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New Zealand Olympic Ambassador

# Barbara Kendall

**Olympian number:**  
**631**

**Discipline:**  
**Sailing**

**Specialist event:**  
**Windsurfing**

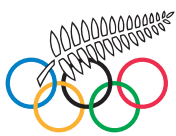
Barbara Kendall was born in Papakura in 1967, the youngest of three children. Barbara was an athlete from a young age, representing her school in swimming and athletics. However, her true passion was dancing. She was a talented dancer and a natural performer. By age 14, she was teaching her own dance class.

Barbara, her brother Bruce and her sister Wendy always loved the sea. They spent their childhood summer holidays on their old yacht, *Sunlight*. In the weekends, Barbara and her sister learned to sail. They went to coaching camps run by well-known New Zealand skippers Russell Coutts and Chris Dickson, where they learned tactics and rules. Their father helped them and encouraged them along the way, teaching them how to analyse their races and ‘read’ the weather and tidal currents. Barbara excelled in the sport, winning the Auckland Championships three years in a row.

In 1983, Barbara competed in her first national championships. She was shocked when she didn’t win a race but she realised the best thing to do was relax, stay positive and enjoy her next race. Barbara maintained this positive attitude throughout her sailing career.

## Quick facts

- Favourite food:** Quinoa and tuna with lots of vegetables
- Favourite movie:** Fried Green Tomatoes
- Favourite music:** Zac Brown Band
- Childhood hero:** Ariel from *The Little Mermaid*
- Current favourite athlete:** Kelly Slater
- Most rewarding moment in sport:** When I won an Olympic Gold Medal and all my competitors celebrated.
- Talents other than sport:** Ukulele, dancing, surfing, speaking, knitting
- Biggest injury:** Broken wrist in 1991. I was told I would never windsurf again
- Biggest sacrifice:** Time away from home
- Job outside sport:** Growing confident and consciously aware daughters
- Other fun facts:** I use a lot of sunscreen, don’t like the wind or getting wet anymore, prefer surfing!!



**New Zealand  
Olympic Education**

Windsurfing was invented in the early 1980s and Barbara's mum bought the family their first board. It was heavy, slippery and difficult to manage, but Bruce quickly became an expert and taught his sisters. They practised hard until they were good enough to compete at local regattas.

At the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, Bruce won New Zealand's first windsurfing medal – a Bronze. Barbara was incredibly happy for her brother and inspired by his success. She decided that she too would win an Olympic windsurfing medal.

When she was 17, and had only been windsurfing for six months, Barbara was selected for the Windsurfing World Championship in Scotland. She placed twenty-fifth out of twenty-seven, and realised that she had a long journey ahead of her if she was going to qualify for the Olympic Games.

Barbara finished school and taught dance classes for several years. She still went windsurfing at every chance she could, competing in weekly races. Then in 1987, she decided to commit to windsurfing full-time. She began competing in the Professional Boardsailing Association (PBA) Tour. By maintaining a place as a top five competitor on the tour, she was able to earn a living from sailing.

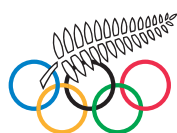
However, travelling around the world as a windsurfer was tough – she had to transport a heavy board and sails; she was strapped for cash; it was difficult to find accommodation, venues and food; and sometimes she had to hang around waiting for the right wind!

In 1988, her brother won a Gold Medal at the Seoul Olympic Games. That same year it was announced that there would be a women's division in windsurfing at the 1992 Olympic Games. Olympic boardsailing used a different type of board to the PBA Tour. This meant that Barbara had to learn to sail on the Lechner board. She trained hard, working with her brother, and racing against men.

In 1990, Barbara was ranked second female in the world. She returned to New Zealand to compete in the Olympic trials over the summer of 1991–1992. But in early 1992, a wave tipped her boat and she broke her wrist. She would have missed out on the Olympic trials, but fortunately the

## Career highlights

2008	Beijing Olympic Games, RS:X women (Sixth)
2008	World Windsurfing Championships, RSX (Silver)
2007	World Windsurfing Championships, RSX (Silver)
2004	Athens Olympic Games, Mistral (Fifth)
2004	World Windsurfing Championships, Mistral (Silver)
2003	World Windsurfing Championships, Mistral (Silver)
2002	World Windsurfing Championships, Mistral (Gold)
2000	Sydney Olympic Games, Mistral (Bronze)
1999	World Windsurfing Championships, Mistral (Gold)
1998	World Windsurfing Championships, Mistral (Gold)
1997	World Windsurfing Championships, Mistral (Bronze)
1996	Atlanta Olympic Games, Mistral (Silver)
1992	Barcelona Olympic Games, Lechner women (Gold)
1990	Professional Boardsailing World Tour (Silver)
1987	World Windsurfing Championships, Production (Gold)
1985	ISAF World Championships, Production (Bronze)



New Zealand Yachting Federation delayed them, giving Barbara time to heal and strengthen her wrist. She won the trials and went on to win a Gold Medal at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. Her win was an important moment for New Zealand history – it was New Zealand first women’s windsurfing medal, Barbara was only the second New Zealand woman to win Gold, and Barbara and Bruce became New Zealand’s first brother and sister combination to win Olympic Gold Medals.

Barbara went on to compete at four more Olympic Games, winning a Silver Medal in Atlanta (1996) and a Bronze Medal in Sydney (2000). She placed fifth in Athens (2004), and sixth in Beijing (2008). She also won 15 World Championship medals between 1985 and 2008.

In her twenty-four-year career, Barbara has received numerous awards for her achievements, including multiple Halberg Sportswoman of the Year awards (1996, 1998–2000, 2002). She was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to windsurfing. She is New Zealand’s golden girl – one of the country’s most successful athletes and an important member of the national and international sporting communities.

Barbara officially retired from competition in 2010 after 24 years. Barbara currently lives in Whangaparaoa with her husband Shayne and their two daughters Samantha and Aimee. She works as a motivational speaker, conducts leadership workshops, is a director for the cosmetic company *Feel at Home* and serves on various international and national sporting commissions and boards:

- Athletes Commissions (International Olympic Committee, Chair Oceania Athlete Commission, New Zealand Olympic Committee)
- Woman and Sport Commission (International Olympic Committee)
- Sport and the Environment Commission (International Olympic Committee)
- New Zealand Olympic Committee board.

Barbara has been a New Zealand Olympic Ambassador since 2010.

## Honours

- 2007** Inducted into ISAF Sailing Hall of Fame
- 2002** New Zealand Sportswoman of the Year, Halberg Awards
- 1999** New Zealand Sportswoman of the Year, Halberg Awards
- 1998** New Zealand Sportswoman of the Year, Halberg Awards
- 1998** New Zealand Sailor of the Year
- 1996** New Zealand Sportswoman of the Year, Halberg Awards
- 1992** New Zealand Sailor of the Year
- 1992** Awarded MBE for services to windsurfing

## Links

Barbara Kendall’s Olympic Museum profile:  
<http://imuseum.olympic.org.nz/museum/athlete/profile/21>

Barbara Kendall’s website:  
<http://barbarakendall.co.nz>

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