

Samara Maxwell

UNIVERSITY: Victoria University Wellington

GRADUATION DATE: 13th Feb 2023

QUALIFICATION ACHIEVED: Bachelor of Biomedical Science

SPORTING ACCOLADE: Current U23 World Mountain Bike Champion

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT: (Role and Organisation): VUW Research Assistant in the Comoletti Lab

Q: Can you share specific ways in which the skills and qualities you developed through your participation in sport have played a role in securing employment and advancing in your career?

A: One of the biggest skills I have developed through sports is the ability to set goals and set a plan to work towards it. The time between setting certain outcome goals, such as achieving 'X' position, scoring 'X' points or setting 'X' time, and achieving them, is always long and required a lot of dedicated work. Progress is slow and there is often setbacks but if you stick at it you will always achieve your results. Knowing that things will eventually work out and gaining the ability to trust this process and maintain optimism has been extremely important in my job, especially as a researcher where a lot of time is spent trying new methods and constantly having to adjust and optimise processes. Knowing that if I keep working methodically and logically, things will work out, has really helped me persist when others would want to give up.

Q: Many of the skills cultivated in sport, such as teamwork, leadership, time management, and resilience, are highly valued in the professional world. Could you give us an example of how one or more of these skills learned through sport played a pivotal role in your career success?

A: Time management is very important in my career. I spend a lot of time training (like many athletes), so successfully planning my day ensures I am arriving at work on time and attending meetings without it having to impact my training. Without time management skills gained through sports it would be very easy to run out of time to dedicate towards working, so being skilled in this has allowed me to pick up as many hours as possible and spend as much time as possible in the lab contributing to the research projects.

Q: Can you elaborate on specific instances where the teamwork, discipline, or time management skills you honed as a student-athlete have translated into tangible advantages or successes in your post-graduation career journey?

A: It is no secret that to succeed in sport you need to be highly disciplined and dedicated to your training. This is also a highly valuable skill in the lab where being accurate and precise is paramount. There are many instances where you could easily 'cut corners' during experiments however being disciplined and knowing that this is not an option is extremely important. There is also a lot of discipline required to commit to working when away at competitions etc. I have been travelling in Europe for the last 6 months however I have maintained my research while overseas even if it means sometimes I miss a beach trip or BBQ night with the team. It is important to maintain a respectable and professional image to help people make connections and positive progress within the work environment.

Q: In summary, how has your involvement in sport influenced and shaped your career journey and personal development?

A: When I enrolled in University, I quickly made sure to join the 'athlete friendly' community. I became surrounded by supportive, motivated, and enthusiastic people that helped me remain focused on achieving goals (sporting and academic) and graduate with results and grades I was proud of. During this time, I learnt a lot about persistence, resilience, and the importance of listening to my body and asking for help when I became overwhelmed. These skills have been very important, especially later when you are entering the work force and are finding yourself surrounded with highly experienced and knowledgeable people who can help you rapidly progress in your job. Overall, the dedication and resilience required to train and study have made the transition into a job post-graduation a lot easier and stopped me from becoming overwhelmed or disheartened when things get hard or deadlines seem unachievable. I know things can go wrong and progress doesn't come overnight, but if I keep at it and stay focused on my goal things will work out!