



Miami 23-Year-Old Set to Make History

By BET.com Staff



23-year-old pilot Barrington Irving will make history when he returns home to Miami next week.

Barrington Irving, a 23-year-old Miami man, is set to make history. When the Jamaican-born pilot arrives home in his custom-built Lancair Columbia 400 jet next week, he will become the first African-American and youngest person to ever fly solo around the globe.

"I wish I had a chance to bring every child tracking the flight on my adventure," Irving said when he left Miami on March 23. "But I will be carrying all their hearts with me in the plane. This is what fuels me - having youth believe in what I can do, so they can also begin to believe in themselves."

So far, in the plane he named "inspiration," the young man who grew up in inner-city Miami has stopped in Spain, Greece, Egypt, Dubai, India, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan.

Irving, who counts the Tuskegee airmen and aviation legend Charles Lindbergh as his heroes, says his interest in flying was sparked as a teenager when he met a black airline pilot at a Christian bookstore his parents owned in Miami. The man, Gary Robinson, took him on a tour of a United Airlines cockpit.

He began working odd jobs to pay for flying lessons and even turned down a football scholarship to study aeronautics at a local community college. By 19, he had obtained his license to fly.

More than 4000 people, including corporate sponsors like Chevron and Microsoft Flight Simulator, are expected to show up at the airport when Barrington arrives in Miami next week.

Talking about the high school students he mentors through a charity he set up to teach young people about aviation, Irving says, "they can look at me and realize that if I can achieve my dream, they can too."