2026 UNISPORT INDIGENOUS NATIONALS

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE 29TH JUNE - 3RD JULY



Bond University's team for the UniSport Indigenous Nationals

Bond University Defies the Odds at the UniSport Indigenous Nationals

This year, our students proudly represented Bond University at the 2026 UniSport Indigenous Nationals, joining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student-athletes from universities across Australia for a week of sport, culture, and connection. Competing across four different sporting disciplines, our Bond University team punched well above its weight to claim a Top 10 finish for the first time in our short history at the games.

The Indigenous Nationals boast a rich 30-year history, with the first games held in 1996. The University of Newcastle hosted a special homecoming of the Indigenous Nationals back where it all began, celebrating 30 years since its founding. Starting with just a few dozen students, the games now bring hundreds of students together, across more than thirty universities, for something much more than sport.

Sixteen of Bond's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students departed for the games with high hopes, accompanied by staff from the Nyombil Centre and Bond Sport. Despite having one of the smallest Indigenous student cohorts in the competition, Bond's result is a remarkable reflection of our students' commitment and collective spirit. Competing in Basketball, Netball, Touch Football and Volleyball, Bond's results speak for themselves as we punch above our weight once again at the Indigenous Games.

MORE THAN SPORT

While medals and results are an important part of competitive sport, Indigenous Nationals is fundamentally about connection, culture and community. Throughout the week, Bond students had the opportunity to engage in a shared cultural experience that extended well beyond the sporting arena. Being surrounded by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from universities across Australia created a unique space for cultural exchange, where students could share stories, experiences, knowledge and perspectives, while celebrating the diversity and strength of First Nations cultures.

Culture was central to the experience, providing students with opportunities to strengthen their connection to their identities, community, and one another. Through conversations, cultural ceremonies, shared experiences, and the simple act of coming together, students celebrated what makes their cultures unique while recognising the common threads that connect First Nations peoples across the country. These moments fostered a strong sense of belonging and created an environment where students could feel proud of who they are and the cultures they represent. The relationships formed throughout the week are an important part of what makes Indigenous Nationals so meaningful. Students built friendships and strengthened networks with Indigenous students from universities across Australia, creating connections that extend beyond the event itself. They also had the opportunity to learn from one another, challenge perspectives, and gain a deeper appreciation of the different cultural backgrounds.

An important theme at the games is gift-giving, as students exchanged gifts with the opposition at the end of each match. These gifts take the form of hand-painted boomerangs and coolamons, individually designed by students. While these artefacts have found new homes, the gifts received are proudly displayed in Nyombil and remain a point of pride and connection for students. As pictured, the gift-giving is representative of trade that would occur between Indigenous tribes, nations, and communities throughout history. Preserving this tradition strikes the core of the games' purpose as students immerse themselves in tradition and culture.

Throughout the competition, Bond students proudly represented the University through their leadership, sportsmanship, respect and resilience, both on and off the field. Their participation demonstrated that Indigenous Nationals are about more than sporting achievement; it is an opportunity to celebrate culture, foster belonging, strengthen community and create lasting connections.

The memories, friendships, cultural experiences and relationships developed throughout the week will continue long after the final whistle, reinforcing the enduring value of Indigenous Nationals as a celebration of culture, community and Indigenous excellence.



Team captains Taleiah & Isaac receive their welcome gift from the University of Newcastle Elders



Morgan exchanges gifts with his childhood mentor



Noah S' gift exchange


Shaylee's gift exchange



Gift exchange with the University of Queensland

OUR TEAM

Comprised of sixteen students and five staff, the official team of the 2026 UniSport Indigenous Nationals is as follows:

Paddy Bassani - *Lama Lama*
Bachelor of Commerce

Shaylee Borg - *Bundjalung*
Bachelor of Criminal Justice & Criminology

Tarren Boyce - *Kooma*
Bachelor of Business
& Bachelor of International Relations

Bella Boyd - *Quandamooka*
Bachelor of Actuarial Science

Lily Boyd - *Quandamooka*
Bachelor of International Relations

Noah Ellis - *Wiradjuri*
Bachelor of Arts & Bachelor of Laws

Shardae Elsegood - *Jingili & Limilngan*
Bachelor of Psychological Science

Taleiah Hill - *Larrakia & Wadjigan*
Bachelor of Biomedical Science

Isaac Maynard - *Worimi*
Bachelor of Exercise & Sports Science
Doctor of Philosophy

Xavier McCarthy - *Yugambeh*
Bachelor of Actuarial Science

Flynn McCullough - *Ngemba*
Bachelor of Project Management

Deklyn Reid - *Anaiwan & Kamilaroi*
Bachelor of International Relations
& Bachelor of Laws

Harrison Reid - *Ngunnawal*
Bachelor of Business & Bachelor of Commerce

Morgan Sexton - *Butchulla & Mununjali*
Bachelor of Commerce
Master of Business

Noah Skippen - *Kamilaroi*
Bachelor of Exercise and Sports Science

Grace Winter - *Wiradjuri & Kamilaroi*
Bachelor of Laws & Bachelor of Business

TEAM CAPTAINS

Isaac Maynard
Worimi
Bachelor of Exercise & Sports Science
Doctor of Philosophy

Taleiah Hill
Larrakia & Wadjigan
Bachelor of Biomedical Science

SPORT CAPTAINS

Basketball

Morgan Sexton
Butchulla & Mununjali
Bachelor of Commerce
Master of Business

Touch Football

Harrison Reid
Ngunnawal
Bachelor of Business
& Bachelor of Commerce

Netball

Lily Boyd
Quandamooka
Bachelor of International Relations

Volleyball

Deklyn Reid
Anaiwan & Kamilaroi
Bachelor of International Relations
& Bachelor of Laws

STAFF

Duane Brown - *Wiradjuri*
Manager - Nyombil Centre

Maci Polley - *Melukerdee*
First Nations Teaching Fellow - HSM

Ryan James - *Bundjalung*
Alumni - Team Manager

Rebecca Stower
Club Sports Program Officer - Bond Sport

Toby Larsen
Club Sports Program Officer - Bond Sport

DAY 1: BASKETBALL

The tournament kicked off with the first of the four disciplines, basketball. It was a sizzling start to Bond's tournament, achieving a personal best outcome, qualifying for the quarter finals for the first time in Bond's short games history. After a tight encounter with cross-town rivals, the University of Queensland, Bond secured a draw, leading to a comfortable win against the Australian National University. The best was yet to come, however, as the team proceeded to post an emphatic win against the University of the Sunshine Coast, outscoring them by 21 points. These points proved crucial as the University of Queensland went on to win its next two encounters as well, following the early draw. However, boasting a superior point differential, Bond topped the pool and progressed to the quarter finals for the first time. Coming in as the 8th seed in the quarter finals, the team had it tough against an impressive University of Sydney outfit, unfortunately bowing out after a 37-7 loss. Nonetheless, it was an encouraging start to the campaign and laid the groundwork for a Top 10 finish.

POOL PLAY

DRAW
vs University of Queensland
16 - 16

WIN
vs Australian National University
16 - 6

WIN
vs University Sunshine Coast
31 - 10

QUARTER FINAL

LOSS
vs University of Sydney
37 - 7

OVERALL RANK: 8TH



Team photo following the opening match-up



Harrison and Paddy contest a rebound



Xavier soars for a lay-up



Post-match photo following Bond's clash with the University of the Sunshine Coast

DAY 2: NETBALL

After a strong start on Day 1, the team moved outdoors to the black top for Netball. Alike Day 1, Bond were tasked with an opening match-up against the University of Queensland. However, this time, the result favoured UQ as they secured a comprehensive win to open the day. The tides slowly shifted for Bond following, as the team bounced back to a drawn game with Curtin University, followed by a handy win against RMIT University in the final pool match. This resulted in a third-place finish in the pool, slipping below Charles Sturt University on account of point differential. Nonetheless, the team continued to outperform expectations, racking up wins in a fashion that Bond University cohorts had not seen before.

POOL PLAY

LOSS
vs University of Queensland
13 - 3

DRAW
vs Curtin University
11 - 11

WIN
vs RMIT University
11 - 4

OVERALL RANK: 17TH



Half-time huddle


Shardae plays defense



Harrison reaches for goal



Bond's team following their clash with University of Queensland in Netball

DAY 3: TOUCH FOOTBALL

After another strong showing across the opening days, the team took to the field for Touch Football on Day 3. Bond opened the day against the University of Newcastle, facing a tough challenge against the hosts, which ultimately resulted in a 7–2 defeat. With little time to dwell on the result, the team bounced back emphatically in their next fixture against Curtin University, producing a dominant 11–1 victory. A scheduled BYE in the third and final round left Bond with one win and one loss through the pool play. The impressive win over Charles Sturt University proved pivotal, with Bond securing second place in the pool, missing finals, although continuing their strong showing throughout the competition.

POOL PLAY

LOSS
vs University of Newcastle
7 - 2

WIN
vs Curtin University
11 - 1

BYE

OVERALL RANK: 16TH


Teamwork in the ruck



Flynn scopes the field



Deklyn sends it to Morgan


Teammates look on from the sideline


Paddy and Noah S take the ball up

DAY 4: VOLLEYBALL

After a strong showing through the first three days, the team carried their momentum into Day 4, taking to the court for Volleyball. Bond opened the day in impressive fashion, securing a convincing 2–0 victory over Macquarie University. The team faced a tougher challenge in their second match, however, facing the University of Technology Sydney, where they were defeated 2–0. With their final pool match still to come, Bond responded strongly against Edith Cowan University, producing another comprehensive 2–0 victory to close out the pool stage. The result secured Bond second place in the pool, marking another strong performance as the team wrapped up their impressive campaign with a win.

POOL PLAY

WIN
vs Macquarie University
2 - 0

LOSS
vs University of Technology Sydney
2 - 0

WIN
vs Edith Cowan University
2 - 0

OVERALL RANK: 9TH

COMPETITION SUMMARY

Day 1 - Basketball

POOL PLAY

DRAW
vs University of Queensland
16 - 16

WIN
vs Australian National University
16 - 6

WIN
vs University Sunshine Coast
31 - 10

QUARTER FINAL

LOSS
vs University of Sydney
37 - 7

OVERALL RANK: 8TH

Day 2 - Netball

POOL PLAY

LOSS
vs University of Queensland
13 - 3

DRAW
vs Curtin University
11 - 11

WIN
vs RMIT University
11 - 4

OVERALL RANK: 17TH

Day 3 - Touch Football

POOL PLAY

LOSS
vs University of Newcastle
7 - 2

WIN
vs Curtin University
11 - 1

BYE

OVERALL RANK: 16TH

Day 4 - Volleyball

POOL PLAY

WIN
vs Macquarie University
2 - 0

LOSS
vs University of Technology Sydney
2 - 0

WIN
vs Edith Cowan University
2 - 0

OVERALL RANK: 9TH

FINAL RANK: 10TH Place

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Indigenous Nationals program is supported through financial contributions from the SSAF Committee and the Office of the Provost. This funding helps provide students with the opportunity to participate in a unique and meaningful experience that extends beyond sporting competition. Through the program, students can develop leadership skills, strengthen cultural connections, build lasting friendships, and establish meaningful relationships with peers at Bond University and First Nations students from universities across Australia. Furthermore, the Bond Sport team's role in the planning and delivery of the Indigenous Nationals program has been integral. The team coordinatedthe event and supported students throughout the competition and preparation phase. Their contribution helped ensure the program was well organised and provided students with the opportunity to participate in a positive and inclusive sporting experience. Bond Sport Club Sport Coordinators Rebecca and Toby (pictured) were immense in their efforts, helping guide the team to a historical best result.



Toby, Rebecca, Maci & Duane

Beyond staff contributions, one of the most pleasing outcomes was the leadership demonstrated by students. Their enthusiasm and experience were instrumental in building momentum for this year's program and encouraging broader student participation. In particular, Isaac Maynard, Deklyn Reid, Tarren Boyce, Morgan Sexton and Harrison Reid played significant leadership roles by promoting the program, encouraging participation, assisting with training sessions and helping prepare students across the various sports. Their leadership created a genuine sense of ownership amongst participants and contributed significantly to the positive culture experienced. throughout the campaign.

LOOKING AHEAD

The 2026 Indigenous Nationals campaign has established a strong foundation for future success. The strengthened partnership between Club Sport and Nyombil, combined with increasing student leadership and engagement, has created a sustainable model that can continue to grow in the years ahead. Indigenous Nationals has become far more than a sporting event—it is now an important pathway for First Nations students to connect with the University community, develop leadership capabilities and experience a strong sense of belonging. The program also presents an important opportunity for Bond University to further distinguish itself as a destination of choice for prospective First Nations students who wish to combine higher education with sporting excellence. The outcomes achieved this year demonstrate what is possible when students are empowered, staff collaborate across departments, and there is a shared commitment to creating exceptional student experiences. Club Sport & Nyombil look forward to continuing to build this program in partnership with the broader University community in the years ahead. The collective team achievement belongs to every student who wore the Bond colours and represented the University with pride. Most importantly, it reflects the collective spirit of Bond's Indigenous student community—a community that continues to show what is possible when students are empowered, supported, and connected. Bond Sport, Nyombil and the wider University look forward to nurturing and growing the Indigenous Nationals into the future.



Isaac & Morgan