

New York Metropolitan Cricket League is 131 not out

By STAN WALKER

The sport of cricket is not considered a big draw in the U.S., but a recent report has revealed that when it comes to the largest fan base America comes second to India, where it is the national sport.

Although many may not be aware of it, cricket has a long history in the U.S. going back to 1709, when the sport was reported in Virginia by planter William Byrd, and that the famous American statesman Benjamin Franklin was a keen follower of the game. Franklin is said to have brought with him from England a copy of the laws to his beloved Philadelphia in 1705. MASCELLES BAILEY



These are some of the reasons why the officers of the New York Metropolitan Cricket League expressed how proud they were to celebrate its 131st anniversary at a very exciting presentation function which was held in Queens, Long Island, New York on Saturday, November 20.

The league was established in 1897 by a group of visionary clubs in the New York area who were resolute in keeping the game alive in North America. During its formation, the majority of the players in the area were mill workers who were immigrants from Nottingham and Yorkshire counties in England.

Addressing the gathering, Mascelles Bailey, president of the league, said that when he reflects upon the fact that the league has been around continuously for 131 years, he is thoroughly convinced of the power of cricket to unite people. "Most if not all of us has met because of cricket," he said. "We have forged many long-term friendships, even marriages because of the sport. We are all here tonight because of this wonderful sport. I know of no other sport that can do that," he asserted.

"On one hand cricket is one of the fastest growing sports in the world, especially here in America," he said, "on the other hand though, our local clubs are falling prey to the fast tempo of the 21st century. We no longer have our local cricket clubs where members could meet and build a stable organization. Now we just have a bunch of teams who meet in the park and conduct their business by email, telephone conference calls and the ever present cell phones. And everyone wants to get paid for playing.

"My exhortation to all is that while we must keep pace with the new society, we cannot afford to abandon the old traditions that have got us this far."

"Thank you very much for being a part of this historic milestone," he said. "When the Rev. W. S. Rainford and his fellow English expatriates founded the league, I am not sure that they envisioned that after all these years their legacy would still be alive. There is a great sense of history and tradition that this league must preserve for generations to come. We must continue our uncompromising commitment of excellence and our adherence to the ideals upon which this venerable association was founded," he said.

During the function they also took time out to honor three stalwarts of the game in the New York area, Denzil R. Powell, Hugh Pitter and Lloyd G. Dixon with Lifetime Achievement Awards and six others Fitzroy I. Hayles, Roy Ricketts, Kharren Thompson, Dempster Duncan, Roan McFarlane and Michael Gordon for outstanding contributions to the league and the sport.