

# Going for Gold: Perseverance Leads Team Toyota to Tokyo 2020

July 20, 2021

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The Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 are just a few days away, and the time leading up to this event has pushed Toyota's Olympic athletes to the ultimate test – a chance to win gold.

Perseverance and resilience have been a theme for this year's Games. When the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 were postponed by a year, Toyota reached out to its athletes right away to provide support and reconfirm their commitment to helping them reach their goals. As a mobility company, Toyota believes in helping others as they strive to go beyond the impossible.

Qualifying for Team USA is no easy feat, but the Team Toyota athletes have trained hard, pushed themselves to new limits and have emerged stronger than ever. And now they are ready for the big stage.

Here are the incredible Team Toyota athletes competing in Tokyo at the Olympic Games, scheduled to take place July 23 – Aug. 8, 2021. Keep an eye out for these unstoppable standouts as they realize their ultimate dreams.

Bookmark the [Tokyo 2020 page](#) on the Toyota Newsroom, to follow along as the Olympic Games unfold. For up-to-date athlete news, follow #TeamToyota on Instagram ([@TeamToyota](#)).

### **Meet the Olympic Athletes:**

**Alise Willoughby: Cycling (BMX)**



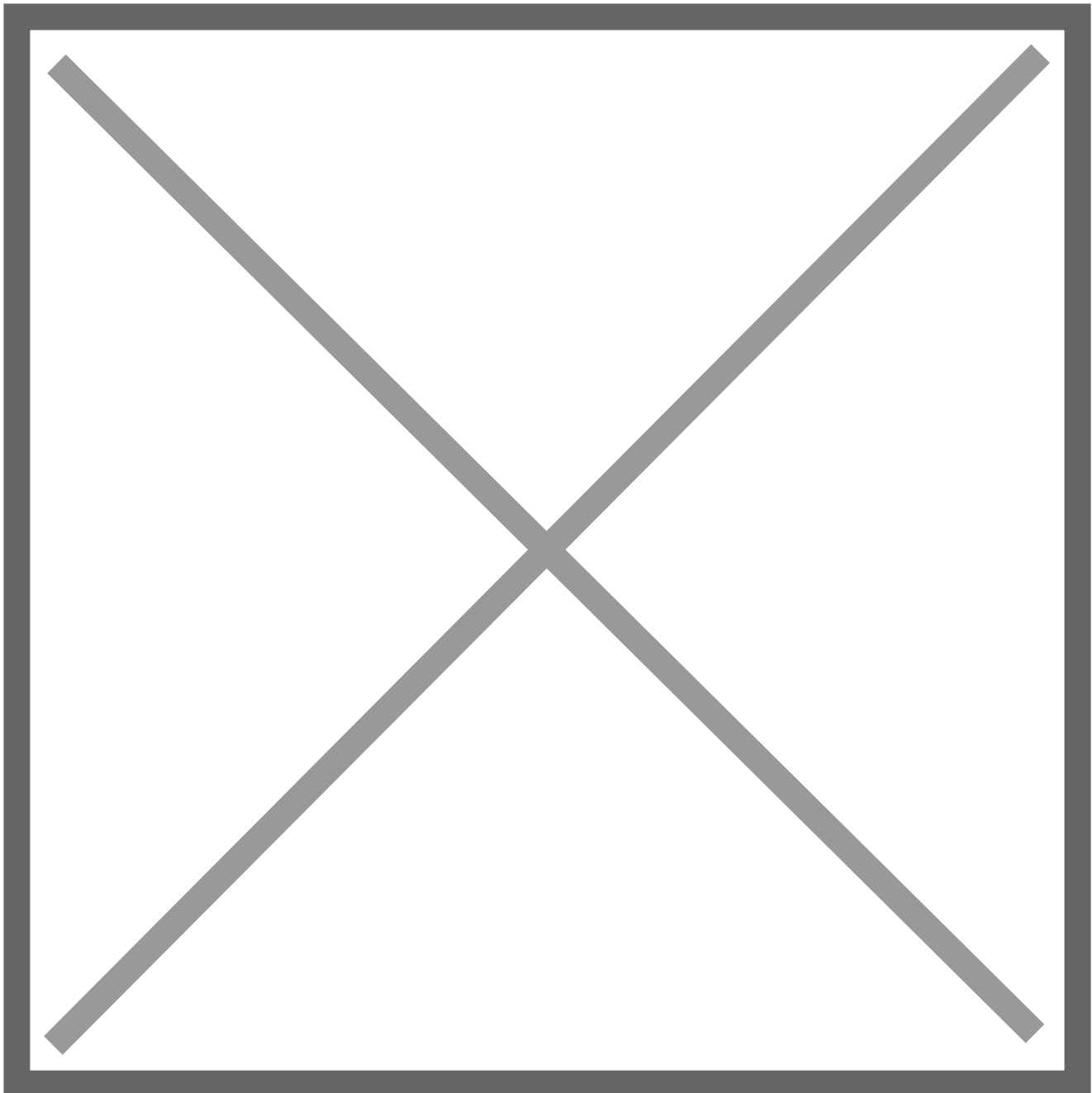
Throughout her career, Minnesota native and BMX star Alise Willoughby has consistently overcome adversity and emerged stronger. She endured multiple surgeries, including knee and hamstring reconstruction, one year before the Olympic Games London 2012. She also underwent treatment for a broken tibia 12 weeks ahead of the 2014 World Championships, during which she won a silver medal. However, Willoughby's medical setbacks didn't stop her from achieving these remarkable accomplishments, including becoming the first woman ever voted Rookie Pro of the Year by BMXer magazine and being the youngest competitor to win the American Bicycle Association's national title at just 15 years old. She also won the USA BMX Women's Pro Series Title in 2014, the same year her mother passed away from late-stage melanoma. Willoughby excels at turning

setbacks into opportunities. And she wants others to find their momentum and soar over any hurdles that may hold them back. Willoughby and her family converted an old, vandalized park in St. Cloud into one of the top BMX facilities in the country — Pineview Park BMX.

**Quote:** “Every athlete — every person — goes through a challenge in their life and it can be seemingly impossible to overcome that,” says Willoughby. “I think that’s what makes the strength you draw from those around you and everything leading up to that moment so important.”

You can learn more about Alise Willoughby by exploring her athlete biography page, [here](#).

**Daryl Homer: Fencing (Saber)**



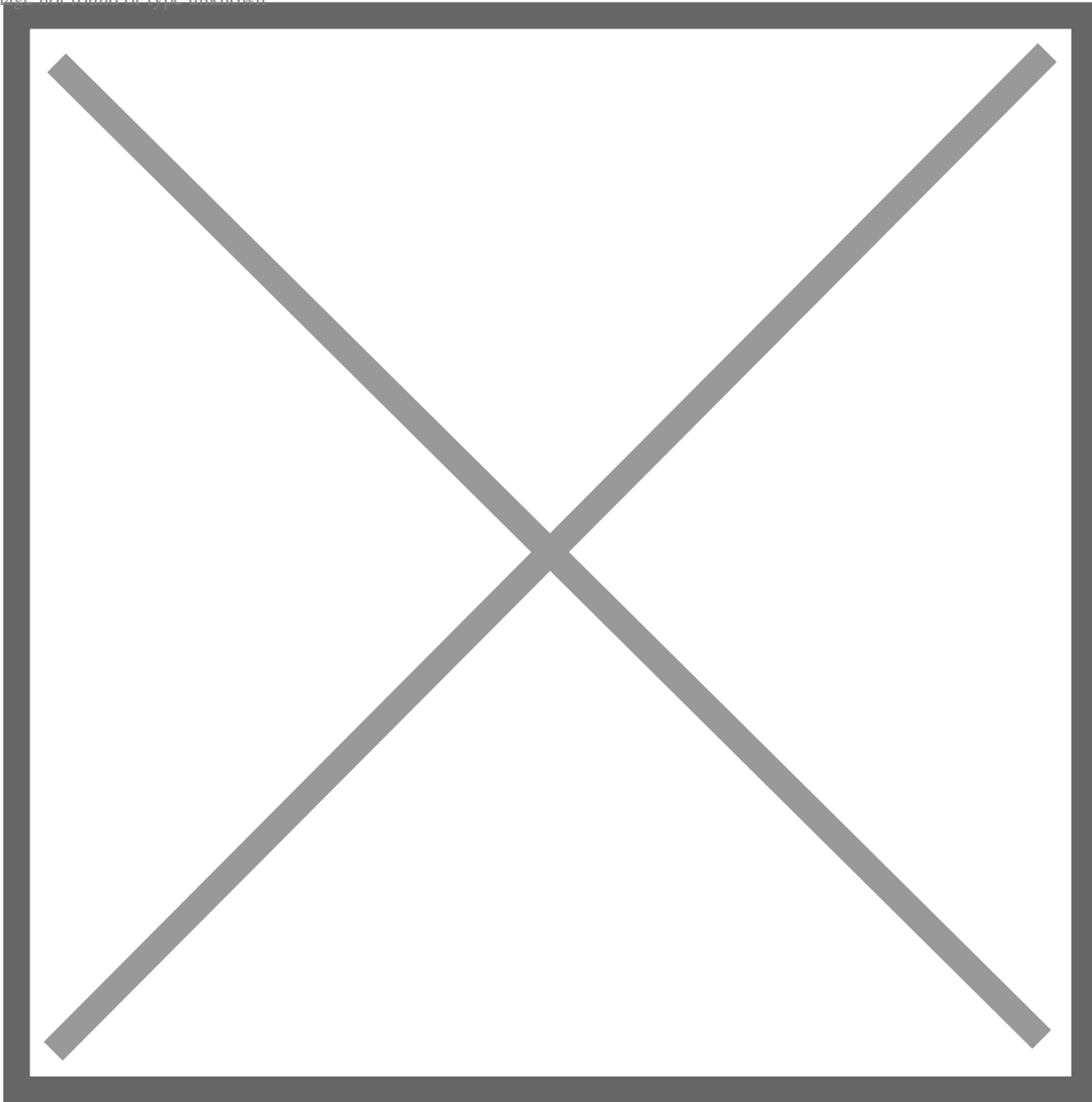
Born in the U.S. Virgin Islands and raised in the Bronx, Daryl Homer, a saber fencing champion, won an individual silver medal at the Olympic Games Rio 2016, becoming the first U.S. medalist in men's saber since Peter Westbrook took home bronze in 1984. While still training for Tokyo 2020, Homer is helping introduce young athletes like himself to fencing. Homer believes that showing children how to fence is a way to teach them life skills, something he learned firsthand. In 1991, Westbrook began a nonprofit foundation in his namesake to bring fencing to young people from New York City, like Homer, who would otherwise not have access to the sport. The Peter Westbrook Foundation's all-volunteer staff are primary Olympians, such as Homer, who serve as coaches and mentors to young fencers. As Tokyo approaches, Homer continues to give back to the foundation where he got his start, helping young athletes, even as he rigorously prepares for the Games.

**Quote:** "Fencing is literally your life put into a 20-second period," he says. "Twenty seconds of pressure. It takes so much from you. You have to make the right decisions, keep your emotions tight and stay confident."

You can learn more about Daryl Homer by exploring his athlete biography page, [here](#).

**Michael Norman: Track & Field**

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After watching Usain Bolt set the world record in the 100 meters at the Olympic Games Beijing 2008, Michael Norman knew then and there that he wanted to be a professional athlete. The San Diego, Calif. native qualified to compete in the 2016 U.S. Olympic Team Trials when he was just 18 years old. While he didn't advance to the semifinals in the 400 meters, Norman did take fifth place in the 200 meters, just two spots short of making the Olympic team. Norman believes that result gave him time to grow in college, both as a person and an athlete. Now that Norman has graduated, he is excited to no longer split his time between school and training. The accomplished sprinter remains focused on making his mark in Tokyo at his Olympic Games debut.

**Quote:** "Running is my job," Norman says. "The training schedule is pretty rigorous, but I love what I do. I enjoy every moment of it. Some of the stuff becomes tedious, but it's what you need to do to become the greatest person you can be."

You can learn more about Michael Norman by exploring his athlete biography page, [here](#).

**Jordyn Barratt: Skateboarding**

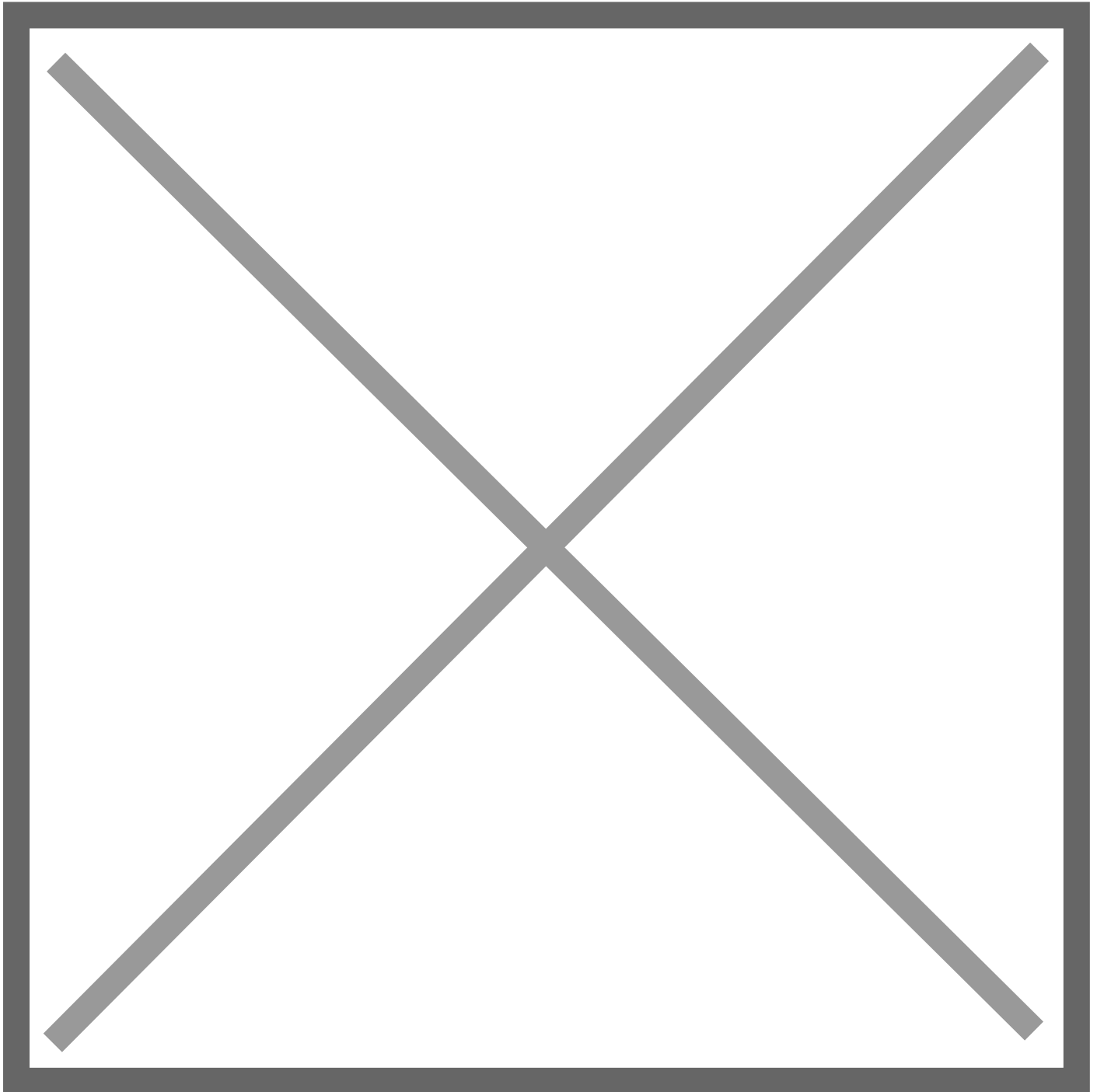


Skateboarding is making its Olympic Games debut in Tokyo this summer, and two-time X Games skateboarding medalist Jordyn Barratt is thrilled that she'll be there as it happens, right at the heart of the exciting milestone. The Hawaii native, who now calls San Diego, Calif. home, looks forward to making history alongside her fellow Team USA teammates. In 2016, she became the first female to compete in both skateboarding and surfing at the VANS US Open in Huntington Beach, Calif., where she medaled in skateboarding. She views the skateboarding lifestyle as a blend between authenticity and athleticism. Now that skateboarding is taking a global stage as an Olympic sport, she's delighted about the exposure. Still, she hopes the skateboarding world doesn't change too much, especially its inspiring culture of inclusivity.

**Quotes:** “No matter what you do in your life, if you love it, I think you should do it,” Barratt says. “I was lucky to find that at a pretty young age.”

You can learn more about Jordyn Barratt by exploring her athlete biography page, [here](#).

**Caeleb Dressel: Swimming**



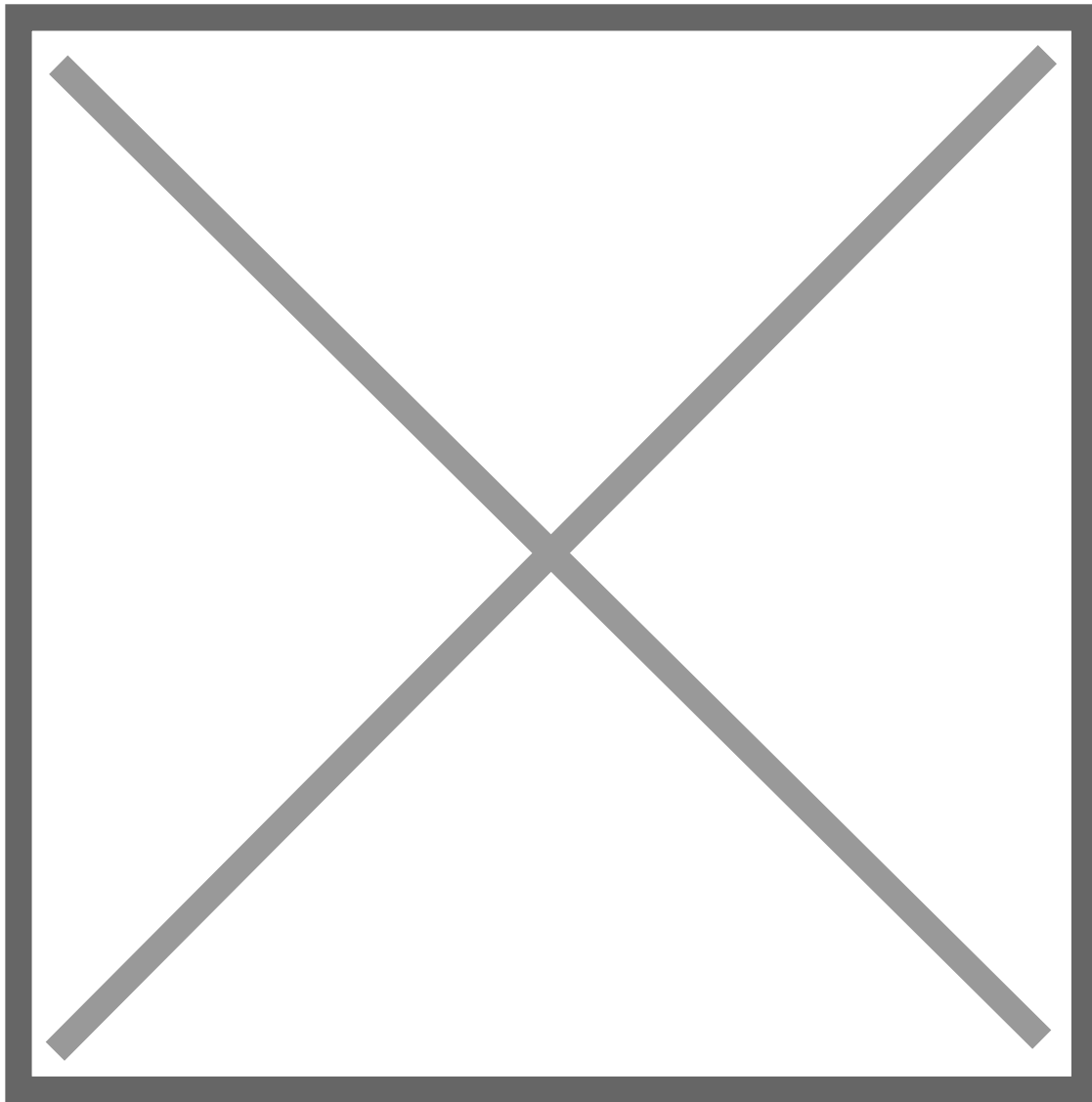


Competitive swimming runs deep in the Dressel family, with not only Caeleb Dressel swimming but also his father and two sisters. The Green Cove Springs, Fla. native and two-time Olympic gold medalist is the son of Michael and Christina Dressel and has three siblings, Tyler, Kaitlyn, and Sherridon. Dressel credits racing to the shower for hot water against his siblings with helping him develop an appetite for winning. In 2016, he was named NCAA Co-Swimmer of the Year and later won the 2017 FINA Male Swimmer of the Year and USA Swimming Athlete of the Year. Dressel is widely considered to possess the best start “off the block” in history. The incredibly accomplished University of Florida graduate became the first swimmer to win eight medals at a single World Championships in 2019.

**Quote:** “I don’t ever want to take for granted the people I’ve met,” Dressel says. “I feel like everyone I’ve come in contact with along my journey has been a part of it. I don’t know where I’d be if one of them hadn’t been there. Every coach I’ve had along the way, every teacher, they’ve all played a part to some extent in getting me to where I am today.”

You can learn more about Caeleb Dressel by exploring his athlete biography page, [here](#).

### **Simone Manuel: Swimming**



Simone Manuel is the first African American woman to win an individual Olympic gold medal in swimming. Manuel's parents enrolled her in swimming for practical reasons: They wanted their children to know how to swim so they'd be safer in the water. She immediately fell in love with the water. Manuel, who specializes in sprint freestyle, qualified for her first Olympic Games in 2016, and won two gold and two silver medals in Rio. As a result, she feels a little bit more prepared heading into Tokyo. The process to make the Olympic team still makes her nervous, but she's proven successful twice now. And she's proud to have a place on the world stage — possibly serving as inspiration for other children to get in the water.

**Quote:** "I'm a firm believer that representation matters," she says. "I really want to inspire little boys and girls, especially minorities or people who have not always felt welcome, to get in the water. I want kids to be able to see themselves in me."

You can learn more about Simone Manuel by exploring her athlete biography page, [here](#).