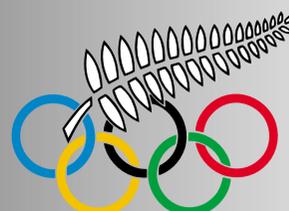


SIMON WI RUTENE



OLYMPIC MUSEUM
New Zealand Olympic Committee



"I was born at Pukeroa Pa on the 10th of March 1966, which is the location of the Rotorua hospital on the south lakeshore of Lake Rotorua. It was within the view of Mount

Tarawera, which was a volcano that erupted in 1886, the century before, that I was to grow up in a land steeped with mysticism and imbued with the mythologies of the local Maori, Te Arawa. This had a great influence in the shaping of my life and in particular that I wished to be outstanding in the realm of mountains.

Skiing was purely the most exhilarating and most fun that I could be doing out of any of those types of sports, so I decided to choose that, and I felt most liberated by that sport because of its environment and the outlook that I could see the land from. *Things just took off from there.*

In 1974 I broke my leg skiing on the local Ruapehu Whakapapa slopes when I was part of the local ski team but this was not going to turn me away from the sport that I'd decided to pursue. I looked on to my poster board in my bedroom, and I was able to count the years in front of me which were to be the duration of my career, and I realised that I would be able to get four Olympic Games in by the time I reached the age of my late 20s. So I was able to firmly focus those aims into my mind, and this became the driving force which took me around the world to achieve that.

I found that athletics, gymnastics and also the other sporting opportunities of learning new things were very attractive, and they had a result of developing, an all roundness and would put me in good position to be a high performance elite athlete.

I feel that this type of athletic development is necessary, because all of that dive rolling and things like that gave a good grounding for being able to take the bumps and falls that were a part of my skiing. The next influence was martial arts."

The Balanced Development of Body, Will and Mind

"I left home at the age of 12, and travelled to Mammoth Mountain, California. I was very fascinated with the landforms, the environment of Ruapehu being a National Park, and comparing that to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. At the age of 13 and went to school in Jackson, Wyoming for a summer, and then at the age of 14, this is in my 3rd form year, I was already in Europe where I was exposed to these international cultures. In particular, the French language which happens be a language of the Olympic Movement. I was able to read and write in both Olympic languages (French and English) and also was brought up with a Swiss family where I lived in Lausanne, Switzerland (which is where the headquarters of the International Olympic Committee and Olympic Museum is located). I was very focused to reach my goal of representing New Zealand at the Olympics of Sarajevo in 1984.

During all of that time I was supported by my family and my mentors, most of whom were international coaches who did recognise my potential, and talent. The individual must recognise their own potential and drive that potential to developing that talent. That was a challenge, which I picked up and was, I think, the main successful step for me to making it on to the Olympic Team in Sarajevo.

At a very, very young age I was competing at a very high level on the world cup, and on the world championship stage.

The natural sense of wanting to excel in competition was a trait in me. I simply loved to race and win, and to get the medals, and I'd just naturally found that pathway accessible, and it only led one way – to the top! My whakapapa and culture were able to give me a very deep *genius of imagination*, and I would think that that was unique in myself as a New Zealand athlete.

XIV OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES SARAJEVO, YUGOSLAVIA, 1984

The opportunity to represent New Zealand at the 1984 Sarajevo Olympic Winter Games was, for me, an amazingly phenomenal reward for all my efforts. I'm sure every athlete dreams about representing their country at the Olympics. At that stage I could only state that one day I might win a Gold Medal.

Really it would have been an unrealistic expectation to believe that I could take away a medal. Also I probably weighed 60 kilos at that stage and I was competing against mature men that were trained and had unbelievable amount of power and force and energy. It was an acknowledgement of all of the hard work and the support of my family and those that had believed in me, and I wanted to go and do the best that I could and finish or complete the race.

XV OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES CALGARY, CANADA, 1988

Flagbearer

The interaction of the crowd to seeing New Zealanders, our names were announced, was an immense moment of ecstasy and exhilaration to realise that that whole world is heralding your participation. If there is a significance to carrying the flag, it is personal and the emotion of the event is something which is very special and I shall remember for the rest of my life.

Role models

A role model must not be a person that is the conservative, staid, perfect person. They must have this element of asking questions, or doing things which other people are afraid to do.

ON REFLECTION

Be the Best You Can Be Within The Olympic Spirit

The enjoyment of being there is always going to override any disappointment of not having won an Olympic Medal.

I'm left with no doubt in my mind that it was something that I should cherish for the rest of my life, and because I don't have any of the gold, silver or bronze medals, but yet those were definitely a part of my training focuses and goals, I always wanted to go there to win. Who wouldn't?

I was on the New Zealand National Team for 20 years, and was able to represent New Zealand at four Olympic Games and be a national champion for a decade, as well as an international champion of many countries. I think it's something that all people in the sport world see as the pinnacle, Olympic representation. I'm pleased to have been able to have pushed myself mercilessly and ruthlessly towards fulfilling those things so that I can be seen as having excelled amongst my peers. I can also give useful independent advice to other people who want to be a champion of Aotearoa, New Zealand and help them in areas which I believe they've never considered. I can improve them as not only athletes, but as all round people – that holistic aspect which is the enduring part.

I was qualified for the selection criteria, and declined to be a member of this team, on the 5th Games (XVII Olympic Winter Games, Nagano, Japan, 1998). The four Games that I took part in had a significance to me because they were connected with the way that I realised the dream. I no longer saw myself as needing to prove or test myself and therefore there was no need to be a part of the celebration, which is what can be fairly summarised as high pressure, and very high expectations that the country places on people. It's a choice that you can do, or not do, or be involved with, but that 5th Games just had absolutely no relevance to me.

MESSAGE TO YOUTH

The words I would give would really be about the heart, and how to develop your own courage, and why it's important to question and to not be satisfied with stereotypes and standard expectations, and why you should push yourself through difficulty and this has got to do with your own effectiveness, of your blood, and your own effort. The quality of your blood determines your attitude and it determines the quality of your life. You must work on your metabolism, you must train with a bit of perspiration and effort."

Simon Wi Rutene – Olympian



Simon aged 7 (1973)
Photo: Private Collection



Simon's childhood home, Lake Okareka, Rotorua, 1980
Photo: Private Collection



Simon being farewelled by his grandmother and mother at Auckland Airport on his first trip overseas (1978)
Photo: Private Collection



XVII Olympic Winter Games, Lillehammer, Norway, 1994
Simon, as New Zealand Flagbearer, with Norwegian flag, (attached to flagpole), prior to the march past, Closing Ceremony.
Photo: Private Collection



XV Olympic Winter Games, Calgary, Canada, 1988
Simon – Flagbearer, Opening Ceremony
Photo: Private Collection



XVII Olympic Winter Games, Lillehammer, Norway, 1994
Simon marching with other flagbearers, "the Norwegian flag creates Solidarity of Continuity", Closing Ceremony.
Photo: Private Collection



"Mum and Dad"
Photo: Private Collection

XIV Olympic Winter Games, Sarajevo, Yugoslavia	8 – 19 February 1984
Alpine Skiing; Giant Slalom, 36 / 107	
XV Olympic Winter Games, Calgary, Canada	13 – 28 February 1988
Alpine Skiing; Downhill, (dnf); Super Giant Slalom, dnf; Giant Slalom, dnf; Slalom, 17 / 54	
XVI Olympic Winter Games, Albertville, France	8 – 23 February 1992
Alpine Skiing; Super Giant Slalom, 42 / 118; Giant Slalom, 28 / 13; Slalom, dnf	
XVII Olympic Winter Games, Lillehammer, Norway	12 – 27 February 1994
Alpine Skiing; Combined Downhill / Slalom, 20 / 56; Giant Slalom, dnf; Slalom, dnf; Super Giant Slalom, dnf	

dnf Did not finish