

# NAVY RESERVIST VIES FOR



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Team

HONOLULU, Hawaii -  
- YN3 Kelsey Nakanelua,  
a Sailor stationed at  
Naval Reserve Center  
Honolulu, competed in  
the Olympics in Athens  
on Aug. 21, representing  
American Samoa, a  
territory of the United  
States.

This is his second  
Olympic appearance.  
He also competed in the  
2000 Sydney Olympics.

Nakanelua, a 38-year-old single father, holds the State of Hawaii record in the 100-meter dash at 10.59 seconds. He is also a 5-time Hawaii's Fastest Man, from 1995-1998 and again in 2001.

Nakanelua joined the Naval Reserves in December 2003, primarily for educational assistance in pursuing his master's degree. Nakanelua said he also wanted to contribute something and make a difference, especially after 9/11.

"With the war going on, I think it's a way to show patriotism and I'm inspired to do something," he said. "I've had ROTC training at Kamehameha Schools, it's something that I've been involved with back through high school, and with the war going on it just seems like it's the right thing to do."

Nakanelua said the Naval Reserves didn't slow his race to the Olympics one bit.

"I really didn't say anything coming in (about being an Olympic athlete)," he said. "Once they found out they were very, very supportive. I've met with my unit commanding officer and the chiefs and they've all said, 'What can we do? We want to make sure you're okay.'"

"I've got my commitment here with the Naval Reserve, but they understand it's something I want to do and so far the support has been excellent," said Nakanelua. "The 2004 Hawaii's Fastest Man happened to fall on a drill weekend, and I needed time off to compete. Everyone has been extremely supportive -- Petty Officer Pavao and Chief Smith were definitely helpful."

"I'm very proud," said LT Carmen Ehret, Honolulu Reserve Center executive officer. "I think it's a wonderful influence for our Non-Prior Service Sailors having someone

of Nakanelua's ability, because his athletic background emphasizes physical readiness, one of the very important aspects of the military."

Nakanelua started running track when he was 13 years old. He first competed in the 8th grade and continues to run this day. In 2000, he won the Polynesian Championships held in Western Samoa, where he also set a record at 10.78 in the 100 meters and won the 400 meters in 49.56 seconds.

"My grandfather is from Western Samoa," Nakanelua said. His mother's second husband, from American Samoa, legally adopted him at age 10.

"Kels," as his friends call him, is a Kamehameha Schools graduate, and holds a bachelor's in Economics and Speech. He has been accepted in the Masters in Communication program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

"I'm looking forward to getting into Communications," he said.

And in the Navy, Nakanelua has similar aspirations. "Actually I'm looking forward to becoming a Navy Journalist," he said. "That's what I'd like to do in my military career. I'd like to go into public affairs."

As a civilian, and single father of an 11-year old, Nakanelua works as a career developer for a non-profit organization where he "helps people find employment and develop their career and continue their education."

Nakanelua also coaches running part-time and puts on running clinics at Kamehameha Schools, Punahou and Word of Life Academy, although he took some time off this past year to train for the Olympics.

This "striving" parent, athlete, coach and educator finds time to train, too. "I do full sprints two or three times a week, conditioning workouts and weights...pretty intense before and after work," he said.

When asked what inspired him to compete again at this stage in life, Nakanelua said, "it's an honor and privilege to represent the Navy, my culture, my family and Kamehameha Schools."

At 38, he said, "this was my last Olympics." He is looking forward to mentoring and training someone locally "to take my place and hopefully compete in the international level of competition."

"I wouldn't mind running for the Navy in some capacity either," he said.

His wish will come true to some extent, as Nakanelua is scheduled to attend boot camp Sept. 13 at Recruit Training Command in Great Lakes, Ill. As a Non-prior Service Member (NPS), he is completing his third of four Naval Reserve indoctrination phases. ♦

