

THE LAST DECADE OF GLORY

The new century to WWI

Foenander claims that the Colts were never more powerful as a team than they were between the years 1896 and 1910 (1941: 5). During this period flourished great cricketers such as A. Raffel, T. Kelaart, E.H. Ohlmus, E. Weinman, J.C. McHeyzer, W. de Fransz, L. Thomsz, C. Orr, C.E. Perera, Dr. A.J. Scharenguival, the brothers S.P., E.A. and D. Joseph, W. de Rozayro, A. Holsinger, J. Ludovici, A.T. Pollocks, E. Weerasuriya, A.C. Amath, V.S. de Kretser, W.C. Boteju and A. de Silva. According to Foenander no Ceylon team was as strong as that which was fielded by the Colts against Charles Ward Jackson's European XI in 1898. The game was won by the Colts in an exciting finish (Foenander 1941: 62). The game was played at Galle Face in front of the biggest crowd to attend cricket match at Colombo up to then.

But in the new century the main opposition to the Colts were not coming from European cricketers but from local clubs such as the N.C.C (1888)¹, Bloomfield (1892), SSC (1899) and B.R.C. (1902). As late as 1920 the Colts were still beating the C.C.C. but not necessarily prevailing over the N.C.C. and the S.S.C. While talented Sinhalese cricketers gravitated towards the S.S.C., Burgher cricketers did not necessarily make the Colts their first choice. As a result, "... the honour of representing the Ceylonese against the Europeans was shared by the Colts and other leading Clubs, and in the course of time other teams challenged successfully the supremacy of the one-time premier Club" (Foenander 1941: 5).

There was a huge influx of quality cricketers from Colombo schools and the N.C.C. was an option for those who felt that they couldn't make the Colts team. Frank Ondaatje (1941: 27) explains –

¹ Although the N.C.C. like the Colts was founded by Burghers and technically open to all races, it too faced the challenge of not having a monopoly of Burgher talent, and in addition, having to face competition from ethnically based clubs such as the S.S.C, Tamil Union, the Moors and Malays. The foundation of the SSC was particularly disruptive as over half of the NCC's players left for the new club.

"I remember that, as a young schoolboy, my greatest ambition had been to be a member of the Colts' Eleven. But time marched rapidly for Ceylon cricket in the period between 1894-1903, my ten-year spell at Royal, and when in due course I had emerged after captaining the school eleven, I had already been a member of the Nondescripts C.C. for some months. And why? Merely because the influx into the ranks of the Colts from the schools since 1897-99 was such that the late C.E. Perera, J.A. Scharenguivel and E. Weerasuriya, to mention only three, were already there. Where then was the room in this exalted company for lesser fry?

Douglas de Saram², the Thomian captain of 1901-02, was then the leading figure in school cricket. His elder brothers, Shelton and Beauchamp were already identified with the Nondescripts. It came as a matter of course therefore that he and those of his time should conceive the idea of matching their strength against the Colts in the ranks of the Nondescripts"

A friendly rivalry developed between the Colts and the N.C.C. which could be likened to the Royal-Thomian and the CR & FC - Havelocks rugby rivalry of the sixties. (After WWI it appears that the rivalry between the Colts and the NCC was replaced by a rivalry between the N.C.C. and her neighbours, the S.S.C.) Apparently, the bi-annual matches played at either Racquet Court or where the town hall now stands, attracted crowds eight to ten feet deep. Lorenz-Andree (1973: 55) remarks that as a lad he observed Douglas de Saram, uncle of Colonel F.C. de Saram, have the measure of Kelaart at the Racquet Court as he hit six after six into the adjoining Lotus Pond ditch.

The NCC beat the Colts for the first time in 1903 at the Racquet Court. Then in 1908 they beat the Colts twice, although the second game a 36-year-old Tommy Kelaart played and captured 9 for 86. However, the star for the NCC was Cecil Horan who, a decade earlier, would surely have played for the Colts.

Ondaatje makes the interesting point that in 1908 while the Colts were relying on six of her veterans, the N.C.C. only had W.E. Gratien representing the old brigade (1941: 29). One immediately sees the problem the Colts now had in attracting the best in young talent. Ondaatje (1941: 28) adds –

"1908 came round, and by then the Nondescripts XI, was comprised largely of four brotherhoods, viz., the de Sarams: D.L., Fred and E.R.; the Weinmans: J.C., J.J. and L.O.; the Gunasekeras: D.B. and E.I; and the Ondatjes: F. and E. Was it any wonder then that this club side was able to produce team spirit of the best? Their cricket strength was enhanced by the inclusion of W.E. Gratien, A.F. Molamure, E.G.M Goonewardene and last but not by any means the least, C.A. Horan."

² Douglas de Saram was son of Richard Francis de Saram who set up his own practice in 1898 as R.F. De Saram. On the death of R. F. de Saram, Douglas and his brother Fred renamed the firm as D. L. and F. De Saram. One of Fred de Saram's four sons, all partners of the firm, was Col. F. C. de Saram, Today this tradition continues, and of the present partners Michael Sproule and Dijen de Saram are grandsons of Fred de Saram.

The NCC was predominantly a team of Burghers and Burgherised Sinhalese (the de Sarams). It was not so much that the Colts were losing potential Sinhalese to the SSC. but that talented Burghers also gravitated towards the NCC and subsequently, to the BRC.

The challenges

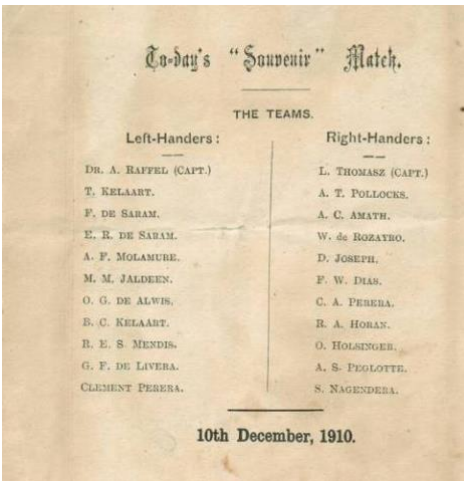
Between 1891 and 1913, in the games between the Colts and the NCC the Colts won 14 and the N.C.C. won 6. Between 1902 and 1913, the SSC beat the Colts only once in fifteen encounters. That win took place in 1913 (Foenander 1941: 44). Between 1873 and 1923 only six centuries were scored against the Colts.

By 1910 Tommy Kelaarts's reign was at an end. He was 38 years of age. And the period of Colt's domination was also at its end.

A cricket match was held between Right handers and Left handers after which a silver tray was presented to Tommy Kelaart. The group photograph from that occasion, wrongly attributed to 1911 is featured below.

A souvenir article came out and to mark the event and the pages, minus the page presented below, are featured in appendix III.

THE RIGHT HANDERS VERSUS THE LEFT HANDERS



L to R (back row): E.W. Foenander, W. Rosayro, M.M. Jaldin, V.T. Dickman, F. Dias, R.E.S. Mendis, _____

L to R (middle row): Walter Parys, H.R.H. VanCuylenberg, O. Holsinger, E.R. De Saram, R.A. Horan, F. De Saram, A.S. Peglotte, A.C. Amath, _____, F. Solomonsz

Seated (L to R): A.F. Molamure, Dr. A. Raffel (Governor's Private Secretary), K.G.W. Macleod (Mayor of Colombo), Sir Henry MacCallum (Governor of Ceylon), James Van Langenberg, Hon. H.L. Crawford (Colonial Secretary), L. Thomasz, O.G. de Alwis

On ground (L to R): B.C. Kelaart, T. Kelaart, A.T. Pollocks

Picture and souvenir courtesy of Richard Kelaart

This is a mixed team of players. Ex Thomians O.G. De Alwis and A.F. Molamure played for the N.C.C. along with de Sarams before they all defected to the S.S.C. The two de Sarams are the brothers of the famous D.L. de Saram. In 1911 they were likely to still have been with the N.C.C. R.A. Horan is the father of the famous bowler Cecil Horan.

The identifiable Colts cricketers are W. Rosayro, Allan Raffel, Walter Parys, A.C. Amath, O. Holsinger, Lawrie Thomasz, Tommy Kelaart and A.T. Pollocks. Thomasz was a great wag and one of the most popular cricketers of his generation. O. Holsinger was the younger brother of Alfred, the fastest bowler the Colts ever had.

Walter Parys was a familiar figure with his straw boater which he is holding in his hand in the picture and served as Hony. Secretary when the Racquet Court was the home of the Colts. The E.W. Foenander in the photo is Edward Wise Foenander, the younger brother of the famous Samuel Peter Foenander, known as SP³. Both brothers were gifted cricket scribes, and both appear in Colts club group photos.

E.W. Foenander is the author of eight books between 1911 and 1918. He authored Royal vs St. Thomas': a complete record of all matches played (1918). He also authored three Ceylon cricket almanacs from 1911 to 1913.

It is strange Tommy say on the ground rather than on a seat in the middle given his age. Maybe being at the feet of the Governor was something special in those days!!!

The B.C. Kelaart next to him is a nephew 'Bertram Colvin', Colvin's eldest son who would have been 20 in 1910. Bertram excelled in hockey and soccer.

The tray gifted to Tommy Kelaart is featured below.

THE TRAY GIFTED TO TOMMY KELAART

Presented through the Sportsman Testimonial Fund

To

T. Kelaart Esq

By

The Sporting Public

Of Ceylon

In

Appreciation of his long honourable and highly creditable
connection with cricket and of his valuable service to the game

4th April 1911



Courtesy of Richard Kelaart

³ S.P. and E.W. Foenander were the sons of Rowland Garvin (16/02/1860 – 05/08/1889) who died in Sydney, Australia. S.P. Foenander spent a part of his youth in Sydney.

Government service cricket

Foenander (1957: 11A) states –

“Cricket had been a popular pastime among members of the Government Service in all parts of the Island and informal games used to to be played by these Departments, against each other or against local Clubs. The Colonial Secretary’s Office had in the brothers Colvin and Tommy Kelaart two famous old Colts cricketers besides othrer Colts players like Willie F. Mottau and Gerald Heyn, while the Customs had in their clerical staff such stalwart Colts as W. de Fransz, Lawrie Thomasz, James de Kretser, W. de Rozayro”

Not surprisingly, the customs which won the inaugural “A” division competition in 1907, had many Colts cricketers in it.

FIRST WINNERS OF THE “DENHAM” SHIELD, 1907



Standing L to R: J. de Kretser, A.E. Weerasinghe, W.H. Gooneratne, W. De Fransz (captain), L. Thomasz, M.A. Sampan, K.E. Keller, G. Brohier
Seated L to R: H.E. de Kretser, A.N. Galbraith (First Hony. Secretary, CGSCA), Hon. Mr. W.H. Jackson, H.E. Sir Henry McCallum, B. Constantine, F.J. Smith, M.M. Anthonisz
On ground L To R: C. Kuypiah, S.A. Slaiman, W. de Rozayro, T.M. Rajudin
Inset right: E.B. Denham
Courtesy of Ceylon Government Service Cricket Association Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1957

Burghers distributed amongst clubs

Although the S.S.C. won the club championship in 1924 and 1925, the top Ceylonese cricketers were still Burghers. There were at least five Burghers in the Ceylonese team of 1930 which beat the European XI. They were – V.C. Shockman, E.G.S. Kelaart, N.S. Joseph, C.A. Horan, and H.E. Poulier⁴. This leads the chronicler to believe that well into the sixties a combined burgher team would have beaten its Sinhalese counterpart.

The Burghers were still a force to be reckoned with in Sri Lankan cricket. It is just that they were distributed between the Colts, BRC and the NCC. The SSC attracted the cream of the Sinhalese cricketers and many Burgherised Sinhalese. We also see that while Tommy and Colvin attended Royal, their sons attended St. Joseph's which came into being in 1894 after the original Kelaart brothers had finished their schooling.

Nineteen fourteen was the end of an era for the Colts. Although it continued to be competitive, it wouldn't dominate other clubs in quite the same manner. The first decade of the twentieth century was the last of unrivalled domination for the Colts.

⁴ In addition, there were three others with English names.