

= Jessica Gallagher =

Jessica Gallagher (born 14 March 1986) is an Australian Paralympic alpine skier , track and field athlete , and tandem cyclist . She was Australia 's second female Winter Paralympian , and the first Australian woman to win a medal at the Winter Paralympics at the 2010 Vancouver Games . She competed at the 2014 Winter Paralympics in Sochi , where she won a bronze medal in the Women 's Giant Slalom Visually Impaired .

She is legally blind , and represents Australia internationally in three sports : skiing , athletics and cycling . Besides her skiing achievements , she has represented Australia in athletics at the 2012 Summer Paralympics in London , and won a silver and a bronze medal at the 2011 Christchurch IPC Athletics World Championships in long jump and javelin , respectively . She has also represented the state of Victoria as a junior in netball and basketball . Gallagher has been selected in the Australian cycling team with her pilot Madison Janssen for the 2016 Rio Paralympics . Her " long term goal is to be the first Australian to medal at a summer and winter Paralympics or Olympics " .

= = Personal = =

Gallagher was born on 14 March 1986 and lives in the Geelong suburb of Highton . In 2009 , she graduated from RMIT University with a Master of Osteopathy , and is a registered osteopath .

At the time of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Paralympics , she was dating the American Paralympic sitting ski slalommer Gerald Hayden . She is an ambassador for the Australian Paralympic Committee , Vision Australia , Seeing Eye Dogs Australia , Vision 2020 Australia , Kx Pilates and 2XU .

She is legally blind due to Best 's disease , a rare condition . She started to lose her eyesight when she was a teenager , having received the results of tests while she was competing at the U17 national netball championships .

Gallagher was selected to compete at the 2008 Beijing Paralympics in long jumping , 100 m , shot put and discus , but she failed her classification test because the classifiers said the eyesight in her right eye was 0 @. @ 01 % too good . In November 2009 , her classification was revisited due to deterioration of her vision and she was deemed eligible to compete . She is aiming to become the first Australian Paralympic competitor to win medals at both the Summer and Winter Paralympics .

= = Sports = =

= = = Netball , basketball and snowboarding = = =

She played netball and basketball with able @-@ bodied competitors , having first participated at the elite level in both sports as she started to lose her vision . In netball , she was a goal keeper and goal attack , represented Victoria several times and was named as an emergency for the Australian U16 team . In the Victorian league 's Championship Division , she represented both Palladians and Altona Lightning . In basketball , she represented the Geelong Cats for five years and also represented Victoria Country . At that time , her goal was to become a professional netball or basketball player . As well , she played netball in the Geelong Football / Netball League , representing South Barwon and Leopold . Despite her low vision and missing one third of the games due to her Paralympic training program , she won the A grade Best and Fairest Award in 2007 , representing Leopold .

Gallagher is also a snowboarder , having taken up the sport while on a working holiday in Vail , Colorado before she found out about the Winter Paralympic Games .

= = = Competitive skiing = = =

Gallagher was the first Australian woman to win a medal at the Winter Paralympics , and Australia

's second female Winter Paralympian . She was given the opportunity to compete at the highest levels in skiing after being identified during a talent search and because of her snowboarding experience . As she is blind , she competes with a guide with Eric Bickerton being her first guide . She is coached by Steve Graham , who also coached Michael Milton and is the current head coach of the Australian Institute of Sport 's Winter Paralympic program . Her Australian training base is at the Victorian Institute of Sport 's training centre located at Lakeside Stadium in South Melbourne . While actively training six days a week , her individual training sessions will last between two and three hours each a total of ten to twelve sessions by the end of the week .

Gallagher first represented Australia in 2009 at the New Zealand Winter Games , where she won a gold medal . In January 2010 , she competed at her first IPC Alpine Skiing World Cup event in Austria and won a bronze medal in slalom . Before the start of the 2010 Games , she had competed in nine World Cup events . On her 24th birthday , she won a bronze medal at the Vancouver games in the Women 's Slalom visually impaired event , becoming the first Australian woman to do so . In her first and second time down the hill , she finished third both times , She also competed in the Women 's Giant Slalom visually impaired event at the 2010 Games , finishing seventh after headset issues that caused problems with communication .

In 2013 , at the IPC Alpine Skiing World Cup in Thredbo , New South Wales , several weeks after taking on her new guide , Christian Geiger , she won two silver medals in giant slalom and slalom . At the 2014 Sochi Paralympics , Gallagher (guided by Geiger) won a bronze medal in the Women 's Giant Slalom Visually Impaired and came seventh in the Women 's Giant Slalom Visually Impaired .

She has been in the Australian Institute of Sport Alpine Skiing Program since 2009 .

Australia 's National Sports Museum put several items related to her on display after her bronze medal win at the 2010 Vancouver Games .

= = = Competitive athletics = = =

Gallagher is an athletics competitor , competing in long jump , discus , shot put , javelin and sprinting , She became involved in athletics after learning about the Paralympics . At the skills assessment , the classifiers had her try shot put and , despite being dressed in casual athletic attire , she managed a throw that met the Paralympic qualifying distance . After a year of training , she increased this initial distance by 2 @. @ 5 metres (8 ft 2 in) to have a personal best throw of over 12 metres (39 ft) . She holds several records in the F13 classification , including Australian and Oceanian records in the long jump , javelin and shot put , and an Australian record in discus . In athletics , her coaches have included Mike Edwards and John Boas . In January 2011 , she competed at the 2011 Christchurch IPC Athletics World Championships , where she finished second in the long jump and third in the javelin throw event , with a throw of 33 @. @ 75 metres (110 @. @ 7 ft) . Her appearance at the championships marked her return to the sport after having taken a break to compete in skiing .

At the 2012 London Paralympics , Gallagher competed in the Women 's Long Jump F13 and Women 's Javelin Throw F12 / 13 events , finishing fifth and sixth respectively . Gallagher was disappointed with these result , having suffered a severe tear in her meniscus during training that forced her to use crutches in the month leading up to the competition .

In a 2014 interview Gallagher expressed what competing at Summer and Winter Paralympics meant to her . She said : I love the unique cultural experience each host city brings . Ultimately , competing for your country on the worlds biggest sporting stage is a pinnacle . It brings memories and experiences that last a lifetime .

= = = Competitive cycling = = =

She was encouraged to take up cycling by Victorian Institute of Sport coach Glenn Doney . The decision to transfer to cycling was made easier after her favorite athletics event the long jump was not included on the 2016 Rio Paralympics athletics program . Gallagher believes that track cycling is

easier than downhill skiing . She said " " Being a skier , the guide is not connected to me like on a tandem and so I need to ski at high speeds under incredibly intense variabilities that constantly change . The velodrome is a stable environment . " At the 2016 UCI Para @-@ cycling Track World Championships in Montichiari , Italy , Gallagher and her pilot Madison Janssen made their international debut . They won the gold medal in the Women 's Sprint B in world record time and the bronze medal in the Women 's 1 km Time Trial B.