



The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited

Launch of NGC/NAAA Championship Month 2018

Remarks by Mr. Ronald Adams, Vice President - Operations | May 24th, 2018

SALUTATIONS

Mr. Ephraim Serrette – President, NAAATT

Mr. Kabir Hosein - Chief Administrative Officer, NAAATT

Mr. Dexter Voisin - NAAATT Events Committee Chairman

Ms. Lisa Mahabir – Manager, Business Development, Sagicor

Ms. Lisa Burkett – Manager, Corporate Communications, NGC

Athletes and Members of the track and field fraternity

Members of the media

Good morning.

Veteran US Olympian Michael Johnson has said that the formula for success is a combination of natural talent, hard work and opportunity. The first two are a given, but we can sometimes take for granted the role of **opportunity** in achievement. You could be blessed with extraordinary ability and the requisite dedication and drive to make something of your talent, but if you do not have a platform to bring that talent to the fore, you can go nowhere.

The NGC/NAAA Championship Series has been furnishing young athletes with opportunities of immeasurable value to their development as track and field stars: the opportunity to benchmark their ability against that of their peers and identify areas for improvement; the opportunity to learn from the experience of others in their field; and importantly, the opportunity to get noticed, spotlighted and *supported*.

We at NGC believe deeply and invest heavily in causes that create opportunities for our people and help them succeed. Track and field accounts for the lion's share of T&T's international sporting success.

If we want to sustain that success, we must give the next generation of athletic stars every opportunity to cultivate their talent. For that reason, NGC has been focusing significant investment attention on track and field. We have been partnering with the NAAA since 2013, and recently renewed our support with a \$2.5 million commitment for the 2018-2020 term. The NGC/NAAA Championship Series is just one of our signature sponsorships under our partnership agreement.

In 2017, we joined with the NAAA to launch a Youth Elite Programme - a training intervention targeting athletes aged 15 to 20 who have excelled at regional and international competitions. The 10 inductees in the inaugural run of the programme were paired with specialist coaches for customised courses of training. These were aimed at building their strengths and correcting their weaknesses. In November, the Michael Johnson Performance agency, founded by the Olympian

himself, was brought on to partner with the administrators of the Youth Elite Programme, and has been sharing world-class experience with the athletes.

As sponsors, we were pleased to learn that since the start of the programme, the elite athletes have shown marked improvement, with most achieving personal bests over the course of their training. These athletes represented our country with distinction at the CARIFTA and Commonwealth Games - Tyriq Horsford, Avindale Smith, and Jereem Richards copped gold for Trinidad and Tobago in their events, and several others bagged silver and bronze. We could not ask for a better return on investment, or more compelling proof of the link between training opportunities and success.

I invite us to recognise with applause the efforts of all the coaches and trainers, and the commitment and achievement of the athletes themselves. Set your sights now on Olympic glory – you are well on your way. On that note, I wish to add another element to Michael Johnson's formula for success - motivation. Talent, hard work and opportunity are all critical, but motivation is just as important. Motivation to take that extra step, to put in the hard work, to dream the impossible dream, is arguably just as necessary an ingredient to achieving success.

I want to issue an appeal to the public to come out and motivate our athletes at these Championship Series events. We sadly do not appreciate just how powerful a motivator it is for athletes to compete in a stadium full of spectators – people who cheer and encourage, congratulate and commiserate; people who share the thrill of victory, and give the athletes purpose to push themselves a little further. If we want our young athletes to work towards international glory for Trinidad and Tobago, they need to feel the support and love of Trinidad and Tobago.

I also urge the public to see these events as an opportunity. We as spectators and supporters will have the chance to see the future of our sport, tomorrow's track and field champions, take to the field. Our next Olympic gold medallist may be running or throwing or jumping at one of these events – wouldn't you love to witness the start of his or her career?

Ladies and gentlemen, we at NGC are mindful of the importance of motivation and inspiration to personal success, not just in sport, but every field of endeavour. That is one of the reasons why we took the initiative last year to launch a National Heroes Project that celebrates and shares the inspiring stories of iconic national achievers with our young people. Understanding the path taken and struggles faced by others in pursuit of success can be a powerful stimulus to push past one's own obstacles and dream big.

Fittingly, the inaugural honouree of our National Heroes Project was Hasely Crawford – a man we celebrate today, who defied circumstance to triumph over world champions at the 1976 Olympic Games. The project, which took the form of a roving exhibition of Hasely's life and story, introduced hundreds of children to 'the man behind the stadium' and without question, will have inspired these hundreds to go after glory themselves. Among them, perhaps, are future Olympic champions.

As we get set to launch the 2018 edition of the NGC/NAAA Championship Series, I want to leave the competing athletes with some more wise words from Michael Johnson – *Pressure is nothing more than the shadow of great opportunity*. If the competition is tough, it means there is so much reward to be gained from victory. Work hard and seize every opportunity you are given at these events to develop your natural talent, and success is sure to follow.

Good luck to our athletes, and I wish the event organisers all the best for another successful Championship Series. NGC remains your committed partner as you continue to create opportunities for our athletes to make us proud.

I thank you.