

SPORTS

Bahamian Jonquel Jones shooting for another basketball milestone

Writing about Jonquel Jones never gets unexciting. Jones has become such a wonderfully eventful athlete, who deserves all of the encouragement and accolades she gets from this forum and elsewhere.

It is well documented, her rise to being one of the world's best female basketball players over the last two years. Two seasons in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) saw her evolve rather quickly from just a promising rookie to the greatest single-season rebounder in WNBA history.

She became an all-star starter and a slam-dunk thriller.

In two seasons overseas, playing in Asia, namely, South Korea and China, Jones has established herself as a household name in that region. She won a championship with the Woori Wibee Bank team of the Women's Korean Basketball League

(WKBL) and all of the major individual awards.

Presently, she is in China participating in post-season play in the Women's Chinese Basketball Association (WCBA) Division 1. Jones led the Shanxi Xing Rui squad to a third place regular season finish and accordingly, the No. 3 seed in the play-off. Paced by Jones' awesome statistical contributions, Shanxi demolished Heilongjiang in three straight games to move on to the semi-final round.

Jones and company will face Guangdong beginning today. In two regular season meetings, Shanxi triumphed both times.

Of course in post-season, teams up their performance levels, some in a more considerable manner than others. It figures that Shanxi would be the favorite team but I'm sure that Jones and her teammates are minded not to expect a cakewalk. If Shanxi gets past

Guangdong, the next round will be for all of the marbles.

If a victory is the result, the market value of Jones, the West Grand Bahama, Holmes Rock native, would skyrocket. For all of its prominence and the acceptance that the standard of play is the best in the world, the WNBA does not pay well. In Asia and some European leagues, the salaries are much better.

Jones is nearing billboard star status in Asia. She has told me that her interest is a lengthy career in the WNBA. She said at the time, that she got more satisfaction in playing night in night out against the best players in the world.

There is the money factor though.

Several noted players through the years have opted to forego continuance in the WNBA in preference of greener pastures. For sure, the offers are plentiful that go out to Jones.

What will she do? The future holds the answer.

For now though, she is concentrating on winning another meaningful basketball championship.

I wish her well.

Go Jonquel!

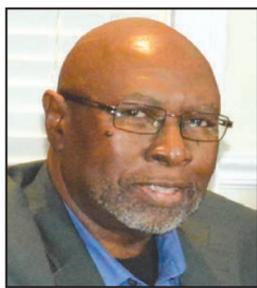
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JONQUEL JONES

SPORTS SCOPE

By FRED STURUP



BEST OF THE BEST - The GBPSAA/GBSSAA Sandra Edgecombe/Cecil Thompson Sports School of Champions award ceremony was held this past Friday at the Harold DeGregory Complex. Pictured are the junior and senior high champion Tabernacle Falcons. The School of Champions is determined on success in the core sports of softball, track and field, basketball, soccer and volleyball. Pictured making the presentation to the school were Senator Jasmine Darius, principal Edward Johnson, Superintendent for the Western Division Ivan Butler, representing the late Sandra as patron, Godfrey Edgecombe, patron Cecil Thompson and Principals/Vice Principal association president Gia Walker. (PHOTOS: SHAYNE STUBBS)

SCHOOL OF CHAMPIONS CELEBRATED

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The Grand Bahama Primary and Secondary School Athletic Associations came together this past Friday for a celebration of champions!

The 2017 Sandra Edgecombe/Cecil Thompson Sports School of Champions is a yearly tradition where both athletic associations come together and honor the schools that were the best of the best in all sports including: softball, track and field, basketball, soccer and volleyball.

Warriors are the 2017 primary school division small school champions. The big school champions of the primary division are the Freeport Primary Conquerors. In the high school division, the Tabernacle Falcons were named the junior and senior high school champions.

All four schools were present to receive their championship trophies at the Harold DeGregory Building in front of some special guests including Ministry of Education Superintendent for the Western Division, Ivan Butler and Principal and Vice Principal Association president Gia Walker.

As patron of the awards ceremony, Thompson deemed it a "special" honor to be a part of the occasion. After listing a few of his accomplishments as an athlete in high school and college, he bid congratulations to the organizers and students for a job well done.

"It's just left for me to say how proud I am of my former student who is the organizer behind this event (Oswald Simmons). He's doing an excellent job.

"Congratulations to Freeport Primary School, Bishop Michael Eldon Primary School, and double congratulations to the two-time champions, Tabernacle Baptist Academy," Thompson stated.

Widower of the late Edgecombe, Godfrey, expressed his gratitude for honoring his deceased wife. He reminded those in attendance of "Mother Blue Jay's" love and joy in seeing young persons excel.

"She always wanted the best for her children and for them to do well. She would be very proud of this day. May they continue to do well in their education and sporting events. May her soul rest in peace."

Senator Jasmine Darius stood proxy for the Honorable Kwasi Thompson, who was unable to attend the ceremony as guest speaker. The senator, who is also a former athlete in her own

right, repeated the role sports plays in young adults.

"It is a great medium to help keep the mind, body and soul in sync and maintain a balance between school and play. We encourage our youth in sporting activities because there are many life lessons and valuable character traits that are defined and honed through sports.

"The qualities of leadership, sharing, team spirit and tolerance are learned from sports. Sports teaches our students to maintain a physical stamina but it also develops the habit of obedience and of discipline. It builds the determination and produces the will power to suc-

ceed."

Principal of BMES Curt Hollingsworth shared that you could not find two better individuals than Edgecombe and Thompson to honor for such an occasion. He also shared a few encouraging words to all the winners.

"Decide who you want to become and don't let anyone ever tell you that you cannot achieve it. Because I am a testimony that what one believes, once can achieve."

Freeport Primary principal Joy Ritchie credited the work of the school's physical education teachers, Shendira (Continued on Page 11)