



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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“Student-Athlete Combine in A Bubble” Designed to Help High-Performing Virgin Islands’ Student-Athletes Prepare for College Sports

ST. THOMAS, USVI – The Virgin Islands Department of Education, in partnership with the Virgin Islands Department of Sports, Parks & Recreation and the Virgin Islands Department of Health on November 4 launched the territory’s first “Student-Athlete Combine in a Bubble” program, which was developed to provide top 11th and 12th grade student-athletes the opportunity to both hone and showcase their athletic skills, with the added benefit of receiving a professionally produced video profile that students can use to apply for athletic scholarships.

The videotaped exhibition sessions will feature students engaged in drills, training, and scrimmages, and can be shared with colleges, athletic recruiters and scouts.

A total of 82 student-athletes from the territory’s public, private, and parochial schools, as well as a student who is homeschooled, have been selected to participate in the combine, which runs from November 4 to November 25 on the campuses of the University of the Virgin Islands.

According to Education Commissioner Racquel Berry-Benjamin, the purpose of the bubble is to “create a safe and secure environment for top student-athletes in the Virgin Islands to demonstrate their skill and competence in one or more sports, as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Sports, Parks & Recreation Commissioner Calvert White pointed out that as a result of the pandemic, it was necessary to provide students with this unique opportunity because the NCAA has suspended all in-person recruiting for Division 1 sports through January 1, 2021. He said coaches are not allowed to meet face-to-face with recruits off campus or conduct any in-person scouting. The NCAA has also encouraged all colleges to stop all official and unofficial visits.

“Now, more than ever before, it is important for Virgin Islands’ student-athletes to maximize their digital presence and to be proactive in starting recruiting conversations with coaches,” he said. “The Combine in a Bubble will afford them the opportunity to do just that.”

The process of selecting students to be a part of the combine was based on how close the student-athlete is to graduation, their academic status and behavioral record. Additionally, organizations such as IAA and respective federations played a role in the eligibility requirements and selection process, White explained.

STUDENT-ATHLETE GROUPS

The first group of students to participate are:

- Girls Softball on St. Croix and Boys Basketball on St. Thomas, November 4-11

The second group of students to participate are:

- Boys Baseball on St. Croix and Girls Basketball on St. Thomas, November 11-18

The third group of students to participate are:

- Co-ed volleyball on St. Thomas, November 18-25

The total number of students per sport are:

- Boys Basketball - 15
- Girls Softball - 14
- Girls Basketball - 11
- Boys Baseball - 20
- Volleyball – 22
- 13 girls
- 9 boys
- **Total Student-Athletes 82**

Indoor sports will take place at UVI Sports and Fitness Center on St. Thomas, while outdoor sports will take place at the D.C. Canegata Ball Park on St. Croix. Students will be required to travel via seaplane to participate in sports not offered on the island in which they reside.

Breakfast and lunch will be provided by the V.I. Department of Education’s School Food Authority and catered dinner will be provided by the Department of Sports, Parks & Recreation.

EDUCATION, PROGRAM SCHEDULE AND PARENT OUTREACH

While participating in the Combine in a Bubble, student-athletes are required to participate in their academic classes virtually. They will wear their school uniform shirt and join classes from their laptops from 8:00am to 3:00pm.

During the week, students will engage in classes from 8:00am - 3:00pm; homework from 3:00pm - 4:00pm; training from 4:30pm - 7:30pm; dinner from 7:30pm - 8:30pm; and recreation/workshops from 8:30pm - 9:30pm.

On weekends, students will engage in training from 8:30am - 11:30am; Lunch from 11:30am - 12:30pm; recreation from 1:00pm - 4:00pm; training from 4:30pm - 7:30pm; dinner from 7:30pm - 8:30pm; and recreation/workshops from 8:30pm - 10:30pm.

Some of the topics that will be presented during the combine are:

- The Clearinghouse process NCAA/NAIA Compliance by Mr. Greg Tyler
- The expectation of the Student Athlete by Dr. Jerel Drew, UVI Athletic Director
- Careers in Sports by Dir. Kirby Callendar, VIDE, and a
- Financial Aid and FAFSA Process by Ms. Mia Felix, Career Counselor

Parent meetings are being held for each student group via Zoom to inform parents of the requirements of the program and to answer any questions they might have.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Key measures were taken to ensure the health and safety of student and adult participants of the combine. Through the V.I. Department of Health, participating students are tested for the COVID-19 virus at 10 a.m. on Mondays, travel on Wednesdays, and tested for a second time on Fridays. Testing is free for students and chaperones.

St. Croix drive-through testing is being conducted at the Charles Harwood Clinic in the East parking lot area and St. Thomas drive-through testing is being conducted behind Schneider Regional Medical Center.

The test being used produces results within 15 minutes and if a test produces a false positive, which is common among rapid testing instruments, participants are retested.

Outsiders, including parents, friends, family members, or any other member of the public, will not be allowed into the bubble and combine participants will not be allowed to leave the bubble. Anyone needing to leave the bubble for emergency purposes, will be required to go through the necessary testing before reentry.

Participation in the Combine in a Bubble is at no cost to parents and students.

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