



Derek Parra

Derek Parra is the first-ever Mexican-American to compete in, and medal, in the Olympic Winter Games. He grew up in San Bernardino, California in a predominantly Hispanic, economically strained neighborhood. During high school, Derek took to roller-skating at the local roller rink and showed serious potential. He was invited to join the rink's speed skating team.

Due to his incredible work ethic, perseverance, and willingness to move in order to follow his coach and pursue his dreams, by 1996 he had become the most decorated athlete in the history of inline skating including being two-time World record holder (1500m and 42K) and earning eighteen individual gold medals.

In 1996, he switched from inline skates to ice skates in pursuit of Olympic Gold. For the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, he was part of the Home Depot's Olympic Job Opportunities Program (OJOP). He was selected to carry the US flag from the World Trade Center into the opening ceremonies. During the games, Derek earned a silver medal and momentarily held the world record in 5000 meter. But it was in the 1500-meter event that he clocked in at 1:43.95, a new World Record and an Olympic Gold Medal.

Derek Parra retired from the sport and was instrumental in piloting the in-line to ice skating program called "Wheels on ice Program" or WhIP from 2006 to 2009, helping young inline skaters make the transition to speed skating. In 2009 he was named the US Speed Skating National All-Around Head Coach for the 2009-2010 Olympic season. Derek currently works for the Utah Athletic Foundation as Outreach Director of Youth Sport Programs. He wants to give back to the community by teaching kids about being champions in sports and in life.

"My high school teacher, Mr. Wells, taught me 'If it's not worth doing well, it's not worth doing at all.'"