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New Zealand Olympic Ambassador

Joseph Sullivan

Olympian number:

1216

Discipline:

Rowing

Specialist event:

Double scull

Joseph Sullivan was born in Rangiora in 1987, but grew up in Picton. He was a keen runner at school, particularly good at cross-country and athletics. A senior student at his school recommended he try rowing, and Joseph never looked back. As Picton is a small town, the school had limited training facilities for rowing, and Joseph spent his initial training sessions avoiding fishing boats in the local harbour. Eventually, the school moved the training to a nearby river.

At 182 centimetres tall and weighing 82 kilograms, Joseph is small for a champion rower, but he worked hard to compete at an international level. In 2005, he raced in the double scull at the Junior World Championships and came third. Over the next few years he earned several international titles, coming first in the under-23 World Championships in 2007 and 2008.

Joseph faced a challenge when it came to the double scull event – because of his smaller size, national coaches felt it would be difficult to find a rowing partner for him. His big break came when Nathan Cohen, who

Quick facts

Favourite food: Rack of lamb

Favourite movie: *The Untouchables*

Favourite music: All sorts

Childhood hero: Sir Edmund Hillary

Most rewarding moment in sport: Winning my Gold Medal in London with Nathan Cohen

Talents other than sport: Photography

Biggest injury: Breaking my arm

Biggest sacrifice: No social life being a rower

Other fun facts: Smallest heavyweight in the world at elite level rowing



**New Zealand
Olympic Education**

had represented New Zealand in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games with Rob Waddell, needed a new partner.

Nathan is also smaller than usual for an elite rower, which means he and Joseph work fantastically together. Their size means that they are able to adjust their speed more quickly than other rowing teams, and they are known for their last minute sprints to the finish line. Their determination and unique style earned them first place in the double scull at the World Championships in 2010 and 2011.

Following their remarkable achievements, Joseph and Nathan were selected to represent New Zealand in double sculls at the London 2012 Olympic Games. During their training time, Joseph filmed a video to demonstrate their hard work and Olympic journey.

At the London Olympic Games, the pair earned a place in the final with some solid performances. In an amazing illustration of their style, Joseph and Nathan burst from fifth place to first in the last 500 metres of the final, winning the first New Zealand Gold Medal of the Games. On the podium, the difference in size between the first place pair and the other competitors was striking, making their achievement seem all the greater.

On returning home to Picton, Joseph was overwhelmed to be welcomed back with a town-wide celebration. He has now returned to training, and he and Nathan hope to compete together again at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

In 2012, the New Zealand Olympic Committee appointed Joseph as a New Zealand Olympic Ambassador.

Career highlights

- 2012** London Olympic Games: Double scull (Gold)
- 2011** Lake Bled World Rowing Championships: Double scull (First)
- 2010** Lake Karapiro World Rowing Championships: Double scull (First)
- 2009** Racice World Rowing Under-23 Championships: Double scull (First)
- 2008** Brandenburg World Rowing Under-23 Championships: Single scull (First)
- 2007** Glasgow World Rowing Under-23 Championships: Single scull (First)

Links

Joseph Sullivan's Olympic Museum profile:
<http://imuseum.olympic.org.nz/museum/athlete/profile/28903>

Follow the NZ Olympic Team here:



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Official Olympic Sport

Rowing

Men's rowing has been part of the Olympic Summer Games since 1900 (it was cancelled in 1896 due to bad weather). Women's events have been part of the programme since 1976.

The basics

There are two styles of rowing in Olympic competitions.

- Sweep rowers use a single oar on one side only. They compete in crews of two, four or eight people, with equal numbers of oars on each side of the boat.

Coxed or coxless crews are all sweep rowers. The coxswain is a person who steers the boat, but doesn't row. In coxless boats, the boat is steered by one of the crew, normally using their feet.

- Scullers row with two oars. They compete as singles or in crews of two people (called double scull) or four people (quad scull).

Sculls are slower than other categories of racing boat, so scullers are known as the strongest and toughest rowers. Single sculls are also often used in training for team events to improve rowers' techniques.

The course

All Olympic rowing races take place over a 2,000m course. There are six lanes in each race, and the first boat across the finish line wins.

Rowing is the only Olympic sport where competitors cross the finish line backwards.

Important points

At the Olympic Games, each country is allowed to have only one boat for each rowing event. This can mean selections are strongly contested, such as during the trial series raced between Rob Waddell and Mahe Drysdale in 2008.

There are lots of things for rowers to be aware of in their races. Some important ones are:

- getting a good start (a false start results in disqualification)
- staying in their lane (crossing into another lane results in disqualification)
- working as a team to get the most distance out of every stroke
- saving just enough energy to push to the finish.



Olympic events (at the London 2012 Olympic Games)

Men

- Men's single sculls
- Men's coxless pair
- Men's double sculls
- Men's coxless four
- Men's lightweight double sculls
- Men's lightweight coxless four
- Men's quadruple sculls
- Men's coxed eight

Women

- Women's single sculls
- Women's coxless pair
- Women's double sculls
- Women's lightweight double sculls
- Women's quadruple sculls
- Women's coxed eight



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