

COMPETING AGAINST ALL ODDS



David Katoatau- Kiribati

Twenty years ago on the island of Nauru, a young Kiribati boy by the name of David Katoatau, was playing at the 'location' a settlement where many expatriates lived as they worked in the Nauru phosphate mining industry. The Katoatau family was one of those many families. Nauru weightlifting at that time was enjoying enormous success in the region and at world level. Weightlifting grabbed the attention of David. He would walk a couple of kilometres, to the training centre, where the best lifters of Nauru would train. He would watch the training sessions day after day from outside the windows.

A few years later, his family returned to their home nation of Kiribati. David decided that he too wanted to be an international weightlifting athlete and so he started to train and he has not stopped since. He has spent almost his entire youth at the Oceania Weightlifting Institute

training under Paul Coffa. He has won many Oceania championships. He has travelled the world competing at many international events and world championships. He has competed at three Olympic Games and three Commonwealth Games.

At the last Commonwealth Games in Glasgow he made history for his country when he won gold for Kiribati. This was to be Kiribati's greatest day in sport, their first ever medal at a Commonwealth Games. At the time, President of the KNOC, who would later become the Minister for Sport, the Hon. David Collins, was ecstatic. His support to weightlifting had finally paid off. The KNOC with the assistance of Olympic Solidarity and the Government of Kiribati had funded David Katoatau at the Oceania Weightlifting Institute for many years. Their investment had paid off big time.

David Katoatau on the day of winning gold could not contain his jubilation as he started to dance on the stage after his final lift. That dance made history. Millions of people have watched David on youtube. That victory dance became one of the highlights of the 2014 Commonwealth Games.



RIO – 2016 OLYMPICS



SUVA- 2016 OCEANIA



SCOTLAND 2014

Asked many times, why does he dance. His reply is very simple. David wants the world to know where Kiribati is. He wants the world to know what Kiribati is facing due to climate change. He himself became a victim of climate change when a king tide washed away the house that he had built next to his parents home.

Such is David's passion for weightlifting and his desire to see the next generation given the same opportunities afforded to him, David visits schools in Kiribati when he returns home to promote the sport. Simply put, David Katoatau is a national treasure.

David will compete in his fourth and final Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast. Twenty years of lifting weights, day after day, is a long time and a massive commitment.



Kiribati situated in the middle of the Pacific – ocean on both sides



David visiting schools in Kiribati to promote weightlifting.

He sees his country disappearing slowly, yet this unpretentious athlete, always humble and possessing a golden heart of goodness, David wants to see more Kiribati lifters winning medals in the future. He wants to see Kiribati to continue winning medals at Commonwealth Games. Through the sport of weightlifting he wants to keep the world focussed on Kiribati and the devastation which is occurring from climate change. Kiribati at the Gold Coast will be represented by 4 men and 1 woman.

62kg Takirua Betero, 69kg Ruben Katoatau, 77kg Taretiita Tabaroua, 105kg David Katoatau and only female 69kg Tiiau Bakaekiri

Question is - will Kiribati win another medal at these Games. We will know very soon.



Ruben Katoatau (David's brother) competing in the 69Kg category. Medal prospect Taretiita Tabaroua competing in the 77Kg Category.



Some of the weights used on the island to produce lifters.