

Kim Neuenkirchen breaking down barriers

Neither age nor disability is a barrier when sport is in your blood – just ask Kim Neuenkirchen.



Kim competed in the Women's 75 kg powerlifting at the Sydney 2000 Paralympics where she ranked eighth, and now twenty-one years later, she's continuing to work hard to achieve new dreams.

Now 53, Neuenkirchen is breaking national records and winning gold as a RaceRunner.

For those who aren't aware of RaceRunning as a sport, it is an inventive sport for people with a physical disability who

are not able to functionally run.

Disability Sports Australia explains, "Participants use a race runner trike which is a custom built three-wheeled frame where the runner is fully supported by a saddle and leans against a chest support. They propel themselves forward by the feet, while using the hands or arms to steer.

"Participating in RaceRunning provides each individual the freedom to move and run in a supported and balanced way without a walker, wheelchair or similar device."

RaceRunning and powerlifting aren't Kim's only forays into competitive sport. She joined Cherrybrook Athletics Centre's Para athletics program to compete in throw events and train with Julie Charlton – the current national champion and record-holder in the F57 women's secured discus.

While training with Julie, Kim was a gold medallist at the open national championships in discus and also a gold medallist at the Arafura Games.

Kim's association with athletics predated her powerlifting – she competed in long jump and discus (F37 class) at the

1994 World Para-Championships in Berlin, Germany.

Unfortunately, carpal tunnel issues meant Kim had to give up her successful throwing career, and instead decided to turn to RaceRunning. In her first season she won both the state and national championships in the Open (Amb) 100m – setting a national record.

Neuenkirchen currently has her sights set on representing Australia in international competition,

"I feel a lot younger than what I am."

Although she's currently having to run on roads and paths closer to home with lockdown preventing her from training on a synthetic track.

However, in the transition to competitive running, Kim has lost weight – meaning her running frame is now too heavy for her. Kim, who has cerebral palsy, is trying to raise money in the hope of getting a new frame, at a cost of over \$14,000, by the time competition resumes post-COVID.

If anyone wishes to donate to help Kim fund a new frame, you can find this fundraiser on gofundme.