**December 2020**

**Thomas Scotti**

My name is Tomas Scotti and I am 15 years old. I am in Year 9 at Marist College Kogarah and really enjoy being at school and hanging out with my mates. When I was four days old I suffered a stroke and I live with Cerebral Palsy, left hemiplegia.

I love sports and to be outdoors, but my real passion is football. I have played since I was 5 years old, when I joined Roselands soccer club. Joining a local club with a disability is scary, however, I made friends and had huge support from everyone involved in that club from my very first day.

Playing sport in the mainstream and going to school has always given me many challenges to face, but I love a good challenge. I have tried a few different sports such as swimming and athletics and won some medals in multiclass athletics in primary school. I now focus completely on football in every aspect of my life. I play for Oatley FC, follow my favourite team Napoli in the Serie A and locally I am a supporter and member of Sydney FC and watch all their home games. My motto is to never give up, I have tried out every year for the school team, since I started high school and this year I was finally selected. It was a great moment, unfortunately due to COVID, I didn’t get to play one game, however, the achievement of just being selected is there.

During the football season, I train twice a week with my club Oatley FC, once per week with North West Sydney Spirit FC and with my personal trainer Kim Schaefer, through The Disability Trust. I also train with my Physio, Theodora, twice per week. During COVID, we were fortunate enough to continue, not in the same capacity but we still managed to train. In the off season, I continue training with the AYL team at North West Sydney Spirit, 6-a-side with my team Oatley FC and training twice per week with my physio. When I’m at home, my younger brother Cristian and I spend our spare time training together in the backyard, passing the ball or just juggling and practicing our skills.

A couple of years ago, in 2017, I was fortunate enough to play for IFG (International Football Group) in Fiji in The Ultimate Fiji Cup. This is a representative side made up of many different players across NSW and around Australia. Bruce Tilt, who runs IFG, gave me a wonderful opportunity and I was able to return to Fiji in 2018 and 2019. Unfortunately, due to COVID, the competition was cancelled this year but I hope to go again next year.

When I was 11 years old, my dad took me to a “come and try” day with the Pararoos over at Valentine Park, Parklea. I was then given an opportunity to train with the NSW Pararoos. Last year, I was selected to play in one of the NSW teams and we won a bronze medal. It was amazing, I love this team and all of the new mates I have made. My dream is to represent Australia and play with the Pararoos. I will continue to work hard to achieve that dream!

Click Here to read an article written by Dylan Arvela, during my 2018 trip to Fiji.