



Michal Smolen Biography

Michal Smolen is a professional kayaker in the Olympic discipline of Whitewater Slalom. Michal is currently ranked as one of the top kayakers in the country and is an Olympic Hopeful for the 2012 London Games.

Michal was born in Poland where he spent the first ten years of his life. It was not until he moved to the United States when he took his first steps in a kayak. At the age of 14, he became more active and involved in the sport, and at which point he became the top junior kayaker in the country. For the last four years, Michal has placed 1st at the US Junior National Team Trials making him a 4-time Junior National Team member. Within those four years, much progression was made and Michal quickly made his way to competing with the best junior kayakers in the world. In 2010, he placed 4th at the Junior World Championships in Foix, France. This result proved Michal to be one of the best junior kayakers in the world as his final run time included two penalties (which kept Michal off the podium). Shortly after this competition, Michal's dissatisfaction with his performance at the Junior Worlds forced him to set his sights on a new goal: competing at the Olympic Games in London.

With much training and preparation last fall and winter, Michal entered the 2011 racing season at full speed and placed 2nd overall among the senior kayakers at the US Open. This marked the first race at which he competed against and defeated past Olympians and National Team athletes. Building upon his successful finish at the US Open, Michal placed 1st at the US Senior National Team Trials. Being only 17, he is one of the youngest athletes to achieve this result in the history of US kayaking. By default, Michal earned a spot on the US Senior National Team but extenuating circumstances kept him from competing internationally. Because of his outstanding citizenship status, Michal was unable to represent the United States at the World Cups and World Championships in 2011. Consequently, he went to compete at international Junior Cup races where he won the overall title.

In present day, Michal is living in Charlotte and training full time at the US National Whitewater Center. He recently finished his first semester of college at Queens University and is taking time off in the Spring to prepare for the Olympic Games and the upcoming racing season. Michal's current citizenship status prevents him from qualifying for the Olympic Team in 2012. Nevertheless, Michal is determined to obtain citizenship in time for the Olympics and will keep representing the United States throughout his professional kayaking career.