

Carol Cooke – Paralympic Gold Medallist

Carol Cooke deserves a special mention for an amazing achievement – Carol remarkably won a gold medal at the 2012 London Paralympics in cycling. For those of you who don't know Carol Cooke, she was a competitive swimmer with the Yarra Roughies for many years and a former president of the club. Carol also founded the 24 Hour Mega Swim for MS which started its days at the Roughies training ground, Fitzroy Swimming Pool.



Carol was originally from Canada and moved to Australia to start an exciting new life but was tragically diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in her 30's. From that day onwards Carol has battled daily with the disease and has had several relapses over the years, leaving her hospitalised and wheelchair bound for months at a time. Through pain, determination and hard work, Carol managed not only to get herself back on her feet each time but to also get herself back in the pool competing as a Masters swimmer.



Carol receiving her Victorian Sports Award in 2006

Having been a national swimmer in Canada, Carol set her sights becoming an elite multi-disability swimmer and during the 2005 World Masters Games Carol won five Gold medals and a Silver medal in the Athletes with a Disability (AWD) Division. Then in 2006 at the age of 44 she qualified for the Telstra Commonwealth Games Swimming Trials (Australian National Swimming Championships) and made the final of the 50m Breaststroke Multi-Disability event against swimmers half her age. Both these achievements contributed to Carol winning the Victorian Masters Athlete of the year in 2006.

Later that year, Carol attended a talent day and discovered she had a gift for rowing. Letting her swimming take a back seat, she focused all her efforts on rowing and narrowly missed out on making the Beijing 2008 Paralympic team. Not giving up on her dream of making the Paralympics, Carol again switched sports to take up cycling a few years ago. Her dream finally came true when she made the London 2012 Paralympic team. But the dream didn't end there. Against both men and women, Carol had the race of her life which saw her take the top spot on the podium and win a gold medal. At 51, making the Australian team is an amazing achievement in itself but going on to win a gold medal is something else....something truly exceptional!

Carol is the most hard working and determined person you could ever come across. Her toughness and resilience shows an incredible strength of character and those who are lucky enough to know her are never failed to be amazed by her. She lets nothing get in her way and does not ever give up. She is a real inspiration and a true superstar. We are all so very proud of you!

