



Captain Cooke discovers the right balance

CAROL Cooke is an elite athlete living with MS.

As ambassador for the 2012 MS Melbourne Cycle, Carol will ride the course on her trike and captain a team of solo riders who have entered without a team.

The 48-year-old has not let the challenges of living with MS dampen her ambitions — it has fuelled her competitive fires and allowed her to help others.

The first signs of MS appeared after Carol competed in the Masters Swimming Nationals in Hobart in 1998, and she was quickly diagnosed.

“I was told bluntly I had MS and to go home and get my affairs in order before I was incapacitated,” she said.

But Carol was determined to defy her diagnosis.

After leaving full-time work she started the 24 Hour Mega Swim in 2001, which is now held in three states, raising more than \$3 million to provide scholarships to people living with MS.

Carol took up competitive rowing in December 2006 and made the Australian rowing team less than two years later. And now she has taken up para-cycling in the trike class, where last year she won two silvers in the Para-Cycling World Road Championships in Denmark. She is now waiting to hear if she is on the team for the 2012 London Paralympics.

“With MS you have to find the balance between pushing too much and having your body completely crash, and doing enough to keep up,” she says.

“Most people with MS want to do as much as you can today because you don’t know if you’re going to be able to do it tomorrow.”

She’s thrilled to be the MS ambassador for the Melbourne Cycle and captain of the Riding for MS team, encouraging those who want to take part and share the experience to join her team.

“It is not a race. It’s about enjoying yourself.”

To join Carol’s MS Melbourne Cycle outfit, visit register.ms-melbournecycle.org.au and perform a search for the Riding for MS team.