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## Aliyah Boston and South Carolina Defeat Mercer 79-53; Other Virgin Islanders Advance in NCAA Tournament

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Kyle Murphy **March 22, 2021**

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The Virgin Islands lost one connection in March Madness but the top seeds with ties to the territory advanced on Sunday.

North Texas had its Cinderella run end against Villanova but Baylor and Houston advanced to the Sweet 16 in the Men's Tournament. Aliyah Boston and South Carolina convincingly made the round of 32 in the Women's Tournament.

Ms. Boston, a St. Thomas native, and No. 1 seed South Carolina handled their first round matchup against Mercer 79-53, and advanced to play Oregon State on Tuesday. Ms. Boston contributed 20 points and 18 rebounds in the opening round win.

J'wan Roberts, a redshirt freshman from St. Thomas is on Houston's roster but didn't play as the Cougars survived an upset bid from 10 seed Rutgers, 63-60, in the second round of the NCAA tournament.

Rutgers built a 10-point lead in the second half but Houston came storming back. With just under two minutes of play left, Houston cut the deficit to one possession. The deficit was overturned when Tramon Mark converted an and-1 with 24 seconds left to give Houston a 61-60 lead.

Marcus Sasser created a turnover and got fouled with nine seconds left. He hit both free throws and Rutgers missed their chance to force overtime when they missed a three-pointer on the next possession.

Mr. Roberts briefly returned from a thumb injury in Houston's first round victory against Cleveland State on Friday.

Houston will play Syracuse in the Sweet 16.

Baylor didn't fall victim to the upset bug and beat Wisconsin 76-63 to make the Sweet Sixteen. They will play Villanova in the Sweet Sixteen.

Baylor's associate head coach is Jerome Tang who is the link to the Virgin Islands. Mr. Tang was born in Trinidad but moved to Frederiksted at a very young age. He has been part of the Baylor staff for 18 seasons and earned his promotion to associate head coach in 2017.

During his time coaching USVI junior teams, he led them to two Centrobasket bronze medals and one silver medal in 2015 — the Virgin Islands highest finish in that competition.

Baylor will play Villanova in the next round.

Villanova beat North Texas 84-61 to advance to the next round and eliminated one of the Virgin Islands connection in the NCAA tournament.

North Texas's connection to the Virgin Islands is assistant coach Jarrem Dowling. North Texas upset Purdue to advance to the next round.

In his bio on the North Texas website, Dowling is credited with being a crucial recruiter for North Texas. The same bio states that he led the Virgin Islands national teams to two silver medals and a pair of bronze medals during his time with the V.I. Basketball Federation.

Mr. Dowling joined the coaching staff in 2017-18. A year prior, the team had just eight wins. However in a remarkable four-year turnaround, the team is now two-time conference champions and on Friday had the first NCAA tournament win in school history.

### **Correction: March 22, 2021**

*A previous version of this story, because of a text error, included the incorrect team that South Carolina's Gamecocks beat. It was Mercer, not Hartford. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.*

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