



PETER RICKARDS

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Discipline: Para Cross Country
Olympic participations: Geilo 1984
Medal awarded in: 2020

Peter Rickards is Australia's first Cross-Country Paralympian.

Born with the retinopathy, a condition which may cause vision impairment, Rickards has 2% vision reading an eye-chart and no central vision. He has maintained enough peripheral vision to see shapes and contrasts, but no details.

He was taught to cross-country ski by his wife and, after his first cross-country race, he decided to take up the competitive sport. Peter was competing in open cross-country ski events when his coach Barry Field from Melbourne Nordic Club suggested he should try to represent Australia in the 1980 Winter Paralympics in Norway.

He recounts that being able to represent Australia as part of the first official Paralympic Winter team in 1980 was an amazing experience and wearing the green and gold inspired him to set up an organisation which could enable other people with disabilities to have similar experiences in the snow.

Rickards went on to become the founder and President of the Victorian Disabled Skiers Association (DWW) from 1980 to 1994. The DWW was established to enable people with disabilities to enjoy winter sport and recreation with their fellow competitors, families and friends. During his tenure as President, Rickards contributed to starting the ski-guide program, as well as establishing the dog-sledding and cross-country ski programs.

After 1994, he continued running ski camps for DWW and supported people to participate in the Kangaroo Hoppet with their ski guides. Rickards is a Disabled Wintersport Australia (DWA) life member. He still enjoys cross-country skiing with his family and grandchildren.

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KYRRA GRUNNSUND OAM

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Discipline: Para Alpine and Para Cross Country Skiing, Para Athletics

Paralympic participations: Geilo 1980, Innsbruck 1984, Tignes-Albertville 1992, Barcelona 1992 (Summer Olympics)

Medal awarded in: 2020

Kyrra Grunnsund is a five-time Australian Paralympic athlete who represented Australia at four Paralympic Winter Games and one Paralympic Games. He was the first Australian to compete at both Games, moving from skiing to athletics in 1992.

A below-the-knee amputee, Grunnsund was keen to ski from an early age and was very active from the moment he had his first prosthesis. He began to race in both Alpine and Cross-country ski events from the age of eight, but concentrated mainly on alpine skiing. He trained with the Perisher Smiggins Ski Racing Club, competing in able-bodied ski races.

Grunnsund made his Paralympic debut in Geilo, Norway, in 1980, where he competed in both Alpine and Cross-Country. It was the first time Australia had sent an official team, with Grunnsund and Peter Rickard becoming the first Australian Paralympians to compete at the event (as Ron Finneran had not been allowed to participate in 1976). Grunnsund is also the only Australian Paralympian to ever compete in two winter disciplines, a feat that is even more impressive as he did this at the same Games.

After Geilo, Grunnsund went on to participate in three more Paralympic Winter Games, focussing on Alpine skiing. His best Paralympic result is a fifth place in the combination event at the 1984 Games, along with many top-10 finishes.

Grunnsund also competed in two world championships and many able-bodied races in Australia and in Europe, achieving a number of victories and top-10 finishes at state level. He also competed successfully in athletics and swimming, winning over 20 national and 50 state amputee titles. At one time Grunnsund held world records for leg amputees in 1,500m, 5,000m and 10,000m half marathon and marathon.

In 1992 he became the first Australian Paralympian to compete in both the winter and summer Paralympics, making the Australian team for the Barcelona Paralympic Games in Athletics and racing in the 5,000m and 10,000m.

During his career Grunnsund also assisted with the administration, promotion and coaching of disabled sport. He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1995 and the Australian Sports Medal in 2000.

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RODNEY MILL



Discipline: Para Cross Country
Olympic participations: Innsbruck 1984
Medal awarded in: 2020

Rodney Mill is a blind athlete who competed in the Nordic skiing Men's Middle Distance 10km B2 and the Men's Short Distance 10km B2 at the 1984 Innsbruck Paralympic Winter Games. He was accompanied by his guide, Peter Smythe.

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