

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Student Athletes and Coaches Prepare for a New Year

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Robert Moore **September 30, 2019**



Fielding competitive college athletic teams on remote, sub-tropical islands these days is a daunting task.

One morning Mother Nature might up and decimate facilities, scattering student athletes and university staff off-island for good.

When a full team, coach, and support staff can be assembled, most games are away from the comfort of home turf, and instead played stateside or somewhere abroad. Two years after hurricanes Irma and Maria barreled through the Caribbean, the University of the Virgin Islands Athletics Department wants student athletes and the

public to know that the UVI Buccaneers – in all current sports – are back in the game.

The University on Saturday held the first of annual Media Day events. The afternoon welcomed student athletes from the St. Croix and St. Thomas campuses – some of whom had never met — at the Sports and Fitness Center on St. Thomas.

But first, a few reassuring messages had to be delivered.

“The reason we’re here today, to me, is to show appreciation to you, the student athletes,” said UVI Athletic Director Wilberto Ramos. “Our job here is to make sure that you all have everything that you need to compete, and to have a great time here at UVI... and to get your diploma, get educated.

“We are growing as an athletic department. We are going to make sure that whatever your needs we can get it for you,” Mr. Ramos said.

Provost Camille McKayle cannot wait for this season’s home games. “Those of you who know me, know I can get a little loud in the stands, but I love our Buccaneers.”

Ms. McKayle said it was a unique pleasure to see student athletes from both UVI campuses gathered together. “To have all of our athletes in the same room is really a joy to see.”

Soccer coach Eduardo Collado said the men’s soccer team has only 14 players, well short of the usual 24 or 25 on other major college teams. But UVI soccer will be competitive, he said. “This a new beginning,” said Mr. Collado, a first-year coach at UVI. “We are starting from scratch, but we will be ready.” Mr. Collado has coached university-level soccer across the world for more than 10 years.

UVI soccer will launch an international recruiting effort next year, focusing in part on building a women’s soccer program, Mr. Collado said. Recruiting begins next year with vista to Brazil and other South American countries. Women’s basketball coach Asia Vetter is a UVI grad and former player returning to lead a team of veteran and new players.

“I’m looking forward to this season,” she Ms. Asia. “We fell short the last few years that I played here, but that stops nothing. Today marks a new year. I am excited to see where we go.”

Details of team schedules and line-ups for the Bucs men’s basketball, the Lady Bucs women’s basketball, co-Ed Track and Field and soccer will be published in the coming days.