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NZ's Female Medal Prospects in Paris

Theme:
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 NZ's Female Medal Prospects in Paris

Co-authored by Paul Lewis - NZ Herald

Paul Lewis works for the New Zealand Herald; he has covered four Olympic Games and three Commonwealth Games.

NZ's Female Medal Prospects in Paris

Some wit once said: “Men play the game but women know the score”. If you’ve been watching the performance of New Zealand’s elite sportspeople over the past few Olympic Games, you’ll know that Kiwi women are not just playing the game, they are bringing home the gold.

Let’s, for a moment, leave aside all the unjust and challenging stuff – like how much money is fed to male athletes in whatever sport; how much more male athletes can earn than female counterparts – and focus on a few facts.

The Paris Olympics will be over in a couple of weeks and we’ll be able to judge the success of the New Zealand team by the number of medals won – never a perfect measure but, really, all we have.

In an exhaustive exploration of all the New Zealand athletes and their chances of a medal in Paris, the *New Zealand Herald* ranked eight [top gold medal chances](#). Five were women or women’s teams, three were men or men’s teams. One of the latter, the All Blacks Sevens, are already out – beaten in the quarter-finals by South Africa.

But if it’s news to you that women are our biggest Olympic sporting weapon, it shouldn’t be. In the last two Olympics – Tokyo three years ago and Rio 2016 – women brought home the majority of the medals: winning 11 of the 20 in Tokyo and 11 of the 18 in Rio.

It’s an even clearer picture when measured in gold medals over the last 20 years:

- 2020: women 6 golds; men 1.
- 2016: women 1; men 3.
- 2012: (London Olympics): women 3, men 3.
- 2008: (Beijing) women 2; men 1.
- 2004: (Athens) women 2; men 1.

That’s a total gold medal tally of women 14, men 9. If you count all medals won (gold, silver, bronze), over those same 20 years, it looks like this: women 31, men 34 – but the trend, as can be seen above, is shifting.

It’s a far cry from New Zealand’s best-ever haul at an Olympics – in 1984 at Los Angeles when New Zealand won a record 8 golds (as well as 1 silver and 2 bronze medals) and finished 8th on the medals table, the only time this country has featured in the top 10. All those medals were won by blokes, many with famous names in our sporting context: sailing’s Russell Coutts, canoeists Ian Ferguson and Paul McDonald, equestrian Mark Todd and more; not a woman in sight.

The Tokyo Olympics were the closest yet to that gold medal haul – and it’s been estimated our team stands to win 14 medals in Paris, well short of the 20 medals from Tokyo and 18 from Rio.

However, if any naysayers point out that women’s contributions might fall after the retirements of confirmed winners like Dame Valerie Adams and Lisa Carrington, it seems highly unlikely. Look at the Herald’s list of potential medallists – and how many are women on the way up.

Predicting medals is a fool’s game – there are so many variables and form on the day can mean everything – but there are several potential surprises from our female contingent, including:

Sailing, 49er FX class: Jo Aleh and Molly Meech. Aleh won gold in 2012 but in the 470 class with Polly Powrie. However, if being New Zealand’s female flag bearer hasn’t taken too much out of her, she has all the experience and ability to win a medal with Molly as well as Polly...

Cycling: Women’s Madison: An almost incomprehensible event to those who don’t follow it, but two of Ally Wollaston, Bryony Botha, Emily Shearman and Nicole Shields could do famously. Wollaston is a powerhouse, also a chance in the women’s Omnium.


Cycling: Women’s road race. Niamh Fisher-Black and Kim Cadzow have every chance of grabbing a medal in this tough event.


Golf: Lydia Ko hasn’t been in great form but loves the Olympics...and French golf courses.


Rowing, double sculls. Lucy Spoors and Brooke Francis are both former world champions and Olympic medallists and both are returning after leaving rowing to have a family.

Javelin: Tori Peeters. Not in the medal hunt according to world rankings and 2024 distances thrown but the javelin is such a get-it-right-on-the-day event, she could well surprise.

Tennis: Women’s doubles. Lulu Sun and Erin Routliffe don’t have a good record on clay – but both have just dusted themselves off from great campaigns at Roland Garros at the French Open.


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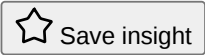
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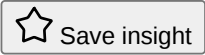
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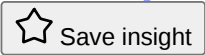
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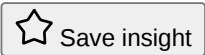
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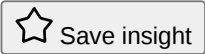
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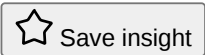
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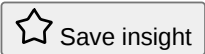
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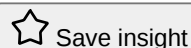
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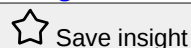


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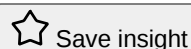


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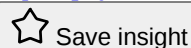
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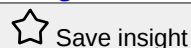


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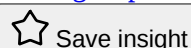
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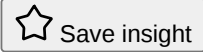
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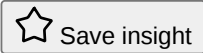
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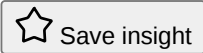
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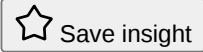


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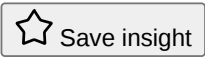
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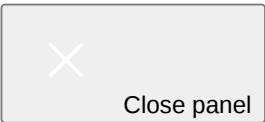
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