

Bio

Marita Payne-Wiggins



Born in Barbados, Marita Payne-Wiggins spent her early childhood in Providence Hill, Christ Church, Barbados and attended St. Bartholomew's Girls School. As a young child, her parents, Ina and Clarence Payne moved to New York for school and work, leaving her behind in Barbados.

In 1970, when Marita was nine, she rejoined her parents and the family settled in Toronto and later in Concord, Ontario. She attended Vaughan Road Collegiate Institute in Toronto, where she blossomed into a star sprinter, becoming an Ontario provincial champion in 1979 in both the senior 100 metres and 200 metres.

In 1980, Marita enrolled in Florida State University (FSU), where she competed for the Seminoles track and field team, graduating in 1984 with a Bachelor's Degree in Rehabilitation. A 21-time NCAA All-American, she was a 400 metres champion in 1982 and 1984; a 4 x 100 metres relay champion in 1981, 1983, and 1984; an indoor 4 x 200 metres relay champion in 1981; and a 4 x 400 metres relay champion in 1983 and 1984.

In 1981, Marita was a member of the Americas 4 x 400 metres relay team that took bronze at the IAAF World Cup in Rome. The following year, she won a silver medal with the Canadian team in the 4 x 100 metres relay, at the Commonwealth Games.

Marita won a silver medal in the 200 metres, at the 1983 Universiade, and helped Canada win silver medals in both the 4 x 100 and 4 x 400 metres relays. That year, she also won a silver medal in the 4 x 400 metres relay at the Pan American Games. At the inaugural World Championships in Athletics held in Helsinki two weeks earlier, she finished fifth in the 400 metres – the best performance by a non-European athlete in the discipline, breaking the existing Commonwealth record with a time of 50.06.

At the 1984 Summer Olympics, held in Los Angeles, she won silver medals in the 4 x 400 metres relay and 4 x 100 metres relay. She finished fourth in the individual 400 metres, establishing a new Canadian record of 49.91. She has personal best times of 11.43 for 100 metres, 22.62 for 200 metres, and 49.91 for 400 metres. She is the co-Canadian record holder in the 400 metres, along with Jillian Richardson, and the Canadian record holder in the 200 metres.

She helped the Canadian 4 x 400 metres relay team win the gold medal, and finished fourth in the individual 400 metres race, at the 1986 Commonwealth Games. In 1987, she won her second silver medal in the 4 x 400 metres relay at the Pan American Games. A few weeks later, she reached the semi-finals of the 400 metres at the World Championships in Athletics, and was a member of the Canadian team that placed fourth in the 4 x 400 metres relay.

At the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul she was a semi-finalist in the individual 400 metres race. Shortly after the Olympics, Marita retired from track and field at the age of 28 and has since been focused on raising her family.

Marita was inducted into the Florida State University Hall of Fame in 1991 and into the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame in 2001.

The City of Vaughan, Ontario named a park in her honour. Marita Payne Park, located in Concord, where she was raised, is also within walking distance of her family's current residence in Vaughan.

Marita Payne-Wiggins is the wife of former NBA player Mitchell Wiggins who she met at FSU where he played for the Seminoles basketball team. They have three sons and three daughters, including Andrew Wiggins who plays basketball in the NBA for the Minnesota Timberwolves and was recently named the NBA's 2014-2015 Rookie of the Year. The Wiggins family has resided in Vaughan since 2002.

References: Information for this biography was obtained from Wikipedia.