



Third-time lucky: Hockeyroo Casey Sablowski, pictured at the State Hockey Centre in Bentley, is looking forward to her third Olympics in Rio. Picture: Will Russell

Thrice girl seeks her redemption in Rio

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It was always Casey Sablowski's goal to take part in three Olympic Games, a box she's likely to tick in Rio if, as expected, she's selected in the squad.

But the 27-year-old has hinted it could also be her last.

Sablowski, who hails from the south coast of NSW, made her Hockeyroos debut at the age of 17 and three years later, in 2009, she was named the FIH World Young Player of the Year.

It's been a stellar career ever since, but after marrying her long-time partner Scott in 2014 she has set herself a new goal – starting a family.

The couple are based in WA, which is where Hockey Australia's high-performance unit is, but a move back to NSW is on the cards after Rio.

"At the moment the only thing I am sure about is that my husband and I want to start a family, so that's going to be the priority after Rio," she said.

"I think at that stage we'll have to reassess where we're living – we're both from NSW and ideally when we start a family we want to both be close to our families and friends.

"For me it will be just taking a back step from hockey and allowing him to pursue his career and where that takes us.



Dreaming of gold: Hockeyroos, left to right, Mariah Williams, Jodie Kenny, Georgina Morgan, Anna Flanagan (front centre), Georgia Nanscawen (back), Karri McMahon, Casey Sablowski and Kate Hanna, during a team promotional visit to Shenton Park Dog's Refuge Home. Picture: Marie Nirme

"He's teaching, so it just depends on where he's working and I'll be the supportive wife for him. They've given up a lot of their time and effort for us, so it would be nice to repay the favour."

It means there's added motivation to finish among the medals this campaign, especially after the devastation Sablowski experienced in the past two Olympics when the Hockeyroos finished fifth.

"I'm really excited at the prospect of going, but for me

coming away with two fifth places at the two previous Olympics, I'm really hungry for that gold medal," she said.

"I think preparation has probably shifted a little bit for me in the last two or three years knowing how devastating it is to come close and miss out on semi-finals, so I think I've definitely left no stone unturned for this campaign.

"Physically I'm in pretty good shape so far and I'm just hoping the body holds out. I knew I was probably in the age

bracket where I could make three Olympic Games, that was always a bit of a goal of mine.

"Along the way you have different setbacks and you start to re-evaluate – different things happen in life where you questions things.

"But I always knew I wanted to go to my third Olympic Games. I'm really hungry for the gold medal in Rio, that would just be a nice little send off."

Sablowski, born Eastham,

has hockey in her blood. Both her parents played the sport, as did her brother and extended family.

Sablowski herself took up the sport at the tender age of five, playing in a mixed competition for a team called Albion Park until she switched to women's hockey at the age of 12, and her rise to national level

not to have experienced anything career-threatening.

"I've definitely had my fair share of injuries, but fortunately I've had no major concerns that have been career-threatening," Sablowski said. "I'm thankful nothing like that has come about. It's just about managing soft tissue injuries, recurring hamstrings, tears

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was, as she describes it, "rapid". But it also required her to leave home and head west for Perth.

"It was pretty rapid coming into the Australian team. I was young, I debuted at 17 and moved over to the institute at 18, so I moved away from family and friends, which was probably the hardest thing I've ever had to do at such a young age," she said.

"It was completely across the other side of the country, you can't just pop home and have someone look after you, you have to grow up quite quickly."

She also had to nurse herself through various injury setbacks along the way, though she counts herself as fortunate

and strains. I've had a fractured eye socket along the way and a torn posterior cruciate ligament (PCL). In all I consider myself quite lucky to have had the few serious injuries I've had."

Though unsure of what the future holds after Rio, it's bound to be an emotional Olympic Games for Sablowski no matter the result. Either way, she can't wait to get to Rio for what could be her final campaign.

"It probably won't hit me until after it's all over," she said.

"Rio is such a vibrant city and Brazil, I've never been there, so it will be cool to try and experience it."