

Jamaica Youth Soccer Team on Goodwill Visit

By Stan Walker

A 15-member squad of a young Jamaican soccer team is currently in Hartford on a goodwill visit. The youngsters who are members of the Norman Gardens Youth Club of Kingston, Jamaica, hope to play games against local and New York teams before returning to their homes.

Last year the team won the Princes cup, a community youth competition sponsored by the Prince Charles Youth Foundation in England and run by the Kingston Restoration Company (KRC). They also were runners-up in the Ian Goodison League, another community youth competition, run by the Institute of Sport on the island.

Because of their success in the Princes Cup, the youngsters were invited to England where they met people involved with the program and the British High Commissioner. While in England they were interviewed on the Skyports Network, visited the Police Youth Club and were guests at a game between the English national team and the Netherlands. They were also invited to attend a training session of the English national team where they met and received autographs from most of the top players.

The visit to Hartford resulted from the desire of the organization to take their program further and they are in Hartford because they had established a relationship with the Hartford United Sports Club through its member, Casmore Stewart. To make the trip, the disciplined and enterprising group of youngsters, chipped in funds on their own. They also received generous assistance from Gresford Bennett, Project Manager of KRC and from the Minister of Commerce and Technology, Phillip Paulwell.

Two members of the team represent the island at the national level. They are Ryan Reid, a member of the Under-20 team and Conrad Hunt, who plays on the Under-17 team. They opened their visit with a make-shift game on Sunday, March 31, against Hartford United and went down to defeat 3-1.

Hartford resident Stewart, who was instrumental in getting the team to visit Hartford and has single-handedly taken on the task of hosting the team locally, said that he would welcome any assistance he can get either in cash or kind from members of the community. He can be reached at telephone (860) 246-4722.

Patrick Leslie, president of the club and manager of the team has expressed his gratitude for the reception that they have received since their arrival in Hartford. The Cricket Hall of Fame has planned a welcome reception for the youngsters on Wednesday, April 10, at the Sportsmen's Athletic Club, Main Street, Hartford, at 7 p.m. The group will return home April 28.