First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Ken Cooke

Hockey

Inducted in 1985

As an unflappable left back in any hockey line-up, Ken Cooke was a constant in the national team for 15 years. Originally a football player, like many in the 1940s era Cooke found that both hockey and football complemented one another, and he doubled up, even playing in the same position for each discipline, turning out season after season for his first division clubs, but making it to the national level as a stickman.

In football he played for the Colts team from his early twenties, but then joined the police force and turned out for their powerful squad in 1945 and 1946 – the latter year where Police enjoyed a memorable battle for the Second Division title, narrowly losing. While within the police force, he focused on his hockey and cemented a place as the team's left back, forming a solid partnership with Russell Toppin, with both showcasing enough talent to be selected for Trinidad and Tobago in 1945.

Cooke's debut was against British Guiana in one of the many triangular, and later, quadrangular, tournaments that comprised inter-colonial competition. In the ensuing years, Toppin would be replaced by as many as four players, while Trinidad and Tobago would also change the forward line up with great regularity, it was only Cooke that kept his place. His Police team became dominant in the domestic First Division, packed with so much talent that they played the British Guiana team in 1949 and won. When Trinidad and Tobago toured Guiana the following year, Police had five players in the squad, including Cooke.

Beyond his tenacity in defending his team's goal, Cooke became an integral part of the scoring process from the short corners awarded to both Police and Trinidad and Tobago. He worked out a system with Police and national teammate, Earl Austin, whereby Austin would stop the ball 'dead' once it was shot from the goal line, allowing Cooke to convert it into a goal from the top of the goal area semi-circle. It worked more often than not, resulting in a great many goals for club and country.

Cooke played against Barbados, Jamaica, Guiana, taking on all comers (including younger players competing for his left back position) and created a national team career that lasted until 1960. He was never left out of the national team for a period of 15 years, a remarkable achievement. He went out on top, with Trinidad and Tobago winning the 1960 Inter-colonial tournament before he announced his retirement from competitive play.

A stalwart of the early era of hockey in the country, in 1985 Ken Cooke was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.