First Citizens Sports Foundation

HALL OF FAME



Sydney G. Smith

Cricket

Inducted in 1984

With over 10,000 runs, and 900 runs in first-class cricket, Sydney Smith possesses an enviable record for any cricketer. The man dubbed 'cricket's mystery man' also holds another record, having appeared for three different countries in the same sport.

A left-hand batsman and slow left-arm orthodox bowler and slip fielder, his reputation as an all-rounder grew quickly in his south Trinidad, then around the country in domestic league cricket.

By the age of 18 he was selected for the Trinidad and Tobago team for the much-vaunted Inter-Colonial Tournament of 1899-1900, where his ability to move the balls both ways off the pitch, and his deceptive change of pace, saw him achieve success as a bowler while his batting was still average.

In 1902, after a gap of five years since the last tour, an English team containing many Test players arrived in the Caribbean, and Smith's standing as 'the best amateur bowler in the West Indies' ensured his place.

In the first match at the Queen's Park Oval beginning 20 March 1902, Smith opened his account with a solid 30 runs before showing his bowling craft by taking all the English wickets bar one. His astounding bowling figures were 9 for 34 runs. Clearly taking a liking to his home ground, he followed up with an equally remarkable 7 wickets for 51 runs in the second innings.

When the next English touring team arrived in 1905, Smith was again taking wickets, 3 for 42 and 2 for 30. A year later, he was part of the second ever West Indies team to tour England. The team was not yet granted Test status, but these tours offered exposure to a higher grade of first-class cricket against Test players. Smith started with a bang. By the end of the first eight matches he had true allrounder's stats of having scored over 700 runs and capturing over 50 wickets. He had taken a liking to the English conditions and the English county teams had also taken notice.

Northamptonshire (or 'Northants'), against whom he had taken 12 wickets, offered him a place, but he would have to go through the qualifying process of playing league cricket within the county, though he could play against touring sides. This he did with aplomb, taking 10 wickets versus South Africa in 1907 and scoring 76 while also bagging 9 wickets against a first-class American team, the Philadelphians.

With qualification complete, his was an instant success on the county circuit, achieving the all-rounder's coveted double of a thousand runs and a hundred wickets in his first season. He would go on to achieve this double on two more occasions, 1913 and 1914, and was named a *Wisden* Cricketer of the Year in the latter year. By 1913, he was the county captain.

During these years he returned to the West Indies twice as a touring player, in 1911 and 1913.

When World War 1 began, all first-class cricket was suspended and Smith's illustrious county career came to an end. From 119 matches, he had scored 6,396 runs and taken 502 wickets.

In 1916 he moved to Auckland, New Zealand, and picked up where he left in first-class cricket. In the 1919-20 season he achieved his high score of 256 for Auckland versus Canterbury. In his next match he took 8 wickets for 55 versus Wellington. Having qualified for citizenship, he was a natural selection for the New Zealand national team and played against Australia and the touring Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), representing the Kiwis on five occasions. He retired from first-class cricket in 1926, having attained figures that still see him ranked in the top 10 bowlers on New Zealand's all-time list as well as in the top 20 batsmen list.

He remained in Auckland for the remainder of his life. For his remarkable, consistent cricket performances with career statistics that will forever mark him as a great all-rounder, he was inducted into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame in 1984.

Matches: First Class 211

Bowling: First Class Wickets 955, Average 18.08; Five Wicket Innings: 71; Ten Wicket Matches: 19

Batting: First Class 10,920, Average 31.28, Hundreds 44, Fifties 60