

Essay Contest 2016/17

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The fastest immigrant in Canada

“Follow your passion, be prepared to work hard and sacrifice, and, above all, don’t let anyone limit your dreams”, is Donovan Bailey’s answer to Paul Irish’s question on what he would say to today’s kids on the subject of success. The interview was published in the *Toronto Star* on November 28th in 2011. Bailey, who immigrated to Canada as a teenager, is not only a successful businessman, he also won two gold medals at the Olympic games in Atlanta in 1996. He retired from his athletic career in 2001. Apart from investing in several business ventures, he founded the Donovan Bailey Fund to help Canada’s amateur athletes (*The Famous People*, n.d.).

I chose to write about Donovan Bailey, the fastest immigrant in Canada, because he was not only a successful athlete, but also a successful businessman before he focused on his athletic career.

Donovan Bailey, the son of Daisy and George Bailey, was born on December 16th, 1967 in Manchester, Jamaica. As long as they lived in Jamaica, he used to wake up early in the morning and take care of the family’s pigs, chickens and goats before going to school. After school, he used to play soccer (*The Famous People*, n.d.). In 1981, when he was 13 years old, his family immigrated to Canada hoping for a better life and he lived with his father and four brothers in Oakville, a suburban town in Ontario. There he went to Queen Elizabeth Park High School. Although he was part of the school’s track team, he was more interested in basketball than in athletics. At the age of 16 he took part in a 100-metre dash and completed this in 10.56 seconds (*The Famous People*, n.d.).

But instead of focusing on sports, he studied economics at the Sheridan College in Oakville and did his diploma in business administration. Afterwards, he started to work in the investment and consulting business. He also ran an import-export clothing business. At the age of 22 he was already a really successful businessman in Canada and bought his own house in Oakville and a Porsche 911 convertible. During his time in college he joined the basketball team playing for one season and, occasionally took part in sprint races (*The Famous People*, n.d.).

In 1991, he began to train seriously and won the 60m dashes at the Ontario indoor championships. In the same year he was part of the 4 x 100 metre relay team that won the Pan American Games in Havana, Cuba (*The Famous People*, n.d.).

Two years later, he was a member of the Canadian team at the World Championships, where he was introduced to the famous American track and field coach Dan Pfaff. Training with Dan Pfaff helped him to improve not only his running and starting technique but also his consistency throughout the run, and by the end of 1994 he was number eight in the world rankings in 100-metre dash (*The Famous People*, n.d.). In 1995 at the Athletics World Championships in Gothenburg he won his first gold medal. With his team he also won the 4x100 metre men's relay title. His greatest achievement was to win two Olympic Gold Medals 1996 in Atlanta. One in the 100 metre finals in 9.84 seconds and one as part of the 4 x 100 metre relay team (*The Famous People*, n.d.). Several injuries, mainly a torn Achilles tendon, led to his retirement in 2001.

He founded the Donovan Bailey Fund in 2002 to help amateur athletes in Canada. Together with other former athletes he established the DBX Sport Management, a company that assists talented athletes to advance and finance their careers (*Top 25 immigrants in 2010*, n.d.). He also opened a sport injury clinic in Oakville, Ontario (*The Famous People*, n.d.). The Canadian hero now plays basketball to stay in shape and he says that he also doesn't miss running. Concerning his family status he said in the interview with the *Toronto Star*, "I'm a divorced father of two great kids — a 17-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son. I do a lot with my son, like I did with my daughter when she was younger, but she's starting to carve out her own life as young lady, and that's a good thing." (Toronto Star, 2011)

Although he is only 50 years old he has achieved a lot in his life and I think that he must be very proud of this. Without immigrating to Canada, his life would probably have been completely different and he seems to be grateful for the possibilities he has found in Canada for himself as well as for his kids. "That's easy, I love it. It's a wonderful country with plenty of opportunities. It's a great feeling knowing this is where my kids are being raised" is Donovan Bailey's answer to Paul Irish's question in the same interview about how he feels about this country, even though he was born in Jamaica. It's impressive that before starting his athletic career he had been successful in his profession. His social engagements are really inspiring too like his Donovan Bailey Fund to help amateur athletes. He has also been an amateur athlete once so he probably knows how to help talents to be able to finish

school, or to get a job besides training. He started his athletic career after he had got a good job so it maybe wasn't a big problem for him but not everybody is able to do it like Donovan Bailey.

In my opinion Donovan Bailey is a very inspiring person, not only because of his athletic and business career, also because of his social engagement. He has really achieved a lot in his life.

Bibliography:

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