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Today's High 76°F

OLYMPICS TRIP 18 nights at two hotels for Government officials went unused

Rio: \$5,500 empty rooms bill

Adam Zacharias

Sports minister Sylvan Richards and his permanent secretary Wayne Carey spent almost \$5,500 on empty Rio de Janeiro hotel rooms during their trip to the Olympic Games.

The pair visited Brazil to officially support Bermuda's competing athletes at the international sporting event, which ran from August 5 to 21.

However, they drew sharp public criticism when it was revealed that the trip cost more than \$30,000 of taxpayer's money. Now *The Royal Gazette* has received records breaking down the men's expenditures, after sending a Public Access to Information request to the Bermuda Government.

One document showed that Mr Richards and Mr Carey requested reimbursement for stays in separate four-star hotels from August 4 to 22, despite arriving in Rio de Janeiro on the morning of August 5 and flying back to Bermuda on the evening of August 14.

Mr Richards booked a standard double room at the Royal Regency Hotel at a cost of \$348 per night, totalling \$6,264.

Mr Carey had a standard double room at the Solar do Amanhecer Hotel at a cost of \$254 per night, totalling \$4,572.

The combined spend on hotels was US\$10,836, which was converted to \$10,991 in Bermudian currency and sent to Government.

Eighteen of the 36 nights booked at

the two hotels went unused, at a cost of \$5,4950.50 to the taxpayer.

Details of the pair's visit were posted on the One Bermuda Alliance's expenses website last month, prompting angry claims of profligacy from the public due to its \$31,566 cost.

This comprised \$20,290 on business-class flights, the aforementioned \$10,991 on accommodation, \$130 on ground transportation, \$105 on meals and \$50 on miscellaneous expenses.

Public indignation intensified after this newspaper revealed that former sports minister Patricia Gordon-Pamplin had also attended the Olympic Games — spending \$6,312.09, which was not listed on the OBA expenses website.

Michael Dunkley, the Premier, con-



Sports minister Sylvan Richards

ceded that the outcry was “well-founded”, but defended his party's overall travel budget and highlighted its efforts to improve transparency on spending.

When contacted about the discrepancy between the hotel dates and the flight dates, a Government spokeswoman said: “Official hotel rooms were only available on a block basis for the entire Olympics.”

The Royal Gazette then contacted the Royal Regency Hotel and the Solar do Amanhecer Hotel in Rio de Janeiro.

Staff at both establishments denied that they had only allowed block bookings during the Olympic Games, adding that they always accepted bookings of any duration.

Tourism arrivals continue to grow

Owain Johnston-Barnes
Lisa Simpson

Vacation air arrivals increased by 18 per cent in the third quarter, according to the latest Bermuda Tourism Authority statistics.

As September figures leapt 31 per cent compared to the same month last year, year-to-date statistics also marked the highest number of vacation and leisure air arrivals since 2008.

Describing the numbers as “nothing but phenomenal”, BTA chairman David Dodwell added that nine months of consecutive growth showed that Bermuda tourism was in recovery.

“This is not peaks and valleys we are going to worry about in future years, this is putting the foundation in place, getting the right people working with us —

“We've had nine months of consecutive growth — it's not just lift in one of the months — and we're in recovery

— BTA chairman David Dodwell

all of which takes time. When we started the Tourism Authority in 2014, really the first year was formative, setting it up, legislation, getting key people, getting the board set up.”

Adding that the BTA also changed every commercial relationship since it started, he said: “This is the first year that all of

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Endeavour graduates getting regatta ready

Sarah Lagan

Some of the first graduates of the America's Cup Endeavour programme have said while they never had an interest in sailing before, they now want the sport to remain a part of their lives forever.

This week *The Royal Gazette* met Ocean Archebal, Isaiah Hayward and Atwah Butterfield — all 12 years of age — who are among those who have success-

fully completed the course and have been chosen to compete in their first race regatta next month against international youth teams.

They have been lucky enough to get some tips from some of the world's best competitive sailors, including Oracle Team USA skipper Jimmy Spithill and tactician for SoftBank Team Japan Chris Draper.

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ALLAN WARNER (1956-2016)



Photograph by Blaire Simmons

A giant has fallen: Allan Warner, who embodied the essence of the Gombey

Veteran Gombey captain's 'spirit lives on'

Jonathan Bell

Allan Warner, a Gombey captain deeply rooted in the traditions and culture of a quintessentially Bermudian art form, has died at the age of 59.

“For him, it was all about keeping the heritage and the culture alive,” Mr Warner's wife, Tracey, told *The Royal Gazette*.

“He didn't want the younger generation to lose it.”

Beginning his career in 1959 at the age of 3, courtesy of his uncle Llewellyn “Termite” Warner, Mr Warner set about mastering every aspect of the Gombey: he emerged as a gifted dancer, created most of his first costume at the age of 9, and at 16 began drumming for Warner's Gombey, the troupe that he ul-

timately captained. Mr Warner championed the Gombey legacy, which blends African culture with American Indian, Caribbean and British elements.

“The spirit of the Gombey is the core of one's soul,” he said in an interview for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, adding that “every costume in my group depicts some African in its greatness”.

In 1995, he became the first Gombey captain to receive the Queen's Certificate of Honour, and his stature was acknowledged at last year's Gombey Festival with special recognition from the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Under his leadership, Warner's Gombey represented the

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MUSTREADS

ILS 'stolen' claim

The CEO of Lloyd's of London said Bermuda “stole” the insurance-linked securities market from the city. But the ILS Bermuda Convergence has released a statement to redress the balance.

BUSINESS 13-18

Fear on the Pier

Aerial silks, aerial hoops, pole dancing, fire breathing, and fire swords come together for a carnival of craziness at this year's Hallowe'en celebrations at Pier 6 tomorrow night.

LIFESTYLE 23-26

Levesque holds his nerve

Marc-Etienne Bussieres and Dave Levesque held their nerve on the final hole of the Nike Golf PGA Team Championships of Canada to pocket \$12,000 of the \$90,000 prize money.

SPORT 41-44

Hitting 'corrupt' Clinton

Trump denounced Hillary and Bill Clinton as creatures of a corrupt system who would use another pass at the Oval Office to enrich themselves at the expense of Americans.

OVERSEAS 19-22



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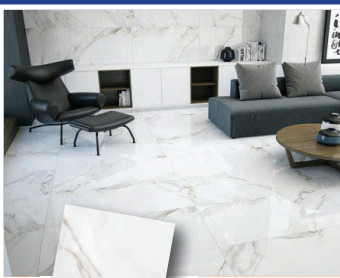
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