



OLYMPIC MUSEUM
New Zealand Olympic Committee

www.olympic.org.nz

“I am Auckland born and bred.

Recently I have been semi-living in the Waikato. I attended Diocesan School for Girls in Auckland.

I played all sorts of sport when I was at school. I wasn't a particularly studious character. I was the Sports Captain at school.



EARLY INSPIRATION

My grandad died before I started cycling. He competed in cycling at the III British Empire Games, Sydney, Australia 1938 and he managed a New Zealand cycling team to the Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne 1956. My dad held lots of records in New Zealand as a junior cyclist and competed for New Zealand just a couple of times as a senior.

While at school, I played everything - volleyball, squash, soccer, swimming, tennis, hockey, a little bit of athletics. I was 16 when I started cycling and I was inspired by a friend of mine to take part in the sport. I carried on my other sports interests until I left school and then went hard with cycling.

At that time cycling was quite an unusual sport for women to be involved with - and I just loved it. Absolutely loved it, and the more I cycled the better I got, the better I got the more I liked it.

I was Sports Captain at school, I was a pretty useless Sports Captain. I was hardly ever at school, but I recall returning back home from the Junior World Cycling Championships - I had spent about 10 weeks away from school and on coming back there was a special presentation for me in the Assembly Hall.



EARLY ROLE MODELS

I went to the Junior World Track Championships, Quito, Ecuador in 1994 (*Gold Medals: Individual pursuit and Points races*) and as well, that same year, I went straight to the XV Commonwealth Games, Victoria, Canada but that was just a huge step up from the junior level. I just remember seeing Anna Simcic (*swimming*) walk into the food hall one day and people like Gary Anderson (*cycling*) who I'd completed projects on at school. Suddenly I was in the same team as them, it was wicked, it was so cool.

OLYMPIC IMPRESSIONS

It was definitely my dad who gave me the inspiration and motivation to believe in myself and that I could be selected to compete at the Games of the XXVI Olympiad, Atlanta, 1996. I totally threw all my eggs into one basket and went overseas for four months before and put absolutely everything into a performance at the Olympics, because it was so much bigger than anything else I'd ever done, so I didn't want to mess it up.

GAMES OF THE XXVI OLYMPIAD, ATLANTA 1996

I remember flying into Atlanta sitting next to a fellow team member and saying 'this is it, we're going to the Olympic Games!' We had seen the Olympics on television and suddenly we're going to be part of it - it was just amazing, absolutely incredible!

It was hot! Atlanta was probably the first 'big time', where I just had so many wows! In terms of an event I had never experienced anything like that ever.

PRIDE IN THE SILVER FERN

In the Olympic Village most of the New Zealand team would gather in a common lounge area to watch Danyon Loader (*swimming*) race on television. He was the first New Zealander to compete, and the New Zealand team didn't really know each other at that time. Everyone was watching him on the live TV screen and the Olympic pool was just 50 metres from where the New Zealanders were situated. When he won the whole New Zealand team just erupted, total strangers, but we were all just totally elated. Then we went outside and listened to the New Zealand National Anthem being played - 'God Defend New Zealand'. Because the pool was so close, we could hear the announcer and the National Anthem - that was just awesome. It was such a cool way to kick-start the campaign.

GAMES OF THE XXVII OLYMPIAD, SYDNEY 2000

The Sydney Olympic Games were totally different. Atlanta was huge, I remember the security in Atlanta was just phenomenal and in Sydney the security was tight, but it didn't have the same sort of regimented approach that America took and Sydney was just fantastic. They were the friendly Games, absolutely. It was a cool event to be part of, absolutely awesome.

LEADERSHIP THROUGH SPORT NZOC - ATHLETES' COMMISSION

The longer that you're in a sport the more you become aware of the things that are common concerns. The longer that I am in my sport the more I'm encouraged to try and change some things or at least try and take steps in different directions for the benefit of other athletes coming through. You learn so much as you progress, and that's the stuff that you want to try and give back to the youth coming into the sport.



PLAYING A LEADERSHIP ROLE THROUGH SPORT

In terms of the development of women in cycling in New Zealand, essentially there is none! That's something I'd like to see changed. There's not a clear pathway for a woman to get into the sport. Often a young woman comes into the sport and there is no direction for her as opposed to maybe the guys that have just a bit more of a defined pathway.

There are no women administrators in the office of Cycling New Zealand, really very few women coaches, and just very few women participating, and yeah, I do think there's a bit of an old boys network in the current structure. Definitely!

I would like to try to help make a few changes once my competition days have finished.

THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

I represented the Oceanic region at the inaugural International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Forum in 2002 held in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The fact that it was organised for a start showed that the IOC do have a commitment to listening to athletes around the world. Athletes from all around the world were asked their opinion on various issues. I attended a forum concerning "Doping in Sport". As delegates we were asked whether or not a one-year ban was sufficient for those caught 'doping'. As a result of our input a two-year ban was introduced by the IOC for first time offenders.

I could see that by placing a group of proactive individuals together that things can actually happen. Sometimes you can become disillusioned with administration and politics, but that was really encouraging to see that if people are prepared to make a change it can actually happen. Hopefully that can get filtered down into my own sport.

OLYMPIC GAMES PARTICIPATION
Games of the XXVI Olympiad, Atlanta 1996 Cycling - Track / Women's 3000m Individual Pursuit, Placed 7th Sarah was awarded an Olympic Diploma.
Games of the XXVII Olympiad, Sydney 2000 Cycling - Track / Women's Points Race, Placed 8th Sarah was awarded an Olympic Diploma.
Games of the XXVII Olympiad, Sydney 2000 Cycling - Track / Women's 3,000m Individual Pursuit, Placed 4th Sarah was awarded an Olympic Diploma.



MESSAGE TO YOUTH

If you are a young woman playing sport and you choose to carry on with it, then give it a really good nudge. It can be a huge self-confidence booster for you. In terms of excelling, sport gives you extra self-confidence in yourself as a person and as a woman, which you might not ordinarily have had.

Never think that you're any different or think you're behind the 8 ball just because you're a girl."

