

MACKINNON SPRINTS TO GOLD AT THE 1969 GAMES

Prince Edward Island's first medal ever won in the Canada Games came in the inaugural summer edition of the Games in Halifax-Dartmouth. Bill MacKinnon of Charlottetown upset the field in winning the 100 yard dash during track and field competition to capture the gold medal and in doing so, he etched his name into PEI sport history.

MacKinnon's team-mate, Kevin MacDonald says a few of their competitors in Halifax caught wind of the fact the PEI team didn't have the luxury of some of the other richer provinces. "We trained on a cinder track at Memorial Field in Victoria Park in Charlottetown." MacDonald recalled. "There were not that many places to train around PEI and I guess a few of the other athletes thought that was a joke. They laughed at us because of our facilities."

The last laugh was enjoyed by PEI. MacKinnon had a little extra incentive as he entered the starting blocks, having qualified for the final and already defeating two of the favourites from Ontario—Charles Francis and Bill Lord of Toronto. The favourite in the final at Beazley Field in Dartmouth was Michel Charland of Montreal but MacKinnon surprised the field with a winning time of 10.5 seconds as he dashed to the gold. Ian Gordon of Burnaby, B.C. was second while Ted McDonough of Alberta finished third. Charland wound up in sixth place while two Ontario sprinters, John Swainson and Mike McCann were fourth and fifth. An overflow crowd of 3,000 took in the track and field finals on Thursday August 21, 1969.

"I won it on a bit of a lean," MacKinnon explained to the press after his race. The Island sprinter had to bend over at the finish to beat the field. As it turned out it was a photo finish in 10.5 seconds.

He also just missed out on a bronze medal, finishing fourth in the 200 metre.

MacKinnon and MacDonald were also part of the Island 4X400 metre relay team that just missed a bronze medal as the result of a miscue in passing the baton near the end of the race.

Bill MacKinnon was named Island Sportsman of the Year by the Charlottetown Club and had the trophy presented by Montreal Canadiens defenseman Terry Harper. He also was the Eastern Canadian 100 metre champion and second in the 200 metre Canadian championship in 1969. He finished the year with two gold, a silver and two bronze in Japan on Canada's first Pan-Pacific Games team and in he was invited to the Toronto Telegram Invitational Meet and was second in the 50 yard dash in the Canadian Intercollegiate Indoor Championships.

MackKinnon re-wrote the Maritime record books with times of 9.5 in the 100 yards, 10.4 in the 100 metres and 21.4 in both the 200 metres and 220 yards events.

He was also a member of Canada's National Junior team in 1967.

Not bad credentials for a runner who's home training was on a cinder track that circled a baseball field.

MackKinnon went on to coach PEI's 1971 Canada Games track team and in later years he was a member of the PEI mission staff in 1993.

Bill MackKinnon was inducted into the PEI Sports Hall of Fames in September, 1971.