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New Zealand Olympic Ambassador

Mahé Drysdale

Olympian number:

896

Discipline:

Rowing

Specialist event:

Single scull

Mahé Drysdale was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1978. He had a very international upbringing, spending the first four years of his life living between Australia and New Zealand, before moving to the United Kingdom for seven years. When he was eleven, his family moved back to New Zealand and settled in Tauranga.

Since he was a child, Mahé loved playing sport and competing. When he was nine years old, he watched the American track-and-field star Carl Lewis win Gold at the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. At that moment, Mahé was inspired to become an Olympic Champion.

Mahé played many sports at school, but didn't start rowing until he was at university studying to become an accountant. He rowed for two years but gave up because it was too much of a commitment, including too many early morning training sessions! A year later, he watched Rob Waddell win Gold at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Once again, Mahé was inspired to become an

Quick facts

Favourite food: Broccoli

Favourite movie: *The Castle*

Favourite music: Very wide range, but if I had to pick one band, probably the Rolling Stones.

Childhood hero: Sir Edmund Hillary and Carl Lewis

Current favourite athlete: Roger Federer

Most rewarding moment in sport: Olympic Gold in London

Talents other than sport: Ability to set and work towards goals

Biggest injury: Lower back disc injury in 2010, which has turned into osteoarthritis in my facet joints in my lower back

Biggest sacrifice: Loss of income by being a rower, but worth every cent I've forgone

Job outside sport: Accountant prior to rowing

Other fun facts: Named after an island in the Seychelles



**New Zealand
Olympic Education**

Olympian. He decided to commit and started rowing again. In 2001, he made the New Zealand rowing squad and has never looked back – he put his accounting career on hold and has been rowing full-time ever since.

In 2004, Mahé’s dream of becoming an Olympian came true. He competed at the Athens Olympic Games in the Men’s Coxless Four, coming fifth. After Athens, Mahé made a decision that changed the course of his rowing career, and New Zealand rowing history – he decided to focus on the single scull event. It was tough at first because he had to come to grips with using an extra oar and being alone in the boat. Then in 2005, he was in a serious accident while training on Lake Karapiro. A collision with a waterskiier left Mahé with two compression-fractured vertebra and bruised kidneys. However, he quickly overcame these setbacks, winning Gold 12 weeks later in the single scull at his first World Rowing Championships in Gifu, Japan. His single scull career was off to a flying start.

Mahé went on to become one of the greatest single scullers in world rowing history. He is a five-time World Rowing Champion, having taken the title an unprecedented three times in succession in 2005, 2006 and 2007 and then again in 2009 and 2011.

In 2008, Mahé was honoured to be selected as flag-bearer and team captain for the New Zealand Olympic Team at the Beijing Olympic Games. He was favoured to take Gold in the single scull event, but unfortunately he came down with a stomach virus during the Games. Extremely weak and dehydrated, Mahé still raced, winning Bronze after a courageous effort. In 2009, he received the Lonsdale Cup, which is awarded to the New Zealand athlete or team who made the most outstanding contribution to Olympic or Commonwealth sport during the previous year.

Mahé took a four-month break from rowing after Beijing, taking some time to reflect and think about the future. He missed being out on the water, so he plunged back in to rowing with his sights set on Gold at the London Olympic Games. In 2009, he was unbeatable, winning two World Cup regattas, the Diamonds at the Henley Royal Regatta, the Holland Beker Regatta and finishing it off with a world best time and his fourth world title at the

Career highlights

- 2012** London Olympic Games: Single scull (Gold)

- 2011** Lake Bled World Rowing Championships: Single scull (First)

- 2009** Poznań World Rowing Championships: Single scull (First); World best time (6:33.35)

- 2008** Beijing Olympic Games: Single scull (Bronze)

- 2007** Munich World Rowing Championships: Single scull (First)

- 2006** Eton World Rowing Championships: Single scull (First); World best time (6:35.40)

- 2005** Gifu World Rowing Championships: Single scull (First)

- 2004** Athens Olympic Games: Men’s coxless four (Fifth)

Honours

- 2009** Winner of the Lonsdale Cup

- 2009** Inducted as a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to rowing

- 2008** Beijing Olympic Games – Flag-bearer and team captain

- 2006, 2007, 2009 & 2012** Sportsman of the Year, Halberg Awards

- 2006** Supreme Award Winner, Halberg Awards



World Championships. That same year he was inducted as a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for his services to rowing.

In 2010, Mahé suffered a back injury, which developed into osteoarthritis. This meant a change in his training regime, to doing half his training on a bike. However, Mahé didn't let this obstacle get in his way. In 2012, after 12 years of working towards his Olympic goal, Mahé won Gold in the single scull at the London Games. His commitment to rowing had finally paid off.

Mahé currently lives in Cambridge with his wife, (former rower Juliette Drysdale (née Haigh)), a farm manager, two dogs called Oslo and Dasha, a pig, eight cows, four chickens and two Burmese cats called Sahara and Taz. He trains twice a day, six days a week with the rest of the New Zealand rowing team on Lake Karapiro. A typical training day for Mahé consists of one row and one cycle, which add up to a combined distance of 500 kilometres a week! He is hoping to compete at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, as long as his body and mind are up to it and he still has the passion and determination that have got him this far.

Links

Mahé Drysdale's Olympic Museum profile:
<http://imuseum.olympic.org.nz/museum/athlete/profile/25475>

Mahé Drysdale's website:
<http://mahedrysdale.com>

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

