

Sasha Leaps To Success

Year 10 Gifted and Talented dance student Sasha Zhoya has received the 2017 Pierre de Coubertin Award. The award acknowledges secondary school students who demonstrate values that are consistent with the Olympic Movement through participation in sporting activities.

Named after the founder of the modern Olympic Games, the award recognises students who demonstrate sporting prowess whilst exemplifying the Olympic values of sportsmanship, teamwork and fair play.

Sasha was recognised earlier this year as Australia's next pole vault prodigy when he cleared an Australian under-16 record height of 4.92m to win the national under-17 title, one of the best pole vault performances by a 14-year-old boy. Guided by Olympic champion Steve Hooker's former coach, Alex Parnov, this performance lifted Sasha to the top of this year's international under-18 rankings.

He also has held his age group's national title in short hurdles for the past three years, has set a number of national records, and is currently the national champion in U17 pole vault and 110m hurdles, and national champion in U16 200m and long jump.

Sasha acknowledged that performing arts and elite sports have a lot in common, where the stage might be different, but that feeling of giving to an audience is somehow similar.

"I have no doubt that my athleticism makes me a better dancer, and my dance makes me a better athlete. To me, they are a fine complement of each other," he said.

"It is also about having a deep sense of internal rhythm, and having a very special connection with your body within space. It's all about your focus, control and concentration."

Last year he travelled to remote Aboriginal communities in North East WA as part of the Indigenous Development Program of Athletics WA to promote healthy living and lifestyle through participation in sport.

"This trip was very successful and resulted in the opening of a couple new athletics centres in the region. I've since obtained my Level 1 Community Athletics Coach and I will be going back

regularly to keep conducting workshops and promoting our sport,” he said.

As part of the nomination process, applicants had to discuss their favourite Rio Olympics moment.

“For me it was when the pole vault world record holder and favourite of the event, Renaud Lavillenie, came silver to a competitor with a much lower personal best than himself,” he said.

“It shows that even in an elite competition nothing can be taken for granted as it’s about who performs the best on the day. Although Lavillenie would have been quite distraught inside, he still showed beautiful sportsmanship.”

“It was an important moment for me because I saw that it doesn’t matter if you’re the best of the best, you can be defeated on any one day. This, I feel, portrays Pierre De Coubertin’s spirit of the Olympics perfectly,” he said.

Sasha’s unique digital application piece can be seen [here](#).