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## Investment in two 15 year olds pays off

Time flies when you're a winter superstar.

Seven years ago two 15-year-old rookies readied themselves to take on the world's best on sport's grandest stage, the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

New to the international scene, Moguls skier Britt Cox and Halfpipe snowboarder Scotty James were given their first taste of Olympic Games' pressure.

Cox had only competed in her first World Cup just three weeks before and James was a late injury replacement but both athletes were called on to wear the Aussie colours and soak up the Olympic experience.

Fast forward to 2017 and the duo are on top of the world.

Cox has a dominant lead in the world rankings having won six World Cup events to begin the season including gold at the PyeongChang 2018 test event.

Not one to be outdone, James took out the 2015 World Championships, recently became an X Games gold medallist and secured the World Cup title last weekend by also taking out the top step on the podium at the home of the 2018 Games.

The pair of now 22-year-olds are forever grateful of being given that early chance to help with their development and to propel them to where they are today.

"I really feel like I gained a lot of valuable insight and knowledge in Vancouver that helped my development as an athlete," Cox said.

"I was thrown in the deep end which was actually perfect because I didn't really have time to comprehend the situation and get nervous.

"I just treated it like any other competition and then soaked up the Olympic atmosphere. I got to see the top end athletes train and compete and it gave me a great insight of how I could get to that level."

It has been that insight that has allowed Cox to become the dominant athlete she is today.

“Experiencing the games in Vancouver as a competitor when I was 15 helped me become more accustomed to the hype that surrounds the Olympic Games,” continued Cox.

“I’ve been able to apply this to other major events in my career thus far.”

It was much the same for James.

“Getting to compete in Vancouver definitely helped my development,” he said.

“Being exposed to such excitement, atmosphere and what it meant to wear my country colours was awesome at such a young age.”

At that first major event with the world watching James realised what it would take to become the athlete he is today.

“Not to put too much pressure on myself, with such a big audience and a great atmosphere it comes down to how you handle the nerves.”

The duo have been supported along their journey to the top by the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia (OWIA).

The OWIA together with the AOC, Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), New South Wales Institute of Sport (NSWIS) and the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) have provided programs for athletes in the winter sports covering coaching, international competition opportunities and support services including medical, strength and conditioning, psychology and physiotherapy.

“Our developing athletes have been really lucky compared to their peers in other countries,” said OWIA CEO Geoff Lipshut.

“The AOC together with SSA (Ski & Snowboard Australia) provided a unique opportunity for Britt and Scotty and we are really seeing the dividends of this seven years down the track.

“It is great that the Olympic Team is able to help with the development of our best youngsters.”

Now with the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Games less than a year away both Cox and James, who also both lined up in Sochi, have their sights set on replicating their recent success in Korea.

“I absolutely love South Korea. The people are awesome, everyone loves snowboarding and is very supportive and helpful” James said.

“They’ve put on a really good pipe and I’m sure it’s going to be exactly the same next year, so I think we can expect another really fierce competition in a year’s time.

“All the experiences over the years have been put in my pocket and embraced. I’ll be ready!”

Cox added: “I am always learning and developing as an athlete and I will carry the knowledge I gained from Vancouver and Sochi with me through the next 12 months.

“It’s great to have that insight however, Sochi was a completely different experience to Vancouver and I suspect Korea to be different again and that’s exciting.”

James now heads to the US to continue competing while Cox will be looking to build on her World Cup lead when she takes to the air in Thaiwoo, China this weekend.

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