First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Sybil Allen–Dommartin

Track & Field

Inducted in 2008

A trailblazer for women's sport in Trinidad and Tobago, whose blistering performances locally and representation abroad showed what was possible for Trinbagonian female athletes. Her career represented the initial steps for Trinidad and Tobago female athletes in an era when the gender was overlooked (consider that there was not even a 200m event for women at the CAC Games until 1966).

Like so many Trinidad and Tobago runners, Sybil Allen Dommartin exceled over the sprint distances of the 100m and 200m. She made her announcement on the local scene by winning the national 100yds title (before the metric system was adopted for race distances) in 1955, when it was held at the Queen's Park Oval. Dommartin then backed up that victory by securing the 220yds, easily cementing her place as the fastest woman in the country.

Opportunities for travel to major Games were limited for all Trinidad and Tobago athletes in the 1950s, so Dommartin was restricted to dominating her events at the plethora of weekend sports meets across Trinidad, leading up to the defence of her national titles, again at the Oval in 1956. She was in imperious form, winning the 100yds in 11.8secs, and the 220yds in 26.5secs. These were run on a grass track, much slower than the cinder surfaces that were used at major events.

The following year brought more of the same, including the same 11.8secs winning time in the 100yds, and a faster time in the 220yds – 26.2secs.

The national championships were not held in 1958, but when they returned in 1959 there was a new 220yds champion in Joyce Dunmore, proving that Dommartin was not having things all her own way. Fired up, she returned to the top step of the national podium in 1960 when the championships were held at San Fernando's Skinner Park. She took the 100yds in 12.8secs, and then achieved her fourth 'double' by winning the 220yds in 26.4secs. In addition to Dunmore, there were other new faces appearing to challenge Dommartin for her crown, including an up-and-coming Thora Best, as well as Sigrid Sandiford.

Dommartin finally got her chance to compete against other territories at the British West Indies Championship held in Kingston, Jamaica, where she ran the 100m and won in 12.4secs – a seminal moment, Dommartin becoming the fastest woman in the region as well as the first Trinidad and Tobago woman to win a medal at an international meet. With her penchant for doubling up, Dommartin anchored the Trinidad and Tobago

4x100m Relay team, that included Sandiford, where the team stormed to gold in 50.4secs. Though the British West Indian Championships were held to also choose the team for the Rome Olympics later that year, where the colonies would compete under the British West Indian (BWI) flag, none of the female winners was selected for the grandest stage of them all.

Dommartin returned to Trinidad where she and Best would have memorable battles on the domestic scene, especially over the 100yds. It pushed Dommartin to higher levels and an incredible fifth doubling up at the 1961 nationals, where she crossed the line at Point- à-Pierre's Guaracara Park in 12.8secs and 26.4secs in the 100yds and 200yds respectively. They would be her last national titles, but in every instance that she was national champion, she did the sprinter's double.

In 1962, Sandiford won the 100m (the championships turned metric) while Best took the 200m, but Dommartin was still amongst the top sprinters in the nation and earned selection for her first major event, the 1962 Central American & Caribbean (CAC) Games in Jamaica. On the Kingston track, Dommartin made it to the final in the 100m where she ran 12.2secs to win the bronze medal – a first for Trinidad and Tobago athletics.

She followed that performance with an appearance at the 1963 Pan Am Games in São Paulo, Brazil. Competing in the 100m, she ran 12.06secs but did not advance to the final.

She retired from competition in the mid-1960s, having blazed a trail for female runners in Trinidad and Tobago, and in 2008 these efforts were

recognized when Sybil Allen Dommartin was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.

National Championships 100 yards: **1955-57, 1960-61**
National Championships 220 yards: **1955-57, 1960-61**
British West Indian Championships: **1960 Gold 100m**
1960 Gold 4x100m Relay
CAC Games **:** **1962 Bronze 100m**