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SASS Talk: Olympic cyclist's hellish ride to Paris In Episode 6 of the SASS Talk podcast, four first-time Olympians reveal their joy and misery on the Road to Paris, and for cyclist Nicole Shields, the sickness that almost defeated her before reaching the startline

Theme:
Voice & Visibility

 SASS Talk: Olympic cyclist's hellish ride to Paris

Co-authored by Sarah Cowley Ross and Suzanne McFadden - LockerRoom

LockerRoom founder Suzanne McFadden and Olympian broadcaster Sarah Cowley Ross host the episodic podcast, SASS Talk, sparking new conversations about women's sport and the big issues females are facing.

LISTEN to Episode 6 below or on your favourite podcast app, including [Apple](#) and [Spotify](#).

It's been a cruel, frustrating ride Olympic cyclist Nicole Shields could never have scripted.

Over the past two years, the Central Otago rider has endured an inconceivable run of illness – including Covid multiple times – and injury that threatened to end her cycling career.

But she's persevered to become first wheel in the New Zealand women's team pursuit quartet, one of the favourites to win Olympic gold in Paris next month.

Shields reveals to the SASS Talk podcast how she came close to quitting more than once, while missing two seasons of competition through sickness and fatigue. She first fell ill after contracting a Covid-like virus in March 2022.

"I couldn't really study at all. I couldn't have dinner with people; it was too loud," the 24-year-old says. "I was so sick. I couldn't walk up the stairs to the offices at the track." And more crucially, she couldn't ride her bike.

But Shields refused to take the advice of a chronic fatigue specialist to change her expectations and re-evaluate what she wanted to get out of her life.

"I just got up and walked out, and I just cried on the street," she says. "But I was just not having a bar of it. I was like 'Let's figure it out'."

She continued to be plagued by illness (Covid, shingles and strep throat) and injury (jumping off a deck and putting a steel bar through her foot). The exhaustion that followed ruled her out of the 2022 Commonwealth Games and the 2023 track cycling world champs.

Last year, Shields went to Europe to train on the roads for three months – but the fatigue reared up again when she returned home. "That was one of the hardest times," she says. "I remember calling my parents and I was like, 'I'm done... this is stupid. I just want my life back'."

But after therapy and hospital treatment, Shields was finally able to get back into serious training and rode at the UCI Track Nations Cup in Hong Kong in March – despite having food poisoning. The Kiwi quartet won the women's team pursuit and qualified for the Paris Olympics – they are ranked No.2 in the world going into the Games.

Since being named to ride at her first Olympics and now in Europe for final training, Shields has had Covid again. But she says she's in a much better place, mentally and physically, to lead the team pursuit off the start-line in Paris.

In this episode of SASS Talk – the final in the Road to Paris season – we also talk to Tayla Ford, the first Kiwi woman chosen to wrestle at an Olympics, about her challenge of getting down to the right weight to compete in the freestyle 68kg class.

And artistic swimming duet, Eva Morris and Nina Brown, are also bound for Paris – 16 years after the Daniells sisters and 40 years after the Sadleir sisters (yes, they're the only Kiwi duo to compete at an Olympics who aren't siblings).

Morris was inspired to take up the sport after (reluctantly) doing a school project on the Daniells sisters at the Beijing Games. She talks about the legacy they hope to leave the sport.



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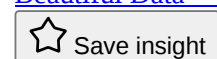
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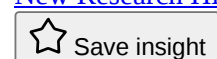
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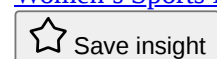
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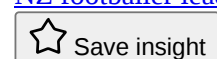
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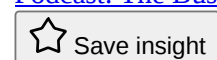
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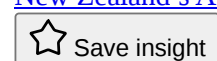
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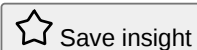
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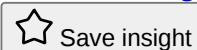
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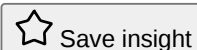
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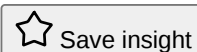


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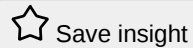


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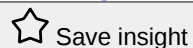


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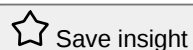


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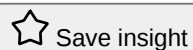
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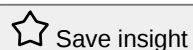
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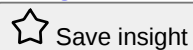
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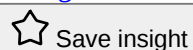
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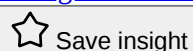
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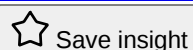
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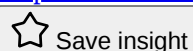
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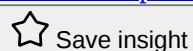
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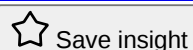
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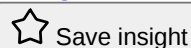
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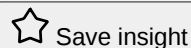
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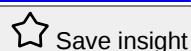
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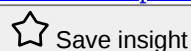
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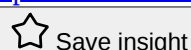


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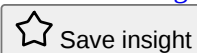
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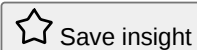
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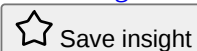
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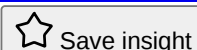
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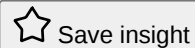


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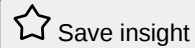


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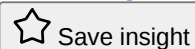


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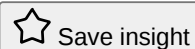


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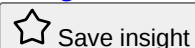


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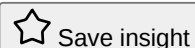


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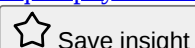
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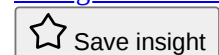
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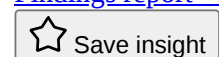
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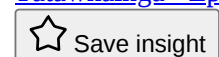
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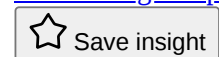
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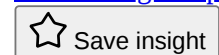
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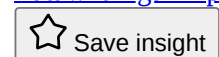
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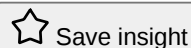
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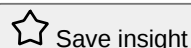
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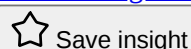
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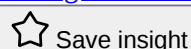
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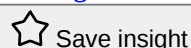
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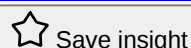


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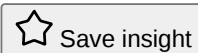
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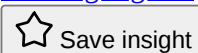
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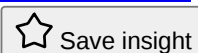
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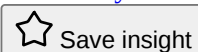
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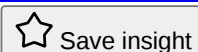
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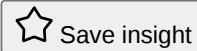
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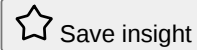
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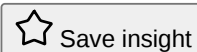
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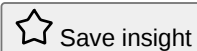
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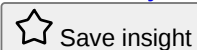
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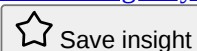
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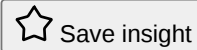
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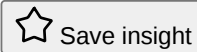
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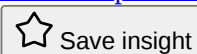
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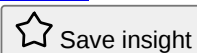
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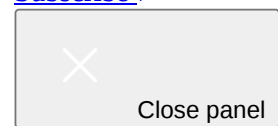
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