

Rob Waddell

Discipline: Rowing
Specialist events: Single scull

Rob Waddell was born in Te Kuiti in 1975 and grew up on a farm in the King Country. He took up rowing while in year ten at Kings College in Auckland. Despite being small and slightly uncoordinated when he started, Rob was determined and soon made it into the school's top rowing team. Rob also showed all-round ability by playing in his school's First XV rugby team.



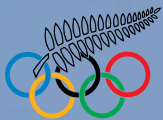
As a 17 year old, Rob made the New Zealand junior rowing team. He was asked to try out for the national under-23 team, but declined as he was heading to Japan on a scholarship. In Japan, he learnt Japanese and gained a black belt in judo. Upon his return to New Zealand, he completed an honours degree in management studies at Waikato University, while continuing to row competitively.



In 1993, Rob noticed he was having trouble with an irregular heartbeat. He didn't stop rowing but didn't want to let his team-mates down during a race. This led him to focus more on single sculling, although he still competed in team events.

This change of focus enabled Rob to win the New Zealand single sculls title in 1995. At 20, he was the youngest New Zealand champion ever. In 1996, he won six out of seven national titles. He qualified for the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games and finished seventh in the final. This was the beginning of an exciting rise through the ranks of world rowers. He won the Australian world single sculls title in 1997, then the world title in 1998 and 1999.





By the time the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games came around, Rob Waddell was under a lot of pressure as the clear favourite. He managed to stay calm as he won his heat and his semi-final. He then claimed the Gold Medal, finishing 1.5 seconds ahead of the Silver medallist. He was honoured to be New Zealand's flag bearer in the Closing Ceremony at the Olympic Games. He also received his third consecutive Halberg Award – becoming the first person to win the Sportsman of the Year award three years in a row.

Rob took a break from rowing after the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Looking for a new challenge, he took up yachting and was selected for Team New Zealand. He was a grinder in the unsuccessful America's Cup defence in 2002–03, and again when Team New Zealand challenged in 2007. In 2003, this multi-talented sportsman was selected to play representative-level rugby for Waikato.

At the end of 2007, Rob returned to rowing with his eye on the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The national Olympic selectors struggled to choose between Rob Waddell and Mahe Drysdale, the reigning world champion in single sculls. The selectors held a three-race trial, which Drysdale won 2–1. Despite Rob's heart condition flaring up during the trial, he still made it into the team in the coxless pair with Nathan Cohen. After finishing fourth at the Beijing Olympic Games, Rob retired from rowing.

Rob is married to Sonia Waddell, and they have three children. Sonia is also a talented athlete. She has represented New Zealand in athletics, rowing and cycling.



Sonia and Rob Waddell at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games

Quick facts

Favourite food: Lasagne

Favourite movie: Snatch

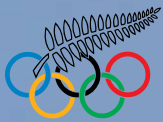
Favourite music: Gin Wigmore

Childhood heroes: Sir Peter Blake, Sir Edmund Hillary

Current favourite athlete: Richie McCaw

Most rewarding moment in sports: Making the first eight at school - my first major sporting goal ever set and achieved.

For more about Rob, see the *Living the Olympic Values* resource, available from <http://www.olympic.org.nz/education/living-olympic-values>



Career highlights

2008: Set new world records for indoor rowing – 5 min 36.6 sec over 2000m and 14 min 15 sec over 5000m (first person to break 15 minutes).

2001: Made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to rowing.

2000: Gold Medal at Sydney Olympic Games, single sculls.

1998, 2000: Winner of the Lonsdale Cup.

1998, 1999, 2000: Winner of the Halberg Award.

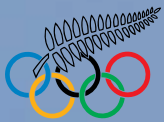
1998, 1999: World single sculls champion.

1995: Youngest winner of the New Zealand single sculls title.

1994: Bronze Medal at Ontario Commonwealth Games, coxless pairs with Ian Wright.



<http://www.nz2012.com/blog/6>



Rowing

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

All Olympic rowing races take place over a 2000m course. There are six lanes in each race, and the first boat across the finish line wins.

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.

Sweep

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.

Scull

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.



Well-known New Zealand rowers

Philippa Baker: 1991 world lightweight champion

Caroline and Georgina Evers-Swindell: 2004 Athens and 2008 Beijing Olympic Games Gold in double scull; 2002, 2003 and 2005 world double scull champions

Mahe Drysdale: 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009 world single scull champion, 2008 Beijing Olympic Games Bronze in single scull



Caroline and Georgina Evers-Swindell

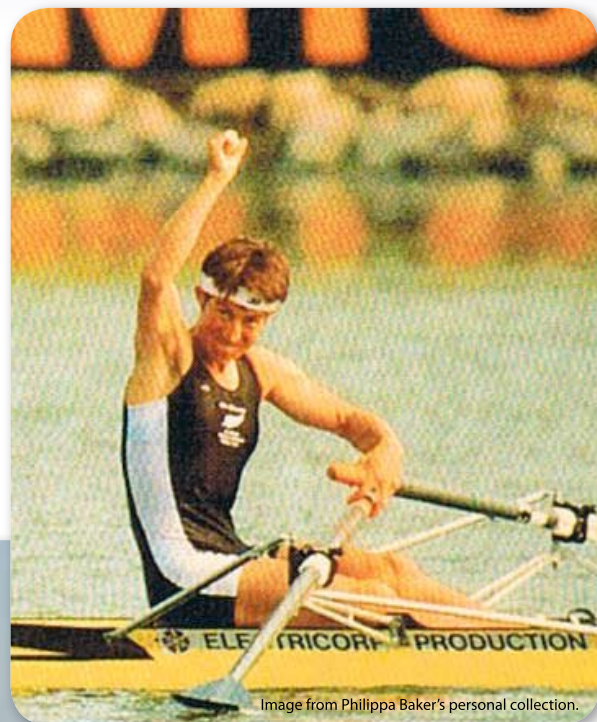


Image from Philippa Baker's personal collection.

Philippa Baker



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Mahe Drysdale