First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Oliver Penlyn Bennett

Horse Racing

Inducted in 1984

Within the horse racing game 'Pen' Bennett has done it all, from starter to steward, from breeder to classifier. But it is his career as a jockey – some state the best that Trinidad and Tobago ever produced – for which he is most remembered and where he left his mark on the sporting landscape.

Despite his diminutive jockey's build, Bennett was an all-round sportsman who began breaking records in another sport before he did so on the horseracing track. In 1907, at the age of 18, he became the first schoolboy to play cricket for Trinidad and Tobago, taking part in the inter-colonial tournament. He was not just there for experience, as proven by his taking of 15 wickets in the season that included 4 for 18 versus Barbados. He also played football and lawn tennis, as well as athletics, where he ran the 220 yards and 440 yards.

But horses were his first love and he dedicated himself to being the best in the country in the Sport of Kings. By his late 20s he had won every classic on the racing calendar. In the age before official champion jockey awards were handed out, Bennet's remarkable win rate ensured that he was easily regarded as the best jockey in Trinidad and Tobago for several years throughout the 1930s. He also raced on the regional circuit, which at the time consisted of Trinidad, Barbados, Grenada and British Guiana.

Even as the 1940s dawned and he was in his 50s, he was still competitive enough to win regularly and, appropriately enough, won his last two races aboard the thoroughbred *Ras Taffare*. Those last two victories took his total career tally to 660 wins.

Accustomed to winning in great quantities, Bennett became a renowned horse trainer, being involved in the training of 920 wins. Before Bennett, such a high number of wins – as jockey or trainer – had never been achieved. He was truly a master of the horse racing domain, and in 1984 Oliver Bennett was duly inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.