

BENJAMIN HAACK



AGE: 27

COUNTRY: Australia

HOMETOWN: Gilston, Queensland

POSITION: Defender



STORY: Special Olympics athlete Ben Haack has played football for more than 10 years. He is an inspirational athlete, mentor and ambassador for SO Australia. Ben has overcome tremendous circumstances to get to where he is today. Beyond conquering his intellectual disabilities, he has also faced physical challenges. Despite rupturing the ligaments in his right knee while playing football and suffering from a car accident in 2004, neither setback kept Ben from accomplishing his goals. Ben's dedication and commitment to rehabilitation and training lead him to play football at Special Olympics World Games in Shanghai in 2007.

The 27 year-old defender plays football, but is also an active member of the SO Australia advisory panel for the sport. In addition, Ben serves as an assistant coach for the SO Australia football team that recently attended SO Australia National Games in Adelaide in April. A leader both on and off the field, Ben is a strong advocate for athletes with disabilities, and he regularly attends sports forums and speaks at National conferences.

His parents are very proud of him to have come back from such horrific injuries to accomplish what he has today. He is a living inspiration to everyone around him. They describe him as a very honest, hardworking and humble young man. He serves as a leader both on and off the football field. In addition to football, Ben also plays cricket, where he represented Australia at the World Cup in India in 2006. Ben works two days a week at a Recreation and Sport Organization for people with I.D. In his free time he also helps his parents out with the family farm, and enjoys spending time with family and friends.

Ben says that Special Olympics has helped him conquer his disabilities and has given him the confidence to be proud of himself. He is thankful for the wonderful opportunities Special Olympics has provided him to travel, to play sport on an equal playing field with others and to be accepted for who he is. He is extremely passionate about Special Olympics and football and says that the opportunity presented to him to play in the Unity Cup is his dream come true.