First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Joey Kaufman

(Posthumous)

Swimming

Inducted in 2008

It seems that for anything to do with swimming in Trinidad and Tobago, Joey Kaufmann's involvement was a key ingredient. From developing the sport in the nation, to establishing actual pools to swim in, the name 'Kaufmann' is synonymous with swimming in Trinidad and Tobago.

Born in Guyana where he was an avid swimmer, Kaufmann moved to Trinidad at the age of 23 when his employer transferred him to the twin-island colony. Upon arrival, he was totally surprised that swimming was nowhere near as popular as he had thought it would be, more so that water-polo had found favor as both a participatory and spectator sport.

Kaufmann wasted little time establishing himself as the driving force for the sport. As a competitor he was the number one swimmer by the late 1950s. At a competitive meet in Trinidad, he beat Jamaica's Central American & Caribbean (CAC) Games multiple medalist, Barrington Roper, in the 200m Breaststroke.



By 1960 he was West Indies open division champion, a title that he would also take in 1963.

While enjoying the thrill of competing, and having established his own pool construction company, he realized that there was the need to help other ambitious swimmers. Kaufmann began coaching, with his first national stint taking a team to the 1964 CAC Group Age Championships. Three years later he was the manager of the Trinidad and Tobago swim team at a much larger event, the 1967 Pan Am Games in Winnipeg. When Geoffrey Ferreira was selected as the country's lone swimmer for the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, Kaufmann was the logical choice as the manager.

Kaufmann also helped with the formation of the Blue Dolphins Swim Club, a move that led to the creation of other clubs and began a level of competitiveness that would help grow the sport in the Port of Spain area. By extension, more youths also became involved in the sport, leading to the establishment of swimming in schools and clubs, generating the rivalries that exist to the modern day.

The effect of the Blue Dolphins club was far reaching, even to the Olympic bronze won by George Bovell III in 2004. In his own words, Bovell described Kaufmann's incredible contribution to sport: "As I walked into Blue Dolphins swim club, our oldest and best kept pool, where I train, I glanced as I always do at the plaque dedicated to the memory of Joey Kaufmann, the man indirectly responsible for my success. He is credited with being the founder of local swimming, who built the pool in 1962, and even coached my father to Sportsman of the Year in 1969. I smiled to myself, knowing surely that he would be looking

down favourably on one of his ripples, that what was about to create other waves over the next three and a half hours in his creation."

In 1982, he joined the Trinity Masters club, with their emphasis on competing in master's events across the Caribbean and Florida and, as ever, enjoyed the camaraderie and competition. He is remembered as being warm, friendly, engaging and ,of course, driven. That same drive coupled with passion established the sport of swimming in Trinidad and Tobago – no mean achievement.

For these unprecedented efforts, Joey Kaufmann was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 2008.