



# Nikki Ayers

- ◆ Paris 2024 Paralympic Games Gold Medallist;
- ◆ Registered Nurse & Mid-wife;
- ◆ 2023 World Champion;



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# Nikki Ayers

Nikki Ayers was training to be an Australian Women's Rugby Union Wallaroo, when a traumatic knee dislocation left her fighting to save her leg. 16 surgeries in 9 months was the gruelling start of her recovery.

Epitomising resilience, Nikki kept looking for the positives to avoid falling apart. There was one ligament still holding her knee together. She had family and friends encouraging her every step of the way. And para sporting organisations were reaching out within months. She seized the opportunities and pushed herself to make the most of this traumatic injury. Only 8 years later she was standing on the podium at the 2024 Paris Paralympics with a gold medal around her neck.

Nikki grew up in Dalmeny, a small town on the South Coast of NSW. As a young girl, Nikki was introduced to Rugby Union when Rugby League no longer let her play with the boys. She found her new passion and dreamt of wearing the Green and Gold Wallaroo jersey. Nikki was on her way, representing the ACT Women's Brumbies 15 a side, captaining the Brumbies 7's team and working as a Registered Nurse at the Canberra Hospital, when her dream was shattered.

In 2016 Nikki was in the Wallaroo training squad when playing for her local club, the Tuggeranong Vikings, an innocuous tackle dislocated her knee, tearing 3 ligaments, severing an artery and severing a nerve. Nikki needed a partial amputation of her leg and was left with foot drop. While Nikki gained many scars physical and emotional from her journey she embraced resilience, positive thinking and the mantra 'control what you can control'.

And one thing she could control was how she recovered. During her recovery, Nikki focussed on her rehabilitation to get stronger and fitter unaware that she could now be a para-athlete. Nikki didn't stop at the gym during her rehabilitation and completed the punishing Kokoda trek in 2018 two years after her life-changing injury. 2018 also saw Nikki find a new passion for para-rowing and reignited her dream of wearing the Green and Gold. Nikki trained hard making the 2018 PR3 mixed coxed four, for the Rowing World Championships in Bulgaria, coming 5th. More determined than ever, Nikki strove towards the Paralympics and winning gold. With resilience and a positive mindset Nikki became a Paralympian and competed at the 2021 Tokyo Paralympic Games coming 4th in the PR3 mixed coxed four.

After some time away in 2022 to pursue further studies and complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery Studies, Nikki's drive to win gold had not disappeared. Getting back into the boat in 2023, Nikki was selected in the Australian PR3 mixed double. Twice breaking the world best times and winning gold at the 2023 Rowing World Cup two in Gavirate, Italy, and the World Championships in Belgrade, Serbia. Going in as the hot favourite for the 2024 Paris Paralympics gold medal, Nikki had to embrace the pressure, building resilience, pushing her physical and mental limits. With her rowing partner Jed Altschwager, the dynamic duo crossed the line first. Nikki achieved her dream of Paralympic gold.

A Paralympic Champion, a former state rugby union player and a Registered Nurse and Midwife, Nikki can finally relax .... until the next dream.

Location: Canberra ACT



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