First Citizens Sports Foundation

# HALL OF FAME



## Lebrun Constantine

**Cricket**

**Inducted in 1984**

Grandson to a slave, father to a Baron, first centurion. This is the unique connection that Lebrun Constantine, the first West Indian to score a century on English soil, carries.

Primarily known for his batting early in the order, his all-round ability often saw him behind the stumps wicketkeeping, in line with match report descriptions of his excellent fielding skills. His batting was deemed to be faultless, with a particular fondness for his left side, while his occasional medium pace bowling was effective.

Born in Maraval to a family lineage tied to slavery in agriculture, he became the overseer of a cocoa estate while pursuing his love of cricket. Constantine's skill and reputation meant that it was not long until his first-class debut in 1894, for Trinidad and Tobago against Barbados, where he did not produce the performances expected of him.

A quiet 1895 was followed by fruitful years from 1896 to 1899, by which time he had cemented a place in the batting middle order for the fledging regional side, the West Indies XI.

When that team was invited to tour England for the first time ever in 1900, Constantine found himself part of the crucial lineup that would help develop Caribbean cricket and eventually change the game forever.

On 26th May the boat left Barbados, arriving ten days later to a curious English public. With English teams selected and captained by the legendary W.G. Grace, and with the Windies unaccustomed to playing together, some of the intricacies such as proper running between the wickets, as well as the grind of back-to-back matches, the tourists lost their first three matches, two of them by an innings.

With West Indies 132 for 8 in their second innings against MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club) at the home of cricket, Lords, and another innings defeat likely, suddenly Constantine's impeccable batting came to the fore. His 113, part of 162 partnership scored in just over an hour for the ninth wicket, avoided another innings defeat and, more importantly, proved that there was talent in the West Indies to score big runs against world class bowling. *Wisden*, the cricket bible, described his century as 'a dashing and faultless display'.

He was again included on the tour of England in 1906 and wasted no time making an impact, taking two wickets for 29 runs and scoring 89 runs in 95 minutes out of a West Indian total of 156 in the first match verses W.G. Grace's XI. His excellent tour continued with 54 and 51 against an England XI (not the Test team), 79 and 31 against Yorkshire, with 92 and 50 against Leicestershire.

The good form continued upon his return to Trinidad with 116 against British Guiana before his best bowling performance in the Inter-Colonial Tournament Final versus Barbados. Trinidad and Tobago racked up 346 before Leburn took 6 for 17, helping to bowl the opposition out for 134.

He continued to play cricket until 1913, before making a reappearance at the age of 48 in the Inter-Colonial Tournament of 1922 in Bourda, Guyana. Despite losing to Barbados, the match was special because batting ahead of Lebrun in the Trinidad and Tobago line up was a young, talented batsman, who was also destined for great achievements, his son Learie.

Lebrun Constantine, whose batting exploits would pave the way for so many West Indians to light up the cricketing world, was inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame in 1984.

**Bowling: 46 First Class Wickets**

**Batting: 25.34 First Class average**