

SVG: A NEW NATIONAL SAILING ASSOCIATION

For St. Vincent & the Grenadines, the enormous sailing heritage made up of fishing, whaling, boatbuilding and servicing, from the colonial-period commerce of clipper ships and the trade triangle between the Americas and Europe all the way to today's commercial interests of modern yacht racing, cruising, chartering and preserving their double-ender (open wooden boat) racing makes for a mighty swirl.

Bequia Sailing Club has put on the wonderful Bequia Easter Regatta annually for many years. Bequia Youth Sailors (BYS) has developed racing in Optimists and double-enders. Bequia Traditional Sailing Academy started in more recent years focusing on giving youths a foundation in safety, seamanship and racing of native open wooden boats. Despite these advancements, SVG did not form a national sailing federation until 2015.

As Eddie Brown, president of the newly formed SVG Sailing Association (SVGSA) says, "The idea behind it is that the push for double-enders keeps tradition alive. If we want to go further afield, we need to do it in Optimists and other international classes. That was the idea behind forming the association. That is the idea, to be able to move forward with assistance from ISAF (now World Sailing). The traditional boats are not recognized outside the Grenadines."

SVG's Governor General, Sir Frederick Ballentyne, will explain the mandate of SVGSA and conduct election of new officers at an April 10th meeting.

SVGSA Board member Louise Mitchell explains the value of the new national body: "Having a national sailing association that is a member of the International Sailing Federation (now known as World Sailing) can mean the transformation of sailing as a sport in St. Vincent & the Grenadines. For years our young men have been involved in sailing purely as a local community initiative. Membership in ISAF will now be a bridge to link these young people to fellow sailors and sailing in the rest of the world. Our sailors will be able to benefit from training sessions on sailing throughout the world and also be able to now compete in sailing competitions worldwide. Right now

our only ISAF-registered sailor is Phillip Barnard, which he achieved all on his own. Having a national association will make this possible for many young sailors.



Members like these of the Bequia Youth Sailors and other youth-sailing programs in St. Vincent & the Grenadines will now benefit from being part of a national sailing association recognized by the global sailing body ISAF

"Sailing has been a sport that has been limited to one or two activities per year — such as the Bequia Easter Regatta and the Canouan Regatta," she adds. "Sailing will now become a year-round sport. The Association will be able to give support to community sailing clubs like the Bequia Traditional Sailing Academy, the Bequia Youth Sailors, the Bequia Sailing Club and other clubs in the Grenadines. Now that the framework has been set up it is for the young community leaders to step up and get elected to the Sailing Association executive and develop this sport."

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