



PIVOTING CSR

TRANSFORMING SPORT DEVELOPMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE





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HASELY CRAWFORD'S HISTORIC WIN MARKED A TURNING POINT FOR SPORT IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

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One hundred metres. Only 100 metres now stood between what had been up to that point, an elusive dream, and glory. This was the moment. Eight men, all champions, took their marks. The starting gun went off and a small nation held its collective breath while praying to the sprinting gods to help make our collective dream come true. Ten seconds later, Hasely Crawford crossed the finish line that became a golden threshold into a new era of sport in Trinidad and Tobago.

With every stride of his momentous dash in Montreal, 1976, Hasely Crawford carried the aspirations of his people with him. And when he crossed the line in first place, we shared in his triumph. He showed that a small nation could do big things on the world stage. The young Brian Laras, Dwight Yorkes, Ato Boldons and Kershorn Walcotts now had irrefutable evidence that one person from Trinidad and Tobago could make a difference.

Such is the power of sport to inspire and unite. That is one of the many reasons The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (NGC) has been an active proponent of sport development for decades.

A legacy of sport development

NGC has supported sporting activity for decades. However, 1999 marked the genesis of the Company's deepened involvement in the developmental aspects of sport with the launch of the NGC Right on Track (ROT) programme. With the guidance of Olympic trailblazer and sporting authority Hasely Crawford TC, the NGC ROT programme was formulated to teach track and field skills to young people aged five to 18. NGC worked closely with regional athletics body, the North American, Central American and Caribbean Athletics Association (NACAC) in developing the programme content. Following the initial success of ROT, NGC collaborated with the Basketball Federation of Trinidad and Tobago to add basketball to the initiative.

Until early 2020, ROT was delivered via a roving caravan in which trained coaches held weekend sessions in communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. NGC assesses the community in advance to determine whether there is a suitable facility for hosting the session, such as a levelled and cut recreational ground. Discussions are also held with Physical Education (PE) teachers and clubs to ascertain the level of interest in having a ROT workshop in the area. Generally, ROT aims to conduct a series of four practical workshops on consecutive Saturdays in each community. The Company provides the coaches and all requisite equipment for the workshops and ensures that participants are provided with meals during the day. Participation in the weekend workshops is open to anyone within the age group, including members of athletic clubs.

Transforming Sport Development in the Digital Age | CONTINUED

Teaching is focused on the fundamental skills of running, jumping and throwing – the foundation of all physical sports. Workshops are conducted in a circuit of 45-minute intervals in which participants are grouped according to age and taught the rudiments of seven sports – running, high jump, long jump, hurdles, discus, javelin and shot put. More advanced students receive guidance to improve skills specific to their respective sports. Coaches and PE teachers are also trained to expand their knowledge and improve their coaching capacity.

Since its inception, over 20,000 young people and 100 coaches have benefited from the NGC ROT initiative which has been hosted in 105 communities. The model was also replicated in four Caribbean countries – St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada and Dominica.

The Company has leveraged its longstanding partnership with the National Association of Athletics Administrations of Trinidad and Tobago (NAAATT) to support young sportsmen and women with potential to compete at the local, regional and international levels in various age groups. NGC supports the Kids Athletics Programme (KAP) which was developed by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) – now World Athletics – for integration by all athletics federations into their development programmes. KAP introduces primary school students and PE teachers/coaches to the foundational skills required for running, jumping and throwing. KAP also seeks to incorporate physical activity as a regular part of school life with the concomitant benefits to students' physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing. As an extension of KAP, NGC sponsors primary school games in the Moruga Zone as well as St. Patrick and Caroni Educational Districts.

NGC's commitment to support the nation's sporting talent reaches beyond the pre-competitive level.



Through the Youth Elite Programme (YEP), selected athletes receive assistance for coaching, medical services, nutrition, mental health, as well as involvement in competitions. NGC is justly proud of the YEP athletes, most of whom have gone on to pursue studies and sport-related career paths. In 2021, two YEP athletes – Kelsey Daniel and Tyriq Horsford – made history, becoming the country's first medallists at the inaugural Junior Pan American Games held in Cali, Colombia. Tyriq Horsford bagged a bronze medal with a javelin throw of 71.33 metres, while Kelsey Daniel took silver in the men's long jump, touching down at 7.90 metres.

Integrating and digitising for the future

During the local primary school games put on by the Ministry of Education, areas of potential alignment and integration with NGC's ROT and KAP programmes were identified. Following in-depth

discussions between the Company and the Ministry in 2019, approval was granted for integration of the ROT and KAP content into the ministry's P.E. curriculum for the nation's primary schools. Implementation of the integration plan was however stymied by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 when in-person classes were halted.

As the months went by, it became increasingly evident that a return to familiar ways of operating would not be possible in the short term. NGC moved efficiently to reconfigure how its business operations were conducted, utilising technology to empower its employees to work from home and adopting new technology for its field operations. Given its commitment to delivering service to its stakeholders, the challenges posed by the pandemic were viewed as an opportunity for reimagining and transforming our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) systems.



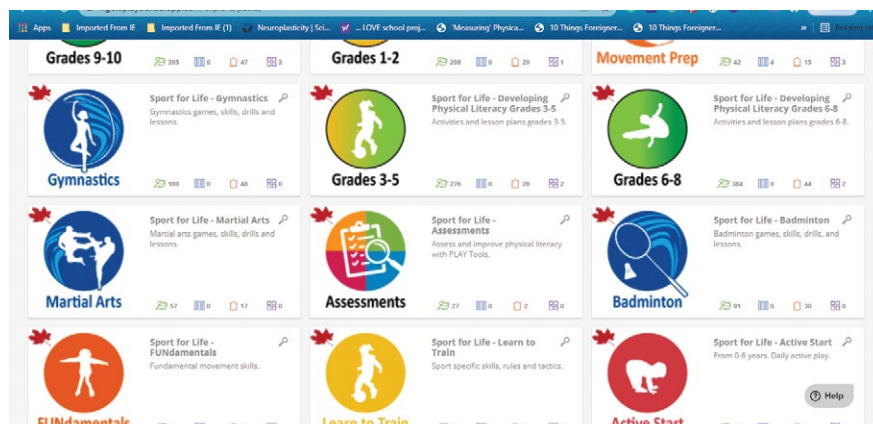
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The Company implemented an approach that is aligned to the UNDP's Digital Transformation Pathway 1, which focuses on using digital technologies to improve our partner experience and solve development challenges. The aim is to achieve innovation in delivery, co-creation, collaboration, and advocacy with our partners (UNDP, 2021). A strategy was developed for delivery of digital coaching and capacity building training for our NAAATT partner coaches and PE teachers.

Discussions were held with multiple stakeholders including NAAATT and the Ministry of Education, to obtain buy-in for the concept of digital coaching. NGC also engaged Sport for Life of Canada for delivery of digital coaching resources on their specialised digital coaching platform — PLAYBuilder. Before participants could be trained to use the platform, it was necessary to introduce them to concepts related to working in the digital space.

Therefore, in Phase 1 of the implementation process, NGC engaged the services of Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), which had provided similar training for the Company's sponsored Police Youth Clubs, to train the coaches and teachers in the use of digital platforms. Over the course of seven 2-hour sessions, participants learned about online facilitation platforms; facilitating online platforms and training; designing content for online learning; and managing online classrooms. The course was intensive and those who completed the programme emerged equipped to begin developing and delivering online coaching and training material.

Phase 2 will involve digitisation and uploading of content on the



A SNAPSHOT OF THE PLAYBUILDER PLATFORM

PLAYBuilder platform. In addition to the PLAYBuilder content pack which includes a plethora of sport and age-specific lesson plans, demos and report templates, a series of fun videos produced by the NAAATT as well as NGC's ROT and KAP content pack will be included in 2022.

To date, 44 coaches and teachers have attended eLearning sessions hosted by Sport for Life, which introduced the key concepts of physical literacy and long-term development in sport and physical activity. A total of 49 persons participated in two workshops focused on the introduction to virtual coaching and how to get started with physical literacy. There are currently 31 coaches, teachers and administrators registered on the platform, which is licenced for a total of 60 persons in the first instance.

Thinking long-term

NGC has embraced the concept of sustainability which inevitably requires that the Company adopt a long-term perspective in how it thinks and acts. In the coming years, we envision that there will

be an overall improvement in the performance of our student athletes at local and regional competitions. We also anticipate that the country's standard of coaching would be transformed as persons not only utilise information on the platform, but also build a community within which their individual and collective experience can be shared. Despite the current physical limitations, increased knowledge of physical literacy would allow for the creation of fun, engaging and safe physical activities for the nation's children. When it comes to our investment in the transformation of sport development, NGC is looking forward with anticipation to see the benefits that will surely accrue in the future.

In alignment with Sustainable Development Goal #3, we are happy to do our part to improve the health and wellbeing of our nation — one child, one partner, one community at a time. ■

References

UNDP. (2021, December 05). UNDP Digital Strategy. Retrieved from UNDP: <https://digitalstrategy.undp.org/>