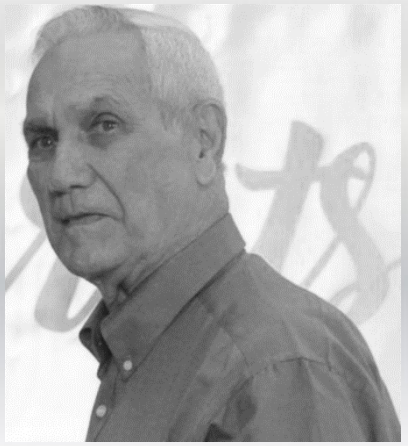
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Richard Nieves

All Rounder

Inducted in 2011

For most athletes earning a spot on one national team, for one discipline at a major Games, is difficult enough. Imagine being in the position of having to choose which sport to represent the nation, when both possessed a very good chance of earning a medal?

That was the question Richard Nieves faced in 1967. The Pan Am Games were being held that summer in Winnipeg, Canada, and Nieves was a prominent part of both the Trinidad and Tobago football and hockey teams for the past decade, with eminence in the former across school and domestic first-class leagues before he also focused on hockey from 1959.

Growing up in St. Anns, he had the Queen's Park Savannah – where he would later star in many competitive matches – as his playground, and his family as teammates.

His father, 'Boysie' Nieves, was the player-coach of Port of Spain team Hotspurs, where Richard and his three brothers played alongside their dad, doing so to great effect.

In 1957, Hotspurs went unbeaten for the entire season, winning the Northern League Second Division as well as capturing the Camacho Knockout Cup. Surprisingly, during this time Nieves was not playing football for his school team, St. Mary's, a situation that soon changed once the school coach made a scouting trip to see Hotspurs play and immediately drafted the nimble left-footer into the team in time for the Intercol Cup final.

Nieves scored the winning goal to secure the trophy, and within a few weeks was on a plane bound for Kingston where the Trinidad and Tobago Intercol champions played a series of matches against Jamaican opposition. It was immediate and marvelous exposure for the 17-year-old, with the team earning mixed results on tour.

With his skill now on show on a much larger scale, Nieves joined Shamrock Club in 1959 and again tasted immediate success as the team won the FA Trophy, as well as the Port of Spain Football League. By now his speed and dribbling with the ball from his preferred position of inside left, had earned him the apt nickname 'Quicksilver'.

At the end April 1959 he was included in a Casuals XI team that toured Bermuda where they won two and lost four matches. By November 1959 Shamrock went one better than Nieves' first season with the club when they captured the clean sweep of the BDV Cup, the FA Trophy, the Football League, as well as the Gooden Chisholm Cup. With Nieves an

integral part of these victories, he was drafted into the national football team in 1960.

Trinidad and Tobago's football team earned some good results on tough tours to Jamaica and British Guiana, with Nieves scoring a memorable late winner in Georgetown in 1964. There was also his key part in Trinidad and Tobago securing its first win in Suriname when captain Sedley Joseph suggested that Nieves move to midfield from the center forward position. This was Joseph's description of Nieves' football: "Richard was the nemesis of many rival teams. He never seemed to stop running and always popped up anywhere the ball happened to be. A difficult forward to mark. I always preferred to have Richard on my team than to have to play against him."

Shamrock also played competitive hockey, and with Nieves' penchant for anything involving a ball he represented the club in that sport as well. As he says, "There were two distinct seasons back then and I played the same position of inside left in two very similar sports."

There were memorable clashes throughout the early 1960s, especially between Shamrock and their arch-rivals Casuals, many taking place at the St. James Barracks. The two teams dominated 1960s men's domestic hockey, with two league wins to Casuals, four to Shamrock and a shared title on one occasion. It was a golden era for the nation's hockey, with many talented players such as Carl and Ken Spicer, Errol Achue, Aldwin Ferguson…and Richard Nieves. He replicated his inside left football role,

adding renowned stick control to his speed, while displaying natural cleverness with positioning.

When 1967 arrived, Trinidad and Tobago were sending both a men's football team and hockey team to the Pan Am Games. Nieves chose hockey "because I felt there was a bit more discipline in that squad."

Up against the hosts, Trinidad and Tobago lost their opening game to Canada 2-0. They regrouped and refocused under manager Derney Mouttet, bouncing back with a series of wins over Netherlands Antilles (1-0), Bermuda (4-0), Mexico (2-1), USA (3-1), with a 1-1 draw with Jamaica and a 2-0 loss to favorites Argentina. They did enough to reach the semifinal against the Canadians and reversed the earlier result from the group stage, 2-0 to Trinidad and Tobago with Nieves scoring one of the goals. In the final, the team were no match for Argentina and lost 5-0.

Nieves was one of the stars of the tournament, scoring 6 of the 13 goals that Trinidad and Tobago recorded. "I felt proud standing on the podium to get my silver medal." He chuckles but never answers when he is asked the inevitable question: with the Trinidad and Tobago football team earning the bronze medal at the same Games, did he make the right choice?

After the Pan Am Games Nieves played football and hockey for Queen's Park in his later playing years before taking up managerial roles for these same sports at the renowned club. He also served as manager at the Magnolias and Fatima Men's hockey teams, remaining involved in the sport up to the late 1990s.

The multi-talented Richard 'Quicksilver' Nieves was duly inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 2011.

Pan American Games: 1967 Silver Field Hockey