

Chun Hon Chan: First Chinese Canadian to Represent Canada at the Olympics

Taken from Chinese North America History Network, a Public Group on FaceBook

Posted by Ben SB is at [Olympic Stadium Mexico City](#).

5 Chinese American and Chinese Canadian Olympic Calibre Athletes #18 of 25:

CANADIAN **Chun Hon Chan** made history by arguably being the **first recorded Chinese Canadian to compete at the Olympics** when he participated in the **1968 Mexico Olympics** as part of the **Canadian Olympic Weightlifting team** as a 33 year old. Four years later he would go on to represent Canada at the **1972 Munich Olympics** at age 37. He was the **Canadian Bantamweight weightlifting Champion from 1963-1971** and at the time held **five Canadian weightlifting records**. He also competed for Canada in many other International competitions including the **Pan American games** and the **Commonwealth games** where he won **Bronze Medals** at both games. At one point in the snatch he ranked in the **top 6 in the world** in his weight class. Chun Hon Chan not only **shattered early stereotypes of Asian mens' strength and body types**, but at 5' 3" and 120 pounds, his story at heart is of a man overcoming his limitations through sheer willpower...all the way to the Olympic stage. Impressively, he is quite possibly the very **first Chinese North American to have competed at the Olympics in the sport of weightlifting**.

<https://olympics.com/en/athletes/chun-hon-chan>

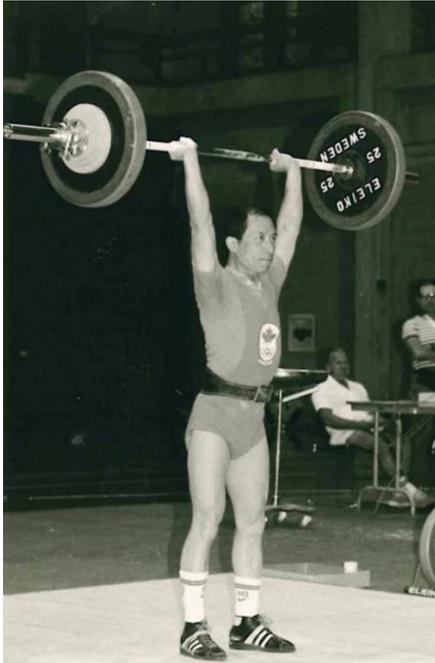
Born in 1935 in Hong Kong, he would later immigrate to Montreal, Canada when he was around 20 years old and would become trilingual in Chinese, English and French as he worked hard to make a living at a Chinese restaurant. In his spare time he would work out at the YMCA where this then-slightly framed man's life would take a dramatic turn and gain strength he never knew he had. He would later state to the Montreal Star paper in 1972:

"I am small, short. This used to cause me difficulty when I was younger. One day I was fooling around with the weights at the YMCA and a coach came along. He gave me some tips on technique and style and I began to enjoy it. Then I began to think, '**So I am small. That does not mean I can't be Strong.**' And that was the start of it."

Back then, there was little government support for athletes like Chun Hon Chan and the majority of his training was self-funded. Further, he had to somehow find time to train between demanding shifts of a restaurant work schedule which limited his training time and eliminated any prospect of a social life. He would quite often try and steal time away to train in the afternoon while later working a grueling night shift at the restaurant. This was compounded by the fact that in the months prior to the 1972 Munich Olympics he had finally saved enough money to purchase his own restaurant which became a 12-14 hour daily grind from which he then had to find spare time to train. Even when he developed an abdominal hernia he refused to get surgery as he feared it would take away rare and precious training time for the Olympics; so through his own initiative, he somehow found a way to push it back in painfully by himself.

Ever committed and despite his exhausting work schedule, he somehow always found the drive and motivation to train hard because as he would say, "**I always consider it a great honor and thrill to be able to represent my new Country of Canada.**" At International weightlifting meets when people would ask him "are you Chinese or Japanese," he would always enjoy seeing the surprise on their face when he replied to them he was Canadian and was proud of the fact that they respected it.

Our thanks to Chun Hon Chan's daughter Debbie for sharing this little known and incredible story of her late Father who was an early pioneer for many Asian North Americans in International sports and helped to break early stereotypes in showing the World just how strong Asian North Americans are in more ways than one.



	<p>CHAN, Chun Hon (flyweight) Montreal, Quebec. Age, 37. Canadian bantam weightlifting champion, 1963-71, holds five Canadian records. Bronze medallist in British Empire and Commonwealth Games, 1966. Competed in Pan-Am Games, 1963, 1967, and in British Empire Games, 1962, 1968 Olympics and British Commonwealth Games, 1970.</p> <p>Champion canadien de la catégorie poids-coq de 1963-71. Détient cinq records canadiens. Médaille de bronze aux Jeux de l'Empire Britannique et du Commonwealth, 1966. Participe aux Jeux Pan Américains de 1963, 1967 et gagne 3 médailles (or, argent, bronze) à ceux de 1971. Participe aux Jeux du Commonwealth, 1970 et aux Jeux Olympiques, 1968.</p>
---	---

Athlete's biography for the 1972 Canadian Team to the Olympics in Munich, Germany



