

# THE *new* Luthnevan

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## KIERAN AND KERRY MODRA

Atlanta gold medallists  
set their sights  
on Sydney

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Godparenting - LCA Olympic Outreach - Men and Emotions



Kieran Modra has one eye set on a gold medal and the other on the lovely Kerry Golding. How can he win both? Simple solution: 'Ride with me at Atlanta', he says.

**K**erry Golding is in tears. She rocks back and forth, as one does when pain is unbearable. But the tears are not just for the pain that sears through her left thigh. They are for a lost dream—the dream of Atlanta gold.

Her boyfriend, Kieran Modra, tries to be positive. It isn't easy. One day before their time-trial, Kerry's injury has shattered his golden dream, too. They are, after all, a tandem team. One out, all out. After coming so far, this is a sickening blow.

Kieran was born with only fifteen per cent vision, which was diagnosed when he was about eight years old. Because his eyes were attuned to following movement, he could play sport with the other boys. 'But not without frustration', he says. 'I'd sometimes kick the ball to the wrong

players because I couldn't see their faces.'

When he was eleven years of age, Kieran's parents made the difficult decision to send him to a school for visually impaired children. He learnt a great deal about managing his disability, but the move to high school was nevertheless very unsettling. Kieran says: 'I had spent four years with visually impaired students and now I was going to a school with fully sighted students. I was scared. Would I

# double

# GOLD

by Linda Macqueen





be teased? Would I have any friends?

Kieran met the challenge head-on. As he adapted to a sighted world, his interest in sports turned into prowess. He trained as a javelin-thrower, and at only sixteen years of age he was selected for the 1988 Paralympics in Seoul. He came sixth.

By now Kieran was on a mission. He wanted to prove to other people that he could do whatever they could. He decided that pole vaulting 'looked challenging enough but couldn't be that hard'. The hardest aspect about pole vaulting was the run-up. 'You have to run flat out and lower the pole into a box sunken in the ground', says Kieran. 'It has to be perfect. Missing the box will give you a close-up view of the grass!' In 1989, competing against fully sighted athletes, he won the Australian All-Schools Pole Vaulting Competition, with a height of 4.45 metres.

When he suffered a knee injury, Kieran started swimming as a recuperative exercise. He discovered that he enjoyed swimming—so much that he began training with the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. He went on to win two bronze medals at the Barcelona Paralympics in 1992.

Still in search of a sport that he 'really enjoyed', Kieran turned to cycling. Tandem racing was quite new. It was fast, which appealed to Kieran, and most of the racing was done on a 250-metre board track. Perfect. Kieran started riding in a men's combination. Then he met Kerry. 'I wouldn't say it was love at first sight', says Kieran, 'but I wanted her to be with me'. So Kieran said: 'Ride with me and we'll go to the Paralympics in Atlanta'.

Kerry was a netballer. She barely knew how to ride a bike. But she said yes.

# Kieran talks about:

## GOD AND SPORT

It is so easy to get caught up in sport: training, competing, winning. Sometimes I've found it hard to keep focused on where God is leading me. In busy training periods, I find it a struggle to make time for God. When I was training at the Institute of Sport, I lost touch with God completely. My relationship with him quietly slipped away, and without other Christians around me, I hardly noticed it was happening. When I 'came to', I got quite a shock. **I had taken God's gifts for granted and had sought the tangible rewards of the abilities he had given me.**

## OPPORTUNITIES

God has given me some wonderful gifts.

One of the best gifts is the one that caused

me so much heartache and frustration that it felt like a curse.

I didn't understand why God had made me different from other people. But throughout my life he has opened my eyes to the unlimited possibilities before me. Most people have more physical sight than I do, but if they don't see what is important and the opportunities that God is giving them, then they aren't using their sight at all.

I sometimes wonder what my life would be like if I had full vision. I'd be able to drive. I could read a book at arm's length, and see a bus—even the bus number—from the bus-stop. What fascinates me most is that it's possible to see individual leaves on a tree from twenty metres. Wow! Yes, I would like to see better, but I've learnt so much about what life has to offer and that God wants us to be challenged.

I thank God for the sight that he has given me. It is enough for me to ride a bike by myself. If I look closely enough, I can see the colours of flowers. And, most important of all, I can see the beautiful girl God gave me. Kerry is my tandem partner, on and off the bike.

I have learnt from my sport and competing in the Paralympics that it's not what I haven't got, but making the most of what I have got that's important. **I've lost more races than I've won, but to accept defeat and push on is what it's all about.**

## THE FUTURE

Kerry and I are really motivated for the Sydney Paralympics. We enjoy training together. We'd want to, as we ride 645 kilometres a week. But after the Paralympics, there's a question mark. I've been very fortunate to gain an income through the South Australian Sports Institute. I have worked as an ambassador promoting sport and good health in the community. After the Sydney Paralympics, the funding for the position will end, and unless the Education Department takes me on, I will be looking for work. It will be a huge turning point in my life. I don't know what will happen, and I am concerned about what lies ahead of me. But **God has taken good care of me all my life; I see no reason why he will desert me now.**



Kerry and Kieran Modra are world champions in three mixed-tandem cycling events, holding world records for two of them. They are members of Aberfoyle Park (formerly Happy Valley) Lutheran Church in Adelaide.



*She did it for Kieran. It wasn't for herself. If they can do this in sport, imagine what their marriage will be like.*

*Head coach, Atlantic Paralympic team, after Kerry's courageous ride*



## Watch Kieran and Kerry ride at the Sydney Paralympics

All events are Mixed Tandem.

Check your television guides for up-to-date program details.

19 October	Event 1	3000m Pursuit	Qualifying	10.00
20 October	Event 7	3000m Pursuit	Semi-finals	10.15
	Event 11	3000m Pursuit	Final	12.05
21 October	Event 16	1000m Time Trial	Final	11.40
22 October	Event 21	Sprint	Qualifying	10.00
	(Sprint quarter-finals commence 14.05)			
23 October	(Sprint semi-finals commence 10.00)			
	Event 44, 48, 49	Sprint	Finals	13.10; 15.05; 15.15
26 October	Event 4	60/70 km Road	Final	10.30

The selection trials for the Paralympics were five months away. Kerry had to learn a fast and elite sport, and learn in a hurry. They went to the trials with nothing to lose and everything to gain. 'We rode for each other', says Kieran, 'and that has been the success of our riding ever since'. Their rides were good enough. They were going to Atlanta.

Now it has all fallen apart. Kerry is in a wheelchair, with her leg strapped. The team doctor tells her that there is no way she will ride tomorrow. But Kerry has other ideas. 'I'm gonna ride. I'm gonna ride.' And she does.

The next day she is lifted onto the bike. There is no warm-up. It will be tough enough just to ride the time-trial. As a word of

encouragement, the head coach, Ken Norris, offers: 'This won't be worse than having a baby'. Kerry's gritted teeth and teary eyes suggest she doubts that very much. But she pedals hard and steers the bike for the four laps. Amazingly, they ride faster than the world record they held prior to the race. Their time is good enough for sixth place—a heroic effort, but no medal.

The media scrambles for the story. Speaking to journalists, Norris says that he had given Kerry no chance of riding. 'I'm just astonished at the guts of the girl', he says. 'She did it for Kieran. It wasn't for herself. If they can do this in sport, imagine what their marriage will be like.' The news-paper reports applaud Kerry's courage but imply that her golden dream is over.

It looks like they're right.

Between heats for the 200-metre sprint, Kerry is seen sobbing with pain. Her leg is strapped. She cannot walk without crutches. She has raced ten times in four days and she is at the end of her endurance. Then one more time Kerry is lifted onto the bike. This is the race that matters. She will ride this race for Kieran. Kieran will ride this race for her.

The sprint is a cat-and-mouse tactical event, with each team trying to outsmart the other. They start slowly, but for the last two hundred metres they pedal their hearts out, pushing the pain barrier to new heights. Kerry's only release from the pain is to scream: 'Go faster! Go faster!' Their courage is good enough. Good enough for gold.

There are lots more tears, but of a different sort this time. Beaming at Kerry, Kieran says: 'She's just amazing. I've never met anyone who had that in them'. Knowing he has struck double-gold, Kieran marries his front-rider the following year. But the baby-seat on the bicycle will have to wait—at least until after the Sydney Paralympics.

Kieran and Kerry gratefully acknowledge the support of fellow Lutheran, Peter Sutton, proprietor of The Complete Cycle, who has kept their bike 'on the road' for the Sydney Paralympics.