First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Brian Charles Lara

Cricket

Inducted in 2011

Most batsmen dream of breaking a single world record, this one broke three, with his insatiable appetite for big scores enhanced by his grace and magnificence at the crease. Where others bludgeoned the ball, he caressed it, where others waited on the ball, he danced towards it, finding impossible gaps, destroying coaching manual theories with his high back lift and his weight on the front foot, before executing his elegance and thrilling crowds across the globe.

Brian Lara was a once-in-generation talent, easily at the forefront of any debate of a greatest ever global XI, far less a greatest West Indian XI. Given the rich and elongated history of both, that is some accolade. Hailing from a family of 11 children, the second youngest of the Lara children played football at a high level, representing T&T at the Under-12 level, in a team with future international stars Russell Latapy and Shaka Hislop. He also dabbled in table tennis, but it was always cricket that occupied his mind.

He would set up plant pots into fielding positions and practice piercing the field – a trait that would be the bane of many opposing captains in the future – while batting left-handed, though he is naturally right-handed, because he knew it was more difficult for bowlers.

He enrolled at the Harvard coaching clinic in Port of Spain, while attending St Joseph RC Primary school. His cricket education grew when he attended Fatima College and joined the Queen's Park Oval, which brought him into contact with past Windies player, T&T captain and fellow hall of famer 'Joey' Carew. All these relationships flourished, as did Lara's batting; at the age of 14 he scored 745 runs in school's cricket at an amazing average of 126.16, which earned him selection for the national Under-16 team. By the age of 15 he was representing West Indies at Under-19 cricket.

In 1987 he captained the T&T at the West Indies Youth Championship, leading from the front with 498 runs that included a final-winning 116. The following year he made his first-class debut in the Red Stripe Cup and displayed his class in his second match against Barbados, scoring 92 off the bowling of Malcolm Marshall and Joel Garner. Later in 1988, he captained the West Indies youth squad to a semi-final spot at the Youth World Cup. He finished the year by showing his penchant for big scores with 182 versus India in an Under-23 match.

Lara was made captain of the senior T&T squad in 1990, with immediate success as they won the Geddes Grant Shield, before he was given his Test cap for the 3rd Test in Pakistan, scoring 44 & 5 in a drawn result. He played in ODI series in England and Pakistan, before playing in his first senior World Cup in Australia and scoring 88 in his first match before

having to retire hurt but helping the Windies to a 10-wicket win. He averaged 47.57 for the tournament and returned to Australia later that year to announce himself on the Test stage. 58 & 52 in the first two Tests opened his account and in the 3rd Test at Sydney West Indies were 1-0 down in the series and were 31 for 2 in reply to Australia's score of 503. Lara walked in at number 4, with 48,000 home fans gunning for another wicket. Undeterred, he dispatched the bowlers to all parts of the ground, seemingly on course for Garfield Sobers' immortal world record of 365, until a mix up in the middle of the pitch and he was run out on 277. The Windies drew the match, won the series and Lara continued to raise his profile with good scores versus Pakistan before England toured the Caribbean in 1994.

That year began with Lara in fantastic form, evidenced by his three centuries in the Red Stripe including one double century. 83 in the 1st Test was followed by his second Test ton, 167 in Guyana. His third Test century would be a masterpiece. West Indies were 12 for 2 when Lara took his guard in Antigua, by the end of the day's play he was 164 not out. By the end of day two he was 320 not out; the Caribbean was buzzing, the impossible was about to happen on day three. With Shivnarine Chanderpaul holding up the other end, a short-pitched ball was bowled to Lara, the trademark pull shot that followed taking the ball across the boundary echoed around the world, as Sobers' 36-year-old record was broken. The new record: B C Lara 375

His 1994 form was so good that even after that feat, he could not stop scoring big runs, two weeks after the world record, he began his county cricket career with Warwickshire, scoring 147 on debut, followed by 106,

120, 136 & 140. This amazing sequence was then topped by a majestic and mammoth innings against Durham at Edgbaston. Hanif Mohammed held the 35-year-old world record for the highest first-class score with 499, in June 1994 Lara eclipsed it with 501 not out, off 427 balls with 62 fours and 10 sixes. The name 'Lara' was now in the sporting stratosphere.

An exhaustive season continued as Warwickshire won three trophies out of four, before tours to India & New Zealand (with 147 in Wellington) before Australia toured the Caribbean where Lara averaged 44 but the visitors ended the 15-year unbeaten record of the Windies. In the following tour to England in the summer of 1995, he knocked off 87, 145, 152 & 179, averaging 85.00 for the six Test series.

At the 1996 World Cup he came to the fore in the quarter-final versus South Africa, with 111 as Windies won by 19 runs. 132 on a bouncy Perth pitch was his best score in Australia in early 1997, before an injury to captain Courtney Walsh resulted in Lara leading the team in the 3rd Test against India at Bridgetown, which the Windies won through Lara's cunning. He was officially made captain for the 1998 series versus England in the Caribbean, winning the series 3-1 in dominant style.

When South Africa beat West Indies 5-0 in South Africa, then Australia won the first Test in Port of Spain by a mammoth 312 runs, Lara's captaincy was on the line. He responded in the best possible way, scoring 213 runs as the home team won. Better was to come in the 3rd Test at Bridgetown, a seesawing affair that came down to a nail-biting finish, with Lara at the crease and running out of partners. He rotated the strike, found the gaps, and hit the winning runs. His 153 not out is considered

one of his best innings given the match situation and experts regard it as one of the top three Test matches of all time.

Indifferent form over the next two years resulted in sporadic scoring but he was back to his best on the 2002 tour to Sri Lanka, with 688 runs in three Tests, followed by 110 & 122 against Australia in 2003. It was the forebearer of what was to come a year later when Australian Matthew Hayden eclipsed Lara's Test high score, with 380 against Zimbabwe. In reply, Lara returned to the scene of his first world record ten years prior, the Antigua Recreation ground, and put England to the sword. They were helpless as Lara took 582 balls with 43 fours and 4 sixes, to reclaim the record with 400 not out. The first player to break the record twice, the first to score over 350 twice and the first (and thus far only) to a quadruple Test century.

In September 2004 he led the West Indies to a magnificent against-all-odds victory in the ICC Champions Trophy held in England, one of his finest moments as captain.

When South Africa toured the Caribbean in 2005, Lara scored 196 at Queen's Park Oval followed by 176 in Bridgetown. Later that year in Adelaide, he went past Allan Border's 11,174 runs to become Test cricket's highest scorer. Similarly, in December 2006 he became the first West Indian to go past 10,000 ODI runs.

The 2007 World Cup hosted by the West Indies was his swansong, after his last game he asked the crowd "Did I entertain you?" A rhetorical question. He has become a batting coach for Indian Premier League teams, more involved with his charity – The Pearl & Bunty Lara

Foundation – and does punditry work for broadcasters. He remains an icon across the globe and the 'Prince of Port of Spain' in the Caribbean.

In 1992 he was awarded the Hummingbird Medal (Silver) before being awarded the nation's highest honour, the Trinity Cross in 1994. His club, the Queen's Park Oval, opened the Brian Lara pavilion in 2007 while the Brian Lara Cricket Academy stadium opened in Tarouba in 2017. He has been given the Order of Caricom and the Order of Australia. In 2011, Brian Lara, one of the world's greatest ever batsmen and holder of the highest Test score and highest first-class score, was inducted into the T&T Sports Hall of Fame.

Matches: Test 131 ODI 299 First Class 261

Batting: Test 11,953 runs Average 52.88 Hundreds 34 Fifties 48; ODI 10,405 runs Average 40.48 Hundreds 19 Fifties 63; First Class 22,156 runs Average 51.88 Hundreds 65 Fifties 88

Bowling: ODI Wickets 4 Average 15.25; First Class Wickets 4 Average 104.00

Fielding: Test Catches 164; ODI Catches 120; First Class Catches 320

World Records: Test 400* First Class 501*

Sportsman of the Year: 1993, 1994, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005