

THE PERFORMANCE OF SCOTLAND IN THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES 1950 -2006

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INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of Scotland, the significance of the Commonwealth Games is that it is the only major multi-sports event at which athletes representing Scotland compete for Scotland rather than for a combined Great Britain and Northern Ireland team. This research updates a previous study (**sportscotland** 2004) examining Scotland's performance in the Commonwealth Games in two key respects. First, it includes the results of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games and thereby continues the time series analysis begun in the 2004 study. Second, and arguably more importantly, it makes a detailed comparison between Scotland's performance in 2006 compared with 2002. Of particular note in this regard are the comparisons made between: Scotland and other Commonwealth nations; athletes representing Scotland sub divided by gender; and different sports or disciplines in which athletes representing Scotland competed in 2006 and 2002.

The 2006 Commonwealth Games was the third time that Scottish athletes have been supported by funding for elite athlete development programmes from the **sportscotland** Lottery Fund. It might be argued reasonably that rule changes to the use of Lottery funds in 1997 came too late to make a meaningful difference to Scotland's performance in Kuala Lumpur in 1998. However, for the first time it is possible to make comparisons between two editions of the Commonwealth Games in which Scotland's athletes have had the opportunity to benefit from elite athlete development programmes that have been in place for complete four year cycles. Thus in addition to updating an historical record of performance, this research also contributes to the forward planning of Scotland's performance in future editions of the Commonwealth Games.

METHODS

The method used to compile this report was desk research whereby a programme of secondary analysis was conducted on the results' database of the Commonwealth Games from 1950 – 2006 (see UK Sport 2003). The Commonwealth Games takes place every four years and thus the results are based on 15 editions of the event. The results for each edition were downloaded from either the official website of the Commonwealth Games (www.thecgf.com) or the official website of the 2006 Melbourne Games www.melbourne2006.com.au. For each edition of the Commonwealth Games 1950 - 2006 we disaggregated the overall final medal table into subsidiary tables such that it is also possible to view:

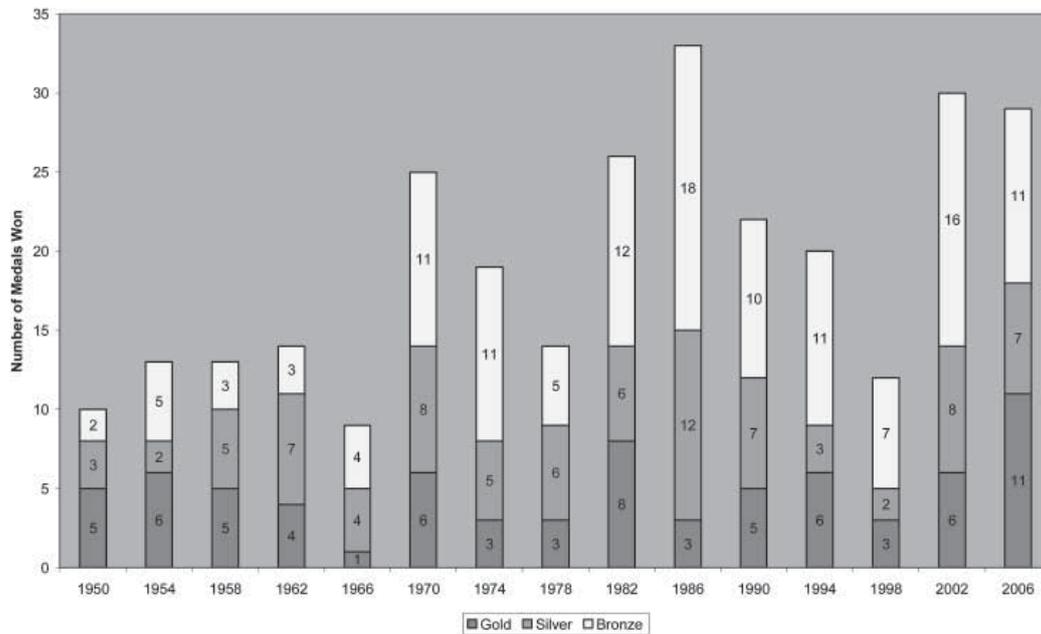
- overall performance by gender;
- overall performance in specific sports or disciplines; and
- performance in specific sports or disciplines by gender where this is possible, for example athletics.

Extensive cross checks have been built into the data to ensure that disaggregated data reconciles back to the official final medal table for each featured edition of the Commonwealth Games. The preferred measure of standardised performance for time series analysis is 'market share' which is explained in depth in de Bosscher et al (forthcoming 2007).

RESULTS

Scotland enjoyed a particularly successful Commonwealth Games in 2006, winning more gold medals (11) than at any previous edition of the event since 1950 as shown in Graph 1.

Graph 1: The performance of Scotland in the Commonwealth Games 1950 -2006.



In addition to its highest ever gold medal tally, Scotland also rose from 10th to 6th place in the final medal table and was the second most improved nation at the event.

DISCUSSION

The headline results enable us to identify the magnitude of Scotland's improvement at an overall level. However it is at lower levels of analysis that the arguably more interesting findings emerge. Scotland has been overly reliant on male athletes for its success and this point is reinforced in 2006. At an individual sport level, our analysis reveals that although sixteen sports were contested in Melbourne all of Scotland's improvement in gold medals won was delivered by swimming and cycling. These findings therefore confirm that sports which have been identified and funded as 'core' sports by **sportscotland** have not shown any improvement. We conclude our analysis by posing three questions:

1. To what extent can success be attributed to Scotland's elite sport development systems?
2. To what extent is actual success in line with targeted success?
3. Is there a satisfactory relationship between inputs and outputs in Scotland's elite sport system?

REFERENCES

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