



LORETO Mandeville Hall Toorak

Where Are They Now?



Emily Petricola – Class of 1998

Emily feels incredibly lucky to have attended Loreto Toorak. The curriculum offered was well prepared, well rounded, engaging and delivered by great teachers. However she feels that learning so many important skills and life lessons in how to be a strong female with a voice in the world outside the walls of the school, was even more valuable. She always loved school, becoming involved in the rowing program as early as possible. She was also elected as a House Sports Captain (Ward). Many of Emily's great friends who are still an important part of her life were made during her school years.

Emily's year level had a successful (and large!) rowing cohort. Josie Millard had just moved into the role of Head of Rowing and was a huge influence on Emily while she was at school and beyond. Being a part of the Loreto Rowing Program shaped the woman that she would become. It taught her important life skills such as teamwork, leadership, organisation, time management and the value of hard work. These are skills that have enabled her success in both her professional and sporting lives.

After leaving school Emily studied a BA majoring in English and Politics, then went back to university many years later to complete a Masters of Teaching (Secondary). She worked as a teacher at a British International School in the UAE for three years from 2016 to 2018, before returning to Australia.

When Emily was 27 years old she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis which created physical impairments throughout her body. After years of not being able to exercise due to complications of increased core temperature from the disease, a friend, Australian Olympic Rowing Representative Matthew Ryan, helped her problem solve a way of getting onto a WattBike and start training while keeping



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her temperature under control. In 2015 Matt, who was prescribing her training, encouraged her to investigate competitive racing as a para cyclist, and suggested she aim for the Tokyo games. Emily didn't know anything much about the capacity for someone with MS to be classified for para sport – she was aware of her physical dysfunction but had never realised it would be recognised in a way that would allow her to participate in para sport. She then contacted Cycling Australia to see if she could be classified by the national body. As a result, she was deemed to be a WC4 cyclist.

Emily began competing locally in October the same year, and within two years had been selected to her first international team. She broke the world record in her first international Individual Pursuit race at the Para Cycling Track World Championships in Rio in 2018 and took home both a silver (Individual Pursuit) and a Bronze (Individual Time Trial). In 2019 she further improved her world record and collected both a gold (Individual Pursuit) and bronze (Scratch Race) at the Track World Championships, before being selected to her first Road World Championship team and winning gold in the Time Trial in Emmen, Netherlands. Earlier this year she travelled to Milton in Canada where in one day she picked up three gold medals – in the Individual Pursuit, the Scratch Race and the Omnium events.

Emily is currently based in Adelaide at the High-Performance headquarters for Cycling Australia, preparing for the Para Cycling Road World Championships in Belgium, and, she hopes, the Paralympics in Tokyo. In the rare moments when she is not on her bike, Emily loves to read.