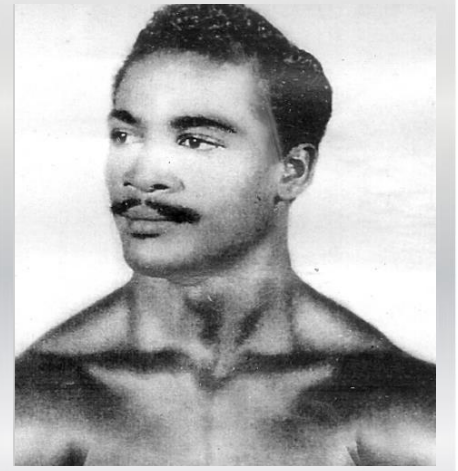
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Carl De Souza

Weightlifting

Inducted in 1985

"You had to do it Carl's way and in Carl's book his way was the right way." So said Lennox Kilgour, Olympic 1952 medalist and fellow weightlifter of Carl de Souza. The statement emphasizes de Souza's reputation as a strict disciplinarian when it came to his sport, either for himself or for those to whom he imparted his knowledge through coaching.

Born in Sangre Grande, he attended Tunapuna Catholic School, moved onto Newtown Boys RC school in Port of Spain before going to Osmond Boys High School, where fate would put him in contact with Kilgour.

Unsurprisingly, for such a disciplinarian, he joined the Trinidad and Tobago Army at 20 years of age and, when he finished his stint, he became interested in lifting weights, inspired by reading Health & Strength magazines. Through his research he taught himself all about the training required, eventually setting up a legendary gym on Bengal Street in St. James, and it was there that the likes of Kilgour earned their training stripes.

At 148lbs, ‘Suze’ (as his gym-mates christened him) entered the Lightweight division in his first competitive outing in the 1945 national Senior Championships and won. Such was the popularity of the sport in the 1930s to the 1950s that there were regular competitions all across Trinidad, sometimes every other weekend. Suze took part in most, building his confidence and experience. He defended his national title in 1946 and was selected to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the Central American & Caribbean (CAC) Games in Barranquilla, Colombia. He would be part of the first ever team of Trinidad and Tobago weightlifters to be sent to an international competition.

Meticulous in his approach to the CAC event – as he was with all competition – de Souza was quietly confident of standing on the top step of the podium. “From my attitude towards sport and conditioning I knew I would be a winner. I knew that I could lift the poundage that I attempted.” He also did his research as to what his competitors were lifting, giving him greater confidence on the day. In the end, Suze won the gold medal – a fantastic achievement for a self-trained athlete.

The Pan Am Games were yet to come to fruition (the first edition would be held in 1951) so the next major target for a Trinidad and Tobago weightlifting gold medalist was the 1948 Olympic Games in London. Despite the prestige of the Olympics, Trinidad and Tobago did not have the funds to send a decent-sized squad to the Games. In the end they opted for five athletes with one weightlifter included. But, it was not de Souza but rather his fellow CAC gold medalist, Rodney Wilkes.

The reality of life took hold and Suze took a job onboard a ship but ensuring that he still worked out on deck. Maintaining his regime paid off when he was selected to go to the inaugural Pan Am Games in Buenos Aires. There were none of the financial constraints of the previous years for Trinidad and Tobago as Argentine premier Juan Peron, the host, paid for the team to travel to ensure a successful games derived from a large number of competitors.

Despite being short on competitive lifting, de Souza ended up in a straight battle with Joe Pitman of the USA in the Lightweight division. They each lifted 225.5lbs in the press, Pitman did 231lbs to de Souza's 220lbs in the snatch, and 302.5lbs to de Souza's 291.5lbs. The result was the American winning by 22 pounds, 759 to 737. But de Souza was pleased with his silver medal, knowing that he had done all that was possible in preparation.

He returned to his job on the ship and discarded thoughts of going to the 1952 Olympics. In any case, when the two-man team was picked for Helsinki, Suze was in the middle of the Atlantic, at work. But whenever he was at home, he took part in local lifting competitions until 1968, when he emigrated to Queen's New York. Carl de Souza was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1985.

CAC Games: **1946 Gold Lightweight**

Pan American Games: **1951 Silver Lightweight**