

## Alexa Hindmarch

### Bachelors in Nutrition and Health Sciences

### Masters of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling

My name is Alexa Hindmarch and I have been Dr. Jowdy's clinical assistant for the past five years. The mental and physical toll of injuries in athletics is a topic that is often overlooked. As an athlete I often pushed myself to the extremes, sometimes at the expense of my own well-being. I was so dedicated and determined to play D1 volleyball that I played through a torn labrum for over a year and even went to the extent of popping my dislocated shoulder back in place to continue to finish out my match. After that match I realized my physical injury was much more than just physical, it was mental as well. I decided to make the hard decision of declining D1 offers and playing on the Australian Women's Volleyball National Team. I wanted to start focusing on regaining my strength both physically and mentally through understanding the power of psychology. Athletics at a high level takes dedication and perseverance but it also takes mental training. Before I ended my career in volleyball, I had to end my career in soccer, tennis, and track. I had to end all those careers due to a life changing concussion and a torn hamstring. I had to turn down a position on the Women's Soccer Junior Olympic Team due to injury and had to leave my accomplishments in tennis and track on the court/track. The importance of mental training throughout injury and sport is crucial in achieving high remarks and success. My accomplishments served as a testament to my dedication and perseverance that I still carry with me today. These are two aspects that I was able to learn through mental training and sport psychology. However, I didn't realize how important sport psychology would become later on in my college career.

Entering college, I was excited to start on a new path without sports and recreate my life without the threat of physical injury. However, one of the biggest lessons I've learned is that we are all human and will always continue to face a series of life challenges. This may seem simple, but in the peaceful and happy moments of our lives, a lot of us forget that there can be unknowns right around the corner. At the start of my sophomore year of college I realized how many aspects of life I took for granted. Over the course of the next six years, I would undergo 12 complicated surgeries, all in attempts to save my life. I was diagnosed with eight of the rarest diseases in the country, making it extremely difficult to find answers. Through strength, discipline, and support I was able to fight the continuous battle of regaining my health. I was able to use what I learned through my athletic career to fight this unwelcome quest and still graduated in four years. I would be taking finals in hospital beds and completing assignments in between trips to doctors' offices. After my experience in the hospital, I started to learn what malpractice looks like and what it feels like to be told you're "crazy". Injury in sport and in life has been a common theme that I have continuously battled. I know what the extremes of dedication looks like and I understand how it feels to have everything stripped away from you in an instant. I am now pursuing my Master's of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in hopes of creating holistic/integrative health care. Throughout graduate school I will be working with several professors throughout the country to start an integrative health approach to injuries or illnesses. I am in the process of writing a book discussing the correct testing and procedures needed to help people battling the same conditions that I have, as well as incorporating how the power of psychology can change your entire mindset when entering any life challenge.