



Courtney

THE MAN

Walsh keeps them guessing

Fans and foes of former West Indies captain Courtney Walsh will have to spend more time in the dressing in order to know whether they will see the formidable speedster representing the West Indies again.

As he did shortly after the press conference, called to announce a new captain last Wednesday in Antigua, Walsh remains uncommitted as to his future in the test arena. "I'm still not decided," he told the **Sunday Herald** yesterday. "I am committed to playing for Jamaica for the entire season, and I hope that I can lead them to victory in the President's Cup.

'The immediate focus is

the present match against Barbados. I am happy to end up with six wickets in the first innings, and I hope that it can help the team to get at least first innings points, if not maximum points in the game," said the former Excelsior High School student.

Walsh, those close to him say, is likely to continue playing test cricket, although he is naturally disappointed that he has been replaced as Windies team captain.

"He will play. He realises that he has not got the support that he should have got as captain over the time he presided over the affairs of the team, but he is willing to

put that aside and play, not only for personal gain, but also for the development of the team," said a close associate of the great speeder.

According to Walsh's associate, the former skipper was always cognisant of the fact that he was seen "as an interim captain", and has always had to be playing with one eye over his back. It was unfair to him to be operating under stressful circumstances, caused by his own people, but he weathered that storm and showed that despite the heavy odds stashed against him, he was still able to give his best," the associate said.

Blessed with many fine qualities

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that enabled his team to clinch a 1-0 series victory in the two-match series. That followed the first time that he led the West Indies, in April 1994 at the Antigua Recreation Ground in a match when a significant record was broken.

It was the final test against England, and Richardson and senior player

Aussies.

Walsh took over again, this time without the label of 'Richardson soon come' hanging off his collar, shortly after the World Cup in India and Pakistan in 1996.

A humiliating loss to Kenya put West Indies cricket under the microscope, and another loss in the semifinal to Australia crippled Richardson's chances

strong opposition to his leadership, particularly from Trinidad and Tobago, which thought that its man, Lara, should have been promoted.

But the hole in the bucket had started to fall out. An under-strength team was sent to Pakistan for a three-test series last November and were soundly thrashed 3-0, twice by innings defeats.

TRIBUTE TO COURTNEY WALSH

(This is an edited version of a tribute by Jimmy Carnegie to Courtney Andrew Walsh — vice captain and sometime captain of the West Indies Test Cricket Team, Captain of the Jamaican National Cricket Team, Captain of Gloucestershire Country Cricket Team, sometime Captain of Melbourne Cricket Club Team, past student and sometime Captain of the Excelsior High School Sunlight Cup Cricket Team, fast bowler — on the occasion of the ground breaking for the construction of the sign re-naming the Excelsior Cricket Field the Courtney Walsh Oval, Excelsior High School Auditorium, Friday, March 24, 1995)

Courtney Walsh — Great Sportsman — Almost certainly a Great Cricketer — Outstanding Leader

Courtney Walsh, as I hope to show, is a great sportsman. He almost certainly now qualifies as a great fast bowler and a great cricketer and most importantly and beyond those, he is an outstanding leader and an outstanding man.

First let us look at Courtney's record as the Jamaican who has played in more Test matches (N.B. 70 at the time of the talk) than anyone except Jeffrey Dujon (who played in 2 before his retirement).

In terms of his leadership as a captain I am grateful to Tony Becca for point out that Courtney has captained his teams at every level of cricket at which he has played (N.B. Excelsior, Melbourne, Gloucestershire, Jamaica, the West Indies "A" team the West Indies Test team).

Courtney is only the third Jamaican to have captained the West Indies for more than one Test (which the late great Hon George Headley did) and the fourth overall — his Test matches as captain against England in the West Indies, India in India

and New Zealand in New Zealand are already more than R K Nunes (who was both the first ever West Indies Test captain and first West Indian wicket-keeper) but less than Franz Gerry Alexander.

In these Tests, Courtney captained the team to draw in the last Test against England (a series that the West Indies had already won — to a drawn series against India after the team had lost the first Test and the first time that India had lost a Test at home in about four years — being one of the stars himself as a bowler in securing that victory — and to a series win in New Zealand, the first time in 39 years that the West Indies had won a Test series in New Zealand.

With distinction

Courtney is also the first Jamaican to captain the West Indies in 35 years and the first and only fast bowler ever to captain the West Indies Test cricket team. Courtney has now given way to Richie Richardson who was captain of the team before him — having just captained the team successfully to 3 of the victories in the 4 limited-overs matches against a fourth country—Australia. His appointment at the start of the series as vice-captain in a domestic series is

also a very rare one.

We have to recognise just how important these leadership roles are — in fact, if we think about it and we think of the importance of the West Indies cricket team and its performances to the five or more million of us in this part of the world and even moreso to the millions of West Indians in England and other parts of the world — the captain of the West Indies cricket team is in many respects, the most important private citizen in the West Indies and Courtney Walsh of Excelsior has held this job and held it with distinction.

Indeed we can think of the fact that Clive Lloyd led the West Indies team at its strongest when Courtney was just coming into Test cricket after which he was displaced for a time by his own countryman (and occasional Sunlight Cup teammate) Patrick Patterson. Viv Richards took over and his team was weaker than Lloyd's but still won, Richardson took over and his team was weaker than Richards' but still won. Walsh's team was weaker than Richardson's but still won. Indeed Courtney's triumphs in both India and New Zealand — where he put on in the last Test the second ranking West Indian bowling performance ever — were both secured with the West Indies bowling at less than full strength.

When Courtney first took over as Jamaican captain, there were many who felt that he should not have got the job and he was much criticised especially when the team did not do well at first. They then subsequently won both the Red Strip Cup and The Geddes Grant Shield under his leadership — (N.B. the Red Stripe Cup in a season in which he set a personal record and regional record of 3 wickets in Red Stripe/Shell Shield season).

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... You Courtney!