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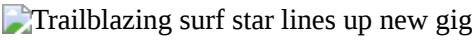
 

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Trailblazing surf star lines up new gig

Theme:
Leadership



Co-authored by Jamie Troughton, LockerRoom

The high-achieving sporting career of Danielle Richards is set to break new ground, with the champion surf lifesaver about to embark on her first official coaching gig.

The five-time New Zealand ironwoman winner will become one of the first female coaches at club level, signing on as an assistant coach at Omanu in the Bay of Plenty.

She'll join forces with another legend of the sport, head coach, three-time world champion and 11-time national ironman champion Cory Hutchings.

Richards (nee McKenzie) says: "I don't really know what I'm going to do next in terms of racing – there's definitely going to be a next, because I'm not done yet – but this is such a great opportunity.

"It puts me in such a good mindset and it's given me great direction for the near future. I've been through a phase where I didn't know what was next and the timing of this role popping up was perfect."

The 29-year-old spent much of the past year kayaking, helping Aimee Fisher qualify a K2 boat for the Paris Olympics, before Richards was controversially omitted when team boat selections were confirmed in March.

Even with Olympic dreams dashed, there have been few more varied – and storied – sporting careers than hers.

After spending her teenage years as one of New Zealand's best junior triathletes, she spent eight years as a professional ironwoman in Australia, making history as the first New Zealand female to podium at the Nutri-Grain Series.

She clinched second place in the 2021/2022 series and third the next year, and has won more Australian surf lifesaving titles than any other New Zealander (including an immensely popular double-ski win with Georgia Miller this year).

Richards won an Ocean Ski world championship in 2019 and collected world titles with the New Zealand surf lifesaving Black Fins team in 2014 and 2016, which is where she first made contact with Hutchings.

"Having Cory here at Omanu was definitely a big enticement. I've worked with him in the past, when he was helping coach New Zealand teams, and his knowledge around skills and racing and combating nerves is second-to-none. Having a female coach is really amazing for a club – it brings a whole new element in – and I can see us really complementing each other."

Other women have made significant impacts in surf lifesaving, most notably Christchurch's Jonelle Quane and latterly sprint specialist Arna Wright, but Richards' appointment is hugely significant at club level.

Omanu general manager, and former national coach, Scott Bartlett, said the club was delighted with the appointment, with Richards due to start in late August.

"If Danielle isn't New Zealand's greatest surf lifesaving athlete, she's probably pretty comfortably in the top-two, alongside the other member of our coaching staff," Bartlett said.

"But what we're especially excited about is the respect she has, across all sports she's competed in. People see her tenacity and competitive spirit but they also see what a quality human she is, and how she so willingly gives back to her sports.

"Having her here isn't just going to be great for Omanu and our young athletes but also the entire surf lifesaving movement throughout Bay of Plenty."

Jamie Troughton is a freelance journalist and photographer with more than two decades' experience writing about sport. [More by Jamie Troughton](#).

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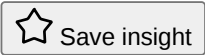
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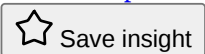
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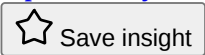
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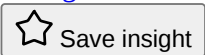
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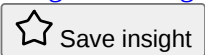
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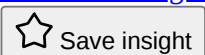
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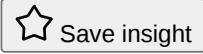
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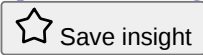
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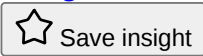
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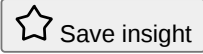
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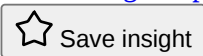


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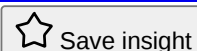
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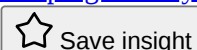
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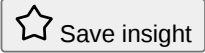
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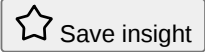
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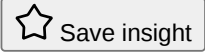
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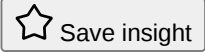
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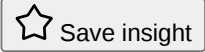
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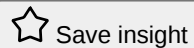
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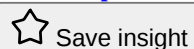
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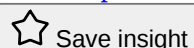
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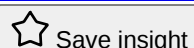
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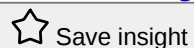


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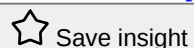


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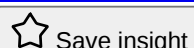
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