

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Thomas-Born Olympic Silver Medalist Shares Path To Success With Local Students

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ST. THOMAS -- U.S. Olympic Individual Saber fencing silver medalist Daryl Homer, a native of St. Thomas, spent the morning with sixth graders at the BCB Middle School on Monday, answering their questions and sharing the path that led to his historic win at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio, the Department of Education announced Tuesday.

According to the release, the 26-year-old, who is visiting his grandmother, retired St. Thomas-St. John district principal Aloma Blake, is the first U. S. Olympian to win a silver medal in modern-day fencing. While some reports say he is the first to win a silver medal in fencing since 1904, Homer pointed out that the type of fencing practiced 112 years ago is completely different from what is practiced today—making him the first U.S. Olympian

to snag the coveted award in modern fencing.

Mr. Homer was born on St. Thomas, but moved to New York at the age of five—the same age he learned of fencing after reading about it in a children’s dictionary. He began fencing at age 13 and has been honing his craft for the last 16 years.

“It’s been a long, long journey to get this,” he said, holding up his silver medal. “This is what everyone wants when you’re doing sports.”

Instead of speaking about himself and his Olympic-sized win, Mr. Homer spent much of the morning learning about the students. “What are your goals in sports or in life,” he asked. Students’ responses ranged from becoming pro-athletes, to attending college, to becoming teachers. Then, he asked students what they would need in order to achieve the goals they’ve set for themselves. After listening to a variety of responses, Mr. Homer offered, “Working hard is part of it, getting your degree is part of it, but you have to have faith. That’s why you must believe in yourself.”



Daryl gives students fencing demonstration.

(Credit: D.O.E.)

He went on to explain that although he is now an Olympic winner at the top of his game, it wasn’t—and often isn’t—always that way. “I wasn’t the best fencer when I was your age; there were a bunch of kids who were better than me, but I also listened to people who were older than me and experienced it before. They always told me to do the right thing and stay focused,” Mr. Homer shared. “You always want to be present in everything you’re doing; everything else can wait.”

One student asked Mr. Homer if he has ever lost a competition. “I lose way more than I win, but it’s important to win on the right days,” he explained. Homer said that after he placed second in the World Championships last year, this entire year, up until he competed in the Olympics, he struggled athletically. “It’s always important to win in the right moments,” Mr. Homer said. “The main thing you have to realize is that we all lose; we don’t win all the time.”

Mr. Homer said one of his goals is to establish a fencing program in the Virgin Islands. “Ideally, I’d want to open up a fencing club here for you guys and find ways for you to compete in international competitions,” he said.

Prior to fencing fulltime, Mr. Homer earned a college degree in advertising in 2013 and worked on major brands while he was training. Some of his clients included Beats by Dre headphones, NASCAR and he even shot an ad with hip hop recording artist, Kendrick

Lamar. “If I wasn’t fencing, I’d probably be working in advertising,” he said, showing students the importance of having options in life.

And speaking of options, every three weeks Mr. Homer travels to Europe to compete, plus he trains twice per day. He has competed in Italy, France, Germany, Russia, Venezuela, and many other places across the globe. When he is not traveling, Homer



Daryl Homer with BCB sixth-graders. (Credit:

D.O.E.)

“The biggest thing about fencing is that you have to be physically strong, but you also have to be mentally and emotionally strong,” he said. “It’s very much like a fight, chess and boxing all mixed together.”

No presentation from a world-class fencer would be complete without a demonstration. The cordial sportsman was happy to show students some fancy fencing footwork. He also highlighted the three types of fencing, including foil, saber and Epee. Foil fencing uses a light thrusting weapon and targets the torso and back, but not the arms; saber fencing, which Mr. Homer does, uses a light cutting and thrusting weapon, targeting the entire body above the waist; Epee fencing uses a heavier thrusting weapon, targeting the entire body.

In closing, Mr. Homer encouraged students to find something they love and keep at it, no matter what. “Kids teased me a little bit about fencing when I was a kid, but the same kids now, when they see me they say, ‘Wow, it’s so amazing that you’re in the Olympics; I never met anyone in the Olympics.’ If you can just do something that you love, find passion in it, and keep doing it and get really good at it [you will be successful],” he said.

Next, Mr. Homer has his sights set to compete in the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. He also competed in the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.