

Image not found or type unknown

# Courtside with Shomyra Francis: Rising Star of Virgin Islands Basketball

Sports / **Published On August 03, 2023 05:28 AM /**

Staff Consortium **August 03, 2023**

Image not found or type unknown



## Shomyra-Francis

*Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of profiles of the athletes on the VI Women's Basketball team, who will be celebrated this weekend for their gold medal win at the 2023 CAC Games*

Some may say basketball runs in 20-year-old Shomyra Francis's veins. The Christiansted native did not have to go far for inspiration, as growing up, she looked up to her older brother Shomari Francis who played with the V.I. Men's National Team. Her own introduction to the court came at just 4 years old by way of her father, Deron "Coach Moto" Francis. No stranger to the sport himself, Mr. Francis served as his daughter's coach until his passing.

Growing up, Shomyra tried her hand at every sport at her school. However, she told Consortium journalists that none of the others could compete with the passion and thrill of basketball. According to Ms. Francis, whereas other sports were just "fun," basketball provided an avenue for her to learn and grow both as an athlete and an individual. She recalls that playing the sport gave her a feeling of purpose and the realization that she was someone special — on and off the court.

Her avid involvement in basketball eventually earned her a spot on the Virgin Islands Women's Basketball Team, an achievement which she describes as a dream come true. Playing for the team and being able to represent her homeland means everything to the basketball enthusiast, she told the Consortium during an interview.

"It's a different feeling than playing in college because I get to put that VI on my chest and ball out with these women that watched me grow up," she said. Having observed some of these same women play the sport as a child, Ms. Francis now considers it a blessing to share the court with them.

[Winning gold](#) in Women's Basketball at the 2023 Central American and Caribbean (CAC) Games has certainly been one of the greatest highlights of Shomyra's athletic career. While she captured the feeling in one word – phenomenal – she added, "I feel like as a smaller island we are always counted out. We don't have much, we don't have too many people on this island, and women's sports are not always a big scene, and this is only my second year with this team so to accomplish this at such a young age and really early, its honestly breathtaking."

Though a first for the territory, June's spectacular victory did not come as a surprise to Francis. "My mindset was locked in with great energy," she says, adding, "when I saw the team we were practicing with, I always told myself this is a great team, everyone was locked in and wanted to win for the VI." She is hopeful that the team's historic win will encourage greater youth participation in women's basketball, while also drawing more eyes to the sport within the territory.

Recognizing basketball's continued contribution to her own development, the player intends to help grow the sport locally. Just as her sights were sharply set on victory in El Salvador, Ms. Francis is now acutely focused on pursuing a professional athletic career overseas, setting the stage for the establishment of women's sporting camps throughout the territory upon her return.

So how does one remain motivated and not lose sight of such a clearly defined goal? In a simple yet profound response, Ms. Francis declared, "What keeps me motivated as a player is all the adversity, all the sacrifices and all the losses/obstacles that I have encountered."

Disappointment and misfortune, she advises, can be leveraged as tools for success. In her own words of encouragement to individuals everywhere, "My advice is to let adversity build you, not break you. Count every loss as a blessing in disguise." Ms. Francis urges athletes and aspiring athletes hoping to carve out their own path to sporting success to "be your own leader, because if you join any team, any great coach will tell you great teams are player-led, not coach-led."

Though an impressive athlete, Ms. Francis's ambitious and driven nature is not only limited to competitive sport. Having already secured a degree in psychology, she will soon be pursuing further academic studies in biology/ biochemistry. While a powerhouse on the court, when she's not adroitly handling a ball, Ms. Francis can often be found enjoying a much slower pace, engaging in activities such as cooking, writing and fishing.