

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Over 50 Rackets, 200 Balls For Youth Tennis Program Stolen From Canegata Storage Facility

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Over the weekend, there was an attempted burglary at the sporting equipment storage facility at the Canegata Ballpark on St. Croix. On Monday night, the thieves came back, this time making off with more than 50 tennis rackets and about 200 balls belonging to the after-school tennis youth program. As a result, the program has been stalled until the equipment can be replaced.

NBA star and St. Croix native Tim Duncan is an avid supporter of the program and also one of its main sponsors. Apart from the obvious benefits after-school programs offer, this particular effort gives the territory's youth, who would otherwise not have the opportunity to play tennis, to both learn the sport and a chance to pursue it



Location where tennis

equipment was stolen and vandalized

"The youth of the territory are the ones suffering today because of a careless, mindless, criminal act," said Ricky Plaskett, who contacted *VI Consortium* about the burglary. He said the VIPD is currently conducting an investigation into the matter.

Students from various elementary schools arrived at the tennis court on Tuesday only to learn of the news of their equipment being stolen.

Plaskett also made mention of coaches Kristopher Elien and Denard Elamin, professionals who sacrifice their time to train the youth.

"They're the ones that show up on the court everyday and train the kids," he said. "A lot of them walk in from the elementary schools, including Pearl B. Larsen, which is right around the corner. So, the coaches are the ones that I feel bad for. I'm in the states and I come to the territory a couple times a year to raise funds, seek donations to purchase equipment. I feel bad for them."

Yet, even with the disheartening news, Plaskett said a wealth of support has been pouring in from Virgin Islanders near and far, who are not only offering encouraging words, but are willing to provide their own resources to replenish what was stolen.



Vandalized tennis equipment

He then explained the purpose behind the tennis program -- and the sport on a whole -- in the territory.

"Three years ago, myself along with two other individuals formed USVI Tennis, which was initiated as a grassroots tennis program in the territory to give back for our fortune growing up in the Virgin Islands and being introduced to the game of tennis, [and] being able to travel the world and represent the Virgin Islands in competition," Plaskett explained. "So, we started USVITennis.com as a way to promote and grow the game of tennis throughout the territory."

Regardless of the disappointing event, Plaskett vowed to keep working to make sure tennis' future in the territory remains vibrant.

"The program will go on, I'm going to box up some of the equipment that I have here, and I'll have it in the post office headed to St. Croix tomorrow, so at least they can keep going with what they started and move forward to keep the kids coming to the tennis court," he said.

Plaskett also thanked the many Virgin Islands entities that have supported tennis in the territory, including Seaborne Airlines, Virgin Islands Lottery, Duncan and others.