



Dame Louise Martin at the Gold Coast 2018 Opening Ceremony

Dame Louise Martin: "A proud moment to be celebrating 90-year anniversary of Commonwealth Sport"

It is a privilege today to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the Commonwealth Sport Movement.

It was on 16 August 1930, in the Canadian city of Hamilton, Ontario, that the Opening Ceremony of the first ever Commonwealth Games (then known as the British Empire Games) took place at the Civic Stadium.

Hamilton 1930 was 'the brain child' of Melville Marks Robinson (better known as Bobby) and I am sure he would be so proud of where we are today.

Bobby had the vision and courage to dare to host the first Games at the onset of the great depression and at a time of significant global uncertainty and social discourse.

Hamilton 1930 was the first major sporting event to use volunteers, the first to provide travel grants for athletes and the first to have an athletes' village in a multi-sport event. It was also the first sporting event to have medal ceremonies for athletes on a tiered podium. What a legacy!



Medal podiums made their debut at the 1930 Games

Since then, the Commonwealth Games has witnessed some of the true iconic sporting moments of the last century.

Many will point to England's Roger Bannister beating Australia's John Landy in the "Miracle Mile" at Vancouver 1954 as their favourite moment, with Bannister beating Landy by 0.8 seconds, first time two runners had broken four minutes for the mile in the same race.

Another is Filbert Bayi of Tanzania, largely unknown at the time, setting a new world record in the 1,500m at Christchurch 1974. In 1994, Victoria, Cathy Freeman celebrated her win by carrying the Aboriginal and Australian flags on her victory laps in the stadium.

Manchester 2002 was the first Games to include a fully integrated Para-sport programme that saw Canada's Chantal Petitclerc win the first Commonwealth Games gold medal in Para-sport, in the 800m Wheelchair event.

In more recent times, few will forget the nail biting Gold Coast 2018 netball gold medal match that saw Team England beat Team Australia in the last seconds of the Games.

I could go on and on as there are so many great moments to choose from – memories are made of these.

I am often asked my own favourite Commonwealth Games memory and from a personal perspective, I actually have two.

The first goes back to the 1962 Games in Perth where I was competing as a 16-year-old swimmer.

As I took to the starting blocks and my name was announced, the Duke of Edinburgh waved at me and despite being in race mode, I waved back enthusiastically. Of course, we didn't know each other at the time but it was a very special moment for a young athlete.

Another memorable moment was at the Opening Ceremony of Gold Coast 2018 when, in my first Games as CGF President, I had the honour of directly addressing the athletes of the Commonwealth. For anyone involved in sport, there can be no prouder moment.

As I reflect on 90 years of history, there are always lessons to be learned from the past and moments in time that deserve particular focus and attention.

Bobby created the Games in 1930, at a time when the future looked so bleak and so many doubted his vision, which has real synergies with the world today.

This pandemic has left us feeling uncertain about the future that lies ahead. What started in Hamilton 90 years ago created a movement that goes from strength to strength. As we reflect on the past, we can remain hopeful and confident that our Sporting Movement has a bright future, that will allow us to build peaceful, sustainable and prosperous communities across the Commonwealth.

Dame Louise Martin DBE is the President of the Commonwealth Games Federation