

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Soccer Stadium Set To Open In April On St. Croix; Facility Will Host Local And International FIFA Tournaments

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A look at how the stadium will look once fully completed

ST. CROIX -- Tucked away on a piece of land in Aureo Diaz is the construction of a massive soccer (football) stadium that is being built and is scheduled to be completed no later than April, 2019 if the weather holds. The facility, owned by the U.S. Virgin Islands Soccer Association, is being fully funded by FIFA, and will facilitate both pro local and international FIFA matches, according to association officials. The stadium comes complete with seating for 600 people, changing rooms, showers, along with media and

medical areas, according to Coach Darryl Rogers, a member of the association.

A press conference, which included Governor Albert Bryan and top soccer officials from Denmark, was held on Wednesday evening at the facility underneath a tent. Preceding the press conference was a tour of the stadium. Mr. Bryan appeared to have been impressed by the work, and said he might even become a soccer fan, attending games at the stadium once completed. He also spoke of the importance of such outlets for young Virgin Islanders that serve to steer them away from paths that lead to either death or imprisonment. And the governor also lauded Virgin Islanders in various fields who have become international professionals at the top of their craft. From Tim Duncan to Julian Jackson, Mr. Bryan highlighted these athletes as examples of the territory's history of producing stars, and as a clear indication that more international names will emanate from the USVI.

"We have been able to produce world class champions for years on end, imagine if we put our backs into it, if we really put our effort into getting every Virgin Islands student exposed in some way to some type of sport, talent, art, music, so that we're really getting the best of our talent," Mr. Bryan said "It's the intension of [Lieutenant Governor] Tregenza Roach and I in our administration to connect youth to all types of opportunities, to explore the talents that God may have given them that weren't explored before, to expose them to opportunities to work, to learn, to play sports and to do recreation."

The warm relationship between the USVI Soccer Association and two major leagues in Denmark -- one being the largest women soccer leagues in the Union of European Football Associations ([UEFA](#)) -- was hailed as an important benefit for both sides, but especially for the USVI youth who play soccer, many of whom have traveled to Denmark to play in the Dana Cup, which is the third largest youth tournament in the world.

Once completed, the new stadium will be a boon to St. Croix's tourism product, as international games will be played in it. This means hundreds of participants and their supporters traveling to the island, eating in restaurants, staying in hotels, and telling about their experience.

"It's the first [soccer stadium] in the Virgin Islands and we're proud that it will be completed by March or April," Mr. Rogers said. "FIFA is covering all the cost and we're just happy that we in the Virgin Islands are finally getting our own."

The USVI Soccer Association joined FIFA back in 1998, and the sport has seen sustained growth in the territory since that time, according to association members.