

Cricket World Cup 1975 by Frasat Ali

The first international cricket match played in Kenya was in 1951. This was against Tanzania, then known as Tanganyika. This was followed by a match against Natal, South Africa. Due to the fact that some international teams appeared keen to visit and play against Kenya, the Kenya Cricket Association was formed in 1953. Famous partisan clubs, such as Sir Ali Muslims, Sikh Union, Indian Gymkhana, Patel Club etc., had already been founded and we had the privilege of watching and imitating the styles of the great players, be it cricket, hockey, football, volleyball and even free style wrestling...yes wrestling!!! Club cricket in Kenya was mainly played between clubs on a friendly basis and in 1964 limited overs competition was introduced. The matches were played on a knock-out basis and maximum numbers of overs per innings was 60. Bowlers were limited to 12 overs each. Like most Punjabi Muslims, I also wanted to play for Sir Ali Muslims - at the time perhaps the strongest side around. I became a regular first team player in 1967. In 1975, International Cricket Council introduced the World Cricket Cup, to be played between 7th and 21st June. As there would be 2 Groups and at the time only six test playing teams, two teams from Associate Members - Sri Lanka (were not a test playing team at the time) plus East Africa were invited to participate. For East Africa to select a side it was decided to hold a quadrangle tournament. After having played round robins matches, Kenya emerged as the winners. The squad was then streamlined to 2 teams and I was selected for the 2nd team. Not only did the 2nd team win but with Allah's blessings I scored 120 not out and secured my place.



The other members of the squad were Harilal Shah (Captain), Jawahir Shah, Don Pringle, Ramesh Sethi, Zulifiqar Ali and Mehmood Quraishy from Kenya, Praful Mehta and Shiraz Summar from Tanzania, Sam Walusimbhi and John Nagenda from Uganda and Yonus Badat, P.G.Nana and Hamish Macloed from Zambia. The Manager was Jasmir Singh. We had about 4 months to prepare for the tour, but the biggest set back was that we had to get used to grass wickets. The only club which had a turf wicket was Nairobi Gymkhana. As bowlers we had to get used to wearing studs, which none of us had hitherto. We were to be kitted out in England. In Kenya, for preparation, occasionally we would get together and have our nets and train. We even had the pitches reduced in size so that we could get used to the faster bowlers that we would have to face. Although it made a difference in reaction time, it would have been beneficial to have had a bowling machine. The squad assembled in Nairobi a week before departure and during this time different combinations were tried by playing local selected teams.



A great reception was prepared in our honour prior to departure and as this was my first trip to the UK, everything was fascinating. We were given a brilliant, indescribable departure from the press, friends, families and well-wishers. Upon arrival at Heathrow we were received by the ICC representatives and the press. I knew then that this was going to be something we had never experienced before. It was heart-warming to see old friends that had come to receive and welcome us. From the airport we had to leave for Birmingham in a luxury coach. I was travelling on the M1 for the first time, the experience was overwhelming. We were accommodated at the Airport Hilton on the A 45. Edwards of Swansea kitted us individually while cricket bats and gloves were sponsored by Stuart Surridge. The bowling and batting shoes plus other items of the kit were sponsored by Cheetah sports. The uniform and cricket wear came from ICC and this was the first time in my life that I had my own personal kit. The following morning we had our nets at Edgbaston and were lucky to watch Warwickshire play Nottingham. After further nets in the afternoon it was back to the hotel. Over the next few days we had some friendly matches, in order to get used to English conditions. One memorable match was against Somerset, led by Brian Close and included the young Sirs Ian Botham and Vivian Richards, later to become legends in world cricket. We also played against Glamorgan and Combined Universities. On 6th June we had the honour to meet her Majesty, The Queen, at Buckingham Palace and enjoy a Garden Tea Party. It was a great experience to rub shoulders with the greats of World cricket. We were then rushed to Lord's - the home of cricket - for The Queen to officially open the First Cricket World Cup. This was certainly the most memorable day of the tour and my life. We left the same day for Birmingham as we had our first game the next day. On arrival at Edgbaston for the match, I had my first experience of autograph hunters that were eagerly waiting for the arrival of the New Zealand and our coaches. New Zealand batted first and scored 309 -5 of which Glenn Turner smashed a staggering 171 not out. We could only manage 128-8. Sir Richard Hadlee bowled superbly 12 - 6 - 0 - 10, whilst his brother Dale Hadlee picked up 3 wickets



The other group match between England and India was a disaster. England scored 334-4 and India could only manage 132-3. A very slow rate. The culprit for the slow batting was Sunil Gavaskar, who

batted 60 overs, for 34 runs. Now that's test match batting!!! On the 11th, we played against India at Headingley, a very historical ground. We batted first and could only manage to score 120 all out in 55.3 overs. Madan Lal did the damage with figures of 9.3 - 2 -15- 3. Bishan Singh Bedi had figures of 12 - 8 - 6 - 1. No wonder he was considered as one of the best left arm spinners in the World. India knocked these runs off in 29.5 overs....India were just too good for us. Our next and last match was with England on the 14th at Edgbaston. England batted first and scored 290-5 in their 60 overs. We were bowled out for just 94 runs.....John Snow did the damage by picking up 5 wickets.. As we were now officially out of the competition, we went to watch the W.Indies vs New Zealand. New Zealand could only manage 158 all out. West Indies scored these runs for the loss of 5 wickets. The other semi-final between England and

Australia was a one sided affair; England scored 93 all out and Australia in reply 94-6. It was a consolation for us to see that we were not the team with lowest total. 21st. June was the finals at the Lord's cricket ground. What a colourful site it was!!! It was a full house.!!! West Indies batted first and were soon in trouble at 50-3....., but finished up scoring 291-8..., thanks to Clive Lloyd who scored 102, Rohan Kanhai 55 and K. Boyce 34. Australia at one time were cruising to victory, but some great fielding by the West Indians turned the game around. Australia scored 274 all out... with 4 run outs.Hence West Indies won the First World cup by 17 runs. After the World cup finished, we did stay to honour our other fixtures around the country. We played against a Wales side at Cardiff, had a 3 day game against Sri Lanka and our final game was in Denmark, before we left for home. We were surprised to see how serious the Danes were with their cricket. The whole city was looking forward to this fixture. They had advertised it all over the city.... They were great hosts, and we really enjoyed our short stay in Denmark. Thus ended the Summer of 1975, full of great memories..., once in a life time opportunity to play in the World cup ... A learning experience and a great help in developing us to become better players.???