

# Christchurch 1974



Xth British  
Commonwealth  
Games 1974

From 25th January to 3rd February New Zealand played host to the Xth British Commonwealth Games.

Created in 1930 as the *British Empire Games*, they first took place in Hamilton, Canada. In 1954 these quadrennial games took the name of the *British Empire and Commonwealth Games*.

The Christchurch Games will however be the last to bear this name as the Commonwealth Games Federation has decided to change it yet again — in 1978 the city of Edmonton in Canada will welcome the XIth *Commonwealth Games*.

1669 athletes from 39 countries went to Christchurch to take part in the nine sports on the programme. Australia was represented by the largest contingent, 203 athletes, while other countries such as Grenada only sent one representative.

Faithful to tradition, the Christchurch Games, were held in a very friendly atmosphere and there was no serious incident to mar their development. The closing ceremony in particular was

characterised by a spontaneity, enthusiasm and joie de vivre which greatly impressed the spectators.

If the results were not on the whole of a very high standard, a few remarkable performances were achieved and several world records broken, including Jim Ryun's amazing 1500 metres record, beaten by the young Tanzanian Filbert Bayi (3 mins. 32.1 secs.).

In the swimming, dominated by the struggle between Canada and Australia, Steve Holland (Australia) beat his own world record for the 800 m. in 8 mins. 5.88 secs. (8 mins. 15.9 secs.), and the Canadian Wendy Cook lowered the 100 m. backstroke record to 1 min. 4.78 secs., held until then by Ulrike Richter (GDR) at 1 min. 4.8 secs. Mike Wenden, Olympic champion at Mexico in 1968, said goodbye to competition but marked his departure by winning the 100 metres freestyle in 52.73 secs., a few tenths of a second away from his best time.

The cycling was dominated by the British and Australians, while the Africans took most of the boxing medals.

But it was athletics which offered the greatest moments of excitement in these games. Apart from the Tanzanian Bayi's feat in the 1500 metres, three world records were approached — the 5000 m. by Jipcho (Kenya) in 13 mins. 14.4 secs., the 800 m. by Kipkurgat

(Kenya) in 1 min. 43.9 secs., and the 200 m. by Raelene Boyle (Australia) in 22.2 secs.

Several other performances deserve a mention but we will only give two, concerning the marathon. Christchurch was only the second marathon for the winner, Ian Thompson, 24 years of age, although he achieved the second best time ever for this distance — 2 hrs. 9 mins. 12.2 secs. (against Derek Clayton's 2 hrs. 8 mins. 33.6 secs. in 1969). The new Zealander Jack Foster finished second, in 2 hrs. 11 mins. 18.6 secs. He is 41 years old and only discovered running in 1965!

Only six nations took part in the wrestling competitions, and the standard was rather mediocre. It is therefore planned to replace wrestling with judo which is practised in a larger number of countries.

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In conclusion, we note that a 13-member commission was established in Christchurch and will meet next July in London to study the creation of an international council of the national sports federations. The constitution of this world council is planned for 1976 and its aim is to create or strengthen the bonds of friendship between the national federations.