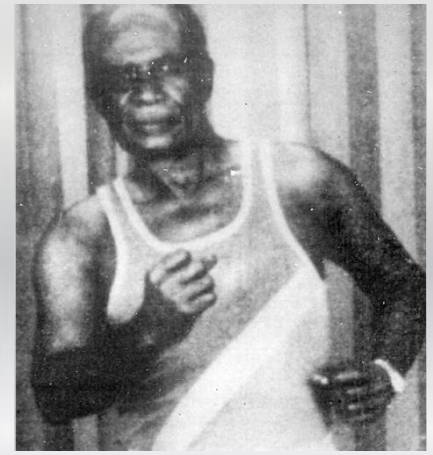
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



James Jackson

Walking

Inducted in 1985

One of seven children, this Moruga born athlete would make his name on the Trinidad and Tobago sporting landscape in ultra-endurance walking events that seldom exist today.

Like most boys, James Jackson played cricket and football at his school, St. Augustine RC, and took a liking to the former, going on to represent his village, Basse Terre, in keenly fought matches across southeast Trinidad. But, at 13 years of age, he entered a 2-mile walking race and finished in second place; he was hooked.

In the 1930s, Trinidad and Tobago was rife with sport days across the country, offering an aspiring walker plenty of opportunities to compete. Jackson began to move up in distances, first to 4-mile races, which he won. This garnered the attention of other walkers, and soon he was training with John Asche, Trinidad and Tobago's top walker of the era. Jackson recalled, "We used to walk on evenings from Fyzabad to Avocat Village and back, it was a good pull. People used to say 'all you mad'."

In his first competitive outing with the seniors, a 12-mile race from San Fernando to New Grant, he finished third. The proliferation of walking races and racers prompted organizers to create much greater challenges; they came up with the ultimate race, 40 miles from San Fernando to Port of Spain. In the second edition of the race (work commitments kept Jackson out of the first edition), Asche won, with his training partner, Jackson, finishing second. Asche would go on to win the next two 40-mile races before Jackson would also notch his own hat-trick of 40-mile victories.

In 1951, a trial was held to select a walker to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the Pan American Games in Buenos Aires. Jackson won the 7-mile race from South Quay to Curepe and booked his place on the team. In Argentina there was a colossal mix-up when Jackson was given the wrong date and time for the 50km Walk event. He went about his early morning training, ate a huge meal and was resting when the officials arrived in the Trinidad and Tobago camp stating that they came for the walker – his event was going to start shortly.

In a panicked state, a very well-fed Jackson managed a short warm-up, there was not time for a massage, and faced the starter. Despite all these shenanigans, Jackson took the early lead in the race, maintaining his signature upright posture, with eager officials taking photos throughout to ensure that all competitors maintained the strict rule of a heel and toe stride. He remained in front for 28km before the Argentinian, Sixto Ibanez, caught Jackson. They remained together until the 18km mark where Ibanez pulled away, but Jackson, even as the now spent early leader, maintained his form, and held off the challengers behind to claim a fine silver medal. His time was 5 hours 21 minutes. It was Trinidad and

Tobago's only track & field medal at these games, secured by endeavor despite errors and setbacks.

Jackson also took part in the 10km Walk event held on the track rather than the road, but was up against walkers who did not take part in the 50km. Fresher legs won through on the day, with Jackson finishing a creditable fifth.

Returning to Trinidad, he continued to take part in the various races, from San Fernando to Palo Seco, Port of Spain to Sangre Grande, San Fernando to Point Fortin and the ever-popular San Fernando to Port of Spain. If he was not winning, he was usually on the podium. Although local walking races remained extremely competitive affairs, neither Jackson's Pan Am medal nor his continuing performances gained him a place in any of the other major games, with finances being the major hinderance. His next competition abroad came in 1959 when he was selected after a trial to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the London to Brighton race. The trial was the distance of the race itself: 52 miles.

114 athletes began in London, 60 finished and Jackson was one of them in 14th place.

Jackson competed locally for another three years and retired from competition at 43 years old.

When he retired from working life he returned to walking, this time in the Masters category, competing in Ottawa, Puerto Rico and Rome. In 1985, the same year that he won two bronze medals in the Masters

championships in Ottawa, James Jackson was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.

Pan American Games: **1951 Silver 50km Walk**

