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SPORT

Spotlight on VCB

Thursday, February 12, 2015



SEVEN-TIME Olympic medallist Veronica Campbell-Brown will be the highlight of this year's fifth consecutive staging of the Ben Francis Invitational Track & Field meet set for February 21.

Campbell-Brown will join her alma mater Vere Technical in a Ben Francis Invitational promotional motorcade from the school through the town of May Pen on Friday, before accepting her award as this year's honoree at the meet on Saturday.

Campbell-Brown is one of more than 40 Olympians and World Championships participants to have passed through the hallowed halls of the Hayes, Clarendon-based institution, and will be the fourth female athlete to be honoured at the meet since its inception in 2010.

Many-time World Championships medallist Merlene Ottey, who is perhaps the most famous

amongst the numbers, along with Deon Hemmings-McCatty and Aileen Bailey, were honoured over the last three years. Campbell-Brown is one of only nine athletes to have won world championships titles at the youth, junior and senior levels of an athletic event.

She is the second woman in history to win two consecutive Olympic 200-metre events, after Barbel Wockel of Germany at the 1976 and 1980 Olympics.

The 32-year-old, who holds personal bests of 10.76 seconds for the 100 metres and 21.74 seconds for the 200 metres, was one of the first female athletes from the Americas to be appointed a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation ambassador in 2009 for gender equity. Henritta Stewart, Principal of Vere Technical, hailed the sensational athlete for maintaining contact with the institution, in particularly for taking time out of her busy training schedule to visit the school as a means of fulfilling her UNESCO ambassadorial role with a motivational session.

“As we stage Ben Francis Invitational and celebrate five years of existence, the present school family takes pleasure in writing, congratulating and honouring at the meet Mrs Veronica Campbell-Brown,” Stewart said, while addressing the launch of the meet at the Spanish Court Hotel yesterday.

“This world-class athlete and Olympian stands out especially as a past student of the school and maintains consistent contact with the school; she provides foundation scholarships for two girls and mentors them in a role she uses to promote gender equity. She conducted a one-day workshop on gender equity to heighten the self-esteem of approximately 200 grade eight girls at Vere Technical,” she revealed.

The meet will take place at Vere Technical High School ground commencing at 9:00 am with a fee of \$100 for children under 12 and \$200 for adults. Over 1200 athletes from approximately 52 schools will participate in high jump, 100m, 400m, 4X100 and 4X400m relays, 1,500m, 2,000m steeplechase, 3,000m female and the 5,000m male.

This year the meet will feature a number of championship events, which will see the winning schools receiving \$40,000 per event. These events will be the 2,000m steeplechase; 400m Class One and the 4X100- metre relay Class One boys, while the girls' category will feature the 100m Class One, high jump Class One and the 4X400-metre relays.

Stewart pointed out that the prestigious meet has now become “institutionalised” and is still serving as the startling reminder of the legacy of Vere Technical High school to track and field

prowess among secondary schools. “We are noted to be the school that has produced most world-class athletes and Olympians, but today (yesterday) my message is so very simple — we must remember that our roots are in the past, but we do not belong to the past. We live in the present and must deal with the present in order to establish our expectations for the future.

“Vere Technical High School has a great foundation and it is based on spirit leadership and character; today we have great opportunities, and these opportunities overwhelm our problems. Therefore, Vere Technical High school will not be deterred from its vision, it will continue to be recognised for its performance and we will realise our aspirations,” Stewart said.

Meanwhile, pioneer principal of Vere Technical High School Colonel Ben Francis, in whose honour the Ben Francis Invitational Track and Field Meet is named, also lent his voice to the proceedings.

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