First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Sonny Ramadhin

C.M.T.

Cricket

Inducted in 1985

Immortalized in song – *Cricket, Lovely Cricket* by Lord Beginner – as well as the sporting annals with his 'spin twin', Jamaican Alf Valentine, Sonny Ramadhin was the type of bowler who comes along once in several generations. Such was his talent that he was fast-tracked to the very top of cricket having only played two first-class matches. Once there, he simply continued doing what he did best, bamboozle opposing batsmen with unplayable bowling.

Ramadhin was born in Esperance Village in south Trinidad, but lost his parents when he was two years old. Raised by his grandmother, his exposure to cricket in his village was inevitable. "Everyone played cricket, nothing else. We played in the middle of the road with rubber balls."

Upon attending the Canadian Mission School in Duncan Village, he was introduced to the stricter fundamentals of the game, specifically batting which he enjoyed, topping the school averages.

Bowling was not yet part of his game. When he left school at 16 years old he stopped playing cricket for a while before taking on some practice sessions with Palmiste Club where, as the 'new boy', he was well down the pecking order for batting practice. So, the young Ramadhin got involved by bowling in the net sessions.

Without any coaching, through his natural arm action, he found that he could turn the ball from the offside to the legside and vice versa without any discerning change in his arm or body action. For a batsman, it was impossible to read; for a bowler, it was gold.

Palmiste was not at first-class level, but such was Ramadhin's success that coaches within the wider cricket fraternity had heard of him. One scout from the Trinidad Leaseholds team saw Ramadhin bowl and immediately signed him onto his team, while also providing Sonny with a job as a storekeeper. He was very successful for Leaseholds, which in turn promoted the suggestion that he should play in the trial matches to select the 1950 West Indies team to tour England.

The trials constituted two matches against Jamaica on matted pitches. Ramadhin bagged 12 wickets at an average of 19.25 runs. He was on the boat to England and, barely 20 years old, had become the first player of Indian descent to play for the West Indies.

In the 1st Test at Old Trafford, Ramadhin debuted with his trademark sleeves buttoned at the wrist to make it even harder for the batsman trying to read his intended deliveries. A return of 2 wickets for 90 runs and 2 wickets for 77 runs may have been disappointing, as England romped to victory by 202 runs. Sonny was worried that he would not be selected for the 2nd Test at Lord's, but his captain John Goddard knew

the reason that Sonny was on the tour his bowling could be unplayable at the best of times. The match proved to be one of those times. Sonny returned figures of 66 for 5 and 86 for 6. Between him and Valentine they had taken 18 out of the 20 English wickets to win the match. It was the Windies first ever win at the home of cricket.

Ramadhin continued with 7 more wickets in the 3rd Test, and 4 in the 4th and final Test, to help set up the first ever series win in England.

His type of spin bowling was rarely seen, with his off-break spun with the middle finger, and the leg-break spun by the middle and third fingers, thus the lack of change in his action.

On the Windies next tour to Australia, he started with 6 wickets in the 1st Test, but his wicket taking faded during a hard tour with seam-friendly pitches. The Windies lost 4-1.

In the home series versus India and Australia in 1953 and 1954, Ramadhin plugged away with wickets in each match, but his next big innings haul came in New Zealand in 1956 where his 6 for 23 and 3 for 58, as well as 44 runs scored with the bat (his Test high score), set up a victory by an innings and 71 runs.

He took a liking to the New Zealand pitches, taking 5 for 46 in the 2nd Test to help towards another win by an innings, as well as a 3-1 series win.

Back to England in 1957 and Sonny displayed his earlier hold over English batsmen with 7 for 49 in the 1st Test. They then decided to adopt a strategy of padding his bowling from outside the off stump without fear of being given out by the umpire. It meant that in the English 2nd innings

Ramadhin bowled 98 overs, the most by any bowler in a first-class innings and an incredible display of stamina.

Sonny picked up 13 wickets in the 1960 home series versus England, before playing his last series in Australia with 3 wickets from the 2 Tests that he played. He then settled in England, playing with County powerhouse Lancashire before playing in the Minor Counties Championship until 1972.

He was awarded the Hummingbird Gold Medal in 1972 as well as the Chaconia Gold Medal in 1995.

Sonny Ramadhin, one the original cricket mystery spinners, and an integral part of West Indies cricket, was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1985.

Matches: Test 43; First Class 184

Batting: Test 361 runs, Average 8.20; First Class 1,092 runs, Average 8.66

Bowling: Test Wickets 158, Average 28.98; First Class Wickets 758, Average 20.24