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New Zealand Olympic Ambassador

Evelyn Williamson

Olympian number:
865

Discipline:
Triathlon

Evelyn Williamson was born in 1971 in Hamilton. When she was 21 years old, her University of Otago friends were intending to travel to the Triathlon World Championships in Manchester. They suggested she try triathlon and come along for the trip. Because she had been a competitive swimmer from an early age and had a background in rowing, netball and waterpolo, Evelyn had a good endurance base. She successfully qualified as an age-group athlete for the Triathlon World Championships in 1993 in Manchester. She competed in another two age-group World Championships before turning professional and attending the 1996 World Championships in Cleveland, Ohio.

Evelyn continued to train hard, racing around the world. A short two years later, she made her way onto the international podium with a Bronze Medal at the Elite 1998 World Championships in Lausanne, Switzerland.

At age 29, Evelyn made her Olympic debut at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. It was a special event for the sport itself, as it was the first time triathlon had featured at an Olympic Games. At that stage of her career,

Quick facts

- Favourite food:** Chocolate
- Favourite music:** 80s
- Most rewarding moment in sport:** The finish line at the Kapiti Women's Triathlon – inspiring
- Biggest injury:** Stress fracture (navicular)
- Biggest sacrifice:** Missing family, including Gromit the coolest cat
- Job outside sport:** New Zealand Olympic Committee



New Zealand Olympic Education

Evelyn's world ranking was consistently in the top 10 and she had a medal in her sights in Sydney. Before Evelyn competed in Sydney, the national coach Jack Ralston said:

“Anything can happen on the day and Evelyn has shown that when the chips are down in big events she can pull out very good performances. She finished second in Geneva two weeks ago ... anything can happen on the day.”

(15 September 2000 http://www.nzherald.co.nz/olympicgames/news/article.cfm?c_id=502&objectid=151511)

Evelyn placed twenty-second at the Sydney Olympic Games with a total time of 2:05:38:30. Two years later she placed tenth at the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games.

Towards the end of 2003, Evelyn was forced to take some time out. She was diagnosed with an iliac artery condition, now commonly diagnosed in endurance athletes. Fortunately, a surgeon in Australia was able to perform a career-saving operation.

Evelyn made a remarkable comeback to competition in 2004, finishing first in the Macau ITU Triathlon Asian Cup, third in the prestigious Los Angeles Triathlon, and in the top five at two World Cup events. She was back in top racing condition and ready to win more races, but the time she missed due to her medical condition and surgery had robbed her of much needed world ranking points. To gain enough points to qualify for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, she needed to finish in at least seventh place at the 2004 ITU World Championships in Madeira in May. The odds were in her favour. Evelyn performed best on challenging courses like Madeira, with an eight-lap cycle including a 50m vertical climb on each lap and a tough four-lap run course. Unfortunately, this was not her day; she finished in twenty-fifth place, dashing her hopes of representing New Zealand at the Athens Olympic Games.

Four years later, Evelyn qualified as an alternate, or substitute, for New Zealand's three-person triathlon team for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Unfortunately, New Zealand did not send their alternates to the Games and so she did not end up attending.

Career highlights

2008	Noumea International Triathlon (Bronze)
2007	Gallipoli ITU European Cup & Balkan Championships (second)
2004	Macau ITU Triathlon Asian Cup (First)
2004	Los Angeles Triathlon (Bronze)
2002	Manchester Commonwealth Games (Tenth)
2001	Boston International Triathlon (First)
2000	Sydney Olympic Games (Twenty-second)
1998	Lausanne World Championship (Bronze)
1998–2008	11 Elite World Championships

Honours

2006	Kapiti Sportsperson of the Year
1999	Wellington Sportsperson of the Year



After the Beijing Olympic Games, Evelyn made an announcement at the Annual Athlete Awards Luncheon in Auckland: after more than 15 years of competing at international level, she had decided to retire from her professional athletic career. It was the end of a long career as one of New Zealand's most successful female triathletes, with over 100 international caps. For around seven years, Evelyn had been the top ranked New Zealand female triathlete, with a world ranking consistently within the top twenty.

Her retirement wasn't the end of Evelyn's involvement in New Zealand triathlons. Until the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, she will be an Elite selector for Triathlon New Zealand and she currently helps organise several running and triathlon events. She brings years of invaluable experience to these events and she loves seeing New Zealanders get out there and give it a go. As race director, she helped the Kapiti Women's Triathlon celebrate its 30th anniversary in February 2013. The Kapiti Women's Triathlon is one of the largest and longest running women's triathlons in New Zealand. Evelyn said,

“We wanted to do something to show how much we appreciate people taking part, and to celebrate turning 30”.

(21 February 2013 <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/local-papers/horowhenua-mail/sport/8331795/Triathlon-turns-30>)

Evelyn also works for the New Zealand Olympic Committee, and has been visiting schools as a New Zealand Olympic Ambassador since 2011.

Links

Evelyn Williamson's Olympic Museum profile:
<http://imuseum.olympic.org.nz/museum/athlete/profile/403>

Follow the NZ Olympic Team here:



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