

Flag to Be Flown At Penn Relays Annually

The flag of Jamaica will be flown at the 119th Penn Relay Games in Philadelphia, from April 25 to 27 this year.

In 2012 the organizers took the decision to fly the country's flag every year at the Games, held on the University of Pennsylvania's Franklin Field, in recognition of Jamaica's 50 anniversary of independence, and the contribution made to the relay festival for nearly five decades by Jamaican athletes. Jamaican high school athletes first competed in 1964 at the Penn Relays, which regularly attract over 15,000 high school, college, and track club athletes from the USA and abroad, notably Jamaica. Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, was on hand at a special ceremony last year to deliver the flag to be flown at all future Games. Penn Relays Director, David Johnson, said Jamaica would be the only country to be so honoured, because of the outstanding contribution made to the games by its athletes, in addition to the tremendous presence and support given to the games by Jamaicans from all over the United States and elsewhere. "Jamaica's participation in the games has greatly influenced the yearly attendance. This is evidenced by the great turnout and vast number of black, green and gold colours in the stands on a yearly basis," he said. Reacting to the announcement last year, Prime Minister Simpson Miller said, "Jamaica felt extremely honoured to be chosen by the organisers for this select distinction. "This is a great tribute to the country, our athletes and Jamaicans the world over," she said. The Prime Minister pointed out that many of Jamaica's world-class athletes who have excelled in track and field were first exposed to international competition at the Penn Relays. "Our athletes who have been participating at these games for the last 40 years continue to do so at a very high level of competition," Mrs. Simpson Miller said. Minister with responsibility for Sports, Hon. Natalie Neita-Headley and Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Stephen Vasciannie, are expected to attend the Relays on April 27.