

# Remarks At The Opening Of The 2014 League

August 14th 2014

A pleasant good evening to each and everyone here in this Save The Seed Energy Center Arena, and welcome to this opening ceremony of our second League.

## The aims of the league are:

- 1) To build character among our youth;
- 2) To provide good competition; and
- 3) To entertain our fans.

**In Building Character** we insist that players be discipline in order to play in the league, we have also established a low threshold for rudeness and misbehavior of any sort, thus our commitment to a program prepared to implement and execute rules that adhere to a policy built on and around the principles of zero tolerance.

Our objective in this endeavor goes far and beyond providing an opportunity for a group of young men to occupy their time at the expense of sponsors. Instead, it is the fulfillment of a dream born by the Bishop through his Save The Seed Center; and, it is a commitment of mine to ensure prudent and managed succession in the territory.

While many may see you as a group of young men on various teams, dressed in shorts running up and down a parquet floor with the aim being to put a ball through a rim, I see the same group of young men from among whom the future members of the House of Assembly could be drawn. I see the same group of young men from among whom this territory could rely upon as part of its succession planning program.

There is no simpler way for me to put it than to let you know that we are doing this for the country, and that the matters of this country are so great that there is no room for slackness. I am not here for political reasons, and neither is the Bishop here to get you to join his church. As a matter of fact I promise you that during your time here you will not hear a single sermon preached, and neither will you be asked to join my political party.

**I can also assure you that anyone here inclined to lean in either of those directions, you will not be discouraged.**

**In Order To Provide Good Competition** we have also committed to making the league a serious one through our endeavors to make all our teams competitive, so that the games will be interesting to watch, and that the outcome of a game cannot be predicted before the finish.

Coming off our experience of last year, which was the first season of the league, we have learned a great deal about the readiness of our teams and what we needed to do to make the League better.

Despite having some very good teams in the League, I will be the first to admit that there was room for improvements, and that those improvements were best attained through a concerted effort to execute a program which involved greater player integration.

To that end, the League was charged with the task of coming up with a plan to improve the teams in the League. I have watched the League wrestle with ways to do this while at the same time maintain the integrity of the League which our fans and players have come to like.

Over the course of the offseason the League has proffered many suggestions, including a Draft, which I considered a novel idea. The Draft was adapted by the League, and implementation took place on Wednesday of this week. The process allowed teams in this League to enhance their game by selecting players from among the Federation's best, by way of a lottery.

**I was fortunate to have been present to witness the process, and I wish to share with you that I walked away proud of the League and its accomplishments.**

**To Entertain Our Fans:** although we already play to pack houses we must endeavor to keep it that way. We know that our product is unique in the Virgin Islands, particularly because of our arena, our policy on behavior, and the competitiveness of our teams, which serves as the primary reasons our fans come out to our games weekend after weekend.

This success can be short-lived unless the League remains proactive in ensuring that the games are interesting, and the facilities are safe to be in. However, we must be careful in the fans we target, by making sure the fans are of benefit to the growth and well being of the game.

To that end therefore, a family atmosphere is one we endeavor to create so we can be sure that the right fans remain and encourage others to join them.

The facility and the grounds upon which it sits are sacred, and the rules of engagement require that they be treated that way. I am pleased to be a partner of The Bishop and his Save The Seed Energy Center for the very reasons of their rules. As a stickler for details especially when it comes to rules, I find comfort in standing behind these requirements as established for the grounds.

**Our Sponsors** are a loyal and dedicated bunch who I thank immensely for their support for the League. I have already beseeched each and every one of them to be more assertive in promoting their businesses during the games. Our announcers will make mention of your products as long as you provide us with information.

**Players,** you know that without you none of us will be here, but I know you don't take that to mean that you are indispensable. We will make every effort to make you happy as a player in this League, because we so value your worth. I have asked the League to impress upon our loyal and dedicated referees that the fans did not pay to see them; they paid to see the players.

At the same time however, I have asked the League to remind the referees of their obligation to control the game under the rules as set out by the League, which means from whistle to whistle, they are the boss.

Let me end by asking you to acknowledge the Committee by giving the members a hand for their hard work and dedication to the League, and for what is a tremendously successful program.

**I thank you all for coming. Enjoy the rest of the program and the games.**