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BVI's Premier Sporting Venue Being Repaired Following 2017 Hurricane Damage

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A. O. Shirley Recreation Ground, Tortola By. ANGELA BURNS/VI CONSORTIUM

ROAD TOWN, TORTOLA – Following extensive damage to the A. O. Shirley Recreation Ground caused by the hurricanes of 2017, work begins February 17 to repair the infrastructure at the British territory's premier sporting facility.

The Virgin Islands Recovery and Development Agency (RDA) awarded a \$575,437.50 contract to C. W. General Maintenance to design, supply and install stadium lighting and to Caribbean Environmental Restoration Limited in the amount of \$284,795.64 to repair the grandstand, gym and sick bay. Cliff Williams, owner of both companies, a former athlete and present-day coach, inked the contracts with the RDA on January 30.

This project is funded by the government of the Virgin Islands, the BVI Olympic Committee and the BVI Athletic Association.

These works will compliment projects already completed - installation of the track, wall and gates including the external perimeter fence and the internal trackside fence, bathroom groundworks and drainage.

The A. O. Shirley Recreation Ground is the training ground for athletes, it is home to local and regional track and field events and the sports arena for soccer and rugby.

Repairs to the lighting will help the athletes maximize time spent on the field particularly during the winter months. Repairs to the grandstand will provide seating and address safety concerns when persons use that area.

President of the BVI Athletics Association Steve Augustine said this is a much-needed and long overdue project, but lauded the timing. “This year, we are looking at the possibility of doing something greater on the track and therefore our seating capacity comes into play,” he said.

The A. O. Shirley Recreation Ground is located in the capital Road Town.

It was renamed in 1988 in honour of Alexander O. Shirley who identified the land where the ground is located. He is a former Cricket Association President and the facility hosted many a cricket game from 1969-2004.

The track at the facility was expanded from 300 metres to the international standard of 400 metres in 1986, but it wasn't until after 2008 when the Mondo surface went down facilitating more competitions that the BVI started to see the development of its local athletes.

The BVI has earned international recognition with winnings from several top athletes.

Tahesia Harrigan Scott, the first BVI athlete to attain the World Championships “A” qualifying mark, won a silver medal at the 2005 Central American and Caribbean (CAC) Senior Championships in Nassau, Bahamas; bronze at the 2008 International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Indoor Championships in Spain; and gold in the 100 meters at the 2006, 2009 and 2010 CAC Games in Colombia, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

Kyron McMaster made history for the BVI in 2018 when he landed the territory's first Commonwealth Games medal in the 400m hurdles on Australia's Gold Coast. He won gold.

He had previously won a bronze medal at the 2016 World U20 Championships in Poland.

Chantel Malone won the BVI's first ever gold medal when she competed in the 2019 Pan Am Games.

Earlier athletes making it big for the BVI include Dean Greenaway, Rose Adams, Lindell Hodge, Guy Hill, Jerry Molyneaux, Keita Cline and Dion Crabbe, while others currently recording successes in the field include Ashley Kelly, Karene King and Eldred Henry.