



New Zealand Olympic Ambassador

Luuka Jones

Olympian number:
1051

Discipline:
Canoe/Kayak Slalom

Specialist event:
Women's Kayak (K1)

Luuka Jones was born in Tauranga in 1988. She started kayaking because she lived down the road from a kayak adventure park, called Waimarino. Luuka was so enthusiastic about the sport that, when she was 12, the park's owner Barry Anderson offered her the opportunity to help out around the park in return for lessons. She jumped at the chance and began learning the basics of recreational kayaking, until she decided she wanted to compete.

Luuka's passion for canoe slalom really took off. At age 14, she entered her first competition, the New Zealand Secondary Schools Canoe Slalom Nationals. It was a challenging race because she had never been on a slalom course. But her white water experience helped her, and she made it to third place.

This placing meant that Luuka was selected for the New Zealand Under-18 Junior Development Team for canoe slalom, beginning her success in the sport and her journey to the Olympic Games. During her time on the development team, she had the opportunity to increase

Quick facts

Favourite food: Vietnamese food

Favourite movie: *Snatch*

Favourite music: Florence and the Machine

Childhood heroes: Sarah Ulmer and Hamish Carter

Current favourite athlete:

Peter Kauzer (Canoe Slalom World Champion)

Most rewarding moment in sport: Sitting on the start line of the 2012 London Olympic Games.

Talents other than sport: I'm not sure they are talents as such, but I like to do a lot of graphic design. I enjoy public speaking, singing and playing the guitar.

Biggest injury: When I bruised three of my ribs a week before the Olympic Games!

Biggest sacrifice: Not spending as much time with family and friends when I am training and focusing on sport. My sport is not a sacrifice, as it has taught me so much and made me who I am.



**New Zealand
Olympic Education**

her skill by training in Australia, where there are better training facilities. She was still not training for canoe slalom full-time though, playing canoe polo in her spare time.

Luuka then qualified to compete in the 2006 Junior World Championships, held in Solkan, Slovenia. This level of international competition was a new experience for Luuka, and she came 27th in her race. The event had given her a taste for world competition, and she became determined to make it in canoe slalom.

Luuka now faced a big decision, because she knew she couldn't train to an international level in New Zealand. She decided to move to Nottingham, England, to train with world-class athletes in her sport and learn as much as she could from them. To make the move possible, she worked three jobs alongside her training.

When she got to Nottingham, she met up with her coach from the Junior World Championships, who introduced her to the canoe slalom community there. The athletes and coaches were very welcoming, and Luuka had the chance to learn from the best. Along with her hard work, this helped her increase her skill.

Luuka set her sights on the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. She trained harder than ever to earn an Olympic spot at the Oceania qualifications and to place in the top sixteen in the World Cup in Slovenia. She accomplished both of these in 2007, becoming the first New Zealand female and the third New Zealander ever to qualify for the Olympic Games in canoe slalom.

The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games were Luuka's first Olympic experience. All her hard work and training paid off when she finished in 21st place. After the Games, she was invited to join the Waiariki Academy of Sport for more training support. The specially designed training programme helped her hone her skills even more. She has been the New Zealand National Champion four times.

Luuka was selected for the 2012 London Olympic Games, where she continued to improve her performance. In her first race, she had a good first run but lost a few seconds in penalties for touching gates. Her second run was not quite as good, but after a few minutes it was confirmed that she had made it through to the semifinals. Luuka didn't make it through to the finals,

but she finished in 14th place overall, seven places up from her placing in Beijing. Luuka is confident that she can improve on this further at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, where she hopes to win a medal. She is now back in New Zealand, working and training for that goal.

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

Career highlights

2012	London Olympic Games (Fourteenth)
2008–2011	New Zealand National Champion
2008	Beijing Olympic Games (Twenty-first)
2007	First New Zealand female to qualify for the Olympic Games in canoe slalom
2006	Solkan Junior World Championships
2005	Lucy Forde Cup Senior U18 Girls' Champion K1 and DR Cup, New Zealand Secondary Schools Athletic Association

Links

Luuka Jones' Olympic Museum profile:
<http://imuseum.olympic.org.nz/museum/athlete/profile/29032>

Luuka Jones' website:
<http://www.luukayaker.blogspot.co.nz>

Follow the NZ Olympic Team here:



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**New Zealand
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Official Olympic Sport

Canoe/Kayak

There are two disciplines within canoe/kayak: slalom and sprint. Canoes and kayaks are both used in each discipline.

Canoeing and kayaking sprint were demonstration sports at the 1924 Olympic Games, and they have been competition sports at the Olympic Games since 1936. Canoeing and kayaking slalom were first introduced at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. They did not appear again until the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games.

The boats

A **canoe** is a lightweight boat, pointed at both ends. One or two athletes kneel in the canoe, propelling it with single-bladed paddles.



A **kayak** is a narrow, lightweight boat, pointed at both ends. One, two or four athletes sit in the kayak and propel it with double-ended paddles.



Canoe sprint boats are long and streamlined for speed, while canoe slalom boats are much shorter and lighter and more manoeuvrable in rapids.



The basics

Canoe slalom consists of time trials that take place on a white-water course with up to 25 gates. Each paddler or pair does a timed run through the course, going through the gates upstream or downstream (depending on the colour of the gate). If they touch a gate, they get 2 seconds added to their time. If they miss a gate completely, they get 50 seconds added to their time. The athletes with the fastest times proceed to the next stage of the competition, or if it is the finals, they win.

Canoe sprint competitions are races that take place in lanes on still water, similar to rowing and swimming races. Up to eight boats all start at the same time, and the first to cross the finish line is the winner. The competitions start with heats, and the fastest finishers in each race progress through the stages to the finals.

Important points

- In the Olympic Games, each country can only enter one boat per event.
- Paddlers can be penalised for incorrect starts in both canoe sprint and canoe slalom.

Olympic events

Men		Women	
<i>Canoe Slalom</i>	<i>Canoe Sprint</i>	<i>Canoe Slalom</i>	<i>Canoe Sprint</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canoe single (C1) • Canoe double (C2) • Kayak (K1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kayak single (K1) 1000m • Kayak single (K1) 200m • Kayak double (K2) 1000m • Kayak double (K2) 200m • Kayak four (K4) 1000m • Canoe single (C1) 1000m • Canoe single (C1) 200m • Canoe double (C2) 1000m 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kayak (K1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kayak single (K1) 500m • Kayak single (K1) 200m • Kayak double (K2) 500m • Kayak four (K4) 500m

