

# Danielle Richards (née McKenzie)

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Nominee – ICF Athletes' Committee

## Statement of Interest

As a lifelong paddler across canoe sprint, ocean ski, and surf lifesaving, I have always valued the role athlete voice plays in shaping a healthy, high-performance sporting environment. My nomination to the ICF Athletes' Committee reflects my desire to contribute to the future of our sport—particularly as an advocate for non-Olympic disciplines, female athletes, and athlete development pathways across all levels.

I bring to this role a unique lense—having competed at the world level across multiple paddling disciplines, while also working as a coach, mentor and within high performance sport in NZ. My broad experience across the different disciplines has given me a deep understanding of both the elite and grassroots athlete experience, and the challenges and opportunities that exist in our community. I believe in a collaborative, inclusive, and athlete-first approach to sport governance and hope to bring my knowledge, international perspective, and leadership to this committee.

## Athletic Achievements

### Ocean Ski Racing – International Elite Competitor

Notable Victories & Podiums

- 🥇 2025 Molokai to Oahu Champion – Set new women's course record by 14 minutes
- 🥇 The Perth Doctor – Champion (2019, 2022), Runner-up (2023, 2024)
- 🥇 20 Beaches (Sydney) – Champion (2019, 2020, 2024)
- 🥇 Dragon Run (Hong Kong) – Champion (2019), Runner-up (2024)
- 🥇 Gorge Downwind Champs (USA) – Champion (2023), Runner-up (2024)

ICF Ocean Racing World Championships

- 🥇 2019 France – Gold Medalist, Open Women
- 🥈 2022 Portugal – Silver Medalist, Open Women

✓ Undefeated podium record since debuting in ocean ski internationally in 2019

✓ Renowned for elite downwind technique, tactical precision, and consistency

### Canoe Sprint – New Zealand Representative

- NZ 2023 World Championships (Duisburg) – 8th in K2 500m with Aimee Fisher
- 🥇 2024 Oceania Championships – 1st in K2 500m, Olympic quota qualified
- 🥈 2023 NZ National Championships – 4th in K1 500m

### **Surf Life Saving – Black Fins (NZ National Team)**

- 🏆 Over NZ 50 National Titles – Ironwoman, Board, Ski, and Team disciplines
- 🌍 World Championships:
  - Gold: 2014 France, 2016 Netherlands (Team World Champions)
  - Silver: 2018 Australia, 2022 Italy
- 🌊 International Surf Rescue Challenge – Represented NZ (2013–2019)
- AU Australian Nutri-Grain Ironwoman Series – 8 years-Best placing 2nd overall in 2022

### **Current Professional Roles**

#### **Talent Identification Coordinator – Canoe Racing New Zealand (CRNZ)**

- Leads national athlete identification strategy for sprint kayaking
- Develops holistic pathway systems (U16–U23)
- Builds regional relationships with coaches and clubs to strengthen talent pipelines.

#### **Coach & Club Lead – Omanu Surf Life Saving Club**

- Assistant coach to junior, senior, and masters surf athletes
- Supports athlete and volunteer development through coaching mentorship.
- Leads seasonal athlete programs
- Promotes inclusive, community-focused participation while developing high-performance potential.

### **Education & Development**

- 🎓 Bachelor of Sport & Exercise Science – AUT, New Zealand
- 🎓 Master's in Teaching – Southern Cross University, Australia
- ✅ Certified Surf Lifesaving Volunteer (NZ & AUS), Bronze Medallion
- 🧠 Ongoing learning via HPSNZ core knowledge, leadership & female athlete development programs

### **Volunteering, Coaching & Advocacy**

#### **International Coaching & Mentorship**

- NZ Volunteer Coach – NZ U18 Canoe Sprint Team – Junior Worlds 2025
- NZ Volunteer Coach – NZ Emerging Surf Lifesaving Team – Battle of the Tasman 2025
- 🛠️ Provided technical coaching, wellbeing support & cultural leadership to young athletes

#### **Community & Club Engagement**

- Regular guest coach at surf & paddle development camps

- Event manager with GC10 and various Ocean Ski races in Australia
- Speaker & panelist at female leadership and athlete wellbeing events
- Volunteer patrol lifeguard for over 15 years (NZ & AUS)
- Leads school & community paddling and ocean safety programs

### **Why I Want to Serve**

The ICF Athletes' Committee must reflect the diverse needs of our paddling community—across Olympic and non-Olympic disciplines, age, gender, and geography. I believe I offer:

- ✓ Real-world experience as an elite athlete in two ICF-relevant disciplines
- ✓ Deep understanding of the pathway from grassroots to world level in paddling
- ✓ Commitment to representation for non-Olympic and under-resourced athletes and competitions
- ✓ A global view, shaped by competition and coaching in NZ, AUS, Europe, and the USA
- ✓ A passion for equality, inclusion, and progressive leadership in paddle sports.

“True progress in sport happens when athletes are at the heart of decision-making. I would be honoured to bring integrity, insight, and action to the ICF Athletes' Committee.”