

Dr. Douglas and Team Jamaica

Written by Sonia Morgan

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If you hear [Dr. Michael Douglas](#) speak about Jamaica and its athletes, the passion in his voice shows his love of the island and its world class athletes. From sprint queen

[Merlene Ottey](#)

to world's fastest man

[Usain Bolt](#)

, this American chiropractor has worked with the Jamaican Olympic team since 1994, witnessing their triumphs, tragedies and overwhelming determination.

Dr. Douglas' commitment to Jamaican athletes is a satisfying mix of sacrifice, passion and privilege. At the recent IAAF Championships in Daegu, South Korea, Dr. Douglas served as one of the team doctors, helping Jamaicans and other Caribbean athletes prepare for the grueling competition.

In an interview with the National Weekly, Dr. Douglas said it all began in 1994 when he was on a mission to deliver nerve testing equipment to Dr. Amza Ali to the [Kingston Public Hospital](#) (KPH) in Jamaica. He met the then minister of sports, Portia Simpson Miller who introduced him to the

[Jamaica Amateur Athletics Association](#)

(JAAA) board, where he discussed working with the team. "They had no medical team, only one doctor would travel with them," Dr. Douglas said.

"My goal was basically to help out and treat the athletes of Jamaica. And to my surprise they

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invited me to Barcelona [for the World Indoor Championships]. I remember first entering this new arena of sports medicine pretty green... so I started to learn from all the other countries' therapists. They were very gracious and took me under their wings. Then I was invited to the next event in Sweden. There wasn't really anybody else," Douglas reflected.

Sweet sacrifice

Working with athletes is a sweet sacrifice for Dr. Douglas. He leaves his South Florida practice for weeks on end for athletic games, volunteering his services. "I volunteer... pay my own way, for hotel and airfare, but I get to come back to South Florida and share with [my radio audience](#) the wonderful experiences I have."

For Dr. Douglas, he sees his invaluable experience as an investment, improving his techniques to serve both the athletes and his patients.

"I was learning new techniques and I was gaining the respect of South Floridians who knew about the team. I kept adding layers and layers of different treatments to the practice and it became a part of me. Then it advanced to the teaching techniques. I would take courses to improve the new techniques I learned from doctors around the world." He took these techniques to treat Jamaican athletes for both Olympics in Athens (2004) and Beijing (2008).

Fulfillment and privilege

What motivates the doctor to continue working?

"I love the challenge of preparing for the event, applying my knowledge to the preparation progress. I enjoy the foreign travel, but I really do play an important role on the team. My role is to anticipate problems before they happen and prevent them before they happen."

For the doctor, "Working with the athletes is an unbelievable privilege. Being around people

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who stretch their bodies to the limit, allows me to utilize a set of skills that I don't use in regular practice. [The athletes] value and believe in my opinion, and when they feel like they are getting better, it translates into how they perform."

One challenge for Douglas is when he's unable to fix the athletes in time for their their event. "I wanna be able to get them well... I want them to run. It's a race against time. It's always a deadline and sometimes you can't meet it... that's the toughest thing, when I have to tell the coach that they have to start looking for a replacement."

For his athletes, Douglas said he wants to do the impossible. "It's an amazing thing to be a part of Team Jamaica and share the pride... to watch, to share that proud moment when Veronica Campbell wins, to touch Usain Bolt. I've earned this over decades of action, commitment and treatment. To have earned [Bolt's] trust, their trust... it's something I really value."

Color him black, green and gold!

In athletics, In athletics Dr. Douglas said, "I am definitely Jamaican. There is no question about what my colors are. There's no question of my loyalty ..or which team I'm on. They're my family; we've gone to battle enough and we have won. I wanna see my Jamaican flag flying out there, but if it's not, we want our Trinidadian cousins, or Barbados or Grenada or someone else from the Caribbean to win."

With passion still swelling in his voice, the doctor said

He said he admires the camaraderie between Caribbean teams, pointing out that many Caribbean athletes train in Jamaica.

"This whole journey has taught me how to evaluate life.," he said reflectively.