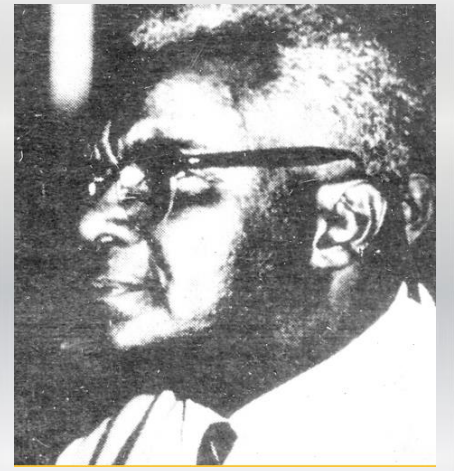
First Citizens Sports Foundation

# HALL OF FAME



## Eric James

**Administrator**

**Inducted in 1987**

Under his stewardship, football in Trinidad and Tobago took unprecedented, courageous steps forward, progressing the game for every level, not least for the players themselves. Eric James, brother of renowned writer CLR James, did not play the game at a high level, but was drawn to the administration of it through both a love for sport as well as his skill as a clerk, who later became an accountant and general manager in his working life.

James joined the Trinidad Amateur Football Association (TAFA, forerunner to the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation and the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association), learning the details about the workings of the entity from TAFA Secretary, Ernie Hinds, who was in the role for 26 years and a great source of information and experience. When Hinds left the post of Secretary in May 1942, an undaunted James stepped in to fill the large shoes that Hinds had left.

He took to the role with relish, understanding that despite being in the middle of World War II, there was the need to expand Trinidad and Tobago's football involvement abroad and to do so with greater frequency. Within James' first year as Secretary, a visit was arranged to Barbados, while the same opposition plus Guyana were invited to Trinidad for an inter-colonial triangular tournament. This would be the first of many such tournaments, and from the outset they proved popular, attracting large crowds.

With the war concluded, James saw bigger opportunities for football, instigating a number of tours by the national team in successive years: British Guiana in 1946, Puerto Rico and Jamaica (Trinidad and Tobago winning the final game 6-0) in 1947, Suriname and Haiti in 1948.

Not content with regional exposure, the man that the players affectionately called 'Sec' arranged to go to England in 1949 as a guest of the British Council to study Football Administration. While there, James not only expanded his knowledge but laid the foundations for a ground-breaking tour that formed part of his wider vision and would be a great leap forward for Trinidad and Tobago football.

He returned to Trinidad and arranged the triangular tournament with Suriname and Curaçao that Trinidad and Tobago hosted and won. The following year the team, building up towards a major target, visited Guadeloupe, gaining further experience. That major target was a tour to the United Kingdom, made possible in 1953 by James' administrative work for years beforehand. Based on the several tours from 1946 onwards, the team became a close, cohesive unit dubbed the 'Family Eleven'. They won on their travels, won at home, and won inter-colonial

tournaments. This proved to be the catalyst for them to undertake this bigger challenge.

The team boarded the SS Golfito in June of that year. It was the national team's first exposure to international competition outside of the Caribbean region, a crucial first step on the journey that would eventually lead to the highs such as the 1967 Pan Am Games bronze and 2006 World Cup qualification. Trinidad and Tobago secured 5 wins and 3 draws in their 14 games in unchartered territory.

After the team returned home, a British Caribbean Football Association was formed to mirror the same that was done for West Indies cricket. James was appointed the Secretary of the new entity, and unsurprisingly it resulted in another tour to the United Kingdom, this time by a West Indian football team, in 1959.

With the colonies about to gain independence and football's popularity expanding across the region, CONCACAF was formed in 1961 to incorporate a wider array of nations. James was a popular choice as 2nd Vice President upon the formation of CONCACAF, bringing considerable experience to the post for the fledging organization which would grow to utmost importance in the game. By the mid-1960s he cut back on his administrative duties, preferring to travel with the national team. Fittingly, he was present when they won the bronze medal at the 1967 Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, an achievement made possible by the work that James had enacted in the two decades before.

For his services in the civil division he was awarded an MBE in 1944, while he was honoured with the Public Service Medal of Merit (Silver)

in 1969. In addition, in 1987 Eric James was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.