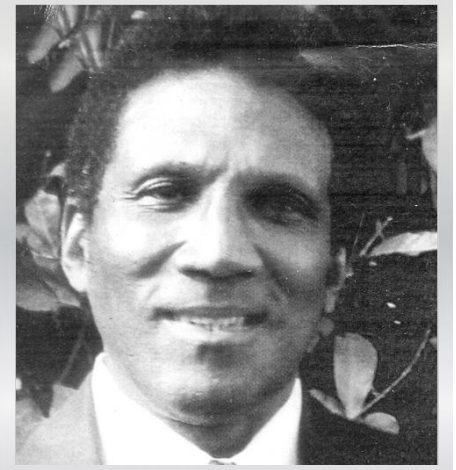
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Carlton Franco

Football

Inducted in 1995

'The General'. With a moniker like that, bestowed upon the very best in football, it's little wonder that Carlton Franco is in the Hall of Fame.

The man that would end up being a towering 6-foot tall forward began his football in his native St. James where he and his friends could not afford a proper football, so they played the game with tennis balls. It gave Franco a greater degree of skill, learning to control the much smaller ball. The young Franco liked to play in defence to, in his own words, "stop the other guys from scoring". Playing with friends was one thing, but when he tried to make the St. James-based Cosmos team, the older boys got the nod ahead of Franco.

It was while he attended St. Crispin's School, Woodbrook, that he started to show his capabilities and got the chance to shine in the newly formed inter-school competition of the mid-1940s. He played as a full-back in the first season with St. Crispin's, who got to the final of the Roy Joseph Cup.

For the 1949 season he was moved to left fullback and proved his versatility by learning to play with his left foot. His performances earned him a place in the trials for the schoolboys' North v South match, with Franco gaining a place in the squad that would trounce South 5-1.

He was moved again in 1950, when he was asked to play in the midfield at centre half position. He was also made captain of the school team, enjoying success as St. Crispin's won the league.

Franco moved onto the Progressive Educational Institute where he played for the First XI and began to get attention from the senior teams from the nation's top division, the Port of Spain Football League. He joined the famous Malvern Club as a Colt member. By 1957 he was a member of the starting XI of a team that redefined local football by implementing a system of using a backward positioned centre-forward to neutralize the opponent's centre-half, opening up more options for the wider positions. Franco was right at home with the system, and it worked; Malvern won three out of four trophies in 1958. The success also meant that Franco was called up to play for Trinidad and Tobago, making his debut as a centre-forward against Jamaica in a 2-1 win for the home team in Kingston. A year later, when Jamaica played Trinidad and Tobago at the Queen's Park Oval, Franco was at his best, dictating the play to his wingers taking many shots on goal himself, as Trinidad and Tobago won 1-0. He excelled again in a second match against Jamaica four days later, an integral part of Trinidad and Tobago's 4-0 win.

He remained a fixture in the Trinidad and Tobago team for years to come, which is why it was surprising that he was not picked for the 1959 West Indies football team that toured England. Franco believed the reason was

that, as enviable as the centre-forward position is for footballers, he preferred to play in the midfield as a centre-half or inside-right and told the coaches that before the trials for the tour. With other players vying for these positions, Franco was not selected.

Unperturbed, he became captain of Malvern and led the team to the 1960 FA Trophy, the BDV Cup, while they also finished second in the league. In 1961, Malvern again secured the FA Trophy and the BDV Cup in 1962. There was also a memorable (and rare) victory for Trinidad and Tobago against a talented Suriname team, where Franco controlled the ball and slipped it to his left-winger to set up the solitary goal of the match.

Between national team service and club service, Franco also played in every North v South Classic from 1957 to 1963. He enjoyed them immensely, scoring in the 1958 Classic. But, the one that he cherished, was the 1963 match at Skinner Park, San Fernando. Franco was made captain of the North who were 3-1 down at half-time, but in the second half he was able to inspire his players who bounced back to win 5-4…a true classic.

A friend that resided in Canada suggested that Franco use his talent to further his studies while playing semi-professionally – an opportunity that Franco grabbed by signing to play with the Columbus Carlings in 1963 for the Pacific Coast Soccer League. Wasting little time, he became leading scorer in the league in 1964. He also earned his university degree and Master's degree and entered social work, retiring from competitive football in 1967 but coaching local teams in the western Canadian area and eventually settling in Vancouver.

In 1995, Carlton Franco was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.