



Photo credit: Sport Singapore

Maximilian Maeder's journey from childhood to kite racing excellence showcases the power of passion and family support. With determination and unwavering commitment, Max has risen through the ranks, inspiring others along the way. As he prepares for competitions, Max's trajectory highlights the importance of dedication and staying true to one's dreams.

Early childhood

Born in 2006 to a Singaporean mother and a Swiss father, the eldest of three boys decided quite early on in life that he wanted to excel in kite racing, even building his life and education around the sport. Maximilian Maeder's childhood was spent between Singapore, Switzerland, and the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, particularly in Wakatobi, where his parents built a dive resort.



The eldest of three brothers, Max picked up kiteboarding at 6 years old. (Photo Credit: Max Maeder Facebook)

At the age of six, Max was introduced to kiteboarding by his father, and by ten, he was delving into the more advanced realm of kitefoiling. What really enticed him to compete in the sport was the adrenaline and the excitement of the sport. In his own words, “(it was the feel of) floating above the water, and for the first time, that feels quite exhilarating.”

What is Kite Foiling?

Kite foiling, also referred to as kite hydro foiling, is a water sport that seamlessly integrates elements of kiteboarding and foiling. Participants glide atop a hydrofoil-equipped board propelled by the force of a kite.

While sharing similarities with traditional kiteboarding, kite foiling stands out due to the incorporation of a hydrofoil system that generates lift, allowing riders to glide across the water's surface. This addition elevates the experience, requiring riders to master a new set of skills and techniques to navigate the board's unique dynamics.

Achieving mastery in kite foiling demands a precise balance of skill and technique. Riders must adeptly manoeuvre the board through subtle shifts in weight and stance, while exercising precise control over the kite to harness the wind's power effectively.

Turning competitive

At the tender age of 11, he had already competed in his first hydrofoil professional race, the Formula Kite Asian Championships, in 2018. Even back then, the young Maximilian was very clear about what he wanted from the sport. His competitive streak was already evident even as a child. When asked at an interview¹ what his long-term goals within kiting or within kite-racing were, Max answered without hesitation, that he wanted to be a world champion.



The 13 year old Max representing Singapore for the first time at ANOC World Beach Games Qatar (Photo Credit: National Youth Sports Institute Facebook)

True to his words, he achieved this feat in just five years, clinching gold in the men's kite event at the Sailing World Championships in the Netherlands in 2023. Such a remarkable achievement was the culmination of relentless dedication and hard work, as Max devoted himself to honing his skills, spending around 200 days annually on the water, with an average session lasting approximately two hours.

Strong Support

His parents have always been very encouraging and supportive of Max's love for the sport. The homeschooled teen trains mainly in Croatia and competes worldwide. Independence and maturity have been ingrained into young Max since he went on his first overseas race alone at the age of thirteen in Mexico, flying from Switzerland with stops in San Francisco and Mexico City.

His mom, Teng Hwee Keng said, "He wanted to do all these things, that's why he had to be independent from a young age. I'm not going to spoon feed him because I don't have these ambitions for him, he has them for himself so he has to work for it... What's more important is trying to help him find his own way, rather than tell him what to do."

His father, Valentin Maeder, agreed, adding, "He knows how the whole mental thing in sport works so he doesn't need us, he's mature enough to develop his own models that work for him. Win or lose, he's still the same Max to me. What we point out to him is that as he gets a bigger platform, he can add significance to what he's doing by inspiring people and making contributions by giving back."



National Youth Sports Institute conducting a sport science briefing session for Max ahead the 2019 World Beach

Games. (Photo Credit: National Youth Sports Institute Facebook)

Apart from his family, Max is well supported by a strong support team including his coaches, sport scientists, medical team, and his NSA – the Singapore Sailing Federation. Since 2022, Max has been part of Sport Singapore's Sport Excellence Scholarship (spexScholarship) – the pinnacle of support for high performance sports in Singapore to prepare athletes to excel at the Major Games at Asian and World levels. As a spexScholar, Max receives financial and programmatic support, including a monthly stipend, support for local and overseas training and competitions, sport science and medicine, amongst other resources that help him excel in his sport.

"Who could ask for more? Your country supports you, sponsors support you and on top of that, your family is still very encouraging,"⁶ he said. "There are so many people that helped me to get where I am. And you know, I can't thank them enough for what they've done."

Achievements

Max currently holds prestigious titles as the reigning Formula Kite World, Asiad, and European champion. Remarkably, he secured the distinction of being the youngest victor in any Olympic sailing class competition, achieving this remarkable feat at the age of 16 in 2023. Additionally, Max clinched consecutive victories in the Formula Kite Youth World Championship from 2021 to 2023.



April 2022 Semaine Olympique Française (French Olympic Week) (Photo credit: Singapore Sailing Facebook)

His exceptional accomplishments garnered him a nomination for World Sailor of the Year in 2023, underscoring his unwavering commitment to excellence in kite foiling.

Victories since 2021

Date	Regatta
25 Apr 2024	Semaine Olympique Française Hyères
29 Mar 2024	Trofeo S.A.R Princesa Sofia / World Cup Series

15 Mar 2024	Formula Kite European Championships
08 Dec 2023	Youth Sailing World Championships
11 Oct 2023	KiteFoil World Series - Cagliari
19 Sep 2023	The 19th Asian Games
10 Aug 2023	Allianz Sailing World Championships
17 Jul 2023	Formula Kite Youth World Championships
31 Mar 2023	Trofeo S.A.R Princesa Sofia / World Cup Series
07 Nov 2022	Formula Kite Pan American Championships
24 Sep 2022	Formula Kite Individual European Championships
10 Aug 2022	Allianz SWC Test Event - M's And W's Kite & Mixed Dinghy
08 Jul 2022	Youth Sailing World Championships
16 May 2022	A's Youth Foil & Formula Kite Youth World Championships (U21)
23 Apr 2022	Semaine Olympique Francaise De Voile
11 Mar 2022	Formula Kite Asia-Pacific Championships
11 Dec 2021	Youth Sailing World Championships
23 Nov 2021	KiteFoil World Series, Act 4 - Jandia
06 Sep 2021	Formula Kite Individual European Championships

12 Jul 2021

Formula Kite U19 Individual World Championship

Paris

and

Beyond

With consecutive victories in the European Championships, the Trofeo Princesa Sofía World Cup Series, and the Semaine Olympique Française from March to April 2024, Max has emerged as a frontrunner heading into the qualifications for the Paris Olympics. More importantly to him though is the significance of consistency and longevity in the sport. He often cites this quote from former F1 champion Jackie Stewart – "It's only those who have won with consistency and integrity over a long period of time that have become regarded as universally successful."

On the significance of donning Singapore's jersey in Paris, Max had this to say: "Remembering the privilege and responsibility to represent our nation at the Olympics will keep me working and competing with diligence and integrity, reflective of the tremendous support I enjoy from Singapore."⁵