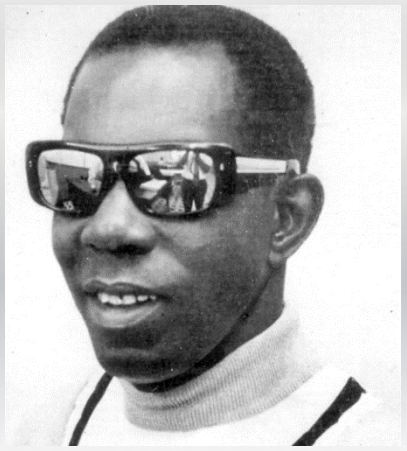
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Gregory Sebastien Lewis

Athletics

Inducted in 1985

Very quick out of the blocks and able to sustain his speed at the front throughout the race – that is the description of Gregory 'Georgie' Lewis' talent, race plan and success.

The Arima-born Lewis was interested in sport from an early age, playing football, hockey and cricket. Though short in stature, he represented Arima Sporting Club as a goalkeeper, but with his natural speed and low center of balance he was soon playing on the right wing. It was a position that he would later replicate when he advanced to the Trinidad and Tobago first-class league, playing for the strong Police squad of the 1940s. His speed was also handy in cricket, where he became known for his ability of taking quick singles.

But Lewis' first love was track & field and running the shorter distances which at the time constituted the 100, 220 and 440 yards (race distances were yet to be standardized to meters).

He not only played for the Police football team, but was a member of the Trinidad and Tobago police service. When the opportunity to run for their athletics team presented itself, Lewis grabbed it with both hands.

With no coach to offer advice, he trained himself to take part in local meets where he excelled over the 100 yards. With the Second World War coming to an end, regional sports were reopening and soon Lewis was competing – and winning – in Suriname, Grenada and Guyana (where he broke the record for the fastest 100 yards run in that country). He was now established as one of the fastest men in the Caribbean, with his competitive streak starting to kindle thoughts of winning a medal for Trinidad and Tobago at the 1948 London Olympics. It was backed up by the fact that when the Games appeared on the horizon, with all its hope of restoring confidence and belief to a world ravaged by war, Lewis had been the national sprint champion for four years (1944 – 1948). He would remain champion until 1950.

The question, as the Games appeared on the horizon, was whether Trinidad and Tobago would send a team. They certainly had the athletes; the finances, however, were another matter.

Eventually Trinidad and Tobago sent a team to London and Lewis was part of the historical contingent, together with Mannie Ramjohn, Rodney Wilkes and Compton Gonsalves. Together with their coaches, they were the first ever Trinidad & Tobago Olympic Games team.

With his hand made shoes (made in Trinidad and Tobago), he lined up for the heat 10 of the 100m and won in 10.8secs to go through to the quarterfinals where he then finished 4th, just missing out on a semi-final place. In the 200m he ran 22.4secs in his heat and progressed no further.

The proud legacy of Trinidad and Tobago Olympic sprinting had begun with Lewis, one that would yield multiple medals, including the coveted gold.

He returned from the Olympics and competed for a couple of years, including moving up to the 440 yards where he won races with his tactic of going to the front from the pistol and holding on to the finish. Lewis emigrated to the USA in the early 1950s, having retired from competitive running, but returned to his beloved homeland in the 1980s, with advice for many a young sprinter.

'The Arima Flash' – the first athlete to compete on the running track for Trinidad and Tobago – was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1985.