

Three Competitors from US Virgin Islands Set to Participate in World Surfing Games in Puerto Rico | Sports

Description

Since the dawn of his earnest endeavour several years ago, Thomas Gibney has tirelessly sought to secure a coveted spot for the U.S. Virgin Islands, his homeland, at the prestigious Olympic Games, spiritedly vying for recognition in the exhilarating realm of surfing.

This forthcoming weekend, Gibney will welcome the reinforcement of his fellow Virgin Islanders as they gallantly compete under the emblem of the USVI, contending in the eminent 2024 International Surfing Association's (ISA) World Surfing Games, which are majestically unfolding on the sun-kissed shores of Puerto Rico.

Spearheading the USVI team, the 27-year-old Gibney, an indomitable native of St. John, will find himself in the august companionship of St. Thomas locals, the formidable duo consisting of 26-year-old Cody Merritt and the experienced veteran Ocean Petersen, aged 39. Their dynamic union conjures the USVI's stellar three-man team to grapple in the fiercely competitive arena that precedes the long-anticipated 2024 Paris Olympics.

"Regrettably, only half a dozen slots are on offer for the men's category this summer, with the heralded Tahiti Surfing competition earmarking winners for the Paris Olympics," opined a rather thoughtful Gibney during an exclusive interview with The Daily News last Thursday. Anticipation is mounting; the stakes are high. Everyone is dogged in their pursuit, tirelessly toeing the line for one last pursuit of glory.

The meticulously orchestrated World Surfing Games will officially kick-off on Saturday, marked by heartening opening ceremonies. The highly competitive tournament will draw to a close on Sunday, March 3. The rigorous competition is slated to unroll across three prime surf spots, bracingly located adjacent to the visual spectacle of La Marginal, a renowned scenic spot in Arecibo, on Puerto Rico's idyllic northern coastline.

"The surf conditions here closely mirror those we are acclimated to in the Virgin Islands," offered Gibney, who displayed an aura of cautious optimism. "While we share identical ocean swells with Puerto Rico, I must admit to their superior consistency over here."

The World Surfing Games presents two tantalising prospects that could potentially shine a global spotlight on USVI's surfers. Firstly, the team championship, which promises the highest-performing team a slot for Tahiti, empowers the team to select the individual contender. Secondly, the "Universality Allocation" provision critically bestows one Tahiti slot to a surfer handpicked by the International Olympic Committee's Tripartite Commission.

However, Gibney and his team are acutely aware that earning these upon coveted opportunities is contingent on achieving a high finish at the World Surfing Games. "Surfing operates on the whims of the ocean," reflected Gibney, acknowledging the unpredictability of the sport. "Despite being proficient surfers, success hinges on the harmonious synchronisation of skill, strategic acumen, robust technique and poise



under seemingly insurmountable pressure."

Gibney's experiences on the international stage, however, are not unprecedented. He harbours profound memories of competing alongside compatriot Jon Gazi (who unfortunately will be absent from this year's WSG due to a foot injury sustained during training) at the former World Surfing Games in Surf City, El Salvador. That momentous occasion served as the final qualifier preceding the delayed Tokyo Olympics. Merritt and Gazi had also represented the Virgin Islands at the inaugural Tahiti/Paris Olympics qualifier, held once again at Surf City, El Salvador.

Merritt offered his insights from his previous stints at these international competitions, "One should embrace the spirit of the competition, discern its essence and derive pleasure from participating while simultaneously not taking the pressure too seriously." He added, "It's a splendid gathering of world-class talents from myriad nations, providing invigorating glimpses into the guts and glory of the sport."

Despite being dubbed a "rookie", Petersen, an intrepid native of Tahiti, is no stranger to the saline oceanic world. He possesses remarkable waterborne experience - born amidst his parents' round-the-world sailing adventure and having faced the trials of local and regional surfing competitions. He advised, "One mustn't falter in the face of mounting pressure but embrace the joyful camaraderie of competition, as if riding the waves with your close companions at your favourite local surf break."

Vocabulary List:

1. **Endeavour** // (noun): A serious and sincere effort to achieve a goal.
2. **Coveted** // (adjective): Desired or admired by many.
3. **Emblem** // (noun): A symbol or representation.
4. **Eminent** // (adjective): Famous and respected within a particular sphere.
5. **Stellar** // (adjective): Relating to stars; outstanding in quality or performance.
6. **Anticipation** // (noun): The act of looking forward to something with excitement.

CATEGORY

1. Uncategorized

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