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**Bahamas crowned basketball champs, Guyana take out Barbados**

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The Bahamas crowned themselves Caribbean champions when they turned back a resilient Cuba in the final of the regional Basketball Championship here Saturday night.

They were slow out of the blocks to trail 14-17 at the end of the first quarter but executed down the stretch at the Multi-Purpose Sports Complex, to come away with a solid 75-62 victory in the end.

United States Virgin Islands, meanwhile, defeated hosts British Virgin Islands to take third spot while Guyana blew out Barbados 79-58, to take fifth place.

The last place playoff was won by Antigua and Barbuda who easily brushed aside St Vincent and the Grenadines, 109-81.

Bahamas' championship conquest was spearheaded by the pair of Alonzo Hinds and Marvin Gray who both got 22 points while the other three starters – captain Magnun Rolle, Kadeem Coleby and Mitchell Johnson – all finished with 11 points.

For the losers, only Jasiel Rivero with 15 points and seven rebounds, reached double figures.

Both teams waged an intense battle in the second quarter, as they fought for control of the game.

Jasiel Rivero takes a jumper en route to his 15 points for Cuba in the final on Saturday night. (Photo courtesy Fiba Americas)

The Bahamas whittled the lead down to one early in the quarter with a Gray basket and it was he who put them ahead with 8:03 minutes left on the clock, when he knocked down a three-pointer.

They opened up a four-point lead at 23-19 but Cuba hauled them back in to lock the scores at 23 all, before another good run saw the Bahamians go ahead to lead 34-29 at the half-time whistle.

Cuba continued to hustle but the Bahamas kept their nerves, out-scoring their opponents 17-14 in the third quarter and then closing out strongly in the final quarter.

The fifth place playoff that promised so much delivered very little, as Guyana experienced little difficulty in disposing of the Barbadians.

Gordon Klaiber led four starters in double figures, scoring 17 points to lead the offence while Andrew Ifill and Dwayne Roberts both got 16 points and captain Rawle Marshall, 12.

For Barbados, Akeem Marsh got 14 points and eight rebounds and was supported by captain David Gill with 13 points.

Guyana held only a two-point lead, 15-13, at the end of the first quarter but had inched further ahead at the half, to lead 33-26.

The third quarter was a close tussle with Guyana out-scoring the Barbadians 23-21, to take a 56-47 lead but the final quarter was lopsided, as Guyana put the game to bed in style.

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