First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Ivor Hart

Football

Inducted in 1984

In the early years of Trinidad and Tobago football, specifically the 1920s, there was something in the culture that lent itself to producing fantastic defenders and goalkeepers. Forming a defensive backbone was a trait that would be crucial as the national football team took on the rest of the Caribbean for regional ascendency, then tested their mettle against the like of Venezuela. Together with talented defenders such as Botha Tench, Arthur Maynard and Alfred Charles, Trinidad and Tobago needed a goalkeeper of superb quality. It found one in Ivor Hart.

He played every sport at Queen's Royal College, but it was at football that he excelled, his large physique belying his agility. It was a simple progression for him to join Maple – one of the top three clubs of the era, Shamrock and Casuals being the others – in the mid-1920s.

Hart, slotted into a dynamic team that was challenging for honours but that had yet to win their first national league title.

With a brilliant forward line and a sound ‘keeper, they duly won their first title in 1927, repeating as champions in 1928.

By now, Hart’s reputation as a courageous, jumping, diving goalkeeper had grown across the football landscape and fans were going to matches at the Queen’s Park Savannah to see him in action. He earned the moniker ‘The Lion in the Cage’ and was soon called up for national duty, further thrilling local fans.

For all their dominance for two consecutive years, Maple were being challenged by a new force on the local scene, Everton FC. In a surprising move, Hart moved to Everton. In the Trinidad and Tobago society of 1930, it was unprecedented; clubs were separated by class and colour. Maple was the team of the middle upper class, while Everton was the team of the working-class black people. It was a move probably initiated by the makeup of the national team. Maple players formed the forwards, while Everton players formed the entire back line, with a Maple player in goal. A ‘keeper and his defenders form close relationships and soon Hart was turning out in the maroon of Everton, preventing that vaunted Maple forward line, made up of his ex-teammates, from scoring.

Two league titles followed, in 1931 and 1932, before Everton were suspended indefinitely in 1933 following on the field altercations during a match versus Casuals. For the Lion in the Cage, the cage was removed, and Hart soon retired from first-class football with a strong legacy that still has him mentioned as one of the best ever Trinbagonians to have taken to a football field, far less one that stood in goal.

As such, he was inducted to the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1984.