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Sports

Three J'can winners at CASI awards ... Delapenha, McCallum, Campbell-Brown triumph

By Howard Walker Observer staff reporter walkerh@jamaicaobserver.com
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Just as he did during his playing career by breaking several barriers, Lindy Delapenha was the first of seven Caribbean Awards Sports Icon (CASI) winner at the inaugural ceremony held at the Pegasus Hotel on Friday night.

Delapenha, 81, was voted top football sports icon. Two other Jamaicans were among the winners - boxing legend Mike 'The Body Snatcher' McCallum and sprint queen, Veronica Campbell-Brown.



Organiser Al Hamilton (centre) poses with award winners



Austin 'Jack' Warner (left) of T&T and Lindy Delapenha of Jamaica at the Pegasus Hotel on Friday night. (Photo: Garfield Robinson)

Top sports administrator Austin 'Jack' Warner and netballer Jennifer Frank of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T); cricketing legend Sir Garfield Sobers of Barbados and Cuban athletic great, Alberto Juantoreno, completed the awardees.

The awards are based on accomplishments over the past 60 years, between 1948 and 2008, for individuals who made their mark in the various sporting endeavours.

The event is the brainchild of London-based Al Hamilton, who said the region has produced some of the finest men and women to grace stadiums of the globe and they need to be recognised.

"An event of this kind only happens because like-minded persons come together to make a difference. Sports is the adhesive which unites our region and allows us to 'walk and talk' on the international stage," Hamilton noted.

Football was the first category to decide a winner and Delapenha beat off fellow Jamaicans Theodore Whitmore and Robbie Earle, Dwight Yorke of T&T and Clyde Best of Bermuda.

When Delapenha strode to the podium and collected his award from Arlene Hamilton, representing one of the sponsors, Digicel, he drew loud applause when he revealed his age.

"At 81 it's an honour to be accepting this award," he said to whistles from several ladies in the audience.

Delapenha was the first Jamaican to play professional football in England in 1948 when he turned out for Portsmouth. He is said to be the first non-white player to ply his trade in the First Division.

He won a League Championship medal with Portsmouth, and in 1950 transferred to Middlesbrough where his career took off. He played on the wing or inside-forward position and became Boro's leading scorer in the 1951-52, 1953-54 and 1955-56 seasons. In total Delapenha scored 93 league and FA Cup goals in 270 appearances.

McCallum outboxed five opponents in lifting the award ahead of Teophileo Stephenson (Cuba), Leslie Stewart,

Claude Noel (T&T), Elisha Obed (Bahamas) and Andrew Lewis (Guyana).

McCallum, who became Jamaica's first world champion in 1984 when he won the WBA Junior middleweight title, was his usual sharp and witty self.

"It's been a long time since I've been in the island, maybe two years. But when I came off the plane, I thought I was in Miami. The place looks good," he said.

"I know all those times I was fighting you were all fighting with me and I just want to say thanks," he added.

Sobers, for his tremendous all-round cricketing achievement, got the nod over Sir Vivian Richards (Antigua), Brian Lara (T&T), Clive Lloyd (Guyana) and Jamaicans Michael Holding and Courtney Walsh.

Former West Indies captain James Adams collected the award on behalf of Sobers.

Campbell-Brown, who was also absent, sped away from Chandra Sturup and Debbie Ferguson-McKenzie (Bahamas); Merlene Ottey and Deon Hemmings, (Jamaica) for the female athletic title.

Cuban great, Juantoreno, who won the 400-800m double at the 1976 Montreal Olympics, won the male athletics category ahead of Jamaicans Donald Quarrie and Bert Cameron; Hasley Crawford (T&T) and Avarad Moncur (Bahamas).

Jennifer Frank of T&T was in immaculate shooting form in pipping Jamaicans Patricia McDonald and Janet Johnson for the netball crown.

"I just want to thank CASI for bestowing this honour on me and I accept this on behalf of the netball fraternity," said Frank, who was a part of the T&T team which shared the world title with New Zealand and Australia in 1979.

The incomparable Warner easily copped the administrator's award ahead of Gloria Ballantine (St Vincent & The Grenadines) and Kathy Harper-Hall (Barbados). Warner, who arrived late for the function, explained his plight while travelling to the event from Egypt.

"I'm gratified for this award... because in my country an award like this to me is non-existent. I always admire Jamaica how they give respect to their sport persons. They

are second to none in the Caribbean," he added.

Warner is a FIFA vice-president and CONCACAF president and has been a member of the FIFA Executive Committee since 1983, and CONCACAF boss since 1990.

Beijing stars Shelly-Ann Fraser and Usain Bolt were Special Awardees for their outstanding performances at the recent Beijing Games.

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