



# BRIAN MALFESI

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**COMMUNITY ATHLETE RECOGNITION AWARD RECIPIENT**  
Sprint Kayaker | National Team Canada Veteran | RCKC Athlete

## HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED WITH RCKC & THE SPORT OF SPRINT KAYAKING?

I have been paddling since 2005 - I was 11 years old, so that makes 2020 my sixteenth year involved in the sport. I have raced for Ridge Canoe & Kayak Club (RCKC) from the beginning. I am proud to be from Maple Ridge and to represent my community.

## WHAT DOES SPORT MEAN TO YOU & WHAT HAS YOUR INVOLVEMENT TAUGHT YOU?

Sport is everything to me. The canoe club is where I feel most at home. Through listening to my coaches, watching the senior athletes, or figuring it out through trial and error, sport has taught me work ethic and attention to detail. I have learned to stay positive, set goals, work as a team and to overcome different obstacles. At training camps away from home, I had to learn to cook, clean and live with others from a very young age. As a high performance athlete, one of the most important things I have learned is to design and stick to a schedule. This includes following a training program, time management, proper nutrition at the right time, optimal sleeping patterns and learning how to recover properly.

The greatest thing sport has taught me is how sport connects us and the importance of giving back to the community. There have been so many people who have helped me in my Olympic journey and I realize the importance of paying it forward along with being positive role model for younger athletes.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE LOOKING TO GET INVOLVED IN SPORT?

If you're looking to get involved in sport, or any physical activity, just go for it! I am a big advocate for physical literacy, especially at a young age, and for people to try different things and be involved.

I think my biggest piece of advice is to be willing to fail, but to keep trying. It is important to understand that everyone starts as a beginner and you have to be open to trying again to get better. Whether it be your first attempt to stay up in a racing kayak and you can't get off the dock without falling in, or failing because you have pushed your body to the absolute limit and simply cannot take another paddle stroke, I think you have to be comfortable with failing. Learning from each failure and being eager to try again is the key to a healthy relationship with sport.

## WHAT WAS IT THAT ATTRACTED YOU TO RCKC & SPRINT KAYAKING OVER OTHER SPORTS?

Growing up I was involved in many different sports from community soccer for 10 years and baseball for four along with school cross country, track and field and volleyball. Kayaking is what stuck because I found something that I was able to push my physical and mental limits, both individually and in a team. I am also drawn to the outdoors and for me there is nothing better than the stillness of Whonnock Lake on a calm fall morning. RCKC is always a welcoming place where everyone is working hard and wanting each other to

succeed. There is a unique sense of belonging that comes from the team atmosphere that is developed within our small community. Besides just paddling, our sport relies heavily on cross training to build our strength and stamina. This always keeps training interesting and less monotonous.

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLES MODELS & WHY?

When I was first starting at RCKC I looked up to the senior athletes Dion, Sean, Farron, among others and was always in awe of their work ethic and unrelenting strive to outdo the other and push their physical limits. I owe them, and my coach Kristof, for introducing me to what high performance sport is all about.

As I continued on and began training with Team Canada, I looked up to Olympic and World Champion Adam VanKoeverden. His ferocious work ethic paired with flawless technique was unparalleled. The hardest workout I ever did was alongside him - well, maybe a bit behind him - when I was first on the National Team. Adam has so much experience in sport and life and I did my best to soak up as much paddling knowledge from him as I could.



Now, as a National Team veteran, I find myself looking up to my younger K2 partner, Vincent Jourdenais. From Trois-Rivières, QC, Vincent is relatively new to the team but keeps me on my toes and has helped keep the atmosphere fun and positive. His drive and competitive nature always makes training enjoyable as we push each other everyday to be better. Off the water, Vincent is kind, humble, and inclusive of everyone and I look forward to trying to qualify for our spot together in K2 for the Olympics.



The person I look up to the most is my best friend, RCKC coach, and partner in crime Tessa Nagai. Her openness and inclusivity is what gets people coming to RCKC, and her positivity, attention to detail, and work ethic is what keeps people coming back. She has a keen sense for understanding different situations and knows exactly what to say and when to say it. Tessa is one of the smartest people I know and has worked hard to earn what she works toward. I am constantly learning from her and she makes me a better person.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF SPRINT KAYAKING?

I am a huge fan of being outdoors and am not one for sitting still for too long. In my time outside of training I am often still at the canoe club, fixing boats, coaching the younger athletes, or setting up the racecourse. RCKC is my home and I try to do my best to maintain it and keep our paddling community strong.

In my little time away from paddling, I enjoy going trail running, hiking, and camping in the mountains of BC or going to a local park with our two wiener dogs.

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