

Athletics Ontario was profoundly saddened to learn of the sudden passing of beloved coach Paul Poce on May 22nd, 2023. Paul was one of, if not the, most prolific coach in the history of Canadian Athletics, with a career that spanned over six decades.

Paul began running after boxing during his teens, believing that running was a better sport. His athletic career began under Lloyd Percival, who coached him while with the Toronto Red Devils. Born in Toronto (Ontario, Canada), Paul helped found the Toronto Olympic Club (TOC) in 1954, after running and coaching with clubs including the West End YMCA and the Toronto Red Devils TC.

Paul's coaching resumé is unparalleled, coaching events from the 800m to the marathon, and holding the role of Athletics head coach for Canada at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona (Spain); and distance coach for the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich (Germany) and the 1976 Olympic Games in Montréal (Québec, Canada) - a role he would have held for the 1980 Games in Moscow (Russian SFSR, Soviet Union - present-day Russian Federation) but for the boycott.

Paul also held the role of Athletics head coach for the 1983 Pan American Games in Caracas (Venezuela), after coaching the distance runners at the Games of 1979 (San Juan, Puerto Rico) and 1967 (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada), and the 1966 Commonwealth Games in Kingston (Jamaica); distance coach for the Games in 1970 (Edinburgh, Scotland), 1974 (Christchurch, New Zealand), 1978 (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada), and 1990 (Auckland, New Zealand); observer coach for the Games in 1986 (Edinburgh, Scotland); and assistant head coach for the Games in 1994 (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada).

Paul has coached thirteen Olympians and over 30 athletes including John Craig (AO Class of 2023 Hall of Fame Builder), Paul Craig, and Jerome Drayton (AO Class of 2009 Hall of Fame Athlete) - who each represented Canada internationally. Paul coached javelin, pole vault, long jump, and hurdles with TOC; steeplechase for Team Canada; and was Canada's national walks coach. In addition, Paul was an accomplished athlete in his own right, winning many races, including the Canadian Cross Country Championships. [You can watch a great CBC interview with Paul here.](#)

In addition to being a member of the Athletics Ontario Class of 2009 Hall of Fame as a Builder, Paul was also inducted into the Canadian Road Runners Hall of Fame in 1991, and the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame in 2010. Paul's contributions to the running community will live on through the lives he has influenced over the decades.

Athletics Ontario mourns with all those who knew and loved Paul, and our thoughts are with his family and loved ones during this most difficult time.