

SPORTS



ALREADY BACK AT WORK — McArthur Rigby, pictured above, became the 60 and over champion at the Peter Phillips Veterans Tennis Championship in St. Lucia this past weekend. He and two other veteran players from The Bahamas represented.

McArthur Rigby comes out on top at Peter Phillips Tournament

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McArthur Rigby proved he still had a lot left in the tank this past weekend.

The YMCA tennis instructor, along with two other veteran players, travelled to St. Lucia to compete in the 2018 Peter Phillips Veterans Tennis Championships.

There, Rigby went on to become the top veteran in the 60 and Over category. The tournament featured veterans from around the globe, including the Caribbean, United States and Canada.

The tournament has been in existence for a number of years and this was Rigby's first time taking part in the competition.

"It was really a good tournament," he expressed. "I haven't played singles in 30-plus years, honestly. So I figured since I'm coaching at the Y, let me go and see where I am. In my first round I won 6-0, 6-3. Then I won my semi-final round and ended up playing a gentleman named John Long from Canada. I beat him 6-4, 6-1. "I also played with Marlene Henry in the mixed doubles. We lost to the top team, which turned out to be a really, really good match. Her and Sandra Bass also played in the ladies' doubles, and they played really good. They lost in a seventh set tiebreak."

Rigby admitted that he originally planned to compete in the championships last year and had put in a lot of work leading up to the tournament. But, he was unsure of what the competition would be like.

Before he left for St. Lucia this past Friday, the veteran noted it was simply all about strategy to put himself in the best position to be competitive, versus flat out winning.

The rest was history. "I left here knowing that if I played a certain way that I had a chance of at least looking like I could play, not necessarily winning. My plan was just to go out there and perform to the best of my ability. I just stuck to the same game plan and it worked really, really, well."

Along with his recent experience,

Rigby added that he has advocated for more senior players to be competitive. He explained that if juniors were allowed to see more local veterans compete in meaningful games, it would give the upcoming generation of racket swingers added motivation.

He noted that more senior competitions, locally, would provide more opportunities for seniors to push themselves.

"I really believe the future is the junior level. I'll always believe in that. But if you forget the seniors then you forget the history, so the children would

have no one to follow. The young kids have no one to see play, they have to watch the television and see everyone else play because they don't believe the seniors can play." I believe we need to have that, locally. I believe there is a national senior tournament in Nassau. And

if so, and they want the senior nationals to grow then they have to look at bringing it here or to Eleuthera - anywhere there is a tennis court.

"And when you have tournaments for the older players, it keeps them competitive. I think the most fascinating thing for

me over there (St. Lucia), was seeing 79 senior people saying 'hey I can challenge myself' and give it their best efforts. The courts were filled up and everyone was cheering. I thought it was really fascinating, because I really believe in the senior people challenging themselves."

Saluting national sports icon, versatile, prolific Eddie Ford

The vast majority of the significant role players who crafted the first part of the Golden Era of Sports in The Bahamas (1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s) have gone on into eternity.

In recent times, the latter generation of Golden Sports Era stalwarts, have as well, been moving off this earthly scene, quite rapidly. In this forum, often, I salute many of them who are still with us and those who have gone on, for the purpose of connecting them with generations of Bahamians who came along after the Golden Era of Sports in the country.

Today, the spotlight is on Eddie Ford.

For versatility and prolific characteristics in sports, Ford, who is presently facing some health challenges, had no superiors.

You could go down the list of the multi-sports icons in Bahamian history, namely such as, Leroy "Uncle Lee" Archer, Leviticus "Uncle Lou" Adderley, Tom "The Bird/Berruti" Grant, Leonard "Boston Blackie" Miller, Roy Armbrister, Cynthia "Mother" Pratt-Moxey, Jayson Moxey, Fred "Papa" Smith, Hattie Moxey, Andre Rodgers, Randy Rodgers, Oria Wood, and Pattie Symonette, among the lot, and the argument could be made that Ford was the most versatile and prolific of them all.

He was known more for his prowess in baseball, softball and cricket, but Ford achieved a milestone in basketball that guarantees him being in the

conversation about the greatest single performance in that sport.

In baseball, I hold the view that Ford was the greatest Bahamian who never played in the Major Leagues. He had it all and would have been an all-star at any position. I say that because of the ability he demonstrated in darting off the mound to field grounders, during his short tenure as a pitcher.

He had the potential to be one of the country's finest pitchers, before he reverted full time to the outfield. As an outfielder, he was impeccable. He operated at the highest of standards. Ford must have made errors. He was not perfect, but I, personally, never saw him drop a fly ball or misjudge one. On none of the many occasions that I watched him play, did he throw to the wrong base. When he had to make the relay to third, he did so. When it was appropriate to throw to second, that's what he did. I saw him, one time, hide the ball and then pick off a runner at first, by throwing a straight-line strike to the bag.

He also had a particular acquired skill in the outfield, a small percentage of others, at any level of baseball, mastered. At the crack of the bat, Ford in his prime, would go to a spot and most often, without him having to move a step to the left or right, the ball would fall directly into his glove.

On the base path, he was efficient. Everything worked the same for him, in softball.

As a cricketer, I don't think there was a better batsman, and

he was well rounded. I have always maintained that if Ford had seized the opportunity, he could have played test cricket and had a quality career in that sport, internationally.

In high school, Ford also showed athletic skills. He had speed and if he had pursued long or triple jumping, he would have been one of our best, I think.

Eddie Ford was the real deal, definitely.

What about Eddie Ford as a basketball player?

There are those who would argue that he was not one of the best. Yet, he is the only Bahamian who scored 100 points in a game. He owns that prolific accomplishment, a legendary component.

An incredible sportsman indeed, was, Ford in his prime.

The second son in perhaps the greatest sports family in Bahamian history, Eddie is considered the greatest Ford. That says quite a lot, given that older brother Wenty was a Major Leaguer; younger sister Linda was arguably the most successful Bahamian female pitcher; and younger brother Mario has excelled as an athlete and a sports mentor.

Today, it is with pleasure that I made the trip down memory lane to salute one of our stalwart contributors to nation building through sports.

Continued best wishes Eddie!

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EDDIE FORD

SPORTS SCOPE

By Fred Sturup

