

SPORTS



DELEGATION – World Championships in Glasgow, Scotland. Pictured far left Cora Hepburn and far right Barbra Thompson

Nation's gymnastics matriarch Barbara Thompson passes on

Cora Hepburn passionate about contributions made by Thompson

I'll always remember Barbara Thompson for the ability she had to be a dynamic sports leader in stark contrast to her low-key demeanor. In fact her profound link to sports in The Bahamas has always been somewhat of a contradiction to other leadership styles. She had an enormous task at hand, but went about her sports development business extremely quietly.

The matriarch of organized gymnastics in The Bahamas died earlier this week and she has left some huge footprints on the national sports scene. Filling them will be quite the challenge. She blanketed her passion better than anyone I ever met. Deeply devoted to cementing gymnastics into the organized mainstream of the national sports fraternity, Thompson gave much of her life over the last four decades to the sport, in the most unassuming fashion.

She was extremely courteous, respectful, gracious, heart-warming and appreciative. She requested assistance with building and promoting gymnastics, but more often than not, the response was not exuberant. Nevertheless, she carried on with a passion to contribute to

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BY FRED STURRUP



nation building through sports, equaled by few.

For years, Thompson struggled with the national gymnastics program, which she fostered and sustained. She never really received the attention deserved, to best grow gymnastics in The Bahamas, but there are those like, the producer of Sports Scope, who have from the outset, appreciated her presence as a national sports leader.

One such other is Cora Hepburn, who served as vice president to Thompson on the gymnastics executive board and now is the acting president.

"I see Barbara Thompson as a contributor of the highest order. She gave abundantly to the development of gymnastics in

this country, even though we got nothing, for the past six years from the Ministry of Sports. Other sports organizations got grants annually, but we got nothing.

"I spoke to the Director of Sports, Tim Munnings about this and he talked about the conflict of the last two years in gymnastics. I asked him what about the four years before. But, this grand lady, Barbara Thompson carried on. I can tell you something in particular. When we went to the World Gymnastics Championships in 2015, yes, representing The Bahamas, Barbara had to come up with \$20,000 of her own money to cover the team's cost.

"That's how dedicated she

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~ Cora Hepburn

was. She covered that financial burden alone. Through the years, we would get small donations from business, houses, but for the most part, she undertook the financial burden of building the sport of gymnastics in the country," said an emotional Hepburn, when we chatted on Thursday.

Hepburn's passion towards the

late iconic sports leader is understood.

The national sports landscape has lost a vital development role player. As for Gymnastics Bahamas, it will be extremely difficult to find a replacement to provide the same kind of "total" support, given for these many years by Thompson.

Perhaps the Bahamas Olympic



BARBARA THOMPSON

Committee, in its new development outreach program, will do a lot to fill the void, even if, financial grant support from the Ministry of Sports is not forthcoming.

I extend condolences to Hepburn, the other friends, colleagues and family members of the late Barbara Thompson.

May her soul forever rest in peace!

(To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturup at sturup1504@gmail.com or on WhatsApp at 727-6363).

NWCU lends support to CARIFTA swim team member

SHAYNE STUBBS
FN Sports Reporter
shayne@nasguard.com

The 2018 CARIFTA Swimming Championships are fast approaching.

The 36-member roster will be in Kingston, Jamaica March 31-April 3 defending their CARIFTA championship, while looking to add their fourth championship in the past five years.

Among those 36 junior swimmers is Marvin Johnson Jr. The first time CARIFTA team member made waves up to this point by posting CARIFTA standard times at such a young age. The 11-12 competitor is expected to compete in nearly a dozen races over the Easter weekend. While there are some initial nerves headed into his first CARIFTA games, Johnson Jr. stated he is ready to hit the pool at the National Aquatic Center in Kingston.

"It's shocking because last year I was too young but I was making the times. I'm a little afraid because last year it was here (Bahamas) and I would have all of the family's support. But now it's in Jamaica, in a foreign land and I'll have to adjust quickly."



THANK YOU KINDLY - The National Worker's Credit Union is lending a helping hand to Marvin Johnson Jr., center, Marvin Johnson Sr, far left, and family. The NWCU made a generous donation to help Jr.'s family travel and witness his first CARIFTA swim experience this March 31-April 3 in Kingston, Jamaica. Making the donation is NWCU Branch Manager, Karen Neily.

(PHOTO: SHAYNE STUBBS)

Nonetheless, Johnson Jr.'s time in Jamaica should be made a little easier thanks to the help of the National Worker's Credit Union. Their generous donation to help Jr.'s family make it over to Jamaica to watch their youngest child perform, should make things much easier on the multi-event swimmer.

Father, Marvin Johnson Sr, expressed that the donation comes in a timely manner. While making sure Jr. has what he needs and also traveling with Jr. to past international events, Sr. is just grateful that the NWCU saw it fit to ensure that the family would not miss out on Jr.'s CARIFTA experience.

"I appreciate it so much because we have to make travel arrangements as a family going over to watch him. And the Bahamas Swimming Federation is taking care of his trip. But us getting over there is a little challenge because we've been travelling all year with the Goodwill Games and stuff like that. So

everything was coming out of our pockets.

"So I came to my bank and asked them for assistance to help along the way and they said no problem. They like to see when young men are doing big things in the community."

With Sr. raising his son along with wife and mother to Johnson Jr, Karon-Pinder-Johnson, he encouraged parents to be their children's primary motivators in whatever their children gravitate to.

"Push your kids, find out what they like. And like I say, sports is the way into college and that's what we're pushing for."

Branch Manager at the NWCU Karen Neily voiced that the company is no stranger when it comes to helping those in need. She furthered that when they heard young Marvin was selected to the team, they had no issue in helping out.

"We are always happy when young men are excelling, because a lot of times you only hear about the young ladies excelling. But I'm pleased that this is a young man who is excelling all around. So National Workers is pleased to assist them in their efforts."

The help was certainly unexpected to Jr. and was entirely

grateful that the company saw it fit to help the family.

"All I heard this morning (from my father), is Marvin, I'm going to pick you up from school early because we have to go and do something for the National (Worker's) Credit Union. He didn't tell me until I got here and I was very excited and I'm just appreciative."

The full CARIFTA national swim team are as follows:

Girls 11-12: Abayomi Brown, Devin Bethel, Grace Farrington, Leylah Knowles, Keianna Moss and Mia Sastre

Girls 13-14: Ketlyn Cabral, Giovanna Eneas, Salene Gibson, Jamilah Hepburn, Delaney Mizell and Zayle-Elizabeth Thompson.

Girls 15-17: Celia Campbell, Anya MacPhail, Lilly Higgs, Victoria Russell and Virginia Stamp.

Boys 11-12: Amauri Bonaby, Nigel Forbes, Tristin Ferguson, Marvin Johnson and Hodari Prince.

Boys 13-14: Rommel Ferguson, Roman Pinder, Ishan Roy, Erald Thompson III, Lamar Taylor and Kierro Stubbs.

Boys 15-17: Izaak Bastian, DaVante Carey, Samuel Gibson, Kevon Lockhart, Peter Morley, Ian Pinder, William Russell and Luke Kennedy-Thompson.