CLIFF MARSHALL – CELEBRATING A TALENTED GOODISON PIONEER

Words // Rob Sawyer


'Ahead of his time': Cliff Marshall

Throughout October, visitors to the Trinity Bar at Hill Dickinson Stadium can view a gallery celebrating the first 11 black footballers to play for Everton. Second, in chronological order, is Cliff Marshall.

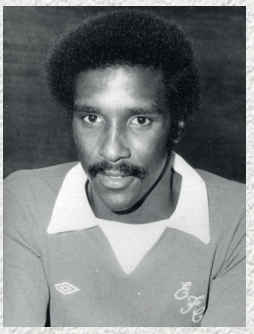
Of Barbadian heritage, Marshall was raised in Toxteth, attending Windsor Street School. He caught the eye with his footballing ability and was successful in a trial for Liverpool Schoolboys.

Having represented Lancashire Schoolboys and England Schoolboys, the teenager was hot property.

He worshipped George Best and was approached by Manchester United, but he plumped for Everton, the local team he admired for their style of play. Having been voted the best player in an international youth tournament in Alassio in 1973, Marshall signed professional forms and continued his progression at Bellefield.

Marshall's Everton debut came in January 1975 at the age of 19, when he came off the bench for fellow youth product Gary Jones in a win over Leicester City.

Within seconds of his introduction, Marshall had the crowd on their feet with an effort that flew just past the post. Thus, he became the first Liverpool-born black player to pull on the royal blue jersey in a Men's fixture. He made three more appearances that season on the winning side each time, followed by four the next, to bring his tally to seven.



The hostile reception black players could receive from the terraces and a focus on defensive tactics sapped Marshall's love of the game, culminating in him asking Billy Bingham to release him in 1976. He then swapped Merseyside for Miami, for an enjoyable spell in the NASL – he even got to play against Pelé.

Returning to the UK, Marshall spent a season with Southport before stepping away from league football and embarking on a new career connected to pubs, snooker halls and a nightclub.

He reconnected with Everton in the mid-2000s and became a regular attendee at Everton Former Players' Foundation functions and home matches. Marshall died in November 2021 but lived long enough to see black footballers play a key role at Goodison.

In 2013, this footballing pioneer reflected: "I am proud to have been the first (local) black lad at Everton; people don't recognise how tough it was.

"You had a bit of all sorts like banana skins and monkey chants, but you got more of that when playing for England Schoolboys all over Europe.

"I'm not being big-headed when I say that I must have been good, as Billy Bingham didn't have to pick me. Billy once said, 'Cliff is ahead of his time'."

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