

Summary of the visit by Brian Windler Waitakere CC to SASA – II Summer Games in Gauteng Province, South Africa March 21st – 26th 2010

Through Mr Winston Stubs, National Cricket Convenor SASA_II (South African Sports Association – Intellectually Impaired) I received an invitation to attend the cricket tournament that is part of their annual summer games, held this year in Pretoria. This was the 11th such tournament held in South Africa for the Intellectually Impaired. It also included swimming and table tennis.

This invitation was also extended to West Indies Kenya and England.

I will refer to the participants as II (Intellectually Impaired) and their organisation as SASA-II

It was an ideal opportunity to observe and network with like minded people who have a common interest in promoting the game of cricket for II people.

Background to the tournament.

South Africa has 16 cricket unions and each have a team of II cricketers of variable skill level...

There were three grounds each dedicated to the game with good boundaries and well prepared grass pitches.

Eesterust A and B – Mamelodi and Transnet

They were not first class grounds by any means but certainly suited the cricket being played- There was a marked contrast between Mamelodi and Transnet. Mamelodi was in the township of the same name and, Transnet was a company ground that Northernns Cricket Union had prevailed upon to be made available for disabled cricket. This, the company did and also made funds available to employ ground staff and a manager. This ground is now used solely for all kinds of disabled cricket as well as being used for their company teams. It is an inspiration to all countries involved in the game to emulate.

Coaches were predominately II school teachers with coaching qualifications ranging from Bakers Mini to Entry Level ably supported by Provincial Cricket Union Coaches. Their enthusiasm was infectious as was their dedication to their charges.

The teams were split into sections of 4 from previous years results.

Gold G1:- Western Province; Boland; Limpopo; Griqualand West
Gold G2:-KwaZulu-Natal; Northernns; South West; Eastern Province
Silver S1:-Mpumalanga; Northwest; Easterns; Free State
Silver 2:- Transkei; Gauteng; Border; KZN Inlands

Given the vastness of the country and the variable amenities to play the game, bringing together the players would have been a logistical nightmare. It is with great credit that this was achieved with a minimum amount of disruption. This did not

detract from the enthusiasm and organisation of each and every province. I was impressed with the amount of care and due diligence shown by the convenors and organisers of the tournament to ensure cricket was played at the highest level possible. If there was a hiccup it was due to outside circumstances and beyond the control of the organisers. A few games were shortened because of rain. We did not visit one morning game due to a possible threat of unrest in the township. This is not uncommon in South Africa but it imposed no threat to us.

In all games there were official umpires supplied by the Northern Cricket Umpires Association. The standard of which was good and the scorers were efficient as well. There being no problems either on or off the field of play.

Standards of Play

Bowling was a good standard and probably equivalent to Premier U 17/U15 or at best 1 day 5's men's cricket.

As you would expect most were quick and only 2 spinners were observed plus a few medium.

Fielding was very mercurial. A lot of dropped catches and mis-fields but then some good catches were made. Running to field the ball they were very quick across the turf.

Wicket keeping was non-existent and I saw nobody of equitable standard to the bowling. There was a tendency to stop the ball with anything but gloves.

Batting was also a mixture of some good shots and lusty blows of an agriculture level but effective in the context of a 30 over game. The long handle was taken to the ball on many occasions with some little success. The number of dismissals by being bowled was certainly the highest with LBW next.

Running between the wickets was good and some of the batsmen were very quick between wickets.

Scores were low for this type of game and in some instances games were over very quickly. In spite of all this the players showed tremendous spirit and enthusiasm for the game. In talking to them after the match they all expressed the enjoyment they got from the game. They admired their coaches for their hard work. They had their heroes in the full SA national team and asked plenty of questions relating to cricket in New Zealand. Comments such as "At my school I can now walk tall as I am a cricketer"- "I like this game because I have to think" –"I like bowling because I can get them out" All rang true of people who enjoy the game and love playing it.

Mark Arthur was the National Coach for SASA-II and he had this to say "I treat them as like ordinary cricketers and they are as quick as they can be to develop. Patience is the answer and they will get there in the end"

Outcomes from the visit

A better understanding of the requirements of II cricket was paramount and this was achieved.

A distinct benefit was meeting with Ian Martin Chairman of the International Cricket Development Group for the Intellectually Impaired (ICDG-II) and Brian Breese of the Courtney Walsh foundation from Jamaica. The whole team from SASA-II and in particular, Winston Stubbs National Cricket Convenor SASA-II; Liz Vogel President of SASA-II. Theunns Luus National Sports Convenor SASA-II, who was also the games director; Maxwell Jordaan Senior Cricket Manager Cricket South Africa; Charles Mothoa our guide and minder for the tournament.

There is no doubt that there is a lot of hard work ahead for New Zealand to compete at International level. However the gulf is not that wide that with good organisation and coaching we can in my opinion foot it with the best within 3 years possibly 2.

To reach this goal I make the following suggestions

1:- New Zealand Cricket to take charge and responsibility of encouraging and promoting II cricket at all levels of the game PLUS disabled cricket on the whole.

2:- To bring under one umbrella ALL forms of cricket so that the governing body (NZC) can better promote the game to all participants

3:- NZC to charge provinces in developing disabled cricket- especially II.

4:-To have a designated club within each district as a flagship club for disabled cricket.

5:- These clubs to go through a proper disability access audit to ensure proper facilities are available for the players and fans accordingly.

6:- To properly support and promote II cricket to the media

7:- Involve local government and schools in order to access players. So the game can grow.

8:- Involve SPARC – Halberg and Special Olympics

Waitakere Cricket Club

Strategic Plan:-

- Establish a development group for II cricket in New Zealand.
- Auckland Cricket to support Learning Difficulty (II) activity in Waitakere.
- Obtain list of possible players from education authorities- contact special schools co-coordinators to publicise activity and IHC
- Provision of Milo cricket equipment – in Waitakere and in special schools
- Establish who the INAS contact is in NZ
- Teams into T/20 club competition- twilight T20 league 8- a-side by next season (October 2010)
- Encourage II players to play club cricket within existing team make up

- NZC to help to identify resource for II development in NI, to be shared with identified resource in South Island in order to establish Regional cricket.
- Simon Hickton to be approached to do same in Hamilton
- Time line: - T/20 October 2010 – Full side April 2011 – to go for participation in SAS-II National as invitees April 2011 (if not 2012 dead line.)

The production of an overall strategic plan to make participation in the SASA-II national tournament a reality within 2 years rests with the urgency in which the governing bodies react to the distinct possibility of participation in said tournament. Even if we have to go to 2 or more as guests before entering the International scene so be it- but come hell or high water we must give it go.

We are looking at a possible 25 players being coached and sifted before selection and when done to exhaustive coaching in order for them to give it a good show. It is not going to be easy by along way but it can be achieved if we want it to.

In closing:-

The spirit of cricket was well and truly alive in all players and officials. There were no incidents of dissent or bad behaviour at any of the functions or games played. The friendship shown between teams was very good and respect was the order of the day.

I would like to sincerely thank all the SASA-II people for making the games possible and allowing me to visit and observe a truly great tournament.

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