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New Zealand Olympic Ambassador

Rebecca Wardell

Olympian number:

1104

Discipline:

Athletics

Specialist event:

Heptathlon

Rebecca Wardell was born in 1977 in Oamaru and was raised on her family's sheep farm. Rebecca started dreaming of competing against the world's best athletes when she was just seven years old. She was inspired to become an Olympian while watching the Los Angeles 1984 Olympic Games on television.

Always a keen, talented and driven athlete, Rebecca played lots of sports at school. After she left Rangī Ruru Girl's School in 1997, she decided to seriously focus on athletics:

"I just love the purity of athletics. Everything is measurable. I was always good at athletics at school and thought I would have a serious crack".

(Otago Daily Times, 17 December 2011, <http://www.odt.co.nz/sport/athletics/191222/athletics-wardell-focused-london-goals>)

She focused originally on the 400m running and 400m hurdles, representing New Zealand at the 2001 and 2005 World University Games and the 2003 World

Quick facts

Favourite food: Japanese

Favourite movies: *Footloose*, *The Intouchables*

Favourite music: Six60, Pearl Jam, U2

Childhood hero: Michael Jordan

Current favourite athlete: Carolina Klüft (Swedish athlete – heptathlon Gold 2004 Olympic Games)

Most rewarding moment in sport: Qualifying for and competing at the 2008 Olympic Games

Talents other than sport: Snowboard instructor

Biggest injury: Broken foot at Commonwealth Games in 2010

Biggest sacrifice: Moving to Dunedin after the Christchurch earthquake

Job outside sport: New Zealand Olympic Committee



**New Zealand
Olympic Education**

Championships. When she wasn't selected for New Zealand's Olympic Games team in 2004, she turned her attention to the heptathlon, which involves competing in seven events over two days. Rebecca trained hard to become an all-rounder who could jump, throw and run at a world-class level.

Rebecca's training and determination paid off. In 2006 she became the national heptathlon champion and came seventh at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games. Then, in 2008 Rebecca's childhood dream came true, when she competed in the heptathlon at the Beijing Olympic Games. She placed twenty-second and rates the experience of competing in the Bird's Nest stadium with the world's best athletes as one of the best moments of her sporting career.

After Beijing, Rebecca set herself a new goal – to win a medal at the Commonwealth Games. She believes in the power of goal-setting and is driven to work hard to achieve goals. Edmund Hillary once said,

“It's not the mountain you conquer, but yourself”.

Rebecca values this message and thinks it rings true for any goal you set in life. She believes

“it is important to look at what the goal means to you rather than just the importance of achieving the goal itself”.

Rebecca enjoys all of the heptathlon disciplines, but her favourite is javelin. She usually scores well in the shot put, javelin and 800m. Her personal best heptathlon score is 6108.

Rebecca's all-roundedness extends beyond track and field. In 2010, she completed a masters degree in transport engineering. After that, she became a full-time athlete, which meant she was able to train hard for the 2010 Delhi Commonwealth Games. At the Games, Rebecca was in fourth place towards the end of the first day. With just the 200m to run, she was a serious medal contender. However, during the 200m, she twisted her foot and had to be carried off the track. She had a hairline fracture in her foot, which ended her medal hopes.

Career highlights

- 2010** Delhi Commonwealth Games
- 2008** Beijing Olympic Games (Twentysecond)
- 2006** New Zealand heptathlon champion
- 2006** Melbourne Commonwealth Games (Seventh)
- 2005** New Zealand 100m hurdles champion
- 2004** New Zealand 400m hurdles champion
- 2003** New Zealand 400m hurdles champion; national record (56.25 sec)
- 2003** IAAF World Championships, Saint-Denis, France



Due to the injury, Rebecca could not run for almost a year. In training, she replaced running with rowing, cycling, swimming and lots of strength training. This new regime ended up working in her favour, giving her a good base and making her stronger than ever before. She set her sights on the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Unfortunately, there were more setbacks to come. The February 2011 Christchurch Earthquake damaged Rebecca's training facilities in Christchurch. The on-going aftershocks also disrupted her training, forcing Rebecca to leave her home in Canterbury and shift to Dunedin. Rebecca stayed positive. She liked living in Dunedin and using the world-class training facilities there.

Rebecca lives by the saying

“Never, never, never give up”.

However, in 2012, she was forced to abandon her London campaign six weeks before the Olympic Games due to a hamstring injury. Rebecca was heartbroken – in the best shape of her career, she was on track for a personal-best points tally and had planned to end her career on an Olympic high.

Despite this huge disappointment, Rebecca focuses on her career's highs, rather than the lows. She now works for the New Zealand Olympic Committee as a New Zealand Olympic Ambassador and Athlete Co-ordinator. And her sporting adventures aren't over yet! She enjoys travelling and competing in mountain bike races.

Links

Rebecca Wardell's Olympic Museum profile:

<http://imuseum.olympic.org.nz/museum/athlete/profile/817>

Rebecca Wardell's website:

<http://www.rebeccawardell.com>

Follow the NZ Olympic Team here:



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Official Olympic Sport

Heptathlon

The heptathlon is an athletics discipline for all-round athletes. It consists of seven events over two days. At the Olympic Games, the heptathlon is for women, while men compete in the decathlon (ten events over two days). The heptathlon has been an Olympic event since 1984.

The events in a heptathlon are as follows.

Day one	Day two
100m hurdles	Long jump
High jump	Javelin
Shot put	800m run
200m run	

The basics

In the heptathlon, the competitors follow the rules for each individual event. Athletes are given points for each event based on formulae. These formulae are based on the time or distance the athlete achieved, not whether she came first, second or third in the event.

The course

The heptathlon takes place inside the main Olympic stadium. The same venues and equipment are used as for the individual events – the track for running and hurdles, and the field areas for jumping and throwing events.

Important points

- Each national team can include only three heptathletes.
- If an athlete does not attempt an event, they are disqualified from the heptathlon.



Olympic events

Men's decathlon

Day one

- 100m run
- Long jump
- Shot put
- High jump
- 400m run

Day two

- 110m hurdles
- Discus
- Pole vault
- Javelin
- 1500m run

Women's heptathlon

Day one

- 100m hurdles
- High jump
- Shot put
- 200m run

Day two

- Long jump
- Javelin
- 800m run

