

SPORTS



BAHAMAS GOLD—The Bahamas as the host country for the third consecutive IAAF World Relays, captured its first gold medal. It came via the exploits of standout athletes in this file photo from left: Michael Mathieu, Shaunae Miller-Uibo, Anthonique Strachan and Steven Gardiner.

Important factors connected to World Relays controversy

Public kept in the dark about international track classic

One of the problems Bahamians are constantly confronted with, is being kept in the dark by governing politicians.

This is so very true, regarding the International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) World Relays. There is a large World Relays picture, much of which the public has not been privy too. It seems, from one governing party to the other, nothing changes.

Firstly, the former Progressive Liberal Party Government is to be applauded for securing the first three versions of the IAAF World Relays. Indeed, something quite wonderful was brought to the country. The World Relays product, the latest mega international plank of the IAAF, expanded the outreach of The Bahamas beyond any direct tourism vehicle. In fact, up to the present controversial state of affairs, whereby our government has opted not to partner with the IAAF for the sports extravaganza, The Bahamas in the view of the world, had become synonymous with the international track classic.

For some strange reason though, the PLP Government, with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture as the primary arm acting on its behalf, kept important data from the public. In this very space I lobbied for the full details of the arrangements the government at the time had made with the IAAF.

How were the television rights handled?

Was there a split agreement? Was Broadcasting Corporation of The Bahamas paid in ac-



MICHAEL PINTARD

cordance with the magnitude of the world event?

Was the BCB paid at all?

Did The Bahamas cover all of the air travel, accommodations, food and inland transportation costs for IAAF officials who came into the country throughout the preparation periods. What were the payments made to members of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC)?

Did The Bahamas share at all in the marketing revenue from the World Relays, for any of the three?

What were the profit/loss fac-

tors for the three World Relays competitions?

The PLP Government kept Bahamians in the dark on the aforementioned.

Now, we come to this present Free National Movement Government. Early on in the new central administration, understandably the new politicians in charge were in awe of the incredibly high level of spending done to accommodate major events, sporting and otherwise.

The then new Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, Michael Pintard traveled to Ugan-

da for the 2017 Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, July 31-August 4. It was widely reported that he then flew into London for the 2017 IAAF World Championships and had discussions with President Lord Sebastian Coe and other IAAF executives regarding the conditions of the partnership for the World Relays. It figures that the financial structure was discussed.

If the terms that remained on the table following those discussions, were not deemed palatable when Pintard conveyed the same to his Cabinet colleagues upon his return home, then the public should have been informed, updated.

Clearly, the national sporting fraternity got the impression that it was business as usual and the 2019 World Relays would indeed take place in The Bahamas, although under the auspices of a different central administration.

This government, just as did the last one, kept the public in the dark. As a result, the nation was shocked to learn, all these many months after Pintard came home from those reported key meetings in London with IAAF officials, that there would be no World Relays hosted here in 2019.

While the narrative about high cost (\$5 million) is relevant, if the discussions with the IAAF officials were rigid and not balanced to be worth it to The Bahamas, the public should have been informed.

Frankly it is disrespectful to the nation to be simply told the World Relays will not take place because of the \$5 million



LORD SEBASTIAN COE

tag. The public should be given details.

What did Pintard ask for in those reported discussions with IAAF executives in London? What were the points of discussions The Bahamas and the IAAF could not settle on?

Why did it take so long to conclude that there would be no partnership with Lord Coe and company for a fourth edition of the World Relays?

Was the disengagement done smoothly, whereby the IAAF would consider granting The Bahamas the rights to stage the World Relays again?

Governments are elected to govern and it would be unreasonable to expect the public to be informed of every single function. However, with major national issues, especially when they are controversial, governments should be much more forthcoming with details.

The IAAF World Relays had become very important to Bahamians.

(To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturupp at sturupp1504@onWhatsApp.com or 737-6363).

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SPORTS SCOPE

BY FRED STURUP

