

Graham on track for Tokyo 2020 spot after bold Bond move pays off

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ALEX Graham has made huge moves in the pool this year but it's the few strides he took across a stage at Bond University on Saturday that were just as important on his mission to become an Olympian.

Graham received his Bachelor of Sports Management degree almost four years after a move to the Gold Coast that has proved vital for his swimming career.

After bolting on to the Australian swim team as a teen, Graham swam outside his best at his first international meet at the 2013 world titles and narrowly missed the Commonwealth Games team the following year, with the disappointment taking a toll.



(L-R) Mack Horton, Elijah Winnington, Kyle Chalmers and Alexander Graham celebrate winning gold in the Mens 4 x 200m Freestyle Relay on day four of swimming competition at the XXI Commonwealth Games at Gold Coast Aquatic Centre. Photo: AAP

Seeking a change of scenery, Graham considered heading to college in the US before becoming the inaugural recipient of the Georgina Hope Rinehart Swimming Excellence Scholarship and shifting, instead, to the Gold Coast.

“In reflection, I’m so glad that I made the move and that Bond Uni supported me on this journey and especially Gina Rinehart being the benefactor of this scholarship, I owe her so much,” Graham said.

“I can honestly say without the scholarship I don’t think that I’d be in the same place in my swimming career as well because they’ve helped me so much and the uni is so passionate about sport and committed to helping you achieve what you want to achieve in the pool as well as your study.”

Graham, who also trains at Bond under coach Richard Scarce, has had a breakout year in 2018, winning gold at the Commonwealth Games in the 4x200m relay and making the Commonwealth Games and Pan Pac finals in the 200m freestyle.

While Kyle Chalmers, Mack Horton and Jack Cartwright have been in the spotlight in the event, Graham has been flying under the radar, steadily improving and showing himself to be a genuine contender for a Tokyo Olympic berth.



Gold Coast swimmer Alex Graham ahead of Pan Pacific Championships. Photo: Delly Carr

“To improve from Commonwealth Games (in April) to Pan Pacs (in August) was a big goal of mine and to make the final (in Japan) was pretty awesome,” Graham said.

“I’m getting closer to breaking that 1:46 barrier which is another goal of mine - and it’s given me a lot of confidence leading into the next two years.”

But he knows he can’t afford to relax in what is shaping as the most competitive event in Australian swimming, with as many as 10 swimmers genuine chances of making the national final with just six spots on offer for the relays.

“The Australian men are flying at the moment in that 4x2 (relay) and it showed at Pan Pacs, we just got pipped for the gold medal by the US.

“But it’s super exciting and it’s definitely a goal of mine to continue to be involved in that and I know I’m going to have to go fast.

“Next year is going to be a bit of a working year and grinding away and the main focus for me from here on in is the 2020 Olympics.”