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Biggest Softball Tournament Ever for Territory Begins This Week on St. John

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The USVI Softball Team is among participants of the 2023 English Caribbean Amateur Softball Confederation (ECASC) Women's Fast-Pitch Tournament Qualifier. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The biggest softball tournament ever to be hosted in the U.S.V.I. begins on Tuesday, with teams from seven countries arriving in the territory.

Over five days beginning on Wednesday, teams from seven of the ten member countries will compete in the 2023 English Caribbean Amateur Softball Confederation (ECASC) Women's Fast-Pitch Tournament Qualifier, at the National Park Ball Field on St. John.

Apart from hosts U.S. Virgin Islands, teams from Aruba, the British Virgin Islands, Curacao, Jamaica, St. Martin, and the Turks and Caicos will be vying to secure the chance to represent the region at the 2023 Central American and Caribbean Games slated for June in El Salvador.

According to Jose Tony Rosario, director of the USVI Softball Federation, the Bahamas team will not participate this year, however their president will be on hand to participate in the election of a new executive for ECASC, which will occur later today.

Mr. Rosario told the Consortium that the tournament was originally scheduled to take place in Curacao, but plans fell through because of disruption caused by Covid-related shutdowns. The local Federation stepped in, despite challenges in finding suitable playing venues.

“It wasn’t an easy undertaking,” he said, “since all our parks are basically closed. The only park that’s open right now is the park in St. John. And thanks to the National Park – [they] spent almost a million dollars fixing this park — and this is the first event in this park on St. John,” Mr. Rosario continued.

The members of the USVI National Team are mostly playing at the collegiate level, Mr. Rosario said, and many landed in the territory on Monday to prepare for their first game against St. Maarten. He expressed pleasure that the tournament will serve to inspire younger players in the territory, who may not have yet gotten the opportunity to witness high-level games such as these up close.

“We have the talent, we do have the talent. Being able to play [at] home, in front of our people, to show the younger kids...how high they could attain, is very crucial to us. We always travel out, everywhere. Nothing is ever at home. So how do we influence, how do we show our young people the level...seeing Jamaica play against us, seeing Aruba...we have people coming from as far away as Holland. If we bring them home, we might have a bunch of young ladies in the audience who say, ‘I want to be like that one day’.”

Mr. Rosario said he expected a high standard of play, as this tournament conforms to all the rules and regulations of the international Confederation. “Everything is by the book,” he said.

The home team will begin their tournament by playing against St. Maarten at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday. On Thursday, they will meet Aruba at 7:00 p.m.. Friday presents a double challenge for the USVI women — they will play neighbors the BVI at 5:00 p.m. and then Curacao at 8:00 p.m. On Saturday, March 4th, USVI will be matched against Jamaica, while on Sunday afternoon, the third place and championship games will occur.

Mr. Rosario believes that the hosting of this tournament, and the development opportunities it presents, heralds an auspicious period for the sport in the territory. "The future is bright for women’s softball in the Virgin Islands.”