

20th June, 2017

T&T hosted successful inaugural NACAC Age Group Championship

Host country Trinidad and Tobago managed to emerge as winners over a gruelling two days of events at the inaugural North America, Central America & Caribbean Athletic Association (NACAC) Age Group Championships this weekend at the Hasely Crawford Stadium. The impending tropical storm Bret that threatened to deter proceedings, were not enough to prevent the T&T representatives from shining through and claiming precious metal amongst a tough, yet friendly competition field.



Leading the way for Team T&T were LeBron James and Dorian Charles who finished 1-2 in the Boys U-12 Pentathlon. The duo amassed their most points in the Ball Throw and the 1000m. James had a “slam-dunk” in the Ball Throw with a massive throw of 62.15m, possibly pointing to a future in the javelin as the latest in a new conveyor belt of local talent for that event. Charles was his closest competitor with a throw of 58.01, just one of three people able to cross the 50m mark. The roles were reversed

in the 1000m where Charles claimed 1st spot with James settling for 2nd. However, in the end, it was James who claimed the overall gold while Charles contribution ensured that T&T got the team award for the category.

T&T were also able to claim the Team Award in the Heptathlon Boys 13-14 with good showings from Shakeem McKay and Anthony Diaz. However, it was Matthew Kur Sophia of the Curacao who walked away with the individual prize in the end with McKay coming in second and Diaz settling for 4th. Sophia was a worthy winner as he dominated proceedings by placing first in the long jump, high jump, hurdles and 1200m; four of the seven events on show. Shaniqua Bascombe was not as dominant in the Girls equivalent as Sophia proved to be, but still managed to walk away with a convincing gold in the Girls Heptathlon 13-14. Bascombe could not be caught in the 80m flat as well as the 60m hurdles. She also combined with McKay, Diaz and Malika Coutain to claim gold for T&T in the 13-14 mixed 4x100 relay.

After receiving the baton from Coutain for the anchor leg, Bascombe blazed the last 100 leaving a trail of boys. Her speed, along with emergence of Carifta and PanAm Junior Champion Khalifa St. Fort, points to an exciting future in women sprinting for the twin island republic.

Although not performing well enough to medal this weekend, the names of Kevah Scott and Janae De Gannes can also be added to the list for the future. Competing in the 11-12 Pentathlon Category both have a long future in the sport ahead of them with lots of time for improvement. Gold Medalist Samiya Dell showed that she is definitely on track to add to the number of Olympians hailing from Barbados as she showed exceptional potential in the High Jump and Long Jump. Jamaica claimed their only individual medal through Omarion Constable who claimed silver, while Akeela McMaster of the British Virgin Islands finished third.

Despite the lone individual medal winner, Jamaica still managed to claim second place overall displaying continued strength in depth, especially among the girls where the black, gold and green had the most points among girls across both categories. Barbados finished in third spot overall despite finishing second in both Boys and Girls Combined categories. It was the hosts who proved to be the toast of the town by finishing first overall. T&T finished top in the Combined Boys' Category, the Boys and Girls Team Heptathlon and the Boys Team Pentathlon.



The developmental meet was a success to all participants however, as it provided the platform for many young athletes to test their talent outside the confines of the home countries for the first time. As host country, T&T were permitted to have an exhibition team participate not for points, but just for the experience, in the form of Janae Murray (Girls 11-12), Keone John (Boys 11-12), Xea Bruce (Girls 13-14) and Tyrique Meijas (Boys 13-14).

The objective of the meet was to ensure that children at the target age engage in multi events competition and at the same time compete as a team so adding the exhibition team was a form of allowing as many athletes as possible to share in the opportunity. The meet is designed as a way to enhance participation in athletics and encourage boys and girls 11 to 14 to stay in the sport before specialising in events at the U-17 level.

The championships were previously known as the CAC Age Group Championships and has been around since 1985. Many of the region's top high performance athletes started their careers competing in this category. The name was only recently changed to NACAC in order to include the USA and Canada. Unfortunately, neither could compete on this occasion as they are still finalising a qualifying system in order to select their team.

The experience gained by those who managed to make the trip though, will undoubtedly help enhance their prowess for the future. We look forward to enjoying seeing many of these names on the international stage, remembering all the while that their early steps were at the Hasely Crawford Stadium, Port-Of-Spain.

