

Sammy gets rousing welcome in Hartford

An overflowing crowd showed up at the Sportmen's Athletic Club on Friday, October 27, to pay respects to Darren Sammy, former captain of the West Indian cricket team. Sammy the only captain to have won World T20 twice was there as the guest of the Connecticut Cricket League (CCL) who was staging their presentation of trophies following the conclusion of their 2017 competitions.

He was accompanied by ESPN representative Alexis Nunes and Richard Berridges, Chief Operating Officer of the St. Kitts-Nevis (SKN) Patriots team who participates in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) tournament. Sammy, who was paying his first visit to the area, had earlier been taken on brief tours of the ESPN facilities in Bristol, Connecticut, and the Cricket Hall of Fame, which was next door to Sportmen's.



Somewhat overwhelmed by the reception that he was getting from the attendees, many of whom wanted to take pictures with him or to get his autograph, the organizers decided to have him respond to questions posed by Kevin Hussain, president of the CCL rather than to have him give a speech.

In his response, he spoke about his involvement with the game and the teams that he played for and a foundation that he has established in his homeland St. Lucia that is geared to help youngsters improve their game. The main purpose of his foundation, he said, was to help the youngsters especially the under-privileged, some who have already received scholarships, to improve their education. Before the end of the function, members of the audience surprised him by coming forward to donate funds to his foundation. He thanked them for their efforts and said that he was glad that he came here.

In regards to the current situation with the West Indies Test team, he said that we need to strengthen our game. We are just not strong enough. Our guys take much longer to mature. We come into Test cricket with less experience than most of the other teams. The talent is there, but we need to be more consistent in our performances.

Stating that she was the only member from the Caribbean on the ESPN team, Nunes said that USA cricket enthusiasts seem to be putting the right structures in place to get the sport moving. Getting it in the schools still has a long road ahead. They need to find a way to get the youngsters involved.

Berridges, whose concentration is in marketing, pointed out that the CPL is a good tournament. However, he said that despite its efforts to stage games in Florida, the U.S. market which is second to that of India is difficult to crack. You need to get the people to develop a passion for the game.