

**NZOC Media Release**

**9 November 2021**

**Nigel Avery named New Zealand Team Chef de Mission for Birmingham 2022  
Commonwealth Games**

Olympian and five-time Commonwealth Games medallist Nigel Avery is pledging to bring further focus to athlete wellbeing in his role as New Zealand Team Chef de Mission for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Avery, a former New Zealand representative in weightlifting, athletics and bobsleigh has today been named Chef de Mission following an extensive recruitment process.

The 54-year-old began his elite sporting journey in shot-put and triple jump, but injury cut short his athletics career. He then turned to bobsleigh and was in the national squad from 1991-96 before discovering a love for weightlifting.

Avery went on to compete in weightlifting at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, as well as the Kuala Lumpur and Manchester Commonwealth Games where he picked up five medals, including two gold. His outstanding performances and leadership in Manchester saw him carry the New Zealand flag at the closing ceremony.

Since then, Avery has remained involved in sport through Governance and coaching roles, notably as Auckland Weightlifting President from 2004-2008, and as Millennium Institute of Sport & Health High Performance Manager from 2003-2008.

Avery also led the New Zealand team to the Sydney Youth Olympic festival as Chef de Mission in 2007 and was a member of the NZOC Athletes' Commission from 2002-2008.

"I'm thrilled to be named Chef de Mission for Birmingham, it's an amazing opportunity," said Avery.

"I'm really looking forward to contributing to the success of the New Zealand Team as a whole, I've had loads of people support me during my career so the opportunity to give back is pretty awesome."

A unique leadership role, the New Zealand Team Chef de Mission champions the needs of athletes inside complex and high-performance Games environments. The role ensures the New Zealand Team promotes athlete mana, wellbeing and performance at all times throughout the Games period.

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“It’s about helping people succeed, so for me it’s all about the athletes and the structures we can put in place around them to ensure they’re supported and to optimise their performance”.

Avery is passionate about athlete wellbeing and is pledging to put even more focus on supporting athletes as they work towards Birmingham.

“Athlete wellbeing is an area that I want to bring even more of a focus to,” said Avery.

“I believe if athletes are empowered through an environment where they’re needed, wanted, embraced and nurtured, their wellbeing and performance should be fantastic as a result. The safety, health and wellbeing of our athletes is our number one priority as a leadership team.”

NZOC CEO Kereyn Smith says Avery will be an outstanding Chef de Mission.

“Nigel brings an extensive background of sports experience across various codes and roles, always with a strong interest and focus on athletes, their performance pathway and wellbeing,” said Smith.

“He has all the leadership qualities we are looking for to lead a large and diverse team to Birmingham in these complicated covid times, having considerable leadership and management experience in New Zealand and overseas.

“The Commonwealth Games are a unique Games which champion social good through inclusion and diversity, and Nigel is the perfect person to lead the team, build on our culture of manaaki and help to create a new chapter in our Commonwealth Games sporting history.”

The NZOC Athletes’ Commission was a key party in the appointment process. Chair Sarah Cowley Ross says Avery is an experienced athlete and leader who understands the significance of the Commonwealth Games to the New Zealand Team and to New Zealand.

“Nigel brings a wealth of knowledge about the athlete journey and will champion our athletes while bringing the whole team together as one,” said Cowley Ross.

“As a young athlete I remember watching Nigel train at AUT Millennium preparing for the 2002 Commonwealth Games. He inspired a performance culture in the way he role modelled high performance sport and I’m sure he will bring the same mana to his role leading the New Zealand Team.”

Avery lives in the Hawkes Bay with his wife Shelley and three teenage daughters.

Around 240 New Zealand athletes are expected to compete in the Birmingham Commonwealth

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Games which will be held from 28 July – 8 August 2022.

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### **Nigel Avery Bio**

Nigel Avery is an Olympian, five-time Commonwealth Games medallist, and was the New Zealand closing ceremony flagbearer at the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games.

Avery was born into a keen sporting family in 1967, beginning his career as a shot putter and a triple jumper. After injury cut short his athletics career, Avery turned to bobsleigh. He was in the national squad from 1991-96 and narrowly missed representing New Zealand at the 1994 Winter Olympic Games.

In 1996, when he was training for the bobsleigh, he got talking to a group of weightlifters in the gym. Avery decided that the sport appealed to him and just a year later was lifting for New Zealand.

“At the time I thought it would be nice to do something competitive over the winter and then go back to bobsleigh during our summer,” he said. “I did pretty well at weightlifting, and then they said I could make the Commonwealth Games.”

At the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games Avery was still a novice but picked up bronze medals in the 105kg class for the snatch and the total, and was fourth in the clean and jerk.

At the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, Avery squared off with the giants of his sport in the 105+ category and lifted outstandingly. He finished 17th with three personal bests and three Commonwealth records.

By the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games he was ranked first in the Commonwealth in the clean and jerk and second in the snatch. Avery dominated the 105+kg division, winning two golds and a silver. He hoisted a total of 390kg, including a Games record 215kg in the clean and jerk, to win double gold. Earlier he won silver in the snatch. He was given the honour of carrying the New

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Zealand flag in the closing ceremony.

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Avery also led the New Zealand team to the Sydney Youth Olympic festival as Chef de Mission in 2007 and was a member of the NZOC Athletes' Commission from 2002-2008.

He will lead the New Zealand Team to the Birmingham Commonwealth Games in 2022 as Chef de Mission.

Avery and wife Shelley live in Hawke's Bay and have three teenage daughters.

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