

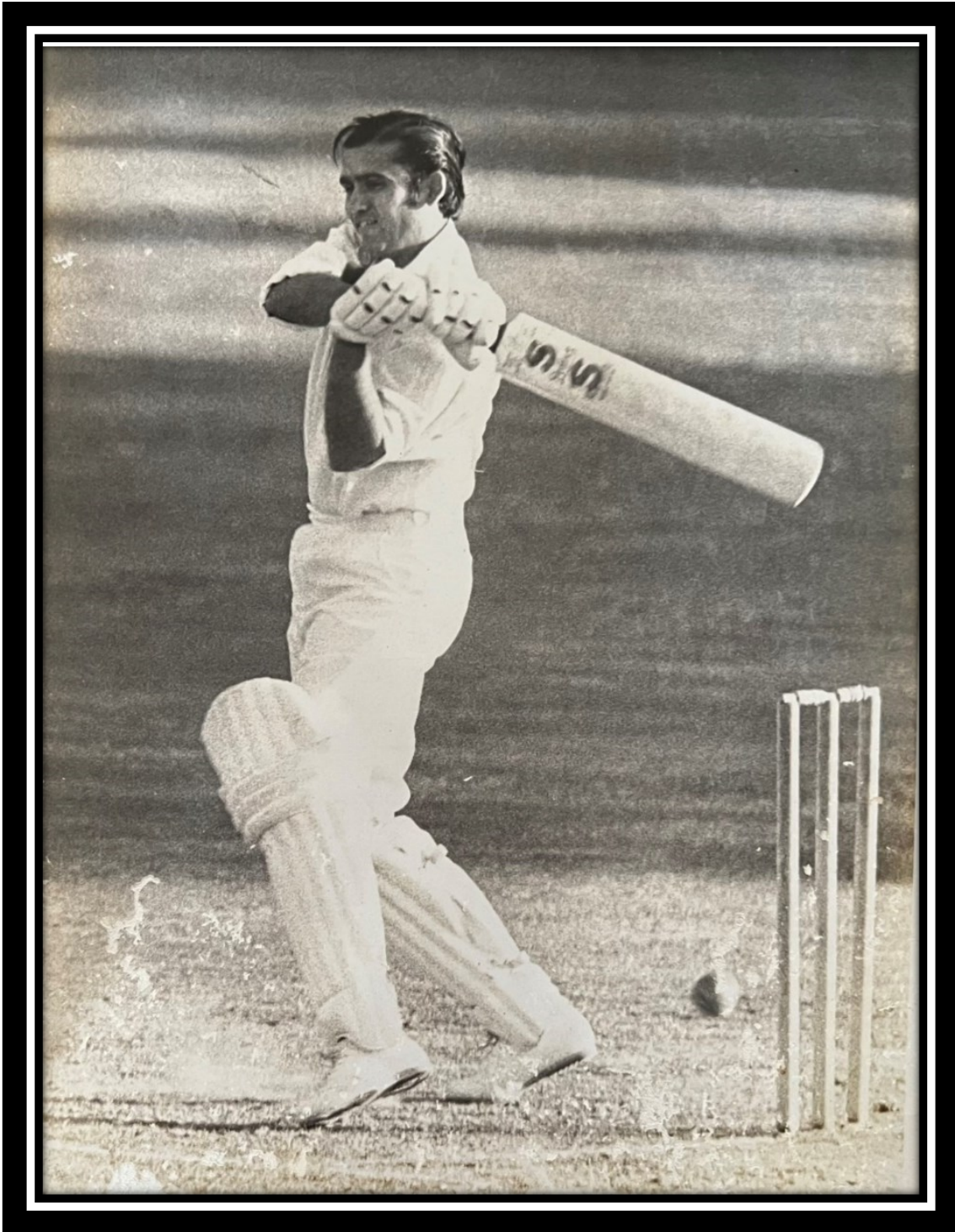
MICHAEL TISSERA 85*
THE FINEST GENTLEMAN CRICKETER

(Compiled by Ravi Rudra - March 2024)

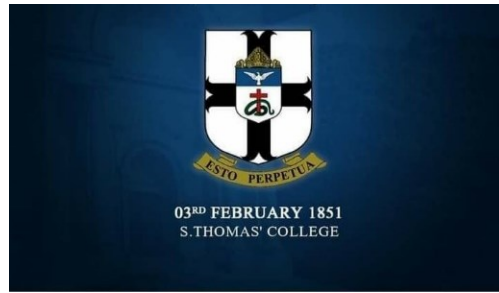


Michael Tissera – A Name Engraved In Pure Gold!

“National Sportsman of the Year 1961 & 69.”



Born on 23rd of March 1939, Michael Tissera could have been an All-time great had he been born a couple of decades late...As an elegant batsman Tissera captured the imagination of players, spectators and writers... he is fondly remembered as an inspirational leader and one of the finest captains produced by the country...The dignified and exemplary manner in which Tissera carried himself both on and off the field was exceptional.....**Michael Tissera, is undoubtedly The Finest Gentleman of Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) Cricket!**

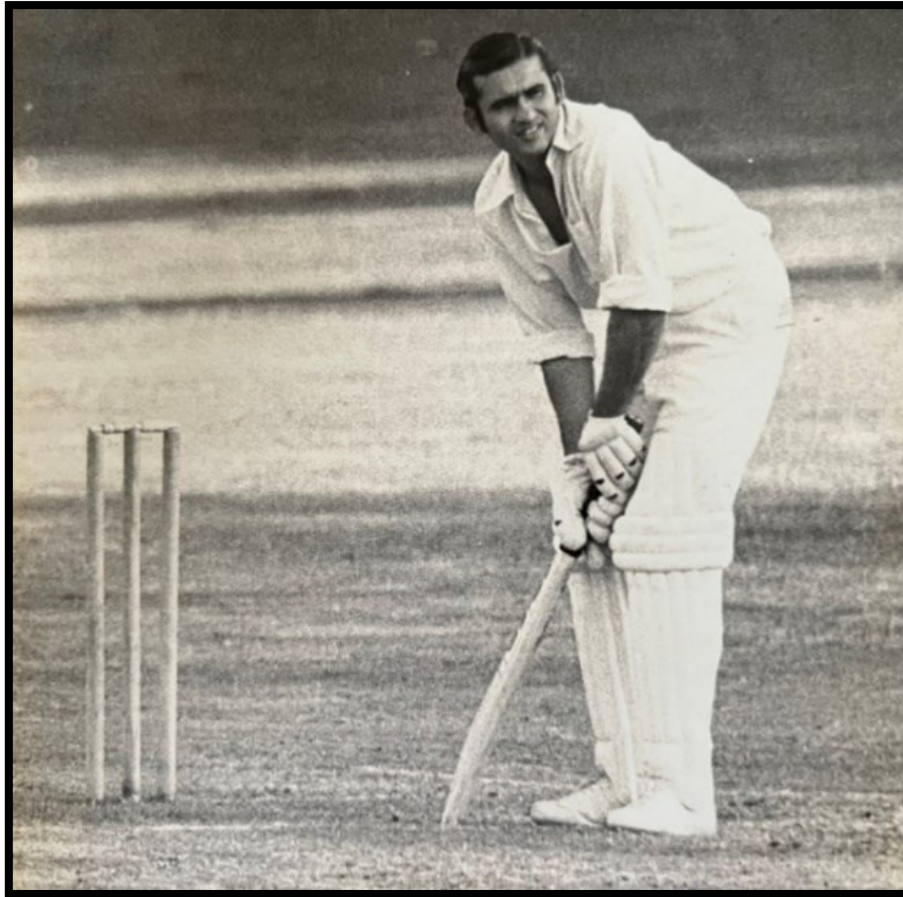


CONTENTS

1. Michael Hugh Tissera	4-6
2. Early Promise	6-8
3. STC Cricket 1954-56	8-16
4. STC Cricket 1957-58 (Michael's Captaincy Years)	17-33
5. Representing other Sports at STC	34-36
6. 1958 - Debut for Ceylon	37-38
7. 1961 – Memorable Century against Daily Mirror XI	40-41
8. 1961 – Australian Team to Ceylon & 1961 Gopalan Trophy	42
9. 1962 – Gopalan Trophy	43
10. 1962 – Ted Dexter's MCC	44
11. 1964 – Bob Simpson's Australian Team	45
12. 1964 – First International Victory - Beating Pakistan	46-47
13. 1965 – Historic Win against Pataudi's Indian side & the Video Link	48-53
14. 1967 – Playing the Mighty West Indies	54-55
15. 1969 – Historic Win against Colin Cowdrey's MCC	55
16. 1969 – Keen Contest against Bill Lawrey's Australia	56
17. 1969 – Sportsman of the Year	57
18. 1975 – Cricket World Cup	58-59
19. Past Cricket Captains	60
20. 1996 - Brainstorming Session with Sri Lanka Cricket Board	61
21. 2005 – 2007 Highly Successful Sri Lanka Cricket Manager & Coach	62
22. 2009 & 2011 Prestigious MCC World Cricket Committees at Lord's	63
23. 2015 - The Sobers-Tissera Trophy	64-65
24. Thomian Cricket Legends (Over 65) – Fellowship at SSC	65
25. The True Legends	66
26. The Michael Tissera Interview	67-77

“I am extremely honoured and grateful to my life-long hero Michael Tissera for having so very kindly invited me to his beautiful home to select some precious, rare photos from his old collections. To my further delight, Michael graciously consented to an impromptu interview. A day, so memorable, that I shall never ever forget. Michael's legacy will undoubtedly continue to inspire generations of cricketers, reminding us that the spirit of the game transcends boundaries and time itself. Thank you Michael for making a dream come true.”

- Ravi Rudra (01.03.2024)



Michael Hugh Tissera, a name synonymous with S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia (STC) and Sri Lanka Cricket, captained Ceylon in 15 unofficial test matches in the pre-test era, recording notable victories against Imtiaz Ahmed's Pakistan (1964), Nawab of Pataudi's India (1965 **see rare video link on page 52*), Colin Cowdrey's MCC (1969), and creditable draws against the mighty West Indies led by Garfield Sobers (1967) and Bill Lawry's Australian Team (1969), both teams having dominant series wins on their India tours.

Michael Tissera represented STC in Cricket, Tennis, Athletics, Hockey and Rugby. Having made his remarkable 1st XI cricket debut as a 14 year old, he would go on to represent his School team for five years (1954-58), which he captained in 1957 and 58.

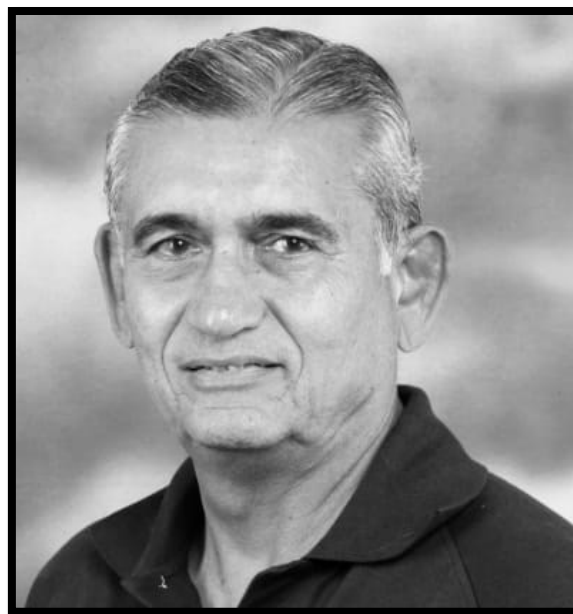
Michael fondly recalls, *"I really enjoyed 1950's and for that matter 60's and 70's too. In 50's, schools cricket unlike today was played while upholding the highest values, we enjoyed it. We went out with positive minds and took risks to win matches and in the process we lost games too. Today, Tournaments and Competitions have killed the spirit and the game. I treasure those times, as life back in those days was fantastic."*

In 1959 Tissera could have played a record equalling sixth year for his School. However, he opted to leave College in 1958 and propelled his career by scoring a fluent century for NCC in his debut in first-class club cricket. Later that same year (1958), 20-year-old Michael would be picked to represent Ceylon (Sri Lanka) against MCC.

A momentous occasion unfolded during an exciting match at the Colombo Oval in 1961 when Tissera, in front of a capacity crowd, scored a magnificent century off the last ball against a Daily Mirror XI that comprised six super star West Indians who were returning from their epic tour to Australia.

In a prestigious International career that lasted over 17 years, culminating at the end of the first Cricket World Cup in 1975, Tissera scored 1,394 runs with two centuries and 8 half centuries. As a leg spinner he also took 27 wickets including a 5-wicket haul.

Tissera's first century was against India in the second unofficial Test in India in 1964–65, when he made a classy 122 in the second innings, adding 224 for the fourth wicket with Stanley Jayasinghe (135). The second was in the third unofficial Test in Pakistan in 1966-67, when he made an elegant 120 not out, an innings admired by even captain Hanif Mohammed.



After hanging up his boots from first-class cricket Michael served Sri Lanka Cricket with great distinction as a National Manager and Chief Selector. Subsequently he was invited by the former England Captain and MCC

Chairman, Tony Lewis, to serve on the prestigious MCC World Cricket Committee.

Fittingly, Test matches between West Indies and Sri Lanka are now played for the Sobers-Tissera Trophy, in honour of Tissera and the greatest cricketer of all time, Sir Garfield Sobers.

In 1987 Tissera was awarded the Sri Lankan honour '*Deshabandu*' for his meritorious service to cricket and in September 2018, he was one of 49 former Sri Lankan cricketers felicitated by Sri Lanka Cricket, to honour them for their services before Sri Lanka became a full member of the International Cricket Council (ICC). Recognitions so richly deserved.

EARLY PROMISE

Cricket came naturally to Michael Tissera and he was fond of reading cricket books, playing book cricket and collecting pictures of famous cricketers of the day. He was boarded at S. Thomas' College and as was the case he got involved in many sports that were available at the school by the sea.

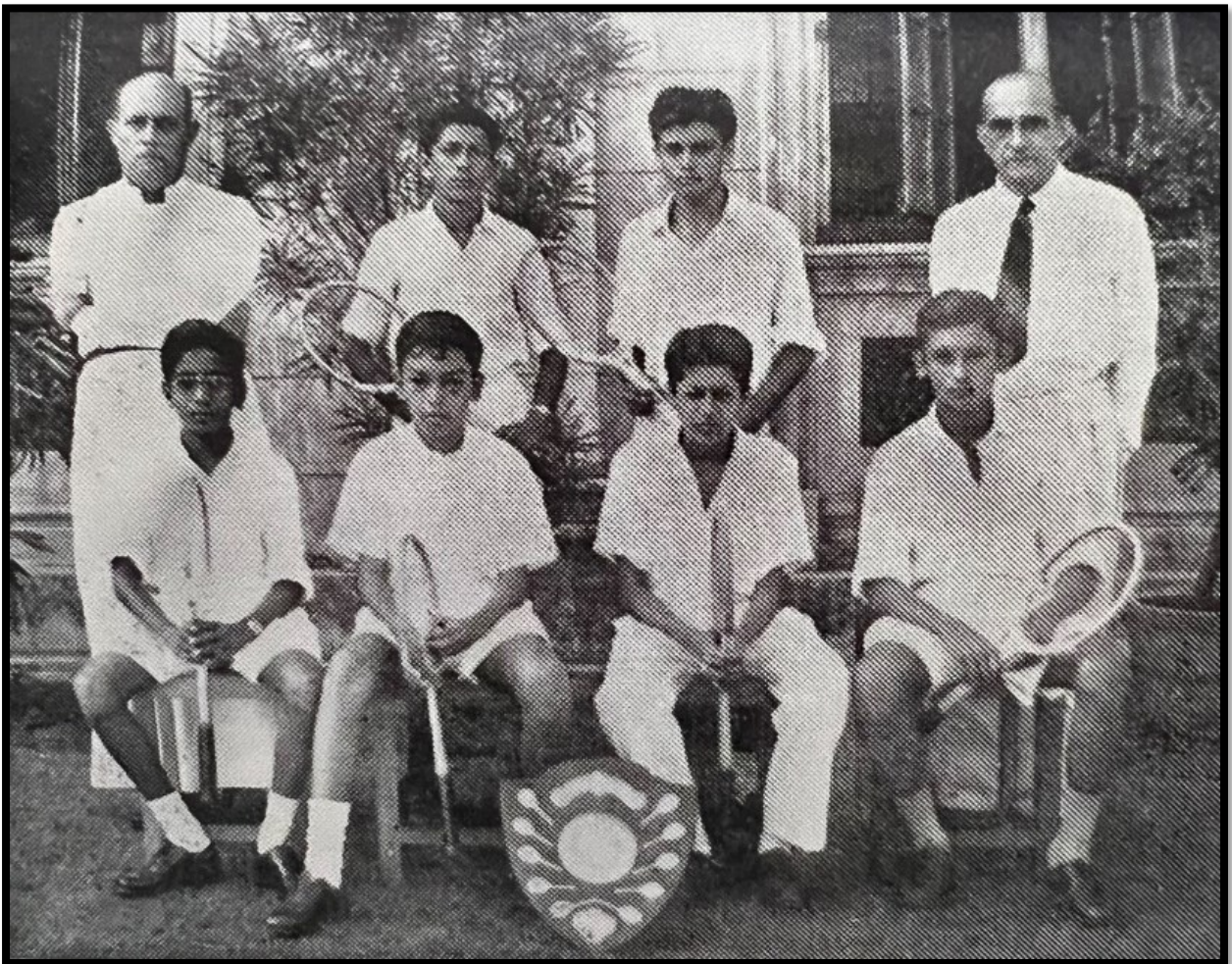


Michael Tissera (seated 3rd from right) was a boarder in Cloughton House till part 1956.

As a Junior he was a promising cricketer and tennis player. Michael took a particular liking to tennis and was good at tweaking the tennis ball and bowled leg spin and googlies, which was spotted readily by one of the masters in charge of the first eleven team. As a result he was invited to bowl for the 1st XI boys for two days and in next to no time he was summoned to play against St Benedict's in the first eleven team at the raw age of 14.

THE JUNIOR TENNIS TEAM - 1953

[Winners of the De Saram Shield for Juniors - Public Schools Tennis \(1953\)](#)



Standing (L-R): The Warden (Rev. Canon de Saram), A. Sinnatamby, A.K. Fernando, Mr. C.H. Davidson.

Seated (L-R): P.S. Kumara, M. Sproule, S. Wijewardene (Capt.), **M.H. Tissera.**

STC - 1953 Under 16 (Term 3) Cricket Team



Standing (L-R): Mr. L.W. Abeywardene (Coach), U.R.P. Goonetilleke, A. Sinnatamby, P. Scharenguivel, N.S. Gurusinghe, S.R. de Silva, S. Pieris, A.E. de Silva.

Seated (L-R): J.K.C. Gunasekera, A. Davoodbhoy, **M.H. Tissera (Capt.)**, The Warden (Rev. Canon de Saram), L.R. Amarasekera (V. Capt.), E.J.P. de Silva (wk.)

1954 - Michael Tissera's Remarkable Debut as a 14 Year Old

"I played U14, U16 and 1st XI. In cricket or for that matter in any sport, to be successful you need a little bit of luck! Funnily, I was in the boarding those days and I was playing tennis on the Warden's court in a pair of shorts and tennis shoes when I got a message to say, 'come and bowl at the Small Clubs to the 1st XI team' because they were playing St. Benedict's in a couple of days' time at Kotahena (on a matting wicket). This must have been on the Wednesday. So I went and bowled and at the end of the session they said come tomorrow and be prepared to bat. I went the following day and batted a little bit and on Friday I was playing in the side! I didn't even have a pair of longs but fortunately was able to borrow a pair of longs from one of the dorm mates to wear for the game. That's how I played my first 1st XI game for College."

– Michael Tissera (in conversation with Ravi Rudra, 19 Dec. 2023)

Royal-Thomian 75th Encounter

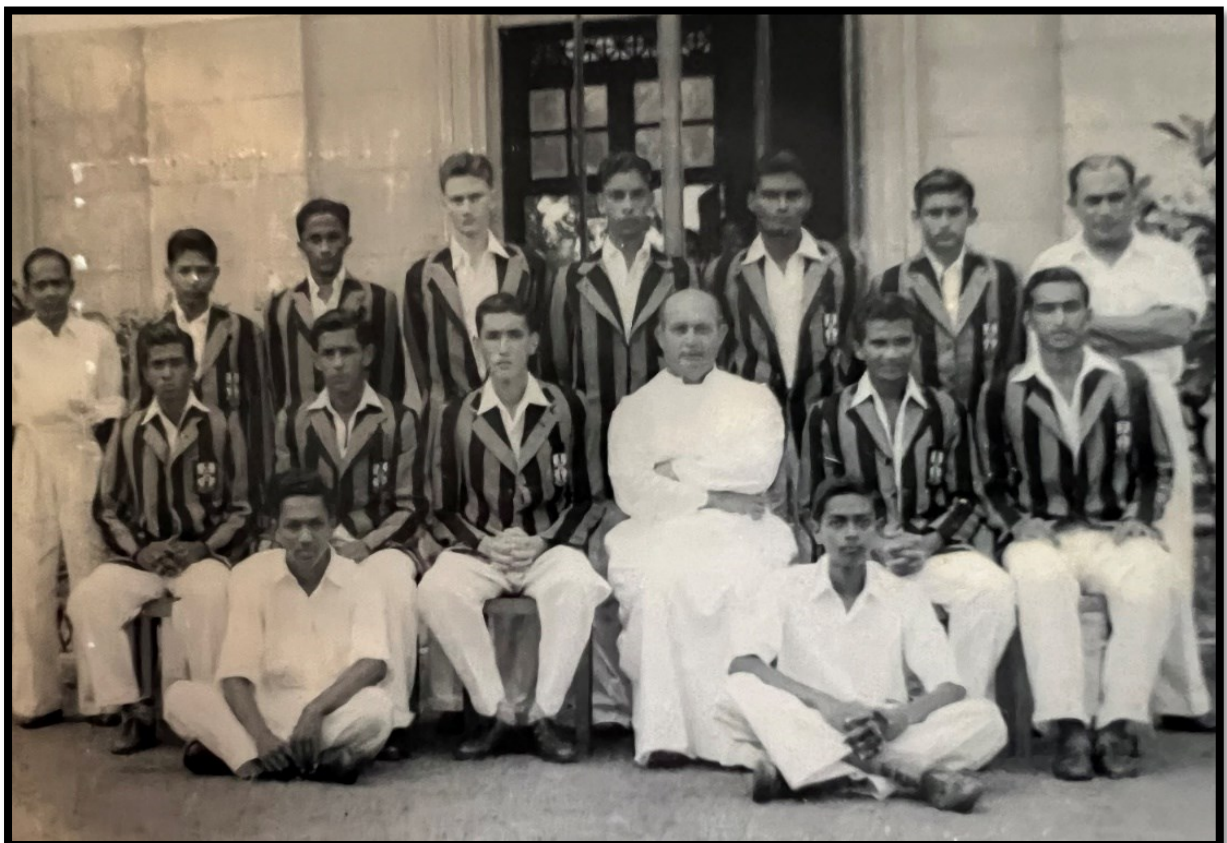
Date: 12th & 13th March 1954 Result: **Drawn**

STC 1st Innings: 131 (R.A. Weerasinghe 40, J.D. Piachaud 29*, Z.A. Cader 23; F.B. Crozier 10.3-02-30-04, U. de Silva 12-03-30-03, T. Nirmalingam 10-04-24-02)

RC 1st Innings: 290 (T. Nirmalingam 69, T. Jothilingam 47*, R. Rabindran 37, R. de Silva 37, U. de Silva 27; D. Pieris 17-04-55-02, A.T.L. Gauder 17.5-02-56-03, J.D. Piachaud 12-02-41-02, D. de Silva 07-03-25-02)

STC 2nd Innings: 191 for 4 wickets dec. (A.T.L. Gauder 61, **M.H. Tissera** 48, G.L.W. Wijesinghe 42*, R.A. Weerasinghe 21; F.B. Crozier 24-10-49-04)

1954 STC 1st XI



Standing (L-R): Mr. L.W. Abeywardena, P.D. Bulankulame, G.D. de Silva, J.D. Piachaud, D.P. Pieris, M. Samarasinghe, **M.H. Tissera**, Mr. L.S. Gauder.

Seated (L-R): G.L.W. Wijesinghe, Z.A. Cader (Vice Capt.), R.A. Weerasinghe (Capt.), Warden (Rev. Canon R.S. de Saram), A.T.L. Gauder, A.E. Witham. **On Ground:** W.M. Seneviratne, C.E. Reid.

Michael Tissera's Best Innings for College



1954 RT – GLW Wijesinghe (no: 4) and young Michael Tissera (no: 5) returning to the pavilion for the Tea Interval on the 2nd day. They put on 73 vital runs for the 4th wicket in the 2nd innings after Royal took a first innings lead of 159. Wijesinghe was unbeaten with 42 while Tissera, in his debut RT innings showcased his talent scoring 48 in the 2nd innings total of 191 for 4 wkts.

When GLW & Michael came together STC were only 32 runs ahead of Royal who totalled 290 in reply to STC's first innings low score of 131. **Michael Tissera considers this innings of 48 to be his best ever innings for College, given the precarious situation of the game and the tremendous pressure the team was under.**

"In 1954, at the age of 8 years, I watched the Royal-Thomian encounter for the first time, played at the Colombo Oval, and I was seated next to my two sisters and father. Suddenly the tent erupted in a chorus of cheers with girls screaming, "come on Michael, come on little Michael;" and my little eyes picked a small Burgher boy walking out to bat. I asked my sister why, all of a sudden, the girls in the tent had gone crazy, and was told that the little chap who was walking out to bat was their former classmate whom they loved very much. The little Michael warmed the hearts of all with a polished display of batting, missing a half century in his debut by just two runs." – Mevan Pieris, Thomian Cricketers Fellowship, 17.12.2023

1955 STC 1st XI



Standing (L-R): Mr. L.S. Gauder (Coach), S.B.L. Perera, G.A. Wikramanayake, D. Ferdinands, E.D.C. Van Houten, R.J. Reid, T.J.M. Jayasinghe, A. Perera.

Seated (L-R): M.H. Tissera, P.B. Bulankulame, Z.A. Cader (Capt.), Warden de Saram, J.D. Piachaud, C.E. Reid.

On Ground (L-R): W. Seneviratne, L.R. Amarasekera

Royal-Thomian 76th Encounter

Date: 11th & 12th March 1955

Result: **Drawn**

RC 1st Innings: 201 (M.J. Wille 32, F.B. Crozier 47, B.W.M. Gooneratne 48; Z.A. Cader 23-07-55-04, **M.H. Tissera 12.5-03-27-03**)

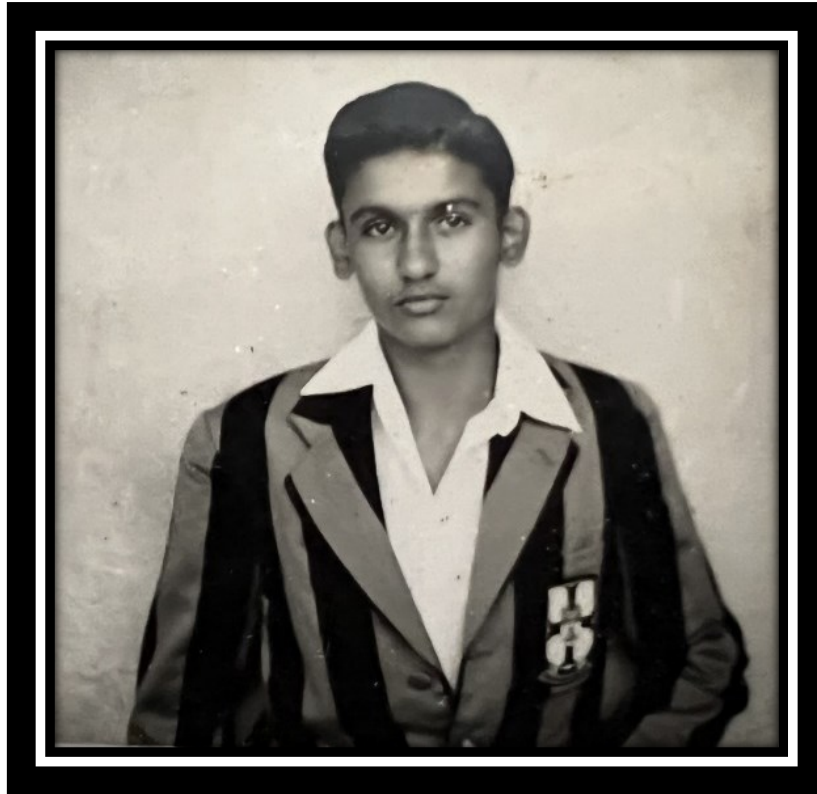
STC 1st Innings: 145 (S.B.L. Perera 47, J.D. Piachaud 45; B.W.M. Gooneratne 14.5-08-15-04, R.M. Wickremasinghe 16-08-27-04, T. Jothilingam 10-03-39-02)

RC 2nd Innings: 127 for 6 wickets dec. (S. Perinpanayagam 31, M.J. Wille 42, L. Weerasinghe 22; **M.H. Tissera 05-00-17-02**)

STC 2nd Innings: 126 for 7 wickets (S.B.L. Perera 27, R.J. Reid 37, J.D. Piachaud 18; R.M. Wickremasinghe 07-01-22-02, T. Jothilingam 07-03-16-02, R. de Silva 03-01-14-02)



1955: Superb All Round Sportsman, **Zackroff Cader** (top left) who scored 175* against Kingswood earlier in the season led the 1955 Thomian side; 15-year old **Michael Tissera** (top right) batted number 4; **Ronald Reid** (bottom) who came good in the 2nd innings in his debut RT with a solid 37 in an opening stand of 64 with SBL Perera (27), who also top scored with 47 in the 1st innings.



Tissera had the Best Bowling Average (8.8) at the 1955 Royal-Thomian with fine figures of 3 for 27 and 2 for 17.

1956 - 1ST XI CRICKET

Buck House - Winners of the Inter-House Senior Cricket Trophy (1956)



Seated: Asoka Wikramanayake (1st left), Michael Tissera (2nd left), Ronald Reid (centre).

1956 – STC 1ST XI



Standing (L-R): D.D. Abeysekera, L.R. Amarasekera, G.A. Wikramanayake, N.S. Gurusinghe, D.A.J. Ferdinands, T. Kandiah, W.M. Ekanayake, Mr. L.S. Gauder (Coach).

Seated (L-R): S.B.L. Perera, **M.H. Tissera**, J.D. Piachaud (Capt.), Warden de Saram, P.B. Bulankulame (V. Capt.), R. J. Reid.

On Ground (L-R): E.L. Lisk, A.E. de Silva

Royal-Thomian 77th Encounter

Date: 16th & 17th March 1956

Result: Drawn

RC 1st Innings: 283 (T. Jothilingam 121; D. Ferdinands 16-04-31-03, J.D. Piachaud 23-03-66-03, W. Ekanayake 21-06-61-02)

STC 1st Innings: 288 for 9 wickets (**R.J. Reid 158***, P.B. Bulankulame 33, J.D. Piachaud 37, L.R. Amarasekera 20, D.D. Abeysekera 21; R. de Silva 21-05-55-05)

RC 2nd Innings: 145 for 6 wickets (M.J. Wille 33, S. Perinpanayagam 17, R. de Silva 26, B.W.M. Gooneratne 30, T. Jothilingam 25*; W. Ekanayake 10-01-46-05)

1956 Royal-Thomian

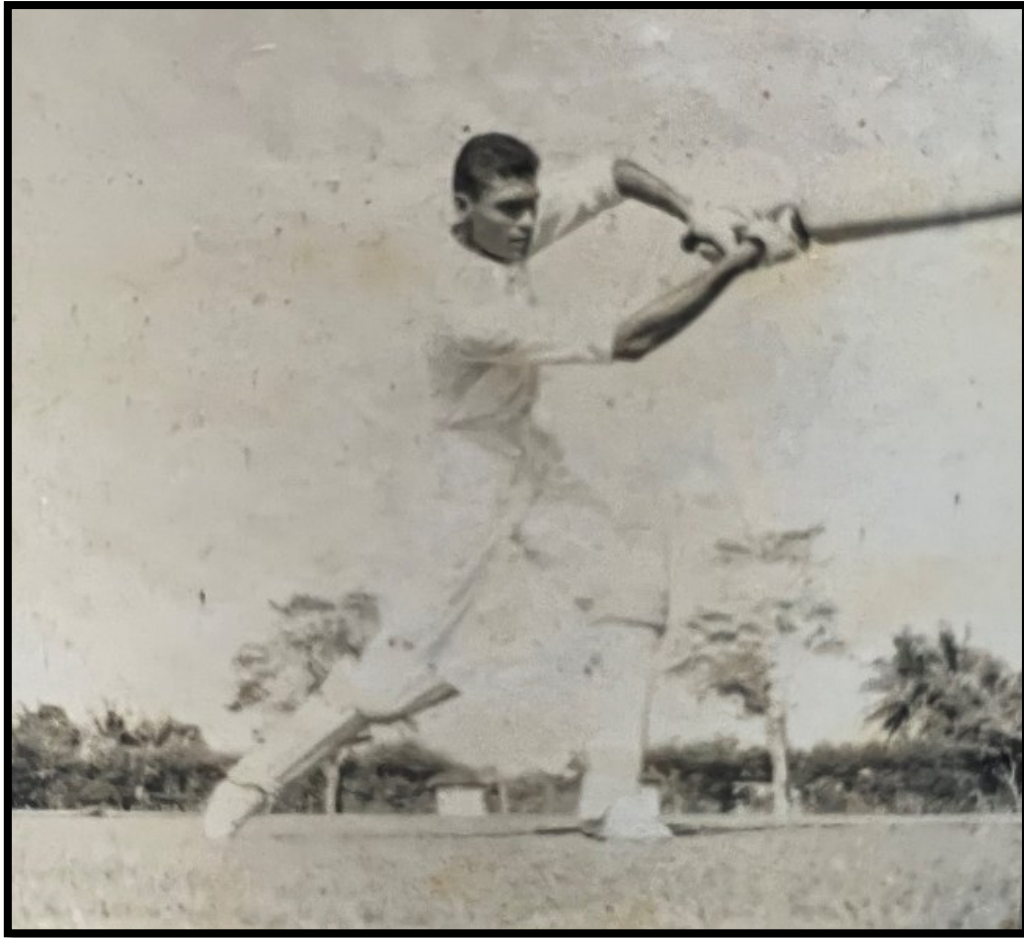


Michael Tissera
having a knock before
the 1956 Royal-
Thomian.

*“In 1954 - 1956 a Len
Hutton or a Don
Bradman bat cost me Rs
75.” – Michael*



1956 RT (R-L): Skipper J.D. Piachaud leads the Thomians out to field. Behind him are P.D. Bulankulame, M.H. Tissera, D.A.J. Ferdinands, L.R. Amarasekera & N.S. Gurusinghe.



(Top): **Ronald Reid** (1956 RT) – set a **New Record of 158*** for the highest individual score at a Royal-Thomian (when he broke Thomian Norman Siebel's 20-year old record of 151 n.o set in 1936) to carry the Thomians to a first innings score of 288 for 9 dec in response to Royal's 283. (Below): **PB Bulankulame** – opened the batting with Ronald Reid at the 1956 RT and scored 33 in an opening stand of 66.

1957 – STC 1st XI Team (Michael's first year of Captaincy)



Standing (L-R): U.R.P. Goonetilleke, D.D. Abeysekera, J.K.C. Gunasekera, N.S. Gurusinghe, T.C.T. Edward, E.L. Lisk, M.L. Idroos, Mr. L.S. Gauder (Coach).

Seated (L-R): L.R. Amarasekera, G.A. Wikramanayake, **M.H. Tissera (Capt.)**, Warden de Saram, R. J. Reid (V. Capt.), D.A.J. Ferdinands.

On Ground (L-R): Ana Sinnatamby, A.E. de Silva, T.R.P. de Alwis (Scorer).

*Thomians under Michael Tissera in 1957 played 10 games and won seven lost one, with two draws. However, they made amends the following year (1958) by remaining unbeaten and becoming unofficial schools cricket champions.



1957 Season: (Top) **Tissera** returns to the pavilion vs St. Anthony's Kandy and (Below) **Denis Ferdinands**, the quickest and most hostile bowler in school cricket. "We played 10 matches during that season of 1957 and won 7 but we lost to St. Benedict's. We would've been 'Unofficial Schools Cricket Champions' if not for that loss. Instead, St. Benedict's became Champions."
- Michael

1957 Royal-Thomian Toss

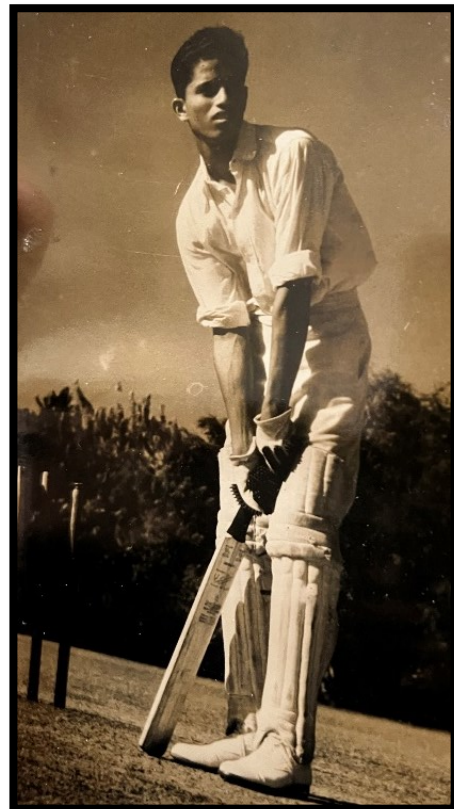


The Two Michaels! Tissera tosses while Willie makes his call.

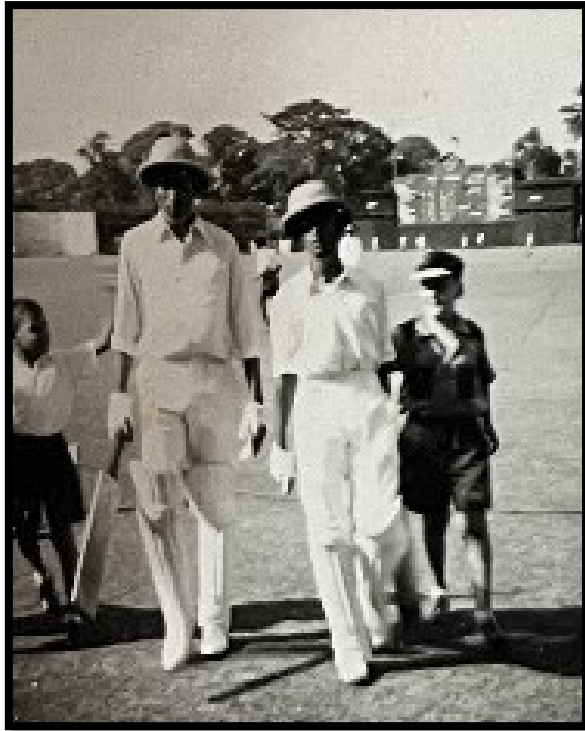


“Michael Tissera, my opposite number, won the toss. I said: “Lucky bastard.” He laughed, picked up the coin and said: “We’ll bat.” We shook hands and wished each other good luck.

– Michael Willie (Royal Captain)



1957 RT: (L) **Michael Tissera** walks back to the pavilion, touch disappointed having missed out on a well-deserved fifty, Tissera (48) and **DD 'Corky' Abeysekera** (R) added 70 runs for the 4th wicket.



1957 (RT): (L) - **Asoka Wikramanayake** and **Lareef Idroos** return for the Tea Break. They added 50 runs for the 7th wicket. (R) **Asoka Wikramanayake** walks back after scoring an entertaining 42.



1957 RT: Michael Tissera leads the Thomians after they posted 259.

Royal-Thomian 78th Encounter (Colombo Oval)

Date: **22nd & 23rd March 1957** Result: **Drawn**

STC 1st Innings: 259 (R.J. Reid 65, M.H. Tissera 48, G.A. Wikramanayake 42; N.S. Gurusinghe 38, D.D. Abeysekera 23, U.R.P. Goonetilleke 21, M.L. Idroos 15*; E.L. Pereira 35-06-83-05; Mahinda Wijesinghe 34.4-09-94-04)

RC 1st Innings: 249 (M.J. Wille 121, E.L. Pereira 57; D. Ferdinands 18-07-43-03, M.L. Idroos 12.3-01-56-02, R.J. Reid 17-06-39-02, G.A. Wikramanayake 06-02-27-02)

STC 2nd Innings: 113 for 2 wickets (R.J. Reid 65*, N.S. Gurusinghe 31)

RC 2nd Innings: 51 for 1 wicket (R.K. Samarasinghe 29*)

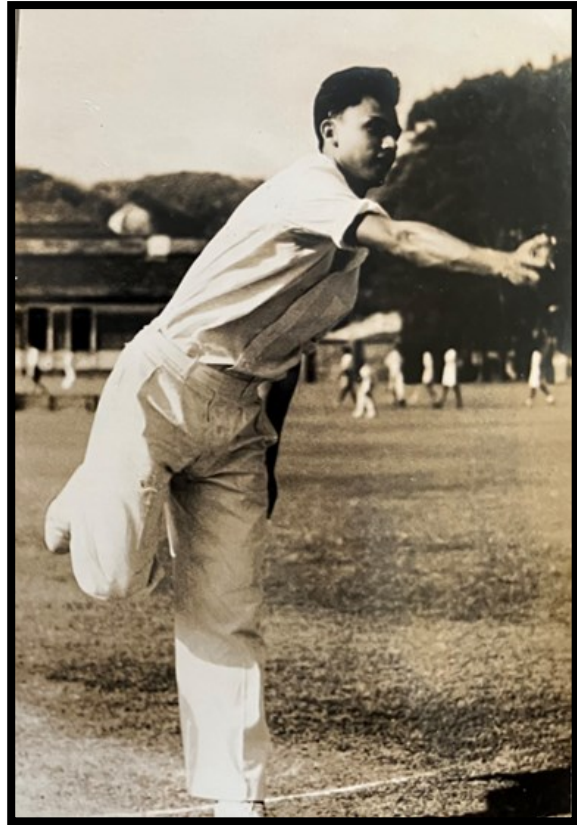
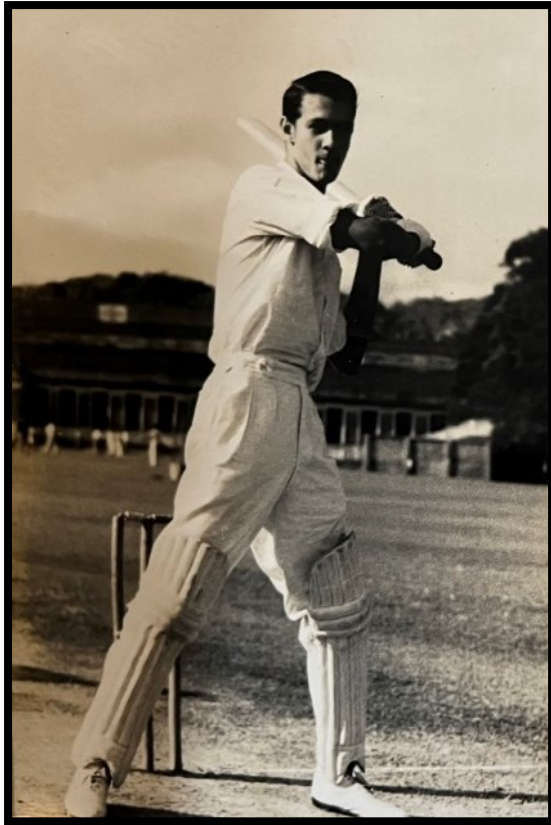
“I saw Denis Ferdinands, who was very fast, as the main threat. If he got a couple of early wickets and got his tail up, he could go right through us. I tried to keep him away from the “freshers”. In ’56 I tried to hook him and he nearly broke my forearm so I had decided that I would duck under the many bouncers that he bowled. Anyway, we held him off and when Lorenz and I put on 115 for the fifth wicket the chance of a Thomian victory disappeared. From the point of view of concentration, my century was the best innings I played. I watched every ball and did not look at the scoreboard until I reached my century.

Ronnie got another 65 in their second dig. He was the outstanding batsman in the competition that year and rightfully won the Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year award. The match also produced another future star in M.L Idroos, a very good young leg-spinner.”

- Mike Wille, Royal Captain (1957)

“The Thomians, led by Michael Tissera had a very strong team. To counter that situation, our Michael Wille said: “I will get a 100 and I want each of you to try and score at least 20 runs which would make things difficult for the Thomians.” As promised, Wille scored a brilliant century and saved us from possible defeat. I remember the Thomian paceman Denis Ferdinands obtaining Michael Wille’s autograph on the ball to keep as a souvenir!”

- Mahinda Wijesinghe, Royal (1957)

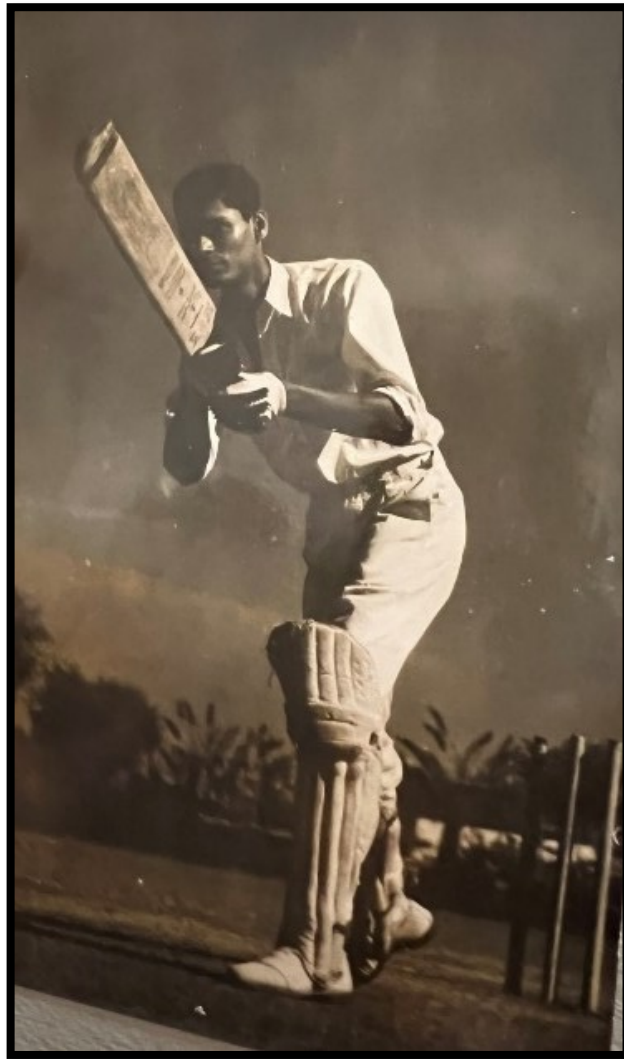


1957 RT: **Michael Willie** (L) and **Lorensz Pereira** (R) were outstanding for Royal. Willie (121) & Lorensz (57) combined to score 115 for the 5th wicket when Royal were 68/4 and looked to be in trouble. Lorensz also took 5/83 in the Thomian's first innings score of 259.



1957 RT: **Asoka Wikramanayake** (L) scored a vital 42 & took 2/27 in Royal's first innings.

"I got Five Colours at College. My idol was Zackroff Cader. He was great in Athletics, Soccer, Fives, Hockey & Cricket. I too followed in his footsteps, and got Colours in Athletics (Captain), Cricket, Rugby, Football, Hockey, and Swimming." - Asoka



1957 RT: **Ronald Reid** (L) followed his record-breaking unbeaten 158 not out at the 1956 Royal-Thomian with scores of 65 & 65 n.o at the 1957 Big Match. He batted splendidly in both innings and in doing so he also broke records for both the highest aggregate (325 runs in five innings with two not outs) and the batting average – a staggering 108.33! He was awarded the Stephen Memorial Batting Awards in 1956 and 1957 for top-scoring at the Royal-Thomian.

Reid also won the F. L Goonewardene Batting Shield awarded to the Best STC Batsman of the Season for the third consecutive year in 1957. He scored 1,566 runs over three seasons with an average of 53.66 and was voted Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year in 1957.

*Ronnie Reid & Asoka Wikramanayake were outstanding athletes. In 1955, they were part of a superb 4x440 winning relay team that set a New Pubs Record (3m 35.9s) and shared the Jefferson Trophy with Royal.



1957 RT: Post Match Awards – Michael Tissera carries the D. S. Senanayake Memorial Shield retained by STC.



1957 RT: Post Match Awards - Three Cheers to STC! Sporting Gesture by the Royal team led by Michael Willie.

1958 – STC 1st XI Team (Michael's 2nd year of Captaincy)

UNOFFICIAL SCHOOLS CRICKET CHAMPIONS



Standing (L-R): M.L. Idroos, U.R.P. Goonetilleke, J.K.C. Gunasekera, M. Sproule. N. Chanmugam, T.C.T. Edward, Mr. L.S. Gauder (Coach).

Seated (L-R): E.L. Lisk, L.R. Amarasekera, **M.H. Tissera (Capt.)**, Warden de Saram, D.A.J. Ferdinands (V. Capt.), N.S. Gurusinghe.

On Ground (L-R): A.E. de Silva, Ana Sinnatamby, T.R.P. de Alwis (Scorer).

CRICKET 1958

STC vs. Kingswood:

STC: 425 (MH Tissera 75, A. Sinnatamby 108, AE de Silva 47, N. Chanmugam 60; CM Fernando 6/108)

Kingswood: 132 (CM Fernando 54: ML Idroos 6/26) & 169 (Harvie 46; ML Idroos 3/38, MH Tissera 4/54).

STC won by an innings and 124 runs.

STC vs. Prince of Wales:

POW: 51 (LT Fernando 5/12) & 82.

STC: 180 (MH Tissera 35, ML Idroos 32).

STC won by an innings and 37 runs.

STC vs. Richmond:

Richmond: 62 (ML Idroos 4/11) & 120 (AE de Silva 6/33).

STC: 168/8 (A. Sinnatamby 62) & 20 for 2.

STC won by 08 wickets.

STC vs. St. Peter's:

STC: 126 (TCT Edward 28, MH Tissera 32, Duckworth 4/25) & 173 for 4 dec. (NS Gurusinghe 88, NO Goonetilleke 32).

SPC: 118 (Duckworth 50: ML Idroos 3/43) & 93 (ML Idroos 5/17).

STC won by 88 runs.

STC vs. St. Benedict's:

STC: 157 (TCT Edward 62, Elmo Rodrigopulle 6/45) & 202 for 4 dec. (NS Gurusinghe 50, M. Sproule 47, MH Tissera 33).

SBC: 97 (ML Idroos 6/39) AND 109 (ML Idroos 5/34).

STC won by 153 runs.

STC vs. Wesley:

Wesley: 123 (ML Idroos 7/23) & 185 (ML Idroos 6/81).

STC: 268 (MH Tissera 121, EL Lisk 49, D Ferdinands 25; Abeysuriya 5/65)

AND 25 for 2.

STC won by 08 wickets.

STC vs. Ananda:

Ananda: 128 (D. Ferdinands 3/31, JKC Gunasekera 3/27, ML Idroos 3/34) & 85/4 (Ekanayake 44).

STC: 243/8 dec (TCT Edward 95, URP Goonetilleke 29, NS Gurusinghe 47, EL Lisk 30*) & 25 for 2. [Match Drawn.](#)

STC vs. St. Joseph's:

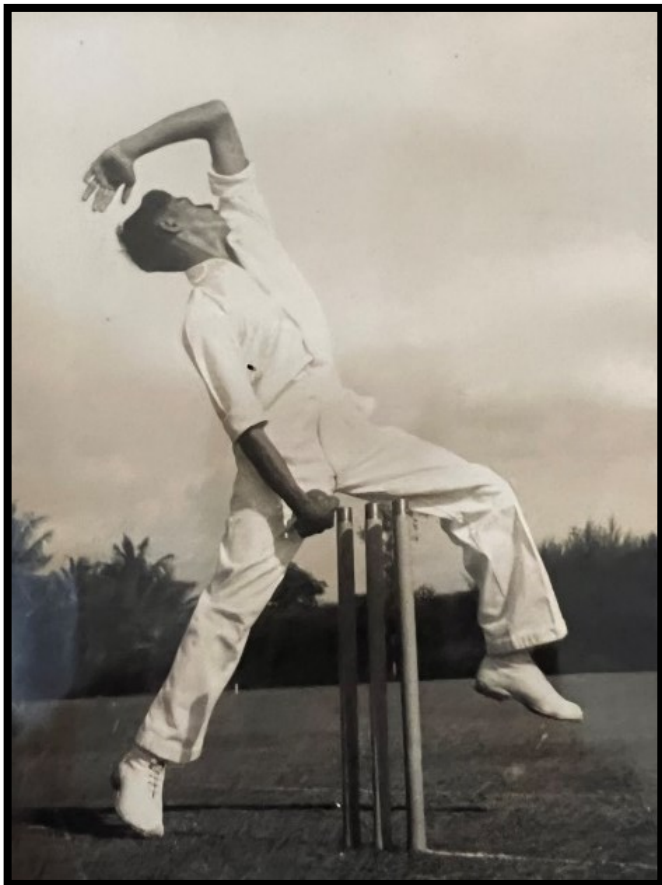
STC: 204 (MH Tissera 64, LR Amarasekera 47; P Perera 5/40) & 202 for 4 dec. (NS Gurusinghe 50, M. Sproule 47, MH Tissera 33).

SJC: 123 (ML Idroos 5/37) & 154/8 (I de Soysa 51*, P. Perera 40, MH Tissera 3/28, ML Idroos 3/55). [Match Drawn.](#)

STC vs. Trinity:

STC: 120 (MH Tissera 37, M. Sproule 34*; Eric Roles 7/49) & 184 for 9 dec. (TCT Edward 50, MH Tissera 32, ML Idroos 30, EL Lisk 28*).

Trinity: 137/9 dec (N. Chanmugam 4/25) & 147/6 (M. Kurukulasuriya 61, ML Idroos 4/56). [Match Drawn.](#)



(L) **Lareef Idroos** (1958) -
Mastro Leg Spin & Googly Bowler.

During the 1958 season, **Idroos** took 49 wickets in six games. In 1959 he took a record 'all ten wickets' in an innings (10/38) against Prince of Wales and went on to lead a strong Combined Schools XI. He captained STC in 1960.

"Michael Tissera was a highly knowledgeable cricketer. As captain he knew the game well and also about each player."

– Lareef Idroos (STC 1st XI 1957-60, Captain 1960)



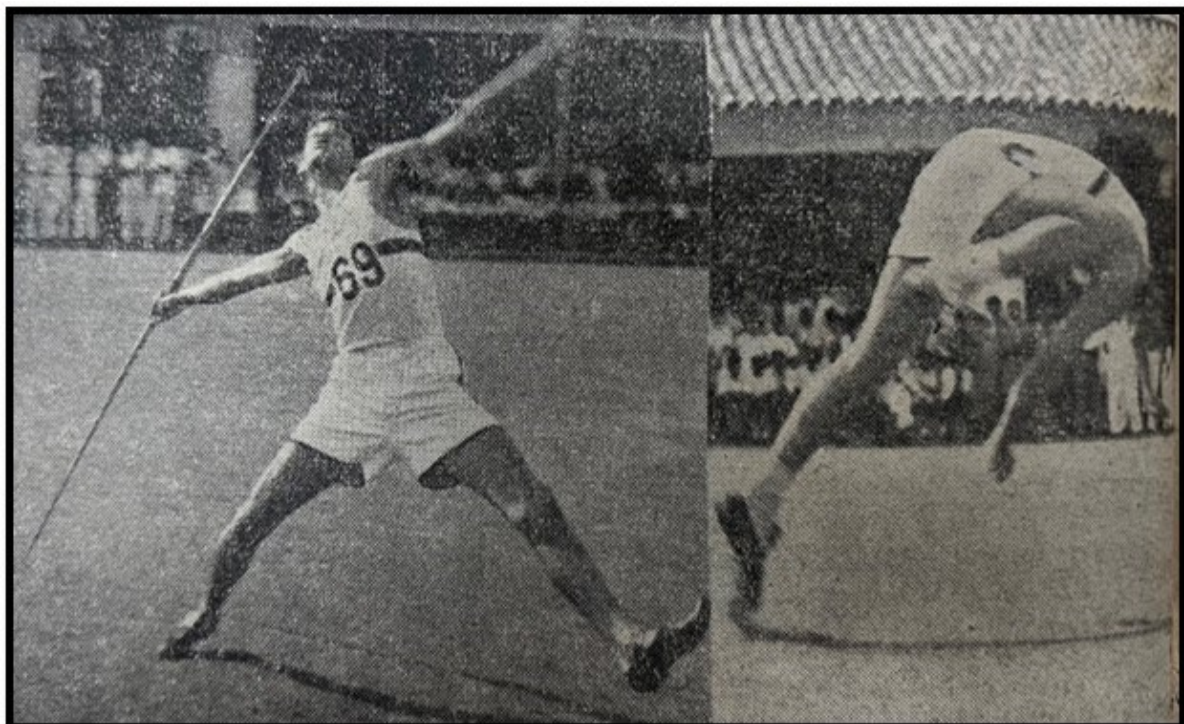
(L) Opening Bat **Trevelyan C.T. Edward**.

He went on to play nine matches of first-class cricket for Ceylon between 1961 and 1965. Edward made his debut for Ceylon in the Gopalan Trophy match in 1960–61, opening with A. C. M. Lafir. In the 1961-62 Gopalan Trophy match he made his highest first-class score, 73, in an innings victory for Ceylon. He toured India with the Ceylon team in 1964-65, playing in all three matches against India. Edward, who played domestic cricket for NCC, sadly passed away in 1995, aged 57.



Denis Ferdinands (1958): perhaps the fastest opening bowler to play for STC, was also a superb Javelin thrower - including a magnificent throw of 196' 8" as a 16-year-old that shattered the Colombo South Group Meet record in 1955... a throw better than the Pubs record, held by Josephine H. Jayawardena, by over 22 feet – a staggering performance!

(Below) Denis in action at the 1955 Pubs. He had the distinction of captaining his College in both Athletics (1957) and Cricket (1959). Denis sadly passed away in Melbourne on 30 Jan 2024 – during the compilation of this article. (RR)



THE 79th BATTLE OF THE BLUES (1958)



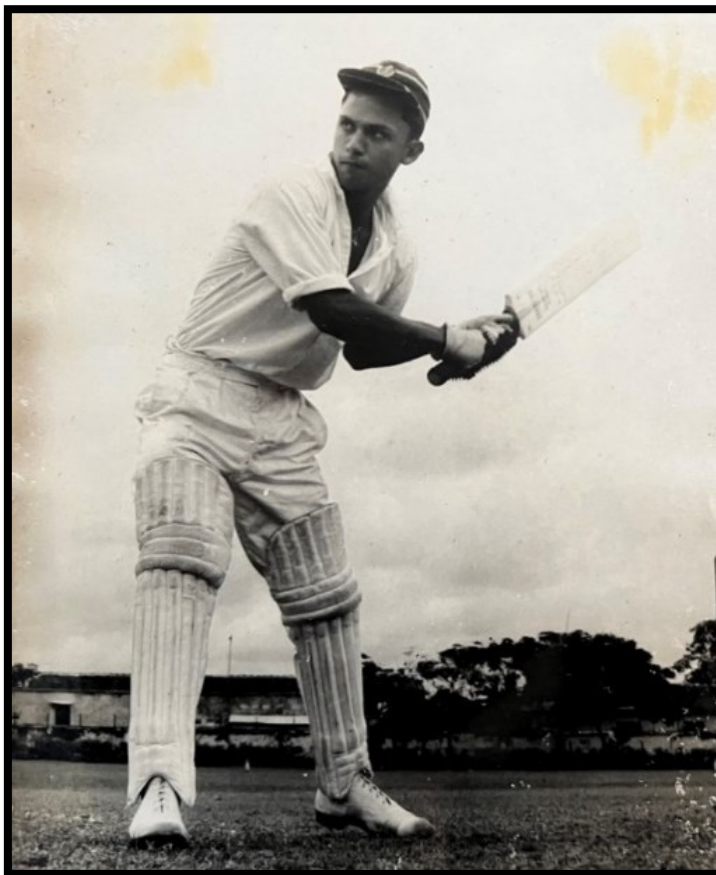
Michael Tissera (R) waits for Royal Skipper Lorenz Pereira to flip the coin.



Tissera wins the toss for the 2nd consecutive year and elects to bat first.



Tissera
Captain's
knock of
50 in the
1st innings
as wickets
fell around
him.



Lorensz Pereira
(Royal Captain) scored a
handy 35 in Royal's first
innings and had match
figures of 5 for 64 with
the ball.

Royal-Thomian 79th Encounter (Colombo Oval)

Date: 14th & 15th March 1958

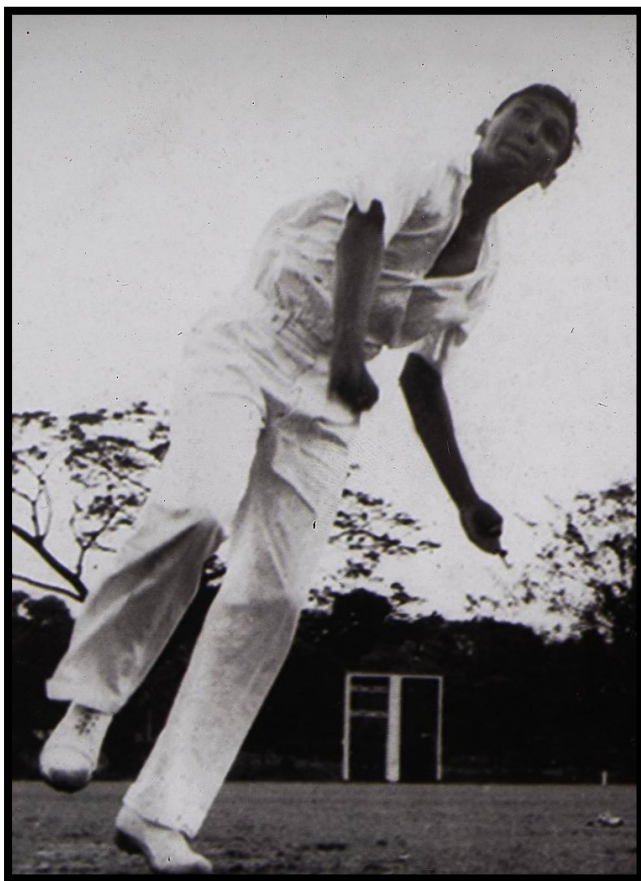
Result: **Drawn**

STC 1st Innings: 192 (M.H. Tissera 50, N.S. Gurusinghe 32, D. Ferdinands 30*, E.L. Lisk 22, J.K.C. Gunasekera 21; D. Sahabandu 26-12-59-03, E.L. Pereira 14-03-37-03)

RC 1st Innings: 245 (L. Senanayake 56, M. Dias 62, E.L. Pereira 35, N. Kodituwakku 34, N.J.S. de Mel 31; D. Ferdinands 14-04-20-03, J.K.C. Gunasekera 22.2-08-43-03, N. Chanmugam 26-12-43-03)

*Lalith Senanayake & Michael Dias added 100 runs for the 3rd wicket.

STC 2nd Innings: 104 for 4 wickets (T.C.T. Edwards 20, U.R.P. Goonetilleke 37; D. Sahabandu 14-04-19-02, E.L. Pereira 13-04-27-02)



Neil Chanmugam (L) made his mark as a fresher at the 1958 Royal-Thomian. He came on first change and dismissed three of the top four Royal batsmen with his wily off-spin... Neil played for S. Thomas' College in 1958 & 1959 and went on to become one of Sri Lanka's leading offspinners of the pre-Test era. As an off-spinner making use of his height he mesmerised most leading batsmen, local and international, with crafty variation in flight and length. Neil was also an excellent close-in fielder and as a hard-hitting batsman it was a delight

to watch the shots that he played with immense power, dispatching the ball to every corner of the field and many a times over the ropes.

Michael Tissera represented his School in Five Sports - Athletics, Cricket, Hockey, Rugby and Tennis. He was also a College Prefect.

1955 – FIRST EVER STC 1st XV RUGBY TEAM



Standing (L-R): Mr. L.W. Abeywardena (Master-in-Charge), Rohantha de Silva, D.M. Seneviratne, Asoka Wikramanayake, Rodney Ingleton, **Michael Tissera**, T. Gray, R. Kandaiya, Tissa Molligoda.

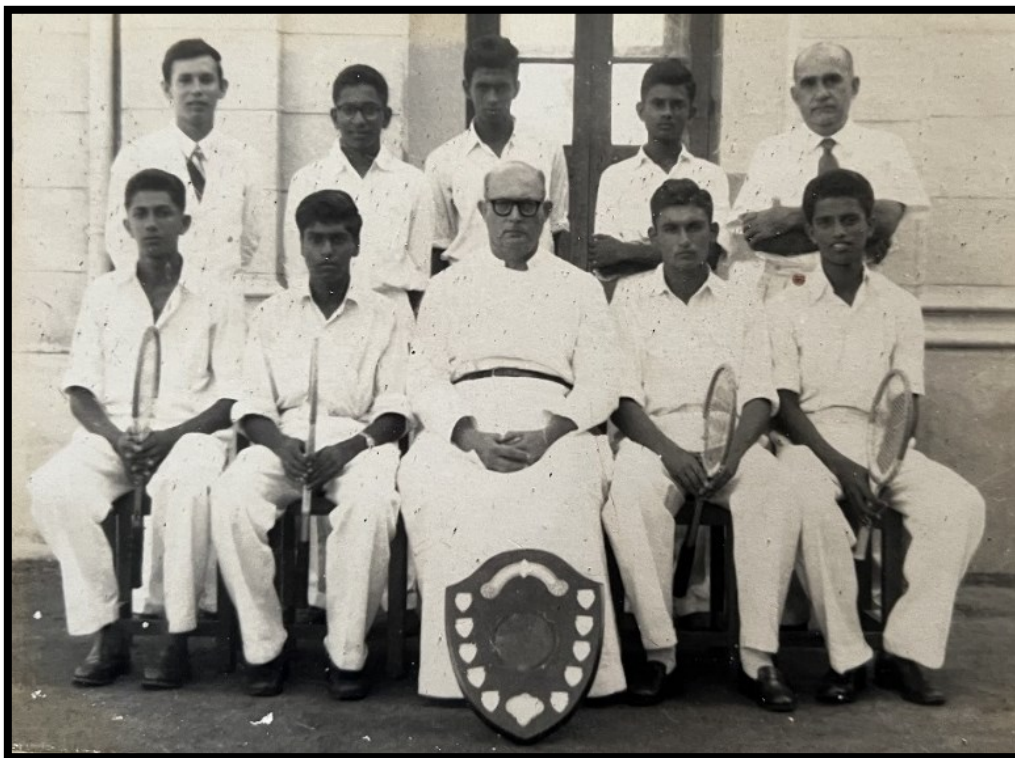
Seated (L-R): P.B. Jayasekera, L. Hewawasam, Lester Schokman, KS Ananthan (Captain), Warded R.S. de Saram, S.B.L. Perera, Ifthikar Cader, Errol Jacotine, Dan Piachaud, Sudath Weerasuriya.

On the Ground: Van Cuylenberg, Mack?

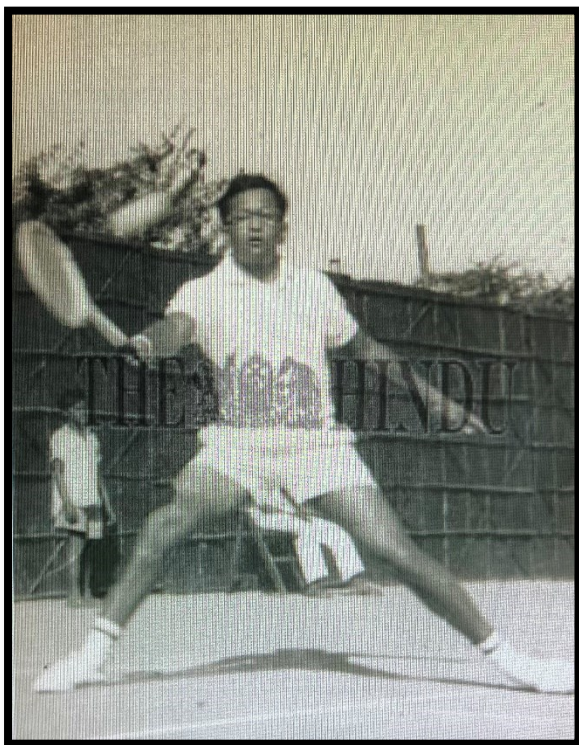
Absent: Mr. Mahesh Rodrigo (Coach)

*Michael played three games at Inside Centre.

Senior Tennis Team - Public Schools Champions - 1956



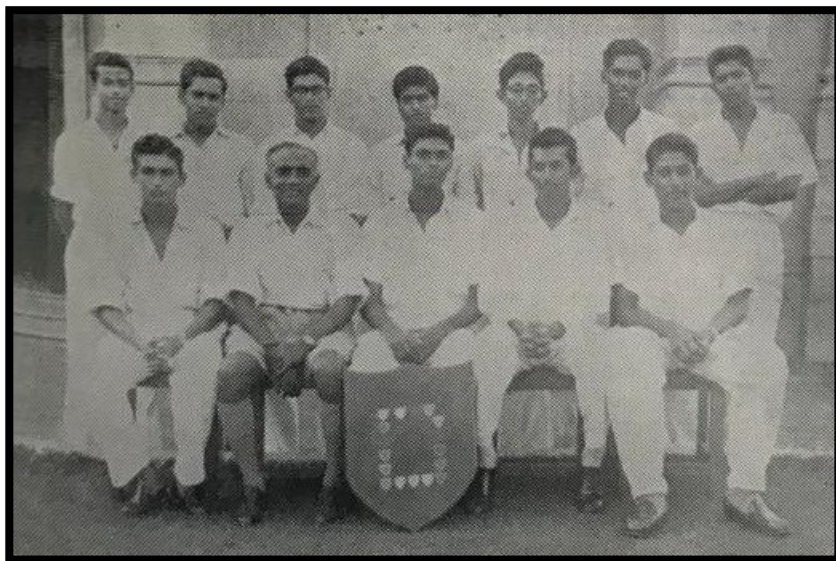
Standing (L-R): R.W. Ferdinands (Coach), P.S. Kumara, B. Dharmapala, G.N. Perera, Mr. C.H. Davidson (Master in charge). **Seated (L-R):** A. Sinnatamby, F.L.N. Senanayake (Capt.), The Warden (Rev. Canon de Saram), **M.H. Tissera** (Vice Capt.), D.D. Abeysekera.



* Rupert Ferdinands, P.S. Kumara & G.N. Perera went on to become National Tennis Champions. **PS Kumara** (L) – snapped in action during the South India Tennis Championship in Madras on Feb 18, 1966.

While Tennis was Kumara's first love, he also excelled in cricket and hockey. He later took to golf and squash becoming national squash champion. In cricket he was a hard hitting right hand batsman using the long handle to smack sixes. Batting at No: 5 he scored an unbeaten 41 at the 1959 RT.

Buck House - Winners Inter-House Senior Athletics Shield (1956)



On leaving the boarding in 1956 Tissera joined Buck House and won his College Athletics Colours that year for the Discus.

Seated (L-R): Michael Tissera, Mr. S.J. Anandanayagam, R.J. Reid (Captain), Asoka Wickramanayake, Ranjith Dambawinna (then K.D.P.R. Perera). **Standing (L-R):** Shanti Wijesundera, Ranjit Boralessa, R. Sunil de Mel, F.L. Senanayake, L.P. de Abrew, L.R. Amarasekera, D.W.S. Fernando.

“Michael Tissera, whose prowess on the cricket fields is better known to sports fans, unleashed a throw of 120 feet 5 inches to improve on his own discus throw record at the 1958 STC Inter-House Track & Field Meet.” Ceylon Daily News

1957 Hockey Team



Seated (L-R): P.S. Kumara, R.T. Molligoda, S. Wijesundara (Capt.), Warden (Rev. Canon R.S. de Saram), D.D. Abeysekera, J.K.C. Gunasekera, S.R.E. Fernando. **Standing (L-R):** V. de Mel, P.H.A.N. Dias, G.S. Marapone, S.R. de Silva, **M.H. Tissera**, G.A. Abeysekera, N. Samarasinghe, Mr. O.A. Abeynaike (Coach).

Having bid farewell to his schooling days in 1958 at the end of the 2nd term, Tissera embraced the beauty of club cricket by joining NCC.



Seated (L-R): Chandra Schaffter, C.I. Gunasekera, Vernon Prins (Captain), Channa Gunasekera, H.I.K. Fernando.

Standing (L-R): Anton Sethupathy, Malcom Francke, Tony, Buhar, Clive Inman, Michael Tissera, A.C.M. Lafir.

***Thomian - Vernon Prins** captained NCC from 1952 – 1959. Under his astute leadership NCC won the “Plum of Sri Lanka Cricket”, the Sara Trophy five times. He scored 5611 runs at an average of 45.25 and took 322 wickets at 15.60. ***Vernon also won the Putt Shot for Seniors at the 1941 Pubs with a throw of 40’ 5 ½”.**

“Vernon Prins was my first club captain at the NCC and also my first Ceylon captain - both in 1958. What a lovely chap Vernon was; a GENTLEMAN to his finger tips, stylish batsman and a bowler of medium pace and off spin. As an off spinner you could hear the ball hum when he bowled it. I was very sad I could not attend his passing as I was in India at the time.”

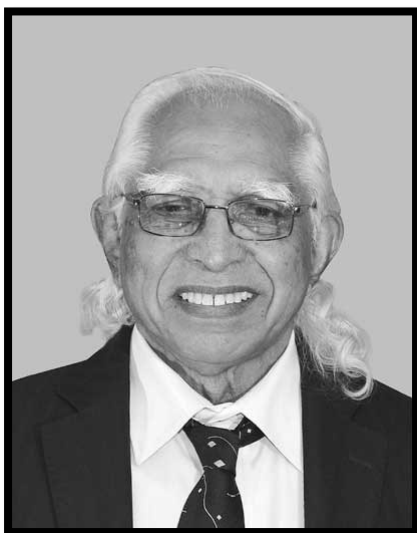
- Michael Tissera



Photo from the book "The History of Sri Lankan International Cricket 1882 - 1982" by Alston Mahadevan

Ceylon and M.C.C. teams, 1958. Standing from left: D. S. de Soysa (umpire), Anton Sethupathy, Michael Tissera, Arthur Milton, A. C. M. Lafir, Raman Subba Row, Clive Inman, Tom Graveney, Malcolm Francke, Peter Loader, Tony Buhar, Peter Richardson, C. D. Mayo (umpire). Seated: Channa Gunasekara, Brian Statham, H. I. K. Fernando, Jim Laker, Vernon Prins (captain), R. P. Senanayake (President. B.C.C.C.), Colin Cowdrey, C. I. Gunasekara, Trevor Bailey, Chandra Schaffter, Godfrey Evans.

* **Michael Tissera** is standing 4th from left (and not 3rd as the photo indicates). The 1958 MCC team was captained by Peter May, who is not in the team photo above which was taken before the first game (05.08.1958) captained by Colin Cowdrey. Ceylon were 47-6, on a damp pitch, when rain stopped play. Peter May was to play the next day but the 2nd game was rained off.



* **Thomian - Chandra Thomas Adolphus Schaffter** - "The Father of Insurance in Sri Lanka," was an outstanding sportsman – a double international in hockey and cricket for Ceylon.

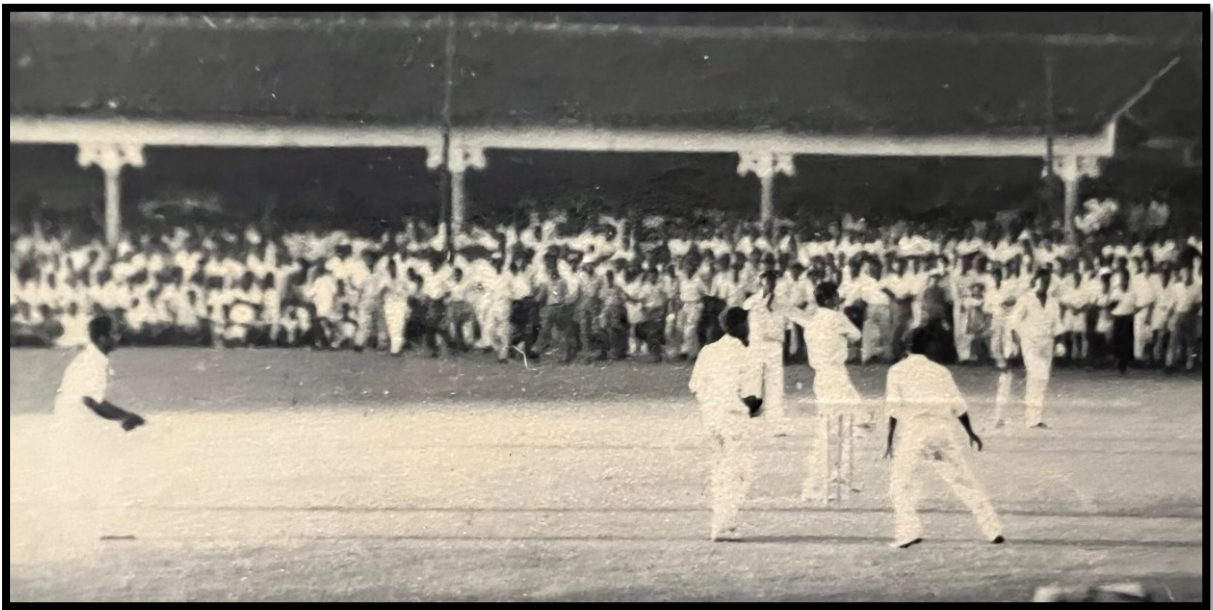
He played for STC from 1947 – 50, captaining the side in 1950. His best first class performance for Ceylon came in the Gopalan Trophy match against Madras in 1953–54, when he opened the bowling and took 3 for 28 and 3 for 71 and the Ceylon team won by an innings.

As a Sports Administrator, his contribution to Tamil Union (the cradle of Sri Lankan cricket) and Sri Lanka has been immense. He has been Manager of Sri Lanka's National Cricket Teams, National Selector in both Cricket and Hockey, and Vice President of the Ceylon Olympic Association. Chandra Schaffter's journey—from the cricket field to entrepreneurship—reflects resilience, passion, and a commitment to excellence.

Schaffter is currently the oldest Thomian cricketer alive and was one of 49 former Sri Lankan cricketers felicitated by Sri Lanka Cricket.



20-year-old Michael Tissera seen here going out to bat with Ceylon captain C.I. Gunasekera in the annual Gopalan Trophy encounter between Ceylon and Madras in 1959.

1961- MAGNIFICENT CENTURY v DAILY MIRROR XI

To the great excitement of a packed Colombo Oval, Michael Tissera slams a full toss bowled by speedster Wesley Hall to the boundary to get to a magnificent century off the last ball of the game against a 'Windies Six' for the 'Daily Mirror XI', on 28th Feb 1961. According to Michael, Wesley Hall in a spirit of sportsmanship, 'deliberately' bowled him a gentle full toss that helped him go from 98 to 102* off the final delivery.

West Indian Maestros - Whistle-stop Cricket in Ceylon - 1961



(Left): A signed photograph of the Six West Indians (L-R): Seymour Nurse, Wesley Hall, Garfield Sobers, Felix Goonewardene – GM, Times Group, Conrad Hunte, Chester Watson and Rohan Kanhai. (Right): The ‘1961 Daily Mirror XI’ had two super stars in Sobers and Kanhai. The Six West Indian cricketers were part of the ‘Ceylon Daily Mirror XI’. The captains of the respective sides were the late Conrad Hunte for the ‘Mirror’ XI and late C. I. Gunasekera for the CCA President’s XI.

There was some magnified batting displays by Kanhai (60), who then retired, Sobers (58) and Wes Hall clobbering (44) in no time, enabling Hunte to declare the innings closed at 305 for six wickets. Wesley Hall, with a 30-yard run-up, and with blistering pace, had the wickets of opener Sarath Silva bowled for naught, Lasantha Rodrigo lbw for one and captain C. I. Gunasekera brilliantly caught by Priya Perera in the slips off a thunderbolt!

But the Presidents’ XI at close were 180 for seven wickets bolstered by a scintillating century by Michael Tissera (102 not out), which was really worth seeing! Though it could be termed an exhibitions match of sorts it was indeed memorable to watch.

Daily Mirror XI – 305 for six declared (C. Hunte 50, C. Watson 22, R. Kanhai 60 (retired) S. Nurse 31 (retired), G. Sobers 58, W. Hall 44, S. Yatawara 2-41)

CCA President XI – 180 for seven at close (M. Tissera 102 not out, W. Hall 3-37)

‘Michael recalled playing for the Daily Mirror Eleven in 1961, with some of the West Indian cricketers after their famous series in Australia where they tied a Test match in Brisbane, they were returning to England to play league cricket and it was a sort of a whistle stop engagement, he reminisced that he got a hundred in that match and according to reports published at the time it had been a magnificent knock.’

- Daily News 26.06.2018

Ceylon & Richie Benaud's 1961 Australian Team – Colombo Oval

In 1961 Richie Benaud brought to Ceylon his Australian Test team on their way to England for the Ashes Series. They played a customary one-day single-innings match against the Ceylon National team, which at that time did not have Test status.

Benaud had in his side Lindsay Kline, an unorthodox left-arm spinner who was thought a match-winning factor in the UK. In the one-day game at Colombo, skipper CI Gunasekera treated him with an exhilarating flurry of fours and sixes direct to the sight-screen to the tune of 26 runs in one over. Unfortunately, rain curtailed further play.



Seated (L-R): Michael Tissera, Abu Fuard, K.M.T. Perera, ACM Lafir, HIK Fernando, CI Gunasekera (Ceylon Capt.), Robert Senanayake, Richie Benaud (Australian Capt.), Lindsay Kline, Norman O' Neill, Bill Lawry, Bob Simpson, Peter Burge.

Standing (L-R): Colin Silva (umpire), Annesley de Silva, A. Polonowita, D. Weerasinghe, S. de Alwis, L. Rodrigo, TCT Edward, Frank Mission, Brian Booth, Ian Quick, Ron Gaunt, Graeme McKenzie, ? (umpire).

* *The Australian cricket team to play Ceylon in a one-day match in Colombo, on 04 April 1961 is: Richie Benaud, Bob Simpson, Bill Lawry, Norm O'Neill, Brian Booth, Peter Burge, Graham McKenzie, Barry Jarman, Lindsay Kline, Ron Gaunt, Frank Misson and Ian Quick, (12th man) – The Canberra Times*

1961 MJ GOPALAN TROPHY 17-19 March 1961, Colombo Oval

Ceylon 1st Innings: 246 (MH Tissera 61, D. Weerasinghe 42, A. Fuard 68)

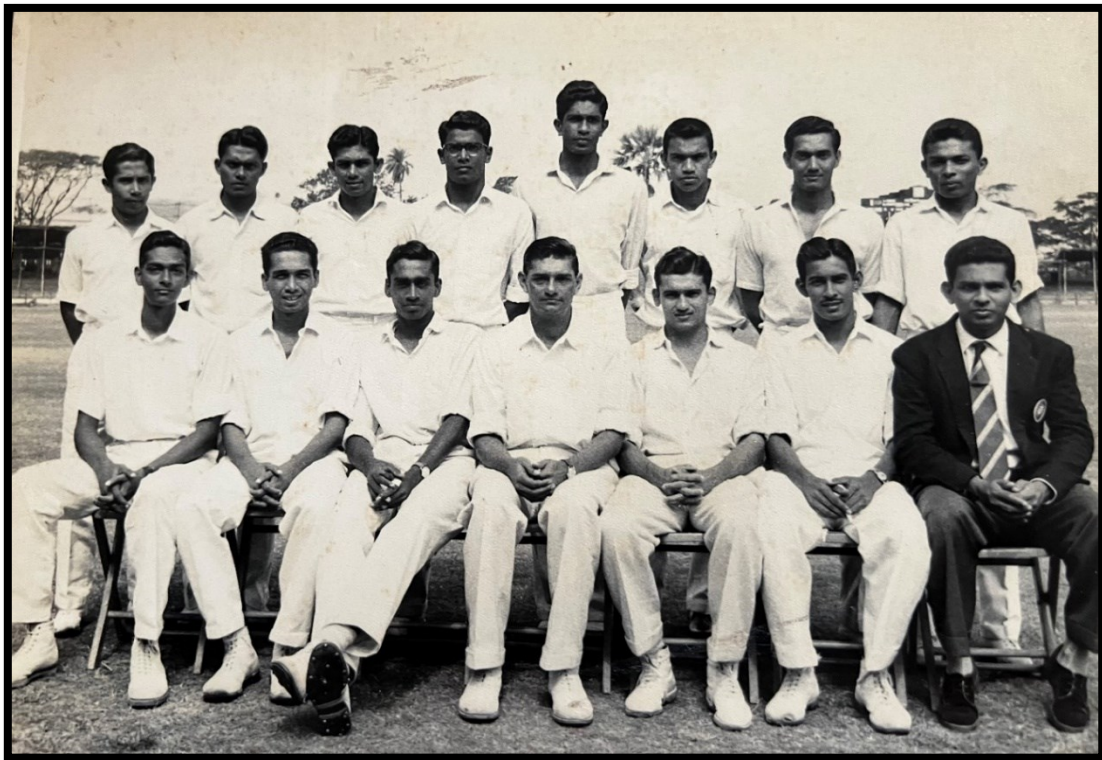
Madras 1st Innings: 137 (JC Patel 31, AG Milka Singh 35, A. Polonowita 4/16, A. Fuard 3/44, CI Gunasekera 2/22)

Ceylon 2nd Innings 230 for 5 dec. (ACM Lafir 121*, MH Tissera 62 run out, TCT Edward 30, VV Kumar 3/66)

Madras 2nd Innings: 170 (JC Patel 35, MK Balakrishnan 31, PK Belliappa 32, A. Polonowita 4/16, CI Gunasekera 3/20, A. Fuard 2/75)

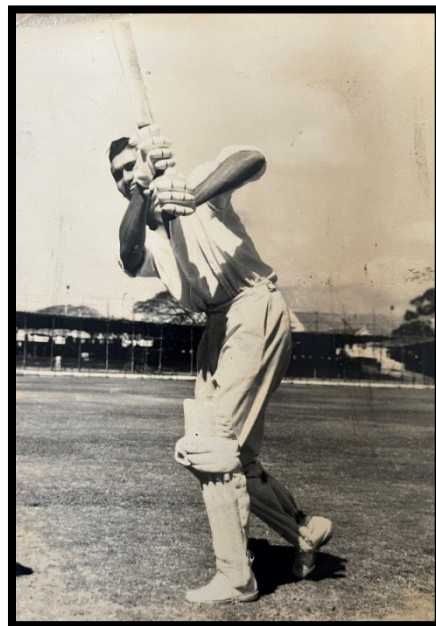
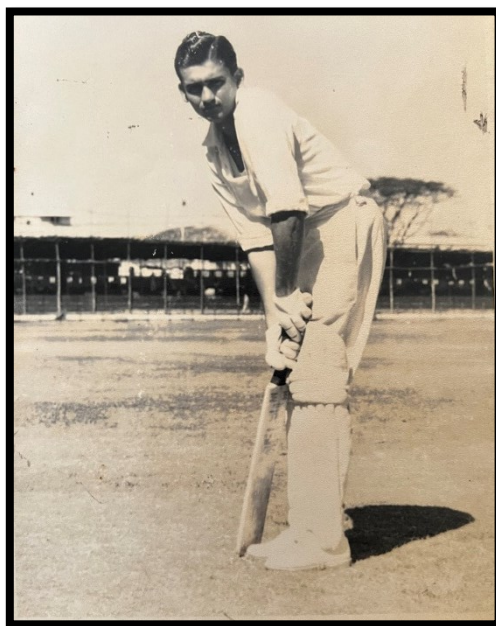
Result: Ceylon Won by 169 runs.

1962 - CEYLON CA TEAM FOR GOPALAN TROPHY IN MADRAS



Seated (L-R): Claud Reid, Tuan Buhar, Lasantha Rodrigo, C.I. Gunasekera (Capt.), **Michael Tissera**, Abu Fuard, Nissal Senaratne (Manager). **Standing** (L-R): Rienzie Perera, D.P. de Silva, A.E. de Silva, T.C.T Edward, L.R. Gunatilleke, T.B. Kehelgamuwa, Anurudda Polonowita, Sonny Yatawara

*Ceylon beat Madras by an innings and 66 runs for the Gopalan Trophy.



Michael Tissera at Municipal Corporation Ground, Madras.



Michael Tissera was not only an exceptional right-hand batsman, but also an effective leg spinner, known for taking some crucial wickets.

“Michael enchanted the spectators and even misled the opponents with his batting and bowling charms.”

**Picture by Chandi Chanmugam courtesy of Oosha Chanmugam.*

1962 MCC Team led by Ted Dexter and Ceylon by C.I. Gunasekara



Seated (L-R): Ken Barrington, A.C.M. Lafir, Peter Richardson, Stanley Jayasinghe, Ted Dexter (Captain, MCC), Mr. Robert Senanayake (President of the Cricket Board), C.I. Gunasekera (Captain, Ceylon), Tony Lock, Gamini Goonesena, Geoff Pullar, H.I.K. Fernando.

Standing (L-R): Annesley de Silva, David Allen, Peter Parfitt, **Michael Tissera**, Jimmy Binks, Abu Fuard, Bob Barber, Alan Brown, L.R. Gunatilleke, Lasantha Rodrigo, Barry Knight, Geoffrey Millman, Anurudda Polonowita, Clive Inman.

* Feb 1962: Ceylon won the toss and elected to bat.

Ceylon: 210 (Lafir 84) & 144-9 (Dexter 5-51) & **MCC: 284** (Barrington 93, Parfitt 50) & 72-2

Result: MCC won by 8 wickets

1964 – Bobby Simpson’s Australian Team to Ceylon & England



Front (L-R): Wally Grout, Peter Burge, Bobby Simpson (Captain), R.C. Steele (Manager), Brian Booth (Vice Captain), Norman O’Neill, Barry Jarman.

Middle (L-R): Neil Hawke, Bill Lawry, Graham McKenzie, J. Ledward (Treasurer), Alan Connolly, Grahame Corling, Johnny Martin.

Back (L-R): Sherwood (Scorer), Bob Cowper, Rex Sellers, Ian Redpath, Jack Potter, Tom Veivers, James (Physiotherapist).

15 April 1964: Bobby Simpson’s Australian side in one of their 'whistle stop' matches, on their way to England, played Ceylon in a 1-day single innings match at the Colombo Oval.

Australia won the toss and scored **249** in 58 overs (Bob Cowper 65, Norman O’ Neil 45, Peter Burge 36; Johnny Martin 25, Brian Booth 21; Anura Polonowita 3/63, Neil Chanmugam 2/29, Abu Fuard 2/80).

Ceylon, captained by C.I. Gunasekera were **101 for 3** when rain prevented further play. **Michael Tissera coming in at no:5 struck a stylish 51 not out** while Buddy Reid was unbeaten on 29.

* Australia retained the 1964 Ashes series 1–0 (thanks to a brilliant innings of 160 from Peter Purge in the 3rd Test at Headingley) with 4 matches drawn.

1964 - Ceylon beat Pakistan by 41 Runs



Photo courtesy of Darrell Lieversz

The History of Sri Lankan International Cricket 1882 - 1982 by Alston Mahadevan

The Ceylon and Pakistan teams, 1964. Back row, from left: M. Razick, M. Illyas, N. Chanmugam, S. Rana, P. Sajjad, T. Edwards, D. Lieversz. Middle row: M. L. Idroos, A. Polonowita, D. Heyn, S. Main, B. Reid, A. Butt, A. Kadir, M. Hussan, F. Hamid, M. Ponniah, M. Devaraj, A. Iqbal. Seated: Majid Khan, P.I. Pieris, J. Burki, H.I.K. Fernando, Imtiaz Ahmed, Robert Senanayake (President - BCCC), Michael Tissera, Intikhab Alam, Abu Fuard, F. Aizzuzadeen, Nisal Senaratne (Secretary - BCCC), On ground: R. Perera (scorer), Don Thomas (masseur), Gulam Abbas.



Michael Tissera (L) tosses the coin as Pakistan skipper Imtiaz Ahmed calls incorrectly.

The Very First Victory in an Unofficial Test

In Aug 1964 the Ceylon team enlightened by the spirits of Michael Tissera beat Pakistan by 41 runs and this filled the record books of Ceylonese cricket as the very first victory in an unofficial test match.

Darrel Liewersz who made a winning debut under Michael Tissera claiming 5 for 40 and 4 for 28, wrecked the Pakistani batting. After Liewersz did the initial damage, Neil Chanmugam dented the lower middle order taking 4 for 28 which included the scalps of Shafqat Rana, Intikhab Alam, Asif Iqbal and Farooq Hamid. Leg spinner Intikhab Alam had a superb game for Pakistan with match figures of 11 for 92.

28-30 Aug 1964 at the Colombo Oval

Ceylon 1st Innings: 152 (MH Tissera 33, HIK Fernando 31, Mano Ponniah 26; Intikhab Alam 4/51, Pervez Sajjad 4/48)

Pakistan 1st Innings: 99 (Abdul Kadir 27, Javed Burki 22; Darrell Liewersz 5/40, Neil Chanmugam 4/28)

Ceylon 2nd Innings: 137 (TCT Edward 20, BG Reid 20; Intikhab Alam 7/41, Pervez Sajjad 2/36)

Pakistan 2nd Innings: 149 (Javed Burki 62; Darrell Liewersz 4/28, A Polonowita 3/45)

Ceylon Won by 41 runs.

Tissera commended the hostile swing bowling of Darrell Liewersz which really had the Pakistani batsmen reeling *“Darrell was great! That Pakistan match was his debut and he bowled brilliantly and won us the match taking so many wickets. He bowled mainly in-swingers, but big in-swingers and I haven’t seen many local bowlers move the ball as much as Darell did. Superb bowler.”*

– Michael Tissera (in conversation with Ravi Rudra, 19 Dec. 2023)

“I appreciate Michael’s comments but it was the wonderful teamwork led by Michael himself that did it. It was Michael’s first game as captain of Ceylon cricket and his style was so different to C. I Gunasekera under whom I played for Ceylon against Australia and before that against Madras in the Gopalan Trophy game. Michael seemed to be able to bring out the best in each one of us.”

- Darrell Liewersz

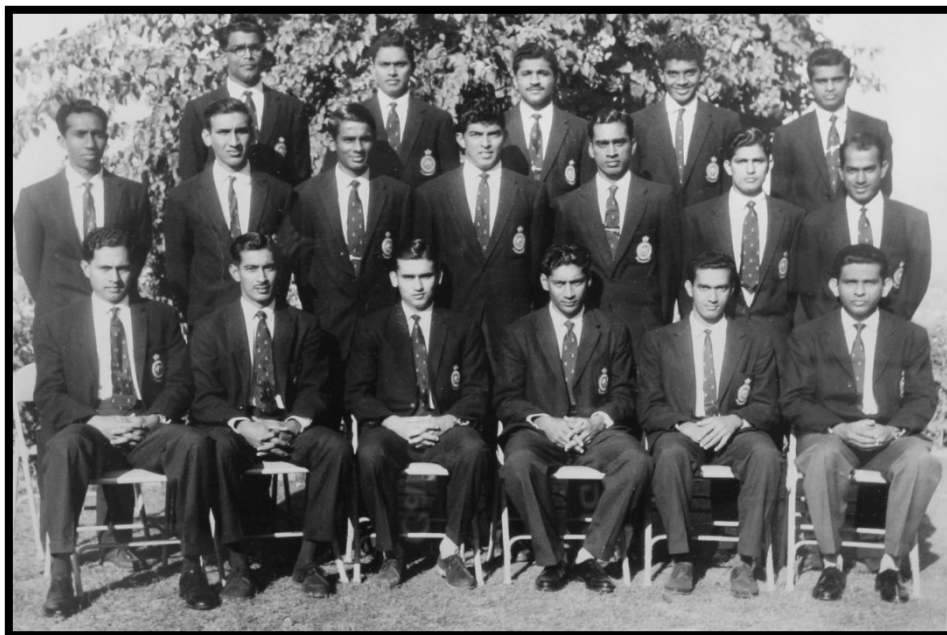
“I was there at the Oval...it was a magical spell of in-swing bowling !”

- S. Skandakumar

“I cut school and watched this match with some friends and enjoyed every moment of it. I cannot understand why they called it a Pakistan A side. Look at the test stars in their ranks. Also, we had Six Thomians (Tissera, TCT Edward, Mano Ponniah, Buddy Reid, Ian Pieris & Neil Chanmugam) in our side and we young Thomians were so proud of all of them. Well worth the risk we took to watch that match!!

- Ajit Jayasekera

1964-65 Tour And A Historic First Win Against India



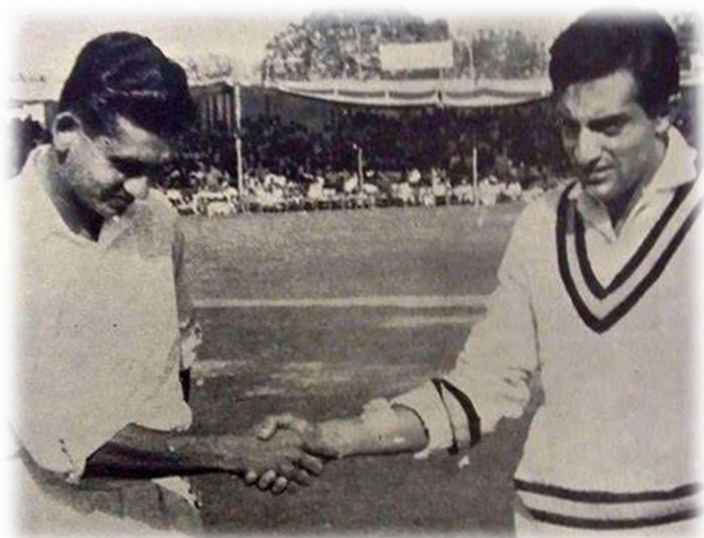
Seated (L-R): Stanley Jayasinghe, Abu Fuard, **Michael Tissera (Captain)**, H.I.K. 'Herbert' Fernando, Anurudda Polonowita, Nissal Senaratne (Manager).

Standing – Middle Row (L-R): Muttiah Devaraj, Neil Chanmugam, Mano Ponniah, Darrell Lieversz, Lasantha Rodrigo, Sylvester Dias, Dhansiri Weerasinghe.

Standing – Back Row (L-R): T.C.T. 'Trevelyan' Edward, D. P. 'Premachandra' de Silva, Norton Fredrick, Ranjit Fernando, Lareef Idroos.

*The team to India had Five Thomians – Tissera, Chanmugam, Edward, Idroos & Ponniah.

2nd – 5th Jan 1965 - 3rd Test v India, Ahmedabad



Michael Tissera (L) wins the crucial toss and puts Pataudi's Indians to bat first.

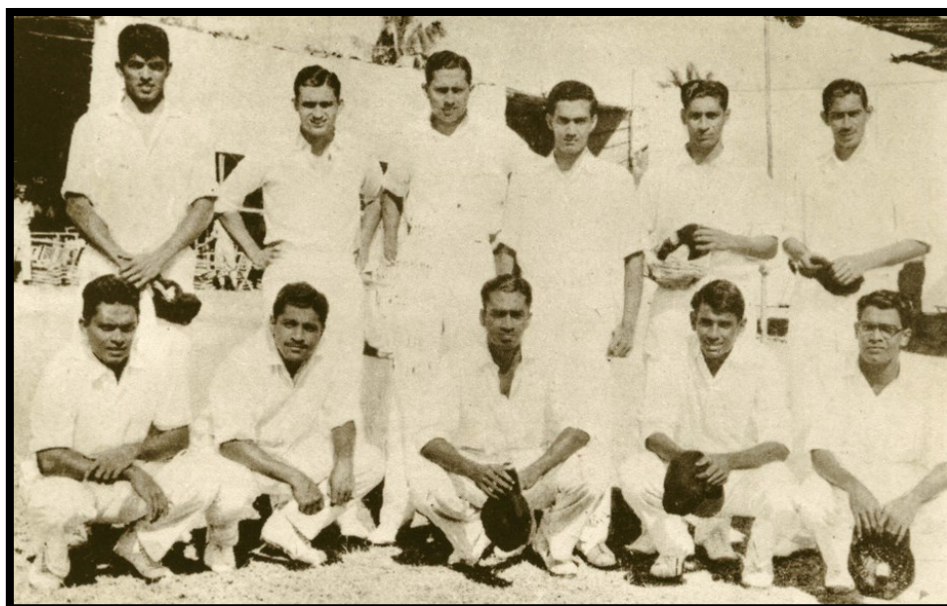


Skipper Michael Tissera introducing the Ceylon Team (L-R): Nissal Senaratne (Manager)...Anurudda Polonowita, Dhansiri Weerasinghe, Stanley Jayasinghe, Lasantha Rodrigo, Mano Ponniah, Neil Chanmugam, Darrell Lieversz and Muttiah Devaraj.

Looking back at Sri Lanka's only 'Test' win in India

Rex Clementine Fri, Nov 17, 2017

“Leading up to recent the India versus Sri Lanka Test series, there has been much talk of how the tourists have failed to win a Test match in India after several attempts. Yet, way back in 1965, before they had gained Test status, a Sri Lankan team defeated Nawab of Pataudi's side in an unofficial Test match in Ahmedabad.



Standing: Darrell Lieversz, **Michael Tissera** (captain), Stanley Jayasinghe, Anuruddha Polonowita, HIK Fernando, Abu Fuard. **Squatting:** DP de Silva, Norton Fredrick, Lasantha Rodrigo, Mano Ponniah, TCT Edwards.

Sri Lanka, then known as Ceylon, were led by Michael Tissera. He had been selected captain at the age of 24...Tissera, however, was a natural leader. He was in the tea industry and during his travels to places like New Zealand, had rubbed shoulders with other famous names in the sport and had the knack of leading a side. Team meetings were never heard of, prior to his arrival, and he ushered in a new culture.

The 1964 tour comprised three unofficial Tests and five other First Class matches. India had won the first two 'Tests' in Bangalore and Hyderabad comfortably. The third game was played in Ahmedabad.

"It rained for one and half days and there was little hope of play. Some 25,000 people were there in the ground and mid-afternoon on day two Pataudi came up to me and said, 'There are so many people who have come to see the game. Can we play?' he asked. I had no hesitations. Luckily we won the toss and put them in. It had rained so much, there was mud all over the pitch. Those days unlike now, pitches weren't covered. So on a bad wicket, the underdogs had a bit of a chance," Tissera, recalled in an interview with Cricbuzz.

In the second ball of the game, Sri Lanka were reduced to ten men as opening batsman Trevelyan Edward was hurt. *"He was fielding at leg slip and got hit and had to be carried off the field. He took no further part in the game,"* Tissera remembered.

India, comprising Test stars such as Dilip Sardesai, Farookh Engineer, Abbas Ali Baig, Hanumant Singh and Pataudi made a mere 189 with Stanley Jayasinghe taking six wickets. Jayasinghe was playing county cricket at Leicestershire and his experience came in handy. In the absence of the injured Edward, Ceylon opened with Fuard. *"Abu was a very good leaver of the ball. He knew where his off-stump was and scored a very good 40 in the second innings. On a wicket like that his skill of leaving the ball was important."*

Sri Lanka's domestic cricket in the 1960s was played for just one and half days and it took some time for the players to adjust to four day cricket. In the first two games, lack of patience had hurt them, but by the final game they had learned their lessons. *"No doubt it took us some time to get used to things. The second Test we should have saved. We could have done that had we battled for another 15 minutes or so. Had we drawn that game, the series would have been 1-1. But we had learned our lessons by the last Test,"* Tissera assessed.

Sri Lanka finished day three on 144 for seven and were trailing by 45 runs. Anuruddha Polonowita 53 & HIK Fernando 35* combined to put on an invaluable partnership of 85 for the 7th wicket. The next morning, Tissera took a gamble by declaring with the overnight score. That surprised the Indians.

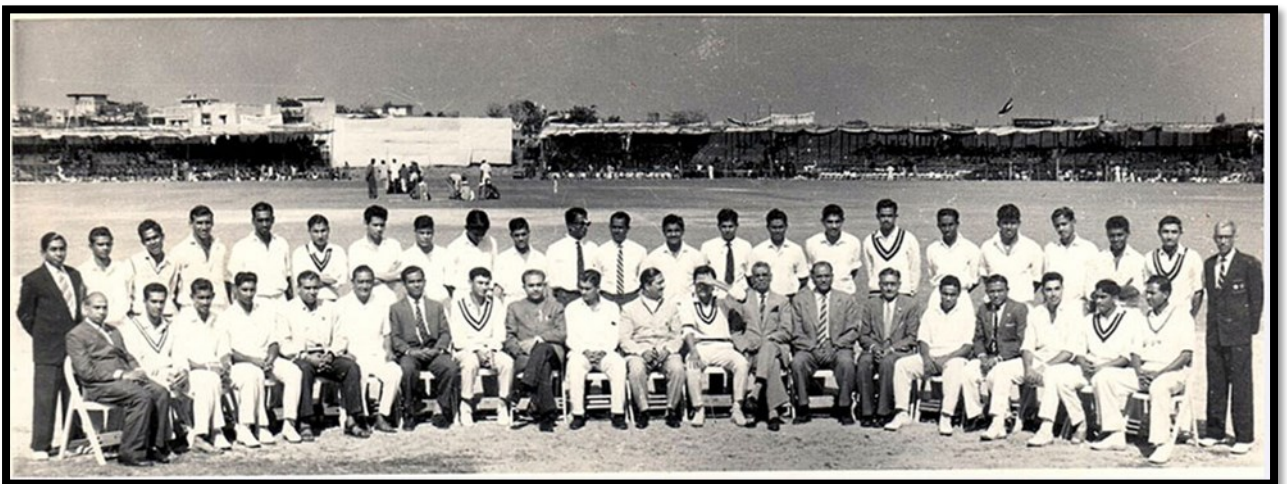
"On the final day, had we batted, it would have been a tame draw. There was obviously dew on the wicket as the wickets weren't covered those days. So we wanted to give our bowlers bit of a chance, but what we didn't expect was for India to get bowled out before lunch for 66."

That left Sri Lanka with a target of 111 runs. After a good start - 77 for two - lack of experience saw another collapse. At 98 for six, India's fine bowling attack posed a real threat.

"It was a bit of a struggle to get those runs after a good effort by the openers. Just managed to hang in there. We were concerned at one stage. But Anuruddha Polonowita, who had batted well in the first innings did well again to hold on from other side," Tissera, who brought up the three-wicket win with a boundary added. "India were a very strong side. They were experienced and such a good all-round side. We needed lot of time to catch up with them and the fact that Ahmedabad was a bad wicket helped us."

"The Indian players were very friendly with us. I built up a good friendship with Hanumant Singh after that tour. Pataudi was an absolute gentleman. He was a charismatic leader. India had not had someone like him before. He had got the team to play together and gave them confidence. He was a very good leader of men and I had a lot to learn from him," Tissera concluded.

Brief Scores: **India 189** (Ramesh Saxena 63*, Hanumant Singh 30, Nawab of Pataudi 28; Stanley Jayasinghe 6-38, Norton Fredrick 4-85) & **66** (A Polonowita 3-7, Stanley Jayasinghe 3-14, Norton Fredrick 3-24)lost to **Ceylon 144/7 declared** (A Polonowita 53, HIK Fernando 38* Michael Tissera 28; Umesh Kulkarni 4-43) & **115/6** (Abu Fuard 40; Mano Ponniah 22, Stanley Jayasinghe 19, Michael Tissera 15*, Rajinder Goel 4-33)



The Indian Team (led by Nawab of Pataudi) & The Ceylon Team (led by Tissera)

"At the end of the third day, Michael summoned a team meeting and informed us that he was thinking of declaring our innings at the start of play the next day even though we were 45 runs behind. Michael felt that the condition of the pitch after the overnight dew would suit our bowlers better. It was a gamble but we all agreed with him, and this declaration was indeed the masterstroke that enabled us to win the Test match.

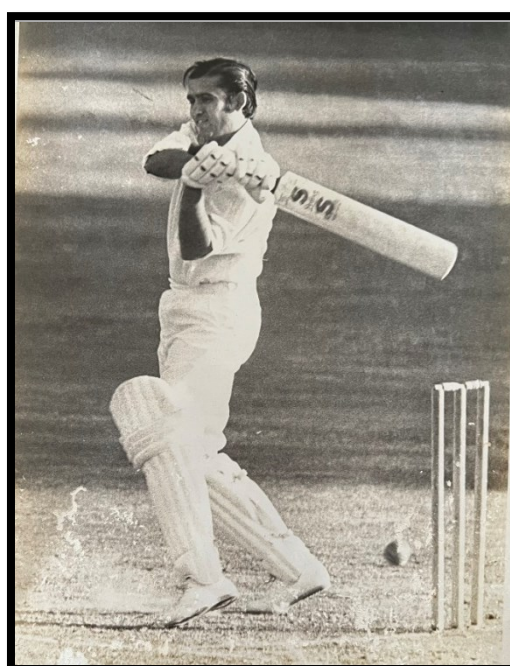
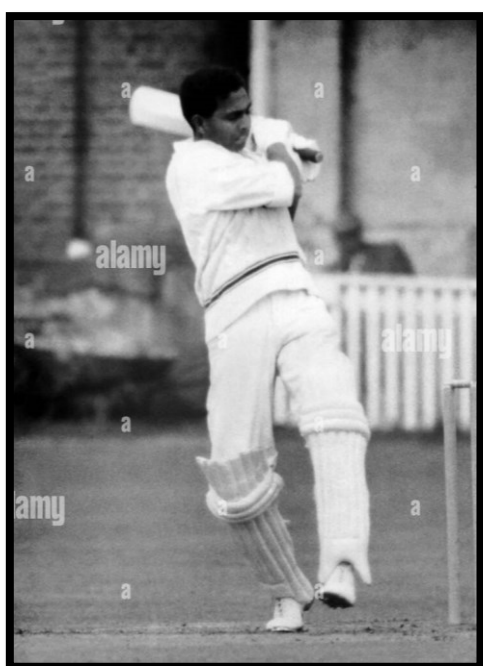
I think the shock declaration rattled the Indians. They never would have imagined that they were going to have to bat at the start of play that morning. A tame draw was the popular prediction. The bowling run up area was so wet and slippery that Freddy and I found it quite difficult to achieve a firm foot hold.

However Freddy and I were able to swing and seam the ball lavishly. Everything seemed to be working out to the plan. We got off to a great start with India losing their first three wickets for

four runs. Stanley Jayasinghe and Polonowita were also able to make use of the seaming surface....Wickets fell regularly and India were all out for 66. We then had to make 112 runs to win which we did. It was indeed a great win... It was a pleasure playing under Michael Tissera as captain. I give full credit to Michael for inspiring us.

The only sad memory of the match was when Trevelyan Edwards our opening batsman was hit in the face. It was early in India's first innings while he was fielding in the slips. The ball shattered his spectacles causing serious external injury to his eye. He could no longer take part in the game. We won the match without our opening batsman.

Our win at Ahmedabad in the third test was Ceylon's first victory in an unofficial Test match. It was the first step towards us being accepted as a full member of the ICC. It is sad that after three decades of Test cricket, we are yet to win a Test in India." – Darrell Lieversz



Batting allrounder **Stanley Jayasinghe** (L) had a fine game with the bat in both innings of the 2nd Test against India at Hyderabad in the 1964/65 series. Batting at number (4) he top scored with 78 & 135 and with **Michael Tissera** (122) put a superb partnership of **224 for the 4th wicket**.

Then on a damp wicket in the decisive 3rd test at Ahmedabad, trump card Jayasinghe used his valuable county experience with Leicestershire to rout India with bowling figures of 6/38 and 3/14 that gave Sri Lanka an historical win.

"Stanley Jayasinghe took nine wickets in the match, despite not being a regular bowler. His county experience was key to his success. He bowled a lot on the tour. He bowled off spin but his constant change of pace seemed to confuse most batsmen." – Darrell Lieversz

[Sri Lanka's FIRST win against India. 1965 Ahmadabad. Pataudi, Micheal Tissera. \(youtube.com\)](#) (cut & paste link to watch fascinating **video clip** of the historical win).

Rare Photos from the Historical Win Against India



(L) Michael Tissera scored 28 in the first innings on a tricky wicket & (R) Tissera hitting a lovely on-drive for four in the 2nd innings - the winning runs off left arm spinner Rajinder Goel.



(L) Tissera & Polonowita scamper for a second run as the ball crosses the boundary to record a historical victory for Ceylon, and the two of them (R) walk back to the pavilion clapped by the Indian team led by Pataudi.

'Hero of the Test Win Stanley Jayasinghe made his international debut on the tour of Pakistan in 1950 as a schoolboy while captaining Nalanda. He had the distinction of scoring his maiden century, the first by a Sri Lankan cricketer in Pakistan. The following year, he was crowned Sportsman of the Year by the Times of Ceylon.' – Sunday Times

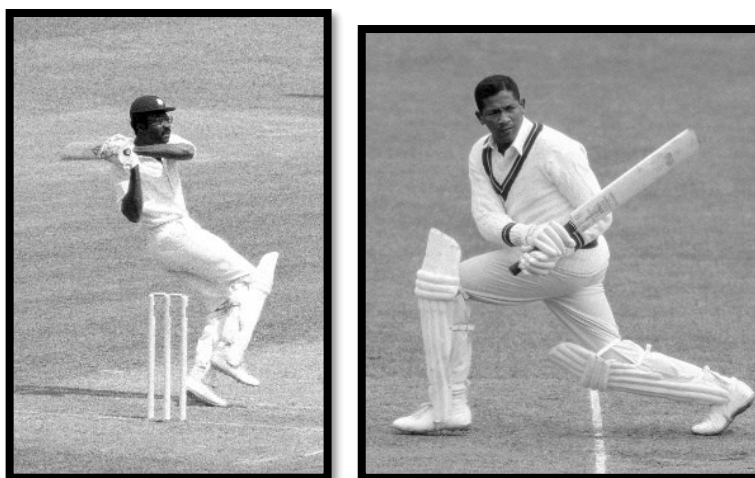


January 1967 – CEYLON v WEST INDIES



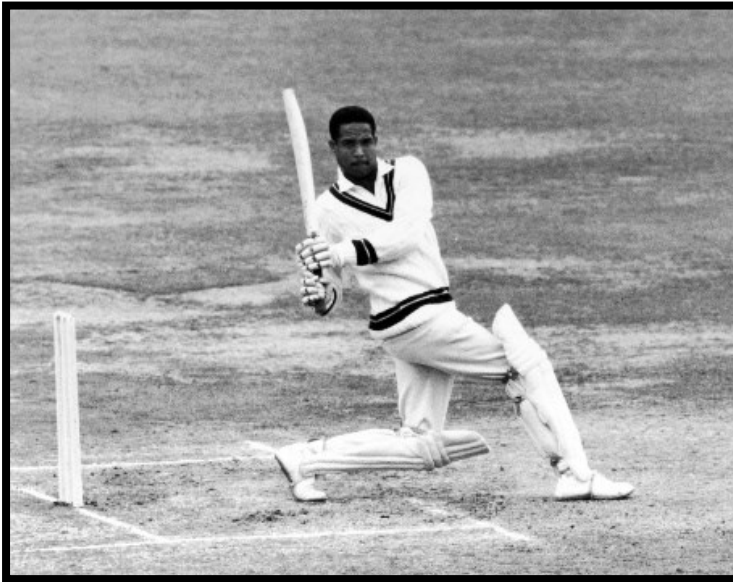
(L): Michael Tissera greets Conrad Hunte at the Airport. (R): Two Thomian Greats - **Neil Chanmugam** (72) & **PI 'Ian' Pieris** (46*) blasted 110 runs in just over an hour against the mighty West Indians at the Colombo Oval. Were Neil & Ian the best No: 10 & 11 in the History of 'Test' Cricket?

"On the first day our batsmen had done quite well to post a score of 290 for 9 with David Heyn 69, Michael Tissera 52, Lionel Fernando 48, and Dr. H I K Fernando 42. Play resumed on day 2 with Ceylon's last pair at the crease. We witnessed a grand display of power batting by our No 10 and No 11 batsmen. Neil Chanmugam & P.I. Pieris added 110 runs for the last wicket in 70 minutes of exquisite stroke play. One of the sixers clobbered by Chanmugam saw the ball wedged between the tiles of the pavilion roof. A groundsman had to climb up to fetch the ball. Invariably any last wicket partnership of substance gets one's adrenalin going. In this instance, with Ceylon scoring exactly 400 runs in their first innings, the partnership between Chanmugam and Pieris was of great significance and brought a great deal of joy and pride to the spectators.



Clive Lloyd (L) & Basil Butchers (R) – Superb Batting Exhibition

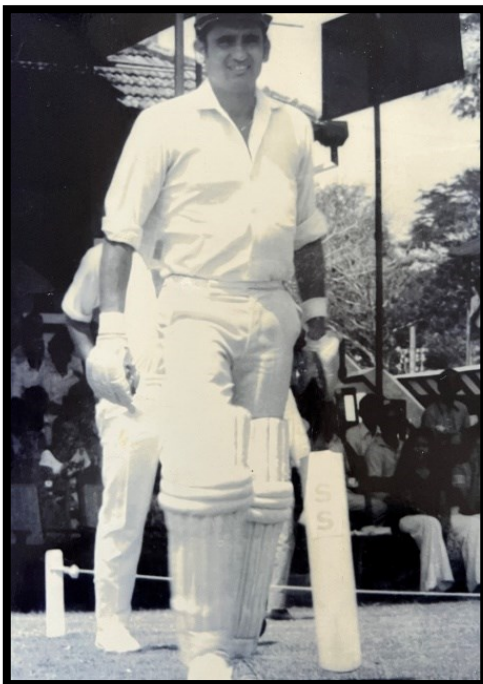
It was then the turn of the West Indians to entertain the crowd. Despite our bowlers claiming a couple of early wickets, we were to witness a grand exhibition of power-hitting by **Clive Lloyd** who scored 138 and along the way belted several sixes, many of which landed and broke the roof tiles – some cleared the roof! On the opposite side was **Basil Butcher**, who scored 152 runs with a lot of grace and timing. However, I was heartbroken, my hero **Sir Garfield Sobers** did not get the opportunity to bat on day 2.



Father described to my brother and me in great detail the century (115) scored by Sobers on day three. According to him, some of the stroke play of Sobers was unbelievable. It had been full of artistry and sheer class. Sri Lankan paceman **Sarath Wimalaratne** nearly bowled Sobers out before he had scored. However, after that, it was all one-way traffic with Sobers in full flow. He was a languid cricketer with loose limbs and a delight to watch. West Indies declared their innings having scored 549 runs for 8 wickets.

In the second innings, Sri Lanka scored 163 for 3 wickets, and the match ended in a draw. **Lionel Fernando (72) and Anura Tennakoon (54)** remained unbeaten.”

- Sanjeewa Jayaweera, in Sunday Island



Feb 1969 - Michael Tissera captained Ceylon that beat Colin Cowdrey's MCC in the first of two limited over games. **This was the first time Ceylon had beaten an English side.**

*MCC 236-6 lost to Ceylon 234-7 (R. Fernando 58, B.G. Reid 57) on faster scoring rate. (Buddy Reid & Ranjit Fernando compiled a 121-run opening partnership)

*MCC 192-5 beat Ceylon 174 (H.I.K. Fernando 65)

***3-day match:** Ceylon 283-9 dec (A. Tennakoon 101) & 118-0 (R. Fernando 59* & B. G. Reid 50*) drew with MCC 406-4 dec (J.H. Edrich 177, T.W. Graveney 106, K.W.R. Fletcher 81).

Ceylon v Australia - Colombo Oval, 24,25,26 October 1969 (3-day match)

Australia: 197: Doug Walter 49, Graham McKenzie 52, Keith Stackpole 25; Neil Chanmugam 5/47, Abu Fuard 2/34, Daya Sahabandu 2/64.

Ceylon: 148: C. Balakrishnan 55, David Heyn 26, Anura Tennekoon 18; Asley Mallett 3/35, Graham McKenzie 2/8, LC Mayne 2/19, John Gleeson 2/63.

Australia: 158 for 6 dec: Bill Lawry 70, Ian Chappell 29; Keith Stackpole 19; Neil Chanmugam 3/43, Daya Sahabandu 2/52.

Ceylon: 132/5: Michael Tissera 53*, HIK Fernando 18; John Gleeson 3/32.



Bill Lawry bowled Neil Chanmugam for 70 in the 2nd innings.



Neil Chanmugam mesmerised the Aussies taking 5 for 47 in the 1st inning. He took three wickets in the 2nd, getting Bill Lawry for the second time and the wickets of Doug Walters and Ian Redpath. Lawry was generous in praising Chanmugam's efforts and complimented him as the best bowler of the match.

**Neil Chanmugam also took 5 for 28 against Mike Smith's MCC in 1965 having broken into limelight in 1962 when he scalped five English batsmen for 43 runs to dismiss Ted Dexter's MCC team for 159 playing for Ceylon C.A.*

1969 Sportsman & Sportswoman of the Year

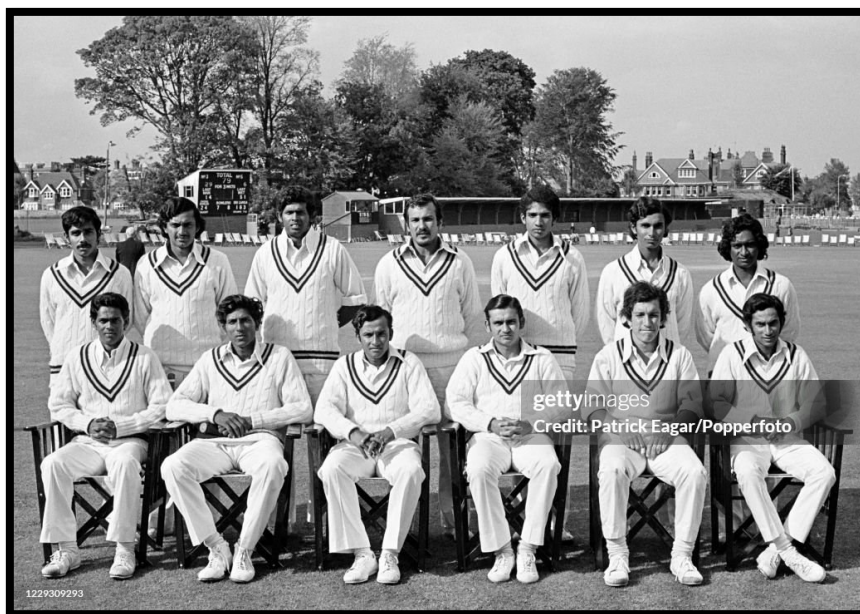


Michael Tissera who led Ceylon XI to victory against the MCC in a 60-Over match was chosen as '**Sportsman of the Year 1969**' by a special panel in the contest organised by 'The Times of Ceylon' and sponsored by the Ceylon Cold Stores Ltd.

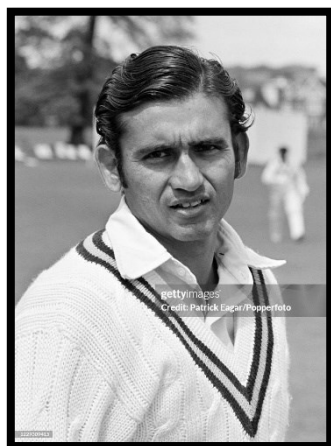
Miss KG Badra, one of Asia's best woman sprinters who won the 100m and 200m in Singapore, India and Ceylon by clocking new marks was once again chosen as '**Sportswoman of the Year 1969**'. They will receive trophies presented by Elephant House. The panel that chose the winners consisted of Major-General B.R. Heyn, Col. F.C. de Saram, Dr. H.S.R. Goonewardena, Director of Sports, Mr P. Julian Grero, Mr. P. Sivalingam and Mr. Ramsay Ziegelaar.

A fabulous musical fiesta has been arranged this time for the presentation of the awards on 29th January 1970 at the Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium. Mr. V.A. Sugathadasa, Minister of Nationalised Services and Sports will be the Chief Guest. [*In the absence of Michael Tissera, who was away in Kandy leading NCC in an important match, his wife Mrs. Junette Tissera accepted the award on behalf of Michael in front of an unprecedented crowd of over 12,000 sports fans who packed every nook and corner].

First Cricket World Cup – 1975



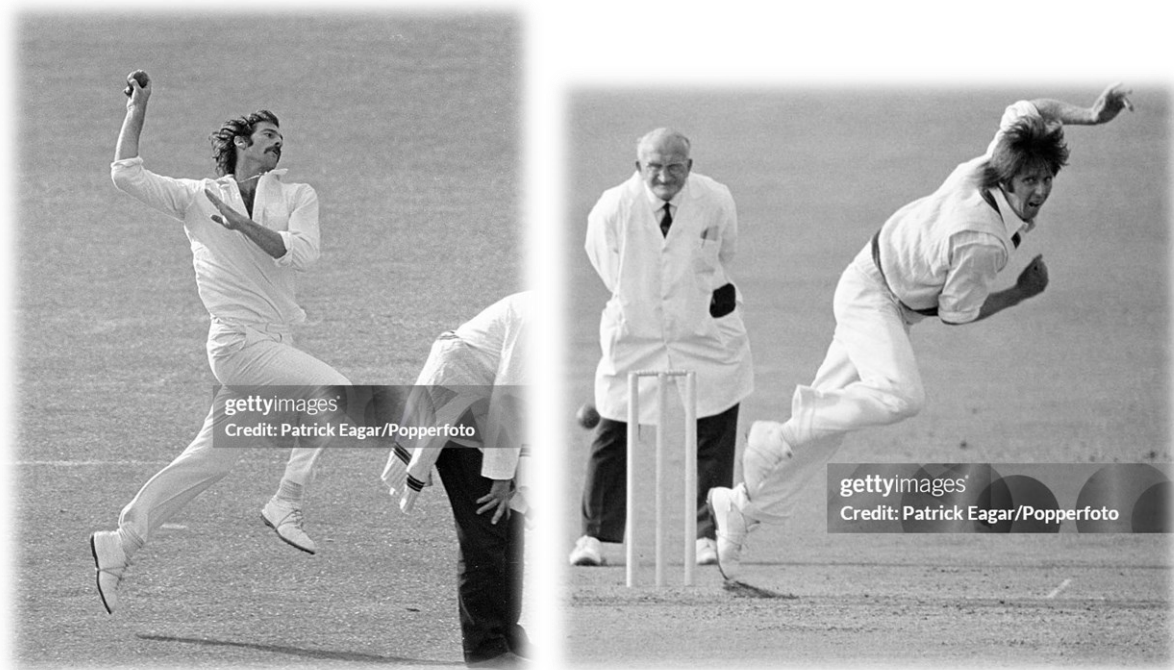
Standing L-R: Bandula Warnapura, Lalith Kaluperuma, Tony Opatha, Denis Chanmugam, Ajit de Silva, Anura Ranasinghe, Duleep Mendis. **Seated L-R:** D.S. 'Somachandra' de Silva, H.S.M 'Mevan' Pieris, Anura Tennekoon (Captain), Michael Tissera, David Heyn, Sunil Wettimuny. **Absent:** Ranjit Fernando



(L): Michael Tissera during the 1975 World Cup warm-up match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at The Saffrons, Eastbourne. Two weeks later, 36-year-old Michael Tissera scored a gutsy 52 in 72 balls with 7 boundaries against Ian Chappell's mighty Australian attack that consisted of Dennis Lillie, Jeff Thomson, Max Walker and Asley Mallett. Tissera and Anura Tennekoon (48) were involved in a partnership of 82 after gallant Sunil Wettimuny (53) and Duleep Mendis (32) had to retire hurt after being hit by Jeff Thomson, possibly the quickest bowler ever in world cricket. Tissera hung his boots playing for the National Team after the 1975 Cricket World Cup in England.

(R): Tissera leading the CTTA Team back after having beaten the 'Planters' – July 1983.

Lillie & Thomson, the most lethal pair, in action at the 1975 World Cup



"Jeff Thomson frightened me, and I was sitting 200 yards away," wrote Keith Miller on seeing Thomson destroy the England batting in the 1974/75 Ashes.

"Ashes to Ashes, dust to dust, if Thomson don't get ya, Lillie must."

Few months prior to the 1975 Cricket World Cup, during the 74-75 Ashes series in Australia, England Captain Mike Denness had an early taste of what was in store when he was hit on the collarbone by Thomson. In those days there were no helmets and no body protection. *"Of course it hurt, but you couldn't show any signs of distress against the Aussies because they will always smell blood. Those days I used to wear a gold St Christopher pendant, and it was only when I got back to the dressing room that I found the ball had literally embedded the pendant in my chest. For any bouncers aimed at your head, you had to rely on your reflexes, or, for those brave enough to take on the hook shot, you had to be prepared to lose your front teeth."*

In the first four-and-a-half Tests Thomson took 33 wickets at 17.93 and left England battered and beaten. He seemed set to break Arthur Mailey's Australian record of 36 wickets in a series when on the rest day of the penultimate Test in Adelaide he tore muscles in his shoulder playing tennis. By then, England's morale was in tatters. Lillie's form had increased as the series went on and Thomson's raw pace had left nerves shattered. It was in that Test that Thomson struck David Lloyd so hard in the groin that his protective box was turned inside out. Denness noted Lloyd's reaction when he returned to the dressing room after one innings. *"Within seconds his body was quivering. His neck and the top half of his body in particular were shaking. He was shell-shocked."*

"There was no respite," added Dennis Amiss, who the previous year had set a record for the most Test runs in a calendar year but ended the tour a shadow of the batsman he was. *"They were in your face the whole time."*

PAST TEST CAPTAINS



(L-R): Michael Tissera, CI Gunasekera, Veron Prins, Sathi Coomarasamy, Ranjan Madugalle, Gamini Goonesena, Anura Tennekoon, Bandula Warnapura.

Former Ceylon Captains - One Thomian among Four Royalists



(L-R): Michael Tissera, Bertram Russell Heyn, Sathi Coomarasamy, Sargo Jayawickrema, FC de Saram.

Michael Tissera and Norman O' Neil (extreme right) were invited to Malaysia to attend the opening of their Sports Foundation. The others are all Malaysian officials.



"I was an admirer of O' Neil's batting. Beautiful player." – Michael



Michael Tissera (standing extreme right) seen here with Ana Punchihewa (President), Dave Whatmore (Coach), Anura Ranatunga (Captain), Carlton Bernardus (SLC Board), Anura Tennekoon, Angelo Rayer, Ranjit Fernando, T.G. Francis (Umpire), Duleep Mendis (Manager), Mahinda Senevirathna and others during a brain-storming session of the Sri Lanka Cricket Board in Bentota (1996) on '**How to be the Best Cricket Nation in the World**' – just prior to Sri Lanka being crowned 1996 World Champions in Lahore, Pakistan. What an Achievement!

MCC World Cricket Committee at Lord's – 2009

MCC World Cricket Committee was established in 2006 as an independent complimentary body to ICC, to discuss the prevalent issues of the game.



Seated (L-R): Barry Richards, Rahul Dravid, Derek Underwood, Tony Lewis (Chairman), Steve Waugh, Majid Khan, Mike Brearley, **Michael Tissera**.

Standing (L-R): Mike Gatting, Michael Atherton, Martin Crowe, Shaun Pollock, Courtney Walsh, Tony Dodemaide, Alec Stewart, Geoffrey Boycott, David Richardson.

MCC World Cricket Committee at Lord's - 2011



Seated (L-R): Barry Richards, Steve Waugh, name not known, Tony Lewis (Chairman), Christopher Martin-Jenkins (MCC President), Geoffrey Boycott, Majid Khan and Mike Brearley.
Standing (L-R): Mike Gatting, Martin Crowe, Alec Stewart, Shaun Pollock, Courtney Walsh, Tony Dodemaide, Steve Bucknor, Anil Kumble, David Richardson and **Michael Tissera**.

The Sobers–Tissera Trophy



The Sobers–Tissera Trophy awarded to the winners of Test series between West Indies and Sri Lanka. First awarded following the 2015-16 series, it is named after Sir Garfield Sobers and Michael Tissera, prominent cricketers of old from the two countries. Sobers exploits with bat and ball made him regarded as the greatest all-rounder in the history of the game. Tissera, an elegant right-hand batsman and leg-spin bowler, played in the same era as Sobers, but his career was limited to playing first-class cricket, as Sri Lanka was not an ICC full member nation.



Oct 2015: A coin created by the Sri Lankan Cricket Board to be used for the toss in the second Test between West Indies and Sri Lanka.



West Indian cricket legend Sir Garfield Sobers, Sri Lankan cricket captain Angelo Mathews, West Indies cricket captain Jason Holder, Match referee David Boon and former Sri Lanka cricket captain Michael Tissera before the start of the first day of their second Test cricket match between Sri Lanka and the West Indies at the P. Sara Oval Cricket Stadium in Colombo on Oct 22, 2015.

Thomian Cricket Legends (Over 65) –Fellowship Gathering at SSC (17 Dec 2023)

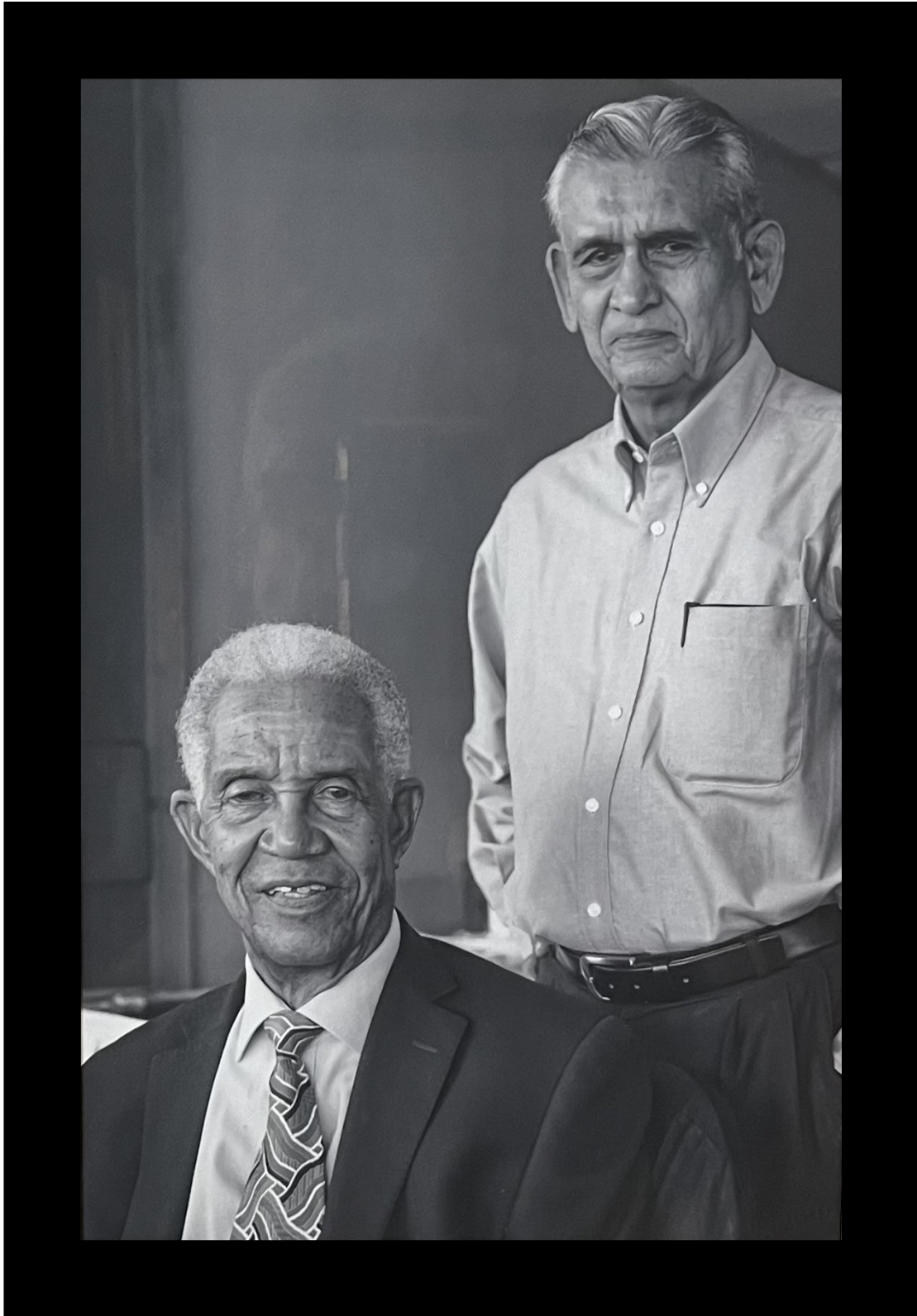


Seated (L-R): Janaka Rockwood, Tony Perera, Sriantha Rajapaksa, Ranjan Samarasinghe, Kumar Boralessa, **Michael Tissera**, Vernon Tissera, Mano Ponniah, Mevan Pieris, Trevor Baines, Prabodha Kariyawasam, Dijen de Saram, Ajit Jayasekera, Azam Hameed, Lyle Peiris, Shantha Kottegoda.

Standing (L-R): Christopher Dias, H.D. Kirthie Silva, Vijitha Jayasinghe, Turney Mohamed, Ravi Abeyawardena, Dhammika Jayasuriya, Thilaka Rudra, Trevor Rajaratnam, Ajith Abeygunawardena, G. Dhamitha. V. Perera, Hemanatha Samaranayaka, Ravi Rudra. Sunil Wijeyaratne, Mohan de Silva.

Absent / Excused: Ana Medonza, Sarath Seneviratne, Priantha Seresinhe, Anura Tennekoon, Jayampathy Bandaranayake, Bandula Tennekoon, Johnny de Saram, G.D. Sunil Peiris.

THE TRUE LEGENDS



Sir Garfield Sobers & Michael Tissera

The Michael Tissera Interview – with Ravi Rudra (19.12.2023)



1. What was the major turning point in your crcketing career?

“At school, I hardly scored runs consistently. Those days the school matches were played over two half-days and you looked to push the game along to get results. I got one only hundred while playing for College. The lack of big scores were more mental than technique.

However, in my first Sara trophy game for NCC (in 1958), which I was lucky to play because I was ill the whole week but captain Vernon Prins insisted that I play, I got a hundred against Saracens. That turned my whole career around. Following that century which gave me a lot of confidence I scored three or four centuries in that debut season and I got picked to play for Ceylon in December of that year against Peter May’s 1958 MCC team.”

2. As a Junior at College, who would you give credit for refining your technique and shaping you into a top cricketer?

“**Lassie Abeywardena** without a question! He was an all-round coach who gave me so much confidence. So much so that even when I was playing Club cricket and if I was having a bad run I would turn up at U16 practice, inform Lassie and bat right at the end, and he would put me right. Lassie is someone who read a lot about the game. He was a very keen student of the game. Took a lot of interest and he knew his stuff.”

3. **You were picked to play 1st XI as a 14-year-old. How did that happen?**

“I played U14, U16 and 1st XI... In cricket or for that matter in any sport, to be successful you need a little bit of luck! Funnily, I was in the boarding those days and I was playing tennis on the Warden’s court in a pair of shorts and tennis shoes when I got a message to say, ‘Come and bowl at the Small Clubs to the 1st XI team’ because they were playing St. Benedict’s in a couple of days’ time at Kotahena (on a matting wicket). This must have been on the Wednesday.

So I went and bowled and at the end of the session they said come tomorrow and be prepared to bat. I went the following day and I batted a little bit and on Friday I was playing in the side! I didn’t even have a pair of longs but fortunately I was able to borrow a pair from one of the dorm mates to wear for the game. That’s how I played my first 1st XI game for College.”

4. **As a talented young tennis player you were part of very good teams at College that were Junior and Senior Public Schools Tennis Champions. Please tell me about your days as a tennis player.**

“My whole family played tennis. My father was a planter on some upcountry estates & when I went for the holidays played at the club twice a week. At college, in the boarding we tended to play most games and tennis & hockey seemed to go with cricket.

I was not such a talented tennis player but I was fortunate to partner G.N. Perera in the junior doubles and P.S. Kumara in the senior doubles at the public schools tennis meet & won both. They were responsible for my getting public schools tennis colours.”



***Tissera Brothers - Michael with older brother Vernon** at the Thomian (Over 65) Fellowship at SSC on 17 Dec 2023. Vernon played 1st XI back in 1949 as an opening bat scoring a solid 30 in the 70th Battle of the Blues. Vernon is currently the third oldest Thomian cricketer after Chandra Schaffter & Bradman Weerakoon.

5. Were there any players that you looked up to as a youngster and said to yourself, 'I want to be like them?'

"Keith Miller was a great favourite of mine at one stage and then Richie Benaud and then of course Sobers. All three were superb cricketers."



Keith Miller



Richie Benaud

6. Who would you say that you really moulded your batting style on?

"I don't think anybody. I never tried to copy or emulate anybody. I never thought I would play for the College 1st XI...I just went for practice. I didn't think that I would play for NCC...I just happened to go for practice and that day they chose me. And I never thought I would play for Ceylon. I didn't have that ambition...it all just happened."

7. You had the distinction of playing five years of 1st XI cricket (1954-58) for STC. You could've played a record equalling Sixth year in 1959 but left College at the end of the 1958 season. Who were some of the outstanding Schoolboy cricketers you played with and against during that period?

"There were many, but the following come to mind: Lorenz Pereira, Michael Willie and Daya Sahabandu (Royal), Anurudda Polonowita, and Sonny Yatawara (Ananda), Chandrasiri Weerasinghe (Nalanda), Malsiri Kurukulasuriya and Nimal Maralande (Trinity), Ranjit Doranegama (St. Anthony's), L. Ebert and L.R. Gunatilleke (Wesley), Anton Perera (St. Peter's), Lovelyn P. Rayen (St. Benedict's) and for STC - Zack Cader, Dan Piachaud, Ronnie Reid, Denis Ferdinands, Lareef Idroos and Erol Lisk, who was a brilliant wicket keeper."

8. You were picked as a captain for the National team when you were quite young. Were you overawed by that or did you have any mentors who helped you?

"When I was appointed as Ceylon captain, I was 24 years. But I was okay with it. I had captained the College side for two seasons (1957 & 58) so I had some experience. Strangely, I captained Sri Lanka (Ceylon) before I captained my Club side.

9. Were there lot of pressure captaining the Ceylon team given that you were mostly playing far more experienced teams?

“Not really. We were always the underdogs so it didn’t really matter!”

10. What was it like facing up to the really quick bowlers. You didn’t have helmets or much protection to wear during your days?

“You certainly needed a bit of luck. I think facing up to those quick bowlers was just a matter of surviving for the first 20-30 minutes. You needed to get the pace of the wicket because they were so quick and we never practiced such bowling at any stage. The wickets were not covered in those days and the Oval wicket was always a green top! But it played beautifully once you were set.”



*[*Wesley Hall used to bowl with a pace like fire – With one of the longest run ups in the history of the game, he bounded to the wicket – a sight of terror. Six feet three inches tall and proportionately wide, all of it sinew, he steamed in with the gallop of a long-jumper. His eyes bulged, teeth glinted, the characteristic crucifix flew ahead propelled by the hurtling pace. Finally came the leap accompanied by arms flailing about as in a cartwheel, and the ball was released at well over 90 miles per hour - Arunabha Sengupta]*

“One other thing, one had to watch the ball right up to the bat and either duck or weave away from bouncers, or else one could get badly hurt. Rudi Webster in his book 'Winning Ways' gives an account of the value of watching the ball, Rudi was mentor to the West Indies team during the 1981/82 tour of Australia. It was the series in which Greg Chapell, one of the greatest batsman in the world, at that time, had a horrendous time, not scoring a

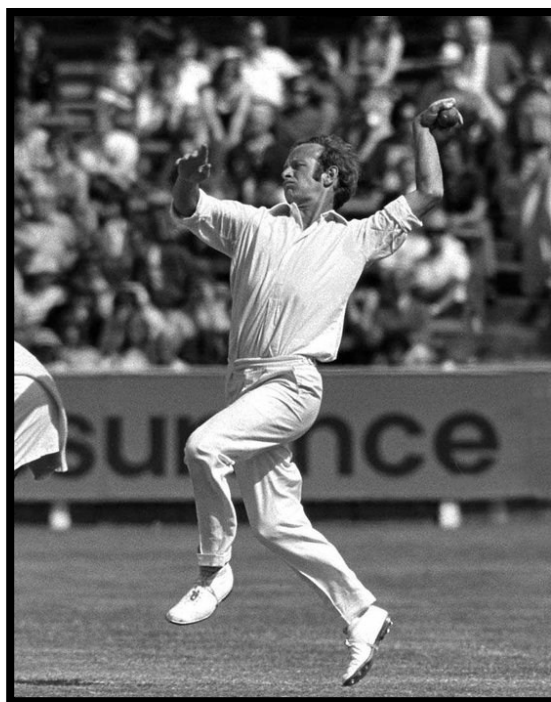
run in seven consecutive innings. Rudi seemed to know what his problem was but not going to tell him till the series was over.

After the last day of the tour Rudi spoke to Greg and asked him if he was watching the ball. Greg said yes but Rudi then asked him whether he was watching it right out of the bowlers hand. After a pause Greg said no and wondered as to how he could forget such a basic thing. Rudi suggested he try it in the nets and in the NZ tour soon to follow Greg scored plenty of runs.

Today, probably because of the protection of helmets, many batsmen seem to take their eyes off the ball.”

11. [Who would you rate some of the top bowlers that you faced worldwide?](#)

“Wes Hall, Andy Roberts, Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson among the paceman. And of the spinners, definitely Derek Underwood. He got us on a wet wicket here on the Oval (March 1967) and we were 43 for 3 and all out for 60 odd. In the 2nd innings I got about 35 on a really bad wicket and I thought that was one of my best innings, especially against Underwood in those conditions. Derek was deadly on that tricky wet wicket... quick, got bounce and turned the ball sharply on that occasion. We were worried about being out for 60 but the English said don't worry, in this type of condition plenty of county sides are out for 50 or 60 with Underwood on the other side.”



*[*Deadly Derek Underwood had stunning match figures of 15 for 43 as he exploited a damp wicket to its best advantage].*

12. [Daya Sahabandu seemed a similar type of bowler to Derek Underwood?](#)

“Sahabandu was not as quick, but he’s a very accurate and a superb bowler. Ajit de Silva was another good bowler too. We had so many good spinners in our time ...Fitzroy Crozier, Polonowita, Abu Fuard, Neil Chanmugam...”

13. [Was Neil Chanmugam a top spinner during his College days?](#)

“Neil started by bowling seam at College but we had JKC Gunasekera and Denis Ferdinands in our side. However, we didn’t have an off spinner. So I said to Neil, ‘why don’t you try and bowl off spin’. And he took it on himself and was not coached...great fellow. Neil was a natural talent.... Idroos in school was also a superb bowler”.

14. [What’s your memory of PI ‘Ian’ Pieris?](#)

“I have fond memories of Ian as a batsman hitting the ball over the sightscreen, and that 1953 Royal-Thomian he virtually won single-handedly. He got runs and he got wickets. Both Ian and Darell Lieversz could really swing the ball.”

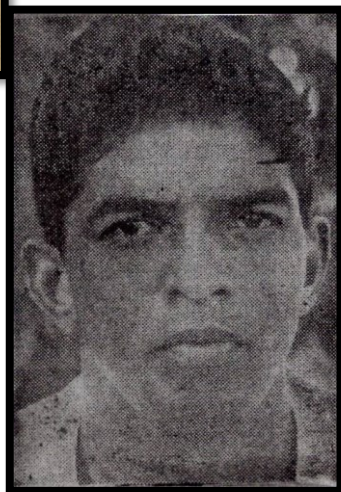


*[*PI scored a scintillating 123 at the 1953 RT. Coming in with the score at 15/4 he put on a record 186 partnership for the 5th wicket with GLW Wijesinghe, and had a match-bag of 6 for 64 including 4 for 29 in Royal’s 2nd innings]*

15. [Your impressions on Darrell Lieversz?](#)

“Darrell was great! That Pakistan match was his debut and he bowled brilliantly and won us the match taking so many wickets. He bowled mainly in-swingers, but big in-swingers and I haven’t seen many local bowlers move the ball as much as Darell did. Superb bowler.”

*[*Darrell Lieversz wrecked Pakistan with match figures of 9 for 68]*



16. Who stood out as top fielders during your time?

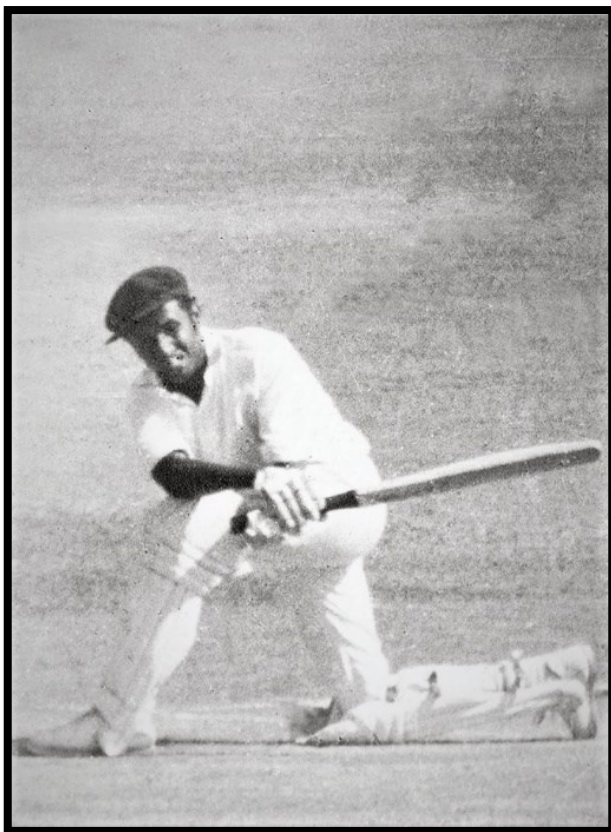


“**David Heyn** was outstanding – mostly in the covers, while close in Anura Polonowita was very good in the gully.

HIK Fernando was probably the best wicket keeper I played with. Russel Harmer too was a very good keeper, but the poor guy couldn’t play because of HIK.”

17. Michael, you and Anura Tennekoon were perhaps two of the unluckiest not to play any official Test cricket. Do you have any regrets about that?

“Not really. I would have liked to have played a Test match but no regrets. I enjoyed my cricket and I can’t grumble...if the time is not right what can you do about it?”



“However, I am very sorry about Anura not playing Test Cricket. I think he retired a little too early. He should have played in that inaugural Test in 1982. I don’t know why he suddenly decided to pack it in, because I would say he was one of our best Test players. He was made for Test cricket.”

18. What did you enjoy the most during your term with the MCC World Cricket Committee which was studded with several former International stars?

“Most enjoyed sitting with International stars and talking cricket while trying to solve some world cricket problems. I owe my position with MCC Cricket Committee to Tony Lewis who as Chairman of the MCC invited me to participate. Of course it was always a pleasure to visit Lords and watch the test matches from the committee room.”

19. Sri Lanka cricket seems to be struggling at the moment. How would you assess the current situation?

“Basically I think that for some time there was no discipline. Some players suspended were brought back before the full period of recovery and that tends to give the impression that one is indispensable. This is not good for overall team discipline. The current players are talented, no doubt, but appear to lack experience and full commitment. Some seem to throw their wickets away too easily, perhaps because there is not enough competition for places. Hope that changes soon. Fitness is also a concern and an important factor in modern cricket. This need not be so as all the facilities and guidance are available these days. More dedication and pride in your cap will help.”

20. In stark contrast we see as to how Indian cricketers are able to play all three formats of the game. Virat Koli is a classic example.

“Koli is simply outstanding! See how fit he is. Our chaps are simply not fit. Too many injuries, mostly our pace bowlers, but that I put down to them playing all three formats of the game. Test cricket is one thing and T20 is another in which every ball counts and you have to go flat out where fitness really matters.

Before the recent (2023) Cricket World Cup the team management had decided that fitness is a must. But they tried to get injured players fit overnight, which you can't...you have to give them 3 or 4 months to properly recover and get fit. We ended up playing key players who were not fit and that was a disaster.”

21. What advice would you give today's young cricketers who aspire to excel at international level?

Three important things they need to develop.

1. DISCIPLINE
2. FITNESS
3. SKILL.

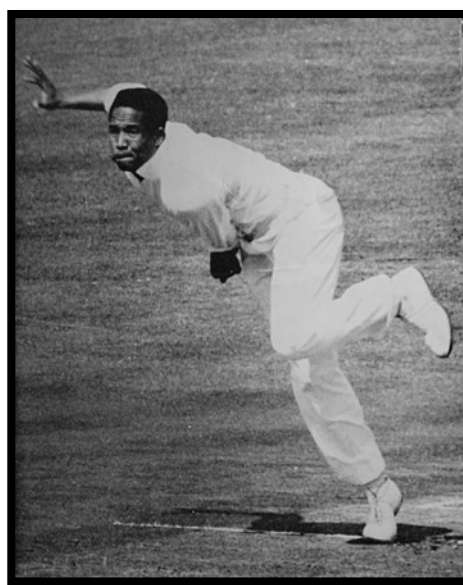
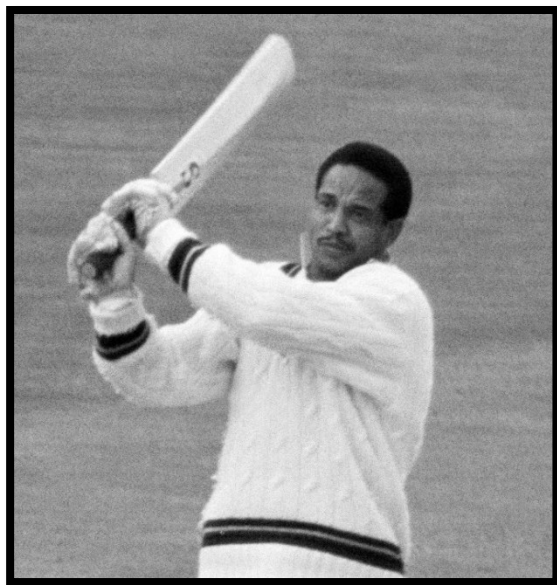
Also high levels of commitment, mental application and pride in your cap.

22. The Sobers–Tissera Trophy is awarded to the winners of the Test series between West Indies and Sri Lanka. What are your special memories of Sir Garfield Sobers regarded as the ‘Greatest Cricketer’ – both on and off the field?

“I was doubly fortunate, not only to play against Sir Garfield but to get to know him personally when he was here to coach the SL team before the country's first ever test match. He was here again on the invitation of the Sri Lanka Cricket Board to witness the West Indies vs SL test match and hand over the trophy, in our two names, to the winners. For me this was a huge honour to even have my name besides his. As a person he was friendly and down to earth despite being such a world star and kept us in awe listening to his fund of stories.

As a sportsman Sobers had a wonderful athletic physique and carried himself majestically on the field - all grace and elegance, so much so that watching him what came immediately to mind was, "***Here is a Champion.***"

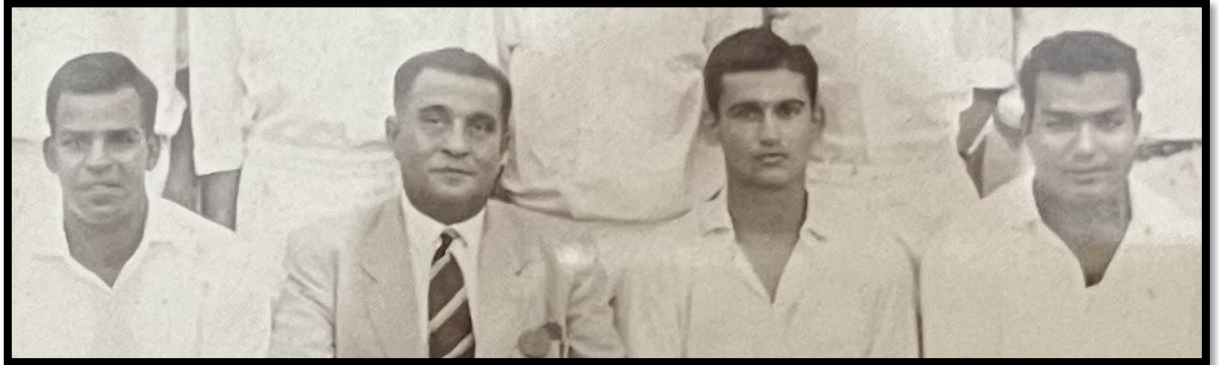
As a cricketer he was a captain's dream - brilliant batsman, bowler in three styles and a wonderful fielder in any position but especially close in. He was indeed the incomparable all-round cricketer, the likes of which the world is unlikely to see again. As a fan and on behalf of all the cricket fans, I say thank you Sir Garfield for the many years of immense pleasure you have given us.”



Garry Sobers an allrounder like no other - the only allrounder to score 300-plus runs and take 20 or more wickets in a Test series three times.

23. What do you cherish the most - as a player, as an official, outside of cricket?

“Having played long there are many that come to mind. As a player being appointed captain of Ceylon in 1964.



FIRST WIN: Imtiaz Ahmed, Mr. Robert Senanayake, Tissera & Intikhab Alam

“Leading Ceylon to its first ever International victory against Pakistan, also in 1964. Winning the third unofficial test match against India in India in 1965 and participating in the first ever world cup in England in 1975.”



“As Manager, when SL won all five ODI'S against England in 2006 and thereafter when SL were runners up at the World Cup final in 2007.

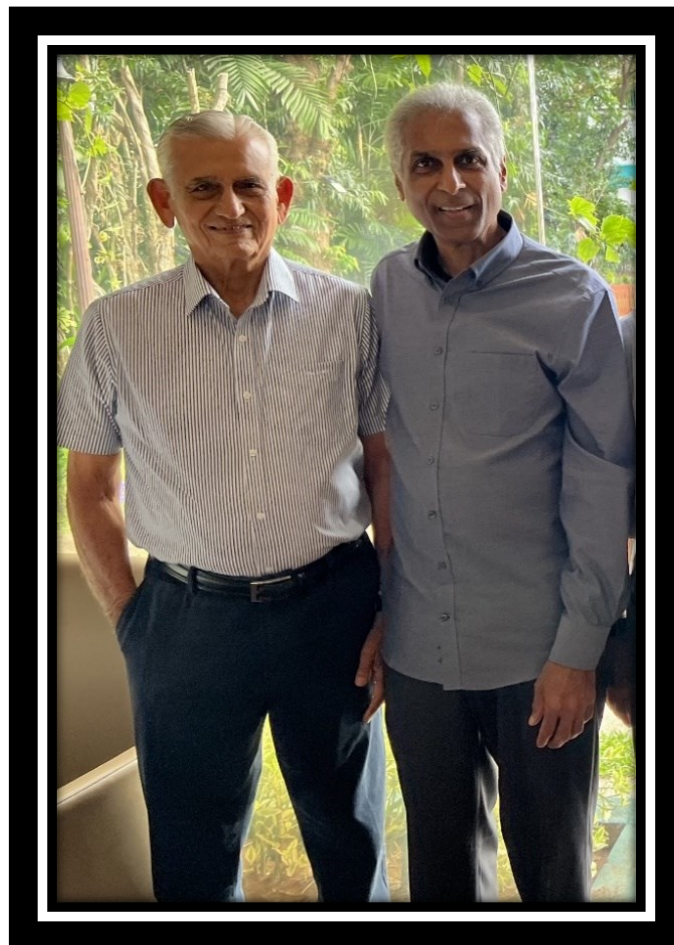
“As a person, I am deeply honoured of being bestowed the title of *Deshabandu* by the President HE J.R. Jayewardene in the first ever ceremony of its kind in 1987 and then being presented the S. Thomas' College, Lifetime Achievement award by the Warden in 2018.

The other highlights were being made Sportsman of The Year for cricket in 1961 and Sportsman of the Year again in 1969.”



* England 2006 - Tissera with former England opener Raman Subba Row.

A Real Privilege & An Honour



“THANK YOU MICHAEL” – Ravi Rudra