



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TO THE SENATE

BY SENATOR THE HONOURABLE OWEN K. DARRELL, JP

MINISTER OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND SPORT

“SPORTING RECAP”

25th SEPTEMBER 2024

Madam President, over the past few months, we have witnessed an abundance of sporting events in the country, where our athletes have proudly competed at both domestic and international levels. Today, I will provide a brief recap of some of these key events.

Madame President, this summer, the Olympics and Paralympics were held in Paris, France, where Bermuda was proudly represented in both events. Our athletes and staff showcased remarkable dedication, representing our island with distinction. Although we did not secure a medal, all athletes delivered outstanding performances.

Dame Flora Duffy, our reigning Olympic champion, competed in her fifth Olympic Games. She dominated the swim and much of the bike ride, ultimately finishing fifth overall—a result that filled the country with pride. Congratulations to Erica Hawley, Tyler Smith, Jah-Nhai Perinchief, Jack Harvey, Emma Harvey, Dara Alizadeh, and Adriana Penruddocke, who all represented Bermuda in Paris. I had the honor of being present at the stadium to witness Jah-Nhai's debut, and the pride I felt after each of his jumps was immense.

A few weeks later **Madame President**, the Paralympics took place at the same venues in Paris. Our Female Athlete of the Year, Jessica Lewis, and Yushae Desilva-Andrade represented Bermuda in athletics and boccia, respectively. Like their fellow Olympians, both athletes made Bermuda proud and kept us on the edge of our seats with excitement and anticipation of a possible medal. Yushae was our top finisher, securing an impressive 4th place in the Boccia bronze medal match.

Congratulations to all the athletes who represented Bermuda in both the Olympics and Paralympics, and to those who worked behind the scenes to make it all possible.

Madame President, when I say that sport matters to us at the Ministry, we ensure this by backing it with investments that help our elite athletes pursue their dreams and make competing in the Olympic Games a reality. This year, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000.00) was provided to the Bermuda Olympic Association, and the Department of Sport and Recreation also funded elite athlete sponsorships with over one hundred and eight-nine thousand dollars. (\$189,000.00) I am thrilled that we were able to make this funding available for our athletes.

Madame President, our national sports, cricket and football, also had some exciting developments this summer. As the domestic cricket season draws to a close, I would like to acknowledge the season winners in the Bermuda Cricket Board's various divisions:

- **50 Over Premier Division Winners:** St. George's Cricket Club
- **50 Over First Division Winners:** Warwick Workmen's Club

Madame President, this year, the Bermuda Cricket Board reintroduced the Women's T10 Festival, marking a positive step for the growth and opportunities for women in cricket.

- **T10 Women's Winners:** Warwick Workmen's Women

Additionally, the BCB has partnered with the ICC to launch a 10-week Women's Cricket Softball Festival for participants aged 13 and up. The first festival is set to take place by October 31, 2024.

Madam President, the T20 league season conclude this past Sunday with Bailey's Bay clinching the Premier League Division without having to play, due to the wet weather conditions. Congratulations to the team and staff at Bay. Cricket fans have a one more opportunity to enjoy the game though. On Sunday, September 29th, the BCB will conclude its season with a T20 Knock-out Tournament Finals doubleheader at the National Sports Centre, North Field. Bailey Bay, Somerset, Cleveland County and St. Georges will all be taking part, and I encourage everyone to come out and support this exciting event.

On the international front, the BCB Senior Men's National Team will compete in the first round of the ICC Americas T20 Qualifiers in December. Nine teams will compete, with three teams advancing to the final round in August 2025.

I would like to take this moment to thank the Bermuda Cricket Board Executive and its member clubs for their dedication in keeping the game of cricket alive and thriving on the island.

Madame President, on September 1st, the Bermuda Football Association kicked off its domestic league with the annual Charity Cup. Pembroke Hamilton Club, the league champions, secured a convincing 6-0 victory over FA Cup champions, St. George's Cricket Club. Since the inception of the Charity Cup, the BFA has consistently made donations to various charities throughout Bermuda. This year, the Eliza Dolittle Society will receive a donation on behalf of PHC, the 2024/25 Charity Cup Champions. Congratulations to PHC on their impressive win.

As the league prepares to kick off, I'd like to extend my congratulations to Devonshire Colts and Wolves on their promotion to the Premier League. Devonshire Colts had an incredible season last year, finishing with an undefeated league record. I wish both teams, along with all participating teams, a successful and exciting season ahead.

On the international stage, **Madam President**, we must highlight the thrilling final our Under-14 Boys gave us in the CFU Championship. Although they narrowly lost in a penalty shootout, they exited the tournament in style. Special congratulations go to head coach Vashun Blanchette, his team, and staff, particularly:

- Jeon Wolfe – Top Goal Scorer
- Xavier Thomas-Bassett – Top Goalkeeper
- Cater Thomas – Most Valuable Player

Looking ahead, **Madam President**, our Senior Men's National Team will play two Nations League games here in Bermuda on October 12th and 15th at the National Sports Centre. I look

forward to seeing everyone come out to cheer on our Gombey Warriors, showcasing our national pride at the stadium.

Madame President, on September 21st, the Bermuda Hockey Federation hosted the opening games of the Pan Am Challenge Cup at the National Sports Centre. When the Bermuda Hockey Federation approached the Government of Bermuda over a year ago for assistance in hosting this event, we were more than happy to award sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000.00) and in-kind services to help make it a reality. This tournament brings together top field hockey teams from across Pan-America, including Brazil, Guyana, Mexico, Peru, and Paraguay, for an exciting display of athleticism, teamwork, and sportsmanship. It promises to be a world-class event, offering a vibrant atmosphere and a unique opportunity to celebrate the global sport of field hockey right here in Bermuda.

This international tournament is currently ongoing, with the final scheduled for September 28th at the NSC. We wish Team Bermuda the best of luck as they compete for the gold! I'll be there to cheer on the ladies this Tuesday, Friday, and at the finals on Saturday!

Madame President, I could speak endlessly about the incredible impact of sports in our country, but we would be here all day! Our NSGBs are doing an exceptional job across all sports, both domestically and internationally. As we all know, sports bring joy, promote health, and inspire national pride, serving as a vital thread in the fabric of our community.

As we enter another sporting season, I wish all our athletes—both young and experienced—continued success and achievement. As you participate, I will continue to support, whether by attending both local and abroad events to cheer you on or by greeting you at the airport to welcome you home. We are a proud sporting nation, and my Ministry understands that Sport Matters. I remain committed to focusing on and investing in sports so that we can reach our full potential as a country.

Thank you, **Madam President**.