

Hall of Fame members participate in Cricket Demonstration

Members of Hartford's Cricket Hall of Fame were among a group of participants who demonstrated their sport to an enthusiastic group of high school students at a session held at the Amity High School, Woodbridge, Connecticut, Saturday, January 25. The students which numbered about 100, and represented five schools in the Woodbridge area, were able to get first-hand knowledge of non-traditional sports, many for the first time, at the session put on by the Yale University Peer Outreach program. It was designed to introduce the students to international non-traditional sports, which are not popular in the U.S.

Through a video presentation, hands on demonstration of the gears used in the game, explanation of how the game is played, brief lectures, distribution of literatures which describes various aspects of the game and timely answers to questions raised, the Cricket Halls of Fame's team, headed by Assistant Director Joslyn Chance Sr., was able to give the students a feel of how passionate the sport of cricket can be to natives of countries that play it on a large scale.

Other Hall of Fame members participating in the demonstration were Dolton James, Ravi Kichannagar, Errol Archer, Stanford Walker and Vernon Tennant. Well-known scorer for the game in the northeast region of the U.S., Carole Grayson, completed the Hall of Fame team. Grayson, an American, who fell in love with the sport some years ago is today the top score keeper in the region.

The students were surprised to learn that the sport is not only regarded by many as the second most popular sport in the world, next to soccer, but that it was once popular in the U.S. dating back to 1737. They were also surprised to learn that baseball is an offshoot of the sport. In fact, baseball was started by two English cricketers and that the first baseball game was played between a group of cricketers and baseballers with the cricketers winning handsomely by a score of 25-0. Ironically, the first baseballers were former cricketers.

Another big surprise to the youngsters is that the game is still widely played in Connecticut and the U.S. and that New York today has more cricket teams than baseball. Although the game is played mostly by expatriates formerly from territories that were once governed by the British, the students learned that it is also played by women and that the U.S. participates in its version of the World Cup.

At the session cheered by Janet Headley, Director of the Yale University Peer Outreach program, keynote speaker Shea Ralph, told the students that sports can change your life. It has a language of its own, and possesses the power of pulling people together for one cause, one reason. It brings people together, the former University of Connecticut basketball star said, pointing out that at events like the Olympics the athletes compete as one world. Regardless of your nationality, politics and culture, when you are there each one is focused just on winning in their particular discipline, she said.

Sports allows you to visit other countries, meet different people, and to learn about their customs and cultures. It is such a wonderful thing, she said. Speaking of the opportunity that she had of being able to attend a mass in Rome in which the Pope presided, while she and the Uconn team were on a visit in Italy, Ralph said that sports enables you to meet people that you only read or hear about,

Ralph, whose playing days may be over because of recurring injuries to her knees, said that had it not been for athletics, many others like herself would not have gotten the opportunity to enjoy such wonderful experiences in their life.

Although the teachers who accompanied the students did not express a desire of starting a cricket program in their schools, a couple stated that they were interested in coming to Hartford during the cricket season to actually witness a match in progress. The Connecticut Cricket League's season runs from late May through October each year. Last year the league made the finals of the Inter-League competition staged by the United States of America Cricket Association (USACA) for the first time.

With an international type field now established in New York, where there is a large following for the game, the USACA which is a member of the International Cricket Conference (ICC), the governing body of the sport in the world, is presently petitioning to have one of the 2004 World Cup games scheduled for this region to be played in the U.S. The U.S. also participates in the ICC World Cup competition.