

= Sandra Morgan =

Sandra Anne Morgan (born 6 June 1942) , also known by her married name Sandra Beavis , is an Australian former freestyle swimmer , who won gold in the 4 × 100 @-@ metre freestyle relay at the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne . At the age of 14 years and 6 months , she became the youngest Australian to win an Olympic gold medal , a record that still stands . Morgan began serious training in early 1956 and won Olympic selection for the relay team as well as the 400 @-@ metre freestyle . Morgan 's selection in the final quartet raised controversy because of her inexperience in top @-@ level racing and her history of false starts . During the final , she lifted her head out of the water and saw her American opponent ahead of her , prompting her to regain the lead with a late burst in the third leg . Australia went on to win the relay in world record time . In her only individual event , Morgan came sixth in the 400 @-@ metre freestyle .

In 1957 , she won the 110- , 220- , and 440 @-@ yard treble at the Australian Championships in the absence of her main rivals , but from that point on her career was plagued by illness and weight problems . She was selected in the 1958 British Empire and Commonwealth Games purely as a relay swimmer , winning gold in the event . At her second 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome , she only competed in the relay heats ; her teammates went on to win silver in the final . She retired from competitive swimming following the Rome Olympics . In retirement , she has continued her involvement in swimming and the Olympics by teaching disabled children to swim and participating in Olympic educational programs and torch relays . She is also an ambassador for Australia Day and has appeared on television as part of her work with Christian groups .

= = Early years = =

Morgan was born in the north @-@ western New South Wales city of Tamworth , before growing up in Punchbowl , a suburb in western Sydney . Morgan was the oldest of four children , with two sisters and a brother . Her father Barrington , a plumber , had success as a swimmer in his childhood , but a lack of facilities in rural Australia curtailed his career . As a result , he vowed that his daughter would become a national champion . Morgan said her father " became my driving and inspirational force . I not only fulfilled his ambition , but surpassed it by becoming an Olympic champion ! " Morgan also cited her meetings with Frederick Lane ? Australia 's first Olympic gold medallist in swimming ? and the Olympic athletics champion Marjorie Jackson @-@ Nelson as key inspirational moments in her career .

Morgan learned to swim at Bankstown at the age of 7 . She was initially slow to learn and her coach used a long pole attached to a rope and belt to maintain her safety . This allowed him to fish her out of the water if she fell into difficulty . Due to her slow learning , Morgan was given twice the number of lessons as the other students . At the age of eight , she won the district championship and in 1953 , aged 11 , she won the New South Wales (NSW) Primary School Championships . In February 1956 , aged 13 , she was taken for serious training . Her father transferred her to the tutelage of Frank Guthrie in Enfield . At the time , Guthrie was regarded as one of the best coaches in the state ; his students included Gary Chapman , Kevin O 'Halloran and Lorraine Crapp . All three would win Olympic medals at the 1956 Summer Olympics ; Crapp won an individual gold medal . Her mother had to drive her to Enfield , as her father was busy with the plumbing business .

= = National selection = =

Under Guthrie 's coaching , Morgan quickly became one of the fastest junior swimmers in the state , winning the under @-@ 14 110 @-@ yard and 55 @-@ yard freestyle , as well as the 110 @-@ yard butterfly at the New South Wales Championships in 1956 . She went on to win the junior 110 @-@ yard freestyle at the Australian Championships , despite causing two false starts . After the national titles , she represented Marrickville Junior Girls ' High School and won the State Combined High School Championship in the 110 @-@ yard freestyle .

Although her times were among the fastest in the country , Morgan 's youth prevented selection for

the Olympic training squad . However , the Australian Swimming Union allowed her to join the squad for training in Townsville at her own expense . Her family was unable to meet these costs , but a fundraising campaign by the Bankstown community allowed her to make the trip . Training in the Tobruk Memorial Baths alongside swimmers such as Crapp , Alva Colquhoun , Faith Leech and Dawn Fraser , Morgan 's times steadily improved . The team were expected to swim three times a day , totalling more than 16 km (9 @. @ 9 mi) . However , Morgan was not regarded as a likely selection in the final team .

Following the training camp , a series of selection trials were held in Brisbane and Melbourne . In three 100 @- @ metre races , Morgan came third , fifth and fourth respectively , with a best time of 1 minute 7 @. @ 3 seconds . She recorded a best performance of third in a time of 5 minutes 10 @. @ 0 seconds in the 400 @- @ metre freestyle behind Crapp and Fraser . Australia was entitled to three representatives in each individual event , thus allowing Morgan to compete in her first Olympics . Morgan missed out in the 100 @- @ metre freestyle as Fraser , Crapp and Leech were selected , but she gained an individual berth in the 400 @- @ metre along with Fraser and Crapp . She was one of six swimmers selected for the 4 × 100 @- @ metre freestyle relay squad , the first from Australia to compete at Olympic level . Morgan was placed under substantial pressure by media commentary that regarded her as the weak link in the relay team .

= = 1956 Summer Olympics = =

Arriving in Melbourne for the Olympics , Morgan was not assured of a place in the final relay quartet . Fraser and Crapp were rested in the heats on 4 December while the remaining four swimmers qualified the team . Morgan swam the second leg in 1 minute 5 @. @ 4 seconds , the fastest of the Australians , securing her position in the final four along with Leech . Australia qualified quickest for the final , winning the second heat by 3 @. @ 1 seconds . They were 1 @. @ 8 and 2 @. @ 3 seconds faster than the South Africans and Americans , respectively , both of which swam in the first heat .

The selection of Leech and Morgan for the 6 December final generated controversy , as they were the two youngest swimmers in the squad and lacked experience at open level competition . Both had competed only once at senior Australian level ; Morgan had twice false started at the 1956 Australian Championships , while Leech had been too ill to compete . Australia was the favourite for the relay , having swept the medals in the individual 100 @- @ metre event ; Fraser , Crapp and Leech finished first , second and third . The favouritism was even more marked because Fraser and Crapp were three seconds faster than everyone else in the world .

The Australian team made a poor start in the final after Fraser almost stopped during the first leg , believing that a false start had occurred after mistakenly hearing a second gunshot . She finished her leg in 1 minute 4 @. @ 0 seconds , almost two seconds slower than her personal best , but enough for a 2 @. @ 3 @- @ second lead over the United States ' Sylvia Ruuska . Swimming the second leg , Leech maintained the lead in the first 50 metres but faded in the second half and finished with a split of 1 minute 5 @. @ 1 seconds ; the Australian lead was thus cut to 0 @. @ 9 s . Morgan dived in for the third leg and was then overhauled and passed by American Nancy Simons . With 25 metres left , Morgan took her head out of the water ? a fundamental error ? and seeing the American a body length in front , responded with a surge to regain a 0 @. @ 7 @- @ second lead heading into the final changeover . Crapp then extended the margin to 2 @. @ 2 seconds to secure an Australian victory in a world record time of 4 minutes 17 @. @ 1 seconds . The victory was the first time that Australia had swept the 100 @- @ metre freestyle relay and individual events for both men and women . The only other time that this has been achieved was by the Americans in 1920 in Antwerp . The win would be Australia 's only triumph in a female swimming relay at the Olympics until the 2004 games in Athens . The victory made Morgan Australia 's youngest ever gold medallist ; this record still stands .

Morgan 's individual event was the 400 @- @ metre freestyle . She reduced her personal best by 2 @. @ 3 seconds in recording a time of 5 minutes 7 @. @ 8 seconds in the heats , just 0 @. @ 2 of a second behind Marley Shriver of the United States , who set a new Olympic record . The mark was

surpassed in later heats by Fraser and Crapp , but Morgan nevertheless qualified fourth fastest for the final , almost seven seconds faster than the cutoff . The final was held the day after the relay final . Morgan was unable to repeat her heat performance , finishing sixth in a time of 5 minutes 14 @. @ 3 seconds , far outside her personal best . Had she repeated her heat swim , she would have placed fourth , just 0 @. @ 7 of a second from the bronze medal . Nevertheless , she noted that " I was so happy that I had made the final in an individual event in the Olympic Games , for this was my first appearance in a senior competition " .

Upon her return to Bankstown , Morgan was honoured with a civic reception and presented with a gold watch and life membership of the Bankstown Pool . However , her stay at the Olympic Village had given rise to a new problem . She enjoyed the food so much that she had gained 9 @. @ 5 kilograms (21 lb) in weight , and now stood at 170 centimetres (5 ft 7 in) and weighed 76 @. @ 2 kilograms (168 lb) . This heralded the start of a continual weight problem .

= = Later career = =

After the Olympics , Crapp and Fraser took a break from competitive swimming , while Leech retired . This allowed Morgan an opening , and she won both the junior and open sprint titles at the 1957 New South Wales Championships . She followed this by winning three individual titles at the Australian championships in Canberra : the 110- , 220- and 440 @- @ yard freestyle , in times of 1 minute 7 @. @ 8 seconds ; 2 minutes 29 @. @ 3 seconds ; and 5 minutes 21 @. @ 6 seconds , respectively . Her times were slower than her bests in 1956 . She was part of the New South Wales team that won the 4 x 100 @- @ yard freestyle and medley relays , anchoring both quartets .

In 1958 , Crapp and Fraser returned to the pool , while Ilsa Konrads emerged as a leading swimmer . At the Australian Championships , Morgan came third in both the 110 @- @ yard and 440 @- @ yard freestyle events ; Fraser won both and Crapp and Konrads placed second in the 110 @- @ yard and 440 @- @ yard freestyle respectively . Morgan was selected for the 1958 British Empire and Commonwealth Games in Cardiff , Wales , but only in the 4 x 110 @- @ yard freestyle relay . Along with Fraser , Crapp and Konrads , she broke the world record for the event in March in Sydney with a time of 4 minutes 18 @. @ 9 seconds . At the Empire Games , Fraser , Crapp , Morgan and Colquhoun lowered the world record to a time of 4 minutes 17 @. @ 4 seconds to win gold .

After the Empire Games , the Australian team returned home via France , Austria , Germany , Netherlands , Italy and Singapore for a series of competitions . Morgan 's best performances were at the Dutch and French Championships , where she came third in the 400 @- @ metre events . In 1959 , she placed third in both the 440 @- @ yard and 880 @- @ yard freestyle events at the Australian Championships . Her swimming career was then interrupted by bronchitis , which developed into bronchial pneumonia . The illness forced her to take an extended break . Her chest problems persisted when she returned to competition at the 1960 Australian championships , placing third in the 220 @- @ yard and 440 @- @ yard freestyle and fifth in the 110 @- @ yard freestyle . She gained selection for the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome as a member of the 4 x 100 @- @ metre freestyle relay squad . She swam the first leg in the heats , posting a time of 1 minute 5 @. @ 5 seconds , giving Australia a 1 @. @ 0 @- @ second lead . Australia led at every change and went on to win its heat by five seconds , qualifying fastest for the final . However , Morgan posted the slowest leg of the Australian quartet and was dropped when Fraser and Konrads were brought into the team for the final , in which Australia won silver . Under the rules of the time , heat swimmers were not awarded medals if the final quartet placed in the top three positions . Suffering from periodic chest pain , Morgan retired from competitive swimming in December 1960 .

= = After swimming = =

Morgan married George Beavis in 1965 and had three daughters , all of whom enjoyed swimming victories at school and district level . After her marriage , she lived in the outback towns of Griffith and Orange for six years before returning to Sydney . She experimented with coaching , but found

the competition unappealing and became a schoolteacher . In 1978 , she began teaching handicapped children to swim in her backyard pool , and was given a government grant to continue her work . She then ran a swimming school at Bonnet Bay for 15 years and worked at the Bates Drive Special School , receiving a grant to teach preschool handicapped children swimming . In later life , Morgan successfully fought a life @-@ threatening battle against lupus , and she now lives in Sutherland Shire in southern Sydney .

A committed Christian , Morgan currently works as a public speaker at functions for Seasons Christian Women 's Conference . From January 1996 to mid @-@ 1999 , she lived in Kuala Lumpur , Malaysia , along with her husband , who was posted there by his employer . During that time , Morgan worked as a Bible teacher. in St Andrew 's Presbyterian Church , Kuala Lumpur . She has also appeared on Face to Face , a Christian television talk show that screens on the Ten Network .

In 1995 , Morgan was inducted into the Hall of Champions at the State Sports Centre and the Path of Champions at the Sydney Olympic Park Aquatic Centre . She has been involved in educational programs aimed at promoting the Olympic movement in schools and helps to raise funds for the Australian Olympic Committee . In 2000 , Morgan was awarded the Australian Government 's Australian Sports Medal for her contributions to the 2000 Summer Olympics held in Sydney and her achievements as a competitor . She has been awarded the honour of carrying the Olympic torch during its passage through Australia in both 2000 and 2004 . Morgan is an Australia Day ambassador , and travels to regional towns promoting the annual celebrations .