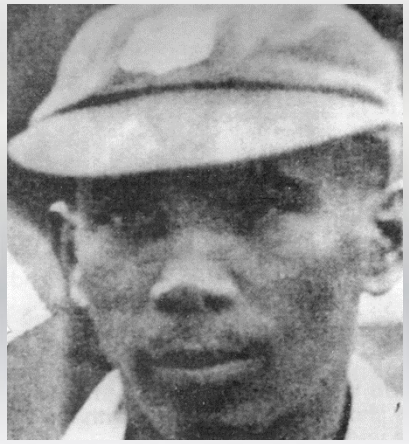
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Clifford A. Roach

H.B.M.

Cricket

Inducted in 1984

Not satisfied with being the first West Indian player to score a Test century, Clifford Roach went one better two matches later and became the first to score a Test double century.

This prolific batsman thrived in the Test arena, finishing his career with a higher Test batting average than his first-class batting average (30.70 from 16 matches versus 28.04 from 98 first-class matches).

Born in Port of Spain, Roach attended St. Mary's College and represented the school at both cricket and football, a common theme for the gifted athletes of the era. His performances in both disciplines earned him a place at Maple, one of the top sports clubs in Trinidad, where the young Roach developed his aggressive batting style on the matting cricket pitches that littered the Queen's Park Savannah, while also holding down a position as right winger for the football team.



He was fortunate to have George John, the former fast bowler of renown, as his coach, developing what would later become known as 'a swashbuckling style' that was so at odds with the conforming style of cricket emanating from England.

It resulted in plenty of runs scored at the domestic level. Roach's Trinidad and Tobago debut was soon followed in February 1924 against British Guiana. 44 and 22 represented good scores to begin his national career, but 1925 and 1926 were quieter years by his own standards. His form came back with a score of 84 in the match that served as the selection basis for the first ever West Indies Test tour, to England in 1928. Like his teammate Learie Constantine, his ground fielding was electric and was a major factor for both being selected for the historical tour. With one eye on the future – like Constantine – he was also training to become a solicitor, completing his final exams before leaving on the boat to England.

The West Indies lost all three Tests, but the cricketer's almanack, *Wisden*, noted about Roach 'a nice variety of stroke — especially on the off-side — he created a distinctly favourable impression, and he added to his abilities as a run-getter the further qualifications of being a brilliant fieldsman — especially at cover point'. Also noteworthy were his two fifties after being promoted to opening batsman in the 2nd Test at Manchester and 3rd Test at Kennington Oval, London.

In January 1930, England began their four Test tour of the West Indies. Roach, having had a taste of Test cricket two seasons previously, embarked upon his historic innings from his position as opener in the first innings. A stroke filled 122 delighted the Bridgetown, Barbados,

crowd, with twenty ‘fours’ including two successive boundaries that brought him to those magic three figures. He backed it up with 77 in the second innings as Windies drew the match.

Disappointment followed. In front of his home crowd in Port of Spain he made a ‘duck’ in each innings. In the third Test, with the team now competitive enough to sniff victory, Roach took guard in front of the Guyanese crowd and began building another historical innings. 295 balls later, the first West Indian double centurion was in the history books with a magnificent 209, made sweeter by the fact that it helped the West Indies record the first ever Test match win.

His form meandered afterwards, with a solitary fifty on the 1930 tour to Australia, and low scores for Trinidad and Tobago in the Inter-Colonial Tournament. Though he was out of form, his class was sufficient to have him selected for the Windies 1933 tour of England. The team did not live up to expectation, losing the Test series 2-0, but in a match against Surrey Roach made the headlines with a century before lunch on the first day, part of his 180 runs scored in 170 minutes. His other innings of note were fifties in the second and third Tests.

In 1934 he made 128 for Trinidad and Tobago against British Guiana, his last first-class century, with his last Test match a year later when England again toured the Caribbean. Scores of 9 and 10 not out in the first Test represented the last time that Roach appeared for the regional squad. He concentrated on his career as a solicitor throughout the remainder of his life, which was not stymied by the unfortunate loss of both legs due to diabetes (he replaced them with artificial legs).

Despite the public opinion that his shots were too risky and that he played too much off the back foot – a factor that some blamed for his inconsistent scoring – Clifford Roach played the game of cricket his way; the historical results speak for themselves. He was honoured as part of the first wave of inductees to the Sports Hall of Fame in 1984.

Matches: Tests 16; First Class 98

Batting: Test average 30.70; First Class average 28.04, Hundreds 2, Fifties 6