Global stars celebrate ‘invaluable experience’ of Commonwealth Youth Games with one year to go until Malta 2027

- Commonwealth Youth Games alumni reflect on the experience that helped prepare them for senior international competition to mark one year to go until Malta 2027.
- Jazmin Sawyers, Kirani James and Shayna Jack look back on their Commonwealth Youth Games journeys.
- Malta will welcome the next generation of athletes from 29 October to 4 November 2027.

Thursday 29 October 2026 – Medallists Jazmin Sawyers, Julien Alfred, Kirani James and Shayna Jack have joined a host of decorated athletes in celebrating the important role the Commonwealth Youth Games played in their careers with one year to go until Malta 2027.

Many of today’s Commonwealth, Olympic, Paralympic and World Champions first competed internationally at a Commonwealth Youth Games. Since the inaugural competition in 2000, they have provided aspiring young athletes with valuable experience of a multi-sport event.

Next year, a talented new generation will attempt to follow in the footsteps of established stars such as Sawyers, who won two golds at the Isle of Man Commonwealth Youth Games in 2011 before claiming long jump silver (Glasgow 2014) and gold (Glasgow 2026) at senior Games.

Jazmin Sawyers, two-time gold medallist at the 2011 Commonwealth Youth Games, said:

“The Commonwealth Youth Games were a key part of my development as an athlete. The Games were one of my first experiences of a multi-sport event, not only preparing me for the senior Games to come but also allowing me to enjoy the feeling of being part of something larger – it stoked the fire to succeed at a senior level.

“Coming away with two gold medals was almost a bonus as the experience itself was invaluable. When three years later I won my first senior medal in Glasgow in 2014, I already felt like I belonged because I’d had the games experience at the Youth Games, and 12 years later, turning that silver to gold in the same city felt like a full circle moment that all began in the Isle of Man.

“My advice for the athletes heading to Malta is two-fold. Firstly, enjoy the experience to the best of your ability, relish the fact that you have earned your spot and belong on the big stage. Secondly, meet as many people as you can, both fellow athletes and staff. Many of the people who are still a big part of my career were people I met at my earliest championships. It's likely some of the people you meet will walk your entire career with you, so share the experience and begin your journey. I can’t wait to see how it goes!”

Like Sawyers, Kirani James also won gold at a Youth Games, winning the 400m in Pune in 2008, before embarking on a hugely successful career. He became world champion in 2011 and claimed gold at the 2012 Olympics in London and at the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Kirani James, 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games gold medallist, said:

"Representing Grenada and winning gold at the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games was hugely rewarding and an invaluable experience. It helped to show me what was possible and gave me even greater confidence in my ability to compete at the highest level internationally,

while also giving me exposure to different cultures and people. Those Games helped to lay the foundation for my future successes at the Commonwealth Games, Olympics and at World Championships."

Shayna Jack similarly enjoyed success at a Youth Games, winning in Samoa in 2015. In addition to her victory at the 2024 Olympics, the decorated swimmer won gold at the Commonwealth Games in 2018, 2022 and this year in Glasgow, where she won two golds before retirement.

Shayna Jack, 2015 Commonwealth Youth Games gold medallist, said:

"Being part of the Commonwealth Youth Games was a pivotal moment in my development as an athlete. It gave me my first real taste of competing on the international stage, representing my country, and understanding what it takes to perform at the highest level.

"The experience helped shape my mindset, build my confidence, and fuel my ambition to compete at the senior Commonwealth Games. Looking back, it was an important stepping stone in my journey to making the Commonwealth Games teams in 2018, 2022 and 2026.

"The lessons I learnt, the friendships I made, and the pride of representing my country have stayed with me throughout my career. The Youth Games played a huge role in shaping not only the athlete I became, but also the person I am today."

With one year to go until Malta 2027, a new generation of athletes will have the opportunity to take their first steps on the international multi-sport stage, develop their skills and confidence, and build connections with young people from across the Commonwealth.

The next Commonwealth Youth Games will take place in Malta from 29 October to 4 November 2027.

Lewis Clareburt (New Zealand, Swimming)
Won seven medals at the 2017 Commonwealth Youth Games in Nassau before winning two golds at Birmingham 2022 and at Glasgow 2026. He also became world champion in 2024.

"The Commonwealth Youth Games in Nassau was my first experience of being part of a New Zealand Team at a major international multi-sport event and it opened my eyes to what was possible. Winning seven medals gave me a lot of confidence and helped set me on the path towards the Commonwealth Games, the Olympics and World Championships."

Michelle Li (Canada, Badminton)
Won silver in the girls' doubles badminton at the 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games in Pune, before winning gold at the senior Games in Glasgow in 2014 and silver in 2022.

"Competing internationally as a young athlete was about so much more than just results. It challenged me, revealed where I needed to grow, and pushed me to build the confidence and resilience to overcome obstacles and break barriers. Those early experiences shaped not only the athlete I became, but also my belief in what was possible. The Commonwealth Youth Games provide an invaluable stepping stone for young athletes, and I hope they continue to inspire the next generation to dream bigger, push their limits, and believe in what they can achieve."

Hannah Miley, (Scotland, Swimming)
Competed at the 2004 Youth Games in Bendigo aged 15 before competing at three Olympics and four Commonwealth Games, winning gold at Delhi 2010 and Glasgow 2014.

"I competed at the 2004 Commonwealth Youth Games in Bendigo at just 15 years old. Travelling across the world to represent Scotland was a surreal experience. Wearing the Scotland kit with pride, surrounded by athletes from different sports and nations, and soaking up the atmosphere of a multi-sport Games was an incredible experience. The Youth Games were a huge stepping stone in my career, giving me the motivation and drive to aim for the senior Commonwealth Games, where I was fortunate enough to go on and compete at four consecutive Games between 2006 and 2018. Looking back, Bendigo really did lay the foundations for my sporting journey."

Sam Offord (Australia, Gymnastics)
Won two golds, silver and bronze at the Bendigo Youth Games, before winning silver and bronze at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne and two golds in Delhi 2010.

"Youth and junior events are so pivotal to help athletes on any elite pathway in any sport develop, grow and learn about what it takes to be successful on the international stage.

"The Commonwealth Youth Games is a fantastic event for athlete development as you are exposed to international competition and a multi-sport event at the same time. Having an event like this as a stepping stone for development is incredible.

"The event I attended in Bendigo was such a great event getting athletes together and had the same feel as the senior "friendly" games. I still keep in touch with some of the athletes I met at that event now over 20 years later!"

Samuel Ogazi (Nigeria, Athletics)
Won three gold medals at 2023 Trinbago Youth Games in the 200m, 400m and mixed 4x100m relay before winning 400m gold at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

"Becoming Youth Commonwealth Champion in multiple events meant a lot to me as a young kid and opened the doors to where I am today, both as an athlete and as a person. Winning the Senior Commonwealth title this year meant even more, because I have always hoped to inspire the next generation of young athletes across the Commonwealth, especially in Nigeria, to believe in themselves, pursue their dreams, and take up athletics. I want my journey to show young people that with hard work, dedication, and belief, they can achieve great things and represent their country on the biggest stage."

Melissa Tapper (Australia, Para Table Tennis)
Competed at the 2008 Youth Games in Pune before winning gold at the senior Games in 2018. She also claimed silver at the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

"The Commonwealth Youth Games were my first experience at a multi-sport event, and I remember being struck by just how much bigger everything felt compared to anything I'd experienced before. It gave me my first real insight into the atmosphere, expectations and pressures that come with representing Australia on a major international stage.

"Looking back, that experience was incredibly valuable for my development, not just as an athlete, but in learning how to navigate the Games environment. When I found myself in similar situations later in my career, I had a much better understanding of what to expect, how to prepare and how to manage the occasion.

"The Youth Games are such a valuable opportunity for young athletes to experience that environment early in their careers, build confidence and take those learnings into whatever comes next."

ENDS

Media Enquiries

Jon Harding

e. jonathan.harding@commonwealthsport.com / Media@commonwealthsport.com

m. +44 (0) 7776 743528

Malta 2027

Maria Vella-Galea

e. media@nocmalta.org

Notes to Editors

For further information on Malta 2027, please visit www.malta2027.com

About Commonwealth Sport

Commonwealth Sport is the organisation with responsibility for the direction and control of the Commonwealth Games and Commonwealth Youth Games, and for delivering the vision of the Commonwealth Sport Movement: 'Our Commonwealth, united through sport'. Our mission is to deliver inspirational and impactful Games; to excite and empower Athletes and young people; and to drive equality in sport and society across the Commonwealth.

Established in 1930, the Commonwealth Sport Movement brings together 74 independent nations and territories creating a diverse Commonwealth community of over 2.5 billion individuals, representing one-third of the world's population. Together we stand as a beacon of unity, diversity, and equality, completely integrating Para athletes, driving gender equality and advocating for legacy and social change through sport.

About Commonwealth Youth Games

First staged in Edinburgh in 2000, the Commonwealth Youth Games were created to provide unforgettable international competition for young athletes across the Commonwealth and to provide a pathway to support progression to the senior ranks.

Since then, more than 6,000 athletes have competed in the Games. The most recent edition, held in Trinidad and Tobago in August 2023, was the first Commonwealth Youth Games to be hosted across two islands and saw the debut of Para sport on the programme.