

## Lightning launch marks St. Maarten's sailing debut at 2018 CAC Games (/sports/local-sports/75951-lightning-launch-marks-st-maarten-s-sailing-debut-at-2018-cac-games)

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COLE BAY—Country St. Maarten will be represented in sailing for the first time at the Central American and Caribbean (CAC) Games to be held in Baranquilla, Colombia, from July 19 to August 3, 2018, when a young team competes in the Lightning Class sailboat. The games are held every four years.

The 20 ft Lightning is one of eight types of boats that will be used in the sailing competition to be sailed by a team of three. The Laser is also included in the group to be raced by experienced veteran Frits Bus who completes the two teams from St. Maarten. The sailing delegation will depart for Colombia on July 15.

The Lightning team comprises Garth Steyn, Jolyon Ferron and Alec Scarabelli, who were presented at the launch of a Lightning hosted by Budget Marine on Friday. The boat was purchased by Garth Steyn, President of Sint Maarten Sailing Federation (SIMSAF), to serve two purposes; to use as a training boat for the close to three months preparation time needed for the CAC Games, and ultimately to keep the boat for the Kidz at Sea Foundation and its continued collaboration with Milton Peter's College (MPC)

"The Lightning is an old Sparkman Stephen design from 1933 but the class rules and how they are measured is very strict," Garth explains. "No carbon is allowed on the boat, but there are adjustments for the mast and rigging, and that's what encouraged me to buy the boat so we can play around with the rig settings in different wind conditions. Also, it has an asymmetrical spinnaker which none of us have a lot of experience with. So, it will be good to practice with.

"The guy that I bought it from in North Carolina has the original plans to build it. So that's where Kidz at Sea comes in. It makes more sense further down the road to have a one design Lightning Class for the kids to race in at the CAC once they get to that level, rather than the one-off Purple Heart which was a good project and concept in itself, but this would be an extension of that. By building Lightnings at MPC it will be a lot cheaper than trying to raise money and find sponsorship."

The Lightning has been christened "Walkabout" due to problems encountered in Florida with its size when the boat was towed up and down the state to find a shipping company willing to ship it to St. Maarten.

To compete in the CAC Games is an expensive undertaking. The boats (new of course) have to be rented at the venue, add in insurance and purchase of new sails and spare parts and the total cost comes up to around US\$ 8,000, Garth discloses. But all costs combined can take the tally up to US \$15,000.

With three 50-minute races per day over six days, the Lightning racing is expected to be exhausting, hence the need for the team to be at a peak of fitness. Cycling and weight training are the preferred forms of exercise.

"The hiking is going to be intense and these are long races," Garth adds. "But for me its once in a lifetime opportunity. For Jolyon and Alec, they are young enough to do the Games several times," he says.

The positions on the boat have not been decided yet, though Garth suggests the two younger and more agile crew members will probably work the foredeck if all agree.

Cary Byerley is the Sailing Delegation Team Leader while Rien Korteknie goes along as Coach.

"Sailing is not normally included in the CAC so that fact that we are going is very exciting," said Cary. "It's the first time St. Maarten is able to compete in the Games. For me personally, I'm on the Regional Games Committee for World Sailing so I'm covering two bases, St. Maarten and my job on the Regional Games Committee."

For Frits Bus, this will be his fifth CAC Games, always in the Laser, and previously two Pan Am Games.

"I have always been representing the Netherland Antilles (AHO) until 2010. Country St. Maarten is now able to participate in the CAC thanks to the hard work of the Sports Federation and Aartwichgt Bell. I was involved from the beginning but passed it on to Garth and Cary as both on the board of SIMSAF.

"The level in the Laser Class will be very high, up at Olympic level. There are no age categories, you represent your country and that's it, so I will be sailing mostly against younger sailors."

Commenting on the Lightning, Bus indicated it has a lot of tuning possibilities which makes it a good choice for novice sailors to learn on.

"There are lot of things on it you can alter and change. And that makes it interesting, especially if sailing with a few boats together. You can really learn a lot."

Sailing, swimming, cycling and judo are the four sports St. Maarten is representing at the CAC though it was not immediately known if the latter three sports are fully subscribed with athletes.