

Press Release

2007 CARIFTA Water Polo Championships – April 12th-15th

CURACAO, NETHERLANDS ANTILLES – The Netherlands Antilles Federation hosted this year's CARIFTA Championships on the island of Curacao. With 3 categories entered, 5 countries signed up: Netherlands Antilles (which include islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao), Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, Bahamas and Barbados. Barbados withdrew at the last minute and Bahamas entered only in the Boys 18 and under category. All other countries included Girls 18 and under and Boys 15 and under categories.

With teams' pairings drawn the day before, Bahamas' first match commenced Thursday at 4:30pm against Trinidad (which included swimmers returning from Jamaica). Though in good spirits, the team appeared a bit intimidated by the veteran team but played according to team's strategy and maintained a close score of 3:1 at the end of the 1st quarter. Two of our key players were fouled with 3 exclusions each and were ousted for the balance of the game. Bench players held-up and Bahamas were defeated 24:6.

The Dutch team, the eventual CARIFTA gold medalist, was the most experienced and fastest in the water. The 7pm game on Friday proved to be a learning experience to our team. The Bahamas team learned from their mistakes prior and no players were fouled out. With a score of 13:1 at the end of the 3rd quarter, Coach Illing made the decision in the last quarter to allow the youngest players to gain some experience. The final score 24:1.

And then on Saturday at 5:45pm was Jamaica (which included swimmers returning from Jamaica), our arc rivals who we recalled 3 years ago slaughtered Bahamas 40:0 on our turf. Our 18 and under boys were pumped and ready though they were by far the youngest 18 and under team competing. The pressure was on with 1 of the Bahamas key players out of the game with a nose injury. They had to perform. Their focus and motivation, major drivers in the game, allowed them to repeatedly stifle the Jamaicans' offensive hopes to rally and put them ahead at the end of the second quarter 3:2. The suspense grew and it was evident that the majority of spectators were behind our young team. No team was able to score in the 3rd quarter. Then Jamaica was able to score 2 fast goals, taking the lead by 1 point. But our team was not discouraged and was able to score once more to tie the game with a final score of 4:4.

Sunday's 1pm performance to fight Jamaica for the bronze was eminent. The previous day's game proved to our squad that they could beat their rivals. The game started and Bahamas gave it all they had scoring 3 quick goals, leading the match at the end of the second quarter with a score of 3:2. The crowd roared. They undoubtedly wanted Bahamas to win. Jamaica then retaliated, scoring 3 goals in the 2nd quarter. But after the 2nd half it was Bahamas' time again who tied the game 6:6. The final quarter was hectic and rough. Both teams wanted the medal. One of our star players had to leave the pool with a broken nose. His quick departure from the game resulted in a bit of confusion in our lineup. Jamaica took advantage of this and scored 2 quick goals. Now it was everything or nothing and full offense for The Bahamas. But all efforts were unsuccessful and Jamaica was able to score 1 more goal in the last 5 seconds with the final score 9:6.

It was evident by our players' performances that they had in fact gained much experience through the course of these championships. They were winners as they were able to tie Jamaica in the last game of the preliminary rounds. This experience no doubt has motivated and energized our players to train harder and longer. With our relatively new team completing its only 3rd year of competitions (compared to other veteran countries of 10 or more years), our players can look forward in the near future to advancing at higher levels of performance to face the Dutch and Trinidadian teams in the near future tournaments.

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