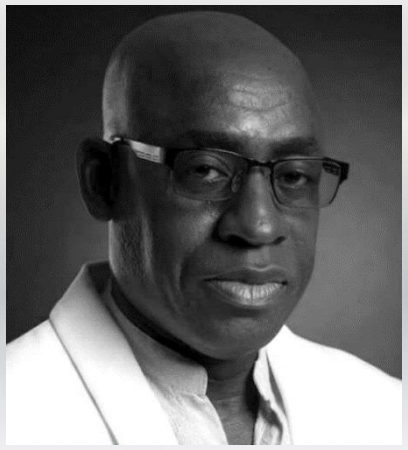
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Clayton Morris

Football

Inducted in 2015

TThe leader of the legendary Strike Squad. The stalwart defender Clayton Morris is a name forever instilled in the minds of T&T football fans; the player that served his nation with aplomb on the field and continued with his passion for developing the next generation of football talent off the field.

Like many, he played football on the roads and playing fields while he was still a youth in his native St Ann's, but his game truly developed when he turned out for John Donaldson Technical Institute in the Colleges Football League (now the Secondary Schools Football League). His skill as a defender was noted, together with his eye for where the opposition's attack was trying to prise open his defence; Morris' name was synonymous with the 'John D' team that would take on the established names and win the InterCol title in 1978 (the final attracted 18,000 spectators at the Queens Park Oval) and the Colleges League title in 1979.

During this time, he was also turning out for the St Ann's based senior level team Rangers, before moving on to the ECM Motown team in 1982. That year marked his national team debut, the beginning of a long and distinguished career in the red, white & black.

A year later Morris joined the ASL Sport team, which was a big step upwards in ability and ambition. With Morris in their ranks, they won the National Football League title that same year, then embarked on a tour of England in 1984, culminating with a match against Crystal Palace. It was priceless experience and exposure for Morris, who enjoyed another League title with ASL in 1985.

When the Trintoc team offered him the captaincy of their squad for the 1986 season, Morris grabbed it with both hands, an action that he would repeat when he lifted their first League trophy in his first season with the club. The team would repeat the League win in 1988, when they did the double by also winning the FA Trophy. His leadership skills clearly on show, Morris was made captain of the T&T team. As with his club leadership, his national leadership yielded immediate results. T&T won CFU Nations Cup, held in Martinique in 1988, to become regional champions. The following year the tournament was changed to the Caribbean Cup, and the Morris-led T&T defended their title in Barbados.

It boded well, 1989 was also the year of the World Cup qualifying matches for Italia '90 and under coach Everald 'Gally' Cummings and Morris, the team were playing as a cohesive unit that made their way into the final round of five teams vying for the two places available for the World Cup finals. With draws away to the USA and El Salvador, a draw at home versus Costa Rica, and wins at home against Guatemala

and El Salvador, T&T were in the unthinkable position of being on the cusp of qualification for the world's greatest football tournament. All they needed was a single point from their last match, at home, against the USA.

As November 19th1989 approached, T&T was abuzz as never before; a sea of red engulfed an expectant nation. The Strike Squad played their heart out, but T&T had it broken by a single strike that put the US into the 1990 World Cup. For the T&T captain, the unimaginable burden of carrying the nation's hope took immediate effect "I remember the whistle blew to end the game. I felt like the earth could have opened and taken me. I felt we disappointed the nation."

To his immense credit, he dusted himself off and returned to what he did best, lead T&T. The team took part in the inaugural CONCACAF Gold Cup in 1991, then won another Caribbean Cup title in 1992, then Morris hung up his international boots.

He continued to play for Petrotrin in Trinidad but divided his season to play for Charlotte Eagles in the USA from 1994 to 1996. With his trademark of making an immediate impact, Morris was awarded the Defender of the Year title in his first season with the Eagles and was included in US Interregional Soccer League Atlantic Division Team of the Year.

When he returned to Petrotrin in 1997, he led them to the FA Trophy. His move to San Juan Jabloteh in 1999 – when the team won the PFL Cup - as player/coach signalled his intentions to move onto the side lines. By 2000 he was fully immersed in the coaching role, which he undertook at Joe Public and managed the team to the Caribbean Club Championship.

He returned to the T&T setup as coach of the Under-20 Team a year later before moving onto becoming the national futsal manager. He remains a firm believer that the futsal version of football is key to the development of world class players and Morris himself continues to infuse his own knowledge of the game by attending global conferences and competitions. In 2004 & 2008 his national teams won the Caribbean futsal championship.

Morris is also heavily involved in using football as part of a community outreach tool, partly through his role as coach of UTT (University of Trinidad & Tobago), taking futsal into local prisons. He is in no doubt that coaching and mentoring youth is what he was meant to do, stating “That really gives me the incentive and I really feel proud about their achievements. They may not come out a better footballer or make it to the national team, but once they are better citizens of T&T, I’m very happy with that.”

Those efforts were recognized by the awarding of the Father of the Nation medal of honour by the Eric Williams Memorial Committee in 2020. He was also honoured with the Chaconia Silver Medal when the award was given to the 1989 ‘Strike Squad’ team. Clayton Morris, captain and coach, was duly inducted into the T&T Sports Hall of Fame in 2015.

CFU/Caribbean Cup: **1988-89, 1992**

National League: **1983, 1985-86, 1988**

FA Trophy: **1988, 1997**