

MAIN TRIBUTE

**CELEBRATION –
DENNIS JOHNSON, C.D.**

ALHAMBRA HOTEL

TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 2016

"DOWN MEMORY LANE"

SALUTATIONS

Master of Ceremonies

Hon. Derrick Smith

Hon. Dr. Alfred Sangster

Hon. Dr. Rae Davis

Dr. Una Morris

And Co-Sponsors

Honoree – Dr. Dennis Johnson

Members of the Press

Distinguished Guests

- Receipt of Invitation and Response
- Formidable batting line – somewhat intimidating
- Courtenay Walsh – Brian Lara
- “Don’t you dare get out”

Commend Group for organizing this Celebration.

Timely to do so for one who has passed three score years and ten.

D.J. – who was bound to accept Starter’s Orders as an athlete.

Must now be coerced to accept Dr’s orders even if he has to be “handcuffed” and “chained” to his bed so that he does not defy their instructions.

D.J. is not too old to have forgotten, but may not care to admit –
That among those present in this audience –
The one who has known him the longest.
While not claiming to have been responsible for his outstanding
athletic career -
I certainly played a role in ensuring that he ended up at the right
school.

I was residents at D'Aguilar Road -
Where Sir Alexander also lived.
Best friend – Eric Owens – “Chirpy” lived at
Waltham Park Road (full of mango trees)
Enough yard space for short races.
This Boasy stripling – at H.W.T Primary
I served as the Starter of the scratch races.
On our encouragement, he entered the sacred Campus Grounds of
Red Hills Road with a swagger.

In the first year – had to compete with the likes of Leroy Keane,
Seaton, Greenland and Gervais Clarke.

He caused quite a stir in 1953, winning the Class III 100 Yds at our
National Sports Day.

Used to “boast and brag” – no one can beat me once I get serious.

He got serious for Sports Day in 1957.

Converted his latent talents into quality performances –

9.8 and 21.5 – 100 and 200 yards.

Herb recognized a star had arrived.

He broke his arm in an accident the Friday night.

Showed exemplary courage in running with a broken arm, strapped to his side.

(Not only good at breaking records but smashing cars as well)

In 1958 – removed all doubts –

9.8 and 21.5 seconds

His memorable salute to the K.C. stand as he stepped past Ventura – got him into trouble, not for the first time with our Headmaster who reprimanded him for “bringing Calabar into disrepute”.

Despite all these fine accomplishments, the star was yet to reach its Apogee.

The best was yet to come

Time will not allow me to retail his legendary feats.

Herb – his mentor – had secured for him a Scholarship

He dominated the field –

National Junior College

Champion – Bakersfield in California

Under the care of that genius Bud Winter – at San Jose University. he broke four World Records in 6 weeks to become universally acknowledged as “The fastest man in the world”.

His hero, Herb and the legendary George Rhoden held World Records for the 440 yards before him.

He blazed the trail where

Asafa Powell

and the great indomitable Usain Bolt have followed.

Time will not allow me to detail his outstanding feats nor even the disappointment which followed the severe hamstring muscle, after beating Canada’s Harry Jerome and preparing to face the daunting challenge of Villanova’s Frank Budd.

Follow the plea from VB to DJT, Q.C. “Leave something on the bone for me”

I have previously asserted –

“What Herb McK has done for the development of Track and Field in Jamaica far exceeds what he achieved by his victories on the track, outstanding and remarkable though they were.”

I believe that remains as true of his idol and Mentor as for Dennis Johnson.

We must not delay – Give the praise he deserves in his life time now.

“Palmarum qui meruit ferat”

Dennis laid the foundation on which our present superstructure of athletic excellence has been built and made us a superpower in the world of Track and Field.

Born out of his own personal experience, he was convinced that all our athletes would be much better off, if there were competing centres for training at home, provided they were of high class and world standard.

“Nowhere nuh better than yaad.”

Both Dr. Sangster and Dr. Davis will have much more to say about the revolutionary and disciplined approach which Dennis J brought to creating that Centre of Excellence in sports.

Suffice it to say – by 1971, the CAST programme was recognized as the best collegiate programme in the region and could be compared favourably with any other in North America or Europe.

A new alliance was forged between UTECH and MVP.

The rest is history.

Since I have deliberately left so much space for the Speakers to come, I shall use the privilege of my remaining time to touch on a subject of paramount concern to us all

Not Brexit

This occasion coincides with the build up of excitement for the JAA National Championships later this week.

As we enter the Stadium for the exciting competition, I want us to spare a thought for Nesta Carter, who deservedly has not been debarred from competing at the Trials for the Rio Olympic Games.

Because of my involvement with the successful defence of VCB various Media houses have called for my reaction.

Before I speak – prefer to gather the facts.

You know me –

“Silence cannot be misquoted.”

Now that I have –

Let me approach this as Counsel and separate facts from fiction.

Jamaica has been notified by the IOC that the retained sample from one of our athletes from the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games has shown presence of "Methylhexanamine" and classified as an adverse analytical finding.

The substance, "Methylhexanamine", was not on the 2008 Prohibited List of banned substances and was only added in 2010.

The IOC maintains that it was previously included as a "similar chemical structure or similar biological effect".

This connection is disputed scientifically and will be stoutly resisted at the hearing.

The rationale for keeping samples for 8 years was to facilitate further testing utilizing equipment and techniques that were not available at the time the sample was taken.

In this instance the testing capabilities for "Methylhexanamine" were available in 2008. The lapse of time would certainly prejudice any challenge to such an allegation.

The athlete declared on the Beijing Test Form that he was taking supplements.

Were these declared supplements the source of the substance complained?

(Is it not the case that the substance as being now classified as offending, is regarded as one which is as consistent with innocent use as with "masking" or any form of cheating?)

Let me make a few additional observations:

Jamaica and every right thinking person must support the fight against doping in Sports. We must not condone it or countenance it in any shape or form.

At the same time, there must be a reasonable period within which the results of all contests are final. Without this, we will never know what the final results are.

Here is an athlete who has been tested innumerable times, including the London Olympics, several World Championships and Diamond League Events without any taint.

Is it fair and reasonable, 8 years after, for an athlete, who throughout his career the records show to have strongly rejected the use of banned or prohibited substances to confront a doping allegation for the very first time?

Nesta Carter deserves our full backing and support.

He is not a cheat.

He has represented this country with great credit and distinction.

No need for him to hang his head in shame or to feel that he has let down his team mates.

Have every reason to believe the appropriate defence team is being assembled – lead Counsel and Technical Experts confident our Government will play its part – The private Sector who benefit from their sponsorship – the public at large.

It cannot escape our attention –

The Foreign Press has been quick to pounce on this – Why?

As investigative Journalists, why have they failed to unearth or publish the names of the other 31 athletes who were caught in the Beijing dragnet?

By the way, the Foreign Journalists should cease perpetrating the myth that the Relay Team will be automatically deprived of the 4x100 Gold, once the finding of the IOC Panel is adverse.

There is precedent for a Relay Team which allowed the Medal to be retained.

I invite them to undertake a thorough research.

Once again – want to congratulate those Olympians who have recognized that like Herb McKenley, Dennis Johnson gave out, continue to give out of what he never had.

For it is by giving that we receive.

Dennis Johnson's spikes and coaching skills were as big as his mouth, or even bigger. For he was driven by a burning desire to move Jamaica to the forefront of First World Status and thereby establish for all to understand "We little but we Tallawah."

HAIL THE MAN!