Fielke said Coles was excited to have the four new ambassadors join the Coles Little Athletics family.

"Coles is delighted to bring on board Kelsey, Jaryd, Matthew and Nina to join Sally Pearson and our own team member Brandon Starc as Coles Little Athletics ambassadors this season. These inspirational Aussie athletes are excellent role models for all kids, not just little athletes, to lead healthier, happier lives," she said.

"We've been proudly supporting Little Athletics for the past five years, donating over 3.6 million bananas and distributing more than \$2 million in sports equipment grants to grassroots clubs and centres. Our six Coles Little Athletics ambassadors will help take our partnership with Little Athletics Australia to the next level as we look forward to Brisbane 2032."

Coles Little Athletics Australia President Sherrie Boulter welcomed the announcement of four new ambassadors.

"We're extremely excited that Coles has added four Australian champions of track and field, including two former little athletes in Jaryd and Nina, to their fold this year to help our sport, centres and kids grow," she said.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION ON NEW COLES LITTLE ATHLETICS AMBASSADORS**

### **Kelsey-Lee Barber** (QLD, javelin)

**Honours summary:** Olympic bronze medallist (Tokyo 2020), World Champion (Doha, 2019), Commonwealth Games silver (2018 Gold Coast) and bronze (2014 Glasgow).

Kelsey-Lee Barber is the reigning javelin world champion and snatched bronze at the recent Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games with a season's best throw of 64.56m. Her personal best throw of 67.70m places her 13<sup>th</sup> on the world all-time list.

Born in South Africa, Kelsey only took up the sport when she was 17 years old and since then has gone onto become a world champion and dual Olympian (2016 and 2020).

### **Jaryd Clifford** (VIC, T12/13 middle/long distance runner)

**Honours summary:** Dual 2020 Tokyo Paralympic silver medallist (T13 5000m, T12 marathon), Tokyo Paralympic bronze (T13 1500m), dual 2019 Doha World Para-Athletics Champion (T13 1500m and T13 5000m), world record holder (T12 marathon and T13 1500m).

At just 22 years old, Jaryd is the youngest of the Coles Little Athletics ambassadors. Born with a congenital vision impairment, Jaryd has competed for Australia in both para-athletics and at the 2018 Under 20 World Championships.

As a former little athlete (Diamond Valley Little Athletics), Jaryd is extremely passionate about the sport, particularly in growing participation in Little Athletics among kids with disabilities.

### **Matthew Denny** (QLD, discus)

**Honours summary:** Olympic finalist (4<sup>th</sup> – Tokyo 2020), World championship finalist (6<sup>th</sup> – Doha, 2019), Commonwealth Games silver (2018 Gold Coast – hammer throw), World Youth Champion (2013).

Matthew threw a personal best of 67.02m at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and just missed the podium by five centimetres. He has been a consistent performer on the world stage over the past few years since making the decision to focus solely on discus.

Matthew hails from Allora, 60km south of Toowoomba where his father built him a throws circle so that he could perfect his technique as he made his way through the QLD schools athletics ranks.

### **Nina Kennedy** (WA, pole vault)

**Honours summary:** Australian record holder (4.82m), Commonwealth Games bronze medallist (2018 Gold Coast), Tokyo 2020 Olympian.

Former little athlete (UWA Little Athletics) Nina Kennedy is a rising star of Australian athletics after breaking the national record in March. Nina has competed in senior athletics since she was just 14 years old and once held the junior world record.

Despite injuries curtailing her bid for a podium finish in Tokyo, Nina remains one of Australia's best prospects for gold at the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

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**For further information, please contact**

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