

= Tony Marchant (cyclist) =

Tony Marchant , also known as " Tippy " Marchant (born 28 August 1937) is a former Australian track cyclist who along with Ian Browne won the 2000 m tandem event at the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne . Marchant had little formal training and only took up the sport at the age of 16 because his friends liked the sport . In 1955 , Marchant shot to prominence after only two years in the sport , winning the 500 m time trial and the 5 mile event at the Junior Australian Championships . This resulted him being approached by Browne to team up in early 1956 and they promptly won the tandem event at the national championships to earn national selection . The pair were eliminated after losing their first two races but were given a reprieve when the Soviet Union pair were hospitalised in a crash and forced to withdraw . Thereafter Marchant and Browne were unbeaten and progressed to an unlikely Olympic gold . In 1957 , Marchant retired to play Australian rules football , again basing his decision on his friends ' interests . In 1958 he made a brief comeback as a professional , but with only sporadic success , he retired in 1961 .

= = Early years = =

Marchant was born in Chelsea , Victoria , where he grew up . His father was a member of the Royal Australian Navy , who later became a bank manager . His father died when Marchant was young . This left his mother , a nurse , to raise Marchant and his four sisters and three brothers . Unlike his siblings , Marchant was interested in sport from a young age . He particularly took a liking to boxing , and won the school boxing championship at St Bede 's Christian Brothers College . In his teenage years , he fought about 25 bouts with the Chelsea Youth Club .

Influenced by three of his friends , Marchant took up cycling in 1953 at the age of 16 . He earned some money from selling flowers and delivering newspapers and bought a semi @-@ racing bike . Later , he was given a proper racing bike from his first trainer Merv Norton .

Marchant began at the Chelsea Amateur Cycling Club , which did not even have a banked cycling track and was trained by Norton and Maurie Cramer . Marchant rose to prominence by winning the 500 metres (m) time trial at the 1955 Victorian Championships for juniors in only his second year of competition . He then won the 5 mile title and the 500 m time trial at the Australian Junior Championships . He added a silver medal in the sprint .

Marchant first teamed up with Ian Browne at the start of 1956 , just ten months before the start of the Melbourne Olympics . The older Browne selected Marchant because of the pure speed that Marchant had exhibited in the past year . They were a contrasting pair . Marchant was a short man of 170 cm (5 @. @ 6 ft) and 65 kg (143 lb) , while Browne stood at 186 cm (6 @. @ 10 ft) and 86 kg (190 lb) , unusually tall for a cyclist . For a final test run before the pair formally committed to racing together , the pair simply had a few tandem sprints around the track . Browne sat in the front seat , while Marchant sat in the rear seat . The pair went on to win the 2000 m tandem event at the Australian Championships in 1956 , but going into the Melbourne Olympics , nobody , themselves included , regarded them as realistic medal chances . However , their mentor , former champion Billy Guyatt convinced them that they had the potential to make progress at international level .

Their training schedule consisted of individual training two or three times a week and two days a week of coordinated tandem training during the Olympic year . Marchant 's main tactical responsibility was to look to the outside for impending attacks while Browne patrolled the inside . Marchant devised a signal system , such as a head bump on Browne 's hip , or even a verbal shout when the opposition made a move .

= = Olympics = =

Ten nations were entered in the tandem competition , and in the first round , they were drawn with Germany and South Africa , who fielded their silver medallist pairing of Tom Shardelow and Ray Robinson from the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki . The Australians made their move too early and led at the ringing of the bell at the start of the last lap , but they were overhauled well before the

line as they faded in the final straight . Browne and Marchant were given another chance in the repechage round later in the same day . The Australians lead for three quarters of the distance , but were overhauled by their Czechoslovakian opponent in the final metres and were defeated in a photo finish . This would normally have meant that the Australians would have been eliminated , however the final repechage between the Soviet Union and the Germans resulted in a tangle , resulting in a heavy pile @-@ up . Neither teams finished the race , but the Soviets were hospitalised . The cycling officials decided that the bruised Germans would be forced to compete in a repechage sequel against the losers in the previous repechages to qualify . This allowed the United States and the Australians a reprieve .

The Australians seized their good fortune and set their fastest time to date with 11 @.@ 0 seconds (s) . Having been beaten twice after leading out , the Australians sat back before sweeping past the Germans and Americans in the final lap . Australia were again drawn against South Africa in their quarter @-@ final , who had defeated them easily in the heats . This time they equalled the fastest team in the competition over the final 200 m , clocking 10 @.@ 8 s to progress to the final , where they faced the Italy . Giuseppe Onga and Cesare Pinarello appeared to be in control at the start of the final lap . They had moved alongside the Australians with one and a half laps to go , but the Australians surprised them at the start of the final lap . The Italians came back to pull level at the start of the back straight , but the Australians held them off and pulled away to win by a length and a half . The Italians lodged a protest for interference but it was dismissed . The Australians finished in a time of 10 @.@ 8 s and Browne later claimed that he was convinced by the performance that they would win the gold medal .

The final took place on the third day of racing . The Australians came to the conclusion that their wheels and tyres were too heavy , so they sought to buy better cycling equipment from the defeated Germans . The Germans agreed , saying " Have ours and you will win the gold medal . " Australia were again pitted against the Czechoslovak Vaclav Machek and Ladislav Foucek . One of the reasons behind Australia 's return to form had been the return of Guyatt to a mentoring role . Guyatt had assisted them at the national championships , but they were assigned to another coach at the Olympics . Guyatt was regarded as a marketing @-@ style motivator and he attempted to give Browne and Marchant a psychological boost . Equipped with their new machines , Browne and Marchant employed a tactical trick devised by Guyatt . The Australian staff had noticed that the Czechoslovaks had always made their final burst from a certain point from the finish . During the final , Australian team manager Bill Young stood at the said point as the Australian led out . When Browne came to the point , he pulled upwards and pre @-@ emptively blocked the expected Czechoslovakian attack . As the Australians veered out to cut off the opposition attack , the two pairs made hip contact . This helped to stifle the attack and Australia went on to win the gold medal . Upon returning to his home town , he was mobbed by thousands of schoolchildren who had come to welcome him , and he was given a civic reception .

= = Later years = =

The following year in 1957 , Marchant unexpectedly left the sport , much to the dismay of the cycling community , which believed that he would continue to more success . He switched to playing Australian rules football because that was what his friends did . He felt that fitting in with his friends was more important , saying " I was a funny bloke . I did a lot on brilliance rather than hard work . I preferred to do what my mates were doing . "

After a year away from the bike , Marchant returned to cycling and turned professional in 1958 . Within a year he left for Europe with Ron Murray and Alan McLellan on the professional racing circuit . The trip was unsuccessful . The group did not take their track bikes with them , with Marchant ordering one from Italy . The equipment never arrived and he competed in Belgium and Copenhagen on borrowed bikes . Marchant only displayed glimpses of his ability , defeating the Italian champion in one outing and also winning the La Trobe race in Tasmania . Marchant then retired in 1961 .

During his cycling career , Marchant had worked as an apprentice shoe cutter . After his retirement ,

he continued along the same line of work , spending his entire working career in the shoe industry , designing and marketing women 's fashion shoes under the brand Imps and Cadets . He married in 1962 and has two children .