

The "Little Master" joins the other greats

By Stan Walker

Indian cricket legend Sunil Manohar Gavaskar added another notch to his illustrious career when he was inducted into Hartford's Cricket Hall of Fame before an enthusiastic crowd in ceremonies held at the Radisson Hotel, Cromwell, Connecticut(U.S.A.), Saturday, October 5, 2002.



Gavaskar speaking at the 2002 Induction ceremony

The "Little Master" who still holds the record of scoring the most Test centuries and remains the all-time highest Indian Test run-scorer, was given a standing ovation when he was introduced to the crowd. "Although Gavaskar likes to point out that Australian legend Sir Donald Bradman accomplished the Test century fete in a shorter time, Gavaskar did it against some of the fastest bowlers in the world at the time, because the best athletes were not allowed to play the game", Master of Ceremonies Rudolph Cohen, himself a former member of the West Indies Cricket team, praised Gavaskar. "Gavaskar, accumulated more than a quarter of the centuries against the West Indies and brings with him a history which transcends cricket". "We would have welcomed him on the West Indies' team and I am certain that our great fast bowlers would have achieved more if they did not have him to contend with. He is very popular in the West Indies. The people love him. He is devoted to the upliftment and furtherance of the game," Cohen added.



Gavaskar accepting the certificate inducting him into the Hall OF fame

Introducing Gavaskar for the Induction, Ravi Kichannagari , a member of the Hall of Fame said, "He is among the greatest Individuals India has ever produced, one of the greatest sportsman the world has ever seen". Deputy Mayor Veronica Airey-Wilson, decked out in a colorful African attire, in her usual manner shook up the audience with one of her jokes then presented Gavaskar with a proclamation declaring Saturday, October 5, as "Gavaskar's Day" in the city of Hartford.

An overwhelmed Gavaskar said that he felt a little special especially since he was following the great Sir Vivian Richards, whom he described as possibly the greatest batsman during his time, into the Hall of Fame. "To be the first one from India to be inducted into the prestigious halls is very special and makes

me feel very proud," he said.

Today's cricketers are different. They play the game with a 'win-at-all-cost' attitude, Gavaskar said, as he related some of his experiences in the West Indies, where he made his debut, lauding great players like Sir Garfield Sobers and Rohan Kanhai, who although were his opponents, took the time to encourage and guide him while he was out in the middle trying to defy all that the bowlers threw at him. "This was very gratifying and has left a mark on me that makes West Indies cricket very close to my heart," he said.

Local inductee, former chairman of the Connecticut Cricket League, Charles Baker, who lives in New York, was not able to make it because of family commitments. However, he was afforded the honor in his absence for his contribution to the sport in Connecticut and the New York area.

Receiving Presidential Awards were Carole Grayson, popular scorer in Hartford, Ashok Patel, manager of the U.S. Under-13 and Under-15 teams, Naeem Khalid, for generous contributions to cricket in Connecticut and H. R. Shah, for outstanding contribution to the U.S. youth cricket program. Grayson, an American who was introduced to the game in 1982, was recognized for her dedication to the sport both as a scorer and an administrator.

The very entertaining program started with a teenage Indian dance group, Anmol, performing a number of pieces in Gavaskar's honor. Dressed in colorful native costumes, the girls got the crowd in the mood, as they twirled, twisted and shimmyed to music reminiscent to their native culture.

Featured entertainer Trinidadian calypsonian Lord Relator, wowed the crowd with his medley of calypsos, some his own creations and others made famous by other well-known calypsonians. He got the crowd to join in singing the chorus to one that he composed early that morning that paid tribute to ESPN. As expected he closed out his performance with the song "The Wall", which he composed when Gavaskar defied all that the bowlers threw at him during his historic tour of the West Indies. "We could not get him out at all . . . he was just like a wall," the song stated.

Gavaskar, who still manages to command a great deal of popularity wherever he goes, was given a hero's welcome from the moment he set foot in Hartford. The prolific run-getter, who retired from the game in 1987, was met by a host of fans at almost every stop.