

= Jamaica at the 1988 Winter Olympics =

Jamaica competed in the Winter Olympic Games for the first time at the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary , Canada . They competed in one sport , Bobsledding , in both the two @-@ man and four @-@ man events and finished outside the medal places in both competitions . Athletes were recruited from the Jamaica Defence Force , which saw Dudley Stokes , Devon Harris and Michael White become the first members of the team . Caswell Allen was the fourth man , but was injured prior to the start of the Olympics and was replaced by Chris Stokes , who was only in Canada to support his brother and new team @-@ mate Dudley .

The two man event took place first , with Dudley Stokes and White finishing in 30th position overall . American television stations aired footage of the four @-@ man Jamaican team , and despite crashing during the third run and finishing last overall , went on to inspire the 1993 film Cool Runnings .

= = Background = =

The Jamaica Olympic Association was formed in 1936 , but due to the cancellation of the 1940 and 1944 Olympics due to the Second World War , the first Games they competed in was the 1948 Summer Olympics in London . They have appeared at every Summer Games since , including at the 1960 Games in which they appeared as part of the combined team of the British West Indies . They have won medals at every Summer Games they have competed at , with the exception of the 1956 and 1964 Summer Olympics .

= = Bobsleigh = =

Businessmen George B. Fitch and William Maloney proposed the idea of a Jamaican bobsleigh team after seeing a local pushcart derby in Jamaica . The President of the Jamaica Olympic Association at the time supported the idea , and so preparations were made to hire athletes . Advertisements were placed describing " dangerous and rigorous " trials which would form the basis of the country 's first bobsleigh team . However , recruitment proved to be problematic and so the Jamaica Defence Force was asked for volunteers . This resulted in the first team of Dudley Stokes , Devon Harris and Michael White . These three were selected as part of the team in October 1987 , with team @-@ mate Casewell Allen added later .

With funding provided by the Fitch and the Jamaica Tourist Board , training was conducted in Canada and Austria in preparation for the 1988 Winter Olympics . Sepp Haidacher was recruited as a coach , and the team began to be featured in North American media with a comical angle . An agreement was reached with the Fédération Internationale de Bobsleigh et de Tobogganing in order to allow for entrance in both the four @-@ man and the two @-@ man events at the Games . Once in Calgary , the team conducted test runs on a frozen lake in order to get used to the conditions , but Allen fell and was injured . Chris Stokes , who was only in Canada in order to support his brother Dudley , was added to the four @-@ man team three days before the first run having never been in a bobsleigh before .

The first event which Jamaica competed in was the two @-@ man bobsleigh , where Dudley Stokes and Michael White became Jamaica 's first Winter Olympians . In their first run , they finished in 34th position , ahead of the second New Zealand team , both of the pairs from Portugal , U.S. Virgin Islands and Mexico . They improved in the second run , moving up to 22nd place , but were in 31st place on the third run and finished only one place higher in 30th place during the fourth and final run . Overall the duo finished in 30th place out of the 41 teams competing .

Following the elimination of the United States ice hockey team , American television stations needed to fill airtime and chose to focus on the Jamaican bobsleigh team in the four @-@ man event . The first run ended poorly , as when Dudley Stokes jumped into the bobsleigh , the push @-@ bar in the sleigh broke , resulting in the team coming in third from last in 24th place . On their second attempt , the team ranked second to last , due in part to White struggling to crouch down

properly in his seat , remaining almost upright through the first corner .

It was the events of the third run for which the team became best known . Stokes injured his shoulder prior to the race , but decided to continue with the run . The team set the seventh fastest start for all competitors . At the turn called the " Kreisel " , Stokes lost control of the bobsleigh and it careened into the wall of the track , and flipped over on top of the four athletes . The four team members climbed out and pushed the bobsleigh to the end of the track , before they carried it off . The team did not compete in the fourth run of the event , and subsequently were listed as not finishing the event and therefore were placed in the last place overall .

= = Legacy = =

The story of the Jamaican bobsleigh team at the 1988 Winter Olympics was turned into the 1993 movie Cool Runnings . However , the film was only loosely based on actual events , with real life coach Pat Brown later saying that the team had never experienced any of the animosity from the other teams as depicted in the movie .

All of the team members returned for the 1992 Winter Olympics , however Harris only competed in the two @-@ man event , with his place in the four @-@ man team taken by newcomer Ricky McIntosh . Harris and the Stokes brothers would continue to compete at the Winter Games in the bobsleigh events until the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano .