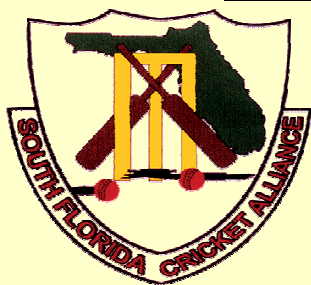


HISTORY OF CRICKET IN SOUTH FLORIDA by Mike Bennett



Despite the popularity of game in the neighboring West Indies, the development of cricket was very limited in Miami and other neighboring communities in South Florida. Playing facilities were few and organized support was lacking for many years.

The Beginning

In the late 1960s migrant cricket lovers, mostly from the Caribbean played friendly games on Sundays in South Shore, Fort Lauderdale and in the Parkway region of Miami Dade. Although the region covers a wide area from Port St. Lucie to the Southern Keys, cricket fans traveled near and far to support of their favorite teams.

In the early 1970s, more teams emerged, and a group of West Indian led by a Jamaican named Linden James, often played against some British sailors from a ship, which usually docks in the Port of Miami on a monthly basis. One legendary player of South Florida's cricket recalled that in those days, cricket lovers visited the parks with families and their picnic baskets, enjoying the festive atmosphere of the games.

Names such as Earl White of Parkway and Joseph Fisher of South Shore are now described as the true pioneers of South Florida's cricket. There was an increasing demand for more competition in the middle 1970s, as more talented players got involved with the games.

Birth of SFCA

Organizers Eric Allen and Linden James mobilized about eight teams to play in the Sunday competition. South Florida Cricket Association (SFCA) was then formed to monitor the competition, which runs from May to November and now all year from January to December culminating with the Annual Awards Banquet.

The famous West Indies Miami cricket team of South Miami featured most of the top players including Lloyd Dyer, Michael Leslie, former West Indies great, Lance Gibbs and skipper Lloyd Rambaransingh.

Islanders cricket team had Calbert Minot, Freddy Marcus and Alvin (Banker) Williams, while Errol Benn, Elton Tucker, were the stars from the north.

SFCA growth

In the early 1980s a number of outstanding players from the Caribbean entered SFCA. Among them were Hylton Gordon, Trevor Henry, Paul Bryan, Earl Melbourne, Errol Peart, Jeff Miller, Timor Mohamed and Lall Munilall.

SFCA then became a member of the United States of America Cricket Association (USACA) and dominated their Central Florida counterpart. The team became one of the strongest in the USA, while touring places like Texas, Free Port, Nassau, California and New York.

At the turn of the 1990s, prominent USA National Team representatives Kenrick Dennis, Nasir (Charlie) Javed, Charles (Tony) Reid, Mark Johnson and USA National Team captain, Raymond Denny made SFCA a much stronger force, attracting more outside teams.

A few years ago, a team led by former West Indies legends Gordon Greenidge and Desmond Haynes visited South Florida, with the great Lawrence Row representing the regional team. Meanwhile, clubs like International, Osswald Park and Caribbean United dominated the domestic competitions. Most players on these teams are often over 30 years, but still play at a very high level, while younger players like Shane Ford and Laurence (Larry) Crichton of division one champions, West Indies, and Masood Mohamed of Sportsman are undoubtedly three of the best players in the in the USA.

For a many years, SFCA remained the only organized cricket league covering the Miami Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties, and at one time, thirty six teams were competing, twenty four in division two and twelve in division one. However, a few ago, eight teams migrated to the newly formed Florida Southeast Cricket League in the Broward area.

Despite the setback, SFCA retained most of the top players and continued to participate at a very high level which attracted most of the cricket fans.

The administrators of SFCA have tried their best to promote the game for many years, but the lack of proper playing facilities limited the improvement of the game. The use of the school grounds, have brought much uncertainty to the game, since these facilities are becoming limited. Former president Lloyd Rambaransingh who served for eight years, managed to



Rambaransingh

bring much excitement to the domestic competition and was even successful to host the USA trials for the team that visited Malaysia.

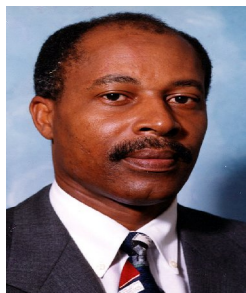
During that era, support from local businesses and political forces had been extremely limited over the years, but the situation improved as the years go by.

Bright Future

South Florida Cricket took on a new look in recent years, as Jeff Miller who first became president in 1999 tried very hard to lure sponsors to assist with the sport in the region.

His efforts only lasted for two years as Patrick Samuels replaced him as president.

Mr. Samuels and his committee tried their best to continue to improve the standard of cricket, but after tremendous effort for two years Jeff Miller was voted in for the second time as president.



Samuels

Mr. Miller with much experience as a player and administrator in South Florida cricket seems to be more fortunate in his recent attempts to attract sponsorship and political support towards the sports, especially with SFCA having recently attained the IRS 501(c)(4) non-profit tax exempt status.

The league has improved in its magazine advertising, while contacts with the local newspapers and sports radio have vastly improved.

Miller's administration who had previously secured the Trade Winds Park cricket ground from contacts with the Broward County Parks administration, has now developed strong ties with the City of Lauderhill and surrounding cities like Miramar and North Miami.



Miller

SFCA now secures the use of the Lauderhill Sports Park where most Finals are played and also the use of two top class cricket grounds at the Miramar Regional Park in Southwest Broward.

Competitions

While SFCA is trying to attract more outside teams, the improvement of the standard of play still remains a priority.

The major competition in the region is the Classic, formerly known as the Shell Shield until a few years ago. It starts in January and ends in April.

Players in the competition are from prominent cricket playing nations who reside in the region, while some teams sometimes have top visiting players. The teams include India, Pakistan, Barbados, Guyana, Windward Islands, Leeward Island, Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and USA.

The USA team is a combination of the many different nationalities living in the region. The most dominant teams in the Classic are Jamaica and

Barbados but teams like India and the USA have vastly improved.



The regular 45 Over and 20/20 competitions are also played on Sundays and include twenty four teams divided in two divisions. For the past two years, the top eight teams have been competing in the Premier Division, while the other sixteen teams are split in two zones while competing in Division One. There is also the recently formed Legends competition which is played on Saturdays, involving six teams with players over forty five years old.

SFCA has launched an Under Twenty Five Youth Program with more than thirty young players including teenagers. Some of these players are presently representing SFCA and also the Southeast Regional youth and senior teams.

With its close proximity to the tropics, South Florida has magnificent climate, which allows cricket to be played for many months without the interruption of bad weather for cricket. SFCA now plays cricket throughout the year with just a few weeks break.

Presently, more and more interest groups are exploring the possibilities to promote games in the region. Sponsors are more willing to be identified with SFCA and its cricket development. If the present trend continues, SFCA will no doubt be the most attractive league with the best available facilities, now that a multipurpose regional park with a cricket stadium is being built in the City of Lauderhill in Broward County.

Appreciation

Despite the new signs of improvement, SFCA still hopes more playing facilities can be obtained to accommodate teams without home grounds.

In the meantime, the league and its members appreciate the help from all the sponsors, community groups, cities, counties and the media who have been helping over the years.