

Dreams do come true



Jonkers (above) will launch the Sporting Dreams Hall of Fame on the fifth anniversary of her foundation.



Virtual hall of fame recognises Paralympians

By **BILL HOFFMAN**

PARALYMPIAN Marayke Jonkers will launch the Sporting Dreams Hall of Fame tomorrow, at an awards ceremony to celebrate the fifth anniversary of her foundation which assists athletes with disabilities.

Jonkers, a triple swimming Paralympian, founded Sporting Dreams in 2008 after winning \$10,000 in the Cosmopolitan Magazine Fun, Fearless female awards (2007).

It aims to help athletes with disabilities achieve fun, fitness and personal development through sport and also to support future Paralympic champions.

"Athletes with disabilities train just as hard as other athletes, and experience the same thrill of winning, yet they face additional expenses," she said this week.

"A pushbike costs \$100, whereas a handcycle costs at least \$1500. Athletes with disabilities are also great role models, encouraging all Queenslanders to live a fit and healthy lifestyle."

She will induct four Paralympians from the London Games, all past recipients of Sporting Dreams grants, into the virtual hall of fame, which will be displayed on the foundation's website sportingdreams.org.

"Five years ago when I started Sporting Dreams I met athletes beginning their sporting careers and dreaming of becoming a Paralympian, and now they are living that dream having competed in London," Marayke said.

"I wanted to recognise this milestone. It also means we are on track with our goal to identify and support Paralympians of the future."

The four inaugural inductees include Rheed McCracken, a 15-year-old wheelchair racer who won silver and bronze in London; Natalie Smith, a shooter who won Australia's first medal at the London Games; Rachael Dodds, who ran in two events in London and was one of the first athletes to receive a Sporting Dreams grant and Bradley Mark, a shooter who equalled the world record in



CONGRATS: Rheed McCracken will be an inaugural hall of fame inductee.

London, ultimately placing ninth.

Special guests include London Paralympic swimmers, gold medallist Blake Cochrane and medallists Rick Pendleton and Michael Anderson. Also attending will be Councillor Jason O'Pray, State Attorney-General Jarrod Bleijie and representatives of sporting bodies including Swimming Australia and Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association.

The function has a UK theme celebrating the London 2012 Paralympic Games. It will be a last hurrah for Marayke and her partner at their Bica Bistro in Maroochydore which she has sold because of ongoing concerns about her own health.

Annual grants will also be presented to eight aspiring athletes from throughout Queensland who compete in sports as varied as swimming, athletics, basketball and lawn bowls.

The grants are designed to assist potential Paralympians with training and competition costs.

The foundation provides two levels of grants to Queensland-based athletes with physical disabilities. Introductory level grants assist athletes to take up a sport and development grants are to assist established athletes with training and competition costs.

It has now awarded grants to 60 funded by Marayke's speaking engagements and fund raising events.

Marayke is seeking sponsors to assist the grant program next year. She is available for motivational speaking engagements in return for a donation to Sporting Dreams. Contact her via her website marayke.com.