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UT Southwestern researcher, Olympic champion Snell honored with New Zealand knighthood

DALLAS – Nov. 10, 2009 – Dr. Peter Snell, adjunct associate professor of internal medicine at UT Southwestern Medical Center and a three-time Olympic gold medalist for his native New Zealand, has won yet another honor – a knighthood in his homeland.

Dr. Snell returned to Wellington, the capital, in August and was honored as a knight of the New Zealand Order of Merit.

“It was a tremendous rewarding experience,” Dr. Snell said of the event, the first of its kind in almost a decade. “It was certainly unique to have been part of that ceremony, and it’s a pleasure to be honored in this way.”

The chivalrous title is given “for those persons who in any field of endeavor, have rendered meritorious service to the Crown and nation or who have become distinguished by their eminence, talents, contributions or other merits.”

While in New Zealand, Dr. Snell also traveled to the city of Wanganui for the unveiling of a bronze statue of his likeness, commemorating the site where, in 1962, Dr. Snell broke the world record in the one-mile run. The statue is based on a photograph of him crossing the finish line in the historic race. During his athletic career, Dr. Snell captured his first gold medal in Rome in 1960 with a record-setting victory in the 800-meter race. He then went on to the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo seizing the gold in the 800-meter race, once again, and in the 1,500-meter race.

In 2000, Dr. Snell was honored by the board of the former Auckland Regional Institute of Sport when the members chose to rename it the Peter Snell Institute of Sport. The institute focuses on development of high school students in track and field. Dr. Snell was also one of five Olympic athletes from New Zealand featured on a series of commemorative postage stamps issued by the New Zealand Post in 2004 to commemorate the 2004 Olympic Games. The stamp featured a moving image of Dr. Snell crossing the finish line of the 800 meter race at the 1960 Olympics in Rome.

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Dr. Snell is director of the UT Southwestern Human Performance Laboratory, where he conducts exercise and metabolic studies on patients with a variety of adverse metabolic conditions. He is interested in exercise training and its impact on athletic performance, aging and health, particularly the prevention of heart disease.

Dr. Snell, who earned his doctorate at Washington State University, has lived in the U.S. for 34 years, 27 of those in Dallas.

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