

# Queens Royal College 1967-68 Teammates Tribute to Sheldon Anthony Gomes



**We all join to give thanks for the life and wonderful times with our truly gifted, talented, friend, brother and teammate, as we bid farewell to Sheldon Anthony Gomes.**

When news of the passing of Sheldon Gomes was received on Wednesday 15th September 2020, all our tightly bonded Queens Royal College cricket and football teammates of the late 1960's shed a silent tear.

Having received the directive for our former Vice Captain, Rolph Clarke, "*You have to do a tribute on our behalf for our brother to Shelly and convey condolences to the Gomes family.*" With his communication as sharp and swift as one of his famous football true-passes from midfield into the penalty box, that Shelly and anyone of us, as forwards, would immediately run unto, to finish with a goal in fine style and celebration, I here proceed with the zeal of our young College days more than fifty years ago. Just ask some of the fellow forwards, Garnett Harris, Earl Best, Neil or Larry Springer of that time.

I therefore immediately wish to extend condolences to the entire warmly knitted Gomes family, to Sheldon's wife, children and grandchildren and we pray that big sister Dianne and the girls and brother Larry and the boys, would be strengthened during this difficult time of mourning.

Sheldon Gomes was born in Arima on October 18<sup>th</sup> 1950, the second son of Mr. and Mrs. Gomes, Pa Cecil Gomes and Mom Kimlan. His four brothers Lester, Larry, Gregory and Randy all played sport and the girls, all five, were very supportive.

In the closely knitted Pro Queen Street "family" the boys all literally walked across the road to the savannah where with Pa Cecil, and several youngsters they became proficient at all sports.

Apart from the Armstrong family on the street, their close neighbours were, Brian and Brendon Bain and family, sons of former international cricket umpire Mr. Charles Z. Bain and Gordon Draper and family, son of community and sports administrator Mr. Eustace Draper.

Sheldon and the boys attended Holy Cross College in Arima, where the well laid foundation was further developed, by young teachers Mr. Jerry Hospedales, Mr. Ian Barnes and Mr. Ewart Williams who joined the staff around 1963. Sheldon Gomes and were students in

the English and Latin class of Mr. Ewart Williams's who was also the sports master and Sheldon and Elvin were the football and cricket teams. Elvin Edwards who also an excellent cricketer who went on to play cricket at the highest level. The young talented Larry Gomes also joined the Holy Cross College team under Mr. Williams. So impressed was Mr. Williams with Sheldon that he named his son Sheldon. Dr. Ewart Williams went on to the Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sheldon's neighbours, Brian Bain, Brendon Bain and Gordon Draper all attended Queens Royal College and Sheldon also followed in their footsteps to attend Queens Royal College and to represent the College with distinction at both cricket and football which Sheldon did on the 1967 and 1968 teams.

As teammates we had the honour, pleasure and responsibility, to welcome Sheldon into the QRC family and to witness his outstanding skill and ability, and to admire the warmth of his humility. He immediately began the rigours of the football and cricket training sessions which he undertook well and delivered on the expectations.

At football, Sheldon was an excellent header of the ball who, in spite of his 5'5 feet frame defied gravity from a standing position with minimal effort and made good height. He was a deadly striker who turned sharply and apart from lethal headers, he had powerful shot with both feet.

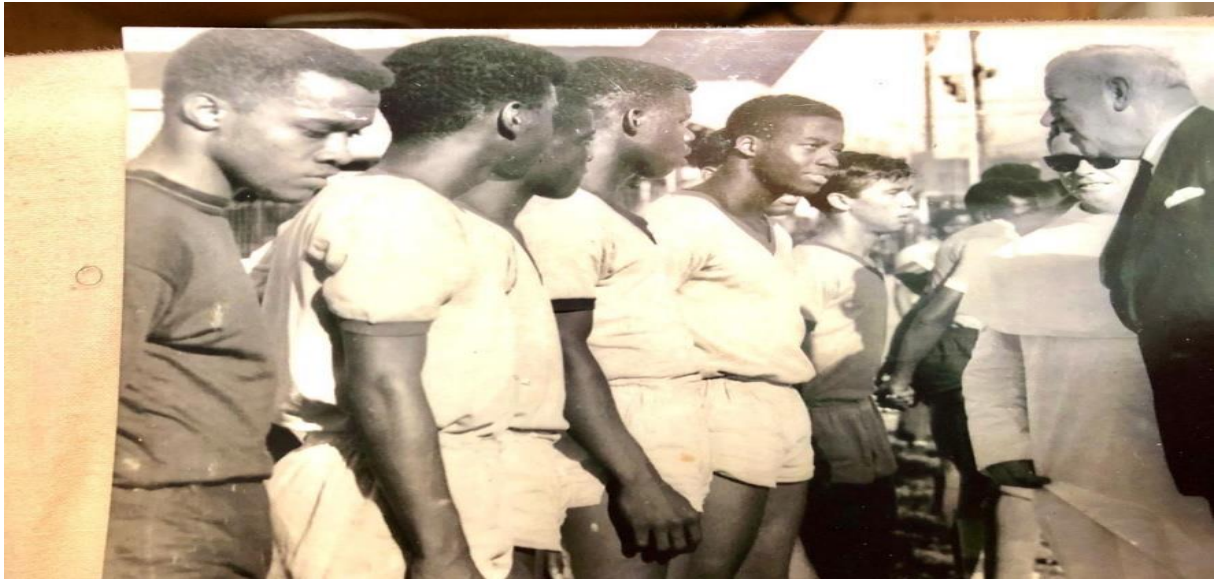
His quick sharp speed and his ability to read the game made him an excellent footballer. How well I recall when taking corners or hitting the ball from either wing, I would call to him "S. Gomes" and his response when in position was - "S. Browne". The other "S" on the team was Stephen Gomez.



The "Three S's" - Selby Browne, Stephen Gomez, Sheldon Gomes.

In the 1967 season QRC was crowned North Colleges champions which we thoroughly enjoyed, taunting opponents demonstrating some of the Brazilian World Cup team, 1966 dribbling and entertaining style of play. Ian Jeffers was our captain with other players; Brian Bain, Terry Thornhill, Stephen Gomez, Andre Pollard - goalkeepers, Roger Mathew, Reynold Mc Kenzie, Raymond Borel, Kenley Rudder, Anthony Halfhide - defenders, Rolph Clarke, Jesse Blackman, Neil Springer - midfield, Garnett Harris, Selby Browne, Earl Best, Patrick Rabathally, Larry Springer and the nippy Sheldon Gomes - forwards. We all made it our duty to protect Sheldon who was repeatedly targeted.

In December 1967 the FIFA President, Sir Stanley Rous visited Trinidad and Tobago and met the QRC team prior to the start of a match against St. Benedict's College at Skinner Park. (See picture below)



Left: Terry Thornhill, Neil Springer, Selby Browne, Reynold Mc Kenzie, Roger Mathews and Sheldon Gomes.

How well I remember the opening match of the Colleges Football League 1968 season was on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September 1968. Our QRC 1968 team met the St. Benedict's team in that match at the Queens Park Oval. St. Benedict's was the National League and Knockout winners of the 1967 season and QRC was the North Champions. QRC won the opening match and did not lose a match in the League that year, setting record victories in the Colleges Football League defeating Naparima College 18-0 and ASJA 21-0, back in that season. (*We called those table tennis scores*) That year we also defeated St. Benedict's at their La Romain home ground 2-1 coming from one down.

QRC won the Colleges Football League in 1968, with the record of one match loss in the InterCol that season to a team we defeated 4-0 one week before. Our captain was Roger Mathew, with Stephen Gomez, Barry Amaroso, Patrick Wilkinson – goalkeepers, Reynold Mc Kenzie, Kenley Rudder - defenders, Rolph Clarke, Neil Springer, Jessie Blackman - midfield, Selby Browne, Earl Best, and Sheldon Gomes - forwards, along with several others.

Sheldon was our outstanding goal scorer and at the presentation ceremony of the Colleges Football League, we all agreed that he would receive the Colleges Football League "Most Team Goals Trophy" while our captain Roger Mathew received the Colleges Football League "Winners Trophy" for the hugely successful QRC season record.

The chorus of the celebration song was: "*Ah boomerack, ah boomerack, who are we, we are the boys of QRC.*" This emphatic League victory was certainly more cherished than that of the Fatima College team winning the National InterCol in 1965.

After that outstanding season, we were quite sure Sheldon had scored the most goals in that season, setting a record. In QRC it was certain that Sheldon and several of us as QRC players who were selected to represent the North Colleges League team would be called to the Trinidad and Tobago National Football team, but alas, that was not to be. Sports Master Mr. Horace Springer, (Uncle H) simply said: "*Leave the bunch of Jokers - they would never have the opportunity to select those for Heaven*"

We relied on valuing our fond memories of representing QRC at the Football Opening Season matches in the Community Leagues, at Carenage and Diego Martin in particular, and when several members of our QRC team travelled to Arima to play for Sheldon's club in the Arima Football League and to Tacarigua to play for our club, "Upstarts" in the Eddie Hart League. Those were the wonderful days fully enjoyed as young men.

As QRC cricket teammates, Sheldon would score a century on any given Saturday afternoon. At that time, we played against the adult teams like Maple, Crompton, Shannon, Paragon and Queens Park Club.



Apart from his excellent batting prowess Sheldon was exceptional fielding close up or in the covers where his knowledge, anticipation, quick movement and safe pair of hands, made it difficult for batsmen to score runs freely. After fielding in a cricket match, we would tell him he was going to bat with a plus of fifty runs. To which his response was, *"I would only make the runs if I bat well"*.

Earl Best was our cricket captain and the 1967 team included; Ronald Navarro, Selby Browne, Clifford Murray, Garnett Harris, Anthony Lewis, Roger Mathew, Rolph Clarke, Reynold Mc Kenzie, Andre Pollard, Stephen Gomez and several others. Here is Earl Best leading our team onto the field at the Queens Park Oval.



Sheldon went on to represent Trinidad and Tobago while at College and was selected to the West Indies cricket team. His younger brother Larry was also selected to both the Trinidad and Tobago and West Indies teams.



**Larry Angelo Gomes and Sheldon Anthony Gomes - Former West Indies cricketers.**

After leaving College, I recall while Sheldon represented Trinidad and Tobago against Jamaica in Jamaica, he registered his highest cricket score with an innings of 213 runs.

In Sheldon's early batting start for the Trinidad and Tobago national cricket team, he encountered a most unfortunate challenge, with being out without scoring on more than one occasion. We were all devastated and several of us reached out to him which we knew he would have immediately done if it was one of us. His usual smile and acceptance were there but we knew he was hurting.

The opportunity arose for me to remind him that in one of our practise sessions at the cricket nets while at College, our coaches Lennie Kirton, Gervais Hannays and Rex Dewhurst, pointed out that he was bringing the bat from the direction of third-man and that action offered one point of contact, which with his quick eye sight and excellent timing proved okay. They also stated that Sheldon should focus on bringing the bat from directly behind the straight line of the ball in the event that he would face a genuine quick bowler with a pace quicker than quick he would at worst play the ball into the pitch. With a smile he acknowledged the reminder and the rest was history. Good History.

I have always equated the brothers Sheldon and Larry Gomes to Vivian and Mervyn Richards, all with tremendous talent at both cricket and football. Viv and Larry going onto become established names in World cricket, with the fullest support of their equally gifted brothers Sheldon and Mervyn.

It was quite easy to compare and confirm that both sets of brothers held equal admiration for each other, for while I worked with the Redifussion Group, with office at 11b Maraval Road, I travelled throughout the Caribbean from my base in Castries, St. Lucia during the 1970's, and apart from playing football in the Barbados and St. Lucia Leagues, I also played in Antigua with Vivian and Mervyn Richards, for the Antigua Superstars club comprised of past Antigua Grammar School past students. The team also included both Viv's brothers in law, the twin, Willy and Ashby Lewis.



**The Antigua Grammar School Football team with Viv, Mervyn, Willy and Ashby  
Captain Danny Oliver**

In 2008 at the 40th Anniversary celebration for the historic QRC 1968 team that won the Colleges Football League, we all thanked Sheldon for his enormous contribution as we reminisced on the great days. (See picture below)



We the members of the QRC 1967 and 1968 cricket and football teams express our sincere thanks to Sheldon, for the tremendous success he brought to our College cricket and football teams. What wonderful enjoyable days with our dear friend and brother.

We all agree and confirm Sheldon was strong in his belief and faith in God, which he displayed in his daily life, with his humility and giving soul, his commitment and dedication to all. S. Gomes was an honest, decent hard-working fellow, with whom we played to the fullest to win.

We express our thanks to the entire Gomes family, for sharing his treasured gifts and the warmth of his spirit with us at Queens Royal College and as we bid farewell, we prayer that his soul would have eternal Rest In Peace.

by  
Selby Browne