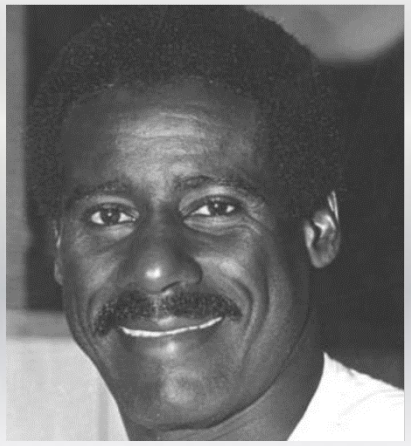
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Everald Cummings

Football

Inducted in 1989

His is a name associated with scintillating play while wearing the red, white and black, then creating brilliant play while coaching the red, white and black. Everald 'Gally' Cummings showed so much early skill as a player that he would play in the national senior league at the relatively tender age of 15 and would go on to be involved in Trinidad and Tobago's football history for decades to come.

He grew up on Dundonald Street with a thriving football community, a mere two blocks from the sporting mecca that is the Queen's Park Savannah. It was the same community that gave him the name 'Galliento' after a foreign boxer, later shortened in Trini style to 'Gally'. At Richmond Boys RC his talent for sport was noticed. He was an all-round athlete, able to run the 100m, play football and cricket. When he entered Fatima College, he got the chance to play InterCol football almost immediately and Cummings shone as a midfield dynamo.

He helped Fatima to win their first InterCol title in 1965.

A year prior to that victory, his exploits earned the teenager a call up from the National Amateur Football League team, Paragon, who put the schoolboy Cummings into their first team. The astounding ascendency continued when he was then called to the Trinidad and Tobago team shortly after. They took part in the CONCACAF Championships in Jamaica in 1967, where several scouts from the fledging North American Soccer League were present and offered Gally, Warren Archibald, Jan Steadman and Leroy de Leon – the best players of the tournament – professional contracts. Cummings signed for the Atlanta Chiefs.

The youngster was now playing matches with and against footballers that had been to World Cups and played in the highest calibre leagues in the world, further raising his skill level.

In 1968, the Chiefs became the first NASL champions, an achievement for Cummings that was not without its obstacles off the field. He experienced racism on a level that he did not expect, including segregation at hotels, but he soldiered on, helping to sow the seeds of soccer in the US.

Injury problems meant that he had to have an operation on both knees in 1970, forcing him to return to Trinidad. Despite advice to extend his recuperation, Cummings was itching to play and started matches for Malvern, which confirmed that the operation had been a success. In 1972, he returned to the US, this time with the star-studded New York Cosmos. The team were fan favourites across the country, and with Gally in their line-up won the 1972 league title.

The following year brought the biggest heartache of his career and one of the biggest sporting disappointments for Trinidad and Tobago. Going into the final qualifying match against Haiti for the CONCACAF zone, Trinidad and Tobago needed just two points to ensure a place at the 1974 World Cup in West Germany. Cummings had been the standout player of the campaign, across all teams. On the match day, Trinidad and Tobago were determined to make history, with Cummings scoring early on. Then Trinidad and Tobago scored three more times, but the goals were all disallowed. Dubious officiating was the cause, and FIFA banned the referee and the linesman for life but accepted the final 2-1 to Haiti result. The Trinidad and Tobago team were in tears, denied the chance to play on the biggest stage of them all.

Cummings was so prolific that he was named MVP of that CONCACAF World Cup qualifying tournament, while his efforts also won him the Trinidad and Tobago Sportsman of the Year award.

A new challenge awaited him when, two years later, he signed for Veracruz of the topflight Liga MX in Mexico. After two seasons, he returned to the NASL to play for the Boston Minutemen for the 1977 season, before finishing his competitive career in 1979 with indoor football team the Cleveland Force.

With his ability as a deep thinker of the game, going into coaching was a natural step for Cummings. By 1988, Trinidad and Tobago football needed a coach and Cummings needed a team to impart his philosophy, to play the game unrestricted in the Trinbagonian way, while keeping the basic tenets such as a good defense. Immediately, he changed the

uniform, placing the national flag on each shoulder to emphasize the pride that players should carry.

The changes were evident in the results. Trinidad and Tobago drew 1-1 with USA in the US, drew 1-1 with Costa Rica at home, then put themselves into the running with three victories against Guatemala (home and away) and El Salvador. The 'Strike Squad' had arrived. Cummings had the team playing some of the best football seen on a national team and a draw was all that was required in the final match versus the USA.

It was to be World Cup heartache once more for Cummings. The USA beat the Strike Squad 1-0 and a nation was in shock. Appreciative fans made the team come back onto the field to take generous applause for taking them on an amazing journey, facilitated by Cummings' coaching. He stepped down to coach league teams including in the TT Pro League and published *Gally Cummings – The Autobiography*, which outlined how his coaching superseded football and was drawn from influences across Trinbagonian society.

In 1974, in addition to being named Sportsman of the Year, Everald 'Gally' Cummings was honored with the Hummingbird Gold Medal, while in 1987, two years before his unforgettable Trinidad and Tobago coaching stint, he was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.

Sportsman of the Year 1973