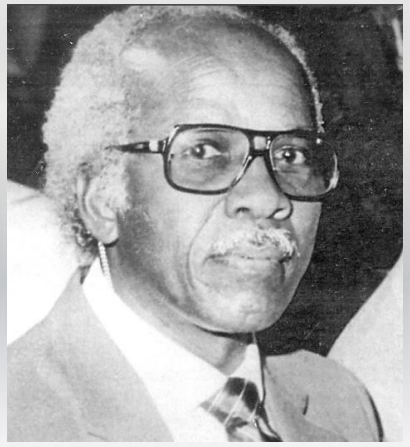
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Emmanuel McDonald Bailey C.M.T

Athletics

Inducted in 1985

His gliding stride belied the fact that he was a short distance runner, blessed with the explosiveness to be amongst the very best in the 100m and 200m. And unlike many sprinters, he was known for his remarkable consistency over several years which resulted in the many titles that he garnered.

'Mac' Bailey was born to run and wasted no time in exuding his natural talent. Born in Hardbargain, central Trinidad, the young Bailey ran at primary school meets in Princes Town before moving to Arima Boys' Government School where his speed shone through as he took on (and sometimes beat) the young speedsters in the Arima region. Further moves to Tranquility Boys and then Queen's Royal College (QRC), ensured that his trajectory to the top was supported by the education that most prominent schools at the time had to offer.

It was at QRC that Bailey made great strides forward in his running, his prowess growing with his ambition fueled by the exploits of Jesse Owens' four gold medal haul at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

The top T&T sprinter at the time was JRN Cumberbatch, the first T&T athlete to win a medal at an international event, the 1939 British Athletic Championship (which Bailey also attended as a junior but upon arrival he chose to compete in the senior ranks and reached the semi-finals of the 100 yards). A fellow QRC alumni, Bailey established his reputation on the national landscape when he became the first local sprinter to beat Cumberbatch over 220 yards and he did so with a new record of 21.5 seconds. Several trips around the region, representing T&T, resulted in Bailey taking some notable scalps but such was the strength of Caribbean sprinting that things certainly did not go his way every time, but the heat of the competition made him stronger.

Graduating from QRC and his appetite whetted by his trip to the United Kingdom in 1939, Bailey was certain that he wanted to go to England to further his education and like many West Indians at the time, he chose the military service route. Enlisting with the Royal Air Force in 1942, he began his longevity at the 1946 British Athletic Championship with the first of many 'doubles', winning the 100 yards and 220 yards. In that same year he won the bronze medal at the CAC (Caribbean and Central American Games) held at Barranquila, Colombia. When he successfully defended his British Championship double in 1947, Bailey was quickly earmarked as a favorite for the eagerly anticipated 1948 Olympic Games, the first to be held after the Second World War. The question was

whether he would represent T&T as he did at the CAC Games, or the nation where he now resided and the Olympic hosts, Great Britain?

Rules regarding representation were not as strict as they are today – for example, even though Bailey ran for T&T in Colombia in 1946, he ran for Britain for the first time in a meet verses France one year earlier. Bailey made enquiries as to whether T&T were going to send a team to the Olympics, one that included a sprint relay squad. With little funding available, T&T could not yet confirm what size team – if any – would be sent to London Games. Bailey opted for the security of the Great Britain team.

In late 1947 Bailey suffered an injury to a thigh muscle, one that was serious enough to jeopardize his career far less his participation at the Olympics. He was only able to race eight weeks before the Games and lost his British titles on the comeback trail. There is some conjecture to Britain's decision regarding Bailey's participation; now injured and off the list of favorites, Bailey was only selected to take part in the 100m, not the 4x100 relay or the 200m. In some circles it was thought that Bailey would then refuse his selection altogether but instead, he accepted. Mystery also surrounds T&T's stance on Bailey at the time, given that by residing in Britain, there would be no travel cost inflicted upon T&T.

After all the innuendo, Bailey performed above and beyond expectations at the Games, reaching the 100m final but finishing 6th in 10.81 *The Times* (London), echoed the sentiment "he did amazingly well, considering his recent muscular and bronchial troubles."

With injuries behind him, Bailey set about reclaiming the Championship doubles, while also competing on the European circuit. With the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki on the horizon, Bailey's 1951 season was one of perfection, capped off with a very special run on 25th August at Belgrade, in the former Yugoslavia.

In the 100m event, Bailey got a great start before settling into his trademark rhythm and never breaking stride until past the finish line. His time? 10.2 equaling the world record held by the man that was his inspiration, Jesse Owens, as well as Hal Davis. Bailey's reaction? That proved that the 100m could be run in 10 seconds flat. He had become the first T&T athlete to hold a world record.

As world record holder he was back amongst the medal favorites for the 100m at the Olympics, able to challenge the favored American sprinters.

In Helsinki, he won all his races to reach the final, posting times of 10.65, 10.73 and 10.74. The final was held on a dreary Finnish afternoon, the turf track soggy and making running 'heavy'. Rain and hail had fallen earlier, and officials attempted to dry out the lanes by putting kerosene on them and then lighting it. The result was a cinder track that resembled mud.

Bailey was nervous with the weight of being the world record holder and the expectations placed upon him by the press. He later admitted to being anxious, which was echoed in the recollections of his rivals in the same holding room. Troubled by the state of the track in addition to his nerves, Bailey faced the starter but tensed up as the pistol shot and did not run with his accustomed fluidity. Nevertheless, he showed why he was the world record holder and recovered over the last 20 meters, to

catch the front two on the line. All three men, Bailey, Herb McKenly (Jamaica) and Lindy Remigino (USA) appeared to cross the line together. It was the first time that there was so close a finish to an Olympic 100m.

The photo finish eventually separated them: Remigino in 10.79, McKenley in 10.80, Bailey in 10.83. Bailey said “I was running with brute force, instead of that fluent style that I was capable of creating. It was a close finish….I was naturally disappointed but I don’t think one need feel even today, too bad about getting a bronze medal.”

Bailey again won all his races on the way to the 200m final but the various rounds of both the 100 and 200 took its toll and he finished fourth. "That was my best event, but I was the only one doing both sprints," he said. "I was leading 40 metres out, then my legs went."

It was his third Olympic final in as many tries. A further nod to his consistency was a further double at the British Championships in 1953, creating another ‘E McDonald Bailey’ entry into the record books; he had won the most national championships with an astonishing seven 100 yards and seven 220 yards titles between 1946 and 1953.

Capitalizing on his popularity in Britain, Bailey turned his speed to rugby, playing professionally for Leigh before an injury ended that career. He returned to the Caribbean, becoming a prolific sportswriter and also accompanying the 1964 Olympic team to Tokyo as a team official. There, he would have seen firsthand the medals won by Wendell Mottley, Edwin Roberts, Edwin Skinner and Kent Bernard on the athletics track, a reminder of the legacy that Bailey helped create for T&T runners.

For his achievements and services to sport, Emmanuel McDonald Bailey was awarded the Gold Chaconia Medal in 1977 and was inducted into the T&T Sports Hall of Fame in 1985.

Olympic Games: 1952 Bronze 100m

CAC Games: 1946 Bronze 100m

PB: 100m 10.2 secs (WR)
200m 20.9 secs