

Ladies and Gentleman, WE are honoured to be in the presence of an Olympian, and indeed a golden Olympian. Danny Nightingale is a former pupil of our school and our highest achieving Old Wellensian in the world of sport.

It was in 1976 that 22 year old Danny Nightingale as a member of the British Olympic Modern Pentathlon team won his gold medal at the Montreal Olympics. This was one of only three gold's that Great Britain won at these Olympics. An Olympics in which - some of you might remember - world gymnastics at that time was defined by Nadia Comaneci the 14 year old Romanian gymnast with her clutch of medals, British swimming by David Wilkie with his Swimming Gold and sporting courage by our British Modern Pentathlon team.

After four days of riding, fencing, shooting and swimming, the modern pentathlon team of Nightingale, Parker and Fox was in fifth place. At the end of the final day, the running event – Danny Nightingale and his team overhauled Czechoslovakia's overnight lead of 537 points to take the title, the biggest final day turnaround in the history of the modern pentathlon.

Danny had also been the British Modern Pentathlete Champion through the entire period of the mid to late 70s. He went on to represent Great Britain again in the Modern Pentathlon in 1980 in Moscow. He is a double Olympian who also won the 1st Spartakiade – the first westerner ever to win the Eastern Block equivalent of the Olympic games.

Perhaps “less pure” in a sporting sense but watched by millions was the BBC show *Superstars* where he was a finalist alongside other great sporting heroes of the time such as athlete, Daley Thompson, the Welsh and British Lions Rugby player, JJ Williams and the only man ever to score a hat-trick in the football world cup final, Geoff Hurst.

But behind every great achiever is a school career and school teachers who believe they have made their contribution. From Mr Peter Bishop, ex Head of Classics and Senior Master at the school – “very determined, not overly academic but he could run”. Mr Bishop started cross country at Wells in the early “70s” and Danny was one of the first team members. “He had to be, he ran 8 miles into school from Oakhill every day”.

One of the school cross country fixtures was against Downside. The cross country master at Downside suggested that he and Peter should “amble down to the finish as he won't be seeing anyone for another ten minutes or so”. Within seconds Danny had appeared way ahead of the field.

But pupils are smart and often have ways of having the last word. I wonder if, Danny, you recall the school's cross country captain Steven Ford writing in the 1970 Lent Term Chronicle on the school's cross country season.

“Our thanks for running the set so well must go to Mr Bishop. We must also thank him for his use of petrol and tyre rubber in depositing people at distant places in this verdant country of ours, and instructing them to run home”.

And Major Green, Head of Geography and also at one stage Senior Master here at Wells. “A very determined wing forward on the 1st XV, who regularly picked up the ball from outside the scrum and scored tries for us – nobody could catch him”.

But of course you are more than a famous Olympic gold medallist. You received your Sports Science and Education Degree from Loughborough University in 1984; spent the years up until 1990 working with athletes in the sport that you love as the National Development Officer of the Modern Pentathlon Association of Great Britain. In 1988 you coached the British Olympic Team in Seoul in Korea to bronze medal success.

And from 1990 a distinguished career in teaching physical education in your school in Redcar in the Northeast of England, coaching many young pentathletes in the part of the world in which you and your family have chosen to live.

It is good to have you and some of your immediate family with us this evening – some of whom themselves are Old Wellensians; indeed your sister Siobhan who was one of the first girls to attend this School.

You are an Old Wellensian who has brought credit and recognition to your old school. You have given something of yourself and the sport you love back to others - and in particular to young people. You exemplify the diversity and rich variety of achievements of former pupils of this school.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege and pleasure, on behalf of the School and the Foundation, to ask you to stand, applaud and formally welcome Danny Nightingale as a Wells Cathedral School Foundation Fellow.

Read by Nigel Walkey