

M.M. (Bobby) Robinson

Inducted 1993

The Commonwealth Games are the only major sporting event in the world to trace their roots to Canada. How it all came about is truly a tale of leadership, the leadership of Bobby Robinson — sports reporter and editor, team manager, volunteer — and dreamer.

Bobby's dream was of a meet that would bring together athletes from all the countries of the Empire. Not content to dream, he seized the opportunity presented by the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic Games to lobby hard for holding a Games that would "enlarge the sport of friendly competition ... ". Bobby proposed that the first British Empire Games should be held two years later in Hamilton, Ontario, the city where he lived and worked.

As envisioned by Bobby, these Games would be "designed on the Olympic model ... but very different, free from both the excessive stimulus and the Babel of the international stadium. They should be merrier and less stern, and will substitute the stimulus of a novel adventure for the pressure of international rivalry."

Once the Empire's sporting leaders were convinced, Bobby's next task was to sell the City of Hamilton on the Games. He succeeded admirably, not the least because Hamilton was the acknowledged Canadian capital of track and field, blessed with strong and well-led clubs that were producing "star athletes and hosts of aspiring youngsters".

Persuasive and determined, Bobby even convinced his fellow citizens to contribute to bringing as many athletes as possible to the Games. He then agreed to organize the Games and turned his attention to staging a magnificent sporting festival, drawing about him a talented and enthusiastic pool of workers.

Inspired by Bobby, they overcame monumental obstacles before welcoming some 400 athletes and 100 officials from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Newfoundland, Bermuda, British Guiana, and Canada.

Prophetically, the official program of the Games suggested that "the meeting may become a historical date of some importance in the annals of games." That Bobby's dream continues, disturbed only by a world war, is a glorious tribute.

More than anyone else, Bobby Robinson instilled in the Commonwealth Games values that have stood the test of time — the spirit of friendship, the ideals of goodwill and understanding, the goal of peace among nations.

Typically, Bobby did not rest on his laurels. He was general team manager of the 1934 and 1938 British Empire Games teams. He served as honorary secretary of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, and held important posts with the Canadian Olympic Association and the British Commonwealth Games Association of Canada. He was an honoured member of the Canadian Amateur Athletic Hall of Fame.

Because Bobby Robinson persevered, his dream endures, the living legacy of a great sportsman.

