



# Oh my to

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**F**IVE weeks before the arrival of her new baby, Olympic champion Alisa Camplin is finally allowing herself to be excited.

Every scan showing that their baby appears clear of the devastating heart condition that stole their first son, Finnan, has been another small weight off the shoulders of Camplin and husband Oliver Warner.

"I'm now actually starting to feel like I'm going to be a mum," Camplin says. "When people stopped asking how many months to how many weeks before the baby is due, I'm like oh my god, I'm going to have a baby."

"It's now starting to get very exciting and very daunting."

"Without deliberately doing it, I think we have had a cap on our excitement."

"But as we've gotten through the gate posts, it's like one blanket is coming off after another and we feel really excited."

For a couple who have already endured so much, Camplin and Warner deserved an easy path to the birth of their second child.

But their journey has been anything but, with a two-year struggle to fall pregnant and a miscarriage at 11 weeks in October last year.

"We'd been trying to get pregnant for a long time."

"I think everyone was looking at their watch and thinking, when is this going to happen?," Camplin says.

"From the absolute day we conceived I knew — I was so sick."

She says for the first half of the pregnancy, the couple kept a lid on their emotions and any excitement was tempered by the scars of their previous experience.

"We were just so concerned with keeping it all in perspective."

"I think subconsciously Ollie and I were pretty cautious going in for each scan to look if everything was OK."

"Most people wait 12-to-14 weeks to share the news, but our doctors wanted to do an extra scan at 16 weeks before we shared, which was hard because I was starting to look really big and I was so sick."

With the richly deserved next chapter of her life now so close, Camplin is again displaying the optimism, resilience and the strength of will that saw her win Olympic gold at the 2002 Salt Lake City Games with fractured ankles.

Nevertheless, she shares the fears of any expectant mother.

"I'm past fears about hearts now and I'm more worried about whether I'm going to be a good mum, will I be bored or will I be exhausted, or will I be able

# God, I'm going have a baby

Olympic gold medallist Alisa Camplin's world turned upside down two years ago with the death of her 10-day-old son Finnan. But with the impending arrival of a new baby, KIM WILSON reports there is fresh hope for Camplin and husband Oliver



Jumping for joy: Alisa Camplin thrilled us with her freestyle skiing exploits (right), but was reduced to tears when telling the nation of her and husband Oliver's pain at losing baby Finnan. Camplin is now beaming (far left) at the prospect of being a mother again. Main picture: DAVID CAIRD



to cope?," she says. "It's nice to feel those normal anxieties."

Camplin's fears of a repeat of the congenital heart defect that claimed Finnan's life have been allayed by additional scans.

"We won't be out of the dark until the baby is born and they can really look at everything carefully," she says. "But I'm an optimist by nature."

"There's a 96 per cent chance every woman will have a healthy baby, so I choose to look at that and think, why wouldn't I be in that percentage?"

Camplin says the raw pain of losing Finnan, who died at 10 days old in March 2011, is not as keenly felt as in the early days.

"I think a lot of people when they speak to us about Finnan now, they expect that the wound is still wide open and any mention of him will put us into tears," she says. "Whereas, in fact, we treasure the 10 days we had with him."

"We got to meet our son."

"We got a feel for his character and his fighting spirit."

"We got to do little parental things for him, albeit in hospital."

"I got to look eye-to-eye with my own child and I feel grateful for that, so I have fond memories."

"It's a sweet thing that we carry now. It's the sweetness of a little boy rather than the tragedy of the loss."

And Camplin remembers Finnan in small gestures like ending all of her personal emails and cards with a special XxX.

"To me, that's Ollie, Finnan and Alisa," Camplin says.

"Every time I do it I'm conscious of why I'm doing it — it's become very natural."

"We don't want to forget him."

There are other ways the couple remember their precious firstborn child — a tree planted in his honour, photos displayed around the house, a foundation set up in his memory.

For Father's Day, Finnan always gives his dad a card and at Christmas there will always be something under the tree from Finnan to Mum and Dad.

The aerial skiing champion attributes much of her strength of character to her training as an elite athlete.

"I can't imagine anything worse being thrown our way than losing Finnan, but when you're there you have to deal with it."

"There's no choice, and maybe my sports psychology training really equipped me more than I realised."

"Ultimately, when something goes wrong you've got two choices."

"You sit in a corner and cry and hope some miracle or someone is going to pick you up and change the world, which isn't going to happen."

"Maybe it's through facing fear in the sport I was in or overcoming the injuries that I did that I just had to get up straightaway (after Finnan died), because the longer you sit there it's not going to change the situation."

One of the first things the couple did was start Finnan's Gift, a charity to raise funds for The Royal Children's Hospital.

"Going through that, even though it was a bit of a blur in that first three or four months, when we got to the other end we realised actually that Finnan's Gift, and the whole community, had helped us a lot more than we could have ever expected," she says.

"People would feel more comfortable saying how are things going with Finnan's Gift than are you OK, so that meant we had a bridge to say 'Hey, Finnan would be really proud', to be able to talk about him and let people know that when you have lost someone, you want to talk about that person that was once there."

Camplin has overcome personal and professional adversity, but she sees her next challenge as one of her greatest — the transition from independent successful career woman to mother.

She works an average

12-hour day, six days a week, doing keynote speeches and running high-performance workshops.

She also sits on the boards of the Australian Sports Foundation, the Australian Sports Commission, the Olympic Winter Institute, the Collingwood Football Club and the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation.

"Expecting to be a parent for the first time around with Finnan, and of course I was a parent, but we never got to take him home and deal with the post-birth things that most parents get to deal with, so there is a real unknown there for me."

"Given I've lost Finnan, people are probably thinking I'll be frothing at the mouth and completely overwhelmed and can't wait to be a mum, and I'm all those things, but I think because I transitioned from the sports world to the business world, I'm aware that transition points can be difficult."

She says husband Oliver

has been a tower of strength to her and is excited about the new arrival.

"I'm excited to do it with him. I think he's going to be a great dad. He's really hands-on and he's great with kids."

"He makes me look forward to it more than be scared of it. But he's also really wise, he knows this will be a big change for me too."

Camplin is now slowly winding down her work commitments, but her multiple roles make a simple handover difficult.

She plans to take six months off and then gently re-enter the workforce.

The first job will be co-hosting the Winter Olympics coverage for Channel 10.

"It will be a slow introduction back into things."

"But in saying that, I don't know how I will feel on the other side," she says.

"I may just think I want to stay home and be with my baby every day — I'm leaving the door open."

[finnansgift.gofundraise.com.au](http://finnansgift.gofundraise.com.au)