



# purple shoes

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Now 31, she's captained both the Australian Diamonds and Queensland Firebirds, won the 2011 and 2015 World Netball Championships and brought home gold for Australia in the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

Laura grew up in the small town of Allora on the Darling Downs in South East Queensland. Her parents built their four-bedroom brick home and one of her favourite childhood memories was sitting around the fireplace during winter.

She says they still have a little piece of land up there, which is where her husband, Mark and son, Barney, spend a lot of time when they return home. "To be there, watching the sunset, is where I am most at peace and my happiest".

As a country girl, Laura says she was capable and confident from an early age, which she believes helped her in her sporting career. But, her start to netball isn't what people might expect.

*"I was picked as a shooter and I was terrible! Eventually though, I found my place in defence," she says.*

*"I was soon playing state and national underage netball, before receiving a scholarship with the Australian Institute of Sport."*

In 2008, Laura joined the ranks of the Firebirds and in 2011, she led the team to a record-breaking undefeated season. She was named Queensland Firebirds

Player of the Year in 2010, Player's Player in 2011 and Member's Player of the Year in 2013.

Laura made her Diamonds debut in 2008. Five years later, she was named the second Queenslander to captain the team, leading them to Commonwealth gold the next year at the Glasgow Games. They then won the 2015 World Cup in Sydney, which Laura says involved some of the best netball she's ever been a part of.

*"The first 15 minutes really set us up for the last quarter," she says.*

*"It wasn't just a feeling of – 'Yes, we did it! We've won the World Cup!' It was the years of hard work in the lead up to our Australian win which made it so special."*

While success is rewarding, Laura says the most important aspect for any young netballer is to enjoy the journey.

*"Professional sport is tough. There are challenges, but there are also some incredible moments you will experience. At the end of the day, you've got to love what you're doing."*

*"I think that's how I got into netball, apart from my sister's purple shoes... I just loved the game. I never wanted the clock to stop! If you want to get out on the court professionally, make sure you're enjoying it. Your love for the game will help you overcome any challenges you face."*

*"Also, get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Do something new! I was*

*18 years old when I was thrown into a public speaking gig, and I was absolutely mortified! I stumbled, but I actually got through it. I made a promise to myself from that day on, that whatever made me feel terribly uncomfortable, I would say yes to it before I even thought about it."*

And just last year, Laura did do something new – she hung up her netball bib and retired from her beloved sport.

She now spends her days working with companies in an ambassadorial role, and giving back to the netball community through her Fuel2Fly clinics.

*"I want to empower young girls to be healthy, active and confident. If you're feeling under the weather, make an effort to get outside every day, even for a short walk. You will feel re-energised and much better for it."*

Motherhood fills up Laura's time too, and she's loving every moment. She's expecting a second child in July – and can't contain her excitement!

*"It's one of the most incredible things you'll ever do. Everything else fades away! I just absolutely adore being a mum to little Barney."*

To sum up her netball career, Laura says she's privileged and grateful for the opportunities that came, for her team and most importantly, for her family's unwavering support.

*"My parents were my rock throughout my career. They are my inspiration and the reason I persevered every day. And if it wasn't for my sister's purple shoes, I never would have picked up a netball!"*