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Major League Dreams: Virgin Islander is One of 15 Who Bested Over 1,100 Players From 75 Schools to Become All-Star Baseball Player in Miami Dade, Florida

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Mackeel Rogers, Jr.

Eighteen-year-old St. Croix native Mackeel Rogers Jr. made the All Day baseball team this May for his second consecutive year in Miami Dade County, Florida. The All Day team is equivalent to an All Star sports teams in the U.S. Virgin Islands. By June 2021, he hopes to get vetted and recruited by a college at the All Day Game as the next step in his vision toward one day playing for the New York Yankees. If not, attending a trade school for trucking is a promising option.

“He made the All Day team in one of the hardest states. Florida is a highly competitive state to play baseball,” said Akeem Maynard, Leadoff Athletics president and Mr. Rogers’s coach.

He made the cut for one out of the top 15 spots on the Miami Dade All Day team, competing against 1,175 players in 75 schools, according to Mr. Maynard. This accolade increases his likelihood of being picked up by college and pro teams, Mr. Maynard explained. Mr. Rogers plays the positions of second base and pit. He's played short stop in the past.

"This shows that it works when people come through my program," Mr. Maynard said.

One can only imagine what the odds are of being drafted for the major leagues. To shed some light on the competitiveness and high caliber of Florida teams, consider these rankings and polls: Both the Florida Gators and Florida State teams are in the top 15 of [Baseball America's 2021 College Top 25](#) rankings for the season. From week one of the season, Florida colleges placed weekly in the 2021 National Junior College Athletic Association-Division 1 polls. For the [week of May 17th](#), Miami Dade College placed #8 and Santa Fe College in Gainesville placed #14 in that poll.

"Since Covid-19, my opportunities to go to college went down," Mr. Rogers said. He said he would cultivate another passion — his childhood love for trucks — into a career should baseball not pan out. Mr. Rogers worked with Ferrol Trucking Services when he visited home in April 2020.

It was a rare opportunity for someone to train under the owner, Edmund Ferrol Jr., personally. Managers typically train new hires, but Mr. Ferrol took a liking to Mackeel.

"He's a hard-working young man. He shows up ahead of time. Anything he loves, he puts a lot of effort into it," Mr. Ferrol said of Mr. Rogers. To sum up his apprentice, he said, "He's driven."

Since 2018, Mr. Rogers has lived with his coach in Miami, Florida and is a 2021 graduate of Miami Senior High School. In interview, he expressed gratitude to Mr. Maynard for taking him into his home, training him, teaching him how to become a man, and helping him navigate racism on the mainland.

Prior to residing in Florida, Mr. Rogers played tee ball on St. Croix at the age of four. He recalled his first V.I. Little League coach as Rael Sackey, when he was just five years old. Additionally, he played for public school teams at Lew Muckle Elementary, Elena Christian Junior High School, and the St. Croix Central High School in ninth grade.

"My dad and mom used to carry us to the field and just play with us," Mr. Rogers recounted. He has three younger brothers who are currently in little league teams on the big island. "My mom played softball and my dad played baseball," he added. Rogers thanked his father for allowing him the privilege to pursue his passion away from home and affirmed that he is doing all he can to maintain focus on his training, with the hopes of college recruitment.

Correction: May 23, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

A previous version of this story stated that Mr. Rogers was 19, however he is currently 18 years old. We've updated the story to reflect the correct information.