

Jessi Laidler Interviewed by Pavel Kriklan for floorbal.cz

Jessi Laidler: Skyrocketed from Perth to Finland

It has been only two and a half years that she has been playing floorball but she is now competing already on her second World Championships. Jessi Laidler is making a rocket career, that included a fast transition from field hockey to floorball and moving from Australia to Finland. A tattoo on her left arm says: Vi Et Animo, which means By strength and courage. And you can be sure she is 100 percent like that. Jessi helped Australia to B division finals with important goal against Netherlands (6-2) and a winner with Slovakia (6-5) in group matches. And her brilliant pass in semifinals against Germany breathed a life to one of two goals Aussie girls scored (2-1).

Jessi, when you compare last WC and this one, do you feel there is a some progress in quality of your play?

„It is definitely growing, we have alot more players, so there is alot more people to choose from. I think we have about 8 new players in our team, but most of us played together before in the same state. We have been playing field hockey together before as well. So yeah, we have definitely got a stronger team this time around.“

It looks like all girls from Aussie national floorball played field hockey before...

„Yeah, most of us, that is why we are all righties. In field hockey there is only right-handed stick. Even for left-handed players. Most of the girls including me are from Perth. And I played hockey with many of them. Like Tania Perpoli, who played state indoor with me along with Narelle Roediger and many others i have played with or against at sometime. And Leith Woods, our keeper, she coached me in the indoor hockey state team.“

How did you get to playing floorball?

„I used to play field hockey in Australia and Jürg – our national team coach – watched one of my games. I was little bit aggressive and possibly threw my stick, I think I got taken off for being a bit too rough. So Jürg asked some of the girls who I was and said I should be playing floorball, because I was too physical to play hockey. And then one of the girls said: ‚Yeah, come down and try.‘ So in January 2007 I started playing and had my first World Championships in April.“ (*smiles*)

Unbelievable! After another couple of months you moved to Finland to play there in the league...

„It has already been 15 months I’m playing in Finland. I got there thanks to Sarah Mitchell, one of our captains, she has been living there for last four or five years and she played there before and now she has an assistant coach role. She asked if there was a couple of players from the Aussie team who want to play in her club team SB Vantaa. So I took an opportunity to go there, had a one season there and then I got an offer from PSS Porvoo, where I’m playing now. They have a very strong team, so I’m learning a lot there. We have an excellent coach, I think in the last six months I learned the most I have learned playing floorball. Definitely.“

What is your situation with PSS right now?

„We are currently drawn 4th place and we are still in the Suomen Cup, knocked Classic out of that, who finished 1st in the league last year. So we are doing pretty well. We have two Finnish national players – defenders – Paula Jouhten and Anu Peltokangas and with Czech Jana Christianova in goal we are pretty strong. And the rest are Finnish ex-national players so it is hard for me to get enough time there on field. But it’s nice to learn from them.“

You Aussie girls are spread across the whole world. Do you play international matches between World Championships?

„We have Australian Floorball Open, sometimes Singapore come across and play and we put in teams from all the other states and then we play each other there, but it is quite expensive to get any competitions going.“

Did you have a training camp before WC?

„Yeah, we had a camp in Eerikkälä, Finland. We were there for a week, had a few training games in Helsinki, we played against SB Vantaa, a league team, Indians and SSV Helsinki, which are both in 1st division and we beat them. It was very close game with Vantaa, though they beat us.“

You have to make all expenditures by yourself. Can you afford flying home to play a national team match?

„It depends, how important the match is. If it’s Australian Floorball Open, I would probably wouldn’t fly home for, if we have Four Nations or any international tournament, I have to see how my funding is... As part of the Australian team you have to pay uniforms, flights, food, accommodation, everything... Which makes it harder, because we have

other quite strong players back in Australia, who would have made this team, but they can't afford it. My little sister actually, she is just 17, she would have been on this team. It would have been very nice to play with her. But how can a 17-year-old kid come up with that kind of money? We have a few little sponsors that help us out, but we don't have a big ones like Excel or Assics behind us."

How much does it cost you to be at the World Championships then?

„It takes some 8,000 Australian dollars, that's almost 4,000 euros. It's very expensive.“

You have to earn alot to be a national player...

„Very much. So we rely alot on fundraising. It's quite hard for us. That's where we lose a lot of interest, because so many people say: „No, I can't afford it.“

It means you spent all of your savings to compete in the WC and play for your country?

„Yeah, pretty much. I have just finished paying off the last WC and now I have this one... (*sighs*) So I have to take out a bit of a loan and by the time I finish paying this one back it will be the next WC... But we pay for it, because we love it.“ (*smiles*)

What is your job in Finland, where do you earn your money for floorball?

„I'm working at Posti, which is the post factory sorting mail. That's not the most interesting thing... I'm actually looking to do something else, maybe study something. At the moment I don't study, because I need the money to play. So if I'm gonna stay in Finland, I think I'd like to find a career. But it's hard to study, if you play floorball, because you have to pay everything. But it's good to be in PSS, cause they pay everything for us. It's funny how that works: a club can pay everything, but a national team – you have to pay yourself...“