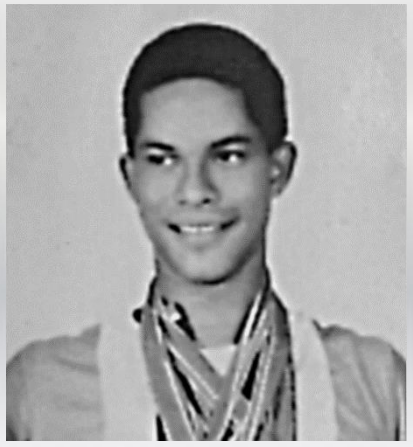
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Leslie King

Cycling

Inducted in 1989

Born and raised opposite Skinner Park in San Fernando, it was perhaps inevitable that this athlete would become a champion cyclist, with major games medals that continued Trinidad and Tobago's proud international tradition in the sport.

Leslie King was the type of track cycling sprinter that crowds loved, not just blessed with pure speed, but also possessing a tactical brain, daring and agility. They say that great athletes pick their parents and King could not have asked for better genes. His mother was an avid netball player, and his father, Everard, was a track & field sprinter who held his own amongst the nation's best. Add the fact that a young Leslie spent his time within Skinner Park trying every sport from football to lawn tennis, before riding its paved, slightly banked surface for cyclists, and by the age of 14 he was competing in races. It was around this time that his family moved to Port of Spain, which changed little for King, who decided to ride from the capital city to San

Fernando regularly, building a base of fitness the entire time.

King dominated the Junior category to such an extent that he was placed in the C Class, where he again conquered all before him. By the age of 16 his obvious talent and results earned him a place on the national team to race against world and Olympic champions, who graced the Trinidad tracks every year for several meets during the dry season. During that 1966 season he won a long-distance race at the Queen's Park Oval, defeating amongst others Roger 'Golden Boy' Gibbon and, in the process, emulating Gibbon's own teenage achievements which were the barometer of future international success.

Later that year King, the teenager, was sent to the Commonwealth Games in Jamaica, gaining invaluable experience and exposure, but also finishing 9th in both the sprinter's events, the Kilometre Time Trial and Match Sprint. He was being groomed for the future, which made the decision to not send him to the 1967 Pan Am Games puzzling. He finished second to Gibbon in the trials and each nation was allowed two competitors in each sprint event. Without any explanation to support the decision there was a public outcry, but there was also public support in the form of contributions to a fund to send him to Belgium to train and race.

That European trip in the summer of 1967 proved invaluable to his career. He was learning from coaches who had trained past Olympic champions, and racing against current Olympic champions. If the teenager was daunted it did not show, and King was such a success that he was invited to return to the European circuit the following summer, this time by the Dutch cycling federation. It was an Olympic year, and racing in cycling's heartland was perfect for a Trinbagonian cyclist

seeking selection for Mexico. When the Trinidad and Tobago team was announced, he was included.

King went to the Olympics and was under no pressure. At his age he was still expected to gain experience. He took part in the Match Sprint and, despite losing in the first round, he came back through the repechage before losing in the second round to eventual bronze medallist, Pierre Trentin, before showing hunger by again winning the repechage. In the eighth finals he lost to Daniel Morelon who was on his way to the gold medal: a good showing for a young cyclist on the biggest stage of them all.

King now set about reaping rewards for all his hard work and experience. He began by targeting the two events in the 1970 calendar: the Central American & Caribbean (CAC) Games in Panama City, and the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh. At the former he posted a time of 1mins 10.34secs in the Kilometre which was good enough for the silver medal. In the Match Sprint King was peerless, winning throughout the rounds and beating Daniel Larreal of Venezuela in the final to win gold and continue Trinidad and Tobago's claim on the title after Gibbon's win four years earlier.

King arrived in Edinburgh full of confidence and rode 1min 10.40secs in very cold conditions for the Kilometre which resulted in another silver medal. For the Sprint, he came through the rounds comfortably to meet Australian John Nicholson in the semi-finals where he won the first of the best-of-three rides. He made a couple of tactical mistakes in the second and third rides leaving Nicholson open to take the place in the final. King,

for his part, recovered to take the bronze medal, defeating New Zealand's Harry Kent in two straight rides.

The 1971 Pan Am Games were held in in Cali, Colombia, and this time there was little doubt that King would be representing Trinidad and Tobago. He was now 21 years old but had a wealth of experience that included CAC and Commonwealth medals, attending three World Championships (1967, 1969 and 1970) and an Olympic Games. In the Kilometre, he rode early in the order, fifth, and set a time of 1min 08.65secs which remained the fastest time until the final rider, Jocelyn Lovell of Canada, rode 1min 07.65secs. It was to be Kilo silver once again for King.

In the Sprint, he knew that it would be tougher competition than the CAC Games a year earlier, but employed all the facets of the discipline. It was particularly needed when he came up against the crafty Argentinian, Victor Limba, in the semi-final, who took King up to the steepest part of the banking as part of scare tactics. King was on a mission and overcame all that was thrown at him, going on to meet Larreal (his CAC opponent) in the final and win the gold medal in two straight rides. The top step of the Sprint podium was familiar ground for the red, white and black, with King having continued Gibbon's results of 1963 and 1967. A hat-trick of victories for Trinidad and Tobago.

Having attended the world championships, King was realistic about his Olympic chances for Munich 1972 where the Eastern Bloc and European riders would dominate. Nevertheless, he was a born competitor and gave it his best. The Kilometre was first, and King recorded 1min 09.96secs for 19th place. In his pet event, the Sprint, he lost in the first

round, won his repechage, then won his second-round ride to go into the eighth finals where he lost to an East German, then lost the repechage to a West German.

He returned to Trinidad and focused on a work career but later, from the 1980s onwards, King became a coach at the Arima Velodrome, with special attention given to the underprivileged children of the area. He believed in exposing them to the joys of cycling that he had enjoyed, and his work was a mainstay for the Arima borough. He also managed several national cycling team tours and was the Racing Secretary of the Trinidad and Tobago Cycling Federation. For his dedication to the sport, Leslie King was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1987.

CAC Games:	**1970 Gold Sprint**
	1970 Silver 1 Kilometer Time Trial
Commonwealth Games:	**1970 Silver 1 Kilometer Time Trial**
	1970 Bronze Sprint
Pan American Games:	**1971 Gold Sprint**
	1971 Silver Kilometer Time Trial