

Former WI fast bowler Croft tops list of nominees



Guyanese born Colin E. H. Croft part of the potent West Indian quartet of fast bowlers from the late 70s and early 80s is among this year's list that has been nominated for induction into the Cricket Hall of Fame.

In a relatively brief career lasting just five years, Croft established a reputation as one of the most chilling of fast men, with no compunction whatsoever about inflicting pain.

With his height (6'5"), Croft bowled bouncers, was very aggressive and renowned for bowling wide of the crease over the wicket and angling the ball in to right-handers. Croft's figures of 8/29 against Pakistan in 1977 are still the best Test innings figures by a fast bowler from the West Indies.

From 27 Tests he took 125 wickets at 23.30 and a strike-rate of 49.3; in the shorter version, Croft took 30 wickets from 19 One-Day International (ODIs) at an average of 20.66, a strike-rate of 35.6, and an economy of 3.47. These are phenomenal numbers by any standards, and for any era. To put things into perspective, if we put a 100-wicket cut-off, Croft's Test average is next to only Malcolm Marshall, Joel Garner and Curtly Ambrose — all champions of the sport — among West Indians. If we apply the same criterion, his Test strike-rate is next to only Marshall's 46.7.

In 1982 Croft accepted a place on the rebel tour of apartheid-divided South Africa, in violation of an international ban on sports tours of the country. The rebel players were granted "honorary whites" status by the South African government to allow them access to all-white cricket playing areas. All the players who took part in the tour were banned for life from international cricket, thus marking the end of his cricket playing career. That ban, however, was effectively lifted in 1989, by both the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) and the UN. Croft moved to the United States to avoid recriminations at home.

Croft also taught mathematics at Lambrook school in Winkfield Row, Berkshire, UK from 2007-2008 for one and a half terms. He never coached cricket at the school but frequently gave autographs to parents of pupils at the school.

Since 1994, he has been doing cricket coverage part-time, as a commentator/analyst, and was one of the first writers for CricInfo, contributing over 500 articles so far to that entity. He has continued his sports journalism career everywhere that cricket is played, covering West Indies tours since 1994.

Croft's first overseas sports journalism sojourn was to the United Kingdom in 1995. During the 2007 ICC Cricket World Cup Croft provided analysis for the BBC's Test Match Special radio coverage on all the Guyana based matches. He continued his analyst's role during the West Indies tour of England the same year.

In his private life, having been an Air Traffic Controller from 1973 to 1981, while also playing cricket for the West Indies, he has also obtained a Commercial Airline Pilot's license in the USA, with endorsements for the UK, and worked as a Commercial Pilot in the Caribbean.

He also regularly appears as a studio guest on Sky Sports when West Indies are playing.