

Will the medal trend at Commonwealth Games continue for Nauru ?



In 1990, the tiny island nation of Nauru – population 10,000 - took part for the first time ever in a Commonwealth Games. Nobody, but nobody in the Commonwealth expected the outcome. They had only one participant. He was the flag bearer and again the only representative of this tiny island. His name was Marcus Stephen. A young boy coached by Paul Coffa in Melbourne, where his father was the Nauru Ambassador to Australia and where Marcus was studying. The college where he was a boarder at St. Bedes College in Melbourne.

After the 60kg category finished, a new era for the sport of weightlifting was born in the Pacific. A young Marcus finished up with 3 medals. Gold in the snatch, silver in the clean & jerk and silver in the total.

The media was scrambling to find an atlas to see where this island nation of Nauru was. Google in those days of course was non existent. But finding young Marcus was very easy , he was back in training the day after.

Marcus Stephen with his 3 Medals from the 1990 Commonwealth Games.

A few days after Marcus's incredible performance , the Queen had invited certain athletes to a luncheon. This invitation included Marcus Stephen who was at that time the novelty. Incredibly however, Marcus Stephen politely declined the invitation. He said that he needed to train during the time of the luncheon and to avoid embarrassment he blamed his coach by saying that he would not allow him to miss a training session.

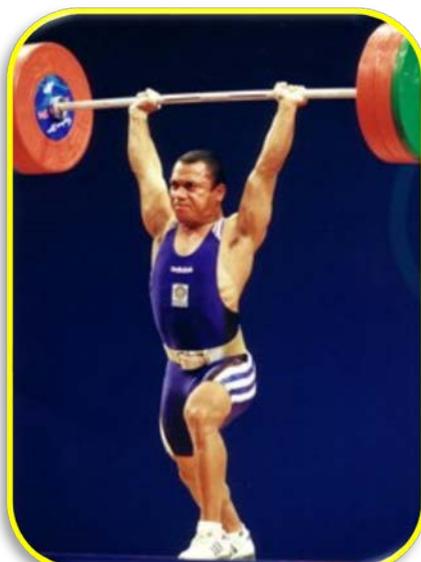
Upon his return to his island after winning gold, they declared a national holiday for Marcus.

History was repeated in 1994 in Victoria, Canada, where two lifters represented Nauru. At these Games Marcus Stephen won 3 gold medals. By 1998, Nauru had developed a very strong weightlifting team. At these Games twelve athletes took part for Nauru in Kuala Lumpur. That is ten lifters, one boxer and one sprinter. Nauru came out again with gold. Marcus Stephen won three more gold medals.

By 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games, Nauru finished up with a barrel of medals. Two gold to female weightlifter Reanna Solomon, 3 silver medals went to Marcus and 10 bronze medals to other lifters.

1994, 1998, 2002, medals were awarded gold, silver and bronze for the snatch, for the clean & jerk and for the total.

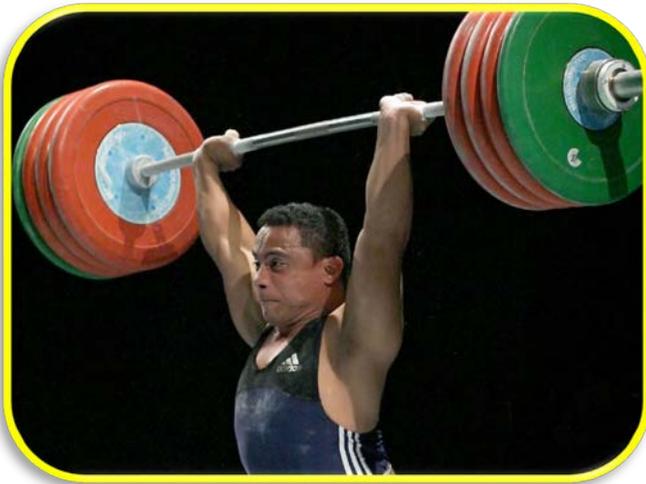
After 2002 Commonwealth Games, Nauru weightlifting had a set back, as Marcus's coach left Nauru to establish the Oceania Weightlifting Institute. And at the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, Nauru won only 1 silver medal and 1 Bronze medal. Never the less, they still retained the trend of producing medallist at every Games they competed in.



Marcus Stephen wins 3 gold medals at the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur in 1998



Reanna Solomon the only female Nauruan weightlifter to win Gold. She won 2 Gold medals at the Manchester Games in 2002



Yukio Peter wins gold at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi 2010

In New Delhi in 2010, Nauru won gold with Yukio Peter and a silver medal with Itte Detenamo. Interestingly, Marcus Stephen, the lifter who created history for Nauru at the time became the President of the Republic of Nauru in 2008.

At the last Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2014, Nauru kept the tradition of winning medals in weightlifting by winning a silver medal with Itte Detenamo.

All in all, from 1990 to date, Nauru in the sport of weightlifting has won 10 gold, 8 Silver and 11 Bronze medals. A total of 29 Commonwealth Medals.

Will Nauru retain the record of winning medals in weightlifting at the Gold Coast.? In three weeks time we will know if this record will continue. Time will tell.

By the way, Marcus Stephen today is the President of the Nauru Olympic Committee and Commonwealth Games Association. He is also President of the Oceania Weightlifting Federation. The General Secretary of the Oceania and Commonwealth Weightlifting Federations is Paul Coffa – the man that coached Marcus for his entire career. **What a combination !.**



Marcus Stephen as President of the Republic of Nauru addresses the United Nations .



Marcus Stephen and Paul Coffa at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.



Marcus Stephen at the time President of Nauru, with President Obama and the First Lady, Michelle Obama at the White House.