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It was a momentous day for 13-year-old Jonas Lau in December last year, standing atop the winner's podium with a gold medal around his neck, just seven months after he began training for bike races and triathlons.

The Doncaster East teen, who has autism and an intellectual disability, joined the NDIS in March 2018 and has since gone from strength-to-strength, both on and off the sporting field.

"Jonas competed in two triathlons and a bike race last year. He was able to focus and stay on the course. To complete each race was amazing. He's really inspired by the results and we're seeing him wanting to do more, it's great," Jonas's mum Kate said.

Jonas trains twice a week with Inclusive Sports Training who coach athletes with disability and prepare them to participate in mainstream sporting competitions.

The NDIS has also helped the Bulleen Heights School student flourish off the track.

"Before the NDIS, Jonas had very limited speech – one or two simple words. Now, he uses sentences and is able to initiate conversation and ask questions. He has come a long way.

"Jonas hadn't been able to access social or community recreation programs in the past, but now he has a real sense of belonging."

Belonging is something the Lau family holds dear, having immigrated to Australia from Malaysia seven years ago.

"I am so grateful for the opportunities we have here in Australia and for the support Jonas is receiving from the NDIS.

"We've got a strong team of support workers, occupational therapists, speech therapists and psychologists working together to develop strategies to help manage Jonas and build his skills so he can become more independent.

"We try to maximise Jonas's NDIS supports wherever we can. For example, when we have support workers to help Jonas access the community, we incorporate training elements so Jonas can learn and practise things like going to the supermarket, paying for things and getting home safely.

"We still have challenges and things to work on, but we hope one day Jonas is able to make a living and lead a very normal, happy life."

April is Autism Awareness Month which promotes the full participation of all people with autism to ensure they have the necessary support to be able to exercise their rights and fundamental freedoms.

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