

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Cyclists Head South in Race to Honor Avid Cyclist Who Died Suddenly

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ST. CROIX — On Sunday the Virgin Islands Cycling Federation held the 4th Annual Donald's Challenge Road Race, in memory of Donald Christian who passed away suddenly from an illness. Christian was an avid cyclist and well respected by the local cycling community.

The race started at the entrance gates to Ha'Penny Beach on St. Croix's Southside Rd., headed west to Cane Garden, turned around then headed out to Castle Nugent, then back to Ha'Penny. Each lap was about 7 miles.

As the nine Elite riders lined up at the start of the race, St. Croix cyclists noticed an unknown rider from St. Thomas. Matthew Erchull headed out at an aggressive pace and kept the tempo going through all five laps. By the end of lap 2, the Elite group had separated into smaller groups. By lap 4, the trio of St. Thomian Erchull, Stephen Swanton and Ian Collins had advanced nearly 3 minutes on the next group, which included Joey Swanson and Glenn Massiah. Spectators were ready for an all-out sprint to the finish, but instead were surprised to see Swanton rolling in alone. His time was 1:35:03. Erchull crossed the line in second in a time of 1:35:58. Collins was third in 1:36:37.

The finish of the Expert race displayed greater excitement at the line. After riding together for the full 28 miles, Mario Peters made a final push towards the finish line and pulled just seconds ahead of Miguel Cruz and Troy Holloway. Peters' time was 1:23:48; Cruz and Holloway both finished in 1:23:51. Hannah Cranford from STT was the lone woman in the Expert race. She finished fourth overall in a time of 1:24:03.

The small Sport category was joined by the Women's category on the starting line of the 14-mile race. It was an "every man for himself" kind of race. James Meyers was the winner in a time of 45:07. Yves Abraham was second in 48:15 and 13-yr-old Mason Lambert was third in a time of 49:04. While Megan Lambert could not provide much of a draft for Meyers, they worked together for most of the race. Meyers nudged out Lambert at the line and she finished in 45:09. Lisa Gay (51:40) was the second place female finisher and Jan Powell (53:58) was third.

The next cycling race will be the St. Paddy's Individual Time Trial on Sunday, March 15 at 7am. The race starts at Junie's Bar & Restaurant, goes to Union & Mt. Washington, then finishes at Ha'Penny. For more information, please call 340-332-6282.

Photo 1: Elite winners, Matthew Erchull (2nd), Stephen Swanton (1st), Ian Collins (3rd) pose with Donald Christian's sisters

Photo 2: Expert winners - left to right - Troy Holloway (3rd), Mario Peters (1st), Miguel Cruz (2nd)

Photo 3: Elite winner, Stephen Swanton crossing the finish line of his 35-mile race

Photo 4: Leaders of the Elite race on lap 5