NEW ZEALAND WOMEN IN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

BARBARA KENDALL OLYMPIAN

“I was born in Papakura. Mum and Dad were quite young parents and they were yachting enthusiasts. I grew up on a yacht and came from a very, very strong yachting family. Our boat was always known to the locals. They could always spot our boat because we had all the nappies strung off the rigging and the toddlers behind us to be cleaned.”

This boating experience instilled in me a sense of adventure and exploration. I was quite a confident child growing up and that comes from parenting. Mum saying, “you can do this, you can’t do that,” so I grew up very, very balanced and then I was introduced to lots and lots of different things: as a child and found that I had a natural flair for yachting. I attended Bucklands Beach Primary School where we did lots of productions and I did all the normal things like go to Brownies, Girl Guides and I did gymnastics. Then I went to Bucklands Beach Intermediate School followed by Massey College.

EARLY ROLE MODELS

When I was a child we had lots of adventures and they were quite competitive. They used to race our yacht in all the cruises and we were always very successful. I remember climbing up waterfalls with Mum and Dad hoisting us up between each other and they had to limit that was instilled in us kids.

I got involved in windsurfing in 1984. My brother Bruce had been windsurfing for some time before that. He had just won the Bronze Medal at the Games of the XXI Olympiad, Los Angeles 1984, in the Facilitating Windsurfing event. After that he had won several national titles in competitions, and then after a few months went to the World Windsurfing Championships at the age of 17.

Windsurfing for women was not included on the programme of the Olympic Games until 1992. However, there were many women competing on the professional circuit and that’s where I aspired to go because that’s where I saw than the Peace, Unity and Friendship. These aspects of the Olympic Games.

The thing that made it easier for me was the fact that my brother Bruce himself a windsurfer. At that time windsurfing was very much a man’s sport, but my brother Bruce had been very successful. I started windsurfing as a child and found that I had a natural flair for it.

I diversified when I got bored. All the skills I had actually crossed over to each of the other disciplines and that’s one of the advantages of the sport.

DEALING WITH CHANGE / EVOLVING WITH THE SPORT

Windsurfing is a very diverse sport, in fact it is like having five different sports in one. For example, you have slalom sailing, wave sailing, speed sailing. I diversified when I got bored. All the skills I had actually crossed over to each of the other disciplines and that’s one of the advantages of the sport.

REALISATION OF YOUR DREAM

It starts with dreams. I had a competitive nature, I was competitive, and believe that you are actually born with that flair; that competitive nature. But I can also be a bit light-headed about it. Therefore, I would have to apply those skills of motivation, skills of goal setting, skills of making sure that you get challenges.

I get involved in windsurfing in 1984. My brother Bruce had been windsurfing for some time before that. He had just won the Bronze Medal at the Games of the XXI Olympiad, Los Angeles 1984, in the Facilitating Windsurfing event. After that he had won several national titles in competitions, and then after a few months went to the World Windsurfing Championships at the age of 17.

At that time windsurfing was a sport that was exploiting with quite big budgets and big advertising budgets, and I just thought, well, that’s where I want to go. So it was just the kids among All Blacks, they saw it as a career option. I didn’t know if I could make it but I knew that’s what I wanted to do.

The thing that made it easier for me was the fact that my brother Bruce was himself a windsurfer. At that time windsurfing was very much a man’s sport, but my brother Bruce had been very successful. I started windsurfing as a child and found that I had a natural flair for it.

It was good to have that challenge of the new discipline as windsurfing became more physical so gym work became part of my training routine.

I had a natural fitness, but I was never like a super athlete. At school I was not a very good runner or a good swimmer, but because I danced I had a natural fitness and that helped me a lot. As windsurfing evolved it became more physical so gym work became part of my training routine.

At the time windsurfing was a sport that was exploiting with quite big budgets and big advertising budgets, and I just thought, well, that’s where I want to go. So it was just the kids among All Blacks, they saw it as a career option. I didn’t know if I could make it but I knew that’s what I wanted to do.

The thing that made it easier for me was the fact that my brother Bruce was himself a windsurfer. At that time windsurfing was very much a man’s sport, but my brother Bruce had been very successful. I started windsurfing as a child and found that I had a natural flair for it.

At Sydney I focused on my competition. I was not until afterwards that I made special friendships with the athletes that were members of the New Zealand Olympic Team. We shared a common bond through the effort it took to get to the Olympic Games.

Olympic Games Participation

Games of the XXV Olympiad, Barcelona 1992
Yachting / IMCO
One-Design: Mistral, Women (Boardsailing) event.
Gold Medal
Games of the XXV Olympiad, Atlanta 2000 Yachting / IODC
One-Design: Mistral, Women (Boardsailing) event.
Silver Medal
Games of the XXVI Olympiad, Sydney 2000
Sailing / Women’s Windsurfing (Boardsailing) event.
Bronze Medal

MESSAGE TO YOUTH

Think about all the things that you would like to do with your life. Think about what excites you! What are you passionate about, what does that feeling of, “oh, I can’t wait to get out there and do this”? Being a leader you need to be ‘in your truth’ with clear intentions. Be honest and if you’re in your truth you’ll never go wrong because it will be your intuition that is telling you things that you should be doing and if you’re in your truth you’re never going to do the wrong thing.”

REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN IN SPORT

I really enjoy competing in a male dominated sport, because when you beat men it feels great! I have always considered that I have pioneered the notion of women taking on sport as a career. Windsurfing is ‘out of the box’ and they didn’t know where to put it.

In my sport of windsurfing it’s been an advantage being a woman, it’s been a disadvantage because of the sport being so new.

Women in sport today are getting into the ‘old boys’ network’ and coming in with a slightly more balanced approach than men. Women can handle stress better than men!

BEING AN OLYMPIC LEADER

NZOC ATHLETES’ COMMISSION

Sometimes sports funding decisions are made by people that do not understand what it’s like to compete any more. This motivated me to sit on the Debaters’ Commission of the New Zealand Olympic Committee.

My biggest concern was making sure that the links between administration and the athletes were maintained to ensure they were thinking along the same lines. This meant that athletes were involved in the decision making of sport.

OLYMPIC GAMES PARTICIPATION

Games of the XXV Olympiad, Barcelona 1992
Yachting / IMCO
One-Design: Mistral, Women (Boardsailing) event.
Gold Medal
Games of the XXV Olympiad, Atlanta 2000 Yachting / IODC
One-Design: Mistral, Women (Boardsailing) event.
Silver Medal
Games of the XXVI Olympiad, Sydney 2000
Sailing / Women’s Windsurfing (Boardsailing) event.
Bronze Medal

THE DOCUMENT COMPANY