

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **ISLAND AQUATICS SYNCHRO SWIMMERS COP NATIONAL YOUTH AWARDS**

Three senior synchronized swimmers from Island Aquatics Synchro Club were last Sunday awarded the Prime Minister's Youth Award for excellence in sports. The swimmers, Michelle-Ann Gabbadon (16), Tashna Smith-Edward(16) and Shannon March(15) have been synchro swimmers for 5 to 7 years. They recently represented Jamaica as the National Synchro Team to the Junior Panam Games held in North Carolina in August. It was the first time that Jamaica was entering a synchronized swimming meet at this level. They have also competed in and won medals in the CARIFTA and CISC Games as well as the Florida Gold Coast meet in 2008.

This is the latest in a series of firsts for the pioneering club that was started in 1998 by visionary Head Coach Mrs Katherine Lim Sang. As the first synchronized swimming club in Jamaica, it was an uphill struggle especially to find competitions to develop the swimmers. The first inter-squad competition was in 1999 among the membership, which had grown from 13 to 26 swimmers.

Head Coach Rochelle Foster, a biomedical scientist and one of the founding members of Island Aquatics is ecstatic. She gave Jamaica their first synchronized swimming medal, a silver at the CISC Games in 2000 along with duet partner Michela Lee. She also volunteered as an assistant coach with the club for 3 years before her current appointment as Head Coach.

Although the club is involved in shows, its primary focus is competitive synchronized swimming, more specifically age group Synchro. The main regional competitions are CARIFTA championships, CISC championships, CCCAN and CAC games for which swimmers can qualify to be chosen for the National Synchro Team.

A hybrid form of swimming, synchronized swimming involves elaborate routines to music and demands advanced water skills, great strength, endurance, flexibility and grace in the water.

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