

## WHEN CYCLING SPINS YOUR LIFE AROUND...

Justin Dunn

After two years of social cycling, including participating in events such as the Coast to Coast and Amy's Ride, and eight months of competing state wide, Justin Dunn, 26, has qualified for the Tour de Formosa racing circuit in Taiwan in November and will represent the Australian cycling team.

Justin's love for cycling has finally taken the shape of professional competing, 'a dream come true.'

But it wasn't always the way.

Justin lost his hearing before his first birthday due to the deadly meningitis virus. Too young to realise his disability, Justin believes he coped well during his youth years using sign language as his way of communicating with the outside world.

On his third birthday, Justin received his first bike: a red and yellow one.

"Every spare chance I jumped on that bike. Sound was replaced by the refreshing sensation of wind on my face. On my bike I felt free," he said.

"Later I rode to school from our farm in Finniss and on the weekends to Milang with the local lads.

"There was never a happier time for me than when I pushed those pedals over and over."

At the age of 19, inspired by the Tour Down Under success, Justin decided to follow his dream and start competing in local cycling races: even buying into the Lycra-clad racing gear.

"There were plenty of giggles from family and friends but I didn't take the digs to heart," he said.

"I just said 'I can't hear you!'".

Just when Justin felt as if life was rolling out pretty well for him, things started crumbling apart. Justin began to be ridiculed and abused by a group of locals over a period of time, an experience that left a devastating effect on him.

"I'd always been pretty lucky with the way people had treated me. Mostly, they were not bothered by the fact I was different, so this bullying had a devastating effect. I began to drink heavily and lost interest in everything," he said.

"In time, I was diagnosed with anxiety, panic attacks, depression and post-traumatic disorder.

"My doctor prescribed me medication and it helped, but I still tried to shut the world out."

Justin gave up cycling and lived through his darkest days yet.

Until one day, his cousin Geoff Rose, a member of the Coast Cruzers Cycling Club, invited him out for a ride with his group.

"I didn't think I'd handle a group of people very well, but then I remembered the great feeling that cycling had given me and the freedom I had felt," he said.

"Eventually, I decided to take a chance."

Justin remembered the joy cycling had brought him as a teenager and decided to join up as a member. His motivation began to shine again.

"I began to train harder than ever before. And as my cycling improved, so did my mental health. Eventually I stopped taking my medication all together."

Today, Justin works hard to create his opportunities but feels he is living his dream.

From riding 300 kilometres a week to joining competitions with the Norwood Cycling Club, Justin's achievements continue to pile up. Revelling in the nickname 'Superman' he has had several podium finishes and recently qualifying for the Tour de Formosa is 'a dream come true.'

"I am very excited about this opportunity, and will be seeking help from community groups and individuals to assist me with the considerable expenses."

Justin is now receiving some assistance from esteemed cycling brand Rodman. Rodman is a bike frame company from Italy, and has sponsored the frame with which Justin will race in Taiwan: <[www.rodman-bikes.com](http://www.rodman-bikes.com)>.

He is also receiving professional advice from an ex-pro Peter Mueller who used to race for Savings & Loans nationally and internationally.

"Big thanks go to Geoff Rose, my mentor who is also my mechanic, without the help of German, Geoff, Peter and the club at Coast Cruisers and Norwood Cycling Club I wouldn't be aiming for this goal. They changed my life."

(Justin is seeking sponsor or donor from local business to help him with the expenses in the air fare to Taiwan and back would be greatly appreciated to make his dream come true.)

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Justin at the Grand Slam #5 last year



Jason and Brett cross the finish line