

# Rising Star

## Niels VAN ZANDWEGHE (BEL)

Rising Star – July 2017



At 21, Belgian sculler Niels Van Zandweghe continues to improve his international status. In 2016, he won the under-23 world title in the lightweight men's single sculls. In 2017, he has already won a European Rowing Championships and World Rowing Cup bronze medal in the lightweight single and at World Rowing Cup III he competed in the lightweight men's double sculls with Tim Brys finishing an impressive fourth.

Van Zandweghe studies sports management in the city of Bruges and he says the travel that goes with elite rowing keeps him in the sport.

**I discovered rowing...** via a summer camp in my local club. My sister and I spent a week there. At first I didn't like the rowing all that much because I was scared to fall in, but we have crabs in our canal and I did like fishing for the crabs after practice! That was what kept me going at the beginning.

**I continue to row and compete because...** it gives me the privilege to travel to the most beautiful places in the world and the sport lets me meet some of the nicest people from all over the planet.

**If I was not rowing, my sport would be...** I do love riding my racing bike so maybe I would be racing my bike now.

**The result I am most proud of so far is...** not one result specifically but more the whole journey of the 2016 season up until the 2017 European Rowing Championships. This whole journey was an incredible experience with a lot of ups (qualifying for the Rio Games, becoming a World under-23 Champion, winning bronze at the European Rowing Championships) but also with a rough patch because Tim (Brys) and I weren't allowed to go to Rio. All of this made me stronger and contributes to the rower I am today.

**I like rowing in the lightweight single because...** you're racing in some of the toughest and tightest races in the regattas against some of the friendliest guys around. We're all enemies on the water but once off the water we hang out together.

**My least favourite training sessions are...** sessions with bungees at a slow rate (resistance training).

**My favourite training session is...** every side-by-side session in the double.

**My best erg score to date is...** 6:09.0.

**I study...** sports management at Vives College in Bruges.

**When I finish my studies...** I will be a full-time rower.

**A typical day...** will see me get up in the morning for training. Then I will probably try to attend some classes and go to my second session of the day after school.

**What I learnt most from competing at the junior and under-23 levels is...** that you should really enjoy every moment of them. They are great experiences to form life-long friendships with people from all over the world!

**What motivates me most is...** trying to reach my full potential and my own set of goals.

**My goal in rowing is...** to win an Olympic medal.

**If I was to row across the Atlantic Ocean I would like to do so with...** a bunch of my friends, because then we could make it a party boat.

**My biggest strength is...** that I dig extra deep when I'm behind.

**A weakness I would prefer not having is...** getting distracted quickly by the small things around me, be it the wind, waves or wake of other boats.

**If I could change one thing about the world it would be...** getting rid of environmental changes.

**When I am not rowing, I like to...** hang out with friends or just watch some television.

**If I was an animal, I would be a...** snake because my friends keep calling me that – haha.