

Cricketers may fade away but they are never forgotten

Members of Hartford's Cricket Hall of Fame's committee have every reason to be proud following the conclusion of their annual induction ceremony held at the Marriott Hotel, downtown Hartford, Saturday, September 22, 2007. The event which is held to honor former outstanding cricketers and individuals, who have made outstanding contributions to the sport and their communities, drew a large gathering which heard some of the stalwarts relive some of their experiences during their glory years in the game.

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The inductees, Mushtaq Mohammed of Pakistan, Chetan Chauhan of India (former Test players), Dr. Basil K. Bryan, Consul General of Jamaica, Isaac Pennycooke of Montreal, Canada, Hammy Reid and Kuldeep Prasad of New York, all expressed their gratitude for the honor that was bestowed on them.

"It is nice to know that you are appreciated," Mohammed, a former Pakistani all-rounder said, following his induction. "I felt honored when I received the letter from the Hall of Fame about my nomination. It made me realize that while cricketers in a sense may fade away they are not forgotten," he said. "Tonight I feel on top of the world ... young again. It is because of this game that I am standing before you today as a celebrity."

"Because of the introduction of one-day internationals, use of color clothing and the white ball, which was brought into play by the late Kerry Packer of Australia, and the now popular 20/20 tournaments, the game is somewhat different than when I used to play. These changes are for the better," he said, "as the tournaments not only provide great entertainment but bring in money that makes it sure that the cricketers will be better paid for their performances."

"Cricket today does not produce characters and celebrities of the former years," he said, "the players are more aggressive and hostile. Missing is the human quality especially on the field of play which in the past led to it being described as the gentleman's game."

Chauhan, former opening partner of Indian legend Sunil Gavaskar, said that cricket is a great leveler. It made us good people. Now a television commentator in India, where the people are very passionate about the sport -- it is a sort of religion -- Chauhan said that it is cricket that brought him fame. "I am honored to be among this year's inductee."

The new innovations to the sport, one-day internationals and 20/20 tournaments, has turned the players into commodities. They are now up for sale, he stated.

Using the occasion to say goodbye to the people of Hartford, Dr. Bryan, who will be departing his post shortly, said that the community had a fine collection of people of which he is immensely proud. "My success is your success. I could not do it without your support," he said.

"Cricket is a continuation of your culture," he said. Recounting his early relationship with the Cricket Hall of Fame which responded to an appeal he made for surgical gloves for health workers in Jamaica who were involved with the treatment of AIDS infected children, Dr. Bryan said that your response is an indication that although you were in a new country you have not given up on from whence you came.

"Continue to work hard to build the community that you live in," he urged the gathering. "Work hard but never forget your native land. "Community building is perseverance, dedication and sacrifice, being away from your family" he asserted.

"Thanks for the memories. We must hold strong to our convictions and learn to love and honor our heroes."

During the ceremony Hartford's mayor Eddie Perez brought greetings from the City Council and presented each inductee with a citation in recognition of their induction into the prestigious halls.

Councilwoman Veronica Airey-Wilson, a strong supporter of the Hall of Fame and who assisted the mayor during the presentation, was also honored with a certificate from the Cricket Hall of Fame in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the Hartford community.

Also present at the ceremony with his wife was the Consulate General of Pakistan Barry D. Hoffman S.Q.A., who is based in Westwood, Massachusetts.