

Top of the world – Fabiana Beltrame

History was made at this year's 2011 World Rowing Championships in Bled, Slovenia as Fabiana Beltrame stormed to victory in the lightweight women's single sculls, winning Brazil's first ever World Rowing Championship gold.

Enjoying an open-water lead through the halfway mark, Beltrame continued to move away from the rest of the field, unstoppable

and entirely focused on the World Championship title, crossing the line in an impressive 7:44.58.

World Rowing spoke to Beltrame, just days before her historic victory. "I'm very proud to represent Brazil at the World Rowing Championships in Bled, but regret there aren't many more Brazilian rowers. It is an

honour for me and gives me even more motivation to go for a medal," said Beltrame.

A wife and mother, Beltrame, 29, started rowing 14 years ago in her hometown of Florianopolis. Now based in Rio de Janeiro, she trains at Flamengo Club, which is located on the banks of Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas, the 2016 Olympic Regatta venue. Thanks to its association with football, the club is able to fund its athletes. Enhancements are currently being made to the infrastructure



Fabiana Beltrame at the 2011 World Rowing Championships in Bled, Slovenia.



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> of the Rio course to ensure it meets FISA standards in time for the Olympic Games. “The lake is natural, which is wonderful to train on,” says Beltrame.

When asked how she feels about the prospect of racing at an Olympic Rowing Regatta on home territory, Beltrame says: “I’m really happy Brazil was awarded the Games as it’s an occasion to promote sports and especially rowing. The Brazilians are proud and happy to organise the world’s biggest sports event and welcome the world. We really hope all athletes and visitors will appreciate it.”

By 2016, Beltrame will be 34 years old. Will she still be competing?

“Personally, Rio really is a good motivation to continue my career until 2016. The Olympic Games are so important to athletes. Lots of means will be invested in Brazil because we want it to be a great celebration, but results will also be expected. We can actually already feel the difference since the Games have been awarded to Brazil – it’s easier for athletes to find personal sponsors.”

Beltrame made her debut on the international scene in 2002 and has since raced at two Olympic Games in the open weight single before dropping down a weight class to kick-start a successful lightweight career firmly focused on Rio 2016.

However, hot off the back of World Championships glory, the London 2012 Olympic Rowing Regatta is in sight. Beltrame will attempt to qualify in the

lightweight women’s double sculls at the Latin American Qualification Regatta next March. An internal national selection process will determine who Beltrame’s partner will be.

Emotions ran high during the medal ceremony of the lightweight women’s single sculls in Bled, as Beltrame’s two-year-old daughter Alice joined her on the podium, for what was clearly a very proud and moving moment. When asked how Beltrame combines being a mother and a full-time athlete, she shrugged it off. “I’m used to it. My husband also rows at the same club and Alice stays with a nannie at the rowing club while we train; she loves it and creates lots of fun and animation. This year I was much more relaxed at events because the President of the [National Rowing] Federation made it possible for my husband and daughter to accompany me to international events. I’m no longer so eager to go back home and see them.”

With just a matter of months to go until the London 2012 Olympic Games, Beltrame will certainly be one to watch.

● Pat Lambert/Laura Fell



Fabiana Beltrame of Brazil posing with her gold medal in the lightweight women’s single sculls with her daughter on the podium at the 2011 World Rowing Championships in Bled, Slovenia.

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