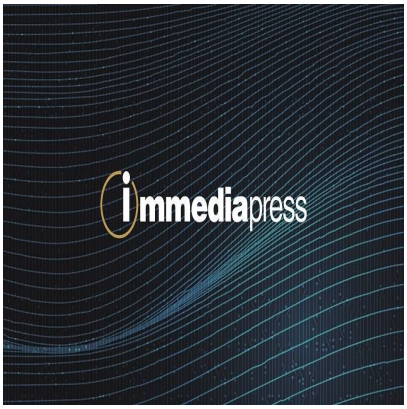


A â??founding father of fitnessâ?? â?? Les Mills Snr 1934 â?? 2026

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COMUNICATO STAMPA â?? CONTENUTO PROMOZIONALE

AUCKLAND, New Zealand, June 29, 2026 /PRNewswire/ â?? We pay heartfelt tribute to our founder, Les Mills Snr, who passed away peacefully today, aged 91.

A Kiwi icon, Les blazed a trail in sport, business, politics and life. Together with his wife Colleen, he created a fitness dynasty, first through the Les Mills New Zealand (LMNZ) chain of gyms and then Les Mills International, the group training powerhouse started by their son Phillip and his partner Jackie, now supported by their children Diana and Les Jnr.

Born in Auckland in 1934, Les had a tough start in life, losing his father at age 11, but he found solace in his passion for fitness and physical culture, inspired by the Charles Atlas strength training program. He grew into a fearsome athlete who represented New Zealand at four Olympic Games, competing in the discus and shot put. He won Commonwealth Games Gold, three Silver medals and one Bronze, later becoming an elite international coach and sports administrator.

Aged 19, Les married his wife Colleen â?? herself a world-class track and field athlete â?? and the pair embarked on several business ventures together before uniting their passion for sport and commerce to launch the first Les Mills gym in Auckland in 1968. After a few false starts, the gym business eventually took off and became the successful LMNZ chain of gyms that remain a cornerstone of Kiwi culture.

While Phillip, Jackie and Colleen were busy building Les Mills International and taking group workouts global with the explosion of BODYPUMPâ?¢, Les entered politics with characteristic determination to drive change for his constituents. He served three terms as Mayor of Auckland City in the 1990s, leading sweeping reforms to strengthen communities and improve infrastructure, as well as regenerating the heart of the city and its waterfront with bold development projects.

After leaving politics, Les continued to coach athletes, help grow the family businesses and support several charity initiatives. In 2002, he was recognized in the Queenâ??s Birthday and Golden Jubilee Honors, being made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to local government and sport. This complemented the earlier 1973 Queenâ??s Birthday Honors appointment as a Member

of the Order of the British Empire for services to sport. In 2022, together with Phillip and Jackie Mills, he was inducted into the New Zealand Business Hall of Fame.

Phillip Mills, Managing Director of Les Mills International, said of his father: â??He achieved a huge amount in his life. And the common thread throughout â?? whether in fitness, politics or family life â?? was that he always wanted to help others.

â??Dad was immensely strong, driven, and always cared deeply for the less advantaged. He left a lasting impression on everyone he met, and his spirit lives on in gym workouts around the world, continuing to help people fall in love with fitness.â?•

Having lost Colleen in 2005, Les is survived by his children Phillip and Donna, daughter-in-law Jackie, grandchildren Diana, Les Jr, Gabriel and Moana, plus many great-grandchildren.

Leslie Roy Mills MBE, CNZM 1 November 1934 â?? 29 June 2026

â??The purpose of the gym is to help people fall in love with fitness.â?• â?? Les Mills, 1968

View Les Mills tribute video

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