First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Daren Ganga

Cricket

Inducted in 2015

Leading from the front is what Daren Ganga does with aplomb, so there is little surprise that his chosen position was as an opening batsman. His is a continuing evolving career within sport, one in which he fulfilled his dream of playing for the West Indies and then used that position to help cultivate a golden era for T&T cricket, as well as give back to his society.

Ganga was born in cricket mad Barrackpore in south Trinidad, where he played club cricket with his uncles and particularly his older brother Sheldon, who represented T&T at the Under-19 level. From the age of 7, Ganga was playing for Rio Claro Vedic School as well as his community Eleven Sports Club, where his batting earned him a reputation as a solid, thinking, player. He was selected for the national Under-13 squad and impressed sufficiently to be made captain of the T&T schoolboy XI that toured England in 1995, the first of many tours during his career.

Ganga scored well on that tour, which put him in line for a place with the T&T senior team, despite him still being a teenager.

In February 1997, at the age of 18, he made his first-class debut against Guyana, with teammates such as Ian Bishop, Brian Lara, and Phil Simmons, scoring 17 & 2 in a drawn match at Queen's Park Oval. Against the same opposition a month later in Georgetown, he opened the innings and registered his first fifty. The following season, Ganga was moved to number 3 in the order and made 68 versus Jamaica at Kingston but then registered very ordinary scores until the last match of the 4-day regional series against Barbados at Guaracara Park, where he came in to bat with T&T tottering at 33 for 3. Ganga played his best innings thus far, scoring 138 to help T&T win the match. When the Windies team was named for its first post-apartheid tour of South Africa later in 1998, Ganga was a surprise choice. He made his debut batting at number 6 in 3rd Test, scoring 28 & 5 and played the remainder of a Test series that the Windies lost 5-0; for Ganga it was a baptism of fire.

He returned to regional cricket in early 1999, scored 92 against Guyana, his only score over fifty for the season. In late 1999, the Windies toured New Zealand and Ganga was selected once more, scoring an impressive 100 not out against Auckland but he was not picked to play in the Tests. The tour meant that he missed most of the regional matches in early 2000 but upon his return to the Caribbean he captained the West Indies under-23 team against the Pakistan first XI, then played for West Indies A against the same opposition, scoring 54 & 63 in a winning effort. Two more 'A' team fifties against South Africa put him back onto the Test

team to tour Australia, where he played 4 Test matches, averaged 13.37, with a best score of 32.

West Indies kept faith with Ganga, selecting him for a tour to Zimbabwe where he achieved his Test breakthrough. Opening the innings with Chris Gayle he scored 89 as he and Gayle put on 214 for the first wicket and the Windies won by an innings. He also did well on the subsequent tour to Kenya, averaging 36 in the One Day Internationals and scoring 105 in the first-class game versus the hosts. His place in the team now more secure, Ganga toured Sri Lanka, making scores of 47 & 33 in the first Test, then 65 against Pakistan. He bolstered these good showings with 40 and 63 in two Tests against Bangladesh, in Bangladesh and returned home to enjoy a full 2003 season playing for T&T – opening with 89 & 111 against Guyana - which was crucial to him getting form for the visiting Australians.

At Georgetown, a duck in the first innings looked ominous for Ganga, but he bounced back in the most unexpected manner, with a superb 113, batting at the coveted number 3 position, with Lara batting at 4 also scoring a century, the pair putting on a 185 partnership. It was almost the same when the pair were at the crease in the 2nd Test at the Queen's Park Oval, Lara scoring 91 and Ganga again making three figures with 117 that had his home crowd on their feet as he stroked 17 fours and 1 six. He had finally stamped his authority at the highest level of the game against the era's best team.

During this period Ganga was made captain of the T&T team and held the view that the team was packed with talented players, yet this was not reflected in their regional results. In the 2004 regional one day

tournament, T&T lost only two matches on their way to the final, where they defeated Guyana and Ganga lifted his first trophy. Under his captaincy they would win three more One Day titles, but it was the four-day tournament, which T&T had not won since 1985, that the nation coveted. In 2006, Ganga was able to deliver; he led from the front, with a career-best 265 against the Leeward Islands, and marshalling his troops with astute decision making to end the 21-year drought. He was a natural choice as T&T Cricketer of the Year 2006.

He toured New Zealand in March 2006, making 95 in the first Test, before returning to the Caribbean for a series against India where his 135 & 66 at St Kitts was a Man of the Match performance. Scores of 82 & 81 in Pakistan solidified his Test opener role in late 2006, capping a good year for Ganga as both a Test player and T&T captain.

He was made the West Indies vice-captain for the 2007 tour to England, making 49 & 31 at Lord's before leading the team in the final two Tests when captain Ramnaresh Sarwan was injured. It was not a happy experience for Ganga, with the Windies losing the four-match series 3-0. The team toured South Africa in late 2007 and his 33 & 45 (top score of the innings) helped the Windies win the first Test, but Ganga struggled in the other two matches, scoring 3 & 11 at Durban in what would turn out to be his last Test match.

The Stanford T20 tournament took place in 2008 and Ganga's professionalism shone like a beacon as T&T took the victory and with it setting the blueprint for over a decade of excellence in the shorter format of the game. The win put T&T into the global T20 Champions League competition in India; again, Ganga was successful in getting the

best out of his team, topping their group, and making it to the final where they lost to New South Wales. The run of matches was instrumental in putting many Trinbagonian players into the international shop window, just as franchise cricket was taking off.

Ganga played until 2011, still the T&T captain; in his final two years he dabbled in some commentary stints but did not consider it a viable career after his playing days were over, given that he had pursued a law degree while playing. However, further requests for commentary came his way and soon he was making the seamless transition from the pitch to the mic and has become a global voice of cricket, fronting the Indian Premier League, Caribbean Premier League and many others as part of his globe-trotting. His analysis of the game – born from his technical ability as both player and captain – is a sought-after commodity for the commentary box.

He also set up the Daren Ganga Foundation, that helps youngsters achieve their full potential through scholarships and support, echoing the community support that Ganga received on his way to the top.

One of the most successful T&T cricket captains, Daren Ganga was awarded the Hummingbird Gold medal in 2007, and was inducted into the T&T Sports Hall of Fame in 2015.

Matches: Test 48 ODI 35 T20 1 First Class 172

Batting: Test 2,160 runs Average 25.71 Hundreds 3 Fifties 9;

ODI 843 runs Average 25.54 Fifties 9; T20 26 runs; First Class 10,137 runs Average 37.13 Hundreds 23 Fifties 48

Bowling: Test Wickets 1 Average 106.00; First Class Wickets 4 Average 83.50

Fielding: Test catches 30; ODI catches 11; First Class catches 112