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- <u>Partnerships</u> <u>Rangapū</u>
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 - <u>History</u>
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Dame Sophie Pascoe announces her Retirement from Competitive Swimming

Theme: Voice & Visibility

Dame Sophie Pascoe announces her Retirement from Competitive Swimming

Co-authored by NZOC

New Zealand's most successful ever Paralympian, Dame Sophie Pascoe, has announced her retirement from competitive swimming.

Dame Sophie is one of New Zealand's greatest ever athletes and leaves sport as an eleven-time Paralympic gold medallist and multiple World Champion.

Reflecting on her incredible career, Dame Sophie shared her gratitude and aspirations for the future.

"Representing New Zealand in the pool has been the greatest honour of my life," said Dame Sophie.

"Every medal, national record, world record and milestone has been a reflection not just of my efforts, but of the collective dedication of my coaches, teammates, family, friends, supporters and the Swimming New Zealand family.

"As I step away from the pool, I carry with me countless memories of triumph and challenge, lessons learned, and friendships forged.

"While my competitive career may have come to an end, I remain passionate about giving back to the sport that shaped me. I hope to continue inspiring future generations of swimmers and foster an inclusive environment where every athlete feels empowered to achieve their dreams."

In a career spanning more than two decades, Dame Sophie redefined excellence in sport. She leaves the pool with an incredible 19 Paralympic medals, including 11 golds, achieved across four Paralympic Games from Beijing 2008 to Tokyo 2020.

Outside of the pool Dame Sophie is known for her resilience, determination, and humility, with the traits making her a role model for athletes and non-athletes alike. She has been instrumental in raising the profile of para-sport in New Zealand and globally, advocating for inclusion and equality in sport.

Dame Sophie underwent a below the knee amputation on her left leg following a lawnmower accident aged two. She began swimming aged seven and soon after was identified by Paralympians Roly Crichton and Graham Condon who were impressed by her potential and asked her to join the QEII Swim Club.

Her determination and talent quickly became evident, and she debuted on the international stage aged just 11, before competing at her first World Championships when she was 13, winning bronze in the 200IM in Durban. Her first Paralympic Games was Beijing 2008 where she won three golds aged only 15.

Since then she has cemented her status as one of the world's best swimmers, breaking more than a dozen world records and claiming numerous World Para Swimming Championship titles in addition to her Paralympic success. At Tokyo 2020 she completed a famous four-peat by claiming her fourth consecutive gold medal in the Women's 200m Individual Medley.

Dame Sophie has won seven Halberg awards and competed at three Commonwealth Games winning five gold medals. Notably, she was the team flagbearer at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games and at the Tokyo Paralympics.

In addition to her sporting achievements, 2024 was a significant year for Dame Sophie personally, as she and her husband Rob Samson welcomed a baby boy to their family.

Swimming New Zealand CEO Steve Johns paid tribute to Dame Sophie.

"We have been privileged to have worked with Dame Sophie for around two decades," said Johns.

"She has been a leader in and out of the water and an inspiration to athletes, young women, anyone with a disability, and to New Zealanders all around the country.

"Her sustained excellence along with her drive and determination have been second to none and she is a true sporting great.

"Dame Sophie, your legacy and place in New Zealand's sporting history is well and truly Entrenched. Congratulations on an amazing career and thanks for your incredible contribution to New Zealand sport. We wish you all the best for your next chapter."

Paralympics New Zealand CEO Greg Warnecke said, "Dame Sophie Pascoe calls time on her incomparable career as a true icon who transcended the sport like few others. She is a household name thanks to her stunning achievements spanning four Paralympic Games and also made a significant impact by changing the narrative around disability in Aotearoa New Zealand.

"Dame Sophie inspired so many Kiwis, particularly those with a disability to 'dream big and aim high'. On behalf of everyone at Paralympics New Zealand, congratulations and thank you. We couldn't be prouder of Paralympian #166."

Group Chief Executive, Sport New Zealand, Raelene Castle added, "Dame Sophie's contribution to para sport and the disability community can't be measured in medals and records alone. She has been a trailblazer and an inspiration to two generations of young people and has single-handedly changed the narrative for young people with a disability in New Zealand."

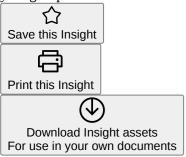
Steve Tew, Director of High Performance Sport New Zealand also paid tribute to Dame Sophie.

"On behalf of everyone at HPSNZ I would like to congratulate Dame Sophie on an outstanding career that sees her retire as New Zealand's most successful Paralympian and one of New Zealand's most decorated athletes. It is unlikely her medal-winning record will be bettered in our lifetime.

"While she may have retired from sport at the highest level, her legacy will endure for generations and we genuinely thank her for everything she has achieved in and out of the pool. We wish Sophie and family all the very best as they embark on the next chapter of their lives."

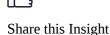
Dame Sophie was coached by Roly Crichton from 2002 - 2022 with Crichton instrumental in discovering and helping her to her early success. She has been coached by Brett Naylor since 2022.

Dame Sophie was appointed a Dame in the 2022 New Year's Honours for her services to swimming. At the time, she was the youngest person ever to be awarded the title.



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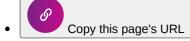














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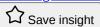
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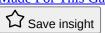
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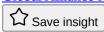
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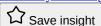
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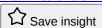
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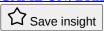
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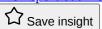
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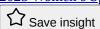
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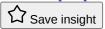
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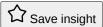


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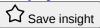
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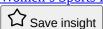
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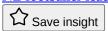
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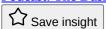
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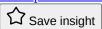
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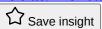
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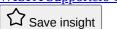
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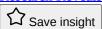
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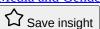
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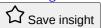
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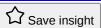
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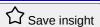
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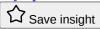
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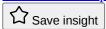
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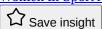
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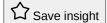


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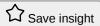
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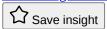


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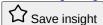


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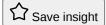
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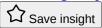
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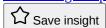


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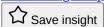


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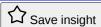


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How to be a male ally to women's sport

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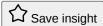
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The Halo of Value Creation Opportunities Around Women's Sports



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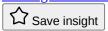
Strategies To Elevate And Diversify Women's Sports Coverage: Insights From The Gist



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Strategies To Elevate And Diversify Women's Sports Coverage: Insights From The Gist

Wellington and Graham sign with Brave for Super Smash



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New Women's Sport Trust Partnership With The R&A Reveals Women's Sports Fans Feel Underserved Despite Record-Breaking Viewing Figures



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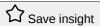
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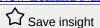
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IWG: Gen Dohrmann - Reshaping the images we see of women's sport in Australia

New Zealand Names Third Ever Artistic Swimming Duo For Olympic Games



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New Zealand Names Third Ever Artistic Swimming Duo For Olympic Games

<u>Grand Slam winner Routliffe, Sun to pair up for Paris tennis</u>



Grand Slam winner Routliffe, Sun to pair up for Paris tennis

Olympics 2024: Paris promised gender equality. Are TV commentators meeting that goal?

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Olympics 2024: Paris promised gender equality. Are TV commentators meeting that goal?

A level playing field: the case for investing in women's sport

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A level playing field: the case for investing in women's sport

Olympics 2024: Gold medallists Brooke Francis and Lucy Spoors on the challenges they faced



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Olympics 2024: Gold medallists Brooke Francis and Lucy Spoors on the challenges they faced

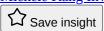
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PARIS OLYMPICS 2024 Paris Olympics: Kiwi diver Lizzie Roussel returns from baby hiatus to rekindle Olympic dream

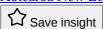
Michele Kang Invests \$50 Million to Boost Women's Sports



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Michele Kang Invests \$50 Million to Boost Women's Sports

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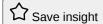


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2021 National Sport Club Survey - Female Friendly Environments



2021 National Sport Club Survey - Female Friendly Environments

By Maddi Mclean - Sport New Zealand

Men as Allies: supporting women and girls in community sport

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Men as Allies: supporting women and girls in community sport

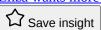
Olympic wāhine winning streak makes powerful case for more funding for women's sport



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Olympic wāhine winning streak makes powerful case for more funding for women's sport

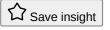
Eliza wants more than a last tango in Paris



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Eliza wants more than a last tango in Paris

Scotty's Spin: Where Is New Zealand's Investment In Women's Sport?



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Scotty's Spin: Where Is New Zealand's Investment In Women's Sport?

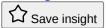
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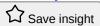
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Invisibility of female participants in midlife and beyond in sport and exercise science research: a call to action



Invisibility	of female participants	in midlife and l	beyond in sport a	and exercise so	cience research: a	ı call to
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Women coaches in Aotearoa New Zealand - Research

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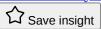
Women's Ice Hockey on the Rise

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Women's Ice Hockey on the Rise

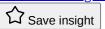
SASS Talk: Olympic cyclist's hellish ride to Paris



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SASS Talk: Olympic cyclist's hellish ride to Paris

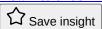
Title IX was a game-changer, but women are still fighting for an equal playing field



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Title IX was a game-changer, but women are still fighting for an equal playing field

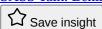
New Zealander Rebecca Foulsham's key Paralympics role



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New Zealander Rebecca Foulsham's key Paralympics role

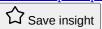
SASS Talk: Behind the scenes of the Paris Olympics



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WomenzSports present's Alice's Soapbox: Ruahei Demant (Rugby 15's)



WomenzSports present's Alice's Soapbox: Ruahei Demant (Rugby 15's	WomenzSports	present's Alice's	Soanbox:	Ruahei Demant	(Rughv	15's)
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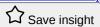
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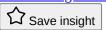
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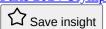
Overcoming the obstacles: How New Zealand women have shone at the Olympic Games



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Overcoming the obstacles: How New Zealand women have shone at the Olympic Games

Paris 2024 Olympics: A new era for women in sport



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Paris 2024 Olympics: A new era for women in sport

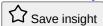
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Yeah, Nah: Is Lydia Ko New Zealand's greatest ever sportsperson?

CJ's Story Inspiring Inclusion





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CJ's Story Inspiring Inclusion

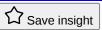
By Dantaye Simpson - Sport Manawatu 2023 Women's Sporting Landscape



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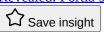
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Who deserves New Zealand's highest sporting honour?

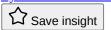
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Lydia Ko's Cinderella story

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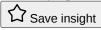
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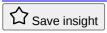
The impact of uniform design on female athletes' confidence - Massey University



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The impact of uniform design on female athletes' confidence - Massey University

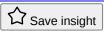
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Pioneer women surfers reflect on their struggle for recognition

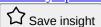
Research Confirms Benefit of Increased Representation of Women on Boards



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Research Confirms Benefit of Increased Representation of Women on Boards

Paris Olympics throw spotlight on needs of athlete mothers



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<u>Diversity and Inclusion Survey</u>
Save insight

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The ROI of Women's Sports: A Blueprint for Value Investing

Dalton's special connection to Southland lives on through foundation's gift



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Dalton's special connection to Southland lives on through foundation's gift

A PERIOD THAT STARTS A CONVERSATION: FEMALE ATHLETES BREAK THE TABOO ON MENSTRUATION IN ELITE SPORT



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