

## **STATEMENT**

12 April 2023

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

The Executive of the Cayman Islands Athletic Association (CIAA) would like to recognise the achievements of the athletes who represented the Cayman Islands at the 2023 CARIFTA Games recently held in Nassau, Bahamas, and congratulate each of them on their performances. It has been 13 years since the Cayman Islands won an individual track gold medal at CARIFTA, and this team returned home with not 1 but 2 Gold medals and a Bronze. They represented Cayman admirably, and we as a nation should be very proud.

We would like to address the unfortunate incident that took place at the Games involving national athlete Lacey Barnes-Riley and her husband which resulted in their accreditation being revoked. Ms. Barnes-Riley is a talented and respected Caymanian athlete whose contributions to the country's track and field community, both on and off the field, are invaluable and greatly appreciated. The CIAA Executive would like to apologise to her and her husband for their experience at CARIFTA and we regret the way it unfolded. We hope that they will consider formally engaging with the CIAA training and development programmes as their experience and expertise will greatly benefit the further development of our Cayman athletes.

The development and future of track and field is CIAA's core mission and is why we took twenty-one athletes to the CARIFTA Games even though coming out of our local trials we had eight athletes qualify by CARIFTA standards. Development of athletes and the sport will only be further aided by having talented and passionate support from athletes like Ms. Barnes-Riley and her husband.

We also wish to provide a timeline of events that will hopefully bring some clarity to the matter.

First, it is important to note that accreditation of team officials can only be made through the auspices of the Member Federation and accreditation of personal coaches can only be made with the consent of the Member Federation. In this instance CIAA is the Member Federation.

In January Ms. Barnes-Riley, observing protocol, applied for CARIFTA accreditation through CIAA. In February she was advised that accreditation was not possible because the team had already reached its quota as it relates to the number of coaches per number of athletes. This ratio is determined and enforced by the North American, Central American and Caribbean Athletic Association (NACAC), one of the governing bodies for athletics in the Caribbean. In fact, while in the Bahamas, another more senior coach who had athletes competing in the meet requested accreditation from CIAA and was denied for the same reason. He ultimately coached from the stands. Ms. Barnes-

Riley and her husband then applied directly to NACAC for accreditation as part of the Cayman Islands team and were denied.

When the Games began, both Ms. Barnes-Riley and her husband were observed on different occasions in the coaches' area coaching members of the Cayman team. An inquiry made with the local organizing committee (LOC) revealed that Mr. and Mrs. Riley were accredited as team coaches. Furthermore, their credentials were obtained through the actions of Ms. Pauline Davis, who collected the passes and removed them from the LOC office over the objection of the LOC, who required proof that CIAA's approval had been received before handing the passes over to anyone.

In CIAA's discussion with the LOC, both parties agreed that the process by which Mr. and Mrs. Riley obtained accreditation violated NACAC Rules. In addition, the team levies would be increased. For these reasons, when the President of the Bahamas Association of Athletic Associations (BAAA) asked how to proceed, the CIAA Executive asked that Mr. and Mrs. Riley's accreditation be revoked but that they be permitted to stay in the stadium if they desired.

Two unarmed policemen were seen walking in Ms. Barnes-Riley's direction, but we cannot confirm if they approached her or accosted her. What was observed was Ms. Barnes-Riley walking hand in hand with the BAAA President. There were no police officers accompanying them.

At the heart of this incident is a breach of protocol which could have had serious repercussions for CIAA, the Bahamas LOC and our athletes. We concede that the way it was handled by CARIFTA organisers was regrettable but the outcome would have been the same – a revocation of the accreditation due to the way in which it was obtained. We welcome the opportunity to engage in dialogue with Mrs. Barnes-Riley and her husband with a view to moving forward and building on the positive momentum that Cayman's success at CARIFTA achieved.