

News

A nation says thanks

Homecoming celebrations for Olympians begin today

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Two-time Olympic 200 metres champion Veronica Campbell-Brown (second right) is greeted by her mother Pamela Bailey upon her arrival at the Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston yesterday for the seven-day Olympic Homecoming celebrations. Looking on are JAAA president Howard Aris (right), Sports Minister Olivia Grange (partially hidden) and decathlete Maurice Smith (left, in white shirt). (Photo: Garfield Robinson)

Seven days of celebrations in honour of the outstanding performance of Jamaica's athletes at this year's Beijing Olympics will begin today with a motorcade throughout the capital during which the country's team to the games will be greeted by a grateful nation.

The motorcade will be preceded by a welcome reception at the Norman Manley International Airport to where the athletes will be bused.

After that, the motorcade, which will begin at the Harbour View roundabout, will move along Michael Manley Boulevard to Port Royal and Duke streets, Marcus Garvey Drive, up Hagley Park Road, Hope Road, Trafalgar Road, along Knutsford Boulevard onto Oxford Road and Tom Redcam Avenue onto Arthur Wint Drive and conclude at the National Stadium Car Park.

Later this evening the athletes will be guests of honour at a fund-raising dinner at Strawberry Hill dubbed 'Dining with the Stars Under the Stars'.

Proceeds from that event will go towards the Jamaica Amateur Athletic Association's Programme of Development for the Track & Field Athletics Team.

Special guest speaker will be the director of the Black

Entertainment & Sports Lawyers Association, Kendal Minter, who Sports Minister Olivia Grange said would speak specifically on leveraging the success of Jamaica's athletes at the Olympics towards building "Brand Jamaica" and ensuring their own continued success.

The Homecoming celebration moves into top gear tomorrow with a concert, National Awards Ceremony and Sports Gala at the National Stadium beginning at 3:30 pm.

National Awards will be conferred on gold medal winners Usain Bolt, Shelly-Ann Fraser, Melaine Walker, Veronica Campbell-Brown, Asafa Powell, Nesta Carter and Michael Frater. Recommended special awards will also be conferred. Colour-coded tickets are to be issued for the event, while the National Arena and National Indoor Sports Centre will be made available for any 'spill-over' of spectators. Activities will also be streamed live on the Internet.

On Sunday, Judge Patrick Robinson will sign copies of his book, Jamaican Athletics: A Model to the World at Hope United Church at noon, and later that day the National Heritage Thanksgiving Service will be held at Emancipation Park.

A by-invitation-only party will be held in honour of triple Olympic gold medallist Bolt at the Quad nightclub starting at 8:00 pm Sunday.

On Monday, Olympians will visit their former high schools. Veronica Campbell-Brown, Simone Facey, Aleen Bailey, Shereefa Lloyd, Mardrea Hyman, and Michael Blackwood will return to Vere Technical; Asafa Powell will head to Charlemont High in Linstead; Novlene Williams makes the trek to Ferncourt in St Ann; while Shelly-Ann Fraser and Michael Frater go to Marescaux Road and Heroes Circle to Wolmer's.

The group goes west on Tuesday for a motorcade starting in Montego Bay heading to Falmouth where there will also be a sports gala and homecoming on Wednesday at the Trelawny Multi-Purpose Stadium.

The athletes will be presented with the keys to the city of Montego Bay in Sam Sharpe Square before the motorcade goes to Trelawny.

The celebrations end on Friday with a Digicel-sponsored banquet at Vale Royal. Proceeds of that banquet will go towards Special Olympics Jamaica.