

The Past Cricketers' Society of Trinidad & Tobago

PRESS RELEASE

30 SEPTEMBER 2020

TRIBUTE TO: SHELDON "SHELLY" ANTHONY GOMES

The Past Cricketers Society wishes to take this opportunity to express our condolences to the family of the late Sheldon "Shelly" Anthony Gomes, who met his untimely death on 15 September 2020 at the age of 69. Shelly, a true son of the soil of the Borough of Arima, was a member of one of the most iconic sporting families to adorn our national landscape. All 5 brothers, Shelly, Larry, Lester, Gregory and Randy represented North/East with distinction in the Wes Hall Under 19 Youth Cricket League. Shelly, Larry and Randy went on to represent Trinidad and Tobago at the National Under 19 level; with Shelly and Larry going on to play for the National senior team; Larry eventually becoming a West Indian Legend. Not to be outdone, his 5 sisters went on to pursue careers in banking, business and in the airline industry.

In his teenage years the dashing, young, talented Sheldon excelled at both Cricket and Football for Holy Cross College, eventually securing an Athletics scholarship to Queen's Royal College in 1967. In assisting QRC to win the Colleges League for 2 years straight, he scored 37 goals for QRC in the 1967/1968 and was one of the 5 national footballers of the year; scoring 23 goals the following year. Remarkably he was not one-dimensional. In 1968, while still playing for QRC, he scored centuries against Queen's Park, Essex, Regiment, Maple and Shannon, tallying 632 runs, compared to the talismanic Joey Carew's 637. He was named sportsman of the year at QRC and one of the 5 national cricketers of the year for 1968.

Being selected for the National senior team in 1969 brought Sheldon instant fame and notoriety. Scoring ducks in his first 3 innings, Sheldon became the butt of many a joke. But everyone knew he could only get better. Kept on the team because of his fielding prowess, he eventually became a fixture. He scored consistently; topped the regional batting averages in 1976; compiled 5 first-class centuries in 1977 including: 213 versus Jamaica; 126 against Barbados; 112 versus Guyana; 100 versus South; he also made 88 against the touring Indians. Oddly enough, believe it or not, his performance in 1977 was viewed by the West Indian selectors as not meriting selection for the West Indies tour to India even though our Senior players were contracted to play in the Kerry Packer series in Australia. Ranked among the best West Indian fieldsmen, his services were in constant demand by West Indies Test Captains as an emergency fieldsmen. Whether he was patrolling the covers or taking up the most feared position at short leg, his low centre of gravity, quickness, bravery, instinctive reflexes, fitness and superb wrist and shoulder strength meant that no half-chance went a-begging.

He closed his 15-year club and 14-year regional Cricket career in 1983 at the tender age of 32 after which he migrated to New York, USA where he continued to play recreationally and conducted coaching programs. He played 55 first-class matches: scored 2645 run, including 5 centuries and 15 half-centuries, with an average of 32.65 and taking 48 catches in the process.

Sheldon was by far the quintessential cricketer. He must have had instilled in him from the very tender age that cricket was a gentleman's game. He never failed to live up to that ideal. Sheldon was soft-spoken, shy, a thinker of the game and never harboured ill-feelings towards anyone. His advice, honed by countless years of experience, was always constructive. I recall coming back from university and playing in the national trials for the first time. Shelly, who was in the winter of his regional career, and I had seen off the main bowlers and the other side brought on a part-time bowler. I was eager and excited to get some free runs. Shelly came down to me and gave me the following sagely advice: "Don't beat him out of the attack. Let us milk him and we can add another 20 or 30 runs on the board." That advice is as relevant now as it was then.

Our Society has since 2013 been honouring cricketers, umpires and administrators (both past and present) for their outstanding contribution to the game. In 2017 we had the privilege of recognising Sheldon for his outstanding contribution to local and national cricket and development in an event held in his hometown of Arima. We truly believe you deserve the highest accolades. We mourn your passing and shed tears at your untimely death. On behalf of The Past Cricketers Society, many of whose members consider you a friend, I express our deepest condolences to the Gomes' family. May you rest in Eternal Peace.

Justice Prakash Moosai

Chairman

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