

Sports

Ja-Texas Spring Open serves off this weekend at UTech

By Hurbun Williams Observer staff reporter
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THE eagerly-awaited Jamaica-Texas Wesleyan University Spring Open Invitational table tennis tournament will be held at UTech Auditorium next Friday through Sunday.



USA's national women's champion Jasna Reed who will compete at UTech

One of the island's top open events, the Spring Open has been organised by the Jamaica Table Tennis Association (JTТА) to provide international competition for the three-man Jamaica team of Nigel Webb, Gavin Hylton and Darryl Strachan, who will compete at the Commonwealth Games in Australia next month.

Main sponsor, Juici Patties, will put up more than \$200,000, including \$100,000 in cash, and will also provide three meals per day for each player and official at the tournament.

Juici Patties' public relations manager Jackie Scott made the announcement at a press briefing at the SDC offices on Friday.

This is the first time that Juici Patties is sponsoring a JTТА event, and "the company's top executive Mr Jukie Chin, a great lover of the sport, was happy to do so. The company is also cognisant that to sponsor events such as these involving young people is a key element in our marketing strategy," said Scott.

JTТА president Keith Garvey, who made the announcement for the tournament, also gave details.

The Texas-Wesleyan University team of seven players - six men and a woman - along with a Jamaican coach, is scheduled to arrive next Friday.

Texas-Wesleyan University is the former Anderson College that provided table tennis scholarships to top Jamaica players Michael and Robert Hyatt from Kingston, and Osbourne Lawrence from Manchester, during Orville Haslam's tenure as JTTA boss.

The overseas team is led by Jasna Reed, USA's national women's champion who is rated at 2471 and will compete in the Men's A and the Women's Open sections.

Reed, who is Croatian, has to her credit 20 Yugoslavian national titles in women's singles, doubles and mixed doubles and team events. She is a four-time Olympian with a bronze medal at Seoul in 1988 in the women's doubles for Croatia.

She represented Croatia twice in the Olympics (1988 and 1992) and the US twice (2000 and 2004). Reed has also played in the German, Japanese, Belgian and Croatian international leagues.

Other members of the team are Carlos Chui, rated 2364 and a member of the Mexican national team for the past six years; Croatian Dinko Kranjac, rated 2280 and his country's youngest player (aged 14) to play in the Division One League; Courtney Roberts, rated 2316, former Jamaican junior champion.

Aldis Presley (1939) and Michael Meier (1571) of the US complete the team, with Jamaican Keith Evans as coach. Evans, who won several national titles and was Jamaica's coach to the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, is assistant coach at the university.