

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Virgin Islander Strikes Gold at PanAm Games: St. Thomas Native Ian Barrows Wins for Team USA

Barrows and Henken Secure a Spot for the Paris 2024 Olympics

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St. Thomas-born Ian Barrows

One Virgin Islander emerged from the just-concluded 2023 PanAm Games with a gold medal, albeit earned under the Star-Spangled Banner.

St. Thomas-born Ian Barrows won the men's skiff 49er event for the United States of America alongside teammate Hans Henken during the event's medal race on Friday, landing them in 1st place overall with a total race tally of 26 net points, compared to 34 net points from second place team Uruguay.

The other Virgin Islanders in the skiff event, Taylor Fairbanks Hasson and Steven Christian Hardee, finished eighth out of eight entrants with 84 net points.

Thursday's first-place finish in the medal race was the cap on a triumphant race series for Barrows and Henken, in which they maintained a top 3 finish in all except race 7.

"Winning gold feels amazing," Barrows said in a post-medal statement. Speaking of the hard work involved in preparing for the games, he expressed gratitude at being able "to come here and pull it off against some good teams."

Fellow Virgin Islander Michelle Smith, meanwhile, had to settle for fourth place in the women's 400 meter hurdles. After race winner Gianna Woodruff was penalized for a technicality, Smith was moved into third place. However, a bronze medal was not to be hers, as the Panamanian athlete's penalty was reversed on appeal.

Meanwhile, the win for the Henken/Barrows team has seemingly secured them a place to compete in the 2024 Paris Olympics, where Virgin Islanders will be cheering on the St. Thomas native.