

Bo Jackson once said "Set your goals high, and don't stop until you get there".

My name is Luuka Jones and in my sport of White-water Canoe Slalom, my goal is, and always has been, to represent New Zealand at the Olympic Games.

Canoe slalom is my passion and my life. I have been training in the sport since I was 15, representing New Zealand from a young age in Australia as a developing athlete, the junior worlds as part of the national junior team and finally, the world cups in Europe as a member of the New Zealand canoe slalom team.

Canoe Slalom is a competitive sport where the aim is to navigate a decked canoe or kayak through a course of hanging gates on river rapids in the fastest time possible. The sport started in Europe in the 1940's, and since then has steadily increased in popularity for competitors and spectators, being the most highly spectated sport at the Olympic Games.

Canoe Slalom is at its most strongest in European Countries, with thousands of clubs dedicated to the sport. New Zealand has also had a major increase in popularity and interest in recent years, and there is a proposal of an artificial whitewater course in Manukau, to be built by 2010.

Last year I decided that I would further increase my skill and knowledge of canoe slalom, by moving to the UK to train among some of the best paddlers in the world at their National Water Sports Centre in Nottingham. Here I have gained a wealth of experience and knowledge, and have developed a new appreciation of what it requires to be at the top most level. I have improved in my time over there and have brought my new skills and attitudes back to New Zealand.

I competed in the selection races for the New Zealand team in February and again in the Olympic selection race in March at the Oceania Champs in Sydney. I won selections, and am the top placed boat on the national team, I am also the top female slalom paddler in New Zealand and have recently qualified the Olympic Spot in the Oceania race. I have been given the Olympic spot by the International Canoeing Federation, and now need to meet NZ Olympic committee requirements by achieving a top 16 nation placing at either the Prague or Tacen world cups at the end of June. Something I am well capable of doing.

I have a chance to be the first ever female to represent New Zealand in Canoe Slalom at the Olympics, a chance like this I have never had before.

As an athlete in Canoe Slalom, one of the biggest challenges is funding. In order to train and compete with and against the World's best we must travel overseas regularly, mostly to Europe. Canoe slalom is a minority sport and funding is limited requiring athletes to personally fund nearly all of their training, traveling and competition expenses. For me personally the cost is more than I can afford, for example, in 2007 I spent over \$15000 training and racing in Europe, but was unable to make the one off world champs in Brazil.

This year, in order to meet the NZOC requirements for full qualification of the Olympic spot, I need to train overseas up until the competition. This requires the funding of a full time coach, training and living expenses and also travel costs. Things I can ill afford and that are standing in the way of my dream.

Any support you could give me to assist these financial demands, and thereby helping me to reach my ultimate dream of representing New Zealand in the Olympic Games would be extremely appreciated! In return, depending on the level of sponsorship, I will place your companies' logo on my kayak and paddle, which travel with me everywhere and receive a lot of media attention, with all my races in the World Cups being broadcast on television, as well as photographs in a large number of newspapers, including the Bay of Plenty Times and the Otago Daily Times. Your help and support would minimize one of the biggest barriers to my success, finances to train and race with the world's best and to ultimately join their ranks.

"I've always made a total effort, even when the odds seemed entirely against me. I never quit trying; I never felt that I didn't have a chance to win."

-Arnold Palmer

Yours Sincerely

Luuka Jones

Canoe slalom Athlete, Member of the New Zealand National Team.

Results 2008:

16th World Series Race, Penrith Australia

1st New Zealand selection races, Kawerau

1st New Zealander Oceania Champs, Penrith

1st New Zealand Nationals

1st New Zealand Pre Nationals

Top Ranked New Zealand Female

Qualifier of New Zealand's Canoe Slalom Olympic Spot

