

Walsh Flying the Flag for Ireland and Australia



Sarah competing in Australia.

A young para-athlete with roots in Carrick-on-Suir is making fast strides in her athletic career in Australia.

Sarah Walsh, daughter of Tom Walsh who hails from the Tipperary town, holds a number of Oceanic and Australian records, despite being only 15.

Currently holidaying in Ireland with her family, Sarah spoke to the Munster Express about her achievements to date and her plans for the future.

While also a talented cyclist and wheelchair basketball player, it's been on the track where Sarah has excelled.

She holds Oceanic and Australian records in the long jump, the U16 record in the 100 metres, the open Australian record in the 200 metres, and the open Australian record in the 400 metres.

Highlighting her growing reputation, Sarah was the sole Australian invited to compete at the Glasgow International Indoor Meet at the start of the year.

Competing in the T44 Long Jump, she produced a then personal best of 4.28 metres to take the silver medal.

"It was a kind of an unexpected event to be invited to because I've never heard of it. It was quite exciting and a different experience to what I've been used to.

"There was no way I expected to jump that well. At the time it broke my personal best which I had done a week before, but since then I've jumped further than that [4.40m]," says Sarah.

Beaten on that occasion by a paralympic silver medalist, Sarah has her sights set on the Paralympic's in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, where she aims to compete in the 100 metres and the long jump.



Sarah with her dad, Tom Walsh.

“Rio is the main goal, and then next year there’s the World Championship’s in Doha so that’s another goal for me.”

Australian paralympians brought home 85 medals from the London Games in 2012, the fifth biggest haul in the medals’ table, but Sarah admits it can be more difficult for para-athletes to secure funding for training than able-body athletes.

“It’s quite poor, we just got the structure for the funding that we’re going to get this year for being on the Athletics Australia squad, and their only funding the first two athletes so if you win a gold or silver, whereas the funding for able-bodies is right down to a Junior.

“So it’s quite hard, you have to do your own funding.”

As for the rest of 2014, Sarah will compete in a number of school based competitions, leading into the Australian Junior and National championships in 2015.

Both of Sarah’s parents are native of Ireland and she says the have been a constant source of support in her athletic career.

“They’ve always said I can whatever I want to do and make my own choice, they’re not going to stop me from doing anything,” she says.

At just 15-years-old her potential is immense, and with aims to compete in further international events in the near future, it’s likely that Sarah Walsh is a name that will gain ever further acclaim.