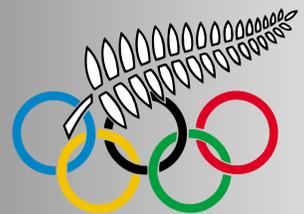


BLAIR TELFORD



OLYMPIC MUSEUM
New Zealand Olympic Committee



“I spent the majority of my life in New Plymouth. It’s fair to say that I come from a very sporting family. Dad himself represented his province of Wellington in his

early days in his chosen sport of athletics and consequently he supported us in whatever sport we chose as we grew up. The first sport I ever played was soccer.

I ended up going to Spotswood College in New Plymouth. Although I wasn’t the most skilful player ever around I had speed on my side and that was evident from early on, and even going through Primary School with school athletics, I would always win the 100 and the 200 metre races. I played soccer and volleyball there as well.

At that stage in the early years I never had any real aspirations to go to the Olympics but that changed later on nor did I have an occupation in mind.”

The Balanced Development of Body, Will and Mind

“The most influential person in my track and field times, was a teacher of mine, and her name was Rosie Gould. She used to coach me after school and got me very enthusiastic with athletics.

Some friends and I decided to get involved with surf life saving, so we all joined the New Plymouth Old Boys’ Surf Club at Oakura and had instant success and some very, very good years after that - I would have been probably 16 or 17 at the time.

I had two role models that I admired; they were Daley Thompson, and Alan Wells. Both men competed and won Gold Medals at the Games of the XXII Olympiad, Moscow, 1980.

I honestly believed I was going to be a sprinter, and then I thought well if I’m not going to be a sprinter I’ll look at another way of doing it, and I thought, well I’m going to have to choose another sport.

I actually had visions of me standing on a dais of all things - Yeah, although I never got there!

The week that I finished my apprenticeship I thought I’ve had enough of this, I’m off. So I bought a one way ticket and went to the United States to join three of my friends who were already over there. I’d just turned 21.

While on my trip I became aware of a New Zealander called Lex Peterson who was putting together a Bobsleigh Team with a hope of competing at the Olympic Winter Games to be held at Calgary (Canada) in 1988.

I completed a fitness test and based on these results Lex said, ‘why don’t you come up to Calgary?’

I saw my opportunity and I had all those memories coming back. This was my chance, I could be an Olympic athlete here, and I thought *I want it bad!* Although I’m not going to be going to the summer Olympics as a sprinter, I can still get my chance to go to the Games!

Joy Found in Effort

I was a crewman, which is either on the side or at the back of the Bobsleigh, and they had a simulated bobsled on wheels that actually goes on a track, so you could practice on that without going down the whole track, and I was half-price good at it, I guess. I wasn’t the fastest person there and I wasn’t the strongest, but I had a good combination of weight, strength and speed.

Having enough money was a problem. Lex was an entrepreneur and he found us odd jobs. We basically did anything and everything to earn money. I remember painting lines in car parks, shovelling snow for the winter, being photographed in our bobsleigh at shopping malls, just about anything and everything to put food on the table. At one stage we were saying we were going to the Olympics on a shoestring budget, so we got bootlaces made up with ‘New Zealand Bobsled’ written on them and sold the shoelaces. People were buying them and we were surviving, we weren’t getting rich but we were certainly getting by.

We made a lot of friends in Calgary, it almost became a hometown for us. Bobsled shoes were very difficult to obtain, and we had to borrow shoes that were 10, 15 years old, but we did get new ones at the time of the Calgary Olympics.

XV OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES CALGARY, CANADA, 1988

The Olympic Games Brings People From Many Countries Together

The Olympic Village was the university complex. People were tripping over themselves to be helpful, and I had memories of volunteers from all different nations actually in the village, people who’d come from overseas, from Europe, just to be volunteers, just to help out, and the same with masseurs, and people like that had just donated their time because they wanted to help out. It was great. It was a neat feeling!

OPENING CEREMONY

It was during the day. There wasn’t a lot of snow around, and I remember walking into the stadium and just seeing a sea of people - it was a fantastic feeling, and everybody in the crowd had coloured ponchos on that formed the Calgary Olympic Symbol. It was neat just seeing the thousands upon thousands of people, and they were cheering as we walked in, and I just thought wow!, it was awesome. They don’t know me, and here I am and I’m walking into the Olympic stadium. It’s fantastic!

It was a very, very emotional moment for me. I wouldn’t say I cried, but I was definitely choked up, thinking I’ve finally done it, and I’ve reached my goal, and it’s what I wanted to do, and I’ve done it, and I’d achieved it, and that was even before competing. And I thought *that’s it, I’ve done it!* I’m here. That was a special feeling for me.

PRIDE IN PARTICIPATION

Be the Best You Can Be

I was trying to prepare mentally for my events, which was hard in a big room, so it was a matter of bundling up, putting layers on layers, going outside and trying to run and stretch and stuff like that. Everybody has his or her own method of preparing, but part of my mental build-up was going through the national anthem in my mind. And still, even now, the national anthem is a strong pull in me. I’m very passionate about it, and passionate about my country.

And I guess there was a huge joy in effort.

CLOSING CEREMONY

Everybody received a Participation Medal and there was a feeling of a common bond, and it was a very happy and joyous occasion.

We’d trained so hard, and we’d set our goals and we’d achieved our goals, and now it was all over.

MESSAGE TO YOUTH

Find yourself a goal and do whatever it takes to achieve it, and start off with small goals, achieve those, and work on to bigger goals. You should do everything within your power to achieve them and you have to know that you will need to make sacrifices along the way.

I’d set my goals that I wanted to be a sprinter and although I didn’t reach them, I modified them slightly to achieve success along the way. *I was satisfied with the results.* In my job as a Policeman I am still setting both short and long-term goals and doing what I have to do to realise them.”

Blair Telford – Olympian



“Superman in fancy dress outfit made by my mum.” aged 7
Photo: Private Collection



‘Undefeated’ Woodleigh Rovers school soccer team. Blair is holding the ball – to the right. (Photo taken approx. 1978)
Photo: Private Collection



▲ “Fundraising for the team in shopping malls and supermarkets in Canada. We sold team sweatshirts and shoe laces to raise money.” (L-R): Peter Henry, Rhys Dacre, Blair Telford, Karen Henry
Photo: Private Collection



▲ XV Olympic Winter Games, Calgary, Canada, 1988
Opening Ceremony with Olympic Flag.
“The maple leaves were formed by the crowd wearing ponchos.”
Photo: Private Collection



▲ XV Olympic Winter Games, Calgary, Canada, 1988
New Zealand’s Four man Bobsleigh Team
(L-R): Peter Henry, Rhys Dacre, Blair Telford, Lex Peterson
Photo: Private Collection



▲ XV Olympic Winter Games, Calgary, Canada, 1988
New Zealand’s Two man Bobsleigh Team of Blair Telford (left) and Owen Pinnell after a training session
Photo: Private Collection



▲ XV Olympic Winter Games, Calgary, Canada, 1988
New Zealand No. 2 Bobsleigh; Blair Telford and Owen Pinnell
Photo: Olympic Museum, Wellington



XV Olympic Winter Games, Calgary, Canada, 1988
Bobsleigh shoes worn by Blair during Olympic Competition
Photo: Private Collection

XV Olympic Winter Games, Calgary, Canada 13 - 28 February 1988
Bobsleigh: Two man, 31 / 41 (with Owen Pinnell)
Bobsleigh: Four man, 21 / 26 (with Peter Henry, Rhys Dacre & Lex Peterson)