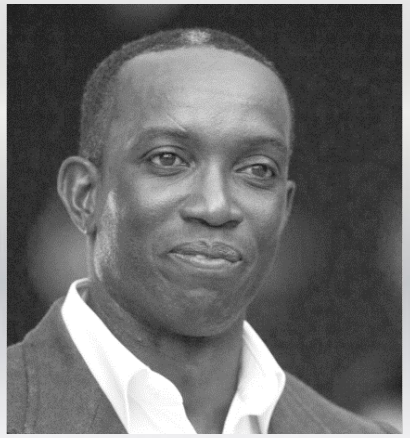
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Dwight Yorke

Football

Inducted in 2011

As a club player he has won it all – leagues, cups, champions leagues. As an international he has captained his country at the World Cup. There is little wonder that Dwight Yorke is the most recognizable footballer to emanate from Trinidad and Tobago.

Born in Canaan, southwestern Tobago, Yorke grew up playing sport, with his older brother Clint paving the way by becoming an opening batsman for Trinidad and Tobago. While the young Dwight was a cricket fan, it was in football that he truly shone, able to play in every position despite his small frame, and with a natural ability to read the game. His career was helped along by the presence in Tobago of Bertille St. Clair, who would later go on to become a renowned Trinidad and Tobago national coach. St. Clair's discipline as coach of the Signal Hill Secondary School where Yorke was attending was key to Yorke's development, a factor that would remain throughout his career – especially with regards to physical

preparation. Signal Hill, with Yorke striking, would go on to dominate InterCol football, winning the national title from 1987 to 1989.

That latter year would prove to be monumental for Yorke. First, he made his debut for the men's national team, scoring his first goal against Grenada in the Caribbean Cup. Then, Trinidad and Tobago were in the battle for qualification for the 1990 World Cup and coach Everald 'Gally' Cummings made the 17-year-old Yorke part of his plans. Going into the final match, the team needed a point against the USA in Port of Spain. Despite the best efforts of Trinidad and Tobago's 'Strike Squad', the USA won 1-0 and an expectant nation and its players were heartbroken.

However, the disappointment soon turned into opportunity for Yorke. In addition to his performances for Trinidad and Tobago on the qualification campaign, he played in a friendly match versus English team Aston Villa. Villa's manager Graham Taylor was so impressed with Yorke's talent that he offered Yorke a trial, then signed him for the club. In the UK, Villa recognized the need to groom Yorke properly. He learnt the ropes by playing in the Reserves and Youth sides before making his First Division (now the English Premier League) debut in March 1990. Building himself up physically to cope with the rigours of English football, by 1990-91 he was a regular starter, playing as a right winger.

The following season he bagged 11 goals for Villa, enhancing his growing role in the team, then scored 6 goals for the 1992-93 season, gaining invaluable experience as the club finished second in the Premier League.

It was his 17 goals in each of the seasons 1995-96 (plus a goal against Leeds in winning the League Cup final) and 1996-97, plus 12 more goals in 1998, that led to Manchester United seeking Yorke's signature. He had developed into the complete player, with United manager Sir Alex Ferguson stating that Yorke was the player that gave them the most problems as an opposition player. A record fee of £12.6 million was paid to Villa and Yorke made his debut against West Ham in August 1998.

His impact was incredible and, being fed balls by the likes of David Beckham and Ryan Giggs, he was a scoring machine, winning the Premier Leagues golden boot for most goals (18), plus 8 goals in the UEFA Champions League where he scored 2 against Inter Milan in the quarterfinal, and 1 versus Juventus in the semi-final. He brought more than goals to the team, igniting a partnership with Andy Cole and providing the crucial holding of the ball in attacking areas that redefined United's play. The team went on to win the unprecedented treble of the league, FA Cup and Champions League. Yorke was one of the best players on the planet.

He continued the scoring the following season, netting 20 goals in the Premiership as United won a second consecutive league title. That year he also starred at the 2000 Concacaf Gold Cup, where Trinidad and Tobago were on fire. He scored in Trinidad and Tobago's 4-2 win over Guatemala and brought the ability to dictate the pace of the match. Trinidad and Tobago progressed to the semi-final (their best performance in the Gold Cup) where they were beaten by Canada. Yorke was included in the tournament's Best XI, together with teammates Russell Latapy and Arnold Dwarika.

Yorke's 2000-01 season included a hat-trick against Arsenal to help United to a third Premier League title, but he was falling out of favour with Ferguson and moved to Blackburn Rovers. In his first season he scored 13 goals for Blackburn, then 4 in the 2003-04 season, and made only four appearances the following year.

He moved to Birmingham City for one season, scoring 2 goals in 13 appearances. Yorke then bid farewell to British football to take up an offer from Sydney FC to play in Australia's fledging A League. Meanwhile, the Trinidad and Tobago team were again chasing World Cup qualification, with Yorke now the national captain and rallying his troops. He was now playing in the position at the top of the midfield, behind the strikers, dictating the game with holding play and distribution. Trinidad and Tobago defeated Bahrain in the play-off in November 2005 to qualify for the greatest football tournament of them all. Yorke was ecstatic. Sixteen years after his greatest international heartbreak he would lead Trinidad and Tobago (then the smallest nation ever to qualify) to the World Cup.

In Germany, he was at his imperious best despite being 36 years old. Fellow Hall of Famer and goalkeeper in that World Cup, Shaka Hislop, described Yorke's role: "How defensive or how attacking we were was dictated by Dwight. He has an incredible football intellect, and at that World Cup it was on full display." The team, despite being down to ten players, drew with Sweden and gave an amazing display against England for the first 80 minutes, a performance of which Yorke was justifiably proud.

He returned to the UK with Championship team Sunderland, helping them to promotion to the Premier League in his first season, playing in a defensive midfield role, and staying with the club from 2006-2009. His renowned fitness had carried him through, but at 38 years old Yorke retired from competitive football.

Stints as a football pundit enhanced his already popular status amongst sports fans, but Yorke always knew he would go into coaching, given that he earned his coaching badges during his time in England. In July 2022, he was made manager of A-League team Macarthur FC.
An immensely popular figure in global football, Yorke's sheer joy at playing the game earned him the nicknames 'the smiling assassin' and 'the grinning gunslinger'. The incredulity of his career is proof of the nation's amazing talent, and his dedication to it resulted in both its success as well as its duration. The Dwight Yorke Stadium in Tobago was built in his honour, the Hummingbird Medal Silver and the Chaconia Medal Gold awarded to him in 1992 and 1999 respectively paid homage to his stunning career, and in 2011 Dwight Yorke was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.

League Cup: **1996**
Premier League: **1998-99, 1999-2000, 2000-01**
FA Cup: **1999**
Intercontinental Cup: **1999**
Caribbean Cup: **1989**
Premier League
Player of the Season: **1998-99**
Premier League
Golden Boot: **1998-99**