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## Virgin Islands Lacrosse Team to Play in its First International Tournament Labor Day Weekend

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Kyle Murphy **September 02, 2021**

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The Virgin Islands Lacrosse Association was recognized as a member of World Lacrosse in November 2020, and subsequently the Pan-American Lacrosse Association (P.A.L.A) before the end of the same year. Now, the team will be participating in the P.A.L.A. Sixes Cup, its first appearance in an international tournament, during the Labor Day weekend.

Along with the Virgin Islands, the tournament will feature Puerto Rico, Peru, Panama and two teams from Colombia (blue and yellow). It will take place in Auburndale, Florida from Sept. 3-5.

The tournament will include a round-robin style seeding round, where each team will play every other team once to determine who will advance to the semifinals.

On Friday, the Virgin Islands will play four games starting at 8:00 a.m. against Puerto Rico. The USVI will play Peru at 11:00 a.m., Panama at 2:00 p.m. and Colombia (blue) at 5 p.m. On Saturday, the USVI's final game of the seeding round will take place at 8:00 a.m. vs. Colombia (yellow).

The top four teams in the standings at the end of the seeding round will play in the semifinals of the tournament on Saturday at 2:00 p.m. The fifth and sixth placed teams will play in the fifth place game at 11 a.m. Saturday.

The bronze medal game will take place at 9:00 a.m. Sunday between the two losers of the semifinals, and the P.A.L.A. Sixes Cup Championship game will take place at 3 p.m.

The Virgin Islands Lacrosse Association finished second in a men's league tournament in June and used the tournament as a tryout to select the roster for the Labor Day Weekend tournament, and the PALA Men's World Qualifiers next summer.

### **The USVILA roster for the PALA Sixes Cup:**

Field Players: Scott Hutchens, Pedro Alvarado, Matt Williams, Tyler Peworchik, Mike Murray, Teddy Bettencourt, Lamont Sweeney, Noel Regalado, Kyle Murphy, Ryan Meade, Ben Duhoski

**Goalie:** Andy Sjolander.

The eligibility requirements for World Lacrosse are as follows: the player must be born in the USVI or the player's parents or grandparents must be born in the USVI. Additionally, the player must have lived in the USVI for two out of the past five years, or be married to someone from the USVI.

The coaching staff for this tournament includes Head Coach Matt Casey and Assistant Coach Marty Ward, who responded to questions via e-mail from the Consortium about the upcoming tournament. Also on the coaching staff are Jojo Marasco and Brian Fitzgibbons.

Mr. Casey played college lacrosse at Ithaca College where he was an All-American and the Empire 8 Player of the Year. He also played in Major League Lacrosse for nine seasons and won two championships professionally. Mr. Ward was a two-time All-American goalie at Limestone College, a three-time Iroquois National Goalie and a bronze medal winner at the 2014 Federation of International Lacrosse World Championships in 2014.

Asked what it means for the Virgin Islands lacrosse team to participate in an international tournament, Messrs. Ward and Casey shared their thoughts.

"This is a huge opportunity to be the first generation of players and coaches to represent the USVI in international competition," Mr. Ward said. "The experience will enable our lacrosse program to become a visible option for the sport in the Virgin Islands"

Mr. Casey stated, "It's everything! There were a lot of people involved in this process who understand how beautiful the sport of lacrosse is and how positively impactful it can be on an entire community."

He added, "With the USVI participating in an international tournament, we will be taking another step towards using lacrosse as a vehicle to make a positive impact on the islands."

Mr. Casey said he expects the team "to play with heart and continue to grow as a team."

"We want the people of St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas to know that the USVI Men's National Team plays to make them proud," he said.

Relative to what they learned about the team during the June Tournament, Mr. Ward said he had three positive takeaways: "Team building, chemistry, and playing for one another."

The USVILA is dedicated to teaching the game to young student athletes in the Virgin Islands. It has already hosted clinics on all three islands, however the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed plans to bring the sport to the territory's youth.

Once clinics resume, Mr. Casey encouraged athletes to "keep your stick in your hands" as much as possible. "Be a multi-sport athlete," he said.

Mr. Ward advised, "Stay consistent and work at the game. The stick skills are the ticket to success so fall in love with Wall Ball and getting your stick work great."

For more information about the USVILA, follow their Instagram or [Facebook](#), or contact [admin@usvila.org](mailto:admin@usvila.org).