



Sports

Olympians receive keys to city of Kingston

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Triple Olympic gold medallist Usain Bolt receives the Key to the City of Kingston from Mayor Desmond McKenzie at yesterday's function to honour the 2008 Beijing Olympic team at the Norman Manley International Airport yesterday. (Photo: Lionel Rookwood)

EIGHT Olympic gold medallists received brand new shiny keys to the city of Kingston, while the other 2008 medallists were given medals by Mayor Desmond McKenzie as the weeklong celebration of Jamaica's exploits at the Beijing Olympic Games in August began yesterday.

Thirty-eight members of the historic 2008 Olympic team were honoured in an hourlong function at the Norman Manley International Airport shortly before being whisked away on several trucks for a motorcade which would take them from the Harbour View Roundabout through Downtown Kingston, New Kingston and into the National Stadium.

The athletes, who had been arriving in spurts since the Games ended, were bused to the airport especially for the event.

Hurdlers Brigitte Foster-Hylton, Delloreen Ennis-London, Sherone Simpson, shot putter Dorian Scott, swimmers Alia and Jevon Atkinson, Natalie Moodie, and cyclist Ricardo Lynch were notably absent as Jamaica Olympic Association president Mike Fennell apologised on behalf of those who could not be present for the government-sponsored honouring of the Olympic team which returned from China

with an historic 11 medals.



Olympic 200m champion Veronica Campbell-Brown gets a big smack on the cheek from Prime Minister Bruce Golding at the welcome home for the country's 2008 Olympians. (Photos: Lionel Rookwood)

Gold medallists Usain Bolt, Shelly-Ann Fraser, Melaine Walker, Veronica Campbell-Brown, Asafa Powell, Dwight Thomas, Michael Frater and Nesta Carter were all given the keys to the city, while 400m silver medallist Shericka Williams, 100m silver and 200m bronze medallist Kerron Stewart, and mile relay bronze medallists Novlene Williams-Mills, Shereefa Lloyd, Bobby-Gaye Wilkins and Rosemarie Whyte collected medals.

"It's the appreciation of a grateful city," McKenzie said. Prime Minister Bruce Golding told those in attendance at the function that so astounding and inspiring was the achievement of the Jamaicans in Beijing that it was the first thing US president George W Bush mentioned to him during his recent visit to the United States.

"What a powerful performance your athletes gave in Beijing," Golding said he was told by the US head of state who is set to demit office in just over three months.

Golding added that the government would be doing a number of things to expand the institutional development of sports and that an announcement outlining details to that effect would be made soon.

He implored the private sector to give their support to the projects being planned.

UK-based Samantha Albert, Jamaica's first Olympic equestrian representative was appreciative of the welcome the athlete's received and said it was nice having missed much of the excitement on mainland China as her competition had been based in Hong Kong.

"It's amazing and nice to come down and be with the other medallists," Albert, who was there with her two young sons, said.

She added that her unique position as Jamaica's first and only equestrian in the Olympics drew a lot of attention. Jamaica won 11 medals at the 29th Olympiad, including six

gold, three silver and two bronze.