



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Public Relations

1834 Kongens Gade, Charlotte Amalie * St. Thomas * U.S. Virgin Islands 00802-6746
Telephone: 340.774.0100 Ext. 8136 Fax: 340.774.1168
340.773.1095 Ext. 7064 Fax: 340.773.4624

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Contact: Keva D. Muller
Director of Public Relations
(340) 774-0100, Ext. 8136 | (340) 643-4784
Keva.muller@vide.vi
www.vide.vi
www.facebook.com/usvi.vide

Sarah-Ann Mitchell
Public Information Officer
(340) 774-0100 Ext. 8135
sarahann.mitchell@vide.vi

CAHS AND IEKHS HOST EXHIBITION GAMES WITH NATIONAL BASEBALL ORGANIZATION

ST. THOMAS, USVI – Baseball players from across the globe participating in the Team Avenue Baseball Cruise Camp faced the Charlotte Amalie High School (CAHS) Chicken Hawks and the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School (IEKHS) Devil Rays in a double header at the Lionel Roberts Stadium on December 19.

The specialized camp works to expose traveling and local student players to collegiate and major league coaches in an effort to help students develop personally and professionally.

Richmond, Calif., native Thomari Story-Harden, founder of Team Avenue Baseball, was inspired to establish the organization after going on a family cruise and found opportunities for exhibition games at every stop. He spent six years playing with the Dodgers organization, played nine years of pro-ball, and has spent the last 10 years traveling with young, aspiring baseball talent to locations, such as Australia, China and throughout the Caribbean.

Story-Harden has assembled a hard-hitting staff to push the students in his program to reach new heights in their baseball careers. With legendary coaches such as Reggie Smith, Tony Schifano, Joey Davis, and Story-Harden himself, the camp aims to offer development unparalleled to any other baseball camp, Story-Harden pointed out.

“We focus on events where we can develop the players, both mechanically and personally,” he said. “We focus on personal and player development. We’re doing public speaking workshops and teaching them how to market themselves to college coaches.”

“So, after the games, we sit down and break down where they could have improved,” Story-Harden continued. “We even do interview skills and media coaching. These are life skills that they can take into the workforce. Over my time in the travel ball world, we tried to identify the topics and issues that the kids don’t get support in that we can help them to develop.”

Recreation Specialist Leon Bookeem Martin was instrumental in coordinating the St. Thomas exhibition games. Martin saw a unique opportunity for Virgin Islands’ athletes to gain exposure and training from college scouts and coaches.

“I was contacted by coach Harden while they were on vacation and we discussed the program and planned accordingly,” Martin said. “We are here to get our local kids involved. This is just a stepping stone for future events for these students. I want the students to be able to come in and see the different caliber of teams. The coaches here are on the collegiate level, so this provides exposure for our athletes, as well.”

CAHS senior Yadiel Desaine, a third baseman, came prepared to display his talents and shared his thoughts on where baseball could take his career.

“I’m a returning player from last year’s team and I feel good going into the season,” he said. “I’m looking at some schools in Boston and Iowa to play baseball on the collegiate level.”

Desaine went on to say that following high school, he plans to enter an MLB sports academy “to do additional training. The academy will really prepare me for college ball. The training will help me to get stronger and be a faster runner,” he said.

CAHS baseball coach Ira Todman said the exhibition games would help his players to up their game.

“It’s an opportunity for [students] to see what they need to work on,” he said. “It’s one thing when you play on the junior varsity level, but when you get to the varsity level, it’s a whole different ball game. Playing with the more mature players pushes them to grow.”

IEKHS baseball coach Rakeem Malone echoed Todman’s sentiments.

“This is an opportunity for us to see where our strengths are and where we need to improve,” he said. “This event is for the kids to have fun and learn respect for the game. I want them to remember that each person here is a teammate and they have a cultural family.”

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