

## **MORE REFLECTIONS - WORLD SPORTS**

### **CRICKET**

*Aug. 02, 2003 -That week, Dominica's teenaged team returned from Barbados with the cricket trophy, having won a tournament that carries the great name of Sir Garfield Sobers. This is good for them, and I write with high hopes that those young men will continue eventually to graduate to represent the West Indies at the highest level. It is that ultimate dimension of the game that grips my interest.*

*For a long time I have wondered: does West Indies cricket benefit from the expertise of the commentators? How often, if at all, does say Michael Holding call one of our young fast bowlers and impart some advice? In the "home" series against Sri Lanka, it was not Holding but Wayne Daniel who volunteered information to the effect that he (Wayne) did provide some tips to at least one of the West Indies seamers.*

*Perhaps it was not by accident that Cory Collymore emerged man of the series. But there were other lessons to be learned this year:*

- Australia employs a throw-in specialist to coach their cricketers how to throw in to the wicket-keeper or to the wicket generally.*
- Australian captain Ricky Ponting won a car as man of a series. He then had only one year's driving experience.*

*This would seem unimportant to most people, perhaps. I nonetheless noted it, because I cannot conceive of a Caribbean player, accomplished enough to be captain, but with a year's driving experience. And other thoughts are hereby triggered. Perhaps many West Indians who own a car want a car without needing one.*

*But the most indelible episode to me in both series involved Mr. Fidel Edwards. On his test debut, June 27, 2003, that young man bowled 15 overs and 4 balls, 1 maiden, 36 runs, 5 wickets. His claim to fame prior to that seemed almost non-existent:*

- At cricket academy he was voted most disciplined player.*
- Played one only first class match in 2002 and claimed one wicket.*
- A few weeks before, Brian Lara had watched him bowl in the nets in Barbados, and identified him as a most promising prospect. Lara insisted that he be selected for the test match.*

*I believe that Lara has come of age and that manifestations to that effect will continue.*

### **TENNIS**

*By and large, American sports commentators behave sometimes as if they have forgotten that Venus/Serena Williams are American-born citizens. Thanks to a combination of umpiring error, crowd hostility and the dishonesty of her Belgian opponent Justine Henin Hardenne, Serena self-destructed and lost the French open title a couple months ago in 2003. Her fellow- compatriots, sports-casters tended to blame Serena in their usual jealousy and racism.*

*Happily, slow-motion television can re-tell events in tell-tale detail. Cricket fans will well understand what happened that day.*

*Movement somewhere far away behind the bowler's arm, or a sudden wind blowing dust into the batsman's eye is enough justification for the batsman to stop the bowler and even walk away from the wicket. In such a situation the delivery is aborted.*

*In my viewing experience this occurs less in tennis. On that occasion Serena was serving. In the process she observed Justin, with hand upheld, stopping her. Serena, in effect, aborted the service, dumping the ball into the net. The umpire very probably did not see the Justin hand and so awarded a point to Justin. Serena appealed to her opponent: honesty would require that she owns up and help the umpire make the correct decision, viz, cause the point to be replayed.*

*Obviously, the Belgian did not have it in her. The French crowd got into it, against Serena of course. The rest is history. The American commentators seemed orgasmic in their conduct as they told the world:*

- 1. That time at Roland Garros, Venus had dropped from 2 to 4 in the world.*
- 2. Serena had lost the French open title she had secured in 2002, even if she still ranked number one on the planet.*
- 3. Serena herself had now demonstrated vulnerability; even fragility as she broke into tears at the ensuing interview.*
- 4. The hegemony of the Williams Sisters in women's tennis had come to an end at last.*

*But did it? Hardly a month later, at Wimbledon, even if Venus was obviously wounded, the Sisters again demonstrated that when they are playing well the opposition fare no better than roach before cock. The Belgians, Justin Henin - Hardinne and Kim Clijsters joined all the others who were blasted away and driven like straw before the wind.*

*Shamelessly, the American commentators changed their tone: Serena and Venus after all were Americans! ... "We saw them grow and mature before our very own eyes ..."*

*Those people must stop their bigotry. They must understand that the world's top athletes belong to us all. For example, I have a massive respect for the record trophies of Martina Navratilova. She is still winning past age 46. Her race or sexual orientation has no effect concerning my appreciation of her achievements.*

*Luckily I have and sometimes enjoy the television option of silencing all sound and simply watching. When this happens it is at the cost of missing some of the deep knowledge and insights that those commentators obviously have of the game. But I eliminate the aggravation caused by their nagging bigotry.*

*One thing is certain: it appears that the dominance of the Williams sisters is forcing several "queens" of the tennis court into retirement. One such queen may be Lindsay Davenport.*

### LANCE ARMSTRONG AND PAMPO ENDURANCE

*Lance Armstrong (31) has just won the Tour de France for a record consecutive five times, equaled by just one other man in history. Many people consider that annual cycling event as the most grueling in all sport. It involves 2130 miles and include climbing the Alps and the Pyrenees.*

*Lance is a cancer survivor!! If any series of events can be associated with the concept of Pampo endurance, this is it.*

### *SOCCKER (FOOTBALL)*

*The following is not a personal anecdote and I am not holding it out as absolute truth. It was told to me in Trinidad some 30 years ago.*

*A football buff continued his talk about football even on his honeymoon night. His wife suggested that he change the topic. For once she protested, why don't you speak about sex? Fine, he agreed; let us talk about sex... Do you know that yesterday Essex beat Middlesex?*

*The anonymous story-teller probably never imagined how popular soccer would become 30 years later. On July 2, 2003 some 500 media correspondents from many countries assembled in Spain trying to hear, if not speak to Beckham who signed up to play for Real Madrid. It was a bundle of super - stardom cum media attention that presidents and kings could envy. The game is now consuming even the USA. I am unclear whether the male or female version of soccer has the greater increase in popularity in that country.*

*Some weeks ago, I watched KARINA LEBLANC (23) of Canada goalkeeping for the REST OF THE WORLD against the United States. Is she Canadian? Or is she an American? After all Karina was born in Atlanta. Or does she belong also to Dominica and the Caribbean? She is the daughter of Vance and Winsome Leblanc. Mr. Leblanc is now current general manager of NCB. His wife is Jamaican.*

*Karina was conceived in D/ca, but the accident of Hurricane David caused her to be born in Atlanta. Her profile on the World Wide Web includes even her "superstitions". But there is no indication of her Dominican background.*

*Advertising the Commonwealth of Dominica on ESPN would probably cost US \$250,000 for 30 seconds. We cannot afford that kind of money. But if only ESPN know that Karina is Dominican, we could get that advertisement free!!!*

*Top officials of the Tourism Ministry, of the Sports Division, and of the Dominica Football Association should wish to be guided accordingly. Perhaps DFA should take the initiative in that regard An athlete's greatest nightmare is injury. Within our means, we could offer Karina to help pay certain costs in case she is injured. After all, Dominica had nothing to do with development of her soccer talent, and we should not necessarily expect everything for free.*

*Expending a little on one we deem our own will well be worth the cost in terms of the advertisement and promotion our country will get abroad. In case of injury, we would have to keep our commitment. Meanwhile we would hold high hopes that she remains healthy. Once we tell international sports big media about it, it would surprise you how many more people would get to know about Dominica.*

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