

Herb Mckenley Monument Installed at National Stadium

The monument to honour the legacy of the renown Jamaican Olympian, the Hon Herbert McKenley, OM, OJ, CD, arrived in Jamaica on Thursday (November 19) and has been mounted at the National Stadium.

Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, the Hon Olivia Grange, whose Ministry led arrangements for the commissioning of the statue and is planning the official unveiling next week, was at the Stadium for the installation.

Minister Grange said she was happy that the statue was completed and mounted on time. "I'm really happy that everything is now in place and the statue has been completed. It has been mounted and it's ready for unveiling. This has been a journey, a short journey, I would say, although it seems like it took forever because there were some challenges," she commented. The Minister also commended the sculptor, Basil Watson. The statue will be the third of Mr. Watson's works on show at Independence Park - the Merlene Ottey statue and 'The Netballer' being the others. "Basil Watson has done a tremendous job in recreating this image of Herb McKenley and I look forward to the unveiling on the 25th, by the Prime Minister," Miss Grange said. "I really feel honoured to be the person at the centre of all of this, to ensure that it happens, and I really want to thank everybody who has put time and effort and money into this effort," she added. Mr. Watson, who was at the Stadium to oversee the installation, noted that the statue was a special project. "It's an honour to be given the privilege of doing a monument to Herb. That's what was special to me and what was motivating and provided a lot of the energy and the enthusiasm for the project," he said. Mr. Watson viewed several images of Herb McKenley to inspire his design. He attempted to sculpt a monument that bridged the gap between the older, more popular image of Mr. McKenley, and that of his younger more athletic days. "Herb was known way into his later years and the more youthful Herb was not remembered as vividly. So it was a challenge to get the kind of Herb that we know now and the Herb when he was as an athlete running. So it's a mature, but still young, athlete," he explained. The statue was funded by the Sports Development Foundation (SDF) and the Culture, Health, Arts, Sports and Education (CHASE) fund. The Urban Development Foundation (UDC) was responsible for its mounting. Prime Minister Golding will officially unveil the monument on Wednesday, November 25, in the presence of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete and Her Excellency Salma Kikwete, who will be on a state visit to Jamaica at the time. Mr. McKenley who died on November 26, 2007, after a long illness won one gold and three silver medals between the 1948 and 1952 Olympic Games, in London and Helsinki, respectively. He was also a former national coach and sports administrator.