



WHAT I'VE LEARNT ABOUT FATHERHOOD



Channel 7 sports presenter
Hamish McLachlan. Father
of Milla, 6, Indi, 4, and Lex, 2



My dad, Angus, was a tough but very well-meaning old taskmaster. My brothers and I used to call him "singlet" because he was always on our backs.

I remember him saying to me when I was about 12 or so, "Whatever you do in life, remember you go to your grave with just one thing, and that's your reputation". What he meant by that, I think, was to live a life that you're proud of – with no wrinkles anywhere.

Dad was, and is, a sheep farmer. The days were pretty simple when I was a kid – if the sun was up then my brothers and I would go out and help him with whatever needed doing, and when it was dark, we'd go home for dinner. We were always outside with him learning about the stock and the land.

In Year 7, dad came to watch me at boarding school on a day when I was competing in six events at the school athletics championships. The day was about to get underway, and he gave me some parting advice before he took his seat with mum. There was this long avenue of plane trees and the sprinklers had been on and the water was running down the avenue and into the drain. "You've got a great opportunity," dad said. "But today is just like that water – once it's gone, it's gone."

What he was saying was to really focus in and concentrate and make the most of the rare opportunity. I went on to win the championships that day. Looking back, it was one of the prouder days of my life. And dad's, I think. I hope.

Going through IVF was difficult. The first two eggs didn't take. And then you do start to wonder if it's ever going to happen. But Soph and I said to ourselves, Let's keep this simple. If we do everything we can, and we look after ourselves and our bodies, and we put ourselves in the best possible hands and believe in the process, then it will happen.

My mum has always said that a stressed horse never gets pregnant, so we tried to be relaxed. And we were so lucky it all worked with Milla and then we had Indi and Lex naturally.

Having a daughter has helped me see life through a different lens. I was one of four boys, I'd been to an all-boys boarding school, and I work in football, which is still very much a male-dominated environment. But having Milla has softened me so much, and broadened me and has made me so much more aware of the challenges, the perspective and the beauty of the fairer sex.

My work takes me away a lot whether it's the Winter Olympics, the football or the tennis. But I always try and get home at night whenever possible. I just love waking up with my wife and kids around me.

Time and listening. They're the secrets to a lasting relationship. You've got to try and find an hour to go for a walk or sit down for a chat. Sometimes I'll say to Soph, "Come with me to Flemington so we can chat in the car". I'd rather spend time with her than go and play five hours of golf.

Our whole family sits down to eat together every night. That means we all eat by 6pm. We always ask the kids to pick their "blue-sky moment" of the day. It's a nice thing to do that encourages reflection and gratitude.

We went camping the other night and I was lying in the tent with one of the girls asleep across my stomach and another one sprawled across my face. And I was listening to them sleep thinking to myself, these are the best of days.

McLachlan is an ambassador of the Magic Millions Carnival that kicks off with the polo on January 6 on the Gold Coast. For more info and tickets, visit magicmillions.com.au