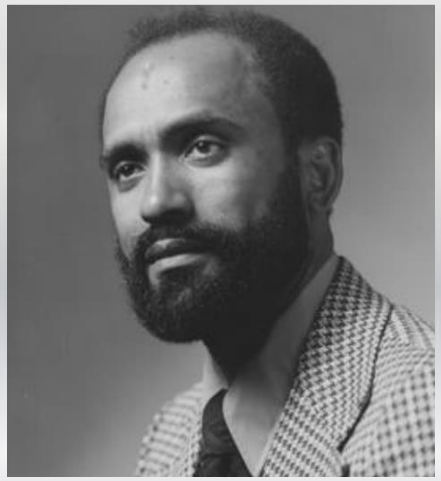
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Clifton "Clif" Bertrand

Track & Field

Inducted in 2008

One of the pioneers of balancing elite sport with scholarships, a path that hundreds of Trinbagonians have since followed, Cliff Bertrand would go on to achieve excellence in both spheres of life.

He was described as one of the most natural athletes seen on the Trinidad and Tobago sporting landscape, equally at home in the 100 meters or the 400 meters, or even the football field. A coach's dream, he easily adapted to the rigours of various disciplines. But, like so many runners, he came to athletics through an initial love of football, which he first played while attending Arima Boys RC School. A proud Arima native, Bertrand attended secondary school in Port of Spain and continued his football at the Progressive Educational Institute. He played at left half for the school in a team that included fellow Hall of Famer, Carlton Franco, but every time he returned to Arima at weekends his interest was piqued by the runners that he saw working out on the track. One of the coaches invited Bertrand to join the runners and he took an immediate liking to athletics; he began to prepare for his first competitive race.



At the President's Grounds, Bertrand was entered in the 200m, overcoming the small matter of not owning running spikes by borrowing a brand-new pair from a friend that thought Bertrand could help by breaking in the shoes. Bertrand did better; he christened the shoes by winning the race. Soon after, Bertrand bought his own pair of spikes. He was now committed to athletics.

Bertrand continued the domestic scene – which in the 1950s meant sports meets both days of every weekend – and was regularly beating boys that were far more established in the sport. He joined the Rangers Club where, under the guidance of his coaches, he shone brightly and made it onto the Trinidad and Tobago team to take part in the 1957 British West Indies Championships. There, Bertrand took the gold at his pet distance the 200m (21.2 secs). In 1958 he returned to the Championships and repeated his feat in the 200m, while also winning the 400m and 4x400m Relay.

Those performances put him into the window for a scholarship in the USA, and Bertrand eventually chose New York University (NYU) to further his studies and running. At NYU he ran the 60, 300 and 600 yards for the indoor season, building a good base for the outdoor season where the University primarily used him as a 100m and 200m runner. Having left Trinidad as one of the prime athletes and then having a year of the college circuit, Bertrand was selected for the 1959 Pan Am Games in Chicago. In that edition of the Games, the English-speaking Caribbean nations competed as the British West Indies, and Bertrand teamed up with countrymen Mike Agostini and Wilton Jackson, as well as Jamaican Dennis Johnson, to win bronze in the 4x00m Relay (41.1 secs).

Regional representation remained in place for the 1960 Olympics in Rome, where Bertrand was entered in the 200m. He qualified from his Heat in 21.3 secs but was eliminated at the quarter-final stage. After graduating from NYU in 1962, he returned to Trinidad, became a teacher, dabbled in coaching and continued running on the track. He was again selected for the Pan Am Games held in Brazil in 1963, and ran the 200m and 400m for a newly independent Trinidad and Tobago. He made it to the final in the 200m, but came 5th in 21.62 secs. Showing his ease of adaptability, Bertrand cruised through his 400m semi-final in 49.06 secs, before running 47.43 secs in the final, which secured him his second Pan Am medal, bronze.

Bertrand's versatility was on show once again two days later, when he teamed up with Irving Joseph, Anthony Jones and Cipriani Phillip to win a bronze medal in the 4x100m Relay. Three events, three finals, two medals.

At the following year's Tokyo Olympics, Bertrand was eliminated at the quarter-final stage of the 200m, the only event that he participated in. He also took part in the 1966 Commonwealth Games in Jamaica, again running the 200 yards (the Games would go metric from 1970). He qualified for the quarter-finals where an injury prevented him from facing the starter's pistol.

In 1968 Bertrand returned to New York to become a professional coach for Jamaica High School. His successes there led to him attaining the prestigious position of Head Coach at his alma mater, NYU. It was the first time that a West Indian was hired as a Head Coach by a US College, a position that Bertrand held from 1976 to 1982. He then attained a

Doctor of Education degree from Columbia University and became a school administrator, always remaining close to athletics and always passing on the ethos of having the versatility to mix sporting ability with education. Cliff Bertrand has a street and park named after him in Arima, is in the NYU Athletics Hall of Fame, and in 2008 was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.

Pan American Games: **1959 Bronze 4x100m Relay**
1963 Bronze 400m
1963 Bronze 4x100m Relay