

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT FOR 2001-2002

8th March, 2003

1. 2001 Rules Changes

The year 2001 started with the Biennial General Congress meeting in February that ushered in several wide-ranging and important Rules changes because of activities in 2000 that began to undermine the club and coaching systems of the Federation's Member Clubs. Over the past 30 plus years, the foundation of the Bahamas Swimming Federation has been its Club system. Swimmers have learned to swim and eventually compete through this system and it has served both the Federation and its clubs well. We saw the club's coaches as persons of authority and, mostly, respected by virtue of their ability to shape, mold, guide and direct young children into becoming excellent swimmers and motivated adolescents. Much of that began to unravel in 2000 with the soft opening of the Betty Kelly Kenning National Swim Complex. A few misguided parents of swimmers took it upon themselves to hire an unregistered coach to work privately with their children on a daily basis at the Complex. This created upheaval within the Federation because of this open display of both disrespect for the club system and the unauthorized relationship between registered swimmers and an unregistered coach. The children involved should not be faulted but unbeknownst to their parents, these children were open to severe disciplinary action by the Federation under its mandate from the International Federation (FINA), which does not condone the contamination of the eligibility of its Members athletes through such unauthorized contact with unregistered persons, whether they are swimmers, coaches, trainers, judges, etc. This is one of the fundamental reasons why BSF club swimmers need a "Travel Permit" from the BSF if they wish to participate in swim meets outside The Bahamas. While unwary or ill-informed parents might complain about what they see as an unnecessary intrusion, as a Member of FINA they require the Federation to protect the innocent from the guilty to preserve its and its members' local and international eligibility to compete. We also had a proliferation of unregistered swimmers with "parent" coaches who had little or no knowledge of the rules, adding to the Federation's difficulties. Instead of distributing meet forms to 6 clubs, we were now faced with as many as 6 "parent" coaches to contact, many of whom did not know how to complete forms, etc. Our Member Clubs and their coaches asked for and proposed ways by which the BSF could change the Rules by which the BSF and its clubs would only recognise BSF registered coaches regarding anything to do with swimmers: entries, coaching, ability to be on deck, etc., to reinforce the authority and respect of the club coach. This was done, has worked well and we have restored sanity.

In addition, because of problems encountered with this group of children regarding training time and lane assignments at the Swim Complex, the BSF required Rules to rectify this problem. Clubs would show up at the Complex to train and find that 5 or 6 BSF swimmers who had arranged with the Sports Ministry to use 5 or 6 lanes. While the Sports Ministry's theory that anyone who receives their approval can use the Complex (whether BSF swimmers or not), the practicalities are that the idea is totally unworkable as it undermines the authority of the Federation and its clubs, and ultimately leads to chaos. The BSF set up new rules requiring its members to apply to it about intended

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training dates and times at the Complex, although “notify” would be a wiser choice of word than “apply” as this commonsense rule is in place to keep order between clubs and know which club or swimmer is going to be there at any given time. Of course, some swimmers, principally the unattached swimmers, act as if these Rules do not apply to them and bypass the Federation by applying directly to the Ministry. While this may appear cute, this circumvention ultimately undermines the authority of the BSF and its clubs by creating the impression of factions within the organisation but then the same people expect the Federation's full support when they have a problem with the Ministry.

Our clubs and coaches and some parents proposed that as the Kenning Complex was in existence, the Federation could now set up 50-metre Team Selection Trials, National Team Training Squads and Long Course Nationals. The introduction of these ideas into the Rules has worked out extremely well. Over the past two years, the number of swimmers who have qualified for National Teams has increased significantly and also The Bahamas' performance at CARIFTA, in particular.

Due to the lack of sufficient persons to adequately run swim meets, the BSF also introduced the Competitor Family Points Participation System. This requires one or both parents of registered swimmers to make some form of contribution to officiating at swim meets by signing-up for at least one officiating position besides just acting as a Lane Timer. Many parents agree with the idea although it requires further refinement and adjustments. Our Member Clubs need to place greater emphasis on the requirement for parents to train and certify as Starters, Stroke & turn Judges, Recorders/Computer Operators, Chief Timing Judges/Automatic Officiating Equipment Operators, Clerks of Course and Chief Timers. Parents must understand that we do the swimmers a grave disservice by not having swim meets completely manned by certified and trained officials at all positions, particularly Stroke & Judges.

2. 2001 CARIFTA Swimming Championships

In April, the BSF was the host to the CARIFTA Championships for the first time in the 50-metre pool at the Kenning Complex. This meet was a complete success in all areas. As we were home, we agreed it with the Club coaches that there would be no Head Coach and that all of them would collectively cooperate as Head Coach. This worked well and they collectively shared decision-making responsibilities on the composition of relay teams. The Bahamas' swimmers finished second in front of their home crowd. This was more than satisfying and culminated many months of preparation by our swimmers, their coaches and the parents on the various committees to whom the Federation owes a great debt of gratitude for their contributions and efforts. BSF parents gained first-hand experience of what it takes to pull off an international swim meet. In particular, the Federation thanks Mrs. Stella McPhee, Mrs. Marguerite Knowles, Mr. David Hanna, Mrs. Desiree McCartney, Miss Donna Williams, Mrs. Shelley Darville, the many committee members, judging and timing officials and everyone who contributed to making this meet such an overwhelming success. My greatest disappointment was the number of persons who signed up to help, but their sole intention was merely to get in and spectate free of charge.

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3. 2001 Royal Bank of Canada National Championships

For the first time, the BSF held the Nationals in July to avoid the difficulties encountered in previous years with end-of-term exams and proms occurring at the end of June. The Nationals was a success, with many new records being set in the 8 & Under and 9-10 age groups. Barracudas repeated as the National Champions.

4. 2001 CCCAN Swimming Championships

This meet was held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, but no BSF swimmers attended. This arose because one swimmer achieved the qualifying time standards but declined to attend and the other swimmer who might have been eligible did not supply proof of qualifying times until long after the team selection deadline. The President represented the BSF as a Judging Official and to attend the CCCAN Congress, where CCCAN decided to replace the 18-21 age group with an 18 & Over age group for future CCCAN and CISC meets to keep the older swimmers involved in the sport.

5. 2001 FINA World Championships

FINA held this meet in Fukuoka, Japan, and the President attended it as a Judging Official and Delegate to the FINA Technical Congress. No swimmers attended as 3 of the senior swimmers who attended the 2000 Olympics declined the invitation to attend, needing rest from their college swimming seasons. The Bahamas had submitted 3 amendments to the FINA Swimming Rules regarding breaststroke, butterfly and Junior World Swimming Championships for swimmers between 11 and 17 years of age. The Congress did not approve any of the proposals but it was the first time that an English-speaking country from the Caribbean had submitted such proposals.

6. Overview of 2000-2001 Season

During the 2000-2001 season, the BSF held several Time Trials to give the swimmers opportunities to qualify for National Teams. These meets went well and provided additional opportunities for the Federation's swimmers besides the club meets. While there are still some kinks to be worked out with adequate numbers of officials and timers, the Federation does not make enough from these meets to cover the costs of renting tents and chairs. The Team Selection Trials process also assists with providing additional opportunities for swimmers to qualify for National Teams and have been quite successful.

The Federation held its election of officers in February and the following persons were elected: Vincent Wallace Whitfield, President; Stella McPhee, First Vice President; Harold Bosfield, Second Vice President; Marguerite Knowles, Treasurer; Meltoria Minus-Rolle, Secretary; and Renia Moncur, Assistant Secretary. During the course of the year, the BSF lost 3 of these Officers due to resignations. Mrs. Minus-Rolle resigned shortly after being elected because her job entailed her working at night and she could not attend Council or Committee meetings. Mrs. Moncur agreed to accept the Secretary's position, leaving a void at Assistant Secretary that we never filled. Mrs. McPhee and

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Mrs. Knowles resigned in July because of business, family commitments and swim club commitments plus generally tiring of the multitude of demands on their time and patience by myself, the clubs and parents (both Stella and Marguerite are also officers of Dolphin Swim Club). Fortunately, Stella and Marguerite both continued to work tirelessly for the BSF despite not being officers, accounting for significant donations and advertisements to the BSF for the CARIFTA meet, the Nationals and in other areas. I would like to express the Federation's heartfelt thanks to both ladies for the work that they did and continue to do for the BSF and its swimmers without thanks, praise or recognition from the parents. Having been privy to their work, I know that the BSF would not be in the sound financial position that it is was it not for them. Although all clubs were aware of these vacancies through their Council representatives and requested to solicit Individual Members from their clubs who might be interested in nominating for the positions, none were forthcoming and we closed out 2001 without an Assistant Secretary, Treasurer or First Vice President.

7. Team Piranha Aquatic Club

The year 2002 opened with our first new member club joining the Federation in 11 years. Team Piranha Aquatic Club was admitted into membership in the BSF in January.

8. 2002 CARIFTA Swimming Championships

This meet was held in Barbados during April and was attended by 30 swimmers coached by Allan Murray (BSC) and Daria Adderley (SBSC), Laurastine Moss as Team Manager, Ann-Marie Wilson as Chaperone and Vincent Wallace Whitfield, Harold Bosfield, Hilary Bethel and Michelle Cargill as Judging Officials. The team did exceptionally well, although they had to settle for third place overall. The meet provided good coaching and officiating experience for the coaches and judging officials and the team officials. Unfortunately, team morale and the actions of several parents undermined the coaches' authority of swimmers who attended the meet as spectators. The first night of the meet, several parents challenged Coach Murray in the presence of the swimmers over the composition of some relay teams and an argument followed. Another parent of a swimmer constantly interfered in the preparations of the swimmers, giving coaching tips, and was habitually at pool side during the warm-up and during races instead of in the grandstand, having obtained a deck pass from the meet organizers without the knowledge or consent of the team's managers or the BSF. These incidents further undermined the authority of the team's coaches and managers and ultimately led to confusion by the swimmers about whom to take their instructions from, the coaches or the parent. Parents need to understand that once a team is selected and is abroad, it is under the management of the team managers and coaches. When accompanying a team, their role is as spectators. Give the swimmers, coaches and team managers the space to do their jobs. I wish to commend Ms. Moss and Mrs. Wilson for the excellent job that they did with taking care of the swimmers needs. One swimmer's luggage disappeared for two days and they managed the situation as best as they could in the circumstances. I commend Coaches Murray and Adderley for the performance of the team under very difficult and trying circumstances, given the amount of parental interference they encountered. Judging Officials Bethel, Bosfield and Cargill

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benefitted greatly from the experience and exposure gained in officiating a CARIFTA meet outside The Bahamas. At the CARIFTA Congress attended by myself and Harold, they approved Jamaica as the 2003 host country with The Bahamas as alternate host. We discussed the inclusion of Water Polo and Synchronised Swimming in the 2003 Games and agreed to it in principle, with further discussions set for CISC in Curacao in July. The Congress adjusted the Meet Rules document, including charging up to US\$40 per day per team member.

9. 2002 CISC

CCCAN held this meet in Curacao in July. The Bahamas sent 13 swimmers coached by Shawn Neely (DSC) and Sylvia Arnold (FSC), with Stella McPhee as Team Manager and Natasha Lightbourne as Chaperone and Vincent Wallace Whitfield and Marguerite Knowles as Judging Officials. Unfortunately, Sylvia did not make the trip for unknown reasons. The team did well although a few swimmers seemed not to be focused on the meet. Stella, Natasha and Shawn did an excellent job of supervising and catering to the swimmers needs. They rostered Marguerite and me to officiate on 4 of the 5 days and discharged our duties professionally under the observation of the CCCAN Executives and Technical Swimming Committee members.

10. 2002 Royal Bank of Canada National Championships

We again held this meet in July and it was very competitive. Again, Barracudas repeated as National Champions. The second night of the meet (Friday) began at the scheduled time of 6.30 P.M.. However, by 9.00 P.M., we were still swimming individual events and the 10 relays' events in all age groups had not yet started. As the Session Referee, I was concerned that the meet would end late, with the swimmers still having to go home, eat, shower, digest their dinner and sleep although we scheduled the Saturday morning session for an 8.00 A.M. warm-up and 9.00 A.M. start. Based on what was happening, I felt that it was in the best interest of all swimmers to start the evening session on Saturday at 5.30 P.M. instead of the previously scheduled 6.30 P.M. I had the announcer ask all head coaches to come to the timing booth, to discuss the issue. When none of the coaches showed up, I went to each club head coach and asked them if he or she would agree to starting the Saturday evening session at 5.30 P.M. instead of 6.30 P.M. because the Friday evening session was running so late. Each coach (Bell; Moxey; Murray; Russell; Vanderpool-Wallace; Ferguson; and Neely) agreed with the proposal without hesitation. I then instructed the announcer to make the announcement about the change of the schedule for the start time of the Saturday evening session. We announced this throughout the remainder of Friday evening's session and again during Saturday morning's session. Unfortunately for her, Julia Hanson of Sea Bees did not report for the start of the 11-12 Girls' 100m Freestyle final. Rule NCR9.5 of the BSF's National Championships Rules provides as follows:

NCR9.5 **Finals:**

NCR9.5.1 Notification of all scratches from final events of preliminary heats shall be submitted to

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the Referee within 30 minutes of the announcement or posting of the names of qualifiers for the final event.

NCR9.5.2 Failure to comply with Rule NCR9.5.1 above shall result in that competitor being scratched from all subsequent events, including relays, for the remainder of the meet.

NCR9.6 Exemption from Penalty:

NCR9.6.1 No penalty shall apply for failure to swim in a final event if:

NCR9.6.1.1 in the event of illness or injury to the competitor, the Referee shall be supplied with such medical documentation describing the nature and extent of the competitor's illness or injury as the Referee considers satisfactory;

NCR9.6.1.2 in the event of circumstances beyond the control of the competitor, the Referee shall be supplied with such documentation as the Referee considers satisfactory, substantiating the inability of the competitor to participate and fully describing the circumstances giving rise thereto.

Not having been scratched from the race under NCR9.5.1, Hanson was automatically scratched from the remainder of the meet under NCR9.5.2. When she appeared behind the blocks for the start of the 11-12 Girls' 100m Breaststroke final, I notified her of her disqualification. The application of this rule also resulted in the Sea Bees 11-12 Girls relay team, of which she was a member, being scratched from that evening's session. To my surprise, when I looked into the Timing Booth after the next race, a Stroke & Turn Judge on the deck during the session was then in the Timing Booth writing up a Meet Protest form for the Sea Bees club. The protest was rejected pursuant to the above rule, appealed to the Jury of Appeal, which met the next day and rejected the appeal. The same rule also adversely affected the Barracuda club on the same night although for different reasons. One of their swimmers failed to report for the 11-12 Boys' 100m Freestyle final because he was playing or swimming in the 25-metre pool. We similarly disqualified him from the remainder of the meet, the difference being that Barracudas had a replacement swimmer to take his place in the relays. If truth be told, the young girl and her family were all in the Swim Complex on Friday night when the announcements were made about the schedule change, as she participated on a relay team later that evening. There is a legal maxim that can be paraphrased for swimming: "Ignorance of the Rules (law) is no excuse". The club coach, having agreed to the time change, has to accept responsibility for the error of the swimmer's parents and the parents have to accept responsibility for not getting their child to the meet on time. Every other swimmer in the Nationals was affected by the schedule change just like Hanson, but they were all there on time for the 5.30 PM start. Additionally, Judging Officials are supposed to be impartial. They have no affiliation to any club or swimmer when working on the deck and need to separate their duties as a Judging Official from whatever role they might have in a club. Partiality undermines the respect for that person's decisions by other Officials, coaches, parents and swimmers.

11. 2002 Commonwealth Games

The Games were held in Manchester, England and the swimming team comprised 4

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male and 1 female swimmer coached by Allan Murray (BSC) and Daria Adderley (SBSC). I also attended the Games as a Judging Official and arrived before the team to attend the FINA World Swimming Officials Clinic. The Clinic was very beneficial and allowed interaction between Referees from all over the world with the members of the FINA Technical Swimming Committee regarding interpretation and implementation of the FINA Technical Swimming Rules and the National Federation's role in training and certifying Judging Officials. Unfortunately, while the Technical Officials Village ("TOV") was a 10-minute walk from the swimming pool, it was many miles from the Athletes Village and my Accreditation Pass did not permit me to visit the Games Village without prior clearance by the Chef de Mission. I visited the Games Village once but the swimming team was out at the pool so I never saw their living quarters.

The Manchester Aquatics Centre was built with lottery funds specifically for the Games. Although deck space was limited, with only 8 lanes, but the pool had a moveable floor that could accommodate all age groups and capabilities of swimmers. The swimmers performed exceptionally well with Jeremy Knowles making 2 finals and Chris Vythoukas and Travano McPhee making one semi-final each and the Mens 400m Freestyle relay team making finals. Travano was a late addition to the team in replacement of Nicholas Rees who could not attend because of injuries. The team's participation was marred by the failure of the coaches to register the order of swimmers for the Men's 400m Medley relay team, thus resulting in their disqualification from swimming in the preliminaries.

12. 2002 Central American & Caribbean Games

These Games were held in November/December in El Salvador, with Nikia Deveaux as the only participating swimmer, and attended by myself as a Judging Official and Delegate to the CCCAN Congress. The fact that the Games were held so late in the year affected attendance and the quality of the swimming, as all of the BSF's top swimmers had either returned to school/college or were just getting back into conditioning after the summer recess. Nikia came into the meet while undergoing deep conditioning at her training base in Cuba and performed respectably but nowhere near her best times. She was without a coach, so I arranged for her to warm-up and stretch under the observation of coaches from Barbados and Cayman Islands, as well as receive any physiotherapy that she required while at the pool. Attendance at the CCCAN Congress was important as the BSF through myself had submitted a number of proposed amendments to the CCCAN Constitution. The greater majority of these proposals were well-received and unanimously approved by the countries attending.

13. The Betty Kelly Kenning National Swim Complex

BSF swimmers were first allowed into the Kenning Complex in April of 2000, ostensibly to prepare for the Olympic Games and the CARIFTA Championships. The Federation has held numerous Time Trials, Qualifying Meets, last 3 Nationals, the 2001 CARIFTA Championships and many club meets there ever since. As a result of arrangements between the Federation and the Ministry of Sports, which owns and manages the facility, BSF swimmers and clubs train there for free. The Ministry has managed to do fairly good job of maintaining the facility although the heating/cooling system has

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undergone several repairs in the less than three years that the facility has been open, particularly during the winter months. The Ministry has also taken steps to market the Complex for winter training by college and club teams from the United States and Canada through the US-based firm of Sports Tour International, and, more recently through the local firm of ANT Sports Tours owned by Andy and Nancy Knowles and Leroy Hanna. These visiting college/club teams and the lack of heating severely impacted on our clubs and swimmers during last December and January of this year. Local swimmers were severely restricted in their use of the facility while the colleges were in town but the moment they left, the heater mysteriously broke down and it is still an unanswered question as to when and if it has been fixed. While the BSF community appreciates that the Ministry, in conjunction with other Government Departments, is attempting to promote sports tourism in The Bahamas, it cannot be at the expense of the local athlete, or, in this case, local swimmer. The Federation's athletes are also primary and secondary students, and their hours for training are consequently restricted to immediately after school and very early in the morning. The Federation's many requests to the previous and present Minister of Sports for exclusive pool time for three or four hours immediately after school have gone, and remain, unanswered. Similarly, during school hours, the Complex is virtually unused, except for the occasional contingent of Police Recruits who come out for training under the Ministry's Life Guards. Anyone who knows the Kennings knows that this was not how they conceived that the Complex would be utilised. It should be a bustling bee-hive of daily activity, from sunrise to sunset, with a coaching staff, administrative staff and maintenance crew.

Our Member Clubs, particularly those that use the Complex on a daily basis, should understand that at some point, the free ride there will end. Part of the cost of maintaining and staffing the Complex will, inevitably, be passed along to those that use it the most. This is normal, but the Federation's responsibility will be to ensure that those charges are fair and reasonable.

14. The Way Ahead

Swimming in The Bahamas is still a “developing” sport, whether we like to think of it that way or not. The Member Clubs only come from New Providence and Grand Bahama, leaving the other Islands to develop the sport on their own. We are at that point in our development where the Federation has to now spearhead the expansion of the aquatic disciplines beyond just these two Islands. This will require funding to cover the cost of hirings, travel, etc.; the hiring of qualified coaches to do the training; and the construction of many more pool facilities than currently exists in both of these major Islands and elsewhere. The Federation can take a direct hand in the first two of these items and advise and assist in the third.

At the Executive Council level, too much time is taken up with issues affecting or regarding the New Providence-based clubs. Because of time and travel expenses, the Grand Bahama clubs play little or no role in the national decision-making process, as a consequence of which the Council's decisions are made almost entirely without their input. On 25th January, the Federation held an Open Forum Meeting to solicit the opinions of persons involved in the sport on putting more emphasis on the word

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“Bahamas” in our title. As we move ahead in the coming days, weeks and months, we will need to give serious consideration on the best method of making the Federation truly representative of all Bahamian islands and, thereby, in the process, expand the aquatic disciplines beyond the two major metropolitan centres.

Here in New Providence, the Federation must find the ways and means to introduce and involve what some call the “disadvantaged” or “Over The Hill” child to the aquatic disciplines. These children, by and large, cannot afford club fees ranging from \$600 to \$900 per year to join a swim club. If they could, they would already be in the sport. If these people cannot come to swimming, then swimming has to go to them in order to get them involved. This is what our colleagues in Cuba, Jamaica and Barbados are doing, with a great deal of success. We are being short-sighted if we believe that we can sit back and wait for these potential athletes (swimmers) to come into the club system. They are going to the sports like track and field, soccer and basketball where they pay little or nothing to participate. The fact that Synchronised Swimming and Water Polo are now part of the CARIFTA Games only increases the reasons why this type of development has to occur, sooner rather than later. We must “build our base” from the bottom, because it is the young swimmer who one hopes will eventually mature into the great swimmer, given time and proper coaching, and then remain in the sport.

Regarding officiating, it is imperative that we increase the number of certified Referees, Starters and Stroke & Turn Judges. As I pointed out earlier, we are doing our swimmers a disservice by not having a full complement of Judges at every swim meet, particularly meets at the Kenning Complex. The swimmers may be getting away with disqualifications that are not caught locally but show up later at an international meet. The best of these Officials need exposure at regional and international meets in order that they can become eligible for inclusion on one of the FINA Lists of International Swimming Officials. Every two years, The Bahamas is entitled to nominate up to three Referees and one Starter for inclusion on a FINA List, or six Referees and two Starters over a four year period. Like most Caribbean swimming federations, we have never taken up our full complement of persons for these positions.

15. In conclusion, wish to thank all of the Executive Officers who have served the Swimming Federation over the last two years: Mrs. Stella McPhee as First Vice President, Stroke & Turn Judge, Starter, fundraiser extraordinaire, and “fire extinguisher”; Mr. Harold Bosfield as Second Vice President Stroke & Turn Judge and “meet setup man; Mrs. Marguerite Knowles as Treasurer, Stroke & Turn Judge, Starter and fundraiser extraordinaire; and Mrs. Renia Moncur as Secretary/Assistant Secretary and Timer. It was my distinct pleasure to work with each of you to improve the Federation in any way that we could. People do not know the many hours that you sacrificed and the stresses and demands made on you when you are on the Executive. I do and I appreciated everything that you have done for this organisation. I would also like to thank each of the Club Representatives who served on the Council and the various Committees over the past two years. The Federation is also deeply indebted to those persons who took the time and cared enough to become certified Swimming Officials. We cannot put on a swim meet without you and you are a very integral part of this

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organisation, who we hope will continue to participate in our competitions, like a Frank Kerr, Loretta Parris or Peter Wiggins, whether your children are still active swimmers or not. I would also like to thank the many parents who came out as Timers in fulfillment of their obligations under the Competitor Family Points Participation System, or did their part without asking, like a Jason Saunders or Barry Miller, because like helping. Last but not least, I would like to thank the Club Coaches and our Member Clubs, for the great job that they are doing with our children and the time that they are given and are giving to our National Team Training Squad programme. The success of our swimmers at CARIFTA, CISC, CCCAN and the Commonwealth Games is directly attributable to your work.

Thank you all.

VINCENT WALLACE WHITFIELD
President