

# Saya Sakakibara Remains Composed Despite the Turmoil of the Brisbane BMX Racing World Cup

## Description

BMX racing never fails to enthrall, thanks to its fever-pitch intensity. In a whirlwind of frenzied activity, eight riders hurtle down atop an eight-metre ramp, brandishing their elbows with pointed aggression. As legs pump and tyres whirl, each participant focuses on navigating the first of three half-circle turns, with all the riders trying to secure the most advantageous line. A thrilling spectacle that teeters on the edge of chaos, it is underpinned by a palpable risk factor, as Australia's Saya Sakakibara knows all too well.

Sakakibara herself encountered a sobering spectacle of the danger associated with the sport during a crash in Tokyo that left her grappling with the after-effects of a persistent concussion for a gruelling year. Perhaps then it may seem a touch incongruent to hear the 25-year-old athlete speaking about calmness on the eve of her participation in the World Cup event in Brisbane.

In the realm of BMX racing, where every second counts and the drama is at its peak until the gate drops, Sakakibara, the World Cup defender, identifies calmness as a paramount emotion. Striving for this peace of mind, she states, can be the definitive factor in a BMX race, or any other life situation. Drawing on this philosophy, Sakakibara aims to maintain a tranquil disposition between the races, invoking her inner warrior only when it's time to compete.

There's no denying that this coping mechanism has brought her impressive results. The Australian BMX star emerged victorious in the opening World Cup events in Rotorua, defeating her primary World Cup contenders, Bethany Shriever of Britain and Laura Smulders of the Netherlands. Shriever, the reigning world champion, and Smulders, who suffered a collarbone injury in a crash, pose significant threats leading up to the 2024 Paris Olympics.

In preparation for the Paris Olympics, Sakakibara and her competitors are racking up important points in the World Cup circuit. The current year's tour stops in Brisbane and concludes in Tulsa, USA, in April, followed by the World Championships in South Carolina in May. The gravity and pressure of potential Olympic participation are far from lost on Sakakibara, although she admits her past experiences have not prepared her entirely for the emotions surrounding the approach to the Games.

Navigating a fraught personal journey in the lead up to the games, Sakakibara has witnessed the inexplicable cruelty of her beloved sport, devastated by her brother Kai's career-ending crash. In a chilling reminder of the sport's life-altering potential, Kai's accident underscores the fine line between success and tragedy. In this high-stakes sport, one misstep could mean yielding a podium finish or enduring a life-changing catastrophe.

Sakakibara counts her brother Kai as a significant pillar of support, changing her perspective on her sport and career. While she's training to better her previous performances, Kai charts his journey towards the 2028 LA Paralympics, symbolising hope and perseverance in the face of adversity.

BMX racing, in all its untempered fervour, reveals a complex network of intertwined dreams, rivalry, and



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brutish reality. As Sakakibara gears up for yet another race in pursuit of Olympic glory, she affirms the importance of maintaining a sense of composure amid the tumult. The chaos that unfurls every time she races is testament to her resilience and determination to rise above and deliver unforgettable performances. Every new challenge motivates her to push the spectrum of her abilities, building her momentum as she barrels towards the pinnacle of her sporting career.

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## Vocabulary List:

1. **Enthrall** // (verb): Capture the fascinated attention of
2. **Intensity** // (noun): Great concentration, power, or force
3. **Frenzied** // (adjective): Wildly excited or uncontrolled
4. **Advantageous** // (adjective): Beneficial, providing an advantage
5. **Incongruent** // (adjective): Not in harmony or keeping with the surroundings or other aspects of something
6. **Gruelling** // (adjective): Exhausting, very tiring

## CATEGORY

1. Uncategorized

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