



## Pedal power to the max



Joanne Palazzetti in her studio . . . 'I can't imagine doing anything else now.' Photo: Michele Mossop



by [Anne Fulwood](#)

Cycling is not called the new golf for nothing, as evidenced by the scores of lycra-clad enthusiasts on city and suburban roads or in cafes any weekend morning.

Joanne Palazzetti has her eyes firmly focused on the more committed of those pedal-pushers and believes her Turbo Studio, an indoor power training facility adjacent to Sydney's Centennial Park, has a unique offering to help improve their cycling performance.

Her goal is to become the one-stop shop for cyclists and triathletes of all levels who want to put more power into their pedals, ranging from elite competitors to the leisure crowd.

Palazzetti says she creates a customised program for each client to work on one of her 12 computerised training bikes and build on it with every visit.

Sessions are 60 or 90 minutes and she rewrites the program every week "so they don't look at the same thing twice".

Palazzetti says the Turbo Studio workout can't be compared with a spin class of the fitness centre variety and is not looking for casual clients.

"The fitter you get, the more intensity I put into the program," she says. "You are

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constantly being challenged."

Further, she says, there are no shortcuts in the "hurt box" at the Turbo Studio. "I want you to work as hard as possible and sustain it for an hour at least," she says. "It is not a smash-fest. I am not looking to break anyone, but I do want you to finish the session."

Since launching in February 2010, Palazzetti says she has compiled a library of programs which she eventually will rotate.

She spends about three to four hours every weekend writing new tailored sessions.

From the start, she did not want the studio to be seen as an alternative to outdoor riding in the cold, as happens in the United States, Canada or Europe in what are called "multi-rider centres".

"I never pitched it as a winter alternative," she says. "It is for year-round training." But she admits she occasionally will open on a rainy Sunday if she has enough takers.

A backer loaned Palazzetti about \$50,000 to set up the Turbo Studio – a raw, utilitarian space with open windows to a main road.

"You come here to work," she says, in her matter-of-fact way.

Computer training units imported from the US cost \$2500 each, she installed office computers and software, air-conditioners and fans and has a few television monitors to display data.

Self-taught, she built the website herself – "That saved me a heap of money" – and will upgrade it this year.

In the first month of operation Palazzetti says she took four bookings for a total of \$600. For the financial year to June 2012, she turned over about \$158,000 and by December 2012 was training about 120 clients a week. She paid back her loan after the first year.

Among the fee options are \$520 for a six months of "power sessions" on Thursday evenings or a 12-week "full-throttle" membership for \$490. A four-week membership costs \$160 for four sessions of 75 minutes and a one-off is \$45. All are paid upfront by internet banking, credit card or cash.

Palazzetti says her fees are higher than a gym membership because there is specialised knowledge and coaching for novices right through to world-record holders.

Peak times are 5.45am to 7am and then 6.15pm to 8.30pm. As client numbers have risen, Palazzetti has employed Glen Thornton, a level one accredited coach, for two days a week on casual rates.

Palazzetti says the road cycling client ratios are around 70 per cent men and 30 per cent women, whereas the split is around 50/50 for the triathlon group.

As part of her promotion effort, she gives high-performance cyclists (such as Nathan Miller) or triathletes studio time to train, and has paid up to \$5000 to put her logos on

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their gear.

She also advertises on a triathlon news site, [www.trizone.com.au](http://www.trizone.com.au).

"Triathlon is the fastest growing sports in the world and in 2012 some 80,000 individuals competed in triathlons in Australia alone," Palazzetti says.

Turbo Studio also offers training for course rides all over the world. A client can ride, for example, stages of the Tour de France route using the computer system in preparation to riding the real thing.

This part of her business is a perfect adjunct to another stream of income she has built over the past nine years, both locally and in Europe. She takes two-week cycling tours to Europe in June each year for cyclists and their partners for a maximum of 16 cyclists, for about \$5000 per head.

In Australia she occasionally runs off-site training camps in the Snowy Mountains or the ACT, often using YMCA accommodation for groups of up to 36, each paying about \$800 for about five days.

A camp is already scheduled for Noosa this August, with former Olympian Henk Vogels as guest trainer.

Palazzetti says the camps and tours can add \$40,000 a year to turnover.

Other plans for this year include an arrangement to launch her Turbo Studio Triathlon Squad where Palazzetti will join forces with Danny Moore, an accredited triathlon coach, to combine her indoor with his outdoor training regime.

She also is considering opening other studios on Sydney's north shore or south of the city in Sutherland or Wollongong. Each would cost, she reckons, about \$40,000.

A divorced mother of two children, aged 19 and 14, Palazzetti says she only discovered cycling about 11 years ago when she got sick of running, and admits she "became addicted". She joined a squad and eventually qualified as a road cycling coach.

These days more of her work is indoors, she says, liaising with customers and sports scientists, upgrading training programs and software and managing communications.

During some very long hours last year, Palazzetti says she considered selling the business but is glad she resisted: "I can't imagine doing anything else now!"

*The Australian Financial Review*



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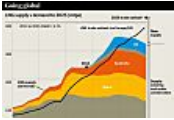
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