

SPORTS

Bernie Russell Memorial Pool Tournament postponed

October 17 penciled in as new tentative date

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The Seventh Annual Bernie Russell Memorial Pool Tournament was scheduled to have the Grand Lucayan Ball Room filled with non-stop action this coming weekend.

However, with the threat of Hurricane Irma last weekend international participants were forced to cancel their flights.

According to tournament or-

ganizers, the players feared the potential impact may have been too "devastating."

Hurricane Irma traveled across the Caribbean and Southern Bahamas as a Category 5 storm.

While the track of the storm could not be solidified until late last week, players decided not to take the chance. However, the organizers wished to let the public know that they are working on a date to still host the tournament.

October 17 was selected as the tentative date to host the tournament.

An official date was said to be coming within the next week.

The tournament is still expected to feature some of the top players from around the world, as well as around the country – Grand Bahama, Abaco, New Providence just to name a few.

The Vegas Style affair will have players compete in singles eight-ball and doubles 10-ball competition.

Sponsors of the tournament include Ministry of Tourism,

BTC, West Star Convenience,

age Company (Sands) and Paradise Cove.

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A LOT RIDING ON 2019 IAAF WORLD RELAYS

Within six months, depending upon the endorsement of the Cabinet, the government more than likely will start facilitating some of the funds allocated for the 2019 International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Relays. If the country's financial state allows, given the damages to the southern islands (Ragged Island in particular) by Hurricane Irma and the ongoing economic challenges to meet health care, education and other national demands, the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) for the 2019 relays should be brought fully on stream about a year in advance of the proposed event.

The government of course, must do a detailed assessment going forward, to determine what the national spending will cover, but it is important for the powers that be to start thinking about how significant to the Bahamas Sports Brand, the fourth consecutive edition of the World Relays would be. Indeed, a whole lot is riding on just how the hosting job on the 2019 sports extravaganza goes. The view here is that the IAAF wants yet another magnificent affair so that the decision could readily be made to endorse The Bahamas as the official host country for the relays.

The Bahamas-IAAF World Relays connection was established by former president of the international track and field parent body Lamine Diack. His successor Lord Sebastian Coe seems just as enthused about the relationship as was Diack. However the idea of a country being given the rights to be the official host location would be a precedent and has to be sold to the entire IAAF membership. We must make it easy for Lord Coe and the rest of the IAAF executive branch.

Hopefully, relatively soon, word would go out to the IAAF from the government that, despite what has been left by Hurricane Irma, the discus-



IAAF WORLD RELAYS – The IAAF World Relays is indeed an ideal product for The Bahamas to become synonymous with.

sions led by Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture Michael Pintard in London during the 16th World Championships a couple months ago still hold true. Staging the fourth World Relays in this country would build handsomely on our international sports hosting reputation. The first two events (2014 and 2015) were held in May. This past April, the third World Relays took place at the same Thomas Robinson National Stadium.

It is necessary, I think, to point out that there was a bit of a drop off this year. Only 35 countries took part as compared to 43 for the two previous events. In

2014, 576 athletes represented their native flags. In 2015 there was a boost to 669 from the same amount of countries. This past April 509 participated. The situation suggests the need for more intense marketing, leading up to the 2019 World Relays. The time has come to begin thinking of expanding the World Relays to include a number of related activities.

We need to make the upcoming IAAF item grander. Yes, we must show that in The Bahamas, the IAAF World Relays can become incredibly impressive, resplendent to the point whereby there would be no other serious host rivals. Part and

parcel of the objective should be a national competitive edge that would make coming to The Bahamas more special. The Bahamas reigns as the mixed relay champion. Indeed we won our first World Relays gold medal, represented by Steven Gardiner, Shaunae Miller-Uibo, Anthonique Strachan and Michael Mathieu.

That triumph should be marketed worldwide, continually, to promote the 2019 event. Actually, The Bahamas has done relatively well competitively, as the host nation. The Bahamas is ranked No. 4 on the success scale, based on the 2017 gold and silver medals (men's

1600 meters relay) in 2014 and 2015. On top of The Bahamas sit the United States (17 gold medals and 24 overall), Jamaica (five gold medals and 16 in total), and Kenya (three gold medals and four silver).

The IAAF World Relays is

indeed an ideal product for The Bahamas to become synonymous with.

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Sports Scope
 BY FRED STURUP

