

Vice President Welcomes Junior Olympians 1967 “You are Here Because Someone Cared”

“I welcome you to the AAU Junior Olympic Games in Track and Field and Swimming. I welcome every champion to Washington D. C.. And what an honor it is to officially open these games.”

With these words from Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, the inaugural National AAU Junior Olympics Championships were opened in the Capital under auspicious circumstances.

Hearty Praise. The Vice President was hearty in his praise of the 523 “excellent young people” gathered before him, finalists of 21 regional meets, and of the help the “American business community” is extending to our young people. In particular, he cited The Quaker Oats Company, national sponsor of the AAU Junior Olympics program.

“Many of you are here because someone cared.” He declared. “you were encourage . . . to develop your skills and your ability and tomorrow you will be in the AAU competition for national honors. And people will know that somebody cared and that you cared enough to do your best.”

“A special tribute is due to a business firm, a fine company that really cares. I’m not accustomed to giving commercials, that doesn’t go along with the job of being Vice President. But I’ve made up mind that when somebody does something that’s good and noteworthy and unselfish and generous and civic-minded, somebody ought to let the world know. And I want to salute The Quaker Oats Company for making this first national competition possible.”

“Like hundreds of other great business firms across the country – and there are hundreds that are doing great things – this company saw the wisdom of giving youngsters a break. And I take this moment to thank the American business community, small and large, for your generosity in helping young people. Never will you make a better investment, Mr. Businessman.”

Mr. Humphrey made a humorous interjection concerning his reference to Quaker. “Somebody apt to say” remarked with a smile, ‘Now why did he select them out.’ Well, I like oatmeal, anyhow, and I think I could tell you. It didn’t make me a champion, but I like it.”

Forced Indoors. Although rain was predicted for the day of competition, in keeping with an exceedingly damp Eastern summer, the day was hot and sunny. Events were run off at two separate sites – track at Calvin Coolidge high school stadium and swimming in the East Potomac Park Pool. Otherwise however, the Weather Man hewed to 1967 form. He intruded on the opening Olympic-type ceremonies scheduled for outdoors at the Washington Monument Grounds, forcing the exercises indoors to a beautiful auditorium on Constitution Avenue.

Such were the excellent arrangements prepared by Dick Kline, president of the District of Columbia AAU and director of the meet, the shift indoors was made without a hitch. The youngsters marched in according to the 21 regional meets in which they qualified for the Washington Finals.

Among those on the state with Mr. Humphrey were David A. Matlin, president of the AAU, who spoke briefly on this new step in Junior Olympics competition; Harvey Garoutte, Quaker Oats official; Debbie Meyer 15 year old Californian who smashed records in the Pan American Games and women’s AAU swimming championships preceding her visit to the Capital, and Bert Rives 10 year old South Carolina lad who was voted the AAU Junior Olympics Award as the most courageous young athlete in America in 1966. A sufferer of cerebral palsy. Bert was unable to pass the fourth grade AAU physical fitness test, but his determined efforts won him a certificate nevertheless, and later the national award. Bert led the audience in reciting the pledge of allegiance and Debby performed a similar chore as the athletes repeated the Olympic oath.

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After remaining off stage Tuesday while the Athletes performed, the rain was back with renewed fury Wednesday morning when the youngsters visited the Capitol to meet with their representatives to Washington at two Congressional breakfast – receptions. The track and field section went to the Senate, where arrangements had been made by the Vice President's office.

The swimmers were taken to the House and were welcomed by Bob Mathias, former Olympic decathlon champion and now a California congressman. The athletes then split up into groups according to states to meet their law making representatives and for a bit of picture taking.

Succumbed to Elements. The last event on the program succumbed to the elements. This called for a visit to Arlington National Cemetery following the breakfast-receptions. In view of the downpour, the youngsters were forced to forego their moment at their national shrine.

The President's Council on Youth Opportunity, of which Mr. Humphrey is chairman, and the District of Columbia Department of Recreation cooperated with the District of Columbia Association of the AAU in staging these first National AAU Junior Olympics Championships.

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Additional articles are welcome for possible posting on this site. We are looking for articles on athletes that participated and the results of the 1st Games in Washington D. C.. Fax these articles to 509 457 0931