

## Cricket Hall of Fame is a welcome treasure

Hartford's Cricket Hall of Fame is a welcome treasure that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. This was the consensus of this year's crop of inductees who had the opportunity to visit the Main Street facility, prior to their induction into the prestigious institution at ceremonies held at the Marriott Hotel, downtown Hartford on Saturday, October 1, 2011. Their only contention is that they could not understand how such a gem could be found here in the U.S. and not in one of the more recognized cricketing areas possibly the West Indies.

The induction ceremony started at 8.00 P.M. Hartford's Mayor Pedro Segarra, led the procession to the head table then welcomed the visitors to Hartford and congratulated the Cricket Hall of Fame for the work they were doing in the city. He next read a proclamation declaring October 1, 2011, Cricket Hall of Fame Day in the City of Hartford and congratulated the honorees on their accomplishments and wished them continued success.

Seated at the head table were Mayor Pedro Segarra, Mayor of Hartford, the inductees Clarence Modeste from Staten Island, Mahammad Qureshi from Florida, Lawrence Rowe and John Gayle from Jamaica, and the Presidential awardees Rev. Patricia Jackson and Aston Archer of Hartford, DeMaio of New Britain, Sidney Schulman, Mayor of the town of Bloomfield and Shirley Matthews, President of the Cricket Hall of Fame.

After some difficulty with the sound system, a brief delay that would have unraveled some seasoned entertainers, the talented and gifted Sola Rowe, the nine-year-old daughter of inductee Rowe, treated the crowd to what some described as a "Whitney Houston" rendition of the national anthem.

Reverend Jackson pronounced the invocation, the food servers started service and the gala affair was off to a great start. Topping the class of inductees was West Indies and Jamaica batting legend Lawrence "Yagga" Rowe. He was joined by former West Indian Test umpire John Gayle, O.D., former president and CEO of Cricket Council USA (CCUSA) Mahammad Qureshi and Clarence Modeste, a stalwart of the game in New York.

Three other individuals Mayor Schulman of Bloomfield, Aston Archer, head of Hartford's Community Soccer League, and the Rev. Jackson, as well as the New Britain Parks & Recreation Department represented by Mr. DeMaio, were presented with Presidential Awards for their contributions to their community.

Two former inductees and stalwarts of the game in New York, Roy Sweeney and Denzil Powell were recognized for their continued contributions to the game in the U.S. with the presentation of Lifetime Achievement Awards.

Certificates of Appreciation were awarded to Godfrey Mitchell from New York, who sponsored the Induction of Lawrence Rowe, Former Councilwoman Veronica Airey-Wilson, Councilman Corey Brinson and Council President RJO Winch for their financial contributions to the Cricket Hall of Fame.

Director of the Cricket Hall of Fame, Michael Chambers in an emotional introduction of Rowe stopped short of calling for a boycott of West Indies cricket, if immediate actions were not forthcoming in dealing with the Chris Gayle incident. "What happened to Lawrence Rowe should not be allowed to happen to Gayle," he said.

Following his induction, Rowe who holds the record of being the only cricketer to make a double century and a single century in his first Test match, expressed his gratitude for the recognition that has enabled him to join the many other greats of the game as a member of the prestigious institution.

"I understand that I was nominated to become an inductee some years ago, but for some reason it was delayed. Now that it has happened, I am very honored and proud," he said, adding that nothing generally happens before its time.

"One of four West Indians who have scored a triple century in an inning, Rowe, who was at one time hailed as the best batsman in the world, while reminiscing on some of his experience during his playing days, said that he was told by many that his 300 innings was the best of the lot.

Rowe also spoke briefly about his experience in South Africa, 1982-83, where he led a West Indian rebel team during the apartheid days, when the country was isolated from world sport. It resulted with him and the others of the team being banned from cricket. The ban was lifted in 1989 when leading South African freedom fighter Nelson Mandela, who eventually became the country's first black leader was freed from prison.

Rowe said that although many may not have been aware, the rebel team at the time was the second best team in the world. We also won a match against the South Africans which made it the first time that they were beaten at home.

Gayle congratulated the Hall of Fame for the great efforts that it is making to conserve the history of the game in the U.S. and thanked the institution for honoring him. "I am proud of what you are doing and hope that you will flourish and become even more successful in the years to come," he said.

Qureshi, who is committed to develop and make the game one of the top sports in the U.S., related the efforts that he is making, which includes the large amount of funds that he has put forward to help get this to happen.

The T20 format of the game was first introduced into the U.S. in 1999, at a beach tournament that he created, he said. The now very popular U.S. Open T20 tournament, which was created in 2010 by (CCUSA), has expanded to more than 16 regional tournaments. This year (2011), the teams participating in the Championship Series which will be held at its usual venue in Florida, will be battling for \$50,000, he said.

Modeste, who has been described as a true cricket man who puts the sport ahead of himself, in his response, gave the audience an insight of the history of the game and that of his organization, the Staten Island Cricket Club, which was formed during the 18th century. U