Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0178

Fraser, Dawn

(1937 -)

Born	19370904, Balmain New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Commonwealth or Empire Games Gold Medalist, Olympian, Parliamentarian, Swimmer, Swimming Coach

Summary

Swimming champion Dawn Fraser is an iconic figure in Australian sporting history. A exceptional sportswoman with a larrikin streak, over the course of her swimming career, she won eight Olympic and eight Commonwealth medals. In October 1962 Dawn Fraser became the first woman to swim the 100 metres in less than a minute. She had to wait until after her retirement to see this record broken, and even then, it took eight years.

Dawn Fraser was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) on June 8, 1988. Her citation read, “For service to the community, particularly as a sports consultant and administrator, and through organisations for people with disabilities, and to the environment.”

Dawn Fraser also had a short political career. She was elected as an independent MLA for the seat of Balmain, New South Wales, in 1988. The seat was abolished in a redistribution prior to the next election. She ran, unsuccessfully, for the new seat of Port Jackson in 1991.

Details

The youngest of eight children, Dawn Fraser began swimming seriously at 16 and was coached by Harry Gallagher. Aged 19, she entered the 1956 Olympic Games held in Melbourne. She won a gold medal in the 110 yards (now 100 metres) freestyle setting a new world and Olympic Games record. Dawn Fraser won the same event at the 1960 Rome Olympics and 1964 Tokyo Olympics, becoming the first swimmer to win the same event in three consecutive games.

In 1965 Fraser retired from swimming, when the Australian Swimming Union placed her under a 10 year ban. She had always had a love-hate relationship with officials during her career. Things came to a head when, at the Tokyo Games, she marched in the opening ceremony against their wishes, wore an old swimsuit (which angered sponsors) because it was more comfortable, and it was alleged she climbed a flagpole in Emperor Hirohito's palace, taking the Olympic flag (later proved false). The ban was lifted four years later.

Fraser then became a publican, swimming coach and in 1988 became a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for the New South Wales seat of Balmain. In 1961 Dawn Fraser received the Helms Award (later World Trophy) and was awarded the ABC Sportsman of the Year Award in 1962 and 1964.

Dawn Fraser was named Australian of the Year in 1964 and voted Australia's greatest female athlete in 1988.She was named Australian Female Athlete of the Century by the Sport Australian Hall of Fame as well as the World's Greatest Living Female Water Sports Champion by the International Olympic Committee in 1999. Also she is the recipient of the Australian Sports Medal on 14 July 2000 and The Order of the British Empire – Member (Civil) (MBE) on 1 January 1967 for services to sport.

Dawn Fraser was an Olympic Torchbearer for the Opening Ceremony at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. In the same year she was the recipient of the Paul Harris Fellowship Medal from Rotary.

1956 Melbourne Olympic Games

100 metres freestyle – gold medal
400 metres freestyle – silver medal
4 x 100 metres freestyle relay – gold medal

1958 Cardiff Commonwealth Games

110 yards freestyle – gold medal
4 x 110 yards freestyle relay – gold medal

1960 Rome Olympic Game

100 metres freestyle – gold medal

1962 Perth Commonwealth Games

110 yards freestyle – gold medal
440 yards freestyle – gold medal
4 x 110 yards freestyle relay – gold medal
4 x 110 yards medley relay – gold medal

1964 Tokyo Olympic Games

100 metres freestyle – gold medal

Australian Championships

110 yards freestyle: 1956, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1964
220 yards freestyle: 1955, 1956, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1964
440 yards freestyle: 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1964
110 yards butterfly: 1960, 1962
220 yards medley: 1959
4 x 110 freestyle relay: 1957, 1958, 1959, 1964
4 x 110 yards medley relay: 1955, 1964

Events

2001 - 2001
Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

1960 - 1960
Swimming – 100m Freestyle

1964 - 1964
Swimming – 100m Freestyle

1956 - 1956
Swimming – 100m Freestyle and Member of the 4 x 100m Freestyle Relay Team

1958 - 1958
Swimming – 110y freestyle, 4 x 110y Freestyle Relay

1962 - 1962
Swimming – 110y freestyle, 440y freestyle, 4 x 110y Freestyle Relay, 4 x 110y Medley Relay

1956 - 1956
Swimming – 400m freestyle

1960 - 1960
Swimming – Member of the 4 x 100m Freestyle and Medlay Relay teams

1964 - 1964
Swimming – Member of the 4 x 100m Freestyle relay team

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book
Great Australian Women in Sport, Brasch, Nicolas, 1997

Australia at the Olympics, Andrews, Malcolm, 2000

The Champions: Australia's Sporting Greats, Smith, Terry, 1990

101 Australian Sporting Heroes, Andrews, Malcolm, 1990

Outstanding Women in Australia: Women in Sport, Rolton, Gloria, 1997

Edited Book
Who's Who in Australia 2002, Herd, Margaret, 2002

Site Exhibition
She's Game: Women Making Australian Sporting History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2007, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/sg/sport-home.html

Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

Putting Skirts on the Sacred Benches: Women Candidates for the New South Wales Parliament, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2006, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/pssb/home.html

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014, http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders

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