



## Jamaicans optimistic about qualifying



KINGSTON, Jamaica, April 14, 2005.- President of Jamaica Volleyball Association (JAVA) Ms Carole Beckford said yesterday that "our commitment is to celebrate 45 years this year as an organized sport in Jamaica by qualifying for our first Women's World Championships in Japan next year"

"We reached the second round of the Qualifiers in 2001 and at present the team is highly motivated and committed to qualify for Japan," Beckford added.

After the Kingston leg, Jamaica will move to Santo Domingo for the second leg on August 24-28 to compete against Cuba, a former Women's World Volleyball Championships winner, Costa Rica and hosts the Dominican Republic. From the South American Qualifiers, Jamaica will need to secure one of the top three spots to advance.

In an attempt to make the 'Road to Japan' a reality for volleyball, one of Jamaica's 17 Olympic sports, a number of sponsors have lent their support to the qualifiers and Jamaica Olympic Association (JOA) President, Mr. Mike Fennell was heartened by the gesture: "I thank you all very, very much for your participation," he said yesterday.

Fennell said "volleyball is a major sport". "When you view the statistics worldwide," he explained, "it blows your mind - by the viewers of live television coverage; live spectator audiences; the number of players taking part; the number of affiliated associations and the development programs taking place."

Teams from Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands, Netherlands

Antilles and the host Jamaica will come to this beautiful island in the center of the Caribbean Sea with dreams of making to the next round and the ultimate goal of reaching the Raising Sun Lands next year. Members of the Control Committee of the NORCECA Confederation arrived here yesterday led by Mr. Cristóbal Marte Hóffiz, President of the continental institution.

The Organizing Committee is preparing a colorful Opening Ceremony at 4:30 p.m. (local time) next Friday 15, and a big crowd is expected at the National Arena of Kingston with a seating capacity of around 7,000 spectators. The Jamaican National Federation is commemorating its 45th anniversary so there is double motive for celebrations. The Jamaica Volleyball Association is offering 'start up' volleyball equipment to the school that has the most students attending day one of the event.

"In order to encourage the young people to watch and learn a great sport, we are offering schools the opportunity to get an incentive," according to President, Carole Beckford.

"The ideal thing is to have a packed arena," asserted Beckford, "so we are doing all that is our power to show our competitors that volleyball is indeed a big sport in Jamaica."

The competition format will be a round-robin with the team with the best record advancing to the next phase in the Dominican Republic next August. Jamaica, with the home field advantage and the support of the majority of the fans, is considered the heavy favorite to take the title, with the Netherlands Antilles rated as a rival to be considered.

These two teams are set to meet each other in what is expected to be a battle of unbeaten squads on April 17. The matches of the three-day competition tournament will be played at 6:00 and 8:00 p.m.

The competition schedule is as follow:

April 15: BVI vs. Netherlands Antilles; Cayman Island vs. Jamaica.

April 16: Cayman Island vs. Netherlands Antilles; BVI vs. Jamaica.

April 17: Cayman Island vs. BVI; Netherlands Antilles vs. Jamaica.