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Dear Editor, Recognition is Due the V.I. Basketball Federation's Senior Men National Team

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The Virgin Islands Basketball Federation's Senior Men National Team

Dear Editor,

Allow me to express my heartfelt CONGRATULATIONS to the Virgin Islands Basketball Federation, and specifically, the members of the Senior Men National Team that participated in the FIBA AmeriCup Qualifiers. Most Virgin Islanders may not appreciate the difficulties the Federation faced in participating and competing in FIBA's (International Basketball Federation) New Competition System, commonly referred to as Home and Away Games. A system designed to bring National Teams games to fans at home, instead of one-shot competitions held in a city during summer, over a period of seven to ten days.

The herculean and expensive task of ensuring participants scattered throughout the World, for an extended weekend of competition, is a *fait accompli* in itself. We should acknowledge that of the sixteen National Teams that “qualified”, out of forty-three (43) National Federations, the Virgin Islands is the smallest of all. A Goliath of some 104,000 thousand people competing within a group of four (4) National Teams, where the Dominican Republic is the next smallest country with a population of over eleven million people. Does population size matters? Yes, it does. The bigger the country, the greater the availability of resources to a National Federation. Resources from the Government and Private sectors that ensures the existence of administrative offices, programs, facilities, sponsorships, and financial support to National Teams. A special Thank You to our Government Authorities and Private Sector supporters that made it possible for these Young Men to represent the Virgin Islands. Support rendered during tight financial times, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Young Men that practiced and competed in bubbles and quarantines, and at times in isolation.

The V.I. Senior Men National Team has been awarded the final spot in Group C for the FIBA AmeriCup 2022. While some may rely on the belief that Cuba’s non-participation in February’s Window is the sole factor that qualified the V.I. Senior Men National Team, I beg to differ. Imagine the psychological impact to our V.I. Team that arrived at the competition with twelve team members and losing lost two of its members due to the COVID 19 Protocols. A roster reduced to ten (10) members to play three (3) games in four (4) days. Losing to Canada 95-93 on a last second shot, losing to the Dominican Republic 103-99 in overtime and again losing to Canada 95-90, in a highly competitive manner. Their representation of us requires commendation. A VI BIG-UP to Head Coach Donald Bough and Assistant Coach Kevin Sheppard, for squeezing every ounce of strength and sweat out of these Young Men in representing our Virgin Islands. The Delegation represents the true meaning of Virgin Islands Pride and belief to battle to the final buzzer.

Submitted Wednesday by: Usie R. Richards

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