



BARWON SPORTS ACADEMY

Athlete & Family Referral Pathway

A tiered guide to help athletes and families access the right support — from everyday development and performance needs through to clinical or urgent wellbeing concerns.

How to use this guide

Start at Tier 1 for most issues. The Program Manager will listen, clarify the primary need and coordinate the most suitable support. Move to a specialist or clinical pathway when the issue is persistent, outside a practitioner's scope, or safety is at risk.

- Tier 1 — first conversation with the Program Manager.
- Tier 2 — referral to a BSA development, mindset or counselling practitioner.
- Tier 3 — referral to a registered psychologist, GP or other allied health practitioner.
- Tier 4 — crisis and emergency pathway.

Common Challenges & Typical Support

Use this table with the flowchart and practitioner guide. The primary need — not the person's title — should guide the referral.

Challenge area	Common signs	Typical support
Development & Goal Setting	Unclear direction, difficulty setting priorities, limited accountability, uncertainty about the next stage.	Paul Hood; structured development planning, goal-setting and review.
Mental Preparation & Performance	Pre-competition nerves, loss of confidence, focus issues, fear of failure or difficulty responding to pressure.	Ben Williamson or Rebecca Bourke, depending on the athlete's needs and context.
Selection Setbacks & Transitions	Deselection, comparison with peers, motivation drop, role changes or pathway transition.	Program Manager debrief; Paul Hood for development reset; Ben Williamson for mindset and response.
Family, Team & Communication	Conflict, difficult conversations, competing expectations or relationship strain affecting the athlete.	Rebecca Bourke for counselling, communication and dispute-resolution-informed support.
Injury & Rehabilitation	Persistent pain, return-to-play uncertainty, frustration, loss of confidence or difficulty coping during rehab.	Sports Physiotherapist for physical care; Stephen Rendall when psychological support is required.
Mental Health & Wellbeing	Persistent low mood, anxiety, trauma symptoms, sleep disturbance, withdrawal, self-harm or major functional change.	Registered Psychologist or GP. Use the crisis pathway immediately when safety is at risk.
School, Life & Identity Balance	Burnout signs, school impact, conflict at home or identity becoming overly dependent on sport.	Program Manager; Paul Hood, Rebecca Bourke or Stephen Rendall according to the primary need.

Referral Flowchart

The Program Manager coordinates all BSA referrals. Families are not expected to determine the clinical scope of a concern on their own.

TIER 1 · Talk to the Program Manager

When to use: Any new question, concern or change in the athlete's experience — development, confidence, pressure, training load, school balance, family circumstances or engagement.

Action: Email or call the Program Manager to arrange a confidential conversation in person, by phone or online.

Who you'll speak with: BSA Program Manager.

Escalate if: The issue is ongoing, specialist input is needed, the need is clinical in nature, or the athlete or family requests additional support.



TIER 2 · BSA Development, Mindset & Counselling Support

When to use: Goal-setting and development planning, motivation dips, selection setbacks, confidence issues, pressure management, emotional regulation, transition challenges, communication difficulties or family/team conflict.

Action: The Program Manager identifies the primary need and makes a warm referral to the most suitable BSA practitioner.

Who you'll speak with: Paul Hood (development and goal-setting) · Ben Williamson (mindset and human performance) · Rebecca Bourke (counselling, sports mindset and relationship/communication support).

Escalate if: Symptoms persist, the concern significantly affects daily functioning, clinical assessment is needed, or the practitioner identifies that the matter is outside their scope.



TIER 3 · Clinical & Allied Health Referral

When to use: Persistent anxiety or low mood, trauma symptoms, sleep disturbance, significant stress, pain-related psychological issues, post-injury adjustment, disordered eating signs, or other needs requiring assessment or treatment by a registered health practitioner.

Action: The Program Manager makes a warm referral and involves the family GP or treating team where clinically appropriate.

Who you'll speak with: Stephen Rendall, Registered Psychologist · family GP · relevant allied health practitioner.

Escalate if: The athlete expresses suicidal thoughts, self-harm, immediate danger, severe distress or any urgent safety concern.



TIER 4 · Crisis & Emergency Pathway

When to use: Immediate risk to the athlete or others — suicidal intent, self-harm, severe distress or a medical emergency.

Action: Act now. Call 000 if there is immediate danger. For crisis support, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14. Then notify the BSA Program Manager so coordinated follow-up support can begin.

Who you'll speak with: 000 Emergency · Lifeline 13 11 14 · GP or treating clinician.

Escalate if: Immediate safety has been addressed; follow-up is then coordinated with the GP or treating clinician before return to the program.

Choosing the Right BSA Practitioner

Each practitioner offers a different type of support. BSA Staff or your Program Manager will help families choose the best starting point and can redirect the referral if the athlete's needs change.

Primary athlete need	Best starting point	Typical examples
Development direction and goal-setting	Paul Hood	Development plans, school, sport and life balance, priorities, accountability and pathway transitions.
Pressure, confidence and performance mindset	Ben Williamson	Emotional regulation, focus, fear of failure or success, external opinions, adaptability and setbacks.
Counselling, high-stakes preparation and relationship challenges	Rebecca Bourke	Competition readiness, difficult conversations, family/team conflict, communication and decision-making.
Persistent or clinical psychological concerns	Stephen Rendall	Anxiety, depression, trauma, stress, anger, pain, post-injury adjustment and general psychological counselling.

Practitioner Profiles

Paul Hood · Athlete Development & Goal-Setting Support

About: Paul is a respected football coach, educator and former Australian Rules footballer. His senior coaching experience includes the Geelong Falcons, Geelong VFL, VFLW and AFLW programs, including serving as the inaugural coach of the Geelong Cats AFLW team in 2019. His approach is grounded in leadership, player development and helping athletes progress on and off the field.

Best placed to support: Clarifying development priorities; setting meaningful short- and long-term goals; building an Athlete Development Plan; reviewing progress; responding constructively to selection setbacks; role clarity; accountability; and navigating pathway transitions.

How to access: Contact the Athlete Pathways and Programs Lead or your Program Manager, who will coordinate an introduction or appointment.

Scope note: Paul provides development and mentoring support. Concerns involving persistent mental health symptoms, diagnosis, treatment or immediate safety require a psychologist, GP or emergency pathway.

Ben Williamson · Mindset & Human Performance Coach — Mindset365

About: Ben focuses on developing the person behind the performance. Mindset365 is built on the view that emotional intelligence, self-awareness and the ability to respond under pressure are critical performance advantages in sport and other high-pressure environments.

Best placed to support: Pre-competition nerves; confidence and focus; understanding emotional responses and triggers; managing reactions under pressure; fear of failure, fear of success or concern about other people's opinions; adaptability; recovering from setbacks; and building practical performance routines and decision-making skills.

How to access: Contact the Pathways and Programs Lead or your BSA Program Manager for a warm referral to Ben and Mindset365.

Scope note: Ben's role is performance coaching rather than clinical mental health treatment. Persistent low mood, trauma symptoms, self-harm, severe anxiety or major functional decline should be referred to a registered psychologist or GP.

Practitioner Profiles — Continued

Rebecca Bourke · Counsellor, Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner & Sports Mindset Coach — Mindset Flex

About: Rebecca is a registered Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner and Counsellor. Through Mindset Flex, she has also provided sports mindset coaching to elite athletes at the Australian Institute of Sport, supporting mental readiness for major competitions. Her approach brings together counselling, performance mindset strategies, communication and dispute-resolution-informed techniques.

Best placed to support: High-stakes competition preparation; managing pressure; confidence and mental readiness; difficult conversations; athlete-parent, family or team relationship challenges; communication breakdowns; competing expectations; conflict resolution; and situations where performance and personal relationships are closely connected.

How to access: Contact the BSA Athlete Pathways and Programs Lead or your Program Manager to discuss the athlete's needs and arrange a suitable referral.

Scope note: Where an athlete requires clinical psychological assessment or treatment, or presents with persistent or severe mental health symptoms, the referral should move to a registered psychologist or GP.

Stephen Rendall · Registered Psychologist — Reliable Mind Psychology

About: Stephen is a registered psychologist with more than 10 years of experience supporting individuals and organisations. Reliable Mind Psychology operates in Melbourne and Geelong, and Stephen currently works with the Carlton Football Club. His practice supports both mental health difficulties and performance-related psychological challenges.

Best placed to support: Persistent anxiety or depression; post-traumatic stress; stress and anger management; relationship difficulties; self-confidence; pain management; psychological adjustment following injury; rehabilitation challenges; and general counselling where a registered psychologist is the appropriate level of care.

How to access: BSA can help the athlete and family arrange an appointment with Stephen.

Scope note: Use Tier 4 immediately when there is suicidal intent, self-harm, severe distress, medical emergency or an immediate risk to the athlete or others.

Scope & Escalation at a Glance

Performance and development support

Paul, Ben and Rebecca can support development, mindset, confidence, pressure, communication and non-clinical counselling needs within their professional scope.

Clinical and urgent support

Stephen, a family GP or another registered health practitioner should be used for persistent or complex mental health symptoms. Call 000 for immediate danger or Lifeline 13 11 14 for crisis support.

Important Notes for Families

- All referrals are coordinated confidentially and in line with child-safe, privacy and mandatory reporting obligations.
- Parents and guardians are welcome to be involved. The athlete's age, wishes, safety and professional obligations will guide how information is shared.
- An athlete may move between practitioners as their needs change. Referral to one provider does not prevent support from another.
- Reaching out early is encouraged. Start with the Program Manager whenever you are unsure.