

## 5 Minutes with Bernie

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On the other side of the door is a Bernie with a two day old cold, not that you would know as she looks great as usual, although she has cancelled her massage (out of concern for her massage therapist more than anything) and is more concerned with making me feel welcome than how she is feeling.

**SB: What a beautiful environment!** **BS:** Starts telling me of the tomatoes and other healthy produce growing in her back yard along with chooks (fresh eggs on tap!). **Note: I'll tell you in a minute what she uses those eggs for...**

**SB: What made you start this sport?** **BS:** Veronica, my daughter got me started in swimming. I was about 60 when I first started, although it wasn't until I was about 62 that I started pushing past the 25m mark. I used to get panic attacks all the time and especially one afternoon down at West Lakes when Grant Ferguson said "ok we're going to swim out to the buoys and back" I had a panic attack without even getting into the water (*she really is an overachiever!*) In the end Sophie and Darren Clarke ended up swimming around the buoys with me and I made it out and back just concentrating on breathing. Helen Shepherd has been incredibly encouraging with my swimming also; the Lakers are a very supportive group.

**SB: What other sports have you been involved in?** **BS:** Living in the country, sports were a big thing - it's just what we did. I played hockey, basketball, netball, tennis. ..It's just what you do when you live in the country.

**SB: What are your personal strengths that you bring into this sport?** **BS:** I don't really know. Probably my determination and my desire to "just want to have a go" I look at what I think is achievable then I get to work and just do it.

**SB: How do you set your goals?** **BS:** I look at what I think is achievable, I ask Ray (husband) and Julianne (daughter) what they think and Julianne will tell me honestly what she thinks and Ray always tells me I can do it. And then I just do it. They are really supportive. I got my Ballarat training program from Julianne and I followed that. Once you start you have to finish. (That would be that determination we mentioned above☺).

**SB: Do you have a saying or a motto that you live your life by?** **BS:** 'Just do it.' When I was racing Ballarat it was 'One foot in front of the other', but mostly 'just do it'. (Bernie smiled and just gently shrugs her shoulders here, why not?)

**SB: Biggest challenge?** **BS:** Ballarat in the bike leg - just making the bike cut-off. I knew once I had done that I would be ok but I really gave it a lot. (I did ask her how close it was and Bernie was quite humble in saying that she still had a bit of time to play with).

**SB: What might some Lakers not know about you?** **BS:** I bake my own Hot Cross Buns. I only make them on Good Friday morning. (*From scratch! – remember the eggs? Sounds like a great place to end up on Good Friday just sayin'*) **BS:** I also used to be a P.E. Teacher before I taught English.

**SB: What do you believe makes you different from your competitors? BS:** There aren't too many in my age group at 67 so I guess I'm just still here (with a chuckle).

**SB: Where do you get your inspiration from? BS:** Other people that do this sport. Just in Lakers there are some amazing people. That's where I get it from. And the encouragement you get from other competitors, supporters – Laker's and others. And wearing the Lakers uniform, it's really important for this. We have made some wonderful friends at the club and the inclusiveness shown by all age groups is strong.

**SB: Inspirational words for someone else wanting to race? BS:** Just have a go at it 😊



Text by Susanê Belkhiati | Image supplied by Bernie Schliebs

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