

# NBA stars hail high standards

By PATRICK SALOMON

'NBA CARES' ambassadors Jerome Williams and Andrea Stinson yesterday called on Bahrain's aspiring young basketball players to continue to work hard every day, just as they had done during their two-day experience at the 'SportsUnited' basketball clinic.

The event concluded yesterday at the Zain Bahrain Basketball Arena in Um Al Hassam with the final two sessions involving over 100 children all together, both boys and girls, from 12 of the kingdom's local clubs.

Williams and Stinson were once again at the helm of the drills and tutorials. They later expressed their delight with seeing the high level of talent and good display of fundamentals from the local youngsters.

Williams, a nine-year National Basketball Association (NBA) veteran, even went as far as saying that the potential of the best youth players here in Bahrain is the same as in the US, where teenagers are considered good enough to turn professional as early as the age of 17.

"The level here is just the same as in the States," Williams told the *GDN*. "The only difference is their being able to continually work at a consistently high level. If these kids do the same things that we did the last two days on a regular basis, they would be just as good, if not better."

"That's really what it's all about - being able to work hard with consistency. That's what makes the difference between top-notch players and players who aren't as good. The best continuously work and not just when they have to."

"With that kind of attitude, there's no telling what these guys here can achieve."

Stinson shared Williams's



■ A group of girls during the closing ceremony. Pictures by JAFFAR ALI



■ Williams and Stinson at the clinic. Left, Williams assists a youngster during a drill

observations. "The talent level here is very good, and if they work hard enough they can get better," she said.

"What we need now is for their coaches to keep working with them at a high level so they could learn more."

"For me, personally, the girls are very good. They have the fundamentals, and they can shoot the basketball and dribble well. I'd like to come back and do a clinic for just the ladies next time, because there's a lot of potential with them here and I can see they are very much interested in the game."

The popular American duo

thanked the youngsters for the warm reception they were given during the clinic.

"We've had an absolutely wonderful time here," said Stinson, who played nine years in the Women's NBA and was a two-time All-Star.

"The kids were very enthusiastic. They wanted to learn, they were willing to learn, and they learned a lot over the two days we were here together."

Added Williams: "I had a lot of fun; just seeing Bahrain and being with these kids, coaches, and all the staff that helped us out here has been a tremendous honour for me," he said.

"I really enjoyed seeing all the kids working hard, giving a great effort each of these last two days."

The participants, aged 11 to 18, were each presented with a certificate for taking part and an 'NBA CARES' bag. Present were General Organisation for Youth and Sports (Goys) official Amal Al Dossary and programme officer and US Embassy deputy public affairs officer David Edginton.

Last night, Goys president Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa hosted a dinner for Williams and Stinson.

Today, they continue their

Bahrain visit with special private appearances at select locations in the kingdom. Williams is scheduled to fly out tonight while Stinson will be leaving the kingdom tomorrow.

'NBA CARES' is the NBA's social responsibility initiative. 'SportsUnited' is the sport envoy programme of the US State Department, and Williams and Stinson are the special basketball envoys. The clinic has been organised locally by the US Embassy, Goys, the Bahrain Basketball Association, and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Recreation. The Department of Naval Support Activity-Bahrain.