

Tribute to Ronald “Bamah” Bamfield – Former Top Tutorial High School Athlete

By Lear Matthews

In addition to his other achievements, Ronald Bamfield, who transitioned from this life on January 23rd, was an outstanding and superb Guyanese athlete in the 1960’s. Among the notable accomplishments in track and field, he ran the fastest Boys High School 440 yards in the country, in a time of 48.5 seconds. Quite a remarkable feat for that time.

Cavalcade of Sports was a 1960’s tradition in Guyana, popular among a generation. To highlight that tradition, I pay tribute to the athletes who attended one of the most reputable educational institutions in Guyana. Known for its excellence in academics and sports, Tutorial High School, Ronald’s Alma Mater was a beacon of hope for a large cadre of working class youth, many of whom were granted the opportunity to display their talents in both academics and Sports.

A memorable moment in track and field at the Cavalcade of Sports demonstrates the athletic prowess of former High School students in Guyana, and provides the context for Ronald’s extraordinary performance as one of most popular High School athletes in the country.

It was an overcast day. Bourda (GCC) was packed with spectators. It was time for the men’s 4 by 100 meters sprint relay Invitation Track Race, and Tutorial was represented by one of the best high school teams in the country: Richard Jones (Jonezee), Maurice Emanuel (Manchi) Wilfred Robinson (Raabo), and of course **Ronald Bamfield (Bamuh)**. “*Dem boys fass baad!*” shouted a young enthusiast as the athletes warmed up on the sun-singed grass track, some in “street clothes”. Tracksuits were not affordable gear at that time.

No sooner did the first-leg runners assume their ready position, than the Starter raised his pistol. “*On Your Marks!*” A deafening silence resonated across the popular Bourda ground. “*Set!*” One could almost hear a pin drop. **BANG!** As if serving as a queue for both athlete and spectator, a thunderous roar emerged from the crowd, increasing in intensity as the athletes propelled from the starting line. Apparently some of the runners on the far side of the ground were not aware of the command for the start of the race. This resulted in the failure of one of the Tutorial athletes to remove his long pants in time to receive the baton. Anticipating the possible calamity that could befall the favorite team, the crowd’s roar was now intermingled with nervous laughter. Jonezee came out of the blocks like a rocket, leaning forward slightly, accelerated at incredible speed, opening an early lead. The spectators went wild as he handed the baton to Manchi. “*Clean!*” yelled an excited fan, referring to the flawless exchange. Manchi was magnificent as he dashed around the track between the unevenly painted lanes, widening the gap further, giving an unforgettable exhibition of speed, strength and skill.

The third-leg scene, however, was mellow-dramatic. Robinson was still struggling to take off his long pants as Manchi approached at top speed. Wishing to avert what would have been certain disaster, Robinson abandoned any further attempt to disrobe, took the baton in one hand while firmly gripping his unzipped trousers at the waist with the other. Now in a frenzy, spectators were screaming and cajoling. A nervous fan, with hands on his head, belted out “*Oh Lawd, is wuh gon happen hay today?*” Amazingly, Robinson in perfect stride and displaying astounding athleticism, negotiated the northwestern Bourda bend with surgical precision, extended the lead further, leaving the competition in the dust. The noise in the stands escalated to a deafening crescendo. With a remarkably smooth hand-off from his unruffled team mate, and his familiar signature high-knee bounce, and perfect form, Bamuh, the consummate anchor, majestically sprinted unchallenged toward the finish line and brought home the win in record time to the delight of ecstatic fans. Just imagine! Ronald Bamfield was a champion. You could always depend on him to seal the deal in grand style as he did on that memorable day.

Sportscaster B.L. Cromby of Radio Demerara described the performance as a classic. Such moments are forever etched in our memory with a sense pride. Ronald was a team player. He was competitive, and methodical in training and preparation. He was unique in style and countenance. For him, to be a success in athletics requires commitment, hard work and sacrifice, all of which I am sure were reflected in other areas of his life. Those glorious days are gone, but not forgotten. Neither will we ever forget the many talents and contributions of Ronald Bamfield. So long my brother, you have been a trailblazer. You had a good run, rest well.