

PRESS RELEASE: For Immediate Release

HURRICANE MATTHEW DERAILS PROPOSED BAHAMAS INTERSCHOOL EQUESTRIAN LEAGUE: COMPETITIONS WILL UNDERGO CHANGE IN FORMAT

November 7, 2016

Equestrian Bahamas announced today that the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew has prompted a change in the initial format of the proposed Bahamas Interschool Equestrian League, or BIEL. Originally encompassing a series of interschool competitions beginning in December, and culminating in a National Championship event in April 2017, the competition format has now been changed for this school year to a single interschool Championship event.

“The change in format is merely a temporary setback,” said Cathy Ramsingh-Pierre, Equestrian Bahamas President. “Devastation from Hurricane Matthew has forced the government to reevaluate its priorities with regard to funding developing school sport activities. As concerned Bahamians we are very sensitive to the need of our fellow citizens, and to the reality that scarce resources must be allocated appropriately. For this same reason, as a Federation we made the decision not to reach out to the private sector for assistance.

“The goals of BIEL have not changed,” continued Ramsingh-Pierre. “First and foremost, the development of interschool equestrian competition is intended to diversify the athletic opportunities available in Bahamian schools; to act as a springboard to increase national interest in the sport; and to encourage inclusive participation from young athletes in all schools (public and private). Secondly, it is intended to introduce our riders to a college competition format, and expose them to opportunities for college scholarships.

Mr. Evon Wisdom, the Sports Unit Director for the Ministry of Education, confirmed that the Ministry of Education is firmly committed to these goals of diversification and increased opportunity for athletes in Bahamian schools. “The National Sports Secretariat, which is jointly headed by the Ministers of Education, Science and Technology and Youth, Sports and Culture, made a commitment to broaden our base and include more National Sports Championships this year for High School Sports,” said Mr. Wisdom. “We stand by this commitment 100%. And thus, despite the funding challenges presented by the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, we will be funding a National Equestrian Interschool Championship at the end of the school year”.

“We choose to see this as an opportunity,” said Ramsingh-Pierre. “This gives us more time to plan the format of the April competition to maximize inclusion of the athletes, and to encourage teams to be as large as possible. Obviously, the children involved will have more competitive experience under their belts by April. In the end, hopefully such an event will not only continue to generate interest in the sport, but also assist us in launching the second phase of the program, which is generating the support of private donors to launch pilot programs for equestrian instruction in the public schools.”