

## IT'S ALL IN THE MIND

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According to Amanda Johnson, the psychology of sport is both unacknowledged and underutilized in the Caribbean. As integral as the human body's largest and most powerful organ is to performance, many turn a blind eye to the work required to fine tune the mind

of an athlete. Johnson, a Sport Performance and Psychology Officer attached to the Elite Development & Performance Unit (EDPU) of the Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago believes education is the key to transforming the perceptions of her work, which is still crawling when compared to other regions in the world.

As part of the drive to develop the research and practice of sport psychology in the region, Johnson is one of the speakers at the one-day inaugural Applied Sport Psychology Conference of the Caribbean to be held next month in Jamaica. The Conference is led by fellow practitioner Olivia Rose Esperance, the first Sport Psychologist at the University of the West Indies, Mona whose passion for the discipline helped plant a seed among the cadre of sport psychologists to join forces and establish a platform for the growth of the sector. The event truly spans the region's community of sport psychologists from Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Barbados and St. Lucia, also incorporating the efforts of Caribbean volunteers, who have been integral to the event's planning and execution.

Apart from her presentation which will focus on optimal training environments and athlete motivation, Johnson also contributed the theme for the Conference – Breaking Barriers, Unlocking Potential – which she says is meant to destigmatize the field as it seeks to become a force for improved sporting achievement in a region already blessed with enormous success and the potential for much more in the future. Johnson will also touch on how coaches and athletes define success and how this definition can hinder or advance training and performance. Johnson's presentation will be largely based on her experience and observations over the past six years working with national teams and athletes in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Conference targets coaches, athletes and administrators as well as the wider public who may be involved in sport at development and grassroots levels. Bringing a high level of authenticity and relevance to the Caribbean context is also integral to the Conference's success. Johnson says, "Although the education and training many of us have received in Britain or America has been valuable, it does not capture the cultural variations that we experience here. As a result, the conference has been tailored to include an entirely indigenous panel to discuss the issues that we in the Caribbean face in the unique contexts of our everyday lives."

Interested persons can register until 31 May for the 1<sup>st</sup> Applied Sport Psychology Conference of the Caribbean takes place on 5 June at the Mona Visitors Lodge and Conference Centre in Kingston, Jamaica. Details can be found at the conference website: [www.aspcaribbean.com](http://www.aspcaribbean.com).