First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Sherril Peters

Netball

Inducted in 1987

The captain who lifted the trophy, the world champion on home soil, leader of the team that will forever be immortalized in the Trinidad and Tobago's history books, Sherril Peters was accidentally introduced to the sport of netball and ended up standing atop its highest step.

Barataria-born Peters was introduced to the game by an older relative in the early 1960s when she went along to a Wanderers (who played in the Eastern Netball League) match being played in Tunapuna. Wanderers were one player short, and the spectator Peters was handed a spare uniform and given a quick education on the rules. "They told me you can play everywhere in the centre, just don't go into the circles on the court, and do not walk or run with the ball." Suddenly, she was playing netball; she more than held her own and, most importantly, she was enjoying it.

When Wanderers practiced against a male basketball team from the area, Ebonites, Peters revelled in the toughness of the sessions and the benefit gained from overcoming the men's greater size and strength.



Soon, she was travelling to the nation's capital to compete in the Port of Spain Netball League, the top tier division which eventually became the National League.

Her height, marking and interception abilities meant that she stood out as a Goal Defence player, making the position her own. It also lent itself to showcasing her burgeoning leadership qualities on the court, a point that was emphasized in 1966 when she was made captain of the Trinidad and Tobago Secondary School Netball team which toured St. Vincent. That was followed by captaincy of the national Under-21 squad which played against England in 1969 and 1970. In between, she was recruited by Jean Pierre for the new powerhouse team, the Pan Am Marvelites. The team regularly clashed with their main rivals, Carib Senators, in hard-fought games that drew large crowds and helped the sport to its peak of popularity. It also helped to produce world class players.

While Peters was being groomed for senior team leadership, she first learnt the ropes as Goal Defence for the national senior squad at the West Indies Championship in 1971-1974, winning the Most Outstanding Player of the Tournament title in three of those four years.

She was now ready for the biggest stage of all and made her World Championship debut in Auckland, New Zealand in 1975. It was to be a frustrating 4th place behind the usual suspects, Australia, England, and New Zealand. But the gap was closing, evidenced by a 39-37 loss to England and 45-37 loss to Australia, coupled with wins such as 82-17 versus Papua New Guinea and 53-50 against Jamaica. The new players such as Peters and Goal Shooter Cyrenia Charles were welcome additions to a team that would host the next World Championship four years later.

Coach/Manager Lystra Lewis handed the captaincy to Peters in 1978, and there was complete buy-in by the entire team for the intense preparation to be undertaken by all if they were to do the unthinkable and win the world title. Besides a tour to Australia, there were fitness regimes designed to ensure that the squad would be at its best throughout the entire championship. For Peters, there was the pressure of being the new leader for the team's biggest opportunity. "I was a little bit timid because the team had all these senior players and I was thinking in my head, 'How do I get these people on a team to be responding to me as a captain, as a leader? How do I achieve that?' The selectors felt I could be the change agent, and so I took up the task and decided I would give it my all, and I had the support of my family, and that helped."

Placed in Group 4 of 5, Trinidad and Tobago started as they meant to go on, dismantling Republic of Ireland, Bahamas and Bermuda to comfortably top their group. After defeating Barbados 51-26, their first real test came when they met England in front of a packed and expectant crowd. They did not disappoint, with shooters Jean Pierre and Cyrenia Charles leading the team to a close 49-45 victory. Wins by much more comfortable margins followed against Jamaica (51-20) and St. Kitts & Nevis (58-21), before the big one, Australia versus Trinidad and Tobago.

The ladies nailed their tactics on the day using Pierre as a foil, while Charles took on the role of main scorer, scoring her first goal from the edge of the circle, all guided by Peters. By the time the Australians realized their error, Pierre was also chipping in, and the final score was 40-38 to Trinidad and Tobago. Scotland proved to be an easier challenge with Peters' team winning 46-21, before their final game of the

championship versus New Zealand. Trinidad and Tobago lost their unbeaten record against an astute Kiwi squad which managed a 33-27 win.

At the tournament's end no team was unbeaten, but three teams lost only one match. Each of the top three teams won eight out of nine matches, losing once to one of the other two. New Zealand defeated Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago defeated Australia, and Australia defeated New Zealand. The tournament rules of the time did not provide a way of determining an outright winner under the circumstances, so the three teams shared the world title. The 'unthinkable' had been achieved by the 'Calypso Girls', and Peters was a world championship winning team captain – still the only one (as at 2022) from Trinidad and Tobago.

Still only 32 years old in 1983, Peters was part of the Trinidad and Tobago team that put up a spirited defence of their title with third place at the world championships held in Singapore. Peters retired from international competition soon afterwards, having provided her leadership skills from school level all the way to the top of the world. Like the rest of the 1979 team, she was awarded the Chaconia Gold Medal that same year, and in 1987 was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame.

Netball World Championships: 1979 1st
1983 3rd