



STORY BY Rosamund Burton | PHOTOGRAPH BY Edwina Pickles

First cousins Lisa Darmanin, 24, and Jason Waterhouse, 24, grew up in Sydney's north messing about on boats and competing against each other. Next week they will be sailing together in the Nacra 17 Class at the Rio Olympics.

JASON: My first memory of Lisa is when we were at our grandparents aged four. I was running naked around the living room and she was the good girl sitting at the table eating her food. We started sailing against each other aged nine. I always enjoyed it, but she was scared when it was windy. She used to cry and jump off the boat.

We're quite different. Lisa is diligent and academic, I'm sporty and have the attention span of a goldfish if I'm not enjoying what I do. It wasn't until we had sailed together for two years and won gold at the 2009 Youth World Championships that I thought we could make a good team. I'm the natural sailor, whereas Lisa has really worked to become the best.

It was hard to get used to how disciplined and organised she is. She does the campaign logistics and is the cogs of the wheel. I'm very cruisy and relaxed. What makes me a good sailor is that I can adapt to change easily, so we meet each other in the middle.

Five years ago Lisa nearly drowned. We were training on a really windy day and the boat capsized. She got caught on the mast.

Somehow the boat came up by itself and that gave her just enough air to breathe. I jumped in the water, got her unhooked, and she was okay. That was scary. So she's nervous if it's windy, but we continue pushing the limits because sometimes we have to race in those conditions.

We had a tight selection battle for the Olympics with another Australian team. The first few events we lost and I cracked. I tore off my life jacket and was like, "I'm done. I'm trying so hard and it's not working." We only stayed because of Lisa. She said, "We need to go to the next regatta. We cannot end like this. Let's get back on the horse, and start enjoying it again." That regatta we had a better result, and the next we were the top Australian boat.

Lis will never say, "I quit." She's emotional. She'll cry when she's disappointed, and I give her a hug, and say, "It's okay. There'll be another regatta next week." For every success we've had 10 failures.

Living and sailing together for nine months of the year is challenging. Some days she wakes up on the wrong side of bed. I can't say, "What's wrong with you?" That makes it worse. I have to

tread lightly. It's different to sailing with a bloke. For an Olympic athlete she's quite clumsy, which is hilarious. Last winter she kept falling off the boat. But she's doing all the other stuff well.

When we started the Olympic campaign in 2013 she was doing uni. We sailed all day, then she'd study until 10 at night. On the boat her job is really physical, so I did anything I could – cooking, more boat work – so she could study and be ready to go the next day.

Now it's a role reversal. I sailed in the 2015 Red Bull Extreme Sailing Series and am on an America's Cup campaign. Lisa has been getting to regattas early and preparing the boat, so I can fly just before we start training. Lis and I work together so well because we're family. We look after and love each other no matter what.

LISA: I wasn't naturally good at sailing. I did it for fun. I remember in the car on the way to school my uncle ringing Mum to see if I would crew for Jason. "How much does Lisa weigh?" he asked. "Do you think she's going to grow any more?" It wasn't my sailing ability, but because I fitted the height and weight criteria.

We started sailing together when we were 16. I am very organised and I plan everything. Jason is the most disorganised person I know and doesn't plan anything. I don't know how his girlfriend copes.

We did the 2009 Youth World Championships in our Higher School Certificate year. I wanted to do well in school and sailing; Jason just wanted to win the Youth Worlds, which we did, and pass the HSC. Before the HSC exams he rang. "How's the study going?" he asked. "Okay," I said. "I'm studying eight hours a day." "I may have done eight hours in total," he replied. I try hard at everything to ensure I do well, whereas Jas is committed if he loves something.

I don't trust anyone more than I trust Jason. If Jas says get out on the trapeze, I won't question it. I fell off the boat recently. Jason gybed around and picked me up so fast that we still came fourth in the race. When we're pushing the limit and it's scary, he just wants to enjoy the ride and ensure we're both okay. He puts on a tough outside, but really he's a big softy.

Being the organised one, I make sure we always have lunch and drink bottles. After a long time together, I'm like, "Could you for just one day fill the bottles with water?" He's a pretty flawless person if that's all that bothers me.

When we started sailing together he was the naturally talented one, always destined for the Olympics. As we've got into more high-performance sailing, I've had to step up.

I can't believe I'm Australian Female Sailor of the Year. In my mind I'm an okay sailor but nothing special; it hasn't sunk in that I have the potential to be an Olympic medalist. However, I have an extreme work ethic. Everyone said, "The Nacra class is so challenging. You've got to be really strong." And I set myself the challenge of getting strong.

The biggest challenge has been when I think that we should rest and Jason just wants to go, go, go. We disagree on the value of taking a day off from the boat, but other than that we don't argue. Jas is the skipper and decision-maker and I work the ropes. He lets me do my job and I let him do his. I just want the best for him. ■

66

When we're pushing the limit on the boat and it's scary, Jason just wants to enjoy the ride and ensure we're both okay.

99