



Ministry of
Culture, Gender,
Entertainment
and Sport

BIG UP!

SUPREME CONFIDENCE

"Our chances are
very good for winning
the World Cup."



A GREAT TEAM

With a great chance

SPECIAL ISSUE
JULY 2023



LETTER FROM THE MINISTER

It's so heartwarming, empowering and yet humbling to think that little Jamaica is a favourite to win the Netball World Cup against the big countries such as Australia, New Zealand, England and hosts, South Africa. It's a big challenge, but the Sunshine Girls, our Sunshine Girls, are ready and fully deserve to be crowned world champions.

We have watched your determination. We felt your pain and disappointment, and shared your pride and joy as you continue to represent Jamaica with such skill, such grace, such dignity and fair play. You have never let us down.

Your consistent hard work and dedication have been inspiration for the whole country and we are cheering you on to victory.

It is to your credit and those on whose shoulders you stand that Jamaica has featured in every edition of world netball's showcase event since 1963, finishing third on three occasions.

You enter this tournament on the strength of your impressive performance at the Commonwealth Games last year at which you proudly took the silver medal; and on the back of your historic victory at the CAC Games where you won the first ever netball competition only a few weeks ago.

What the Sunshine Girls and Netball Jamaica have achieved is nothing less than phenomenal, especially when we consider that your achievements have come in spite of limited resources and facilities. Although the Government has been stepping up

its support of netball, we are not yet at the level that I, as Minister, want it to be. Still we answer your every call and were able to provide more than J\$50M between July 2022 and June 2023 to assist Netball Jamaica. Netball deserves more, much more.

As Government, we are unable to fund sport all on our own and so I must commend the sponsors who have stood faithfully with netball and have given a great deal of support.

But this moment is for and about you — the Sunshine Girls who will wear our national colours in this 2023 World Cup. This is the moment that you dreamed about and have been working towards. Victory is within reach. You have what it takes. Go forth with confidence and claim it.

I love you all. Jamaica is proud of you.

The Honourable Olivia Grange, OJ, CD, MP

Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport

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These girls will do it

There's much to be said about the link between confidence and success. The National Hero, Marcus Garvey, put it so well when he said "with confidence, you have won before you have started."

These are very confident Sunshine Girls as they head into the 2023 World Netball World Cup in South Africa; and they have every good reason to be. They come to this tournament on a roll having taken the silver medal in the Commonwealth Games, only edged out of the gold medal by Australia, a team they previously beat in the early rounds.

The Sunshine Girls won the first-ever netball gold medal at the Central American and Caribbean Games only a few weeks ago. It's also Jamaica's only gold medal in an international netball competition.

Added to that, this Sunshine Girls squad includes the world's best goal shooter, Jhaniele Fowler (page 5) and the world's best defender, Shamera Sterling (page 7) who are bullish about the team's chances in South Africa.

BIG UP! this publication by the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport is a tribute to all the members (page 10) of the Jamaica squad to the World Netball World Cup including their inspirational coach, Connie Francis (page 12).

Netball is not only the number one women's sport in Jamaica but also the number one team sport in the island, based on world rankings. Jamaica is ranked fourth in the world.

Like never before the Sunshine Girls say they are going for gold. Their confidence is likely to lead to success.

BIG UP!

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WE WANT TO BRING BACK GOLD TO JAMAICA

2023 is shaping up to be a memorable year for the Sunshine Girls captain, Jhaniele Fowler. At the start of the year, she reunited with her daughter and boyfriend in Perth after a tough separation caused by the covid-19 pandemic which restricted travel between Jamaica and Australia. She said yes to his marriage proposal, yes to another season in the Australian Netball Super League, and yes to leading Jamaica to the Netball World Cup in South Africa as the captain of the Sunshine Girls.

The 34 year old (who celebrated her birthday on July 21 with her team preparing for the World Cup) is clear about her goal this summer, "Jamaica is going for gold" at the World Cup.

With Fowler — the best goal shooter in world netball today — Jamaica has a great shot.

Fowler rarely misses. She finished the 2022 Australian Super League season with 929 goals at a 97 per cent scoring accuracy. She's a star player in Australia where she's won the last five Super Netball Player of the Year titles and led the Fever to their maiden premiership last season.

The Jamaican also led the scoring at the last global netball competition — the

Commonwealth Games in 2022 — in both volume and accuracy when she scored a total of 273 goals from 281 attempts at 97.2 per cent accuracy. Fowler's effort helped Jamaica take the silver medal in the Commonwealth Games, going down by four goals to Australia in the gold medal match. The Jamaicans had earlier defeated Australia in the group stage by two goals.

Fowler doesn't speak of regrets when she looks back at last year's Games. Instead she speaks about lessons learned and of great possibilities. "...we're going to do it a little better in the World Cup by making sure that we're sticking together, that we are unified, and that we're working as a team."

The former Australia player and team selector, Annie Sergeant, told Fox Sports that her country needs to be worried about the Sunshine Girls. "Of course we do... The Commonwealth Games last year clearly indicated we're seeing the best Jamaica's ever seen."

The current and former presidents of the Netball Jamaica Tricia Robinson and Marva Bernard agree that is the best of the Sunshine Girls and they also agree that is due in part to the performance of Fowler.

Her success might be described as unlikely. At age seven, Jhaniele was diagnosed with rheumatic heart disease which counts dizziness, chest pain, and

shortness of breath among its symptoms. With medication, she continues to manage the condition.

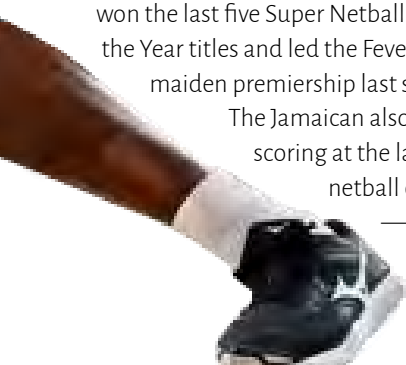
She was all of 11 when she played her first netball game.

"One day my physical education teacher [in primary school] said that she was going to start a netball team for the school. She selected all the tall girls — and of course, I was the tallest girl in school... So that's where my netball career started," Fowler told Trans World Sports.

At 6ft 5in, the girl from Montego Bay, St James is still one of the tallest girls on the court.

Jhaniele has been with the national senior team since 2010. During that time, she's worked hard to help the team cop bronze at the Commonwealth Games in 2014 and 2018; and the silver medal last year. That silver medal performance continues to motivate her.

"Our chances are very good for winning the World Cup. I am definitely going for gold, my team wants gold and we want to bring gold back to Jamaica," she told supersport.com.





Photograph by Whitehead/SWPix.com

INDISPUTABLE INTERCEPT QUEEN

Shamera Sterling, who plays in the goal keeper or goal defence positions for the Sunshine Girls, has been described by the CODE Sports news organisation in Australia as netball's "indisputable intercept queen" and is regarded by many inside and outside of the media as the best defender in the international game at the moment.

CODE Sports reports that, "Sterling has established herself as the best defender in the Australian League—and arguably in the world—this season and currently sits on top of the Super Netball ladder for both deflections and intercepts."

Pitre Bourdon, High Performance Manager for the Adelaide Thunderbirds, Shamera's team in the League, says, "Her talent and athleticism are incredible assets to our side, and we've been impressed with her growth and leadership over the past three seasons.

"Her ability to read the play and hunt down a loose ball makes her exceptional at intercepting and deflecting on the court. With a vertical leap which can be as high as 1.69m more often than not enables her to out jump opponents. She is also quick and agile with an impressive burst of speed."

The 28-year-old 6ft 3in Sterling, born in St James, first played netball at the Corinaldi Avenue Primary School and later at the Anchovy High and the Herbert Morrison Technical High Schools all in St James but was moved to the Queen's School in Kingston where she excelled. She quickly made the Queen's team, winning an all-island school girls championship

with them.

She got her first Test Cap at age 17 and was a member of the Sunshine Girls team which got the bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games in 2018.

Sterling first played professional netball for Loughborough Lightning in England before moving to the Adelaide Thunderbirds.

Shamera was one of the netball ambassadors appointed by World Netball, the international governing body, in its efforts to "Grow, Play and Inspire" netball.

President, Liz Nicholl said, "Shamera is a passionate, exciting, and skillful player who has set the netball world alight. She is a popular and inspiring role model for women and girls at all levels of the game and a brilliant advocate of our wonderful sport.

"She has made a huge impact not only for her country's national team but also in Australia as part of the Adelaide Thunderbirds squad and I'm positive that she will be an influential force as we continue to grow our sport and inspire our community."

Responding Shamera, who was also recently appointed Sunshine Girls vice-captain, said: "I'm honoured to have been chosen as the World Netball Athlete Ambassador for the Americas. I'm really keen to inspire the next generation of netballers as well as grow our sport around the world, so I'm really looking forward to working with my fellow ambassadors to achieve this."

In the midst of everything, she is in the final year of a degree in Primary Education

at the University of the West Indies.

She says it has not been very difficult to balance play and studies.

The new generation of our netballers would be truly inspired by Shamera Sterling helping the Sunshine Girls to win their first World Cup tournament .



READY FOR THE WORLD

It is more expectation than hope this time round that the Sunshine Girls will shine brightly at the Netball World Cup in South Africa. Brightly enough to take home the gold medal.

This following their silver medal at the last Commonwealth Games and gold at the Central American and Caribbean Games where netball was being played at the meet for the first time.

This feeling that the gold at the World Cup could follow gold at the CAC Games is also fueled by the outstanding performances by those of the team members who are currently playing in the

Australian Super Netball League.

Shamera Sterling and Latonya Wilson helped the Adelaide Thunderbirds, to become the 2023 Champions – their first League championship.

Sunshine Girls captain Jhanelle Fowler, who plays for the West Coast Fever in the League, was awarded the team's Stacey Marinkovich Medal for the fifth time. That Medal is presented to the team's most valuable player for the season.

Fowler and vice-captain Sterling are widely regarded as the best shooter and the best defender in world netball right now.

Others of the Sunshine Girls playing in the Super League are Latonya Wilson who also is a defender playing alongside Sterling at the Adelaide Thunderbirds, Romelda Aiken George (another top shooter) for the NSW Swifts who were the beaten finalists; Shimona Nelson for the Collingwood Magpies and Kadie Ann Dehaney for the Sun Coast Lightning. Add the Sunshine Girls who won gold at the inaugural netball competition in the Central American and Caribbean Games, and it's a great team with a great chance.

POOL C

JAMAICA | SRI LANKA | WALES | SOUTH AFRICA

FRIDAY, JULY 28 11:00 AM



JAMAICA vs SRI LANKA



SATURDAY, JULY 29 4:00 AM



JAMAICA vs WALES



SUNDAY, JULY 30 11:00 AM



JAMAICA vs SOUTH AFRICA





Romelda Aiken-George
Goal Shooter, Goal Attack,
Goal Keeper



Shanice Beckford
Goal Attack, Wing Attack



Kadie-Ann Dehaney
Goal Keeper, Goal Defence



Jhaniele Fowler
Goal Shooter



Shimona Nelson
Goal Shooter



Crystal Plummer
Wing Defence, Centre



Rebekah Robinson
Goal Attack, Goal Shooter



Nicole Dixon-Rochester
Centre, Wing Attack



Kimone Shaw
Goal Keeper, Goal Defence



Shamera Sterling
Goal Keeper, Goal Defence



Abigale Sutherland
Centre, Wing Attack



Adean Thomas
Centre, Wing Attack,
Wing Defence



Latanya Wilson
Goal Defence, Goal Keeper



Jodi-Ann Ward
Goal Defence, Wing Defence



Khadijah Williams
Wing Attack, Centre

The Netball World Cup, formerly the World Championship, has been played every four years since 1963, when the inaugural tournament was held in England.

Since 1991, the tournament has maintained a format allowing semi-finals and finals matches to be played, where previously the tournament held no finals and instead utilised the round-

robin system, which occasionally led to more than one nation being crowned world champions.

Australia or New Zealand have won all of the titles, except in 1979 when Trinidad and Tobago became joint champions in a three-way tie for the title.

The reigning world champions are New Zealand, who beat Australia by one goal in the 2019 final, played in Liverpool, England.



THEY WILL TAKE HOME A MEDAL

It is said of Sunshine Girls Coach, Connie Francis, that she is all heart with an unwavering passion for netball. And Connie has a record to show for it. She is our most successful netball coach at the national level and ties for joint second place (120 Test Caps) among the most capped players for the national netball team. Only Nadine Bryan with 159 Caps, has played more times than Connie for Jamaica.

Connie was the coach when the Sunshine Girls won silver at the most recent Commonwealth Games which were held in Birmingham, England, their highest placing ever at the Commonwealth Games. Connie was also the coach when the Sunshine Girls copped the silver medal at the Fast Five tournament in 2009.

She was their coach when the Sunshine Girls won their last medal at the World Cup, a bronze, in the 2007 edition.

It was upon her return after nine years away from the team that she coached them to their historic silver medal performance at the Commonwealth Games.

Now she is saying that she is “confident that the Sunshine Girls will end their 16-year drought at the World Cup when they contest the 2023 edition in Cape Town, South Africa.”

Connie said in a newspaper interview that, “The squad is very experienced entering this year’s championships and therefore I have no doubt that they will take home a medal.”

She continued, “their preparations heading into the championships have been

great so it is now up to the players to go out there and execute on the day.”

The Sunshine Girls play their first match in the 2023 World Cup on July 28 when they take on Sri Lanka after which they will play Wales and South Africa on July 29 and 30.

Coach Connie is reported as saying, “The mood in the camp is very good. This is a squad that has been playing together for approximately 10 years so I believe we have the experience and the girls are eager to compete. These girls are very eager to return home with a medal because it has been 16 years and I believe now is the time.”

Indeed, they have perhaps their best team ever combined with the coach proven to be their most successful so far.





Photograph by Marlon Reid







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