

# SAILOR, TRIATHLETE, SURVIVOR

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## STACY FARRAR

Running the triathlon in 42 degree heat on Sunday was a big ask for all of the competitors. For Megan Dwyer of California it was even more so – she had finished chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer less than five weeks earlier.

A 10-year veteran of the triathlon, Dwyer (right) had been planning for two years to come to the Games to compete in that event as well as the sailing competition with partner of seven years Suna Kneisley (left).

"As soon as we could sign up for the Games we did. I do triathlons one or two times a year and I thought what better place to do one than Sydney," Dwyer told the *Star*.

In June she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which "kind of threw everything up in the air". This led to months of exhausting and nauseating chemotherapy treatment which left her unable to get off the couch for a week at a time.

Nevertheless, Dwyer persisted with her training program – going for runs when she was physically able – and tried to fit the treatments around her sailing lessons with Kneisley and 44-year sailing veteran and team skipper Ann P. Meredith (centre).

"[Not training] was really challenging. But when I was so sick I didn't miss anything. I'm not really a TV person but that's all I had the energy for."

Coming to the Games and competing in sailing was always in Dwyer's plans. Her final chemotherapy treatment on 30 September was scheduled to allow enough recovery time for the sailing and triathlon competitions.

"My goal for the triathlon was two hours, which is kind of slow for me – but having done so little training I really was just looking to finish," she said.

In the end, Dwyer managed to make it within her goal time. She ran over the finish line to a big cheer in one hour and 58.3 seconds.

"It was so hot I decided to walk the whole 5 kilometres but I had a pretty good time with that. The sailing competition is very intense, and I didn't want to hurt myself."

Dwyer and Kneisley were yesterday preparing for a sailing event which would see them into the finals – not bad for a pair of sailors with a year's experience behind them. But Meredith said the pair were the "best sailing team [she'd] had in 44 years".

Dwyer said the Games themselves and her trip to Australia had been an amazing journey, and the perfect recovery from an otherwise trying year.

"I'm really relieved and thrilled to be here. Before I came I thought the Games would be a kind of a revival – it's a wonderful way to celebrate coming through the treatment," she said.