



New Zealand Olympic Ambassador

Aaron Orangi

Olympian number:

989

Discipline:

Four-man Bobsleigh

Aaron Orangi was born in 1972 in Geraldine. He has always been a keen athlete, playing rugby and tennis from a young age. His mother was an international netball umpire for New Zealand, so Aaron grew up around netball courts. When he was thirteen, he was asked by New Zealand Junior Tennis to move to Auckland and focus on playing tennis, but he didn't want to give up rugby. From 1991 to 1994, he played for the Otago University Rugby Football Club while studying pharmacy. His rugby teammates called him "Wheels" because he was so fast on the field.

Aaron did not begin competing in bobsleigh until his early 30s. In 2005, he competed at the lower-tier North America's Cup in Lake Placid, where the New Zealand teams finished seventh and fourth. Aaron was a brakeman in the two-man competition, stepping in for Matt Dallow because Aaron was smaller and lighter. The weight limit of the two-man event was 390kg (sled and athletes combined).

In 2006, Aaron was one of five New Zealand bobsleigh racers selected for the Olympic Winter Games in Torino, Italy. With 18 athletes, it was New Zealand's largest

Quick facts

Favourite food: Steak (preferably on the stonegrill)

Favourite movie: *Top Gun*

Favourite music: Counting Crows

Childhood hero: My Dad

Current favourite athlete: Usain Bolt

Most rewarding moment in sport:

Qualifying for the Olympic Games

Talents other than sport:

Being a good community pharmacist

Biggest injury: Broken legs (both playing rugby)

Biggest sacrifice:

Choosing my career (pharmacy) over rugby

Job outside sport: Pharmacist

Other fun facts: Love cars, currently own 6!

I played rugby sevens with Jonah Lomu in Dubai. The rugby fields were made of sand!



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ever Olympic Winter Games team – it had seven more members than the team for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City. As one of the crew in the four-man bobsleigh team, Aaron embraced the spirit of the Games and was ready to give it his all. His teammates were Alan Henderson, Matt Dallow and Stephen Harrison.

Before the first day of racing in Torino, all the bobsleigh teams had to do six trial runs and show officials that they could complete the course safely at least three times. Aaron's team made it safely through five runs. They were about to finish their sixth run, speeding around the last turn at about 128km/hr, when their sled bumped the track's wall, flew across the track and flipped over. It was a serious high-speed crash – their driver, Alan, hurt his neck and cracked a rib and Matt had a lot of bruising to his shoulders. Luckily, Aaron and Stephen escaped the crash unscathed.

After the accident, the team were ready to jump back into the sled and compete in the heats. Even the injured driver was taped up and rearing to go. However, the doctors advised the team to pull out of the competition, which meant that they received a 'did not start' (DNS) score. Although it was not the Olympic campaign that Aaron had expected, he came back from the Games positive and keen to remain involved in bobsledding:

“I'm fairly philosophical about it, and I still love bobsledding – I'm now helping to train and recruit new team members and we are looking for sponsors so New Zealand can send a world-class bobsleigh team to the 2010 Winter Olympics at Whistler.”

(<https://mas.co.nz/includes/fetch.aspx?id=1017>)

Aaron continued to compete in bobsleigh, travelling to the Lake Placid North American Cup in 2008 and the St Moritz European Cup in 2009. While he still competed in the four-man bobsleigh, he also moved into the smaller two-man sled, as a driver.

Aaron lives in Darfield, Canterbury where he is an active member of the community. He started work in 1998 at the Darfield Pharmacy. It is the only pharmacy from Templeton to the West Coast between the Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers, so he has a far-reaching customer base. In 2007, at the age of 35, Aaron purchased the

pharmacy. He still works there as the owner and enjoys helping out others in the community:

“Having a big personality (is important), as you are often asked to deal with all sections of the community, and are often the first port of call when any medical advice is needed.... Being friendly and easily approachable is very important. The satisfaction of helping others is the best thing about the job.”

(<http://www.justinemcleary.com/article/pharmacy-is-now-open>)

Aaron is no longer competing internationally in bobsleigh, but he still trains most days. He enjoys helping out young athletes in his community, coaching primary school students in tennis, and acting as an assistant coach for the local rugby club.

In 2013, Aaron was named a New Zealand Olympic Ambassador for the New Zealand Olympic Committee.

Career highlights

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 2009 | St. Moritz European Cup: Four-man (Sixteenth), Two-man (Thirty-second) |
| 2008 | Lake Placid North American Cup: Two-man (Eleventh) |
| 2006 | Torino Olympic Winter Games: Four-man (DNS) |
| 2006 | Königssee World Cup |

Links

Aaron Orangi's Olympic Museum profile:
<http://imuseum.olympic.org.nz/museum/athlete/profile/27582>

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Official Olympic Sport

Bobsleigh

Bobsleigh, or tobogganing, is a winter sport that was invented in Switzerland in the late 1860s. It involves teams sliding very fast down an ice track on sleds. When the first Olympic Winter Games was held in Chamonix in 1924, a four-man bobsleigh event was on the programme. In 1932, a two-man bobsleigh event featured at the Lake Placid Olympic Winter Games. Women did not compete in bobsleigh until the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Winter Games, when a two-woman race debuted. The skeleton discipline featured in 1928 and 1948 and then reappeared in 2002. It has been on the Olympic Winter Games programme ever since.

The course

Bobsleigh and skeleton races take place on a 1500m track with a concrete base and an artificial ice surface. The track is narrow and tunnel-like, with banked curves from top to bottom. Every course is unique but each one features several difficult twists and turns.

Olympic events

Bobsleigh	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Four-man bobsleigh• Two-man bobsleigh• Two-woman bobsleigh
Skeleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual men• Individual women



The basics

In bobsleigh, the two-person teams consist of a brake person and a pilot. The four-person teams have a brakeman, a pilot and two crewmen/pushers. The team starts standing up and, holding onto side handles, they push the sled for up to 50 metres at about 40 kilometres per hour. This pushing usually takes less than six seconds. The team then jumps into the sled and races down the track while sitting up.

The pilot uses rings to control and steer the sled with his hands and fingers. The rings are connected by ropes to a steering mechanism. To apply the brakes, the brake person lifts a lever that lowers metal teeth into the ice.

Skeleton involves one competitor sliding down the track on a sled. The athlete starts by pushing the sled and then diving onto it to race lying face down, head-first. Their arms are by their sides and they steer the skeleton by moving their body. There are no brakes on a skeleton sled – the athlete slows it down with his or her feet at the end of the race.

In both disciplines, the competition takes two days. The competitor or team with the fastest time wins.

Important points

- Athletes wear tight-fitting bodysuits, and for protection they wear special leather gloves and high-tech plastic helmets with visors.
- Athletes wear synthetic shoes with spikes on the soles so that they don't slip on the ice during the running push.
- A bobsled is made up of a fiberglass main hull, a frame, front and rear axles and two sets of independent steel runners. The hull is open so that crew can jump in after the push and then sit up with their heads poking out while racing.
- A skeleton sled has two runners and a steel frame.

