

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Winners Of 2019 Viya Open Tennis Tournament Announced

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Winning proved the rule rather than the exception for St. Thomas' Julio Martinez, who championed the highly-competitive Men's Open Singles at the Viya VI Open Tennis Tournament, a release issued Monday said. Mr. Martinez, who began playing tennis as an adult, beat fellow island resident, June Horii during a first to ten-point tie-breaker after each man won one match apiece (4-6, 6-2, 10-3), according to the release. The match proved an exciting finale to this decade-plus old tournament, held February 14 to 18, at the St. Thomas Yacht Club (STYC).

"I came straight from work to play the Singles match and didn't have time to warm up," said Mr. Martinez, who has played in this tournament for many years, most recently

winning the Men's Open Doubles last year with, George Lewis, and the Mixed Doubles this year with St. Thomas Kerri Clifford. "It showed in my first match when I felt a bit off in my game. Then, by the second match, I had my stride."

Over sixty players representing all three U.S. Virgin Islands competed in nine adult Open and B divisions and four junior divisions.

In Women's Open Singles, 17-year-old Charlotte Amalie High School senior Brittany Leonard, beat Ms. Clifford (7-5, 4-6, 6-1).

"Ms. Clifford beat me last year. This year, I won the first match and then lost the second. After that, I really put my mind into it, played more aggressively and was able to win," said Brittany.

Men's Open Doubles winners were Horii and Matthew Mahaffy over John Clauson and Neil Langan (6-1, 6-1).

"We just focused on our basic strategies and trusted that the result would come," Mr. Horii said. "What I love about playing tennis here is the camaraderie among the players. It is very special."

Mixed Doubles saw Martinez and Clifford beat Alec Chipman and Sandra Miller (6-3, 7-6, 7-2).

In Men's Singles 3.5 & Under, Chipman defeated Xavier Richardson (6-2, 6-4).

"This is the second year I've played in the tournament and last year I didn't get very far. Since then, I've been playing a lot of tennis," said Mr. Chipman.

Joyce Bailey beat Miller in the Women's Singles 3.5 & under.

The team of Denis Matthews and Brad Wilson triumphed (6-3, 6-1) over Jeff Chase and Klaus Neuberger in Men's B Doubles.

"Hard work," said Mr. Matthews about the team's secret to success. "He (Wilson) is good at the net and I've got a good forehand. We used that combination to advantage."

In Women's B Doubles, Eve Matthews and Natalie Lo bested Renee Migdal and Caryn Conway (6-3, 6-4).

"We had three really hard long matches with deuce points and tie breakers many times," Ms. Matthews said.

The Men's Doubles 55-plus was won by default by Rick Hunter and Joe Hosie over Warren Mosler and Colin Robertson. Robertson, whose tennis resume includes play in the Australian Open in the 1960s, reaching the third round in the U.S. Open, and invitation to play in Wimbledon, experienced an untimely injury in the first match.

Talent was impressive in the junior divisions at the Viya VI Open Tennis Tournament, according to the release. Eight-year-old twins Jada Chase and Maya Chase finished first and second, respectively, in the age 10 & Under, while Christo Morris beat Grace Lowenstein in the age 12 & Under. The duo of Morris and Lowenstein teamed in age 14

& Under Mixed Doubled to champion a three-hour game that ended in a tie-breaker (9-8(8)) over Mia and Ethan Ronen.

"I tried to push my opponents, make them run more and get tired out," said Christo, a 9-year-old third grade student at the Antilles School.

"For me, I wouldn't have done as well as I did without the people I played again pushing me," said 10-year-old and 4th grader at the Antilles School, Grace.

Finally, it was 14-year-old Toovin Phillip who won the age 16 & Under Singles over Christian Rosenberg (6-0, 6-0).

"Toovin plays very well and he continues to improve. He's got a passion for the sport," said Terrance Jacobs, coach at the West Side Tennis Club, on the UVI St. Thomas Campus.

New this year, a squash division was added to the tournament. Jeffrey Euwema won out of ten players competing in a double elimination format.

"I used to play tennis and have played squash for several years. One helps the other," said Euwema.

Over \$5,000 in prize money was awarded in addition to trophies, according to the release.

The athletic prowess of the players involved in the tournament was outstanding," said STYC Tennis Pro, Jonathan A, tournament co-director with Cate Morris. "I was incredibly surprised to see how players raised their games to step up to the challenges on the court. Whereas we had an awesome display of athletic ability over the last 4 days, the most impressive display was the support of the community. There were over 200 spectators cheering on their loved ones and friends. This tournament inspired me to run more tournaments for the St. Thomas Yacht Club in the near future."

The Viya VI Open Tennis Tournament was sponsored by Viya, the Department of Tourism and White Bay Partners.