

THE HISTORY OF CRICKET IN UGANDA

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The history of Uganda cricket has been written for two generalised periods. The first part, covering the period from an unclear date when cricket began in Uganda to 1989, written in 1990 and the second period covering the years between 1990 and 1999 written in 2000.

From the Beginning to 1989

No accurate date can be given for the beginning of Cricket in Uganda, but it is associated with the dawn of British colonialism at the start of this century. There is no record of who the founding fathers of the game were, but pioneers of the game were the colonial administrators, missionaries, teachers and technicians who introduced the game to the indigenous Ugandans. From its early days the game was also taken up by an alien Asian group that had emerged as an attendant factor in the operation of the British colonial policy.

Organised Cricket activity can be traced back to the 1920's. Much of the game was however still limited to the English and possibly a few Indians. Native Cricket was only being nurtured in the various missionary (CMS) schools with no evident or appreciable organisational status.

In this same period, Cricket was more or less a colonialist game and indeed the first white-man's club - Entebbe Sports Club, was situated in no other place but the then seat of the Protectorate government. It is here that the first organised matches were played against the beautiful background of Lake Victoria.

The later inter-war period saw the emergence of Asian Cricket from its infancy. The period of the 1930's saw the founding of Asian Clubs like the Goan Institute and the Indian Recreation Club. These clubs were characteristically metropolitan, e.g. the Indian Sports Club which was situated at Nakivubo - the heart of the commercial centre of Kampala. These clubs played between each other on occasions and although it was essentially on friendly basis, they surely were the forerunners of Club Cricket in Uganda.

During the same period, native school cricket was also breaking ground and it was during this period that European schoolmasters started organising inter-schools cricket. The traditional annual matches between the schools of Kings College Budo and Nyakasura School can be traced from this time. The other predominantly native schools which acquired the game this early included Busoga College Mwiri, Ntare School, Nabumali High School and Makerere College.

The Uganda Herald of 9-8-39 reported on “The African Cricket Week in which The First Cricket Week for schools was held at Kings’ College Budo, won by Nyakasura who in their kilts, sporrans, and Australian peaked caps, took the place by storm; although African Cricket started in Busoga 15 years ago”. J.W. Lwamafa (became Ugandan Ambassador to the United States) playing for Makerere was the best All Rounder in the tournament.

The 1940’s saw the inception of a Triangular competition between the Whites, Asians and Goans. But disregarding the escalating Independence euphoria of the time, the most spectacular event of this period was undoubtedly the appearance of an exclusively black side. From its first appearance in 1947, the side rapidly grew to emerge as the Africa Cricket Club (ACC) in 1950. Much prominence goes to Prince George Mawanda who not only achieved a distinguished career by captaining a combined Public Schools Cricket Team while studying in England, but also earned the leadership of the first native or indigenous Cricket side. He remains a legendary and fatherly figure in Uganda’s Cricket history.

Among the other pioneers of the ACC today, were names like Caxton Njuki, Joshua Zake and Daudi Ochieng only to mention but a few, all of whom were graduates of missionary schools Cricket. It is true that every person has a birthmark, and the same seems to be true for native Cricket in Uganda whose characteristic feature has been and remains to be material inadequacy. ACC owned no ground; depended on personal or individual efforts and equipment of its more affluent members running around for donations in times of need, to sustain its perpetually empty coffers. In a nutshell, it’s a story of sacrifice and survival but whatever its limitations, ACC managed to get into the main stream of competitive Cricket in Uganda which was to attain its highest momentum and peak in the 1960’s.

During the same period, the inter-territorial matches were started at the initiative of the Protectorate and Colonial administrations of the three East African possessions in Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar. The earlier matches were played in 1952.

Much enthusiasm and momentum had been gained in this period. This was reflected by the fact that the names such as Sir Andrew Cohen (then Governor of Uganda) became associated with the game. Other household names included John Wild, Professor MacAdam and Ranjibhai Patel all of whom imparted much influence on the popularity of the game. It is indeed in the memory of some veteran native players of today, what a big occasion it used to be when the huge and flamboyant figure of Sir Andrew would emerge at the

batting crease, to open the innings for his team of “Abagurusi” (Veterans) which used to tour individual schools every year.

The 1960’s were hey days of Cricket in Uganda for it is during this period that Inter-Club cricket went into high gear, and International Cricket became a regular feature. At the club level, many new clubs emerged as the game got proliferated to cover almost all the major towns in the country. It is at this time also that the Asians split into Moslems and Hindus (or British Asians) and this was to cause a further increase in the number of clubs. With the forceful efforts of John Nagenda, ACC remained a part of the growing clubs in Uganda.

It’s worthwhile to mention briefly the clubs and grounds of the day. Whereas Cricket activity centered around Kampala, where you had most clubs and grounds, other centres also contributed greatly to the highly competitive atmosphere that existed. Situated in Kampala, was the Lugogo ground (opened by the Queen Mother in 1958 and enshrined as “the Lords” of Uganda) well known as a “Batsman’s Paradise”. It was run by Uganda Cricket Association (UCA) and mainly reserved for major tournaments and international matches. Other grounds were owned by clubs among which were Wanderers, Kampala Sports Club, Indian Sports Club, Muslim Sports Club, Agha khan Sports Club and Kampala Goan Institute. In Entebbe was the Entebbe Sports Club and Entebbe Goan Institute. Jinja had the formidable Indian Recreation Club. Among other clubs and grounds were those to be found in Lugazi, Mbale, Lira, Gulu, Fort Portal, Masindi, Soroti (and Kabale which had a turf wicket). Needless to say, some clubs like ACC had no grounds, but nevertheless were actively engaged in Cricket competitions and friendly matches. For a club like ACC, some of its members used to practice and play with more affluent clubs while for the most part they had their main or collective practices on the Makerere University grounds, or the grounds outside the main Lugogo Stadium. For competition they only engage in or played “away” matches.

In this period, many competitions were held, but the highest stakes were for the major trophies, which included the SAZEN CUP, HASLAH CUP and LOWIS CUP. The Sazen was a provincial tournament. The Haslah was a knockout tournament played on 50 over basis while the Lowis was a league tournament contested on a 55 over basis.

On the international scene, cricket was also enjoying a proper representation with a strong national team selected from various clubs that provided a bottomless source of an assorted and well-balanced range of players including all the races albeit in disproportionate numbers. The Asian players dominated the game and indeed contributed greatest to the number of clubs and players. Some of the big names included the likes of Salaudin, Kishore, Davda, Upendrah, Bhanu Patel, Charlie D’Souza, Selly Dias and Noordin. Nevertheless even the blacks were providing their shares of National Stars like Besweri Nyangabyaki, John Nagenda, William Kamanyi, Sam Walusimbi and Sandy Kizito who were undoubtedly solid material.

It is true to say that at this time the game of Cricket was catching on – both “on” and “off” the field. Club life was strongly becoming a livelihood for many fans who flocked to the various grounds every weekend to cheer and chant to their teams and heroes and indeed one English correspondent on a visit to East and Central Africa observed that “while Cricket in Uganda was gaining high standards especially among the Asian community, it was at the same time making deep roots within the native black community which displayed an explosive flare and enthusiasm reminiscent of the West Indians”.

Beyond the boundaries of the club and national Cricket, the game was also being actively played among other institutions like schools, government parastatals and private companies. Among the main Cricketing bodies were the British American Tobacco (BAT), Uganda Electricity Board (UEB), Shell Petroleum Company, East African Airways (EAA) and British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC). These were essentially “beer” games played every Saturday afternoon but despite their lack of competitive seriousness, they were nevertheless great contribution to the Cricketing fraternity in the country.

Young players were being bred as early as elementary or primary school levels. Apart from the Church Missionary Society schools already mentioned, a multitude of other public schools, especially those with large Asian attendance were playing the game seriously. Among other institutions of higher learning was the Makerere University and Kyambogo Technical College - it was indeed hard for one to complete his secondary education at that time without coming to know what a Cricket bat was.

For the schools, intra mural and extra mural competitive Cricket activities were regularly organised. Perhaps the most outstanding event for the schools was the Schools Cricket Tournament whose climax saw the selection of a Uganda Schools XI, which would then engage in international games against foreign schools. A Uganda schools XI toured Kenya and hosted an English Schools XI, which featured schoolboys John Emburey, and Graham Gooch, who became first class international players in the seventies and Eighties.

Apart from playing in school, youngsters were also given opportunity to play in Club competitions and thereby acquiring an early opportunity in first class Cricket. It was good for the future of a game, which at this time had achieved much and was looking ahead towards an even brighter future in the 1970's. This was never to be, because little did anyone know of the great degradation and calamity that was to befall the game of cricket and the country at large in the years that followed the Economic War of Idi Amin.

Without labouring too much on the general social, political and economic turmoil of this period, it suffices to observe that Cricket in Uganda was badly affected in various aspects. To begin with was the expulsion of Asians from the country, an exodus that claimed the largest cricketing community and fraternity from the country. The exodus of expatriate teaching staff affected school cricket also. Practically all grounds and facilities were abruptly abandoned. Just as it would be impossible to remember all of Cricket's great days, it would likewise be impossible ever to forget those days when the game was faced with a sure death.

However, to the background of this gloomy refrain existed the one unique factor of Ugandan Cricket that saved the game from being totally erased from the map of Uganda, and this was the existence of a relatively sizeable and able indigenous or native Cricketing population, not seen anywhere in East and Central Africa.

In the period of the 70's the native community emerged as the only inheritors of the earlier boom days of the game and although it was a Cricket Club, ACC became the dominant Cricket organisation. Not much success was met in trying to save most of the Cricket facilities that were abandoned by the Departed Asians, but at least a minor few of the grounds in Kampala and Jinja were taken up and this helped to keep the game going.

Soon ACC, the only club, which existed, became Uganda Cricket Association, and acquired the former Muslim Sports Club facility and it was from here that the game managed to survive in the difficult years. The Indian Recreation Club, in Jinja was also taken up while the Entebbe ground was temporarily saved the fate of the other grounds which were converted into car parks, building sites, football grounds, parading squares and not say the least, grazing areas. Lugogo Cricket ground was inadvertently relegated by the Authorities to a multitude of other functions, which did much damage to it.

To compound it all, various social and political pressures militated against the proper and safe functioning of the game. However, by far, the greatest setbacks were due to the widespread economic problems that came to grip the whole country at this time. It was the dire economic situation that disabled the UCA or ACC from fully equipping itself with the required facilities and equipment to train, play, tour or even host.

But if to say that the hardships were great, then the magnitude of success was even greater because the game was acknowledgeable kept going at school, national and international levels albeit with lower standards and less frequency of competition.

On the international scene, the ACC had made its maiden trip in 1971 - 72 to Kenya where it had a successful tour of Nairobi, Mombasa and Nyeri. This was followed by a number of home and away series against Ghana (1972 and 1974) and Nigeria (1974). The first all African team played in the 1973 Quadrangulares in Zambia, a miracle in Central Africa. It was a crowning achievement when Uganda managed to host the East & Central Africa Quadrangulares in 1975. After that, the image and conditions of the country took a nose - dive and Cricket was not precluded from the heightening problems of the country. International Cricket temporarily ceased until 1979 when Uganda again managed to send a team for the Quadrangulares in Nairobi. The National team was banned from attending the 1976 - 78 Quadrangular tournaments for political reasons.

Meanwhile, on the local scene inter-club Cricket as it existed in the 1960's, was virtually reduced to intra-club competitions whereby different but regular teams (more or less representing "houses") played against each other under the only one fully functioning club ACC. Not to say the least however, this kind of Cricket achieved much in terms of competitive standards and indeed used to attract much of what remains of the cricketing fraternity in the country. Indeed the ACC saw much activity in the mid - 70's and recorded its

largest ever membership (of 200) many of who still keep fond memories and attachment to their various “houses” which included Tigers, Leopards, Zebras, Lions.

The only real inter-club Cricket was when the ACC would play with the Jinja Cricket Club, which had then taken over from the former Indian Recreation Club. The various club sides featured many school youngsters and much encouragement was given to schools Cricket. It was unfortunate that many of the former predominantly Asian schools had by the mid - 70’s completely abandoned the game. Worse still, even in those native schools where the game had not yet taken strong roots, the game faded as soon as the expatriate staff left. Nevertheless a couple of schools with a traditional Cricket background maintained it and this enabled the UCA to revive the Schools Cricket Tournament in 1976 with an attendance of six schools. This event initiated by the Secretary of UCA, Abraham Lutaaya, marked the beginning of UCA’s strategic development programme. This week-long annual event was continued through the years, and although its attendance was to decline later in the face of the rapidly declining situation in the country then, its vital importance to the future is the evidence of the various young players in the National team today.

It would probably be pertinent to mention the existence in the country of the Cricket Umpires Association, which dates from the sixties, when it enjoyed a membership of more than 20 First Class Umpires who adjudicated in international and local competitions. There are presently five 1st Class Umpires and a handful of 2nd Class members. The Uganda Cricket Umpires Association (UCUA) has been affiliated to the Association of Cricket Umpires for over 30 years, and the UCA constitution provides for one member of its Council to be a representative from the UCUA.

The coming of the 80’s coincided with dramatic changes for the nation at large. The turbulence that immediately followed the Liberation War in 1979 raised much dust in the air and this adversely affected many aspects of life in the country including Cricket. Proceeding from the 1980 General Elections were almost five years of potential instability, and although Cricket experienced a relative upsurge in activity, the prevailing conditions of sporadic insecurity, political chaos and widespread economic malaise were inescapable.

During this period, the UCA did managed to attend three out of five Quadrangulars, which was a great and commendable effort. It also managed to sustain a dying game by organising (through donations) an annual league and a variety of knockout tournaments. Owing to the return of some Asian players, the number of playing teams increased to five (Wanderers, Tornado, Premier, KICC, and ACC).

But despite its efforts and achievements, July 1985 found UCA pinned against the wall. The dire economic situation had cast a heavy cloud over any possible activity requiring large amounts of money, not to mention foreign exchange. The interest in the game was fast dying as the few Cricket facilities that survived the 70’s also went to ruin. And it couldn’t have been at a worse time that the UCA came under undue administrative pressure from political leaders of the National Council of Sports (NCS) who, ironically as the premier

custodians of sports, went to unbearable lengths to outcast the game! Indeed the last decision to open up the only remaining Cricket ground at Lugogo for other sports activities like motor rallying, football and public festivities, and another decision to suspend all Cricket activities on this ground, showed that the hammer had been raised, what to come next may have been the death blow. But the history of Cricket in Uganda has proved that the game is like a cat with nine lives, and the events following the July 27 coup of 1985 proved that this was yet another passing phase in the trials and tribulations of the game.

For cricket, the most timely change arising out of the coup was the appointment of a new progressive NCS, which immediately reinstated Cricket at Lugogo and has hitherto gone to great lengths to improve the standard of sports and its administrative climate at Lugogo (which is headquarters for UCA as well as NCS). Uganda even managed to attend the Quadrangulars in Lusaka - Zambia in September 1985 - during which she accomplished her first international victory in five years against a well-seasoned Malawian team.

Beyond the favourable administrative climate created by the new NCS, the political events of January 1986, which saw the assumption of power by the NRA/NRM Government, ushered in a new and long forgotten political climate of security - which is vital, for any hopes of stability and progress for the game and the nation at large.

The period between 1986 and 1989 brought in an optimistic state of affairs which was reflected by the resumption of secure patterns of club activities, an elaborate tournament calendar to run through the year, formation of the Cricket Masters Cricket Club and resumption of play at Jinja Cricket Club both of which are outside Kampala; the renovation of Lugogo sports premises by NCS and the renewed hopes of acquiring and reconstructing the Banojozi Oval which became the home of ACC in the 1970's.

The current trend of events shall undoubtedly foster a higher standard of cricket but the game old problem of money and equipment for clubs and schools remains a serious handicap, which makes the task of revamping the game ever so daunting. UCA is however committed and determined to maintain and foster the game at home and abroad, and all efforts were made to ensure that Uganda hosted the Quadrangulars in 1988.

(Abridged by Chris Luswata - 1990)

1990 to 1999

Since the administration of cricket passed to indigenous hands in 1972, the Association has regularly held annual elections of its office bearers and until now remain voluntary appointments. Whereas, Abram Lutaya stood out in the late seventies and eighties as a key pillar in the development and administration of cricket, the nineties go to Chris Azuba for consolidating the growth of cricket.

Winning the Quadrangular in 1991 to become East and Central Africa champions for the first time in twenty-five years was arguably the best thing that happened to Ugandan Cricket at the beginning of the 1990s. The composition of the winning team was evidence that the Schools Development Programme, pursued by UCA, was beginning to bear fruit.

Schools Cricket

Throughout the 90s a lot of effort, in time and money, was continually invested in Secondary schools - to promote the game of cricket in both the traditional and new schools. Between 1991 and 1998 the British Council annually sponsored a coach from England for a 3-week coaching stint in Uganda. Most notable was Richard Davis (the Cricket coach at Lancing College in Sussex, England) who came to Uganda on three occasions and Derek Semence who came on two occasions. The Indian government also made a great contribution to Ugandan Cricket when they sponsored Justine Ligyalingi to go for a coaching course in India and imported equipment for schools that lasted for three years (being used!). Locally, Sam Walusimbi was always available to accompany the visiting coaches and when conditions allowed would go to schools for coaching visits. Pithe Ndiko, Steven Kapere and Justin Ligyalingi regularly toured upcountry schools to assist in coaching and encouraging the boys to play cricket.

Thanks to Coca Cola (since 1992) the annual Schools Cricket Week has continued to be played and with almost 20 secondary schools in the program as of now, there is pressure to readdress the number of teams participating and the criteria for qualification to take part in the competition or indeed an increase in the sponsorship.

With South Africa back into the fold of International Cricket, it took over East Africa as sphere of influence from India. Following a meeting in 1994, in Durban, in which an impressive presentation of Uganda's development programme was made, Conrad Hunte (MCC development Officer for Africa) accompanied by Ayob Hoosain (of the United Cricket Board of South Africa) visited Uganda in 1994 to see for themselves the truth about Ugandan cricket. Needless to say, they were not disappointed and the following year they came back to introduce the simple version of cricket, Mini- cricket, geared towards Primary schools and to assist in the instruction of coaches.

Mini-cricket in Uganda is mainly played in primary schools. However, six Secondary Boys schools and four Girls secondary schools play Mini Cricket. At the time of introducing this version of cricket, a handful of primary schools (about five) played the hard ball, while another four played using soft balls. Given the age-old problem of equipment it was always going to be difficult to spread the game in primary schools. Today, over sixty primary schools play cricket stretching from the eastern town of Soroti to Kasese in the southern region.

The benefit of Mini Cricket is that now students with knowledge of the game are beginning to graduate into Secondary schools and asking for the game where it wasn't played before or adding to the numbers where it

is played. Mini Cricket is still growing and growing quickly. Very soon, UCA will have to organise a national championship for mini-cricket to encourage and create incentives for the pupils - there are nevertheless competitions in each of the ten districts at the moment.

Senior Cricket

The senior side of the game has seen a lot of changes. Many of the players who survived the difficult and trying days are all out of the game now save for a few like Sam Walusimbi and William Kibukamusoke. Lohana and Aga Khan whose composition is predominantly Asian have since added to the two predominantly Asian teams (Premier and KICC). Unfortunately, Aga Khan lasted for only one season and could not sustain a team after that. The Asian teams import professional cricketers from India (of course not first class players!) to beef up their sides, and this has created a healthy atmosphere for competition in local tournaments. Of the indigenous teams, Wanderers continues to be a breeding ground for young players and lose them when they mature (the team feels very bitter!). ACC (the mother club) went through a bad patch in the late nineties and at one stage could only use Lugogo boys (ball boys at the tennis club). These boys have since grown up to be good cricketers and other young Cricketing boys have since joined the club. Tornado still remains the most exciting club for youngsters (especially socially) and until 1999 had not won the national league. However, with the help of some Kenyan players, they finally won the National league championship in 1999. Nile (using pros from Kenya and some from India) was at one time the team to beat but it seems to have suffered financial problems when many of their supporters turned to other sports. The team is now trying to build this time round with young schoolboys. White Caps (named after a brand of beer from Kenya) comprising mainly British High Commission and other expatriate staff played a few seasons and as the game became more demanding on the field, they could not cope and consequently the team collapsed.

Upcountry the Association has not done too well. Apart from Jinja Association of Cricket Clubs (evolved out of Cricket Masters) which fields players from a combined Jinja schools, there is no cricket elsewhere. In 1992 Mbarara started a club and hosted some league matches. Unfortunately, many of the people who were behind the club moved to Kampala and the club ceased the following year. In fact, it is some of them that founded Nile Cricket Club.

Grounds and Tournaments

In the last ten years, it has dawned on UCA that many of the old cricket grounds may never be used again. Banojozi oval is not accessible, the Nakivubo ground is now a taxi park, the pitches outside Lugogo Cricket oval are now used for football, and the Police ground at Nsambya is a field used to plant yams and bananas. Upcountry, the story is the same although, (because of lack of economic activity), the grounds have not been reclaimed for other activities as yet.

However, the Association has done some useful work on grounds. After the Jinja Cricketers failed to run the Jinja Recreation ground, the club moved to Jinja SS grounds. UCA has turned both the wicket at Lugogo and the Jinja SS ground from matting to astral turf. Kyambogo ground was renovated with an astral turf wicket and is now used for regular club and league matches. The Association made a half-hearted attempt to reclaim Entebbe ground but the idea seems to have been abandoned.

Three major local knockout tournaments, the Luswata, Mawanda and Munabi cup tournaments have continued to be played over the years. However, with the exception of the Luswata cup, the other two have had sponsorship problems and on occasions have not been played. The league has now graduated to a two round basis - thanks to Bank of Baroda, which has for the last eight years continually sponsored the tournament.

Tours

The national team has had a lot of success in the last ten years compared to the previous thirty. After winning the Quadrangulars in 1991, the team won it again in 1996, 1997 and 1998. Uganda joined the Africa Zone VI Cricket Association in 1994 and began participating in the annual tournament, which included development sides from South Africa and Zimbabwe. The Africa Zone VI grouping was the forerunner to the Africa Cricket Association that was inaugurated in 1998. In this tournament, not much success has been achieved against Zimbabwe or South African opposition but the exposure has been more than welcome. Especially when the team has played against the likes of Paul Adams and Richard Telemacus who have gone on to play for the South African test side.

The Ugandan Cricket loving public has not been left out in the slow but steady growth of the game. The Duleep School of Cricket and Jamnagar Cricket club, both from India, toured Uganda in 1991 and 1992 respectively. The Cavaliers a club from England toured in 1993 for three weeks. Ruaraka Club (including Kuruvila who later played for India) and Afripals (a group of Kenyan native Cricketers including Maurice Odumbe and Steve Tikolo) from Nairobi toured in 1995 and 1997 respectively. And in 1998 the Marylebone Cricket Club from England made a one-week tour to Uganda.

What has missed out as the game develops at the club level is an opportunity for the Veterans to have a chance to play. The beer games and Saturday afternoon matches have slowly faded away and with them some of the old supporters of the game. Worse still, the Abagurusi team has not been active. Through out the nineties only a few matches have been played between the Veterans and schools and even then, there have been players used who do not qualify as Abagurusi.

In spite of the meagre resources in the association, a select Uganda team has made two tours abroad. The first was to the U.K in 1994, reciprocating the earlier Cavaliers tour to Uganda. The Cavaliers organised matches against club sides, colleges and the Kobs (a team in UK, composed of mostly expatriates who had worked in Uganda). A match played at Arundel Castle against the Duchess of Norfolks XI where Sir Colin Cowdrey

was the guest of honour capped the England tour. The second was to South Africa in 1996. The team played against township and club sides mainly in Kwa-zulu Natal province. Two matches were played in Johannesburg against a Soweto select team and Zoo Lake club. Rodney Malamba who was a manager of the South African team at the zone VI tournament in 1995 and a Secretary of Natal Cricket Union coordinated this tour. The match to remember on this tour was the one Against Cockstad XI, after which the Mayor hosted the team to a Dinner.

ICC Affiliation

The greatest achievement to Ugandan Cricket, with its history of Sacrifice and Survival was admission as an Associate Member of the ICC in 1998. The idea of direct affiliation started in 1995 but it is in 1997 that the issue gathered enough steam. In 1997, with the development programme progressing as it was, the association decided to seek direct affiliation to the ICC. At the time, there were many dissenting voices arguing that Uganda was not ready for direct affiliation. Despite the objections, in the same year, the Association lodge its application for Associate membership. Little did the officials know that lodging an application was not enough. South Africa, which had earlier accepted to nominate Uganda, for one reason or another, did not, and the application was rejected. As luck would have it, the newly created Africa Cricket Association had its inaugural meeting in Uganda during early 1998. At the end of this meeting all the delegates were invited to attend the Kampala District Mini cricket tournament. Seeing so many kids playing and the fact that UCA could organise such a tournament, won UCA a lot of praise and convinced many that Uganda did after all deserve direct affiliation. Once again UCA lodged its application for direct affiliation in 1998. Having learnt from an earlier experience, the UCA Executive (each funded their trip and expenses to London) together with the NCS General Secretary, Abram Lutaya and John Nagenda (Senior Presidential Advisor on Media), travelled to the UK to lobby for support during the ICC annual General Meeting. The backing received from Rashid Patel (Chairman ECACC), Peter Chingoka (President Zimbabwe Cricket Union) and Jimmy Rayani (Chairman Kenya Cricket Association) among others, was very instrumental in Uganda being accepted as an Associate Member.

ICC membership was a wonderful way to close the 90's and indeed the Century. What the new membership status brought to Uganda was not the end of a story but rather the beginning of the hard part in the future of Cricket. Uganda has to prove to the world that it deserves the membership. Results have to be shown not only on paper but also on the field.

Future

Funding has been - and still remains - a problem for the Association. Nevertheless, membership of ICC will mean many of the development programmes will have a regular source of funds. Over the years, a few companies, with a lot of negotiations on occasions involving John Nagenda, have assisted the Association to meet its financial obligations. However, because of the economic situation in the country, companies are only

beginning to be in a position to spend money on sports sponsorship. Because there are only a few willing companies in the country, there is a lot of competition for these funds by all sporting groups. Unfortunately for the Association, despite a Schools Development Programme of over 25 years, the crowds that come to watch a cricket game have not grown if anything has dwindled over the years, and without public interest sponsorship cannot be forthcoming.

As UCA starts yet another chapter in its history, it is a good feeling to know that some of the challenges have been overcome although in the process others have come up. The demands in the Association have increased because of the amount of work in the secretariat and the development programme. UCA has been forced to employ a salaried Development Officer, to continue expanding its schools development programme.

The biggest task UCA faces in the coming years is to regenerate interest in the public. There is need to expand club cricket to other towns without losing direction of the Schools Development Programme. The national economy is picking up and there are many expatriate staff and multinational company employees coming to Uganda. The Association should take advantage of this for the promotion of the game.

The national team needs to perform better and better every passing year. To help the players, many tours should be organised by teams coming to Uganda and the team going abroad. An effort should be made to invite former International Cricketers to Uganda to learn from them their experiences and get advice on how the game can move on from here. The Association should emphasise the need for professionalism - what better way than get a salaried Chief Executive.

(By A.T Nainhabo - 2000)