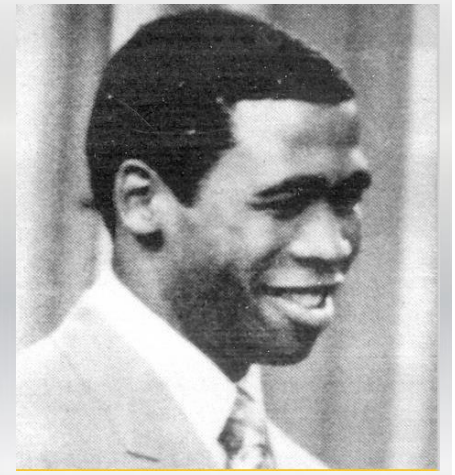
First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Edwin Roberts

H.B.M

Athletics

Inducted in 1987

Sixteen medals, won at all the major Games: Edwin Robert's record for Trinidad and Tobago is simply outstanding. His versatility over the sprint distances made him an invaluable member of any Trinidad and Tobago team. His determination earned him his remarkable success.

Born in Port of Spain, both his parents died when 'Ed' Roberts was very young, leaving him to be raised by his aunt in Belmont. Attending Belmont RC, the ten-year-old Ed began to take part in races around the block of the school, often earning the first prize of a lump of sugar. He then moved onto Rosary Boys RC where he won the sports-day prize that was a talent indicator for many Trinbagonian athletes, the Victor Ludorum. That win was significant for two reasons: it convinced Roberts to dedicate himself to his burgeoning running career, and it got him a place – even at 13 years old – in the renowned Hampton Sports Club.

Roberts moved to Tranquillity secondary school and, with the training done in the Queen's Park Savannah with Hampton, continued his winning ways. He was still in the Junior ranks for open meets such as Southern Games, but on occasion he took on senior sprinters. As a junior, he once beat 1958 Commonwealth Games 220yds champion Tom Robinson of the Bahamas. Roberts was running the full set: 100m, 200m and the 400m. In 1961 he had just been promoted to the elite 'A' Class, and was running low 47secs for the 400m, when he graduated from high school and was introduced to rugby. He wasted little time in his new sport, his speed taking him all the way to the national rugby squad and a 1961 tour to Jamaica, where he suffered a broken hand. The man that would become the nation's most decorated runner made his first sporting trip abroad in rugby.

Jamaica would feature large in Roberts' career, for it was there that he returned in 1962 for the Central American & Caribbean (CAC) Games as part of the first national team from a newly independent Trinidad and Tobago. Running in the 200m, he made it to the final and finished behind two Venezuelans in 21.4 secs for bronze. His medal tally had begun.
As would be the case throughout his participation at Games, Roberts doubled up and ran the relay or, in his case, tripled up and ran both the 4x100 and 4x400 relays. He earned a silver medal from each but took note of the way George Kerr outran him on the third leg of the 4x400. Three medals from three events represented a good haul for a 21-year-old at his first international games.

In November of 1962, Roberts went to Perth for the Commonwealth Games where he disappointed with exits in the second round of the 100 yards and 220 yards. Trinidad and Tobago did not enter teams for the

relays. The experience was a new one for Roberts and made him even more determined to get into the US College system to further his education as well as his running.

He started at North Carolina State in early 1963, where his ability to run three distances was a boon for the University, and his adaptability meant that he could run at ease both indoors and outdoors. For the 1964 season, Roberts transitioned easily to the outdoors, winning the 100m and 200m at the NCAA Small Colleges Championship, and the 100m at the Penn Relays, with the Tokyo Olympics his major goal. In the summer he went to New York, training for a short time with Ed Skinner and Kent Bernard, before the trio were joined by Wendell Mottley for a pre-Olympic meet in Vancouver where the quartet gelled, practicing their baton passing and changeovers in the knowledge that the four of them represented a real chance of earning an Olympic medal. In Vancouver they ran their first competitive relay together and won.

Roberts arrived in Tokyo brimming with confidence. Before the 4x400m he had his individual event, the 200m. He won his heat in 20.8secs, won his quarter-final in 20.9secs, and cruised into the final after another 20.8 in the semi-final.

He was drawn in lane 8 for the final, not having to run the tight bend of the inside lanes. He knew the reason that he was there. “When I settled into the blocks, I didn’t feel any burden…I felt expectation. Running in the outside lane everybody chases you. You can’t see anybody in front of you. So it’s a mindset, you have to plot your race.” At the starter’s pistol he got a good start and came out of the bend in third place, with American Henry Carr pulling away to the line and Roberts closing in on

eventual second place finisher, Paul Drayton. Roberts crossed the line in 20.6secs and had given Trinidad and Tobago its first ever Olympic track & field medal and first Olympic medal as an independent nation.

His work was not yet done. Trinidad and Tobago were labeled as one of the favourites to medal in the 4x400 Relay, a point that was emphasized when they won their first heat in 3mins 5.3secs, and Kent Bernard's words, "We felt confident that we could beat anybody, especially after the first round."

The order in the final was Ed Skinner (46.0secs), Bernard (45.6secs), Roberts (45.0secs) and Mottley (44.7secs). It was enough to take the bronze medal, an outstanding representation of strength in depth for such a small nation and a second Olympic medal for Ed Roberts.
He returned to North Carolina and the US circuit in readiness for another big year in 1966. First, the CAC Games in Puerto Rico where he replicated the three events he ran four years earlier, coming away with gold in the 200m in 20.8secs, silver in the 100m in 10.3secs, silver in the 4x100m, and silver in the 4x400m. Four medals from four events proved that he was in fantastic form.

Mere weeks later, he ran the 100 yards at the Commonwealth Games in Jamaica and won the bronze medal in 9.52secs, before running the 220 yards and winning silver in 20.93secs. The best was yet to come, with the final event of the Games, the 4x440 yard Relay and a Trinidad and Tobago team ready to do something special.

Lennox Yearwood had replaced Ed Skinner in the lineup, and they set about demolishing the opposition and had their eyes set on nothing less

than a world record. When Yearwood handed over to Kent Bernard, Trinidad and Tobago were in fifth place. Bernard took them up to second in his handover to Roberts, who accelerated into first by passing Kerr (from the CAC Games four years previously) in the finishing straight, leaving Mottley now free to finish the job. A cheering Jamaican crowd put aside all allegiances to salute the new world record: 3mins 2.8secs. Roberts would later state that it was the most satisfying race of his career.

For the 1968 Olympics, he again doubled up for the 200m and 4x4 Relay. In the former, he coped well with the high altitude of Mexico City, but just missed a bronze medal when he finished 4th in the final with 20.34secs. In the relay, he was the only remaining member of the Tokyo quartet, and Trinidad and Tobago finished in 6th place in the final.

He was now a veteran of the Trinidad and Tobago team, though still only 29 years old when he arrived in Edinburgh for the 1970 Commonwealth Games. In the 200m (this was the first time that the Commonwealth Games used metric measurements) he ran the fastest heat (20.6secs), won his quarter-final (20.8secs), and turned in 20.7secs in the semi-final. In the final, he continued his remarkable consistency by repeating his silver medal of four years previously, running 20.69secs to winner Don Quarrie's (JAM) 20.56secs. In the relay, he ran the final leg as Trinidad and Tobago maintained their fine tradition with silver.

Until 1971, Roberts had never attended the Pan Am Games, the last major medal missing from his collection. He went to the games in Cali, Colombia, with his usual multi-event participation. In the 200m he again came up against Quarrie, who won the gold, with American Marshall Dill

and Roberts both finishing in 20.39. But, Dill was deemed to have placed second. Robert's bronze would be the first of two Pan Am medals, the second earned in his usual second hunting ground of the 4x4 Relay, where Trinidad and Tobago ran 3min 4.58secs.

The 1972 Olympics in Munich would be the final international stage for Roberts, where he only competed in the 200m. He was eliminated at the quarter-final stage after he ran an uncharacteristic 20.99secs, blaming an extended stay in the sauna for sapping his energy. He retired to the USA and became involved in coaching at Temple University and Beaver College.

Besides his international medal haul, he remains respected for his performances on the US college circuit, where his consistency earned him MVP awards, Athlete of the Year accolades, and induction to the North Carolina State Hall of Fame. In Trinidad and Tobago, for his extraordinary ten-year career at the top of world sport, Edwin Roberts was awarded the Hummingbird Bronze Medal in 1969 and inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1987.

CAC Games: **1962 Silver 4x100m Relay**
1962 Silver 4x400m Relay
1962 Bronze 200m
1966 Gold 200m
1966 Silver 100m
1966 Silver 4x100m
1966 Silver 4x400m

Commonwealth Games: **1966 Gold 4x440 Yard Relay**

1966 Silver 220 Yards
1966 Bronze 100 Yards
1970 Silver 200m
1970 Silver 4x400m Relay

Pan American Games: **1971 Bronze 200m**
1971 Bronze 4x400m Relay

Olympic Games: **1964 Bronze 200m**
1964 Bronze 4x400m Relay