

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VI Students Receive Scholarships To Attend Colleges In Minnesota

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ST. CROIX -- Emotional family, friends, and other supporters watched on as four young men signed their Letters of Intent on Saturday afternoon. The four young football players, who were offered full scholarships to attend and play at different schools in Minnesota, made their decision official with signatures.

Vernon Clarke, Amani Flores, Lejoni William, and Jakeem Auguste from St. Croix -- between 3-4 students on St. Thomas also received scholarships -- all echoed the same sentiments of excitement and appreciation for the opportunity and blessings they were able to receive to not only attend college, but to do so playing the sport they loved. However, they also noted it wasn't an easy road getting to where they are now.

“I’m blessed, I’m blessed, I’m blessed, that’s all I have to say, I am happy for this and we’re going to make things happen slowly but surely,” said Jakeen Auguste when asked how he felt about the opportunity.

It all started with a fight. Kemba Martin, a concerned mother, said she had been away from the island for medical reasons when she received a call that her son had been involved in a huge fight that involved the two high school football teams. After watching several clips of the fight, she said she decided she needed to do something to bring the two teams together.

“I have a senior and I have a freshman on the team and I just wanted them to see something else than what we seeing on the streets or what we seeing the kids their age dying. We seeing kids their age [and] under twenty-five killing each other.”

In search of something, Ms. Martin reached out to Francisco Jarvis. She viewed on his Facebook page that he organized a “showcase” for VI high school football players, to give them exposure to stateside talent scouts and opportunities for scholarships. Working together, Ms. Martin, Mr. Jarvis, and the aid of several coaches were able to have a few players from St. Croix travel to St. Thomas to participate in the 9th Annual VI High School Football Showcase. It was the first time in nine years that St. Croix was been able to participate through their combined efforts.

“I have a freshman now, so I have four more years at least with the Caribs, so I am going to push my best for anything I can do for them. So as much boys or young men that I can get signed. Right now the schools that we had were all out of Minnesota, I’m trying to get all kinds of schools to come in, that’s my push, get them all over the United States, show them the Virgin Islands have talent,” said Ms. Martin.

Another showcase is scheduled for May and both Ms. Martin and Mr. Jarvis are looking forward to have more boys being given the opportunity to go off to further their education.