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New Zealand Olympic Ambassador

Sarah Walker

Olympian number:
1101

Discipline:
Cycling

Specialist event:
BMX

Sarah Walker was born in Whakatane in 1988. She comes from a sporting family – her parents had her skiing when she was just a toddler. When her older brother started riding BMX, Sarah was eager to join him. Their parents encouraged them both. Sarah started BMX in February 1999, and by April that year she competed in her first national competition.

Sarah continued to train and race through high school, and in 2006 she decided that she wanted to put everything into achieving in BMX. It had been announced that BMX was going to debut at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, and Sarah was determined to be one of the first to compete at that level.

Sarah's Olympic dream was a step closer when she was ranked world number one by the Union Cycliste International (International Cycling Union) in 2008. This helped her qualify for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, and she competed in the first ever BMX event at the Olympic Games. Sarah finished fourth.

Quick facts

Favourite food: Nachos

Favourite movie: *The Bourne trilogy*

Favourite TV shows: *The Big Bang Theory, Scrubs*

Favourite music: Anything to sing and/or dance to

Childhood hero: My brother

Current favourite athletes: Lisa Carrington and Sophie Pascoe

Most rewarding moment in sport: Seeing BMX being recognised in NZ.

Talents other than sport: Music

Biggest injury: Dislocated shoulder, 2012

Biggest sacrifice: Not finishing school

Job outside sport: Studying interior design and eventually architecture

Other fun facts: I love skiing and playing volleyball.



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Sarah's dream was to win a medal at the Olympic Games, and she was not giving up. She jumped straight back into training and concentrated on the London 2012 Olympic Games. She focused on her technical skill and also on believing that she could achieve.

Everything was going well until, three months before the Olympic Games, Sarah had a bad crash during training and dislocated her shoulder. She was not going to let even that stop her. Even though it was scary getting back on the bike after she crashed, she did it as soon as she could. She only began riding again one week before the World Championships in 2012, but still managed to come in fifth in the semi-finals. This meant she was ninth overall and she qualified for the Olympic Games. A journalist asked her if she could still win Gold at the Olympic Games with this setback and Sarah was absolutely confident, joking

"I've made it a little bit harder for myself, but it wouldn't be interesting otherwise!"

(<http://www.3news.co.nz/VIDEO-Extended-interview-Sarah-Walker/tabid/317/articleID/258923/Default.aspx>)

At the London 2012 Olympic Games, Sarah's first semifinal heat was not spectacular, but she managed to regain focus and get into the medal race. In the final, Sarah's determination was clear as she sped out of the gate to an early second place. She maintained this throughout the race to win the Silver Medal and become New Zealand's first BMX medallist. Sarah's parents and her brother Matt cheered her on throughout. Matt is a high-achieving downhill mountain-biker.

Sarah is now focusing on training for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. In 2012, the New Zealand Olympic Committee appointed Sarah as a New Zealand Olympic Ambassador.

Career highlights

2012	London Olympic Games: BMX (Silver)
2009	UCI BMX World Championships: Elite Women (Gold), Elite Cruiser Women (Gold)
2008	Beijing Olympic Games: BMX (Fourth)
2007	UCI BMX World Championships: Elite Cruiser Women (Gold)
2005–2011	Twelve World Championship podium finishes in Junior Elite and Elite classes (3 x Gold, 5 x Silver, 3 x Bronze)
1999–2011	New Zealand National BMX Champion (Twelve times)

Links

Sarah Walker's Olympic Museum profile:
<http://imuseum.olympic.org.nz/museum/athlete/profile/28727>

Sarah Walker's website:
<http://www.sarahwalker96.com>

Follow the NZ Olympic Team here:



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www.olympic.org.nz



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Official Olympic Sport

BMX

BMX is short for Bicycle Motocross. BMX started in the late 1960s, and debuted at the Olympic Games in 2008 at Beijing.

The track

BMX races are held on an outdoor track that has lots of jumps, small bumps called 'whoops', and tightly banked corners called 'berms'. At the London 2012 Olympic Games, the men's track was 450 metres long and the women's was 440 metres long. The start of the track is called the 'gate'. At the beginning of the race, the riders launch themselves off an eight-metre high ramp at the gate. The first rider out of the first corner is called the 'holeshot'.

The basics

BMX riders race around the short, bumpy track. They need to be fast and fearless to navigate the track successfully. On the jumps, riders can reach nearly five metres high. They need to land carefully to prepare for the next obstacle on the track without losing speed.

A BMX bike has only one gear and one brake, and its wheels are about two-thirds of the diameter of a standard road bike's wheels. The bikes need to be strong, to survive the hard landings after jumps, and light, for speed.

Olympic events

Men's BMX racing

32 men compete
(each country is limited to three men)

Women's BMX racing

16 women compete
(each country is limited to two women)

Important points

BMX riders need to follow the rules, or the race officials will give them a warning, disqualify them or even move them to last place regardless of where they actually placed.

Riders should be careful not to:

- deliberately interfere with another rider
- come into contact with other riders
- obstruct another rider's racing line in the final straight.



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