Government of Bermuda

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TO THE HOUSE

BY THE HONOURABLE OWEN K. DARRELL, JP MP

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM & TRANSPORT, CULTURE & SPORT

45th ANNUAL SPORTS AWARDS

FRIDAY, 20th NOVEMBER 2026

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to inform this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda that nominations are now open for the 45th Annual Sports Awards. The Awards will recognise the outstanding achievements of Bermuda's athletes, teams, officials and sports ambassadors during the 2026 calendar year, from 1 January to 31 December 2026.

Mr. Speaker,

The Annual Sports Awards are a programme of the Office of the Premier and are administered by the Department of Sport and Recreation on behalf of the Government of Bermuda. Since the first awards, when high jumper Clarence "Nicky" Saunders was named the first Athlete of the Year, this evening has become the premier occasion on which our country pauses to honour excellence in sport. For more than four decades it has celebrated not only those who win, but those who coach, organise, volunteer and give their time so that others may compete.

Mr. Speaker,

2026 has been a remarkable year for Bermudian sport. Our athletes represented this Island with distinction at the Central American and Caribbean Games in Santo Domingo, returning home with six medals, and at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, where Jessica Lewis made history as Bermuda's first-ever Commonwealth Games para-athletics medalist. Across our National Sports Governing Bodies, at home and abroad, at junior and senior level, Bermudians have competed, achieved and inspired. The 45th Annual Sports Awards give us the opportunity to celebrate them properly, and we want to ensure that no deserving athlete, team or contributor is overlooked.

Mr. Speaker,

Nominations are invited in the following categories:

- **Athlete of the Year** – Male, Female, Junior Male and Junior Female
- **Senior Achievement Award** – Male and Female
- **Junior Achievement Award** – Male and Female
- **Team of the Year** – for a team that achieved international distinction during the calendar year
- **Appreciation Award** – for a club, organisation or company that has delivered sustained sport programming for at least five years
- **Special Achievement Award** – for sustained contribution to sport beyond athletic participation

- **Sport Citation Award** – for persons who have distinguished themselves in sport, past and present
- **Special Recognition Award** – for special distinction in sport

In addition, as Minister responsible for Sport, I will once again have the honour of selecting and presenting the awards for our National Sports of Football and Cricket.

Mr. Speaker,

Allow me to briefly outline the selection process. Nominations may be submitted by members of the public and by National Sports Governing Bodies. When the nomination period closes, all submissions are passed to the Sports Awards Selection Committee, which is appointed annually by the Minister responsible for Sport. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Sport and Recreation and includes two representatives of the sports media, two representatives of Olympic sports, two representatives of non-Olympic sports, and the Senior Sport Development Officer as Ex-officio Secretary. The Committee evaluates every nomination against established criteria, through a ballot process using a points-based scoring system overseen by the Chair. This ensures that the process is fair, transparent and consistent from year to year.

I want to be clear, **Mr. Speaker,** these are not popularity awards. Recipients are not chosen by who receives the most nominations. Every

nomination is judged on its merits, so a single well-supported nomination carries the same weight as many.

Mr. Speaker,

Nominations can be submitted online on the Department's website at **www.sportsandrec.bm** . The deadline for all nominations is **Thursday, 31st December 2026**. The 45th Annual Sports Awards will take place on **Sunday, 21st March 2027** and further details will be shared closer to the event.

Mr. Speaker,

I encourage every National Sports Governing Body, every club, every coach, and every member of the public to participate in this important process. You witness firsthand the dedication and commitment of our athletes, the early mornings, the sacrifices, and the countless hours of hard work that often go unseen. I urge you to take a few moments to nominate those deserving of recognition. Together, let us celebrate the individuals and teams who have brought pride to Bermuda through their sporting achievements this year, while inspiring the next generation of athletes to pursue their own dreams of excellence.

Mr. Speaker,

As I close, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the staff of the Department of Sport and Recreation, who are already working diligently

to prepare for this year's National Sports Awards. I also extend my gratitude to the members of the Selection Committee for their continued dedication, time, and careful consideration in ensuring that our sporting achievements are appropriately recognised.

Mr. Speaker, I have said it before, and I will continue to say it: Sport Matters! It matters to our athletes, it matters to our communities, it matters to our young people, and it matters to Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.