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Panman: Tobago bands underscored on purpose

TOBAGO steelbands were deliberately underscored in the "preliminaries" so that the legendary Desperadoes of Trinidad could make it to the national finals at the Savannah.

How else, asks Patrick Arnold, President of the Tobago Steelbands Association, could the judges explain the fact that one week after giving the top Tobago band 229 points in the preliminaries, that same band was awarded 271 points in the finals, a higher score than even Phase II, the eventual North 1989 Panorama champions received.

"For the past 10 years, bands from Tobago have been qualifying for the national semi-finals. On everyone of those occasions, some band in Trinidad was standing by, waiting to be eliminated," Arnold stated. "On this Panorama, 1989, because it was Desperadoes, a lot of pressure was put on the judges with both sections of the media playing up the issue. And so the whole of Trinidad and Tobago knew that no band from Tobago would be going to Trinidad this year," he charged.

Following is part of Arnold's statement:

"The standard of judging seems to be very inconsistent. In the preliminaries held in Tobago, bands were hard pressed to make 230 points. The highest marks made were by East Side, 229, and Our Boys

227. Therefore, no band was able to qualify for the National semi-final.

"Lo and behold, in the finals, there was a drastic change and bands were able to move up to 271 points, made by East Side, 270 by Dixieland, and 254 made by Our Boys. This meant that the bands made even higher points than Renegades and Phase II. As we take a closer look at the overall scores in Trinidad and Tobago — Tobago East-Side is first with 271 points; Dixieland second with 270 points; then third, Phase II with 269 points. Yet, no Tobago band was able to make it to the semi finals!

"Can we now say that the judges marked very low in the Tobago preliminaries in order that Desperadoes would not be eliminated? I think this is a logical conclusion. For the past 10 years, bands from Tobago have been qualifying for national semi-finals. On everyone of those occasions, some band in Trinidad was standing by to be eliminated.

"It would also seem that good music is low on the priority list. What is important is "catching the crowd," and so some arrangers throw in bits and pieces of parts that worked for other bands the year before — some stops, some chromatic runs, some noise. These gimmicks rarely have anything to do with the tune.