

Three American Surfers from the US Virgin Islands to Compete in the World Surfing Championships in Puerto Rico | Sports

Description

Tommy Gibney, a passionate surf enthusiast, has devoted several long years towards bringing the U.S. Virgin Islands into the realm of surfing at the Olympic Games. The approaching weekend offers a beam of hope as Gibney, united with two allies, will represent USVI in the International Surfing Association's 2024 ISA World Surfing Games, taking place in sunny Puerto Rico.

The 27-year-old Gibney, a native of St. John, is bringing a small but strong team to the World Surfing Games. Joined by surfers from the island of St. Thomas - Cody Merritt, 26, and Ocean Petersen, 39 - the three man team is set for the ultimate test - the final qualifier for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Gibney spoke about the intensity of the competition in a recent exclusive chat with The Daily News, "There's a high-stakes game at play with only six slots up for grabs for the men this summer for Tahiti, where the sport of surfing will witness vibrant activity during the Paris Olympics. The competition is sure to be cutthroat."

The World Surfing Games will kick-off this Saturday, bringing the picturesque La Marginal surf zone, located in Arecibo (on the north side of the island of Puerto Rico), to life. Comparing the surf conditions in Puerto Rico and his homeland, Gibney pointed out similarities, "The wave patterns echo what we see at home in the Virgin Islands, albeit a bit more steady and unvarying over here."

But getting a foothold at the Paris Olympics isn't just about showing up at the World Surfing Games. The top six men and top eight women, who haven't yet qualified, will advance from these games. Furthermore, two alternatives might give the USVI surfers a fair chance - one being the team championship and the other, an interesting option known as the "universality allocation," decided by the International Olympic Committee's Tripartite Commission.

However, Gibney and Merritt are no novices to the melting pot of international competition. The former, along with John Gazi from St. Thomas (absent this time owing to a fractured foot from training), had participated in the 2021 World Surfing Games. On the other hand, Merritt had partnered Gazi at the first qualifier for the Tahiti/Paris Olympics, the 2023 World Surfing Games.

As Merritt harked back to his past experiences, he underlined the importance of retaining one's calm, "The key takeaway I had was to enjoy the experience and not let the competition weigh you down. It's a momentous event with varied participants from multitude countries. And the thrill of seeing world-class surfing is something to truly relish."



Nevertheless, Petersen, a Tahitian local, is the "new kid on the block", making his first splash into the global scene. Nevertheless, Petersen has spent most of his life on the water and competed in local and regional surfing events. Petersen noted, "You have to make sure the pressure doesn't bog you down. It's essential to cultivate the mindset of enjoying a casual day out with friends, surfing at our local haunt. Otherwise, the weight of the occasion can easily unnerve you."

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Vocabulary List:

1. **Devoted** // (adjective): Having strong loyalty and support for a person, activity, or cause.
2. **Enthusiast** // (noun): A person who is very interested in or passionate about a particular subject or activity.
3. **Realm** // (noun): A field or domain in which something is dominant.
4. **Qualify** // (verb): To reach the necessary standard; to meet the requirements.
5. **Cutthroat** // (adjective): Fierce and intense; marked by a ruthless competitiveness.
6. **Alternative** // (noun): One of two or more possibilities to consider as a course of action.

CATEGORY

1. Uncategorized

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