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Covid-19 Pandemic Forces Paradise Jam Tournament Out of St. Thomas and Onto the Mainland

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The 2020 USVI Paradise Jam basketball tournament in St. Thomas will be relocated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, tournament directors have announced. The NCAA Division I men's and women's event will happen in the mainland United States for the safety of all participants and stakeholders involved in the tournament. A location has yet to be determined.

“While this was an incredibly difficult decision, keeping everybody healthy and safe is our top priority,” said Tournament Director Jennifer Ashby. “After completing a detailed evaluation of potential on-island options, we determined this is the necessary action. The well-being of tournament participants and the citizens of the U.S. Virgin Islands amidst the COVID-19 pandemic will always be our primary focus.”

“We are so sad the Paradise Jam can’t be held on St. Thomas this November. The U.S. Virgin Islands is our second home and we know how much this event means to everyone in the territory,” said tournament founder Nels Hawkinson. “While many other tournaments like ours decided to relocate already, we waited until the last possible moment to make this decision. This tournament is for the people of the Virgin Islands who we love.”

As a result of the relocation and the college basketball season officially beginning Nov. 25, it is the hope of the event directors to reschedule the men’s tournament to a later date, stated the release. The women's event will take place as scheduled from Nov. 26-28. There will likely be some shift in the tournament matchups based on the additional restrictions that may be imposed by the participating universities and their conferences.

“We want to thank the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Governor Albert Bryan, as well as the Department of Tourism, Department of Education, and Department of Sports Parks and Recreation,” said Ashby. “We also want to thank the University of the Virgin Islands, the local hotels, our staff, sponsors, and contractors for their continued support, and look forward to bringing Paradise Jam back to the U.S. Virgin Islands in 2021.”

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