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Haydn lives and breathes cricket, so it's not surprising the 31-year-old from North Lakes, Queensland, is making every run count.

Haydn, who has a mild intellectual disability and Asperger's syndrome, has just had a year to remember.

The highlight was being named 2022 captain of the Australian Cricket Squad for Players with an Intellectual Disability (ID).

The ID team is one of 3 Australian national disability squads - Blind, Deaf and Intellectual Disability – that took part in the Commonwealth Bank International Cricket Inclusions Series in Brisbane last year.

The squads played 5 T20Is and 3 One Day International (ODI) matches against England.

Hayden recently trialled to again secure a place in the National Cricket Inclusion Queensland ID squad, which will compete with other states and territories ahead of an upcoming international event.

The talented all-rounder said his confidence has grown through disability cricket, along with support from the NDIS.

Haydn is part of the 97% of participants aged 15 and over who felt happy about the relationships they have made with the staff who work with them.

"It (the NDIS) has helped me find a great support team and they help me get out and about more often," Haydn said.

"One of my goals was to play cricket at the top level and I did this in 2017 when I debuted for the Australian ID team when we toured the UK.

"I was very lucky to be named the vice-captain on my first Australian tour. Then I was named captain for the team during the global games in Brisbane in 2019.

"Another one of my goals includes getting better and improving my skills so I can do better in mainstream cricket."

Starting out in junior cricket at 14, Haydn said the sport has been one of his biggest passions, and something he still enjoys to this day.

More than 80 per cent of participants over the age of 15, like Haydn, are finding the NDIS helps them to spend their free time doing activities that interest them.

“I had a lot of self-doubt when I was playing junior cricket and coming up through the ranks because at that stage, I had never heard of playing disability cricket. As soon as I discovered it, I gave it a good red-hot crack and have enjoyed it ever since,” he said.

When Haydn is not representing Australia on the pitch, the all-rounder is facing balls weekly at an indoor cricket competition in Strathpine.

Haydn also plays in a major league competition on weekends.

Haydn said it could be daunting playing cricket at an international level, but he had taught himself to remain calm.

“I try to relax before a game and when I'm out there batting, I try to focus on my breathing and try and switch off from everything so I can focus on the cricket ball closely,” he said.

“I 100% love doing this job, the players are amazing. It can be a tough job to do but I'm always ready for a challenge especially against tough opponents like England.”

Fittingly, cricket was also how Haydn learned about the NDIS.

One of Australia’s ID senior assistant coaches Nathan Dodd is also a Local Area Coordinator for NDIS Partner in the Community, Carers Queensland.

Nathan introduced Haydn to the Scheme through the game he loves.

An accredited Cricket Australia Level 3 High Performance Coach, Nathan says it was his family’s lived experience that prompted him to throw his hat in the ring and coach the ID squad.

“I have a brother with an intellectual disability, we played cricket in Lismore growing up and that’s one of the reasons Cricket Australia asked me,” Nathan said.

“I’m grateful to be involved and to give back to that cohort of cricketers, it’s fun and really rewarding.”

Supported by Nathan, Haydn urged others with an intellectual disability to find a sport they love and get involved.

“Don't give up on your dream, believe in yourself and keep working towards those goals,” Haydn said.

“There’s plenty of sports for people with an intellectual disability. Our support workers are here to help us find sports and other enjoyable activities for us all to enjoy.

“Also, don't feel trapped in, talk to your support worker or family member as they are here to help.”

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