

## NEXT GENERATION - TISSANNA HICKLING



When Tissantha Hickling long jumped 6.82 metres last year, the GC Foster College student-athlete matched the longest mark by a Jamaican since 2006. When she backed that up with a defence of her national title and bronze at the Pan-American Games, it was clear that a new world class prospect was on the horizon. Now, she is looking ahead cautiously.

“The outlook is to PB (personal best) again, hopefully, try to reach the 7 metres, go to the Olympics. Hopefully, I can make the finals again and just give my best,” said the Marlon Gayle coached leaper.

Jamaica's fortunes in the women's long jump are on the upswing. Former NCAA champion Shanice Porter was seventh at the Pan-Am Games, and at the World Championships in Doha, last year, Porter outjumped the likes of 4 time winner Brittany Reece to reach the final where she placed eighth. This breakthrough made Porter, 26, just the second Jamaican woman to reach the World Championships long jump final, after Elva Goulbourne did in 2001 and 2005.

Hickling was in Doha too but missed the final.

Success for either of them in 2021 would add their names to a short list of Jamaican Olympic long jump finalists led by 2008 bronze medallist Chelsea Hammond. The others in that exclusive club are Vinton Beckett, Dorothy Scott and Goulbourne, who holds the national record at 7.16 metres. Success for both of them would make Jamaica a genuine world power in the long jump.

The 22 year-old St Catherine native is easy going by nature but her persona changes during competitions. "When I'm on the runway, I'm different. Once I touch that runway, my whole personality, everything just there. I'm a very jovial person but once I touch that runway, my face gets serious. Then you can know that's Hickling", she self-examined during an interview.

In those situations, she appears calm. Her 11.46 100 metres speed becomes evident when her approach run begins. At 5 feet 8 inches and 133 pounds, she's about the same build as Jamaican sprint great Merlene Ottey and long time long jump world record holder Galina Christyakoa. It could evolve into a potent combination.

During her days at St. Jago, her high school jumps coach Kurt Brooks predicted great things. "Her attitude, her work ethics, everything that sums up for a good athlete, look at a Usain Bolt. You know Glen Mills talks about it, his attitude towards the training, his attitude towards competition so forth. She is basically the female Usain Bolt, but a jumper not a sprinter", Brooks told the well-known CHAMPS PREVIEW.

National Champion in 2018 and 2019, the 22 years old has bronze medals from the 2018 NACAC Championships and the Athletics World Cup. Her personal best - 6.82 metres - came at an All-Comers meet at the National Stadium last year. Afterwards, coach Gayle looked ahead hopefully. "I think, once everything works out according to plan, she should be in the medals just the same", Gayle predicted.

The abbreviated 2020 season has seen her jump 6.60 metres.

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