First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Joseph Anthony Gonsalves

Football

Inducted in 1985

"The best that I have ever seen" is quite an accolade for any sportsman, more so when it emanates from the athlete that has replaced said sportsman.

Those were the words of Lincoln 'Tiger' Phillips, renowned national goalkeeper and a man that has coached the best across the USA.

It is said that Joseph Gonsalves made goalkeeping look easy. There was none of the 'keeping theatrics associated with his saves. There were few desperate lunges in his penalty area because he had the uncanny knack of being in the right place at the right time, or rather, being in the right place ahead of time. He kept it simple but effective. As he once relayed to Phillips, "If it scores at the last post, it's a good goal. If it scores from the cross, it's a defender's fault. If it scores at the first post, it's your fault."

'Joey' was a Woodbrook native born to a Portuguese father and Trinidadian mother. He attended St. Mary's College, where he began life between the uprights while also taking part in cricket matches that cemented a reputation for never giving away his wicket – a similar sentiment towards letting in goals.

By 16 years old he was St. Mary's First XI 'keeper, and two years later was the captain. His habit of attaining elite playing positions despite his youth continued when he was selected for the Trinidad and Tobago team after impressive displays at school level. He was supposed to be the understudy to Randolph Merritt on a 1944 tour of Barbados,, but played in the final two of three matches and as before, cemented his place in the team at 19 years old.

The resumption of inter-colonial football triangular tournaments in 1944 saw Trinidad and Tobago host British Guiana and Barbados, with the home team going unbeaten. He returned to club duties with Shamrock to win the 1945 B.D.V. Trophy.

1946 saw Trinidad and Tobago tours to Jamaica and British Guiana and, in 1947, a tour to Curaçao and Aruba.

By the time of the 1948 visit to Trinidad by Haiti, Prior Jones had retired as national captain and, with his keen sense of anticipation of the ball, Gonsalves was the perfect successor. It was the beginning of a successful period for the team that was dubbed the 'Family Eleven'. They won on their travels, won at home, and won another inter-colonial tournament. It proved to be the catalyst for them to undertake a bigger challenge: a tour of the United Kingdom.

This they duly did in 1953, boarding the SS Golfito in June of that year. It was the national team's first exposure to international competition outside of the Caribbean region – a crucial first step on the journey that would eventually lead to the highs such as 2006 World Cup qualification.

Gonsalves was the proud captain of a team that secured 5 wins and 3 draws in their 14 games in unchartered territory. Upon returning to Trinidad, he retired from national and first-class football but remained close to the sport, especially in his capacity as football coach to his alma mater, St. Mary's College.

In 1985, Joseph Gonsalves was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.