



Photo: Allan V. Crane

Trinidad and Tobago is positioning itself as a destination for sports events, business and politics, its National Olympic Committee president Brian Lewis told *SportBusiness International*.

IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO you don't have to travel far to be reminded of the lingering love affair between the people of this Caribbean nation and its sporting heroes.

And for a country of only 1.3 million, there are more of them than you might at first imagine.

The twin island nation reveres those who have made it proud thanks to their heroics with bat and ball, and track and field, and that reverence is reflected in the naming of stadiums across the land.

The 20,000-seat national stadium in the capital Port of Spain is named after Hasely Crawford, who became the country's first Olympic gold medal winner when he ran 10.06 seconds to win the 100 metres at the 1976

Games in Montreal.

Brian Lara, the legendary cricketer who holds both the records for the highest score in first class cricket, with 501 for Warwickshire in an English country game, and the Test record, for his remarkable 400 not-out against England in 2004, is immortalised in a stadium built in San Fernando to host the 2011 Cricket World Cup.

The exploits of footballer Dwight Yorke, who scored 48 goals in fewer than 100 league games for Manchester United and played for a number of other English Premier League clubs as well as his national team, has given his name to a stadium in his native Tobago.

In the Central district of Trinidad, only a short drive from the heart of Port of Spain,

a stadium named after Ato Boldon, whose haul of four Olympic medals and a World Championship 100 metres gold puts him among the greats of world sprinting, has been joined by two new world-class facilities which are set to make the site at Couva a sports hub for the country, the Caribbean and beyond.

There, just off the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway which links the capital to the south of the country, the finishing touches are being put to two new facilities designed to boost Trinidadian sport as well as attract visiting teams, athletes and coaches.

Funded by the government, project-managed by the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Company, and built by specialist Chinese contractors, the new National Aquatics Centre and National Cycle Track are bold statements of intent. Together with a new tennis centre at Tacarigua they mark the beginning of a new era in which it will become clear that T&T means business in sport.



Diversifying economy

Brian Lewis, president of the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee, is an eloquent and highly-committed advocate for the potential of sport to add a new string to Trinidad and Tobago's economic bow. This is a time when the nation, like so many others built on revenues from oil and gas reserves, is developing policies to diversify economically.

"Sport has always been important to the country and its people and it remains so," Lewis told *SportBusiness International*. "It has always been taken seriously and is a matter for great national pride.

"Now, with the opening of new facilities to complement those already in place, it is clear that Trinidad and Tobago has something special to offer the rest of the world. Our door is open to teams and individual athletes to come and use these great facilities as a training base and to enjoy the Trinidad and Tobago experience."

Trinidad and Tobago's determination to build a reputation as an international sports destination is bolstered, Lewis said, by the commitment of influential individuals such as Sports Minister Darryl Smith; Tobago House of Assembly Secretary for Education, Youth Affairs and Sport, Huey Cadette; Michael Phillips, chair of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago; and Anthony Blake, who manages the range of new facilities in his role at the Sports Company.

"They are serious and committed to improving competitive performance and to making sport a more important part of our economy," Lewis said.

"We are fortunate that some of the revenues from our oil and gas industry have been invested to create new facilities which are among the best in the world in their class. They have been designed and constructed to the highest standards and will be at the centre of our drive to encourage the world of sport to share them with us and enjoy everything else that the country has to offer."

Good hosts

Trinidad and Tobago are known as party islands, and Port of Spain's two-day carnival is one of the cultural and social highlights of the year.

"It is an event which sums up the islands in many ways and which has been the model for West Indian carnivals around the world," Lewis said.

In short, Trinidad and Tobago really knows how to host events and welcome visitors, and, says Lewis, now has an opportunity to kick-start a domestic sports industry.

"Trinidad and Tobago is blessed with beautiful weather; it is easy to get to via Miami, London and other major cities; and the size of the country and a good road network make it easy to get from place to place when you are here. Accommodation is readily available right across the range, from international brand luxury hotels to good quality guest houses which offer great value.

"We also have a highly literate public and are able to offer the full range of support services, including medical services, physiotherapy and sports nutrition, which visiting athletes, teams and coaches might need."

"In fact," Lewis said, "the islands can offer the complete package for sports visitors whether for a training camp, to acclimatise before a competition or to compete here. It's a destination which should be on everybody's list."

Beauty and the beast

The islands of Trinidad and Tobago are very different but entirely complementary destinations. While Trinidad is the bustling commercial heart of the country, Tobago offers a more relaxed Caribbean ambience. Tobago is famed as a leisure destination, and for nearly three decades has hosted the International Cycling Classic, which attracts professional and amateur riders from all over the world.



Brian Lewis

Photo: Allan V. Crane

Creating a thriving sports sector is a step we can take to secure our future

Jeffrey Charles is currently organising the 30th edition of the Classic, which will deliver five days of international road racing as well as mountain biking, capped by the International Cycling Union-sanctioned Tour of Tobago Road Race.

"That is known as 'The Beauty and the Beast' because the course is so scenic yet so gruelling and tough for the riders," Charles told *SportBusiness International*.

The last event attracted riders from around the world, with 75 of the elite group riders coming from countries outside the Caribbean.

"For the last 10 years or so my focus has been on merging the event and the destination – not just its stunning locations but its lifestyle," Charles said.

"This is an event where the riders don't simply come, ride and then go back to their rooms each night. We organise a programme of events which bring people together to relax. For example we have a beach party and involve local people wherever we can and that creates a wonderful atmosphere. The riders tell me they arrive as rivals and depart as friends."

The event has been covered by broadcaster ESPN for the past five years, providing a showcase not only for the sport but for the beauty and lifestyle of the island, and, says NOC president Lewis, is an example of what can be achieved when Trinidad and Tobago sport takes a business-focused, outward-looking approach to the world.



Photo: Allan V. Crane

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Kick-starting conversation

Lewis is committed to seeing Trinbagonian sports thrive at every level and touch every strata of society. He was the driving force behind the TTOC's '10 Golds by 2024' campaign which will support athletes in their quest to add to the country's tally of Olympic gold medals. Other than Hasley Crawford, the only other local athlete to stand atop the Olympic podium was Keshorn Walcott who sparked a nationwide party when he won the men's javelin at London 2012.

But it is not only medals that Lewis has in his sight. He wants to see the sport business sector in the islands kick-started, to create a virtuous circle which will see sports sector businesses prosper and Trinbagonian athletes shine on the world stage.

His advocacy of sports sector growth was evident when he led the first TTOC Sport Marketing and Business of Sport Conference in Port of Spain in March, attracting contributions from the Sports Minister and leading figures from government and the private sector to thrash out first steps to a sustainable and profitable

sports business, and its natural ally tourism.

"When the '10 Golds by 24' vision was publicly announced, many people said it was crazy and unrealistic. But since then we've witnessed a groundswell of support from the corporate sector and individuals – citizens who understand the power of sport and who want to see our athletes thrive on the global stage," Lewis said following the conference.

"Trinidad and Tobago needs sport for many reasons, and because it makes sense economically. Creating a thriving sports sector is a step we can take to secure our future.

"We may be limited by the size of our domestic market, but we have the skill, the talent and the drive. Nobody demonstrates this better than our athletes, some of whom are already tapping into the sport ecosystem by launching clothing lines and colognes. The challenge for us is to find a way to leverage our natural attributes to carve a slice of the sports pie for ourselves. To do this we must deliver entertaining and compelling offerings that set us apart from the rest of the world. We do this with Carnival every year. There is no reason we cannot do it for sport."

And, said Lewis, there is no time to waste. "We have valuable assets and we have to maximise them. There is a need for immediate action to re-think and create a new paradigm for sports. We need to continue to figure out how the sports ecosystem in Trinidad and Tobago can leverage and seize upon the commercial revenue opportunities locally, regionally and globally."

Naturally, sports tourism is a key part of his thinking. "We have to market Trinidad and Tobago as a destination for sports events and meetings, including regional and continental single sport championships; continental and international federation general assemblies; and international federation elite training centres.

"We intend to set up a think tank that will brainstorm strategic discussions in respect of finance, investment, communications, event planning, marketing, business development and public relations as it relates to the development of a sport business industry masterplan and a unique selling proposition."

With this kind of determination, and growing support from the islands' sport and business leaders, momentum is being gained.

"Trinidad and Tobago can be a serious player in global sport and a pioneer and best practice case study on how a small island state can use sport to diversify its national economy and link sport to other sectors of tourism," Lewis said.

"But if brand Trinidad and Tobago is to become a world-class global sport brand, the challenge is to move from talk to action and to do so not someday, but now." ■



Magical Tobago: Sun! Sea! Sand! Sport!

FOR FIRST-TIMERS, a Caribbean vacation usually means three things: sun, sea and sand. But there's another S-word that's drawing people to Tobago: sport. Whether it's a friendly game of soccer or a riveting qualifying match across a volleyball net, or anything in between, more and more fans are discovering there's a lot more to enjoy on the island than her beautiful natural charms. Those very features make Tobago the ideal place to see the sights, catch a wave or two and enjoy a game, whatever sport is your liking.

Globally, sport has changed. No longer are events being held at a few preferred venues. Now, the experience is just as important as the event itself. From the journey, to sightseeing tours, nature trips and local cuisine. In all departments, Tobago has something for you.

On the island, cool, clear waterfalls abound, from Arnos Vale in the west to Argyle in the east. Many of the old naval forts pre-dating the union with Trinidad have been preserved and have become popular spots for visitors to enjoy the arresting views of coastlines and sparkling, clear oceans. From the oldest protected forest reserve in the western hemisphere, to an array of warm, inviting beaches, there's no shortage

of natural beauty to enjoy.

Huey Cadette, Tobago House of Assembly Secretary of the Department of Education, Youth Affairs and Sport, believes local and international sport promoters have certainly noticed the island's potential: "Over the years, the number of tournaments in Tobago have grown significantly. We produce world-class athletes. We are serious about sport and our plan to be a world class sport destination."

Sport promoters have certainly noticed the island's potential. Over the years, the number of tournaments in Tobago has grown significantly. One youth cricket team, V&S Cricket Club, has been escaping cold Februaries in temperate England for almost two decades to soak up some sun and face a local all-star team in the process. Several international teams come to Tobago for the Bago Sports Beach Soccer tournament and stay on for some relaxation.

International rugby sevens, golf at the Magdalena Beach and Golf Resort, Davis Cup qualifiers, masters soccer and even regional track and field meets bring hundreds of athletes and thousand of fans to our shores every year. Tobago now boasts two of the country's most

advanced swimming pools that can host non-Olympic meets. Cyclists get a treat with the Tobago International Cycling Classic. The annual week-long competition concludes with the Tour of Tobago, a gruelling trek around the island through picturesque, rolling hills and quaint seaside villages, where residents line the roadside to cheer on the cyclists. It not only provides valuable UCI points for international competitors, but is also broadcast by international sports TV network ESPN.

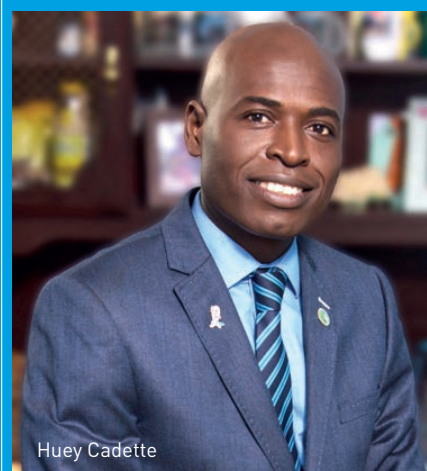
Unlike its bustling sister isle Trinidad, Tobago is surrounded by an array of beaches including Pigeon Point – justly regarded as among the world's most picturesque. The beaches and water draw thousands yearly. One of the most eagerly anticipated events on the Caribbean sporting calendar is the annual Rainbow Cup, an international triathlon for all age groups. The Courland Heritage Park at Turtle Beach hosts the Norecca Beach Volleyball Circuit.

So, if you're looking for a place to kick back and relax, Tobago's just a flight away. Or if you're a sporting enthusiast seeking a tropical venue that puts the 'P' in paradise, we've got you covered too.



2016 SPORTS EVENTS IN TOBAGO

- **Tobago International Game Fishing Tournament**, May
- **Legends tournament**, June
- **Rainbow Cup**, June 11
- **Carib Beer Great Race**, to be announced
- **Tobago Kids Cycling Festival**, August 28 to October 2
- **Tobago Cycling Classic**, September 27 to October 2
- **Tobago Beach Soccer Championships**, October 2016
- **Norecca Beach Volleyball**, November 24-28
- **Beach Netball**, to be announced
- **Beach Handball**, to be announced



Huey Cadette

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO A SPORTS NATION



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO is in the fortunate position of immense opportunity and challenge. Economic prosperity no longer depends solely on the country's bounty of natural resources, but on its ability to be competitive in alternative growth poles to achieve a diversified economy. What this requires is the creation of forward-thinking strategies based on building competitiveness and sustained growth.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is cognizant of the considerable scope for sport as an industry. Seeking to facilitate total participation and high performance in sport and to advance the sustainable development of sport, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs expanded its sport plant, with the development of national sporting facilities:

- A National Aquatic Centre (located in Couva)
- A National Cycling Velodrome (located in Couva)
- A National Tennis Centre (located in Tacarigua)

These facilities are consistent with international competition standards and will position Trinidad and Tobago as a premier cycling, swimming and tennis destination in the Caribbean, while facilitating the preparation of elite athletes in these disciplines to successfully compete on the world stage.

Anthony Blake, Executive Manager (Ag.)

Facilities Unit of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago (SPORTT) has commented that "SPORTT will strive to create an athlete-friendly environment at our facilities as we develop harmonious relationships between sporting stakeholders and business interest. Sustainability in operations is key to the long-term advancement of the operating model for all facilities under our remit. Reduction of state funding for maintenance and operation is the ultimate goal. These facilities will provide the backbone upon which the sport tourism trust will be built".

To take one example, the National Aquatic Centre can accommodate training, recreation and competitive swimming and diving, with the following amenities:

- A 50 metre warm-up pool and a 25 metre diving pool
- Total permanent seating capacity: 700 seats, with the possibility to add an additional 700 to 800 on bleachers for international competitions
- Pool will be equipped with moveable bulkheads consistent with International Federation for Aquatic Sports (Fina) requirements



Anthony Blake

- Total seating capacity at the diving pool: 250 seats. Special attention will be paid to the orientation of the outdoor pool
- A health area including an aqua gym, fitness room, sauna, Turkish baths (with water vapour production), and cold water pool
- Locker rooms for athletes and lockers for judges
- Competition rooms: timing control, swimmers appeal, doping control
- Multipurpose rooms for event organisers
- Warm-up room, with high altitude chamber
- Medical and first aid facilities
- Security and communication room
- Concession outlets for food, beverages, merchandising, etc
- Administration and federation offices
- Ticket booths.

The National Tennis Centre is a multi-court facility with the following amenities:

- 4 outdoor tennis courts including 2 clay court surfaces
- 4 indoor tennis courts
- 1 outdoor centre court with 1,500 seating capacity
- Restrooms, concession stands/areas
- Seating for concession stands/restaurants

The National Cycling Velodrome Centre is the only one of its kind in the Caribbean, and includes the following facilities:

- 250 metre x 7 metre wood cycling track with

Advertising feature contributed by Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs



- embankment of 42 degrees to International Cycle Union (UCI) standard Category 1
- 2,500 seating capacity
 - Hospitality suite boxes with private seats
 - Official/VIP seats
 - Media booths
 - Concession outlets
 - Ticket booths
 - Changing/dressing rooms for athletes and performers
 - Massage room for athletes
 - Multipurpose rooms for event organisers, referees, judges and other officials
 - Warm-up rooms for athletes and other performers
 - Medical and first aid facilities
 - Security and communication facilities

With respect to sport infrastructure, Trinidad and Tobago has set a benchmark in the region. The country's Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs Darryl Smith has said: "The Government's vision recognises the tremendous commercial gains that can be acquired through developing sport as a sustainable industry.

"The ultimate objective is to provide adequate, appropriate and accessible facilities for recreational and competitive sports, and to advance Trinidad and Tobago towards becoming a global sports hub through first-class sports facilities and a host of regional and international sporting events." ■



Leading from the front

Darryl Smith, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago

THE SPORTING landscape of Trinidad and Tobago is at a critical juncture in its history. The country as a whole is eagerly anticipating the start of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, where all stakeholders believe that we are going to have another historic year.

On the sport tourism front, there has been a deliberate focus on this niche as a catalyst for economic activity. In addition to the realisation of the benefits of sport tourism in the global tourism market, the focus of both the government and the nation has been concentrated as a result of the government's investment in three world-class sporting facilities: the National Cycle Track and National Aquatic Centre in Couva, and the Tennis Centre in Tacarigua. These facilities, due to be commissioned in 2016, are best-in-class, with the cycling velodrome being flagged as among the fastest in the world by cycling aficionados.

Trinidad and Tobago is positioned to capitalise on these assets and announce the nation as a preferred destination for sporting competition and training. The cycling velodrome and aquatic centre form part of a de facto sporting 'campus' in the Couva area, where the Ato Boldon Stadium (an IAAF Class II athletics track) and the National Cricket Centre are already situated. The combination and range of sporting activities that are accessible makes the value proposition of this area unique in a global context. Access to quality accommodation in close proximity to the facilities has been stated as one of the main obstacles preventing the optimisation of its use as a sport tourism hub,

Darryl Smith



but the government has recognised this and is developing solutions to satisfy the need.

With a stated mandate to create a sporting industry in the country, there are efforts to increase the capacity of the professionals and personnel needed to drive this industry. To properly exploit the opportunity presented in these facilities, there is an urgent need for more practitioners of sport management, sport science, physiotherapy, event management and coaching. The creation of a vibrant sporting hub will invite the sources of finance necessary to drive the industry which, in time, will move closer to becoming self-sustaining.

Best-in-class facilities, excellent weather, an appetite for competition and activity, and one of the most captivating cultures in the hemisphere makes Trinidad and Tobago one of the best-kept sporting secrets in the world. ■