



Heart racer back on track

The youngest athlete in this year's Auckland Marathon is showing real character.

After a serious broken leg left Georgia Ellis bed-ridden for more than six months, the Kristin student is making a welcome return to sport, competing for the first time in the next month's Auckland Marathon as a Heart Foundation ambassador.

At 14 Georgia is only eligible for the 10km quarter marathon race and will be the youngest competitor.

"A lot of people break their legs. I'm running in this event to prove to other kids that it is possible to get back on your feet after you've hurt yourself," says Georgia.

Heart Foundation ambassadors, or Heart Racers, will be taking part in the annual marathon to raise money for the foundation to help continued funding into heart research, advancing cardiac rehabilitation and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Cardiovascular disease is

still the biggest killer of New Zealanders, accounting for 40 percent of all deaths annually, many of which are premature and preventable.

For Georgia, previously a keen competitor in triathlons and an avid swimmer, recovery gave her plenty of time to think about future goals.

"I looked at the Heart Foundation website and saw all the cool things they work towards. So I signed up. It also means I'm doing my run for something more than just myself," she says.

Preparing for her first major race since her injury last year, Georgia has used a training plan to develop muscles and stamina gradually on gym equipment before hitting Devonport's pavements.

Entries for the 2009 Auckland quarter marathon and 5km walk are still open. If you want to support Georgia or become a Heart Foundation Heart Racer visit heartracer.org.nz.