First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Ria Mark

Lawn Tennis

Inducted in 1989

Known as 'The Caribbean Queen of Tennis' during her era of competitive play, Ria Mark was a dominant player, a feat that belied her tiny stature.

Coming from a sport-loving family, Mark proved her hand-to-eye coordination from an early age but not in tennis; she was an avid cricketer, especially in batting where she would dispatch balls for six over the boundary. She applied those skills to other sports such as badminton, hockey and table tennis, before she found her true calling on the lawn tennis court in the mid-1950s.

Mark wasted little time establishing herself on the local circuit, getting to the semi-final of the 1959 national championship where she was beaten by Mildred Cambridge. She would return a year later to claim the national crown, the first of ten individual national titles that she would win throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Opportunities were opening for tennis players in Trinidad and Tobago. The country had begun to take part in the Davis Cup in 1954, providing exposure beyond the Caribbean region and making the national selectors more willing to send players to compete abroad. For the 1962 Central American & Caribbean (CAC) Games held in Kingston, Jamaica, Mark was included in the ambitious tennis team. Playing in the Mixed Doubles, she teamed with fellow Hall of Famer Michael Valdez to take the bronze medal, part of a wonderful haul for Trinidad and Tobago tennis at those CAC Games that also included Alan Price's gold in the Men's Singles and Price and Peter Valdez's bronze in the Men's Doubles. It would be another 40 years until Trinidad and Tobago would win another CAC tennis medal with Shane and Try Stone in 2002.

Mark also attended the 1963 Pan Am Games in São Paulo, Brazil, but could not emulate her medal success of a year earlier. She continued to dominate the local circuit, winning every tournament available to her, while taking home national titles. Regional success also came her way with a contribution to a Trinidad and Tobago win at the Phillips Trophy (the Caribbean Lawn Tennis Championship for women) in the Bahamas in 1973.

Beginning a new phase in 1966, Mark became the Physical Education teacher at Bishop Anstey High School (BAHS), Mark found a further passion within sport: imparting the joys of competition to her students. There, she coached hockey, track & field, as well as tennis. Beyond the walls of Bishop, Mark began coaching tennis at the St. James Barracks

courts, the Princess Building courts, and at St. Augustine Girl's High School.

At BAHS, she took an interest in her student's academic/sports life, encouraging the balanced pursuit of both. Mark became a legend within the school, with hundreds of young girls attributing part of their success later in life to her influence. She travelled with teams to athletic meets in Florida in her position as coach, always seeking their success.

One of her charges, Charisse Bacchus, who represented Trinidad and Tobago at track & field and became a prominent advocate of Sport Management, Law & Humanities, described her past teacher: "Mrs. Mark was a very special woman; her willingness to lend support always stood out to me. She was always involved in any endeavour the BAHS Track & Field Team took on, from a bake sale to international competition. And we were so, so grateful to her for that."

An inspiration on the tennis court as well as off it, Ria Mark was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1989.

CAC Games: **1962 Bronze Mixed Doubles**

Phillips Trophy: **1973**
Winner (Trinidad and Tobago)