

Close, Wadekar top 2010 class of inductees

By Stan Walker

When the Cricket Hall of Fame holds its induction ceremony this year, former Test captains Brian Close of England and Ajit Wadekar of India will top the class of inductees. They will be joined by six local individuals, Clifford Hinds, Hugh Pitter, Ballista McLeish and Ivor Stephens of New York, Paul Williams of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Akthar Masood Syed of Illinois, who will be honored for making outstanding contributions to the sport in the U.S.

The ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, October 2, at the Hilton Hotel, downtown Hartford. Close, who captained his county Yorkshire and his country England, holds the record of being the youngest player ever to represent England. He was known for his courage of batting against fast bowling and for his fearless fielding at short leg. As a batsman he could defend with great obduracy, but could attack thrillingly, although not always wisely. Although he lost favor with the England selectors in the 1961 Old Trafford Test against Australia, he returned to take England to the brink of victory in the 1963 Test at Lord's against the West Indies.

An aggressive left-handed batsman who became slightly bogged down by responsibility, Wadekar's name will forever be linked with 1971 when he led the Indian team to historic triumphs in the West Indies and England. A tower of strength to the Indian batting, he was one of the best No. 3 batsmen in the history of Indian cricket.

Hinds, a pioneer of the sport in New York, who has served with the United States of America Cricket Association for many years, has helped to develop many aspects of the sport in the state. He was among 100 persons worldwide (five in the U.S.) who were awarded a medal of honor from the International Cricket Council (ICC) for making significant contributions to the game in the U.S.

Syed, a shy and quietly spoken man with a long list of achievements in cricket, was also one of the recipients of the ICC Medal of Honor. A long time player, selector and administrator to the game, the retired physiotherapist who dearly loves the game, has helped to change it for the better in the U.S. Born in Delhi, India, Syed who now lives in Glendale Heights, a Chicago suburb, has helped organize free youth clinics in various suburbs, secured fields for local cricket clinics in the area and had a hand in forming eight leagues in the Central East region of the U.S.

A respectable left-arm spinner and China man bowler, Pitter who is considered one of the main stakeholders of the game in New York because of his dedication to the promotion of the game, has played in many championships. Known throughout the Metropolitan Cricket League, which he has been associated with from 1967 as the "Archive," Pitter has received numerous awards over the years for his tireless work on and off the field.

An all round dedicated player and leader, McLeish who has received numerous awards for his sportsmanship, leadership, humanitarian, outstanding services and contributions, has also assisted the New York region's women's cricket committee. He received a citation from the New York State Assembly and a Certificate of Congressional Recognition from the U.S. House of Representatives for his contributions to his community.

One of the founders of the United States of America Cricket Umpires Association, Stephens, who began his career in Jamaica, had the opportunity to officiate in a Rest of the World vs. Pakistan match, which was played at Downing Stadium, Randall's Island, New York. A well qualified umpire, for several years Stephens has conducted pre-season seminars for umpires in the Metropolitan Cricket League in New York.

Over the years Williams has been a strong supporter and promoter of the sport throughout the state. One of the early presidents of the Connecticut Cricket League, he is presently actively involved with the Southern Connecticut Cricket League, which is making a good name for the state.