First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Elizabeth Gibson-Eckle

Lawn Tennis

Inducted in 2004

As a tennis player, she had an insatiable appetite for titles, winning her first senior crown at the precocious age of 14 and continuing to gobble up wins and trophies across the Caribbean.

Elizabeth Gibson (Eckle) would become a household name for Trinidad and Tobago tennis fans throughout the 1980s to the mid-1990s. She came into the sport through her family's interest and participation in the game and was winning local age-specific junior titles with enough ease that she entered the Carib Tranquility Tennis Championships in 1982 and upset all the favourites to become the Ladies' Singles champion. Her win would remain a record for 18 years, during which time she added another five Tranquility Ladies' Singles titles, plus five Ladies' Doubles titles, as well as six Mixed Doubles.

She graduated to the National Championship Singles title and, in 1984, having continued her winning ways across various tournaments in Trinidad, Gibson entered the Commonwealth Caribbean Junior Championships, taking on the best in the English-speaking region, and won. She backed this up with a win in the senior division of the Neal & Massy Cup, her victories throughout an outstanding season earning her another coveted senior title while she was still a junior; that of Sportswoman of the Year 1984.

Gibson's tennis prowess earned her a place at Palm Beach Junior College (in the world's tennis capital, Florida) before she also went on to represent the University of Maryland while pursuing her education. She returned to the Caribbean regularly to play for Trinidad and Tobago as well as individually. In 1992 Gibson won the triple crown – Singles, Doubles, Mixed Doubles – at the international St. Lucia Racquet Club Open. As in 1984 when she won a regional tournament, she then followed it up with another big win but this time it was a team effort as Gibson led Trinidad and Tobago to victory over Jamaica in the final of the 1992 Phillips Trophy. And, as in 1984, she was named Sportswoman of the Year.

She continued her winning ways into 1993, winning the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Singles title (she would win three in total over her career), before lifting the trophy at the Grand Prix of Pointe-à-Pitre held in Guadeloupe. In the final she defeated Florence Kelsh of Martinique in straight sets 7-5, 6-2. Mere weeks later, Gibson travelled to St. Maarten and won the Lipton Open. Again it was a

comprehensive performance in the final, where she beat Curaçao's Yolande Rosberg 6-4, 6-1.

The following year she achieved greater success in the doubles game, winning the Eric Bough Classic in St. Croix, then went to Texas where she teamed up with Paul Toomey and won the Mixed Doubles title at the Houston Coca Cola Open. At the same competition, Gibson also reached the semi-finals of the Ladies' Singles.

She continued to represent Trinidad and Tobago in the Fed Cup (she began her Fed Cup experience in 1992), taking on and defeating opponents from Panama, Guatemala, Bahamas and the Dominican Republic, and playing for the national team until 1997.

Her accumulation of local and regional titles is impressive: 17 national titles, 3 OECS titles, 18 wins in 32 Fed Cup matches over a four year period, plus 2 Sportswoman of the Year awards. In 2004 Elizabeth Gibson-Eckle earned another honour, when she was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.

Sportswoman of the Year: 1984, 1992