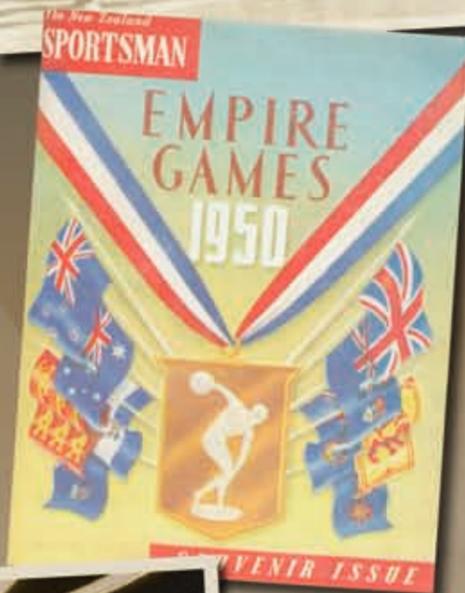


# Nelson Legends of Sport

Harold Nelson is one of New Zealand's heroes of the track with an impressive record of national titles over one mile, three miles and six miles, as well as gold and silver medals from the 1950 British Empire Games.



Harold first hit the national scene in 1941 at the New Zealand Junior championships where he won the one mile title in 4 minutes 30.0 seconds. These championships were not held during the following three years due to World War II, but Harold continued his running career while serving in the airforce. In 1943 he won the Allied Services one mile title, and later took out the New Zealand Services cross-country title for the airforce.

After the war Harold's first major success was winning the national cross-country race in 1946. The following year he took out both the national one mile and three mile events in Auckland and the titles for the same distances at the New South Wales Championships.

1948 was another great year for Harold. He retained his national three mile title in his home town of Dunedin and also won the six mile event in a New Zealand record time of 29 minutes and 57.4 seconds. These successes earned Harold selection for the Olympic Games in London, which he said was the highlight of his career.

Conditions at 1948 Olympics were not ideal as Britain was still recovering from the war. Training had been difficult on the ocean voyage to England, although 1924 Olympic bronze medallist in the 100 metres Arthur Porritt assisted Harold and the other athletes when they arrived in London.

The effect of the London heat was exacerbated by the practice of the day that saw athletes 'drying out' before major races. Running in the 10,000 metres, Nelson withdrew after 17 laps suffering from dehydration. Nearly half the field didn't make the finish line that day.

By 1950 when Harold was selected for the British Empire Games to run the three mile and six mile races he had changed his outlook on hydration. He won the gold medal in the six mile event on the first day of competition in a time of 30 minutes 29.6 seconds, beating Scotsman Andrew Forbes. In the three mile race Harold took silver behind Len Eyre of England in 14 minutes 27.8 seconds.

In 1951 Harold won his second national cross-country title and retired soon after, but continued to be involved in his chosen sport as a coach. He was the organiser of the South Pacific Games Athletic Section in Apia in 1983 and was a track umpire at the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland. He also saw the New Zealand team off to the Athens Olympics in 2004, as New Zealand's oldest surviving flag bearer.

## Harold's achievements

- Born 26 April 1923 in Dunedin
- Olympic Games – London 1948
  - Team Captain and flag bearer
  - 10,000m (did not finish)
  - 6th in 5000m heat
- Empire Games – Auckland 1950
  - Gold medal in the six mile event in 30 minutes 29.6 seconds
  - Silver medal in the three mile event in 14 minutes 27.8 seconds
- New Zealand Titles
  - 1941 – Junior one mile
  - 1946 – National cross-country champion
  - 1947 – National one mile and three mile champion
  - 1948 – National three mile and six mile champion
  - 1951 – National cross-country champion
- Best times
  - One mile – 4 minutes 14.8 seconds
  - Three miles – 14 minutes 19.4 seconds
  - Six miles – 29 minutes 57.4 seconds
- Awarded an MBE in 1986 for services to athletics