

Abbey — My Alopecia Story—Sponsorship Recipient

I was diagnosed with Alopecia when I was only 3 years old. It started as little spots on my head and then throughout the years, it has spread to my body. It wasn't new to our family as my brother had been diagnosed with alopecia 3 years before me. He was totally bald.

At that time, it didn't affect me. It was only until I was 8 years old, that I started trying to cover my spots on my head and fill in my eyebrows which I had lost – a skill that I just taught myself. I spent hours trying to perfect it which has lead me to discover my love for makeup and beauty,

Some mornings before school I would take over 30 minutes just to perfect how I wanted my eyebrow to look, and would not leave the house until I was fully satisfied.

I started wearing a wig when I was 9. My first 2 wigs were attached to headbands because I had hair at the front but none at the back. The day I first received it, was the first time I had felt so confident in myself.

This wig worked well for 1 year but then by the age of 10, I was almost completely bald so after 3 months of convincing me, I decided to change to a full wig. I hated having to wear a full wig as I didn't want to accept the fact that I had no hair.

It was around this age, I discovered my love for competitive athletics and I was part of a club where I made great friendships and people who supported me no matter what. I started training hard and had some great success at State level particularly in sprints, long jump and triple jump.

Starting secondary school was tough as I only knew one person. The challenge of making new friends, feeling accepted whilst trying to hide my alopecia was hard. It took a long time to build trust and the courage to tell my new friends that I wore a wig. Even though I knew that they had already figured it out, it was still a big step for me to admit it to them.

I am now 14 and have found amazing friends who have helped me deal with my alopecia. The other thing that helped me is my athletics, I train 5 times a week and my goal is to compete at Nationals again this year.

I still have a long way to go in accepting myself with alopecia however looking back I can see that I have come so far and will continue to do so.



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Over the last few months, the most important competitions in my whole season were held. The end of February and the whole of March I was competing every weekend and training 4 times a week. I made goals I wanted to achieve in each competition and focused hard in the training sessions leading up to the competitions.



The ACT State Championships were held over the Australia Day long weekend, and this was definitely one of the highlights of my season. I travelled to Canberra with my training squad and we stayed at the AIS for 3 nights. I competed in the 100, 200 and Long Jump and came away with a PB for the 100 and national qualifying time. Being at the AIS gave a real insight into the lives of professional athletes, we had very strict eating times and regulations we had to follow, but we also got to look around the AIS and some of the facilities it had to offer.

Canberra was also a huge stepping stone for me as I originally didn't like the idea and was against going. I didn't want to have to share a room with someone I wasn't totally comfortable with, as I hadn't told any of the girls about my wig except for 1, but none of them had ever seen me without it on. Thankfully I decided against letting that hold me back and ended up having one of the best trips of my life. I ended up having a single room, but that didn't matter as I told the girls about my wig anyway and I was able to joke around with them about it.

As February came around, I started preparing for the peak of my whole season.

This commenced with me running in the Parkdale Gift in the Bayside School Championships. I won this event last year and was keen to make it back to back. I did! I even won some money for it as Gift racing is part of Professional Footraces. Next up I had my Regional Little Athletics competition where I competed in the 100, 200 and Long Jump. I won both the 100 and 200 and came second in the Long Jump, qualifying into states for all 3 events. This year is my 10th year doing Little Athletics which is why I decided to do this competition, as it was also my last year of Little Athletics.



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I then moved my focus onto the Victorian Junior State Championships, which was held over two weekends in February and the start of March. I came out of the competition with 1 bronze medal in the 100, and two 4th places in the Long Jump and 200, which I came fourth in by 0.002 seconds.

Sadly due to the Coronavirus, the state Little Athletics Championships and the Australian Junior Athletics champs were cancelled, giving an abrupt ending to my season. Although my season was cut short, I'm very proud of my results and how hard I worked throughout the year.

The Australia Alopecia Acreata Foundation sponsorship has been an amazing experience and brought in so many new opportunities for me. Being able to speak at the Victorian open day was one of the highlights of my year and helped me grow as a person in so many ways. The sponsorship has been fantastic as it has helped pay for my additional coaching fees and this, in turn, helped my parents with my flights and accommodation expenses for Canberra. I'm so incredibly thankful for this sponsorship as it has helped me accept myself even more and has introduced me to a whole new community of people who are going through the exact same thing. I know I have a long way to go, but looking back at this time last year before I received the sponsorship I can see I just how far I have come.

