

Batting For Grenada

Contributed by Allan Lamb

Almost ironically, Allan Lamb's finest cricketing moment for the England team came in the Test series against the mighty West Indian team of 1984...

Scoring centuries in three consecutive test matches against the "tourists" including the prodigious Malcolm Marshall, Michael Holding, Joel Garner and Eldine Baptise, Allan Lamb proved that he was, and still remains one of the finest players in the world.

Today the tables have turned. Allan Lamb is now the number one enthusiast and promoter of sport in West Indies. Since 1999, he has based himself for much of the year in Grenada with his business partner Nigel Fenton, also a former Northamptonshire player and prior to that, a Somerset Cap.

Visiting Grenada for the first time, Allan realised the importance of sport for the island and its people. He also recognised the vast potential for growth in sports tourism. That year, the two partners set up "Grenada Sports" (www.grenadasport.org) based on the island. With their earlier national and international experience, the two players could call on the support of former team-mates in getting professional sides to come to Grenada. These included the Northamptonshire, Sussex and Yorkshire County teams and eventually culminated 3 years ago in the first Grenada Cricket Classics. Heroes such as Sir Viv Richards, Joel Garner and Curtley Ambrose came together to promote what is considered by many to be the national sport in Grenada.

With this success, the idea of sports tourism grew further with youth teams visiting the island from universities and schools around the UK. Locally, the benefits were seen at all levels; exposing Grenada as a new destination through press and the travel industry, thereby increasing the overall level of tourism on the island; motivating local youngsters to be a part of a new upsurge in sport and who in turn benefitted from the donation of sporting equipment by the visiting teams.

This impetus was dented following the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. The national stadium, as well as many of the island's buildings was destroyed. As great sporting heroes go, Allan and his partner were not to be beaten, re-introducing the event in 2005 at Prospect Park, north of the capital in Grenville. Perhaps now, the need for such an event was greater than ever before and the occasion was warmly embraced at every level.

October 2006, saw the return to Prospect for the biggest and most successful event to date.

Now his thoughts are very much on the Cricket World Cup 2007, one of the biggest events in world sport, coming to Grenada and the West Indies between March and April. This will perhaps be one of the greatest challenges and enormous opportunities for the island in recent years.

A new national stadium is under construction which with Grenada's boundless optimism is set to be complete in time for the World Cup. Holding 15,000 spectators and built by the Chinese Government, this is a further indication of Grenada's willingness to embrace overseas investment and new partnerships.

It is anticipated that the event will be sold-out and with teams playing from around the world, the island will gain valuable world-wide publicity. Grenada has got to get this just right. A shortage of hotel accommodation has meant that cruise ships may be the only alternative for international visitors with developers such as Peter de Savary, Four Seasons and others coming into the fray only recently to provide additional accommodation.

The World Cup is set to be an exciting draw with no one team standing ahead. Allan Lamb, himself one of the hosts for the occasion, sees Australia, Sri Lanka, New Zealand and Pakistan all in there with a chance. He's not ruling out the home team though; their tenacity and enthusiasm may be just the winning ticket. Sadly, for the England hero and sometime sceptic, the England side 'are no threat!'; Don't shoot the messenger.

For more information on

the Cricket World Cup go to

www.cricketworldcup.com

Dates 5th March- 28th April 2007

It is recommended that travel to and from the Cricket World Cup, together with accommodation and tickets are secured through the channels recommended by the ICC.