

In 1998 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia hosted the Commonwealth Games. Overall the Games were a success, and included a number of firsts: the first time team sports such as rugby, cricket, netball and men's and women's field hockey were included in the Games, it was the first time an Asian country hosted the Games and there were a record breaking number of athletes and officials who attended. The logo for these Games incorporates these new beginnings, as the colour yellow is integrated in its design. The traditionally warm, friendly nature of the Malaysian people is revealed in many areas of the 1998 Games-their logo, the Baton design, and their mascot to name a few.

In the following pages the history of the Commonwealth Games themselves are explored. How Malaysia became host of the Games in 1998 is explained and a number of newspaper articles from the week the Games were in progress are analyzed.

Canadian media coverage of the Commonwealth Games in the Hamilton Spectator appears to be minimal. Prior to the Games and after the Games the coverage was a disappointing zero. We found articles printed beginning on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September until the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Analyses of these articles are found throughout the description of the 1998 Malaysian Games.

The Commonwealth Games branch back to 1981, when Rev. Astly Cooper of England "suggested a 'Pan-Britannic-Pan Anglican Contest and Festival...every four years as a means of increasing the goodwill and good understanding of the Empire.'"<sup>1</sup> Ideas continued to brew until 1928, after the Olympic Games when Bobby Robinson of Canada took initiative and called a meeting of all the Empire countries. At this meeting he proposed "that the British Empire Games should be held in Canada in 1930."<sup>2</sup> Hamilton, Canada, the true starting point showed their generosity to attending nations through providing \$30,000 to help defray travel expenses.<sup>3</sup> Competing in these Games were 400 athletes from eleven countries.

The name of these Games changed a number of times over the years. The Games were originally known as the British Empire Games from 1930 to 1950, and then they took on the name the British Empire and Commonwealth Games until 1962. In 1966 the title became British Commonwealth Games until 1974, changing one last time to the Commonwealth Games in 1978.<sup>4</sup> To the present, a total of sixteen Games have been held, between 72 nations, occurring every four years, except for 1942 and 1946, due to the Second World War.<sup>5</sup>

The Commonwealth Games have many unique qualities. First, they have a historical foundation, whereas other global Games are founded on geographic or climatic factors. Secondly, these Games are the only ones that share a common language-allowing both athletes and officials to converse, “creating an atmosphere that has led to the Commonwealth Games being long known as the ‘Friendly Games.’”<sup>6</sup> Lastly, the Games have a number of traditions that are upheld. The Commonwealth Games Ceremonial Flag symbolizes the opening and closing of the Games and flies continuously throughout the competition. This flag changed from its original design the same year as the second name change, in 1966. It now bears the symbol of a crown encircled by a 35 continuous linked chain which represents the participating countries. The second tradition is the baton relay, an integral part of the Games, which conveys the Queen’s Message.<sup>7</sup>

September 11-21, 1998 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, hosted the Commonwealth Games. This was a year of new beginnings. For the first time in 68 years, the Games were held in Asia, and the second time they were hosted by a developing country. Team sports including cricket, rugby, netball and men’s and women’s field hockey, were a new feature and became an overwhelming success as the number of participants and spectators grew. “A new record of 70 countries sent a total of 5, 250 athletes and officials to the Kuala Lumpur Games.”<sup>8</sup>

On September 11 an article titled *Fun never sets on British Empire*, was found on the front page of the Sports section of the paper, complete with a large picture of a diver which captures your attention. The article discusses the importance of the Commonwealth Games, what their relevance is to culture today and the reasons that many athletes choose to compete. The author discusses the need for more funding and compares the host nation, who put \$400-million into the Games to countries such as Canada who have trouble raising the funds to send athletes. There are challenges of keeping money and making the Games sell in popularity present in culture today. The article concludes that the main reason the Games are still valuable to the athletes is because it gives them the opportunity to compete for fun, and to remember why they entered sports in the first place. "Donovan Bailey may not be here, but we have athletes who are inspirational. For every athlete who doesn't come, it opens up a place for someone who wants to put aside his or her life for a while to be here and get experience. That's what's relevant. The human experience is what characterizes the Commonwealth Games." Canadian coverage dominates this article, but a number of other countries are mentioned-India, Pakistan, Australia, although the references to these countries are not positive. Australia is said to dominate the Games and Canada is said to be put at a disadvantage because the sports that they excel at are not in these particular Games in Malaysia. A large section of the article also focuses on a Canadian athlete-Jumbo Kopeck-a field hockey player who was an ideal athlete. This article gives an equal amount of male to female coverage, gives examples of both sexes in competition.<sup>9</sup>

Representing Canada was a total of 277 athletes and 100 officials. Medal standings for the top five countries were as follows: Australia, England, Canada, Malaysia and South Africa. The original six sports had grown to fifteen, featuring aquatics, athletics, badminton, boxing, cricket,

cycling, gymnastics, hockey, netball, lawn bowls, rugby, ten pin bowling, weightlifting and wrestling.<sup>10</sup>

Canadian athletes were recognized in a number of articles printed throughout the week of the Games. Following are a number of examples.

*Bailey , Boldon among many stars missing from Games.* This article, found on the third page of the sports section, talks about the relevance of the Commonwealth Games since many leading athletes skipped the 1998 games in Malaysia. Margie Schuett rejects the idea that because top athletes are missing the games are irrelevant, she argues that the games are just as good and important of a competition, even without the top athletes attending. Despite the three sprinters, and top swimmer who chose to miss these Games, Canada sent 277 athletes and 100 officials. The reason for this poor attendance of top athletes, was due to the conflicting track meets, and the timing, many athletes would have had to give up economic advancement to go to these games. Against some criticism, the article portrays the athletes, coaches and organizers opinions to be synonymous: that the games are as important as any other competition and that there would still be great games without all the top athletes. The focus of this article is on Canadian athletes and their expected outcome in the Games. Other countries are mentioned but are listed as competitors to the Canadians. Focus on this article does belong to the males, since Donovan Bailey's absence was an issue discussed.<sup>11</sup>

*Malar and Wohlberg do us proud at Games.* This article begins on the front page of the Hamilton Spectator, with no pictures complimenting it. It focuses on two of Canada's athletes in the Malaysian Games, Joanne Malar a swimmer from Hamilton and Eric Wohlberg a cyclist from Burlington. Focus is placed on Malar who is portrayed in this article as an athlete who has overcome self-doubt and was able to regain to her old confidence as well as her past performing

streak. Malar won the first Canadian gold medal of the Games and was followed by team-mate Elizabeth Warden who won the silver. Wohlberg won the first medal for Canada—and is honored for his victory completed with a borrowed bike and large women’s shoes, after the airline misplaced his own gear. The article gives a bit more background on Malar’s struggle with self-doubt and the event of the missing bicycles. A very strong Canadian focus is taken, with only two sentences of the whole article mentioning the medal standings of other countries—Australia and England. Since Malar is the central focus of this article, female coverage is slightly above that of the males.<sup>12</sup>

*Fun and Games! Swimmers lead Canadian assault in Malaysia.* This article talks about the world class swimmer Joanna Malar, and how she picked up three medals in three days which at the time was the best for a Canadian. She had won bronze in the 400 metre freestyle and gold in the 400 individual relay and another bronze in 4 X200 relay. This article also goes on to talk about how Malar came back from being the “challenged” the whole race. Mainly this article focuses on swimming and how these athletes in particular have accounted for mainly all of Canada’s medals thus far, with Joanne Malar leading the pack. This article was located on the front of the sports page, and catches the eye of the reader with a picture of Joanne Malar at the podium. This article represents Canada well at the games and shows that even though mainly Australia dominated most of the games Canada had a lot of strong athletes who represented Canada well at the Games. Medal winning athletes from other countries were also mentioned, but focus was placed on the Canadian winners. Focus is not primarily on females or males, but a balanced amount is given to both sexes.<sup>13</sup>

*Pedal to a medal for Burlington cyclist* describes how cyclist Eric Wohlberg captured gold in the mens 42 km individual time trial, as well as bronze medal earlier in the week. This

article talks about how these medals truly legitimized Wohlberg as a world class cyclist, and gave him as well as his country a great sense of pride and “accomplishment”. This article focus’ entirely on Wohlberg, and does not mention the women’s cyclist team at all. The article is located in the middle of the spots section, and displays a picture of Wohlberg with his medal. This article also shows in a way that Canadian amateur athletes need better funding for training as earlier in the season Wohlberg found himself lagging behind due his work commitments, and was forced to make a choice in quitting his job and cycling year round.<sup>14</sup>

*Oakville gymnast has golden rhythm.* This article talks about rhythmic gymnast Erika-Leigh Stirton and how the 18 year old from Oakville won six medals at the Commonwealth Games. This is the best haul by any athlete at the games. The article mentions that some people don’t consider rhythmic gymnastics a sport but Erika herself states it’s a hard sport which requires a lot of training and dedication.

This article was found on the front page of the spectator with a picture of Erika-Leigh Stirton holding her 6 medals that she had won at the Commonwealth Games. The reader is drawn into the article by the with the eye catching picture and bold font, as well this article makes references and comparisons to other great Hamilton or Canadian athletes such as Joanne Molar. Also in this article they mention how this sport is for “anorexic” girls whereas swimming where many of the girls are they same size and weight as a sport. Yet Erika-Leigh defends her sport as saying it is their expertise that makes this sport look easy.<sup>15</sup>

*Rowe puts on outstanding show at Games.* This article mentions the accomplishments of amateur bowler Bill Rowe winning a silver medal at the Commonwealth games. This article focuses entirely on the sport of bowling and all male athletes. This article also states that this was the first year that 10 pin bowling was introduced to the games where a Hamilton native

accomplished a perfect 300 score during the opening game of the tournament and ended with a the Games with a silver. The article is near the end of the sports section which shows that bowling isn't one of the most covered sports at the games even though at each bowling match there were up to 2000 spectators watching. The article compares Canadian bowlers to Malaysian bowlers and the difference the sport has in each of these countries.<sup>16</sup>

“Malaysia won the bid to host the XVI Commonwealth Games on July 21, 1992,” this was a day of national pride as Malaysia received universal recognition as a country “with great potential and ability.” The bid was titled “Share it with Malaysia’ as it truly reflected the sharing and giving nature of the Malaysians.”<sup>17</sup>



Sukom Ninety Eight Berhad, was the organizing committee for the 1998 Commonwealth Games. “The name ‘Sukom’ is derived from the union of two words in Malaysia’s national language, ‘Suken’ meaning sports and ‘Komanwel’ a localized spelling of Commonwealth.”<sup>18</sup> This committee aimed to achieve excellence in both operation and financial viability. Part of their mission statement was to “provide opportunities for human development, cross-cultural understanding, good sportsmanship, attainment of personal achievement, and fostering close and friendly ties between all nations of the Commonwealth.”<sup>19</sup>



As mentioned earlier, an integral part of the Commonwealth Games is the baton relay; this is to these Games what the torch is to the Olympic Games. From Buckingham Palace on Commonwealth Day the Queen’s Baton journeys through all six regions

of the Commonwealth to reach the host country. During the Opening Ceremony of the Games it is read by the President of the Commonwealth Federation. Following tradition, the Baton is designed by the host country. In 1998 Malaysia's design was inspired "from a traditional Malay artifact, the 'Gobek' – a unique cylindrical areca nut-pounder widely used and displayed in Malay homes."<sup>20</sup> "It reflects closeness and friendliness between the host and guests, and exudes a warm ambience."<sup>21</sup> The Baton incorporates the hibiscus flower—the National flower—in its motif, adding a unique and traditionally rich appearance.<sup>22</sup>

In an article titled "*An Affair to remember*" Canadians were noted to have a key role in the Opening Ceremonies of these Games. This article is found on the sixth page of the sports section, complete with two photos of the opening ceremonies. It talks about the opening ceremonies of the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Malaysia. It describes the ceremony and the influence that the Canadians had. Marianne Limpert a Canadian silver-medal winner was the first to enter the stadium as a tribute to the 1994 Games which took place in Victoria, B.C. Despite a hurtful build up with all the negative press, and world-wide big name no shows, the opening ceremonies were a pleasant spectacle. From 70 Commonwealth countries a total of 4,208 athletes and 2,460 officials, coaches and managers attended the Games. It was predicted that Canada would rank third winning 100-115 medals with Australia and England ahead of them. The youngest member of the Canadian Team was 13 and the oldest was 62, and the Games are said to start on this day. This article gives a wide variety of coverage for various countries. It mentions top athletes missing from 5 different countries, gives an overall number of those attending the games and states the expected top three countries. There is slightly more coverage for Canadians, stating the oldest and youngest competitors, but overall they countries are treated fairly. Women also receive slightly more coverage-since Limpert is a main focus.<sup>23</sup>





The Logo for the Kuala Lumpur Games is the first in history to have the colour yellow in its design. Since it is the first emerging nation to host the Games, yellow has been added to the previous colours—red, white and blue. “The stylized Bunga Raya in a rich burst of Malaysia’s national colours is a striking modern portrait of a confident, young, dynamic nation.”<sup>24</sup> The six regions of the world that take part in the Commonwealth Games are represented in the yellow pollen. The logo itself is rooted in the national flower of Malaysia—the Hibiscus.<sup>25</sup>



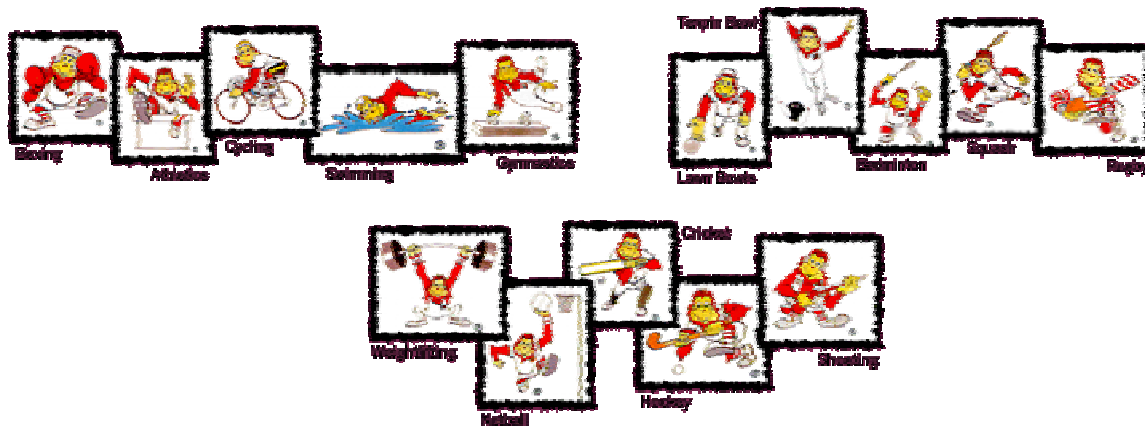
The Look of the 1998 Games is full of rich, beautiful and inviting colours, captivating all who behold it. The shape of the butterfly reflects Malaysian people and its nature in its variety of shapes and colours. As a butterfly transforms from a pupa, the Look captivates “the blossoming of the Commonwealth Games dream in Kuala Lumpur.”<sup>26</sup>

“The Look of the Kuala Lumpur 98 Commonwealth Games is themed ‘Wonder and Splendor’, based on the motif of the Malay roof, batik and celebration of colours from the country’s abundant natural wonders.”<sup>27</sup>



The official mascot of the Kuala Lumpur 98 – XVI Commonwealth Games is named Wira, an orangutan. This creature “lives in the tropical rainforests of Malaysia and is probably the most intelligent primate in Asia.”<sup>28</sup> The traditionally warm, friendly nature of the Malaysian people, nation and land is confidently displayed in Wira. In the local language

Wira translates to Warrior. Wira characterizes, intelligence, charm and sporting ability, which displays its agility in all of the Commonwealth competitions.



At the conclusion of the Games only a few articles were to be found in the Canadian media. One article *The Games are over...* talks about how Canada under-funds amateur athletes, as well as how their medal count was worst then last year and was anything but stellar. This article includes a picture of Joanne Molar and Erika-Leigh Stirton in the parade at the closing ceremonies at the Commonwealth Games. The athletes/coaches interviewed in this article say proper funding for training is needed to compete with the likes of the Australians and the English. It was stated that the Aussies spend about \$160 million a year on sport compared to Canada's \$58 million, and in Canada many Olympic medal and world medal holders have to struggle to survive whereas in other countries they would be very wealthy. This article states that even though Canada has such a variety of great athletes many others talents are going to waste as well as many athletes have no incentives to put all their blood, sweat and tears into competing and training for their country. The location of this article is placed in about the middle of the sport section, yet we felt it was of higher importance and should have been placed either on the first page of the sport section of at the beginning of the sport section.<sup>29</sup>

A second piece we found was the *Commonwealth Games: Medal Standings*. This section covers a large amount of information such as stats on all countries that competed and the amount of medals they won, as well as a section on how the Canadians had finished after 18 events. This article contains no pictures and the amount of coverage men verses women have is dependent on who won medals. The article appears to be located in the middle of the sports section with the other standings in the world of sports.<sup>30</sup>

Although Canada may not have been as successful in the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games as they had anticipated, the overall purpose of the Games was fulfilled. Athletes from the various Commonwealth countries had the opportunity to compete, to gain experience in their sports and for some—like Joanne Malar—to experience a revival. The historical name of the “Friendly Games” still applies to the 1998 Games, a year with so many firsts, the Malaysian hosts did a brilliant job at maintaining this historical vision of the Games. The 1998 Commonwealth Games will forever be remembered and recorded in history, as a tribute and reminder the colour yellow is now incorporated into logo designs.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Commonwealth Games Council for England:History of the Commonwealth Games.” <<http://www.cgce.co.uk/history.html>> (January 16 2004).

<sup>2</sup> “Council for England”

<sup>3</sup> “Melbourne 2006: Games History”<[www.melbourne2006.com.au](http://www.melbourne2006.com.au)> (January 16 2004)

<sup>4</sup> “Melbourne”

<sup>5</sup> “Melbourne”

<sup>6</sup> “Melbourne”

<sup>7</sup> “Council for England”

<sup>8</sup> “Commonwealth Games Federation: 1998 Commonwealth Games.”<[www.thecgf.com/games/default.asp](http://www.thecgf.com/games/default.asp)> (January 16 2004)

<sup>9</sup> Christie, James. “Fun never sets on British Empire.” *Globe and Mail* 11 September, 1998, S1.

<sup>10</sup> “Commonwealth Games Federation”

<sup>11</sup> Morris, Jim. “Bailing, Boldon among many stars missing from Games.” *Hamilton Spectator* 11 September, 1998, F3.

<sup>12</sup> “Malar and Wohlberg do us proud at Games.”*Hamilton Spectator*, 14 September, 1998, A1.

<sup>13</sup> “Fun and Games!” *Hamilton Spectator*, 15 September, 1998, S1.

<sup>14</sup> Dheensaw, Cleve. “Pedal to a medal for Burlington cyclist.” 16 September, 1998, S1.

<sup>15</sup> Morris, Jim. “Oakville gymnast has golden rhythm.” 22 September, 1998, A1.

<sup>16</sup> “Rowe puts on outstanding show at Games.” 22 September, 1998, E6.

<sup>17</sup> “The Official Kuala Lumpur – 16<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Games Website: Games Operations”<[www.thecgf.com/k198/gamesop/default.html](http://www.thecgf.com/k198/gamesop/default.html)> (January 16 2004)

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<sup>18</sup> “Official Kuala Lumpur”

<sup>19</sup> “Official Kuala Lumpur”

<sup>20</sup> “The Commonwealth Games Trivia.” <<http://www.commonwealthgames98.com/trivia/general.html>> (January 16 2004)

<sup>21</sup> “Official Kuala Lumpur”

<sup>22</sup> “Official Kuala Lumpur”

<sup>23</sup> Dheensaw, Cleve. “An affair to remember.” *Hamilton Spectator*, 12 September, 1998, E6.

<sup>24</sup> “Official Kuala Lumpur”

<sup>25</sup> “Official Kuala Lumpur”

<sup>26</sup> “Official Kuala Lumpur”

<sup>27</sup> “Official Kuala Lumpur”

<sup>28</sup> “Official Kuala Lumpur”

<sup>29</sup> Morris, Jim. “The Games are over...” 22 September, 1998, E4.

<sup>30</sup> “Commonwealth Games: Medal Standings.” 22 September, 1998, E5.