



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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A U S T R A L I A

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Jacob taking his chances on the basketball big stage

A Notre Dame graduate is set to play a key role in Melbourne United's quest for another championship when the National Basketball League finals series kicks off next week.

Having helped his team finish the regular season on top of the ladder, Melbourne United assistant coach Jacob Chance now has his sights set firmly on championship glory.

Jacob, who graduated from The University of Notre Dame in 2015, said the skills he had developed while studying physiotherapy had been pivotal to his dramatic rise through the basketball coaching ranks and still influenced his coaching style.

Jacob was partway through his final year exams at the Fremantle campus when an internship opportunity came up that would change the course of his life.

An avid basketball fan and assistant coach for the Rockingham Flames, he jumped at the chance to take up a video coaching internship with one of the most successful franchises in Australian sport – the Perth Wildcats.

Given the fickle nature of the performance-based industry, Jacob, then aged 21, also got a job in private practice after his exams, never imagining his coaching career would take off the way that it has.

"Ultimately I had a decision to make about whether to really go all in on the basketball thing and have a crack and put the physio stuff to bed," he said. "I think it was early 2017 and from that point on I haven't looked back."

Jacob spent six years working with the Wildcats before taking up an opportunity with the NBL's newest team, the Tasmania JackJumpers.

He recently became assistant coach of this season's title favourites Melbourne United and is also part of the coaching staff for the Australian men's national basketball team, the Boomers.

Jacob's work with the national team has taken him around the world, from Kazakhstan to Tokyo, and will see him travel to Paris later this year for the 2024 Olympics.

He said his experience at Notre Dame had taught him the importance of building rapport with people and working in multidisciplinary teams to better the outcome of patients – skills he still applies to his work with athletes.

He was also heavily influenced by the University's holistic approach to understanding people and the conditions they present with.

"That's really shaped my approach to my players and my staff and how you handle an individual's development," he said.

"It's not just about shooting the basketball, it's making sure they are comfortable outside their workspace. Are they safe in their environment? Is everything at home going ok? That holistic approach has been really big for me with my players in particular."

The Wildcats won four championships in the six years Jacob was working with the club, and he was able to learn from Trevor Gleeson, who is now with the Milwaukee Bucks, and triple Olympian Matt Nielsen, now with the San Antonio Spurs.

Working alongside some of the best coaches in Australia, Jacob realised how important it was to understand who you are and remain true to yourself.

"In professional sports there are so many extrinsic factors at play," he said. "Fan pressure, public pressure, media pressure."

"Being able to navigate through all those murky, extrinsic things and being true to yourself is a tool in itself, and I think the best coaches I've been around are able to do that."

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