

OuterOlympians

With the recent inclusion of pursuits such as mountain biking and open-water swimming, it seems the Olympic Games Committee are thinking outside the traditional arena and recognising the appeal of adventure sports. *Outer Edge* meets four of Australia's Beijing-bound athletes who ply their trade on the wilder side of organised sport...



open-water swimming

THE SPORT

Olympic pedigree: This is the first time open-water swimming has featured as an Olympic sport.
Format: 10km
Spots available: One
Venue for 2008: Shunyi Olympic Rowing-Canoeing Park - AKA 'the Great Pool of China'. It's 2200-metres long, 162-metres wide, holds 1,134,000 tons of water, and the venue seats 37,000 people (20,000 more spectators than the famous Water Cube where mainstream swimmers will compete).

THE ATHLETE

Name: Ky Hurst
Date of birth: 11 March 1981
Home state: New South Wales
Previous Olympic appearances: 0
Current form: Ky made the team after coming fifth in the open-water swim at the 2008 World Championships.

Already a legend in Iron Man and celebrity dancing circles, Ky Hurst will represent Australia in the first ever open-water swimming event to make it all the way to the Olympics. From a training camp in Thailand, Ky talked to Outer Edge about...

Growing up wet: I started surfing at two and my family have always been involved with ocean sports. (Great Uncle Keith was a multiple Australian Surf Boat Champion, Uncle

Andrew was a World Longboard Champion and both my Mum and my brother Dane have won many surf championships.)

Busting a gut to get to the Games: I average 60-70km a week, swimming for four hours a day (in two shifts) Monday to Saturday, and I do one and a half hours of weight training three times a week.

Conditions in China: I think the conditions will be perfect. I've been warned about the pollution in Beijing, but they're shutting all factories leading into the Games.

Being Australia's inaugural ambassador for the sport: I'll carry that flag with pride as I enter the 10km event, knowing that all of Australia is watching the introduction of the sport to the Games.

“ I think the future of sport is definitely heading down the road of outdoor and extreme activities, which seem to attract bigger crowds and have a bigger following. ”

Open-water swimming at the Olympics: It will lift the sport's profile and make people around the world appreciate that this is the ultimate distance event. If spectators sit around for the first three laps I guarantee that the fourth lap will be as exciting as any other race at the Olympics.

The format: 10km is perfect. This race is tailor-made for me.

Adventure sports at the Olympics: I think the future of sport is definitely heading down the road of outdoor and extreme activities, which seem to attract bigger crowds and have a big following.

Life outside swimming: I'm a part time student at Bond University studying business and property development.

Travel: I go away once or twice with my sport each year. In the lead up to Beijing I've been on training camps in Asia and North America.

The best place swimming has taken him to: Hawaii, for the 2000 World Open-Water Championships. It was one of the most peaceful places I've ever been to and I've returned many times.

And the worst: Singapore was my least favourite place to swim because I came out of the water with oil all over me from the shipping containers sitting just off shore.

If he wasn't a swimmer: I can't see my life any other way, but if I was to choose another path I think I would have been a muso.

Outdoor sports: I love them. At the moment all my gear is sitting under the house, but I love dirt biking, surfing, wake boarding, bungee jumping and snow boarding, and I used to do a bit of flying. My next sports will be sky diving and base jumping. I have some close friends who are adventure racers and I believe I could happily make the transition.

Post Olympic plans: First a holiday, then I'll decide. I'd like to get back into Ironman racing as I feel I'm not finished in that arena.

mountainbiking

THE SPORT

Olympic pedigree: Mountain biking first appeared as an Olympic sport at the Atlanta Games in 1996.

Format: Cross-country
Spots available: One
Venue for 2008: Laoshan in Beijing's west.

THE ATHLETE

Name: Chris Jongewaard
Date of birth: 18 July 1979
Home state: South Australia
Previous Olympic appearances: 0
Steed: Avanti
Current form: Chris was Australia's best-placed male in the recent world titles in Italy, finishing 29th overall. There is a possibility he will miss out on an Olympic spot, however, due to a non-related court case.

Pedalling powerhouse Chris Jongewaard is a towering presence at mountain bike events all around Australia and the world. From a trackside somewhere in the Netherlands he spoke to Outer Edge about...

Growing up on two wheels: I raced BMX from the age of four to when I was 21, then took up mountain biking.
Busting a gut to get to the Games: I'm confident that I've given this year a lot more energy and focus - I probably put in around 25 hours riding a week, and whatever happens I know that I've done my best.

MTB being an Olympic sport: I think it gives it more credibility. BMX is an Olympic sport now too, which means both these sports get recognition for how good they really are. It will also attract a younger audience to the Games.

The format for the Games: Cross country is good, but as a BMXer I guess they could mix it up a little and make it more extreme, with some downhill.

Conditions in China: I rode the course in September, and it's really difficult and demanding...not to mention the conditions, which will add another whole dimension.

Other outdoor sports: I haven't ridden a BMX for a long time and I'm disappointed with myself, I should have kept it close. I'd love to get a motocross bike again too.

Paying the bills: I'm a carpenter by trade, but I have been a fulltime mountain biker for two years now. And yeah, I make a living out of it...just!

Travel: I'm always travelling, both



Chris competing at Mount Beauty. Image © Newspix

overseas and at home.
The best places his bike has taken him: There are soooo many places - Italy, Switzerland...I'm not sure.
And the worst: Hospital.
If he wasn't a mountain biker: I'd be a firefighter!
Sporting hero: Stuart O'Grady.
Busted body moments: I've broken a few broken bones while racing BMX and training for dirt jumping.
Career highs: The National Championships and the Commonwealth Games - they were a rush!
Scariest moments: Bungy jumping.
Plans after the Games: I'm going to build a house.

triathlon

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Since narrowly missing out on a selection for the 2004 Olympic team, Emma Snowsill has been on top of her game and was an automatic choice for Beijing. From the US Emma chatted to Outer Edge about...

Getting into multisport: I entered my first triathlon at 16 as a team member and raced the swim leg. I've been competing ever since. **Busting a gut to get to the Games:** I get up at 5.30am and swim. Then I have breakfast and a nap, followed by a bike ride. Then it's lunch, another nap, a run, dinner and then I get to sleep.

Conditions in China: It will be very hot and humid. I've raced there twice before, but I hope the air is a bit cleaner. Last time I got a stomach bug from swimming in the reservoir. Usually you can get through the race without being ill - it gets you later. You need clean, fresh air to inhale when you're at maximum heart rate and that's a bit concerning. I don't expect that to change much.

Triathlon as an Olympic sport: More people are becoming interested. Statistics show it's the fastest growing outdoor sport in the world, and the Olympics is the pinnacle.

Her strongest discipline: The swim, because it's the most natural and familiar to me. It's what I grew up doing. But I really like all three, and that's the beauty of what I do.

Adventure sports: I'm very outdoor sports motivated. Other than surfing, which I love, I have a mountain bike and really enjoy riding trails on it for training, variation and excitement. I also ski, wake board and would consider adventure racing.

Travel: It takes a lot of everything out of you: time, money and energy. I compete in around 12 events per season but the distance and differences between races can be huge. You have to adjust to changing hemispheres, seasons, altitudes, food, lodgings, road rules,

race rules, locations and conditions. For the swim the water might be warm or cold; fresh or salty; clean or dirty; flowing or still; tidal, rough or calm; in a lake or a canal or a river or the ocean... The same applies to conditions for the bike and the run.

The best place triathlon has taken her: The annual Noosa Triathlon.

And the worst: Hmmm I don't want to start an international incident, but sometimes the streets you're racing along smell as bad as the local food, or you wear a wetsuit not to keep you warm in the swim but to protect you from the floating debris that bumps you and smears your goggles and the footpath is as slick as a banana skin...I'll leave it there.

If she wasn't a triathlete: Being a professional surfer would be pretty cool. I'd quite like to own a gourmet café, but I'd eat all the profits. As a kid I wanted to be a marine biologist, because I love dolphins.

Career highs: Representing Australia and winning gold at three World Championships and the Commonwealth Games.

Sporting hero: Lance Armstrong.

After the Olympics: Watch this space...

THE SPORT

Olympic pedigree: Triathlon first featured as an Olympic sport in Sydney at the 2000 Games.

Format: 1.5km swim + 40km bike ride + 10km run

Spots available: Three

Venue for 2008: Ming Tomb Reservoir in Changping District of northern Beijing.

THE ATHLETE

Name: Emma Snowsill

Date of birth: 15 June 1981

Home state: Queensland

Previous Olympic appearances: 0

Current form: Emma recently won the World Cup event in Des Moines, Iowa, and Olympic team-mate Emma Moffatt finished second.



INSET: After winning the 2008 Triathlon World Cup event in Mooloolaba.

Images © NewsPix

whitewaterkayaking

Image courtesy Lachie Milne



Jacqui competing in Europe 2006

Jacqui comes from a paddling family and only just beat her sister Kate to a spot on the Olympic team. From the World Cup circuit in Slovenia she waxed lyrical about...

Getting into paddling: Dad is a teacher and coaches canoeing. I started on family camping trips, then began racing, as did my sisters [Kate and Rosalyn]. My boyfriend, Torsten Lachmann, also paddles. He's racing at the Olympics in flatwater canoeing.

Busting a gut to get to the Games: I'm based close to Penrith Whitewater Stadium, an artificial course built for the Sydney Olympics. I train two or three times a day, once or twice on whitewater, and once on flat water, at the gym or cross training.

The course: The water is big and fast, which is hard physically, technically and mentally. It isn't particularly dangerous, but it's one of the world's most challenging.

The competition: The Europeans are very strong, but the great thing about this sport is that anything can happen...especially on a difficult big water course like Beijing.

Being selected: I was laughing and crying. Last year I wasn't even in the Australian Team. I travelled to Europe and worked with different athletes and coaches and it paid off. My sister Kate was a close second. It felt funny to be excited for myself but disappointed for her, but we both knew only one of us could go to the Games.

Choosing K1 whitewater slalom: For women the K1 is the only class that's internationally recognised. I do the occasional river trip and I've taken my slalom boat in the surf before. I got a bit trashed, so I don't make a habit of it!

Favourite whitewater spots: Penrith for training, but if there's enough water I love the Nymboida Canoe Centre, near Grafton.

Whitewater rafting: I've been once, for a work Christmas party at Penrith, my training venue. I thought it would be boring, but it was actually a lot of fun. The guide let me take over and I ran us into the rocks!

Other adventure sports: I enjoy the outdoors. I've tried climbing and canyoning.

Paying the bills: I work as an environmental planner for Innovation Planning Australia. I get some funding from the Australian Sports Commission and I'm supported by the Shangri-La Hotel, Sydney.

The best place a boat has taken her: Here and now. My life has been shaped by paddling, and I'm happy with that.

The worst: Stuck sideways between two rocks, upside down on the Nymboida River...thankfully the force of the current bent the boat and I flushed out.

If she wasn't a paddler: I'd be a better environmentalist. And richer. And not as fit.

Her waterborne hero: My dad.
After the Games: Maybe London 2012!

THE SPORT

Olympic pedigree: Kayaking became an Olympic sport in 1936. The whitewater slalom event first featured at the 1972 Games in Munich, but it then disappeared until the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. It has been on the program ever since.

Formats: K1 (single kayak), C1 (single canoe), C2 (double canoe) and women's K1. Paddlers negotiate between 20 and 25 gates in turbulent water over a 300-metre white-water course.

Spots available: 1

Venue for 2008: Shunyi Olympic Rowing/Canoeing Park north of Beijing.

THE ATHLETE

Name: Jacqui Lawrence

Date of birth: 25 April 1982

Home state: New South Wales

Previous Olympic appearances: 0

Gear: Galasport Toreto (kayak) and Double Dutch (paddle)

Current form: Jacqui finished sixth overall at the World Cup event in Tacen.



OUTER OLYMPIADS OF OLD



As outdoor sports like open-water swimming join the Olympics, other events must give way. In the history of the modern Games some surprising adventure pursuits have made brief but brilliant appearances - here's our top 10.

1. 200m Obstacle Race - Swimming (Aussie Frederick Lane won gold) 1900
2. Tug-of-War 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912, 1920
3. Live Pigeon Shooting (Australian, Donald McIntosh, bagged bronze) 1900
4. Solo Synchronised Swimming 1984, 1988, 1992
5. Rope Climbing 1896, 1904, 1924, 1932
6. Long jump - For Horses (A horse called Extra Dry won with a leap of 20 feet and a quarter of an inch...2.63 metres less than the current human world record) 1900
7. Underwater Swimming 1900
8. Twelve-hour Cycling Race 1896
9. Motor Boating 1908
10. Triathlon (long jump, shot put and 100-yard sprint) 1904

Although it's no longer recognised as an official Olympiad, the 1906 'Intercalated Games' also featured two classic events: Stone Throwing and Duelling Pistol Shooting.