

**D**espite everything, Morgan Mitchell is feeling calm. When the Tokyo Olympics were postponed last year, the 800-metre runner “got sad for about three days”, then put things in perspective, spent precious time with her family and refocused her goals.

Now, with the Olympics tantalisingly close but uncertainty still circling due to the pandemic, she is prepared for whatever happens. “It’s one of those things where you’ll just have to wait and see,” she says. “If they do go ahead, great, we’ll go with all guns blazing. If not, we’ll just have to go to plan B and have other goals for this year with the 800.”

Mitchell, who grew up in Werribee, became an Olympian at 21 when she represented Australia in the 400 metres and 4x400-metre relay at Rio in 2016. In 2019, she switched to the 800 metres and has rapidly improved – and is now more than a good chance to represent Australia in that event if Tokyo does go ahead as planned.

“No two sessions are the same, so you do get a lot of variety,” she says. “Some days, they’ll focus just on strength, other days cardio, some days, it’s a full mix. And it’s the fact that you get to do it with other like-minded people, which I really enjoy.”

For Mitchell, training is a daily menu of running, boxing, gym and Pilates. About a month from a big race, she begins easing off (which for her means running six to eight kilometres in a day instead of 12) in order to rest her body and, hopefully, “slingshot” her way to a personal best.

The day of the race is a different affair. She likes to wake up, go out for coffee with her mates and have a huge breakfast. “Honestly, I’ll order everything on the menu,” she laughs. After some time sitting in the sun or playing basketball, she’ll eat lunch and then take a nap around 3pm. Then she’ll put on a movie – *Kill Bill* and *Rush Hour* are among her favourites – and get ready for the bus trip to the stadium while the film plays in the

“You can see people tanning, playing beach volleyball. I usually grab a coffee from Rock Paper Scissors and just get on my way, listening to music. Honestly, I’m a very simple person. That makes me so happy; just a half-hour walk along the esplanade.”

Living in Port Melbourne is, in some ways, a return to her childhood. “I’ve always wanted to live there,” she says. “[My sisters and I] spent most of our time in Port Melbourne as kids because we went to school around the corner at Galilee [Regional Catholic Primary School].” Mitchell’s mum (and “ultimate hero”) Lois used to work nearby at a luxury car dealership, and, after school, the girls were trusted to walk there by themselves and help out cleaning cars until mum was finished work. As a single parent, Lois would also drive her three daughters across Victoria to various sporting commitments and encourage their interests. “She didn’t have a lot of resources to make it happen, but somehow, she just made it happen,” says Mitchell.

*“At the end of the day, while the training is getting done when it’s scheduled, nothing else really matters.”*

But her success hasn’t been limited to the track. Now 26, chances are you already know her from *The Game Changers*, a 2019 Netflix documentary produced by James Cameron and Arnold Schwarzenegger (among many other big Hollywood names) about athletes who eat strictly plant-based diets.

You’ll also find Mitchell’s face and name on social media endorsing a swag of top-name brands, including Tissot, Clinique, Maybelline, Ford Ranger and Jaggad, a Melbourne sportswear company about to release a dedicated line of clothing.

In March, she became the first Olympic athlete ambassador for F45 Training, an Australian fitness company that started in Sydney and now has more than 2000 studios in more than 60 countries.

Mitchell, who began going to the 45-minute video-presented fitness workouts with her sister, loves the system’s intensity and versatility.

background. “It’s very relaxed,” says Mitchell. “I get nervous [before the race], but I try to be in the moment because it’s like, what’s the point in being nervous when you’re not even at the track yet?”

Her ability to conjure calm is no accident, though. A few years ago, Mitchell had to navigate some personal mental health challenges. She sought professional help from a mindfulness coach and was able to turn her situation around. Her advice for others battling mental health issues is to seek out a professional and stick with the program.

“I found that meditation and slowing down helps a lot. I meditate every single day. And just being in the moment has helped me a lot.”

When she’s not on the training track in Newport, you might find Mitchell at her favourite cafe, Au.79 Cafe in Abbotsford (“the best coffee and their food is incredible”) or walking along the beach on a sunny day in Port Melbourne, where she lives.

“I look up to her a lot. Honestly, [she’s] a 10-out-of-10 woman.”

But despite her increasing public profile and being recognised from time to time on the street, Mitchell draws on advice from her mum (“be true to yourself”) as well as her manager and isn’t fazed by the extra attention.

“I think I’m just so relaxed, and I don’t really notice it anyway,” she says. “At the end of the day, while the training is getting done when it’s scheduled, nothing else really matters.”

“If it does ramp up and things do get hectic, I’ll probably have to sit down and sort a few things out. But for the time being, my life is very much normal. It’s quite nice.” ●

Hair and makeup by Georgia Gaillard.

Morgan wears Jaggad.