



Honourable Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sport, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Sport, Chairman and Director of the National Sports Council, President and Secretary General of the Barbados Olympic Association, sponsors, specially invited guests, members of the Executive Council, officials, players and spectators, welcome to this, the official launch of the BABA's 2004 domestic season. This year is a special year for the Association, as it marks the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of organised basketball in Barbados and I thank all of you for coming today and sharing in this special moment.

Honourable Minister Farley, I wish to extend a special welcome to you, as this is your first opening ceremony with us, in your new capacity as Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sport. I hope that it is the first of many and the beginning of a productive relationship with our Association, and I welcome any opportunity to meet with you to discuss the development of the sport of basketball.

I have always loved basketball, and in the capacity of President of this Association, for over ten years, I have had the privilege of seeing first-hand, how this wonderful sport has grown and developed. I can only imagine that when organised basketball first started 70 years ago, there might have been only 6 - 8 male teams playing the sport. We now have over thirty-five clubs with over sixty-two teams, spanning four divisions, the Premier, the Women's, the Intermediate and the Third. I have seen many of our young men and women leave these shores to further their education, at colleges in the United States, on basketball scholarships. Some have even gone on



to play professionally. I have seen our national teams, proudly represent our country at every regional tournament, since the inception of the Caribbean Basketball Championships in 1978. I shared in the joy that was felt when Barbados won its first title in 1994, when our men's team surprised everyone and defeated the highly favoured Guyana team, on their own court. Furthermore, I'm sure that we were all proud in 2000, when at this same venue, we achieved the most distinguished feat of becoming double crown champions, when our men and women rose above all, as the kings and queens of Caribbean basketball. In my eyes, the future of basketball in Barbados, and the future of its talented players, is bright, and all things are possible once we position ourselves to achieve these things.

In November of 2003, your Executive Council met for a series of strategic planning sessions, aimed at furthering the growth of our sport. Since then we have had two discussions with the clubs to benefit from their input, in formulating our overall strategy. These sessions proved to be relatively productive and we stand committed to addressing and implementing the initiatives that are needed to aid in the continued development of our sport.

The major initiative, which you have heard me speak of on many different occasions and in many different forums, is the need for a home for basketball. This dream has been and will always be a major priority for your Executive, as with our own home we will be able to properly administer our season, without having to rely on the availability of other venues. It is a well known fact that the Wildey Gymnasium is not exclusively a sports facility, and as they seek to



fulfill their other obligations there are many times where previously set schedules had to be revised. The Barbados Community College, the second indoor facility, is also a home to many other disciplines. Netball has home, hockey has a home, swimming has a home, and even table-tennis has a home. The time is long overdue for basketball to have its own home. The assistance of government, our Olympic Association, and corporate Barbados will go a long way in achieving a dream of this financial magnitude, but support must also come from you, the players and fans. I ask you to support us in our ventures to raise funds for this most important cause, as you must see the acquisition of a home for basketball, as that of your own.

Officiating has also been another one of our concerns. In an effort to improve the standard of game Mr Glyne Clarke, Mr Leroy Williams, Mr Chelston Bostic, Mr Richard Walrond and Mr Dennis Holder, our 5 most senior and accredited officials have been mandated to restructure officiating in Barbados. Their mandate is to improve the standard of those presently involved both referees and desk officials and also to recruit more persons, to assist in this vital area of the sport. Later this year there will be a FIBA Certification and Re-Certification clinic, here in Barbados and we would like to have as many of our referees as possible, attend and pass, to become FIBA referees. Please note that the training that will be given will not only in the mechanics of the game but also in developing more approachable relationships with the players and coaches.



Speaking of coaches, during the course of next week, there will be a meeting involving the coaches at the National Sports Council, Premier Division coaches and national coaches in an effort to have the formation of a Coaches' Association. All previous efforts to form this body have failed. However, if we are to take our basketball to the next level, this must be achieved. Once started, coaches at the Women, Intermediate and Third Division will be added, so that there can be a sharing of knowledge, amongst all the coaches in Barbados. It is also our intention to have our national instructor, Mr William Harper, conduct a Level 1 coaching clinic for all coaches and then later in the year, to have a FIBA instructor visit our shores, to conduct the Level 1 examination. Those that pass the exam will then be instructed at Level 2 by the FIBA instructor, who will also conduct an exam for this level. Our ultimate goal is that the time will soon come that no individual can coach at the Premier or national level without being certified at Level 2.

Over the course of the years, there has been a steady decline in spectator interest and we are determined to bring these crowds back. Our public relations personnel will be looking to work more closely with the media, our amateur, website volunteers are working hard at improving the site, and it is our intention to make this season a more rewarding one for the players and fans, alike. Not to give too much away, I can say that this year will mark the return of the much loved All-Star Weekend, encompassing teams from all divisions, as well as the Masters. In addition, as we celebrate our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, you will see many new and exciting things.



Contrary to the relaxed way in which the 2003 season was run, this season will be progress at a much brisker pace. It will begin again this year with the Sagicor League Tournament, which is being held in association with the Barbados Olympic Association (BOA). It is our intention to finish the Premier and Women's competitions by mid-May, so that the men and women in our trial squads can intensify their preparations for the 18<sup>th</sup> Senior CBC Championships to be held in Cuba, June 11<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>. Our men's squad is currently practicing on Wednesdays at the Barbados Community College and our women practice at that same venue on Thursdays.

We have made some adjustments to our national programme which should result in improved accountability at all levels. Our men's programme will be managed and coordinated by Sargeant Carrison Henry. The head coach is Mr Nigel Lloyd and he will be assisted by Mr Dwight Rouse and Mr Adrian Craigwell. Mr Craigwell will also perform the duties of trainer. Our women's programme will be managed and coordinated by Mr Mark Harding. The head coach is Mr Frederick Bynoe and he will be assisted by Mr Richard Toppin and Miss Sonia Burke. The trainer is Mr Alan Mathurin. The selection committee will be chaired by senior coach, Mr William Harper, and is further comprised of the head coach and manager of the respective teams.

The trip to Cuba will be an expensive venture, and we are looking for support from all of you; government, the Barbados Olympic Association, corporate sponsors, players and fans.



Financially, 2003 was a good one for your Association. We ended the year in the black, as at the end of December our current account stood at \$30,700. After our outstanding expenses, such as prize money, are met, our account should stand at \$11,000. This positive state of affairs can be attributed to the stringent management of our resources, as well as the fact that the 2003 Junior Championships were cancelled and funds did not have to be outlaid for that venture.

Ladies and gentlemen, the members of your Association that volunteer their services are working hard for you. Nonetheless, we need more of you, as we cannot all be here forever. I am excited about what can be done with Basketball in Barbados, and I want you to share in my excitement. With your support, I truly believe that all things are possible.

I thank you.