

Inspired by M^cKenley, Jamaican Coach is New Track & Field Director at Georgetown



For the first time ever, a Jamaican is the head track and field coach at Georgetown University. The new director of track and field and cross country is former Calabar High School athlete Alton McKenzie, whose association with Georgetown goes back to 1989. McKenzie is humbled by the appointment and says he owes much to a trio of coaching giants. Among them is Olympic gold medallist Herb McKenzie.

McKenzie, a Spanish Town native, ran track and played football at Calabar before moving to New York in 1986. Ushered up from the sprints into the 800 metres in the US, he won a scholarship to Georgetown. "The passion I feel about being there associated with the school for 31 years since 1989, the same passion I felt at being there and feeling the spirit and knowing this is the place I want to be is the same way I feel now", said the former Georgetown track team captain.

He helped the Washington DC institution win the Conference 4x800 metres title in 1991 "It's humbling. I can't say I envisioned it. I'm grateful. Frank Gagliano, legendary middle distance coach, who was my coach, gave me an opportunity. At the time, I would never have dreamt that 31 years later I'd be in the position of directing the programme", marvelled the Jamaican who helped the Hoyas to the 1993 NCAA Indoor 4x800 metres final.

When he left Jamaica, he planned to follow the footsteps of his uncle Alty 'Doc' McKenzie into football. A talk with coach Errol Lee changed everything. "I wasn't planning on running. It's just by chance I thought to try out to just get in shape. The right person influenced me to say track and field because I wasn't going anywhere as a soccer player", he recalled.

When he was at Calabar, he was in awe of head coach Herb McKenzie. "When you're that young, it's like you're afraid to go on the track and do a workout because you don't want to be disappointing him and not looking like you have some quality", he confessed.

He still brags about McKenzie's achievements and labels him 'the most versatile sprinter in history'. "That has carried over to me as a coach now. My approach when I recruit sprinters, I want sprinters who can do that. My best sprinter at Georgetown now on the female side can run from the 60 to the 400 metres so it ended up influencing what I coach", McKenzie added.

He also was thankful for the support received from Dalton Ebanks, the Jamaican who was head coach at George Mason University. Ebanks died earlier this year.

Last year, while he was still serving as Associate Director, he guided Georgetown to a double success at the Penn Relays as his Hoyas won the men's 4x800 metres and Sprint Medley. McKenzie was head coach at the University of the District of Columbia for 6 years before returning to Georgetown.