

# Crake excelling in his biggest challenge

**FIGHTER:** Paul Crake has described his wife Daniela as his rock after the accident which left him a paraplegic. Crake fractured vertebrae in his back and neck in 2006 when he was blown off his bike into a fence post by a freak gust of wind.  
Photo: GARY SCHAFFER



By Jon Tuxworth

Paul Crake always relished defying the odds. Whether it's climbing the world's tallest buildings or scaling gruelling mountain peaks, he loved conquering obstacles.

But it took just one freak gust of wind to turn his world upside down.

Competing in a New Zealand road cycling event in 2006, Crake fractured vertebrae in his back and neck when he was blown off his bike into a fence post. Now paralysed from the waist down, Crake is using the strength of mind that helped him win the Empire State Building stairs race five times to move on.

"There are days where it's a little overwhelming, having the use of your legs taken away from you overnight, but you learn to deal with it," Crake said.

"After five years you learn to adapt and move on with life."

Crake and wife Daniela were an item for just one month before his crash at the Tour of Southland and he describes his Italian-born wife as his "saviour".

"She was there at my bedside at the hospital in New Zealand, did a second trip out when I returned to Australia, she's my saviour.

"When you're faced with something like paraplegia, not a day goes by where you're not reminded of it, it's not something you can block out."

The couple has recently settled in Sydney after living in Italy the past four years.

Canberra-bred Crake is an ambassador for Hartley Lifecare's Ability Cycle Challenge, where teams will ride over three days from the

## ABILITY CYCLE CHALLENGE

Teams embark on a three-day, 450km ride from Canberra to Mt Kosciuszko, raising money for Hartley Lifecare today.

Departure times: 6am-8am

Arrival times: 1pm-3.45pm Sunday and Monday

Departure and arrival location - Boomanulla Oval, Goyder Street Narrabundah

capital to Mt Kosciuszko. The event helps raise funds for Hartley Lifecare's services which assist ACT residents living with a disability.

Crake was set to ride in the 2006 race, scheduled just days after his life-threatening crash in New Zealand.

It would be understandable, then, if participating in this week's event would be too emotionally taxing. But Crake's journey means he can relate to Hartley's purpose and is very willing to preach their gospel.

Crake refuses to concede he will be confined to his wheelchair forever.

"On one hand you have to deal with being in a wheelchair and you have to accept it, but there's part of me that still believes I can, and will, get up and walk," he said. "Of course you still think back to moments where I'd love to get back on the bike or run up stairs, but when I have moments like that I look at what I still have. I've got my wife, family and wonderful friends, and I try and look at the positives that still remain in my life."