

An Enjoyable Cricket Match

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As a part of the Centenary Celebrations, a cricket match was played on 26th November, 1966, between two teams called the Chief Justice of India's XI and the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court's XI. Doubts had been expressed whether a cricket match was a suitable form in which the JOY felt on the occasion of the Centenary Celebrations of an august institution, such as the High Court of Allahabad, should be expressed. Some members of the Centenary Celebrations' Committee were strongly of opinion that the occasion was too grave and solemn to permit exhibition of such hilarity and light-heartedness as a "festival" cricket match meant. They also thought that the limited time at our disposal, when foreign jurists and judicial dignitaries were to visit Allahabad, could be better utilised. Others thought that a short interlude of good healthy sport and some merriment would not be unbecoming on an occasion of jubilation. Finally, the latter view prevailed when Mr. Justice Katju informed the Centenary Celebrations Committee that the Chief Justice of India, Mr. K. Subbarao, had assented to a proposal for such a match when he had discussed it with him in Delhi in August, 1966. After that, a sub-committee was formed to arrange the cricket match which was to be followed by a lunch to be given to the players and the guests to be invited by the Cricket Sub-committee. The Sub-committee consisted of the following members:

1. Mr. Nasirullah beg, Chief Justice
2. Mr. Justice S.N. Katju.
3. Mr. Justice Hameedullah Beg, (Convener).
4. Sri K. L. Misra, Advocate-General.
5. Sri Lakshmi Saran, Advocate.
6. Sri Amitav Banerji, Advocate.
7. Sri A. N. Verma, Advocate.
8. Sri P. N. Katju, Advocate.
9. Sri I. A. Abbasi, Advocate, Lucknow.
10. Sri S. L. Puri, Advocate, Lucknow.
11. Sri B. N. Sapru, Advocate.
12. Sri T. N. Sapru, Advocate.
13. Sri K. B. L. Gaur, Advocate.
14. Sri L. P. Naithani, Advocate.
15. Sri V. K. Burman, Advocate.

It may be mentioned that the prospects of holding a cricket match, as part of the Centenary Celebrations, dimmed considerably when the Chief Justice of India, Mr. K. Subbarao, wrote to Convener of the Sub-Committee, in response to a request for permission to form the Chief Justice of India's team that was not in favour of associating his official designation with one of the two teams, and that, in any case, such an event did not appear to him to be in keeping with the solemnity and dignity of occasion. The Chief Justice of India was then reminded of previous talk in August, 1966, with Mr. Justice S. N. Katju had come back with the impression that the Chief Justice of India approved the suggestion to play such a match. The Secretary of the Centenary Celebrations Committee, Mr. Justice S. N. Katju, who had been a keen cricketer and had captained his University XI during his student days as well as Mr. Justice M. H. Beg, the Convener of the Cricket Sub-Committee, who had played cricket in India and in England, had both to write several times explaining the position before they could secure the consent of the Chief Justice of India to holding the proposed cricket match.

It was decided by the Cricket Sub-Committee to let each side bat for 20 overs only so that the cricket match did not take more than one hour. The event which took place on the Government Press Ground, near the High Court, between 11.30 a. m. and 12.30 p. m., on 26th November, 1966, in bright sunshine was described by those who attended it as perhaps the most delightful part of the Centenary Celebrations. It could not be played on the High Court's own grounds which were already occupied by the huge Pandal in which other functions of the Centenary were held.

At the match, it was not only the attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, of elderly Advocates and Judges to bowl the ball at the wickets, or the batsmen's attempts, after the ball had been discharged by the bowler, to, punish, or, at least, to hit the ball, or some of the extraordinarily good and successful examples of fielding given by elderly fielders like the Chief Justice Mr. Janki Nath Wazir of Kashmir and the Law Minister of U. P., Mr. Syed Ali Zaheer, which delighted the spectators. Each time a batsman went out to bat or a batsman came back to the gaily decorated Shamiana in which spectators sat, the Military band, which was in attendance, played a martial tune. This added to the splendour of the occasion. And, what followed the match was no less interesting and enjoyable.

The prize distribution by Smt. K. Subbarao, after the match, was preceded by a short introductory speech by Mr. Justice Hameedullah Beg, the Convener of the Cricket Sub-Committee. Mr. Justice S. N. Katju, the Secretary of the Centenary Celebrations Committee, Mr. Justice D. S. Mathur, the Captain of the Chief Justice of India's XI and Mr. K. L. Misra, the Advocate-General, spoke at the end of the prize distribution thanking Smt. K. Subbarao and the Chief Justice of India and other guests.

Lakshmi Saran, the writer of this article and the Secretary of a permanent cricket committee at the High Court, who has been associated with the birth and growth of interest in playing cricket at the Allahabad High Court, together with the institution of lunches which invariably followed the matches, gave an account of how interest on the part of the lawyers and Judges in playing cricket was aroused as part of jubilation planned for the first Republic Day celebrated after the advent of our republic. He mentioned how a cup had been donated as a result

of contributions made by Mr. G. S. Pathak, Advocate, the late Mr. S. N. Verma, Advocate, and the writer himself, for the purpose of keeping alive the memory of the late Mr. Justice S. N. Seth, who was very interested in cricket, and who, unfortunately, died on 26th January, 1951, while a cricket match was being played. A cup was also donated by Chief Justice O. H. Mootham, the last British Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court, for the purpose of encouraging interest in cricket, an essentially British Game.

It was explained by Mr. Justice Hameedullah Beg, the Convener of the Cricket Sub-Committee, that the word "cricket", in the English language, stood for propriety, fair-play, and elegance, and that these qualities were very dear to lawyers and Judges so that a game of cricket could be considered as a particularly happy and suitable medium for expressing our joy on the occasion of the High Court Centenary Celebrations. In the Court, just as on the cricket field, there were attempts by each side to bowl the other, to ward off the attack, and to score fairly and justly over the other. In the Court just as on the cricket field, victory as well as defeat had to be accepted gracefully.

The writer, Lakshmi Saran, announced the awards of various prizes. It may be mentioned that among the prizes announced by him was a silver medal presented to the Chief Justice of India "for having agreed that the match should be played", as Lakshmi Saran put it. Another silver medal, whose award was announced by Lakshmi Saran, was for Mr. M. C. Setalvad "for having found time to watch the match". Mr. Justice S. N. Katju, the Captain of the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court's XI, being the highest scorer, got the batting prize. Mr. K. L. Misra, the Advocate-General, was awarded the bowling prize, "for having enabled Mr. Justice Katju to put up the highest score". Mr. Ali Zahir was awarded the fielding prize for having proved to be "the greatest obstruction to the ball". Each of the players, who included the Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Janki Nath Wazir, and the Chief Justice of Assam, Mr. Gopalji Mehrotra was awarded a commemoration silver medal. In addition, commemoration silver medals were awarded to a number of spectators including Mr. Justice K. N. Wanchoo, and Mr. Justice V. Bhargava of the Supreme Court of India, and the Lord President of the Supreme Court of Malaysia, Mr. Justice Ong of the Supreme Court of Malaysia, the Chief Justice of Nepal, Mr. Justice Singh of Nepal, and Mr. N. C. Chatterji, Advocate of the Supreme Court of India. Appropriate comments were made by the writer at the time of the award of each prize.

It may be mentioned that Lakshmi Saran, at the conclusion of the prize distribution, announced a prize for himself for having acted as the announcer and commentator par excellence.

The scores of the two sides, which did not really matter much, may be incidentally mentioned:

- (i) The Chief Justice of India's Eleven scored. 44 for six wickets in 20 overs.
- (ii) The Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court's Eleven scored. 50 for one wicket in 20 overs.

The Mootham Cup was presented to the Captain of the winning side, Mr. Justice S. N. Katju.

The cricket match and the prize distribution were followed by a very delicious lunch. The members of the Soviet Delegation, who were late arrivals at the Centenary Celebrations, were able to join the lunch. The quality of the lunch proved that the Allahabad Bar had maintained its tradition of possessing, among its members, experts and connoisseurs in the gastronomical and culinary sciences and arts. The choice of the menu and the supervision of cooking had been left, by the cricket sub-committee, to acknowledged experts from the Bar in these branches of knowledge. The whole function was graceful and altogether enjoyable.