

The Virgin Islands Track & Field Federation

An Affiliate of the International Association of Athletics Federations

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Former Virgin Island National Track and Field Athlete Profile:

Iyieachia Petrus was the first Virgin Islands National Track and Field athlete to represent the Virgin Islands in the IAAF World Championships. She competed in the 400m in Helsinki, Finland in 1983...as a supremely talented athlete she has won more medals in different events than any other V.I. athlete at CARIFTA.

Interviewed June 30, by Wallace Williams,
General Secretary,
The Virgin Islands Track and Field Federation

VITFF: You made history in the world of track and field when you competed in the first IAAF World Championships and at the age of 15 [is that correct?] and Tell us how you got started in the sport and who influenced you the most...

IY: YES, I WAS 15YRS OLD WHEN I COMPETED IN THE FIRST IAAF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS. I COMPETED IN THE 400METERS. I GOT STARTED IN TRACK WHEN I WAS 12YRS OLD. I USED TO ALWAYS RUN AROUND IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD(WILLIAMS DELIGHT). WHEN I WAS ATTENDING ST.PATRICK SCHOOL IN FREDRICKSTED, I WAS THEN APPROACHED TO RUN AGAINST THE FASTEST GIRL IN THE SCHOOL. HER NAME WAS SHEILA. WE COMPETED,AND THE RESULT OF THE RACE WAS A TIE. THE PERSON WHO INFLUENCED ME THE MOST WAS MY FATHER ALEXANDER PETRUS.

VITFF: What medals did you win at CARIFTA? Tell us about those races...

IP: I WON A TOTAL OF SIX (6) MEDALS.

17 AND UNDER AGE GROUP

BRONZE MEDAL(1982) 400METERS(57.36)
KINGSTON,JAMAICA

TWO SILVER (1983) 400METERS(57.32)
800METERS(2:15.12)
IN FORT-DE- FRANCE(MRT)

20 AND UNDER AGE GROUP

BRONZE MEDAL(1985) 800METERS(2:14.75)
BRONZE MEDAL (1985) 4X100 RELAY(48.09)
4X400 RELAY(3:50.48)

VITFF: Track and field is a unique sport in that as a competitor one has the opportunity to set world records, win Olympic and World Championship medals, to represent their club, school, country and themselves in local, regional and international competition. Explain to us why it is so difficult for track and field athletes to make a living in their sport.

IP: I BELIEVE IT IS HARD FOR AN ATHLETE TO MAKE MONEY IN TRACK AND FIELD BECAUSE A LOT OF COMPANIES ONLY SPONSOR AN ATHLETE WHO WINS A GOLD MEDAL.OR SETS A NEW WORLD RECORD. SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT TRACK IS NOT A COMPETITIVE SPORTS.

VITFF: Would you share with us what you consider to be your all-time best performances in the various events that you have competed?

IP: MY ALL TIME PERFORMANCES ARE WINNING THE FIRST GOLD MEDAL OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS 1984 AT THE JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP IN THE 800METERS (2:12.20).

COMPETING IN THE 1ST WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP I HELSINKI, FINLAND 1983, AND ADVANCING TO THE SECOND ROUND IN THE 400METERS.(56.33)

COMPETING IN THE 1983 PAN-AMERICAN GAMES IN VENEZUELA,CARCAS AND BEING A SEMI-FINALIST IN THE 400METERS(55.32),& 800METERS(2:13.00)

ACHIEVING A PERSONAL BEST IN THE 400METERS(55.32).

REPRESENTING IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN CARIBBEAN GAMES IN 1982.
HAVANNA,CUBA
AT THE AGE OF 14YRS AND BEING A FINALIST IN THE 400METERS.

VITFF: Last year (2009) is considered by Virgin Islands Track and Field Federation officials as the best year performance-wise in V.I. history. Why do you think that is?

IP: I BELIEVE WE HAD THE BEST YEAR BECAUSE OUR ATHLETES WERE RECOGNIZED ON THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL AS WELL ON THE AMERICAN CIRCUIT. THEY PERFORMED WELL WITH ELITE TRACK ATHLETES. THEY HAVE THE BEST COACHES, AND A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY.

VITFF: Several years ago, The Virgin Islands Track and Field Federation approached The Virgin Islands Olympic Committee with a proposal that would provide V.I. National Track and Field Team members a monetary stipend in the form of Training Grants to help the athlete make the transition from the college season in track and field to the outdoor season and championship competitions where they would represent their country like the CAC Games, Pan American Games, Olympic Games, etc. Would you share your thoughts on this?

IP: I THINK IT'S GREAT FOR OUR ATHLETES, ESPECIALLY NOW TO BE COMPENSATED. I REMEMBER, HOW HARD IT WAS FOR SOME ATHLETES TO GET SPONSORS TO TRAVEL WHEN I COMPETED. I AM GLAD THIS WAS IMPLEMENTED, SO OUR ATHLETES MAY CONTINUE TO PURSUE THEIR TRACK CAREER.

VITFF: The Caribbean is known for its sprinters. More and more sprinters from the Caribbean are winning medals in the IAAF World Championships and the Olympic Games. The Virgin Islands has seen overall improvement in the sprints over the past several years. Where do you think we are today in the world of sprinting for men and women?

IP: I THINK WE ARE IN THE BEST IN THE WORLD IN SPRINTING FOR MEN AND WOMEN.

VITFF: Last year, the Virgin Islands had at least five individual athletes listed on the IAAF Performance List not including the men 4 x 100m and 4 x 400m Relay Teams. What, in your opinion is the next level for the V.I. in track and field and what do you think the Virgin Islands needs to do to take the Virgin Islands National Track and Field Team to the next level?

IP: I HOPE WE WILL HAVE TEN ATHLETES ON THE IAAF PERFORMANCE LIST. WE NEED A BETTER TRACK, OR SEND THE NATIONAL TEAM TO THE TRAINING CENTER IN THE STATES. BUILD A NEW TRAINING FACILITY IN ST.CROIX.

VITFF: When you trained and competed there were no rubberized tracks in the Virgin Islands. How were you able to be so competitive in spite of this?

IP: YES, THERE WERE NO RUBBERIZED TRACK BACK IN MY DAYS. I WAS STILL ABLE TO BE COMPETITIVE BECAUSE MY COACH RAYMOND STEVENS INSTILLED IN ME ,THAT IT DOES NOT MATTER WHERE YOU TRAINED? IT'S HOW YOU TRAINED?

VITFF: What coach/s had the most influence on your development as a track and field athlete?

IP: THE COACH THAT HAD THE MOST INFLUENCE ON MY DEVELOPMENT AS A TRACK ATHLETE IS RAYMOND STEVENS (STEW). HE DEVELOP ME MENTALLY, PHYSICALLY, SPIRTUALLY FOR TRACK AND THE REAL WORLD. HE'S A GREAT COACH.

BESIDES, BEING MY COACH,HE IS IN FACT MY FRIEND, AND THIS IS WHY HE HAS MADE ME THE ATHLETE THAT I AM TODAY!!!!!!!!!!