

# Mia Kramp: From a scared 13-year-old girl to an Olympic competitor



## Climber since a young age

Kranj, Slovenia: That is where you would find Mia Kramp today, training for the upcoming Olympics this summer in Tokyo.

If she is not busy holding onto a wall then she is probably outside the climbing atmosphere relaxing and enjoying one of the many coffees with her best friend and fellow climber Lucka Rakovec.

The 20-year-old climber grew an interest in climbing at the age of six when she grabbed one of the wall holds at her older brother's climbing competitions. She fell in love with the sport that day and decided to make a career out of it. Her brother never continued competitive climbing and instead kept it as a hobby. Today, he is a coach for younger climbers outside home, and a personal adviser to Mia at home.

"It's nice to have someone who understands all the movements and all the holds in climbing, so we speak about the sport quite a lot at home. He's sort of my biggest fan," she says.

What surprises people most of the time, is the fact that Slovenia produces quite a lot of climbing talents such as Janja Garnbret or Anze Pešec despite it being not such a popular sport in the country.

Mia's coach, Anze Stremfelj, believes it is the determination of climbers, their coaches and (surprisingly) a 2m-high wall that is the key to success.

He said: "When I think about my wife Maja (World Cup winner), she trained on such a small wall that still exists today. You wouldn't believe she won a WC by training on it. She wanted it so much and she had a really good coach, so everything is possible."

Does the story seem familiar? That's because it is. Mia has reached World Cup finals and two second-



**Mia (left) and Anze (right) attempting a bouldering route**

place spots during World Championships, all while training on a 2m-high wall in her home town of Kranj. This could be the secret recipe to climbing glory. Get yourself a 2m-high wall, and who knows, maybe you will be the next athlete featured in this magazine.

## Her rapid ascent to the National Team

Mia was only 13 when she first met Anze (her coach). She was scared of many things and lacked confidence, but despite all that, Anze could still perceive the talent she had, and knew that one day she would become a strong climber and achieve great success with Slovenia.

He said: "She came to me, a really small and shy girl, she

was really scared at the beginning. I saw immediately that she was really talented especially in terms of finger power because she could hold onto a wall forever. I was sure that she was going to be successful from the very first training together."

Mia was scared of falling off the climbing wall at first, which could become a problem if you are thinking of becoming a climber. However, she fought her fears with the help of Anze and his wife, Maja, whom Mia saw as a role model at the time, and started competing more intensively at the age of 18. It is only when she reached her first WC finals that she received a confidence boost and started seeing herself as a top climber.

# Coach And Best Friend: The Combination Of Success

Lucka Rakovec, also a professional climber and European Championship winner at just 18 years old, is Mia's best friend and teammate. They train together five times a week, pushing each other to their absolute best, and giving each other advice on how to improve their climbing techniques. While one is better at powerfull moves, the other one is better at coordination and slabs, which both prodigies believe is an advantage.

Lucka said: "I'm not so good at power climbing so I learn by watching her climb the same way she learns by watching me climb. We push each other a lot, we always tell each other if one can do it the other can also."

Both girls joined the national team around the same age and have been best friends ever since, despite the unfortunate qualification for the Olympics in Toulouse. (more on page 5)

Anze and Mia have known each other for more than seven years, training five times a week for three hours each session, sometimes even more. They set Bouldering routes, they train speed and lead, but most of the time, Anze likes to set up training sessions focussed on where she is weak. It is safe to say that his training program has worked as she won her first medal in a Championship competition, and has qualified for the summer Olympics in Japan.

He said: "I've always believed in her, so I was really happy seeing her come second in a World Championship, as it was one of my dreams come true as a coach. That medal was a confirmation of our hard work done over many years."

Mia's next target are the Olympics this summer. Read about her preparation on page 5.



Mia attempting a bouldering route under the watchful eyes of her coach Anze



Lučka (left) and Mia (right) having a little break before training. Photo Credits: Cyril Jazbec



Mia (left) doing one of the many exercises planned by her coach

# Mia's Road To Tokyo



**Mia (right) came third at the 2019 Bouldering World Cup in Munich despite sustaining an injury**  
Photo credits: Eddie Fowke thecircuitclimbing.com

The Slovenian's qualification for the Olympics in Toulouse was a bittersweet moment, which is quite understandable when you have to eliminate your team member but also your best friend. If it wasn't for the unique score multiplier rule, it's Lucka who would have earned the spot at the Olympics, but rules are rules and you've got to respect them. Despite all this, both climbers continue to help each other out in training while focussing on individual targets. For Mia it's the Olympics, while for Lucka it's the upcoming World cup season in April.

Mia said: "As you saw in Toulouse, she (Lucka) is a really good climber and it's really motivating to have somebody that is as good as you in training because there are things that I want to improve in and that she's good at and vice versa."

Since the Olympics have been postponed by a year due to the current pandemic, Mia had a lot more time to train her weaknesses. Her coach devised a plan in which she would train Bouldering and speed for the whole year, while lead training, will begin in March.

Anze said: "I wanted her to do a lot of exercises where she needs to improve in. It wasn't a fun time for her because when you keep on working on something that you're not so good at you get frustrated because you only see progress in the long term."

The Olympics, which start in August, will not only see a debut for sport climbing as a discipline but it will also be a debut for the talented youngster who will be looking to add an Olympic medal to her already successful tally.



**Mia at a World Cup event. Photo credits: Bjorn Pohl**



**Mia and Lučka remain best friends despite the unfortunate event in Toulouse**