First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Douglas L. Barzey (Posthumous)

Track & Field

Inducted in 2015

Trinidad and Tobago's proud legacy in Track & Field would not exist if not for the individuals that gave selflessly to ensure the development of the sport from its embers in colonial times, through to modern-day professional administration. Douglas Barzey was one of those individuals, a pioneer that would traverse through all levels of officialdom in local athletics.

His interest in the sport was first piqued by his participation as a runner, specifically a sprinter and hurdler from south Trinidad, but he soon found himself gravitating towards officiating at the big games that took place within his vicinity. The Southern Games, Palo Seco Games and San Fernando Games were all eagerly awaited annual events attended by thousands and requiring slick organization with a high standard of officiating. Barzey not only found himself ensuring that all race-day standards were met, but soon became involved in the organization of the games beforehand.

He joined the organizing committee for the Southern Games, playing a major role throughout the 1940s and 50s. In this era, the Texaco Sports Club held sway over several sports in south Trinidad, including athletics, so Barzey joined the club in 1955, furthering his experience and influence. This led to him being at the forefront as a Texaco representative when the National Amateur Athletics Association (NAAA) was formed. The aim was to formalize the sport under one national body, a timely action with the nation's increasing participation in major international Games, from the CAC Games to the Olympics. Though that was the ideal, it took some time – and the efforts from Barzey and others within the NAAA – to achieve national consensus.

Barzey had risen to secretary within the organization, which still could not have an athletics national championship after 1962 due to internal politics. But, by the turn of the decade, the Association was able to facilitate the staging of the championships in 1969 and 1970, as well as complete the formation of a true all-encompassing NAAA in 1971. At that juncture, Barzey was the vice-President and became NAAA President the following year, succeeding Jessie Noel.

His tenure was greeted with many 'firsts' including Trinidad and Tobago's first female competitor at the Olympics, 200m runner Laura Pierre. The focus on new competitions continued under his watch as Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Junior CARIFTA Games in 1973 (with Trinidad and Tobago winning a then-best 20 medals, including 6 golds). Barzey also helped the nation's youth attend the inaugural CAC Junior Championships the following year in Venezuela. These pioneering efforts

led to Trinidad and Tobago athletes gaining international exposure at a younger age and enabled the development of a cadre of talent.

His first year (1972) as President also saw the crucial reintroduction of the national championships that have since grown in prestige and, as Barzey would appreciate, organization. Barzey remained NAAA President until 1975 and as Secretary of Texaco Sports Club until 1979. He also remained involved in local football, serving as a council member of the Trinidad & Tobago Football Association and Vice-President of the Southern Football League. In 2008, the TTFF (the Football Association morphed into the Federation) honoured Barzey at its 100th Anniversary gala, while Barzey was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 2015.