



Citation for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of the University *honoris causa*

The Honourable Marjorie Jackson-Nelson AC, CVO, MBE

Nicknamed 'The Lithgow Flash' after her hometown in New South Wales, Marjorie Jackson-Nelson is one of the all-time greats of Australian sport. Born in 1931, Marjorie Jackson was a breaker of barriers. She was the first Australian female runner to break a world record. She was the first Australian woman to win an Olympic athletics gold medal; indeed the first of either gender to win gold on the track since Edwin Flack (1896). And she was the first female manager of an entire national team — the 500-strong Australian contingent at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Canada.

Raised in Lithgow, NSW, Jackson left school early and went to work as a typist. She had a talent for running and a loving father who bought her second-hand spiked shoes and built her a set of starting blocks. And she had a coach, Jim Monaghan, who worked in the town's small arms factory and trained her in the evenings after they both finished their day jobs. At fifteen she won the 100 yards at the New South Wales Combined Girls' High Schools' carnival and broke an eighteen-year-old record in the 75 yards. Just after turning sixteen, Marjorie was invited to compete in the state trials with the possibility of selection for the 1948 London Olympics.

At the 1950 Auckland British Empire Games she won gold medals in the women's sprints, and while at the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games she won gold medals in the 100 metres and 200 metres, becoming the first Australian female to win an Olympic gold medal in athletics. The 100 metres was in a world record 11.5 seconds and her winning margin of nearly four metres is the greatest winning margin in Olympic women's 100-metres history. She set a world record in both her heat and semi-final of the 200 metres (23.4), before winning the final comfortably. After Helsinki, Marjorie went to Gifu, Japan where she set a world record of 11.4 seconds.

Her achievements were recognised in 1952 when she became Australia's 'Sportsman of The Year'. The prestigious Helms Foundation in the United States awarded her the title of 'Outstanding Athlete 1952' and in the 1952 Coronation Honours, she was awarded an MBE for her service to athletics.

Marjorie married Olympic cyclist Peter Nelson in 1953 and they settled in Adelaide. In 1954 she took out three sprint gold medals at the Vancouver British Empire games and then retired following the games to raise a family with her husband. She finished her career with two Olympic and seven Commonwealth Games gold medals, Ten world-sprint records and every state and national title she contested from 1950 to 1954.

When her husband Peter died of leukaemia in 1977 she set up a foundation in his honour, the Peter Nelson Leukaemia Foundation, and has since dedicated herself to raising millions of dollars for leukaemia research.

Marjorie's dedication to athletics has continued despite her massive commitment to the leukaemia cause. She is a past president of the South Australian Division of the Australian Olympic Federation. She was appointed Women's Section Manager of the Australian Commonwealth Games teams of 1982, 1986 and 1990. She was also appointed as General Team Manager for the 1994 Commonwealth Games held in Victoria, Canada. It was the first time a woman had been appointed to this role. Marjorie was appointed as a board member of the Sydney Organising Committee for the 2000 Olympic Games and carried the Olympic flag into Stadium Australia at the opening ceremony.

In 1988, Marjorie was nominated by the Governor-General and the Prime Minister as one of 20 living members of the '200 Great Australians' recognised by the Australian Bi-Centenary Committee.

She served with distinction as South Australia's Governor from November 2001 to July 2007.

In 2001, Jackson-Nelson was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia and, as Governor, was appointed a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order by Her Majesty the Queen on the occasion of the royal visit to Adelaide in February 2002.

The award of the degree of Doctor of the University recognises Marjorie Jackson-Nelson as an outstanding Australian athlete, who has maintained a long-term commitment to the Commonwealth and Olympic sporting movements, a passionate and highly successful fundraiser for leukaemia research and someone who has served the state of South Australia at one of the highest levels as Governor.