

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## USVI Shines Again At Rio Olympics As St. Thomian Daryl Homer Wins Team USA's First Men's Saber Silver Since 1904

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**Editor's Note:** This article originally appeared on Team USA.org. It was written by Rebecca Harris, a student in the Sports Capital Journalism Program at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

RIO DE JANEIRO — As he was being chased down, nearly tripping off of the strip entirely, American saber fencer and Virgin Islander, Daryl Homer, born in St. Thomas, somehow snuck his blade into German fencer Matyas Szabo's ribs for a point during his quarterfinal bout. The point was heralded with chants of "U-S-A" from the audience, with

the painted faces and bodies usually reserved for American football games, not for what could be called modern-day dueling.

Regardless, Homer deserved the chants and cheers. He went on to win a silver medal, a victory that brought about the first multi-medal Olympics for the United States in individual men's fencing since 1904, as Alex Massialas won silver in foil on Sunday. Homer lost the gold-medal bout to Aron Szilagyi of Hungary, 15-8. He became the first U.S. medalist in men's saber since Peter Westbrook won a bronze medal in 1984 and the first U.S. men's silver medalist since William Grebe in 1904. The U.S. has never won gold in men's saber.

"I wouldn't have found an access point to fencing without Peter," he said.

Homer's journey into fencing was a happy accident and he owes partial thanks to Westbrook. Homer came across the sport in a book one day. He took one look at the shiny masks and vests and told his mom he wanted to fence. She wasn't a fan of the idea until she saw Westbrook in a TV commercial.

Homer and Westbrook are close, figuratively and literally. Homer started in Westbrook's fencing program and the former Olympian has mentored Homer throughout his fencing journey. They also live about 10 blocks from each other in New York.

"I'll probably stop by when I get back and talk a little trash because I just dethroned him," Homer said with a laugh.

Fencing can be an unforgiving sport, as No. 1-ranked Aleksey Yakimenko of Russia lost in the round of 32, but the pressure to perform consistently never rattled to Homer.

"I love putting all the marbles on the table and seeing who's going to get them," he said.

His quarterfinal bout against Szabo — and indeed, his entire competition — was full of moments in which it seemed like the 26-year-old was going to lose those marbles. One such moment was when Homer and Iranian Mojtaba Abedini were tied in the semifinals, 14-14. Yet Homer showed calm and poise in the most aggressive of the three weapons on his way to winning a silver medal for Team USA.

"I perform way better on bigger stages," he said. After taking a few extra seconds to stomp out any remaining nerves, Homer scored the remaining point and earned his way into the gold-medal final.

With no men's saber team event in this year's games, Homer is free to enjoy the rest of his time in Rio.

As for what's next now that he's an Olympic medalist, Homer is planning a trip home to his native U.S. Virgin Islands this fall. Then: "2020. Let's do it," Homer said.