

Billy Stairmand

Instagram

Only a handful of people on the planet can say they competed the very first time surfing was introduced to the Olympic Games – and Kiwi Billy Stairmand is one of them.

Billy is an eight-time New Zealand professional surfing national champion; a veteran of over 10 years on the tough international circuit - and as-of 2021, an Olympian.

The journey from catching waves as a nine-year-old in the tiny seaside settlement of Raglan, to competing on the world surfing stage in front of an audience of millions, has been no mean feat, with many challenges along the way.

Billy grew up in a big family and his parents supported him to pursue his love of sports; it was Billy's dad (to this day, his best friend) who pushed him on to his first wave as a youngster, and his love of the ocean and surfing quickly became his main passion. He attended the famed Raglan Surf Academy at the Raglan Area School, where his prowess progressed quickly.

Billy became known for his all-round game, that makes him competitive in any conditions. He won his first competition at 13, rising through the ranks and winning his first national title in 2010; he established himself on the international scene the following year, by defeating 11-time world champion Kelly Slater at the Telstra Drug Aware Pro in Australia.

His placement at the 2019 ISA World Surfing Games qualified him for the inaugural surfing competition in the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics, as the highest-placed competitor from Oceania.

However in March 2020, Billy suffered ligament tear which sidelined him for almost three months, just as New Zealand entered a Level Four Lockdown. The subsequent postponement of the Olympics gave him time to recover and prepare to compete, and he eventually became the first male surfer to represent NZ in the history-making 2020 Games - with just 20 surfers in total involved in both men's and women's competitions.



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Unsurprisingly, Billy names competing at the Olympics as a life highlight - "Ever since surfing was named as a sport in the Olympics, I put it at the top of my goals list."

Always smiling, bubbly and energetic, Billy's determination to succeed has seen him through some extremely low periods - in particular, losing his mother, with whom he was very close, to breast cancer.

He has had to work extremely hard to fund his professional surfing career, paying to take part in competitions himself, which he credits with giving him even more resolve to succeed.

Backing him all the way has been the community of Raglan, which celebrates Billy as one of their most beloved local heroes; and his wife Liana. They live in the heart of the village with their dog Obie and sphynx cat Winnie, their "animal children."

When Billy isn't training, he loves adventure travel and of course, more sport - basketball, golf, skateboarding and snowboarding. But it is the unpredictability of the ocean; each unique wave and set of conditions that ties him to surfing.

"No other sport is like it - the freshness and life you feel after being in the ocean. I love the lifestyle of a professional surfer - we get to travel the world, compete in some amazing places and meet a lot of cool people," he says.

Billy has worked with a number of brands, from fashion (Boohoo Man, Hallensteins) and sport (Curve Surf, Sticky Johnson, Liive Eyewear) to FMCG and tech products (Skullcandy), and is excited to help elevate brands that are a great match with his active lifestyle and Olympic drive!