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### Congratulatory message for U 17 girls world cup team

As Minister of sports, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the history-making Cayman Islands National U 17 girls' team on their recent successes in U 17 world cup qualifying in Antigua.

Cayman was grouped with Antigua, the USVI and Jamaica in this round of qualifying and last Wednesday defeated Antigua at home by a score of three –nil and followed up on Friday with a comprehensive victory over USVI; 4-nil. Jamaica narrowly escaped the Cayman girls by the slimmest margins, two to one, on Saturday.

I am informed by the Cayman Islands Football Association that it is the first time in Cayman Football History that we have won any matches in any category of world cup qualifying.

This, against the background that the Cayman Islands National U 17 program is one of the youngest within CONCACAF having only been in existence for exactly one year.

The girls themselves were also one of the youngest teams in the CONCACAF with an average age of 14 competing against older and physically larger girls.

This is a testament to the significant effort put forth by the girls who demonstrated a tremendous level of discipline and hard work of the past year, sometimes training as much as five times per week.

Congratulations also to the Cayman Islands Football Association, the team manager Bernie Bush, head coach Bobby McLaren and technical director Thiago Cunha.

Congratulations to the parents to the girls for their support of the girls. (There was concern about the amount of time they spent in training as part of the program.)

It was especially good to know that reports are that the girls carried themselves as true ambassadors of the Cayman Islands both on and off the field, with members of staff from the hotel and other entities such as restaurants making it a point to speak to the team's leaders and management to note their exemplary behaviour.





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While they did not qualify for the next round of competition, their performances in Antigua bodes well for the future of women's football and it is my hope that the program will continue and that this group of girls will form the nucleus of the program as it grows. I am told that some 10 of the 18 girls on the team will be able to play again in U 17 qualifying in 2009.

