

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Fighters Win Five Out Of Six Fights In First Ever MMA Competition On The Big Island

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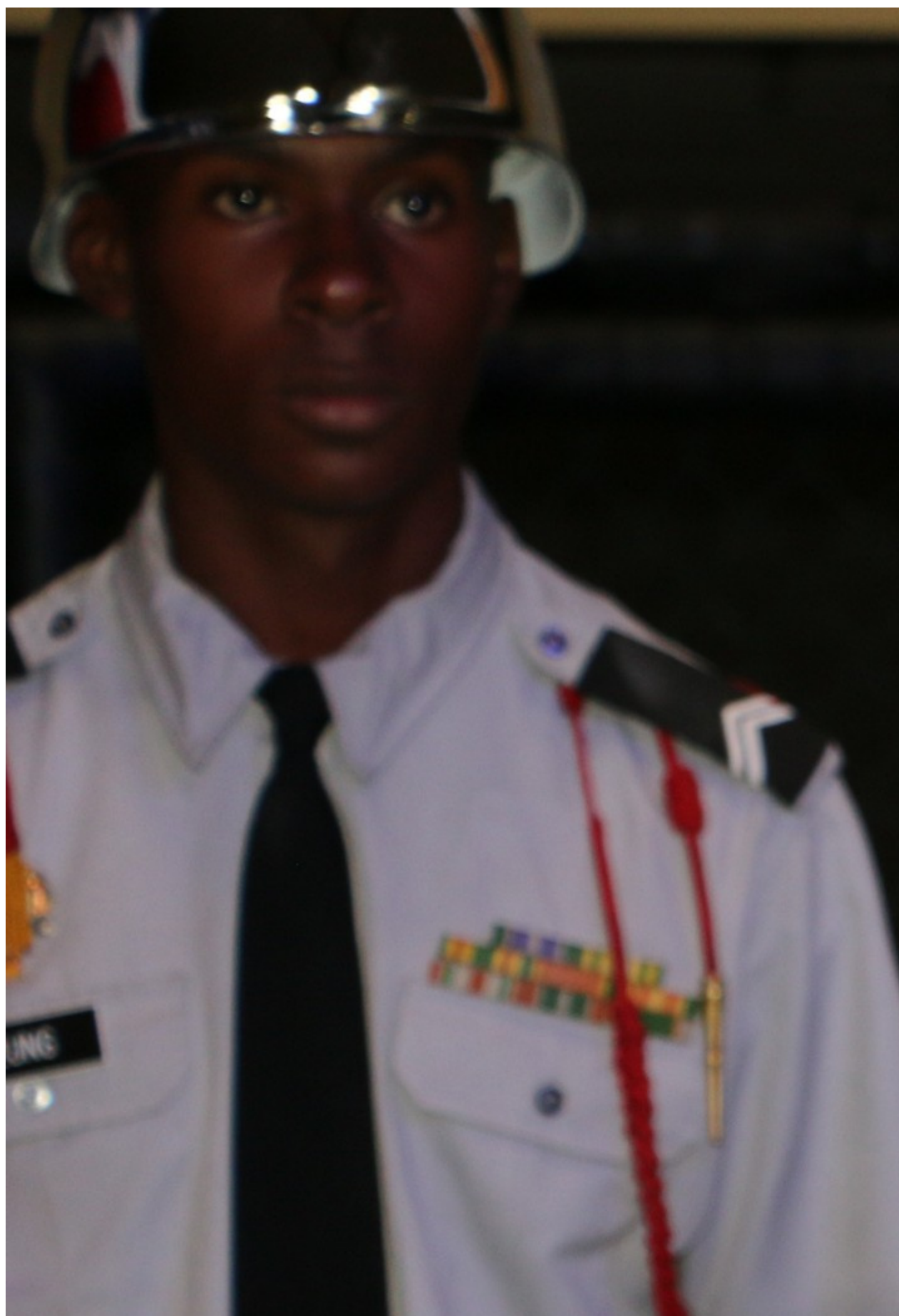
Donna Bellot **April 03, 2017**

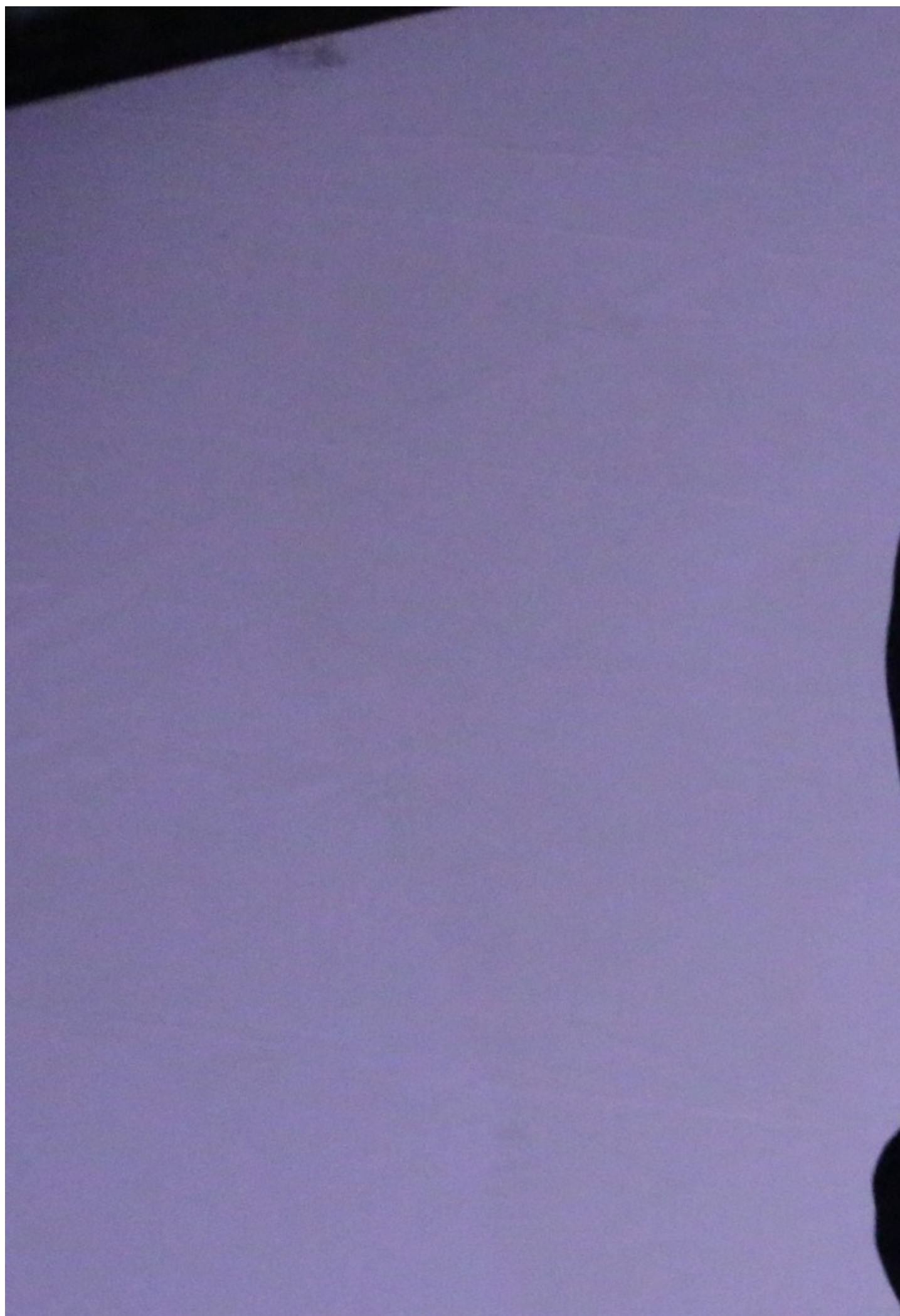


ST. CROIX -- Mr. Rodriguez Promotions and Paradise Fighting Championship are excited to host another event after the first ever MMA competition in St Croix was deemed a success. The MMA competition—which took place on Saturday night at the Sunshine Mall—showcased the talents of some Crucian and Puerto Rican fighters, while calling for youths and adults alike to put down the guns, stop the violence, and get in the ring.

The competition kicked off with students of Central High School's JROTC Drumline, followed by a message from Ariela Hayes, the general manager of Sunshine Mall. Rigo 'Suave' Rodriguez, owner of Mr. Rodriguez Promotions and Paradise Fighting

Championship gave his address to the crowd, recognizing the sponsors and introducing the judges, doctors and EMT staff. The opening prayer was given by Pastor Dexter Skepple. Central High School's JROTC Color Guards posted the flag, and the United States and Virgin Islands' National Anthems were sung by Davina Mar Martinez.





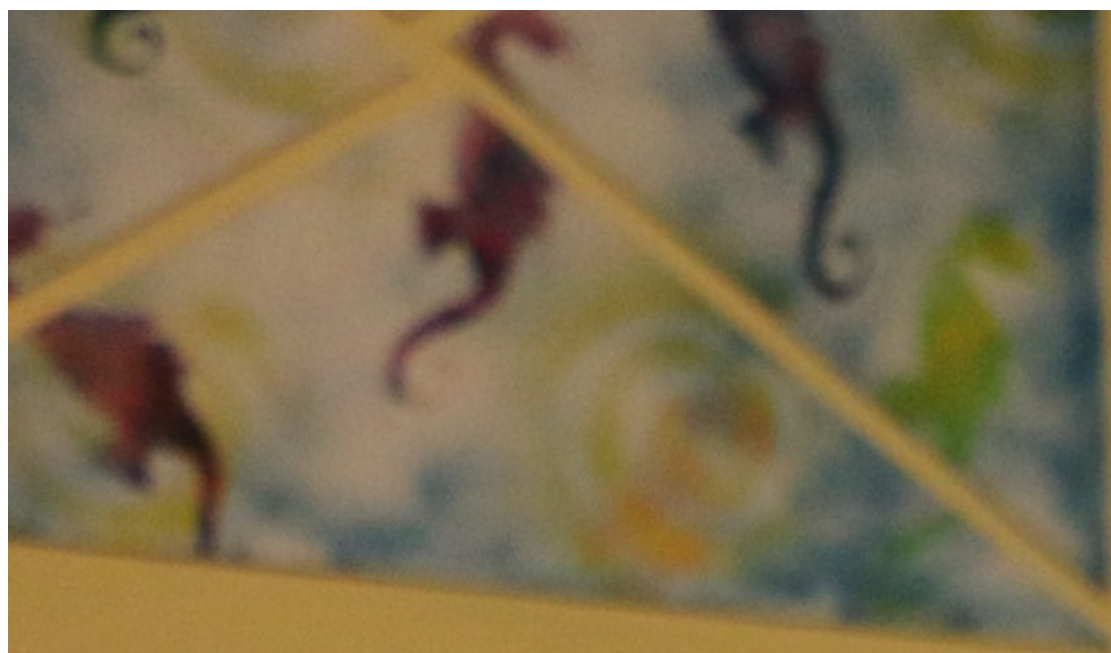
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A total of seven fights pitted Puerto Rico against St. Croix, in a red versus blue match-up, but there was no shortage of camaraderie among the fighters. Each match began with the customary touching of gloves and ended with the competitors sharing a hug and congratulating each other. Their message resonated throughout the night that it was not about win or lose, or the fight, but rather, growing as a competitor and challenging one's self.

"Win or lose it's about challenging yourself, you know anytime you step in here it's not necessarily about fighting somebody else," said Justin Smith, to the Consortium, when asked how he felt about winning. Mr. Smith—who went against Miguel Arce in the main fight—also said that he did not consider being in the ring fighting, but rather a competition with yourself. "I mean in here we got rules that we follow, but real fighting in the streets there are no rules," he said. When asked what advice he would give to those considering becoming a fighter, Mr. Smith said they would first have to change their mindset and understand it is not about fighting.

The matches, which fostered friendly competition between Puerto Rico and St. Croix, did well to display the talent in St Croix, as five of the six matches were won by the Crucian competitors. First time competitor Mark Sinanan expressed excitement over being able to compete. "I was pumped, I was pretty excited, a little scared, but I had to go in expecting the unexpected, but I came out with the best results," he said.

Matches in order were:

- Alberto Kevin Ramos vs. Jeff Aragon
- Wade Rodriguez Kramar Vs. Mark Sinanan
- Jeremy Santana vs. Khalid Matthews
- Jay Santiago vs. Tyson Henderson
- Danny Vazquez vs. Corey Mills
- Calyris Torrez vs. Kanisca Feliciano
- Miguel Arce vs. Justin Smith

As it was the first event of its kind in St. Croix, Mr. Rodriguez stated they are still working out the kinks but are definitely planning on bringing more training and more competition to St. Croix. He revealed that he is in talks with a local gym to provide MMA and other interdisciplinary fighting training to residents of St. Croix, through a nonprofit organization. Mr. Rodriguez noted he hopes to open doors in the VI and provide an opportunity for local talent to one day reach the highest level of competition which is the UFC.

He says he projects December 2nd, 2017 as the next date to hold another competition.

Feature Image: Jay Santiago v. Tyson Henderson. (Credit: Donna Bellot, VIC)