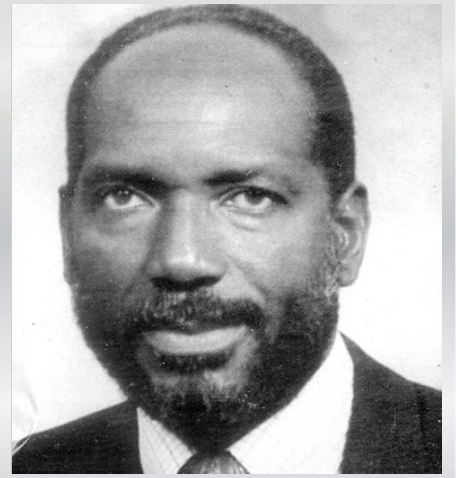
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Lincoln Phillips

Football

Inducted in 1995

Simply, there cannot be any discussion of the greatest ever Trinbagonian football players without mention of the 6'1" goalkeeper who was outstanding between the uprights for club and country throughout the 1960s, who then passed on his skill as coach and author. The St. James born Lincoln Phillips is, for many a fan, the best 'keeper to have played for Trinidad and Tobago.

He came from a sporting family: his younger brother Winston would go on to emulate Lincoln as a national player, while brother George played basketball at the national level. With St. James' proximity to the Police Barracks grounds and King George V Park, the Phillips boys honed their early talent before Lincoln attended Providence and was recruited for Queen's Royal College (QRC) in 1958. His height marked him for the goalkeeper's role but also to open the bowling for the school's cricket team (just to complete the set, he also opened the batting). QRC won both the college football and cricket titles, with Phillips playing at first in the stopper's position before cementing his place as the 'keeper.

Upon his graduation in 1960, he joined Port of Spain League standouts Maple, tasting immediate success as the team was in the middle of a run of winning the League on four consecutive occasions (1960-63). He became known for his ability to read the opposition plays, his positioning, and agility. At the end of that winning run, Phillips left to join the Regiment football team and was installed as captain. By 1965, Regiment had won their first league title finishing ahead of Shamrock, then repeated as champions in 1966 ahead of Phillips' old team, Maple.

In the same year that the Regiment won their first title, he earned his national cap. A relatively newly-independent Trinidad and Tobago had entered its first World Cup qualification matches and he was an integral part of a squad of gifted players building towards unprecedented progress. Besides games against the likes of regional rivals Jamaica, Suriname, and Guyana, Phillips also played against English giants Arsenal (as part of the 1965 Jamaica Independence Festival), as well as Chelsea and Wolves who visited Trinidad. It all served as great preparation for the 1967 Pan Am Games.

Given the opposition and that this was the first Trinidad and Tobago football team sent to a major Games, there was not a lot of hope of progress beyond the group stage. Trinidad and Tobago obliterated that sentiment. They began with a 5-2 dismantling of Colombia (after being down 2-0 at halftime), drew 1-1 with Mexico, and then in the biggest shock of all defeated mighty Argentina 1-0 – Phillips keeping a clean sheet against the favourites. The Argentinians were in disbelief; the Trinbagonians were delirious.

In the semi-final against Bermuda, a bemused Trinidad and Tobago leaked two goals and never recovered. After the euphoria of their earlier results there was initial disappointment, but the team regrouped and defeated Canada 4-1 to win the bronze medal, which remains one of the major achievements of Trinidad and Tobago football.

Medal in hand, Phillips continued to play for Trinidad and Tobago in the 1968 Olympic Games qualifying tournament, having a memorable match versus Netherlands Antilles in November 1967 where his numerous saves were unable to prevent a defeat. The Pan Am Games helped to put Phillips on the radar of a few US professional teams, and when a scout from Baltimore Bays came calling, he signed with the arrangement that the team also help with his enrolment to further his education.

After Baltimore, he joined the Washington Darts (North American Soccer League, the forerunner to the MLS) from 1969 to 1971, while completing his BA and MA in Physical Education from Howard University. During his time at Howard, he was also coaching the football team, building a cadre of players who would win the NCAA Division 1 Soccer Championship – a first national title for the college. Three years later he would win a second title for Howard with a different set of players. In both 1971 and 1974 he also was voted Coach of the Year.

He moved on to became Head Coach at Virginia Commonwealth University, while also writing the strategic playbook *Goalkeeping: The last line of defense, the first line of attack*. Between 1992-94 he served as the US National Goalkeeping Coach, became a FIFA Goalkeeper Instructor in 1995, before becoming the Technical Director of Trinidad and Tobago Football from 2002-2012.

He imparted his outlook as a player and coach: “Being a goalkeeper provides a player a certain perspective on the game that makes the position uniquely conducive to producing leaders — more than any other position on the field. Make no mistake, though: on a professional team you’re frequently surrounded by other alpha males, and my leadership was challenged. This is where education and the ability to deal with people and issues are vital skills for any leader.”

He was voted the Trinidad and Tobago Goalkeeper of the 20th century, was inducted into the Virginia DC Hall of Fame and, for his contributions to the development of the sport in the US, he was awarded the Walt Chyzowych Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2020 United Soccer Coaches Annual Convention. In 2022, Lincoln Phillips was awarded the Hummingbird Silver medal, after being inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1995.

Pan American Games: **1967 Bronze Football**

POS League: **Winner (1961-1963, 1965-1966)**