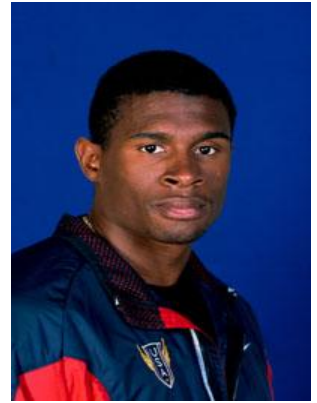


Virginia Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremonies Featured Speaker - Lawrence Johnson

The Virginia Commonwealth Games is honored to welcome Lawrence Johnson as the featured speaker for the 2026 Opening Ceremonies on Friday, July 24, 2026, at River City Sportsplex in Chesterfield County.

As part of the Opening Ceremonies, the Commonwealth Games is proud to welcome an Olympic medalist who inspires athletes of all ages to pursue excellence through hard work, perseverance, and determination. Lawrence Johnson's journey—from a Virginia high school athlete to the Olympic podium—embodies the values the Commonwealth Games strives to instill in every participant.



About Lawrence Johnson

A native of Chesapeake, Virginia, Johnson first gained national recognition as a two-time Virginia High School State Champion in the pole vault while competing for Great Bridge High School.

He continued his remarkable career at the University of Tennessee, where he became one of the most decorated collegiate pole vaulters in NCAA history, earning:

- Four SEC Championships
- Four NCAA Championships
- A collegiate record that stood for 25 years

Johnson represented the United States in both the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games and the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, where he captured the Olympic Silver Medal in pole vault.

His accomplishments also include:

- 2001 World Indoor Champion (Gold Medal)
- Seven-time U.S. National Indoor and Outdoor Champion
- Induction into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame (Class of 2020)

Today, Johnson continues to mentor the next generation of athletes as the Assistant Coach for Pole Vault and Multi-Events at Columbia University.

The Virginia Commonwealth Games is proud to welcome Lawrence Johnson as we celebrate athletic excellence and inspire tomorrow's champions.

Olympic Silver Medalist | World Champion | Virginia Sports Hall of Fame