



The Commonwealth Games: Extraordinary Stories behind the Medals

Brian Oliver

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How well do you know the Friendly Games?

Sports journalist Brian Oliver brings the Commonwealth Games to life with riveting stories of the athletes who have competed over the years. He delves into the best tales of the past and interviews the key protagonists to unveil the highs and lows of this idiosyncratic sporting competition.

There is the classic contest between Roger Bannister and John Landy just months after both had at last broken the four-minute mile, and the lesser-known struggles of one of Australia's greatest swimmers, Dawn Fraser, against the petty-minded and all-male 'silver spoon mob' who ran amateur sport. Read the sad tale of Emmanuel Ifeajuna, the first ever black African to win a gold medal, in any sport in any international event. He won high jump gold in 1954 and became a national hero in Nigeria, but after staging a coup was arrested for treachery and shot by firing squad.

Find out why the 1974 Games in Christchurch, New Zealand were known as the 'Emigration Games', and the story behind the bitter 1980s swimming pool rivalry between England's Adrian Moorhouse and Victor Davis of Canada. There are many more, from that of 4-foot 10-inch weightlifter Precious McKenzie – who rose through brutal abuse and discrimination to record-breaking success and a dance with the Princess Royal – to the penniless and boycotted 1986 Games in Edinburgh that were 'saved' by Robert Maxwell and a bucket of fried chicken.

The Commonwealth Games is a fascinating insight into human tales of endeavour, success and failure.

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