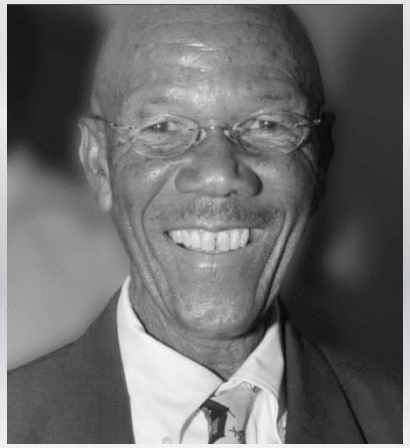
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Bertille St. Clair

Coach

Inducted in 2020

Hailing from Black Rock in Tobago, this coach would impart his ethos of discipline and hard work onto all his charges, reaping the results at every level: school, national, regional, hemispheric, international.

State the name 'Bertille St. Clair' and there is the automatic link to Trinidad and Tobago football, and the stars that passed through his care such as Dwight Yorke, Clayton Ince, Jerron Nixon and Angus Eve. St. Clair would take coaching standards to new heights in Trinidad and Tobago, thereby raising the overall standard as others copied his approach to catch up.

Appropriately for a coach noted as a strict disciplinarian, St. Clair was a schoolteacher at Montgomery Primary School beginning in 1959. Always a sports enthusiast, he recognized that the school's losing cricket team needed proper coaching, so he took over the role, transforming the team's fortunes as they beat all the other schools in their league.

Having achieved that, St. Clair turned his attention to the school's football team, achieving similar results. A key outcome was that the children that were successful in his teams began to perform well academically, a link that St Clair then exploited. He arranged for 'scholarships' to be given to the players to enter more prestigious secondary schools, an option that would not always have been available to them beforehand.

While Montgomery continued to flourish, in 1976 he set up the St. Clair's Coaching School, further reflecting his own watchwords of 'youth excellence, keen sportsmanship and scholastic excellence'. Three years later St. Clair left Montgomery to go to Signal Hill Senior Comprehensive School. At the time the InterCol tournaments were dominated by the non-senior secondary schools, but Signal Hill, under St. Clair, changed that. By 1982, they won their first national InterCol title, travelling to Trinidad and beating all the opposition. Later, with the likes of Yorke in their squad, Signal Hill won a hat-trick of titles from 1987-1989.

Given this success, St. Clair was appointed coach of the national Under-16 team, then the Under-19 team. They thrived with his coaching and the Under-19 squad travelled to Guatemala for the CONCACAF Championship, finished second to Mexico and thereby qualified for the 1991 Under-20 World Cup in Portugal, the first English-speaking Caribbean nation to do so. The team lost all its matches, but St. Clair learnt from the experience.

In 1995 he took charge of the Under-23 national team sent to the Pan Am Games in Argentina, before St. Clair was then made the national senior men's team coach in 1997. He achieved immediate success,

winning the Caribbean Cup that year and the Copa Caribe in 1999. In between, the team played at the 1998 Gold Cup in the USA, beating Honduras 3-1 but failing to advance from the group stage.

When the team returned to the 2000 Gold Cup, having had the benefit of St. Clair's strategy and discipline, Trinidad and Tobago were on fire. They opened with a 4-2 win over Guatemala, and beat Costa Rica 2-1 in the quarterfinals in one of their best displays at international level. Trinidad and Tobago lost to Canada in the semi-final, but it was the nation's best performance in the Gold Cup. At the end of the competition, Russell Latapy, Arnold Dwarika and Yorke were included in the tournament's Best XI.

Despite their Gold Cup performance, St. Clair was dismissed from his national role but returned in 2004. He took Trinidad and Tobago to two draws in the 2005 Gold Cup but crucially also took Trinidad and Tobago through the early rounds of qualification for the 2006 World Cup. Under St. Clair the team were into the final six nations to contest the last phase. St. Clair and the team parted ways before the team progressed to qualifying for the World Cup in Germany, but his contribution to the achievement was a crucial factor.

Many Trinidad and Tobago players credit St. Clair's contribution to their careers, from the time he first crossed their path at Under 10 level, through to the national senior team. He espoused the ideology of using sport to mould youngsters for life overall, not just life on the pitch, and his achievements with Trinidad and Tobago's national teams are remarkable. In 1990 he was awarded the Public Service Medal of Merit Gold, followed by the awarding of the Chaconia Medal Silver in 2005. In

2020, Bertille St. Clair was also inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.