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World Stars to Salute Bolt on June 10

A constellation of world stars will be present to pay homage to Usain Bolt as he runs his last race on Jamaican soil during the second staging of the JN-Racers Grand Prix at the National Stadium in Kingston, Jamaica, on Saturday 10th June. This international athletics meeting, dubbed “Salute to a Legend,” will feature appearances on the track and field of no less than three World Record Holders, four Olympic Champions and six World Champions – in addition to Usain Bolt himself. This was announced by Glen Mills, coach of Usain Bolt and President of Racers Track Club, at a press conference at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel today to outline plans for the second Racers Grand Prix.

Mills recalled the tremendous success of the first staging of the meet last year, and pledged to use the meet as an instrument for the continued development of Jamaica’s athletes. In an exclusive discussion preceding the press conference, he pinpointed the role of last year’s JN-Racers Grand Prix in helping Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce to get back on track after a worrying injury and in preparing Wayde van Niekerk for his successful assault on Michael Johnson’s 400 metres world record at the Rio Olympics.

Van Niekerk will be back in Kingston for the meet this year, said Mills. Joining him will be fellow World Record Holders David Rudisha of Kenya (800 metres) and Mo Farah of Great Britain. This was confirmed by the athletes themselves in videos they sent to the conference. The American Christian Taylor, Olympic and World Champion in the Triple Jump has also confirmed his intention to be among the contestants lining up by the sandpit at the National Stadium on June 10.

This year’s meet will have fifteen international events and four development events in a total of twenty-one events for the night. The international section of the meet will feature eight events for men and seven for women. The 800 metres has been added to the list of men’s events, which now comprises: 100 metres, 200 metres, 400 metres, 800 metres, 110 metres hurdles, 400 metres hurdles, Triple Jump and Shot Put. The women’s events now consist of: 100 metres, 200 metres, 400 metres, 100 metres hurdles, 400 metres hurdles, Triple Jump and High Jump.

Coach Mills explained that Bolt had been the flag-bearer for the Racers Track Club for the past decade, and that it was only fitting that he be honoured by the Club before he takes his leave from competitive athletics.

Following Dr Mills’s address and a short video presentation, Usain Bolt thanked Coach Mills, Nugent Walker, his management team and his parents for the tremendous role they had played in getting him to where he is today. He specially thanked his faithful fans who had stood by him through thick and thin, and declared that Kingston’s National Stadium was where his journey to international

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fame began, as a fifteen-year-old at the World Junior Games in 2002, and that it felt right that his crowning race in London this coming summer be preceded by a final appearance before his Jamaican fans at the site of his most cherished victory.

In his address, Coach Mills reported that the number of foreign athletes wishing to compete in the meet had been overwhelming: consisting of most of those from last year and others who had heard of the excitement, warmth, smooth running and professionalism of last year's meet. He announced the names of over twenty of those who had signed up so far, from Jamaica and seven other countries. The list reads: Usain Bolt (Jamaica); Yohan Blake (Jamaica); Asafa Powell (Jamaica); Wayde van Niekerk (South Africa); Akani Simbine (South Africa); David Rushida (Kenya); Mo Farah (Great Britain); Zharnel Hughes (Great Britain); Trayvon Bromell (USA); Kemar Bailey-Cole (Jamaica); Tori Bowie (USA); Danielle Williams (Jamaica); Blessing Okagbare (Nigeria); Ristananna Tracey (Jamaica); Kaliese Spencer (Jamaica); Dalilah Muhammad (USA); Francena McCorory (USA); Jenna Prandini (USA); Hansel Parchment (Jamaica); Annsert Whyte (Jamaica); Javier Coulson (Puerto Rico); Michael Frater (Jamaica); Jaheel Hyde (Jamaica); Javon Francis (Jamaica); Warren Weir (Jamaica); Gayon Evans (Jamaica); Jura Levy (Jamaica); and Tiffany James (Jamaica).

A further announcement is to be made in May listing additional contestants.

Earlier, former Olympian and vice-president of the JAAA, Vilma Charlton commended Glen Mills and his Organizing Committee for the high level of professionalism of the first Racers Grand Prix last year.

In the keynote address, Jamaica's Minister of Sport, Olivia Grange spoke passionately of Bolt's contribution to Jamaica's development, and announced that a statue of him had been commissioned and would be erected in Statue Park at the National Stadium this summer. She also pledged increased financial support from the government for the meet.

Tickets for the JN-Racers Grand Prix may be purchased on-line as of the 1st of May, by visiting the meet's website racersgrandprix.com. Physical tickets will be available later at all JN Bank locations and at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel. Prices are: Finish line J\$6,000 (US\$50); Rest of the Grandstand J\$3,500 (US\$30); Bleachers J\$1,000 (US\$8).

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