

SULLIVAN, CLIVE (1943 - 1985), rugby league player

Name: Clive Sullivan
Date of birth: 1943
Date of death: 1985
Spouse: Rosalyn Patricia Sullivan (née Byron)
Child: Anthony Sullivan
Child: Lisa Sullivan
Parent: Dorothy Eileen Sullivan (née Boston)
Parent: Charles Henry Sullivan
Gender: Male
Occupation: rugby league player
Area of activity: Sports and Leisure Pursuits
Author: Ted Richards

Clive Sullivan was born on 9 April 1943 at 49 Wimborne Street, Splott, Cardiff, the second of four children of Charles Henry Sullivan (born 1923), an electrical engineer who served in the RAF, and his wife Dorothy (Doris) Eileen (née Boston, 1921-1991). His father was originally from Jamaica, and his mother's father was a seaman from Antigua. Clive attended Moreland Road Primary School in Splott. His parents separated when he was young, and his mother moved across Cardiff to Ely, where Clive went to Herbert Thompson Secondary Modern School. As a boy he suffered problems with his legs necessitating several operations, and at the age of fourteen he was warned that he might never walk properly again.

After leaving school Sullivan worked briefly as a mechanic before joining the army in 1961. He trained as a radio operator in Catterick and then joined the Parachute Signals Squadron, stationed in Hampshire, and saw active service in Cyprus with the UN Peacekeeping Force. Whilst at Catterick he started playing rugby for the army, where his skills were spotted and he was signed up by the rugby league club Hull FC. The beginning of his sporting career was plagued by injuries, knee operations and a bad car crash in 1963, but in 1964 he left the army and was able to dedicate himself to his rugby career. That same year he met Rosalyn Patricia Byron from Welton near Hull, and they were married in 1966. They had a son Anthony and a daughter Lisa.

Clive Sullivan played on the wing and was a prolific try scorer. His phenomenal pace meant he was able to exploit any gaps in the opposition defence. In one match against Doncaster in 1968 he scored seven tries, still a Hull FC record.

He first played for Great Britain in 1967. In 1972 he was selected as Captain of the Great Britain side, becoming the first Black person to captain a Great Britain team in any sport. The team went on to win the Rugby League World Cup held in France where he scored a try in each of the four games in the tournament.

He also captained the Wales Rugby League team. In all, Sullivan represented Great Britain 17 times and appeared at three World Cups, 1968 and 1972 with Great Britain, and in 1975 for Wales. His length of the field try in the 1972 World Cup final against Australia is regarded as one of the game's finest. He was the last person to lift the World Cup for Great Britain as since then the home nations have played individually.

Clive Sullivan, or 'Sully' as he was known, played for Hull FC and later their rivals Hull Kingston Rovers, before returning to Hull FC. He played a total of 352 games for Hull FC, scoring 250 tries, and was the first player to score over 100 tries for both sides. At the end of his career he also played for Oldham and Doncaster. His achievements were recognised by the award of an MBE in 1972, and he was a guest on *'This Is Your Life'* in 1973.

Just six months after retiring from rugby Clive Sullivan died of liver cancer on 8 Oct 1985 at Kingston General Hospital in Hull.

Anthony Sullivan (born 1968) followed in his father's footsteps as a winger, playing rugby league for Hull KR, St Helens and Wales, and also rugby union for Cardiff and Wales.

Clive Sullivan was commemorated in Hull when a section of the main approach road from the Humber Bridge (the A63) was named the Clive Sullivan Way. Since 2001, the Clive Sullivan Memorial Trophy has been awarded to the winner of the local derby match between Hull FC and Hull KR in recognition of his service to both clubs.

Authors

Ted Richards

Revised by the editorial team, 2023

Sources

J. Latus, *Hard road to the top* (Hull 1973)

Ancestry and Find My Past

Further reading

Africans in Yorkshire Project: [Clive Sullivan](#)

Peter Jackson, *Clive Sullivan, Triumph and Tragedy, Welsh sporting legends* (2011)

100 Great Black Britons: [Clive Sullivan](#)

Hull Firsts: [Clive Sullivan MBE](#)

Wikipedia Article: [Clive Sullivan](#)

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