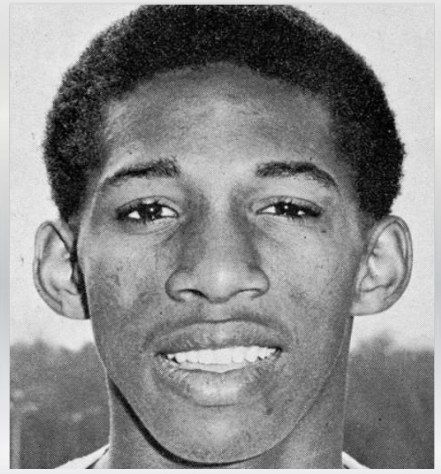
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Leroy De Leon

Football

Inducted in 2008

Another in the long line of distinguished strikers that have graced Trinidad and Tobago football, this 5-foot 9-inch Point Fortin native terrorized defenders from the 1950s to the 1970s. Leroy DeLeon wasted little time establishing himself as a forceful forward whose biggest asset was the outstanding dribbling ability that mesmerized the opposition and got him or his teammates into goal scoring positions.

By 1957, the 9-year-old DeLeon was playing for the Shell Colts team, one of the best youth squads in Trinidad. It exposed DeLeon to organized coaching and play, invaluable experience for an ambitious footballer. At secondary school level, it got even better. Playing in a St Benedict's College team that will always be remembered as one of the best to ever grace the InterCol league, DeLeon partnered with some all-time greats of Trinidad and Tobago football. Warren Archibald, Jan Steadman, Wilfred Cave and DeLeon's strike partner, Steve David, formed an indomitable squad that delighted fans with dynamic play.

They won five consecutive South Zone InterCol titles (1964-68) as well as the National InterCol/CFL double in 1967.

His prolific scoring earned him a place in the Trinidad and Tobago National College team, an all-star squad made up of the best InterCol players, that toured Jamaica in 1966. They beat the Jamaica College team 3-0 with DeLeon scoring. Having made his national senior team debut in 1964 at the age of 16, there was little surprise when DeLeon was selected for the 1967 CONCACAF Championship, again in Jamaica. A good performance at the tournament included scoring the winner against Cuba to give Trinidad and Tobago a 2-1 victory in a must-win situation.

By the end of the competition, talent scouts from USA's new North American Soccer League (NASL) offered DeLeon and Steadman contracts. There was the Pan Am Games later that year to consider (the Trinidad and Tobago football team going on to win an unprecedented bronze medal) but DeLeon chose to enter the paid ranks by joining the New York Generals, making him ineligible for the all-amateur Pan Ams.

The Generals played their games at New York's Yankee Stadium and finished 3rd in both the 1967 and 1968 seasons, with DeLeon scoring 3 goals from 15 appearances. He shone at the 1969 CONCACAF World Cup qualifiers and, though Trinidad and Tobago finished fifth out of the final pot of six teams, DeLeon's dribbling skills and play during the tournament earned him the MVP award.

Also, in 1969 he moved to the Washington Darts of the American Soccer League, and found his groove with 23 goals in 44 matches that helped the team win the Second Division and gain promotion to the NASL in

DeLeon's first year, then finish 2nd in the First Division in 1970. That year, he was named in the NASL All-Star team, having finished fourth in the scoring stats for the season.

When the Darts moved to Florida and became the Miami Gatos in 1972, DeLeon remained with the team and provided 5 goals from his 14 appearances. However, he did not enjoy being in Miami, and in 1974 he returned to Washington, this time to play with the Diplomats. It would be another three-year stint in the US capital city, where he scored 18 goals in 50 matches but contributed much more from a midfield position. The Diplomats though never made it to the playoffs during his time with the squad.

The Diplomats traded DeLeon to the San Jose Earthquakes in 1977 and he enjoyed his time on the west coast, scoring 6 times for the season before moving north to the Seattle Sounders for his final season in the NASL in 1979. He then opted for playing in the Major Indoor Soccer League for the Detroit Lightning in the second half of 1979, before a move to play for the Phoenix Inferno from 1980 to 1983. He scored 73 goals in 123 games and retired to the Arizona area where he took up coaching, with one of his charges, Robbi Findley, playing for the 2006 USA World Cup team.

DeLeon returned to Trinidad in the 1990s, remaining close to the sport and becoming a fixture in the many reunions and awards events within football. One such occasion was 2008, when his football talent, his place as a trailblazer for football both in his home nation and in helping the sport establish itself in the USA, saw Leroy DeLeon inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.