

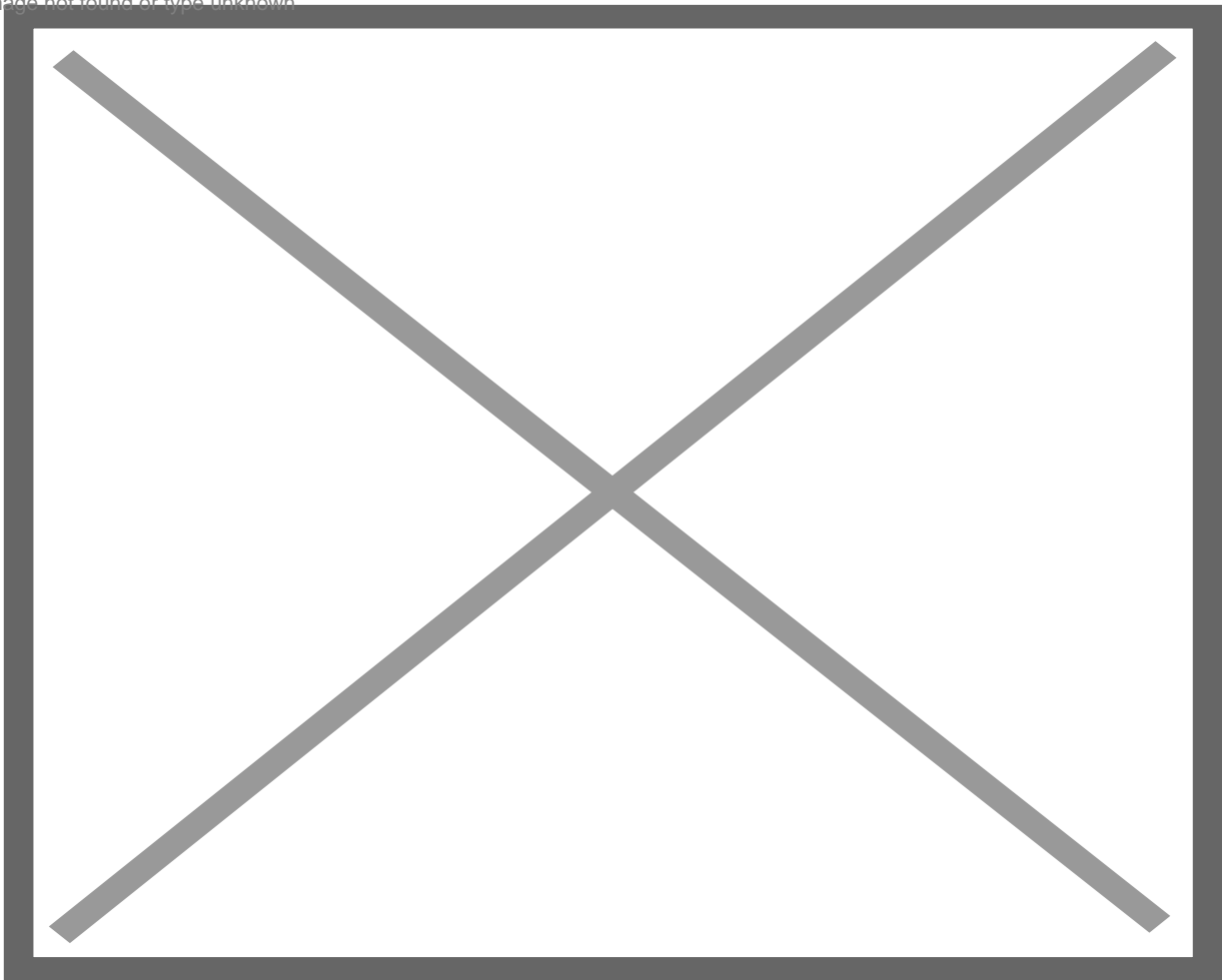
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Cheering Crowd Welcomes Michelle Smith Home Following Gold-Winning Performance Abroad; Government to Provide \$5,000 Sponsorship For Upcoming Competition

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Track & Field Athlete Michelle Smith was welcomed home Tues. June 21, 2022 at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY/VICONSORTIUM

Virgin Islands Track & Field phenom Michelle Smith on Tuesday night was treated to a grand welcome back home to St. Croix after her gold-winning performance on the mainland. A bashful Michelle was lost for words as a group of individuals cheered as she appeared, among them Dept. of Sports, Parks and Recreation, Dept. of Tourism and Government House representatives along

with senators, family members and friends.

Michelle's mother, Mireille Smith, said "it's totally an amazing feeling" to witness her daughter's growth and success. "You want your child to do great, then when they do, they surpass your expectations — it's just unbelievable."

Michelle's stellar performance is on and off the track as she's also the top-performing student academically in her class at Montverde Academy in Florida, where she is a sophomore.

Calvert White, the commissioner of Sports, Parks and Recreation said his department will provide Michelle with a \$5,000 sponsorship as she gets ready to represent the U.S. Virgin Islands in the World Athletics U20 Championships in Cali, Columbia from August 1-6.



Group picture with Michelle Smith, center left, following a short ceremony at the Henry R. Rohlsen Airport on Tuesday, June 21, 2022.
(Credit: Reemy-Reemz Photography, V.I. Consortium)

Her father, Keith. A Smith, Sr. who is also president of the V.I. Track & Field Federation, spoke of the talent in the U.S. Virgin Islands and said that with further financial support a lot more could be done. "We have to cherish his moment right now and understand that this is just the beginning," he said during a small ceremony held in a conference room at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport following the welcoming event.

Also providing remarks were Dept. of Tourism Asst. Commissioner Elizabeth Watley, Former Senator Alicia Hansen on behalf of Governor Albert Bryan, and Senator Kurt Vialet.

In April, Michelle [won a gold medal in the 400m Hurdles at the 49th Carifta Games](#). In that race, she ran a time of 58.61 which is not only a new Carifta Games record and a VI National Junior record, but also the world's fastest time for 2022 for the Under 18 age group.

On May 12, Michelle became a Florida State champion after competing in and [winning the 300m Hurdles during the Florida 2A State Championships](#). Michelle ran a new USVI record of 41.56, a time that also made her the fastest high school sophomore in the 300m Hurdles in the United States.

"We are in the presence of a future Olympic gold medalist - I'm calling it right now," said Mr. Vialet. "Where she is at right now at her age, we have not been in a long time."

"I am very, very proud of you and all of your accomplishments," said Ms. Hansen, who added that the Bryan administration believes in the vision and can see what Michelle will be in the coming years.