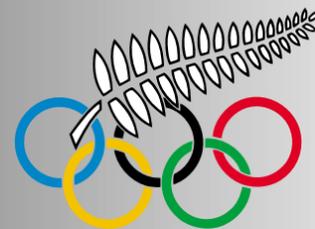


KIRI SHAW OLYMPIAN



OLYMPIC MUSEUM
New Zealand Olympic Committee

www.olympic.org.nz

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“I'm of Ngati Kahangunu and Ngati Porou descent. My mother's family is from Wairoa, and my dad is from Tokomaru Bay on the East Coast of the North Island and I have immense pride in being Maori.

I was born in Lower Hutt on the 4th of June 1973. I have lived in the Wellington region all my life apart from the times I have had seasons overseas. My father was a postal worker, and my mother was sports coordinator at the College that I attended.

ROLE MODELS

I have a younger brother who's bigger than me – so I don't pick on him any more. I would have to say that he is one of my biggest supporters.

My mother was my biggest idol for me. I admire her enjoyment for the game of softball. She trained hard and played hard and I was brought up with those ideals and that's why I enjoy softball so much. I learnt that if you don't put 100 percent effort into your sport, you don't get as much enjoyment out of it, so it was just play fair, train hard, and you'll get out of it what you put in. My mother was my coach and she was a good coach so I was taught the basic skills well. My mother had enthusiasm in her role as coach – always positive and encouraging. She made the game enjoyable for me as an individual and as part of a team. I always knew that even though I was her daughter, she was a fair person; she brought out the best in younger players.

Two other sporting Role Models that stood out for me were Mark Sorenson (softball) and Rhonda Hira (softball).

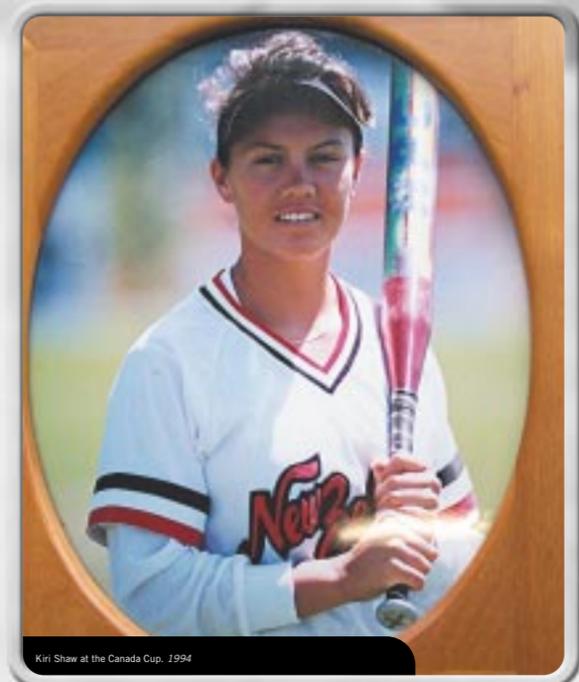
THE TEAM GAME

Unity, Tolerance, Friendship

Because softball is a team game, you get to hang out with your mates doing something that you love. Thanks to my mum I was good at this sport, I had spent so much time hanging out with her on softball grounds.

The Balanced Development of Body, Will and Mind

Once I got to High School, there were so many opportunities to play a lot of different sports, so I pretty much did everything, but knowing that, come summer, softball was always going to be it for me. To play this sport well you have to be strong in your upper body, especially for hitting and throwing. You have to be explosive rather than fast.



Kiri Shaw at the Canada Cup. 1994

EARLY OLYMPIC IMPRESSIONS

Whenever the Olympics would come around you practically had to tear me away from the TV, especially when Kiwis were competing. I knew at a young age what a special event the Olympic Games are for all sports people and I used to get so much pride out of seeing Kiwis perform at the Games. Softball has only been included on the programme in the last two Olympic Games and when I was younger, although I was representing New Zealand, being in the Olympics was never a dream.

BEING A WOMAN IN SPORT

Women who were playing softball in New Zealand at the time my mother was playing (1978-1986), were really successful. Women players were on a level playing field with the guys, because women's softball was played in many more countries and at a very competitive level between the top six – eight countries.

When one considers the small population of New Zealand, the success of both men's and women's softball represents a fantastic result compared to those international teams that have more financial resources to spend on their softball programmes.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND / PRIDE IN IDENTITY

The three biggest achievements for me have been:

- (1) having my daughter, and my son,
- (2) participating in the Olympic Games and
- (3) playing for the New Zealand Maori Women's softball team.

I am not a religious person but I felt a spiritual connection / dimension being part of the Maori team. When you represent New Zealand, you represent your country, but it's a lot closer to home when you're playing for the Maori team, you're representing your family, whakapapa, your ancestors – AWESOME!



Kiri Shaw and daughter Dena outside the New Zealand Olympic Team headquarters in the Olympic Village. Games of the XXVII Olympiad, Sydney, 2000

GAMES OF THE XXVII OLYMPIAD, SYDNEY 2000

The minute I stepped off the plane in Australia, it was like WOW! – this is so much BIGGER than the World Softball Series. This was just like – ooooh, and you're just on a high from the moment you step off the plane and go through your accreditation, through the airport, you're in your uniform, get on the bus, you're on your way to the village, come to the village, it's just like – wow! It's just amazing, just amazing.

OPENING CEREMONY IMPRESSIONS

Our guys got up and performed a haka in the Superdome – prior to the Opening Ceremony while waiting to march into the Stadium. They were singing, dancing, doing their own items – PERFORMING IN OUR OWN BIG CONCERT while the rest of the world watched the main event.

I got goose bumps, it was so cool! All the other countries loved it. Our athletes' time had come!



At the Opening Ceremony, Games of the XXVII Olympiad, Sydney, 2000. Kiri Shaw (left), Melisa Upu (centre), Cindy Potae.

CLOSING CEREMONY IMPRESSIONS

It was as mind-boggling as the Opening Ceremony but it was kind of sad too, to think, this is it, am I ever going to be able to be at one of these again?

It was a big party in the stadium and people were lingering around, because this is the last time you're in the stadium. Also it was kind of a relief, “oh, I can get my life back to normal, I can see my daughter” who I hadn't seen for the last 6 – 7 months prior to this. It was sad – it was the end of an awesome experience.

THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF BEING A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Having been selected to be in a New Zealand Olympic Team, people tended to see me as a Role Model, but that was a hard thing for me to accept. I'm just plain old Kiri who happens to be good at softball. I don't see myself as a role model but hey, if anybody wants help or advice – I'm available!

OLYMPIC GAMES PARTICIPATION

Games of the XXVII Olympiad, Sydney 2000
Women's Softball. The New Zealand Team were placed 6th out of 8 teams competing. The New Zealand team were awarded an Olympic Diploma



Kiri Shaw competing at the Games of the XXVII Olympiad, Sydney, 2000

MESSAGE TO YOUTH

There are a lot of talented kids of all ethnic groups but because I have had more contact with Maori kids, I have found that they are reluctant to move out of their comfort zones and they prefer to cruise rather than extend themselves. It is frustrating, as I have experienced the opportunities that are available to athletes out there – worldwide. I pushed myself, I trained hard, set goals, listened and learned, got knocked down but got straight back up again and tried to do better. This attitude was due to my upbringing and the support of my mum and my whanau and friends. Most importantly, it was a reflection of me as an individual and of the dreams I had.

I can only tell young Maori that there are so many opportunities outside our little community, it's not all about Naenae and Lower Hutt.

If someone has the potential, then I would do all I could to assist them.

I would say to them ‘Push yourself and be good at the talents that I've seen in you!’ – it is up to you!

I say you shouldn't be happy with just cruising or being comfortable in where you are at the moment. There are so many opportunities and kids have so much unrealised potential. If you push yourself and want it bad, then you are more successful than someone reluctant to take on the ‘challenge’ and who will always be left wondering – what would have happened to me if I had given it my best shot?”

