



## THE HISTORY OF ANTONIAN CRICKET

by Afzal Laphir

As one of the first schools to play the game, St Anthony's College Kandy has a great cricketing heritage, producing many exceptional cricketers over the past 109 years. This article attempts to capture snippets of the different eras of Antonian cricket, and record some of the most outstanding performances through this journey. The college history has been so rich that it requires a book with many chapters to do justice to all the proud cricketers who have played for college. In light of this, the author has his work cut out to represent this rich history in a few pages, and therefore some omissions are inevitable.

Cricket was introduced to St. Anthony's by Rev Fr. Andrew Van Langenberg O.S.B. in 1903, and a team known as 'St. Anthony's College Cricket Club' consisting of staff and schoolboys was formed under the captaincy of Fr. Andrew himself. The inaugural match was played against Colombo Carlton Cricket Club. An 'un-official' one-day game was believed to have been played in 1899 against St Joseph's which has often remained unaccounted for.

The very first inter-school match was played against Dharmaraja college in 1904, in the 50<sup>th</sup> year of our college's existence. The team was again lead by Fr. Andrew which resulted in a 109 victory for the Antonians. The first team comprising of only students was captained by Benny Lawrence in 1906 (Benny was the grandfather of our fellow Melbournian Chris Driberg). C.H Wittatchy became the first Antonian to receive national honours when he represented the combined school XI against a foreign team, from New South Wales.

In the first few years of its existence, cricket lost a child prodigy in Charlie Hamilton when he passed away in 1909 at the age of 12. By this time, Charlie had represented the college senior teams of cricket, soccer and hockey and was destined for bigger and better things.

The first Trinity-Antonian cricket encounter was played at the historic Bogambara Grounds in March 1914 with the Antonians winning the game.

## Emergence of the immortal Jack Anderson

The loss of Charlie was short lived when the great **Jack Anderson** came into the limelight in 1915. He was the most dominant batsmen of his era and created a number of records that lasted for many years. Anderson's score of 291 (7 sixes, 54 fours) against St Thomas' in 1918 remained a record as the highest score in an inter-school game for around 75 years until Indika De Saram surpassed him by scoring a triple hundred. Anderson once scored five centuries in consecutive games, reaching 1000 runs in a matter of 8 games and in 3 months. His centuries included 157 Vs Wesley where he put up a record opening stand of 258 with Victor Fernando in a total of 432 for 5, 109 Vs St. Benedict's, 291 Vs S. Thomas MTL., 184 Vs Royal and 111 Vs Trinity. The century against Trinity was the first by an Antonian and also the first at Asgiriya



Jack Anderson



L.V Jayaweera

In the early 1920s, our college introduced **Lionel V Jayaweera** to the cricketing scene. He was an outstanding bowler in school cricket, and followed it up with some telling performances in grade cricket. Jayaweera had achieved nine separate bowling hatricks during his career in cricket. Jayaweera was also renowned for his prowess as a boxer. G.R.S Baie was another top notch bowler to come through in this decade.

**Harry Jayasundara** was indisputably the best performer in the 1930s. He first played for college at the age of 15 and has been credited for single-handedly helping St Anthony's compete with formidable school teams at the time. Our college cricket went through a lull period for the best part of three decades between 1919 and 1947, where we suffered around 20 of the 23 defeats to date to Trinity. In the post-war era we were deprived of the college premises (the British army occupying), practice pitches and playing-fields.



## Domination starts in the 1950s

The arrival of 'super-coach' John Halangoda in the late 1940s, which was initiated by Rev. Bro Macky, brought about a renaissance of Antonian cricket. In 1948 under the captaincy of Lionel Pamunuwa, Antonians turned tables on Trinity by beating them by 141 runs and remained unbeaten through the season. S Dunuwille, openers TK Hannan and TMA Cooray (both coached college in the 1970s) and Melbournian Maurice Barsenbach were part of this successful team.

Our real dominance started in the early 1950s when St Anthony's became a force to reckon with in the school cricketing fraternity. The year 1951 was to be the last time Trinity defeated us and remained so for a period of 35 years until 1986.



**ACM Lafir, above and with Ronnie Stevens after the famous 266 run opening stand.**



The name **A.C.M Lafir** became synonymous with the success that college had. The team he lead in 1954 (College's 100th year) remained unbeaten all season, culminating with an innings victory against Trinity, and included a number of top-notch players. Apart from Lafir being the best schoolboy batsman that year, his association with Ronnie Stevens was considered as the best opening pair. The team also included the best opening bowlers in schools in TOM Deen and Saliya Dorenagama, top spinner in Sivanathan and the best wicket-keeper in Cuthbert Pereira. He was renowned for his solid technique and the penchant for large scores, and in the year 1954 he scored over 1,000 runs in just 7 matches scoring hundreds against St Benedict's(184), Trinity(176), Wesley(100) and Ananda(136). He had an average of 108 which surpassed that of batting immortal Jack Anderson. He was picked to play for Ceylon against the touring MCC in 1954 as a schoolboy cricketer facing Tyson and Statham and continued to represent the country for eight years.



**The 1954 side pictured after defeating Trinity by an innings. Sivanathan destroyed Trinity with 6 for 25 as the scoreboard shows**

Soon after Lafir, came **Wijepala Premaratne** who dominated school cricket in 1956 to become the first recipient of the Schoolboy Cricketer of the year award. It was in the same year a new star emerged when 14-year old **Charlie Joseph** played his first season. Charlie went on to become one of the greatest cricketers the college had ever produced and was adjudged the Best Schoolboy Cricketer in two consecutive years in 1959 and 1960, the two years he captained college.



**W Premaratne receiving the Schoolboy Cricketer award in 1956**



**A young Charlie Joseph in 1958**

Ranjith Dorenagama and S.W Seneviratne were the other dominant performers in the 1950s. The evergreen "Mr Antonian" Ranjith Samarasekara played his first of three years under Premaratne and made his debut alongside Charlie Joseph, who was then an off-spinner.



**Dorenagama**



**SW Seneviratne**



**Samarasekara**



The Trinity-Antonian encounters were suspended in 1956 and 1957 due to a disagreement between the relevant authorities of Kandy's two leading schools, regarding the age rule. During these years, Rev. Fr. D.A. Rosati took the entire cricket team to camp out in the Manampitiya jungles for one week. In fact even the mass was conducted in the jungle.

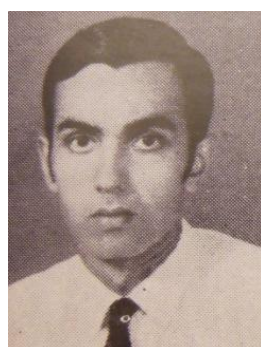
March 1958 saw a welcome return to 'Big Match' cricket action after a lapse of three years at St. Anthony's college ground, where the match turned out to be a Saturday half day game, because of the tremendous rain that we had for one and half days. Whatever time that was available was enough for skipper S.W. Seneviratne to score a memorable 100.

**Charlie Joseph** finished his career in 1961 after a span of six years. He became an outstanding batsman having started his career as an off-spinner. His consistency was a feature, scoring nine hundreds in the last three years of his career, including knocks of 95 not out and 127 in two successive years against Trinity. Against Dharmaraja in 1961, Charlie played one of his best innings when he joined his brother Michael Joseph to form a partnership that took college from 70 for 5 and facing a certain defeat to a match saving 323 for 6. This was the same year the school take-overs took place and the students needed a bit of respite.

The 1960s was another successful decade for college. After Charlie finished his career in 1961 under skipper Muthalib, after playing for six years, players of the calibre of the Burke brothers (Franklyn & Ralston), Charlie's brother Michael Joseph, Macky brothers (Louis & Michael), Jayantha Udukumbura, Nadaraj Nagendra, Randy Sims, Bernard Balaraj, Jack Robertson and Merri Guneratne rose to the occasion.



**Randy Sims**



**Jack Robertson**

**Franklyn Burke** brought distinction to college by winning the Schoolboy Cricketer award in 1962, the 4<sup>th</sup> occasion for an Antonian to gain this title within seven years. The batting prowess of skipper **Randy Sims** was in full show in 1968 and 1969, scoring runs at will and winning the hearts of the pundits as the foremost batsmen in school cricket.

**Jack Robertson** had instant success at Division One cricket soon after leaving college. He was the most feared fast bowler in the country in 1970/71 period, which earned him a place in the 'national XI' under Anura Tennakoon in a tour of Tamilnadu for the Gopalan Trophy. All-rounder Ralston Burke was also a member of the touring party and it became the first occasion where two Antonians had represented the national squad on tour. When a promising career was up for grabs, Jack migrated to Australia at the tender age of 22 and played very little top level cricket ever since, except for a few games for Prahran in Melbourne.



**Mahes Goonatileke**



**Merrill Dunuwille**

**Mahes Goonatileke** was a product of the Randy Sims era, and announced himself as an outstanding wicket-keeper batsman in 1970 and 1971. Mahes captained college in 1971 and was often touted as one of the best ever wicket keepers produced by Sri Lanka, eventually becoming the first Antonian to play in an official Test match when he played in the inaugural test match in 1982. Mahes was regarded as the best that Sri Lanka ever had by most critics, including fellow top-notch wicket keepers Ben Nawaratne and Dr H.I.K Fernando.

Merrill Dunuwille was another batsman of note during the early 70s, scoring the first century on the turf wicket at Katugastota. The team under Jayantha Monnekulama tasted success against Trinity in 1972 and in the following year skipper Premalal De Silva scored a memorable 148 against Trinity with some lusty hitting.





## Bernard Perera's era

**Bernard Perera** was undoubtedly the Antonian cricketer of the 1970s, and displayed sheer natural talent as an all-rounder. Although he was best known for his batting, Bernard was a superb fieldsman and a useful bowler as well. His unbeaten 155 against Trinity in 1976 is still spoken about in admiration, and it was in the same year that Bernard was adjudged the Schoolboy Cricketer of the year, in addition to winning two other awards in the Schoolboy cricketer contest. Bernard's 200-run partnership with brother Bede vs St Benedicts was one of the highlights of the '70s.



**Bernard Perera**



**Thaiyar Mohamed**

After his successful career at school, Bernard was always earmarked as a potential national cap before his involvement in the rebel tour to South Africa put paid to this honour. CPP Raj, Suresh Goonatileke, Mohamed Rizvie, Hiran Jayasundera and the Balthazaar brothers, Shane and Kevin also contributed consistently in the first half of 1970.

Thaiyar Mohammed was another all-rounder of distinction who captained college in 1977. Russel De La Motte, Ranjith Peries, Mohan Ratnakumar Ajith Seneviratne and Rienzie Martinez were 'house-hold' names in the late 1970s.

Ratnakumar had the distinction of scoring the first double hundred for college (204 vs St Peters) in 60 years, since the epic 291 by Anderson in 1918.

The college continued to produce very good teams in the 1980s. Fazeel Sherifdeen, Angelo Leanage, Anura Dunuwille and Pradeep Fernando were strong performers.

The team led by Fazal Majeed broke the Asgiriya hoodoo by defeating Trinity in 1981. Pradeep bowling outstandingly to claim a match bag of 11 for 103.

## Then came Marlon ....



**Marlon Von Hagt**



**Damian Nadaraja**

St Anthony's uncovered another star in early 1980s, when **Marlon Von Hagt** broke into the scene. Having played in the First XI for 6 years, Marlon had the unique distinction of winning the coveted eagle on five consecutive occasions. This was no mean task and paid testimony to Marlon's consistent batting performances over the five years. He notched our last double hundred (224 vs Dharmaraja) and also achieved the rare feat of scoring three centuries against Trinity, albeit two of them in one-day games.

Marlon's success at school level was soon recognized, and was included as the vice-captain to the legendary Aravinda De Silva in the Sri Lankan Under 19 squad. Marlon was part of the Sri Lankan squad for a couple of years before deciding to leave the country at the age of 22.

Another outstanding batsman to come out during this period was Damian Nadaraja, who captained in 1987. He was a top ranking batsman in school cricket at the time. Angelo Wickremasuriya, Dashantha Goonewardena and Rienzie Perera were useful contributors too.

Dashantha developed into a quality off-spinner and was part of the national pool in the mid 1980s.

The year 1986 saw our first defeat to Trinity after 35 years, a match that was gifted away through a 'sporting' declaration by our skipper Rienzie Perera.

## 1988 to 1992 period was the most dominant in recent memory

The period of late 1980s to early 1990s was one of the best times for Antonian cricket. **Ruwan Kalpage** emerged as a brilliant all-rounder, captaining college in 1988 and 1989. During this period he was regarded as the foremost all-rounder in school cricket. Ruwan scored 757 runs and bagged 87 wickets in 1988. As an off-spinner, Ruwan formed a deadly partnership with left-arm spinner **Piyal Wijetunge** (89 wickets in 1989), combining to destroy many an opposition school batting line-up. The legendary **Muttiah Muralitharan** joined the party soon and continued the spin bowling domination, helping college defeat a number of top schools.



**Murali, Ruwan and Piyal played a test match together as the spin-trio against South Africa in 1993 Pictured here with their coach Sunil Fernando**

Murali had the distinction of bagging over 100 wickets in two consecutive years (1990 and 1991), and was elected as the Schoolboy Cricketer of the year in 1991. In the same year, our side under the helm of Nuwan Kalpage was adjudged the best all-island team. Murali's extra-ordinary wicket taking ability catapulted him into the test side in 1992 and the rest is history. Ruwan and Piyal followed into the national side soon after.



**The 1991 side under Nuwan Kalpage was adjudged the best team in the country. Also included Murali**

Legendary Muralitharan went on play 133 tests, 350 ODIs and 12 T20s for Sri Lanka, ending up as the world's greatest wicket taker in both test history (800 wickets) and ODI history (534 wickets). He is easily the most distinguished cricketer St Anthony's has ever produced.



**Muralitharan (1991) and Sajith Fernando (1992) won the coveted Schoolboy Cricketer awards in consecutive years. No successes ever since....**

Sajith Fernando, was an un-sung hero, who opened the batting with success and later on became a useful spinner as well. His consistent performances earned Sajith the Schoolboy Cricketer award in 1992 and remains as the last such title won by an Antonian.

The teams led by Suresh De Alwis (1990) and his brother Umesh De Alwis (1992) were successful in defeating Trinity, and remains as our only victories in the past 21 years. The victory in 1990 was spearheaded by a matchbag of 10-39 by Piyal Wijetunga and a stylish 100 from Nuwan Kalpage. Sajith Fernando played a key all-round role in our win in 1992.

Some notable names to emerge from college since 1992 include Dilshan Witharana, Prasad Ranawaka, Hiran Wickremesekera etc. Although St Anthony's had produced some very good cricketers in the past 20 years, they came few and far between and as a result failed to contribute to a successful team culture. **Hiran Wickremasekera** was a consistent performer scoring over 1000 runs in three consecutive years. Leg spinner Saranga Rajaguru was able to break into the Sri Lankan under 19 team briefly with limited success.

**We hope the efforts put in by the Antonian Cricket Wing and the support provided by old boys in Australia will go a long way in bringing college back to its glory days**



## OLD ANTONIAN SOCIAL CLUB - AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

### Antonian Cricket Captains

Captains in **bold** are those currently living in Australia.

1906	Benny Lawrence**	1953	H Edmond Cooray	1999	Suranga Pinnaduwa
1907	F Wijeyagoonewardena	1954	A.C.M Lafir	2000	Nafees Nizam
1908	F Wijeyagoonewardena	1955	A.C.M Lafir	2001	Samson Burke
1909	J Foster	1956	Wijepala Premaratne	2002	Prasad Ranawaka
1910	G.W Puvimanasingham	1957	Ranjith Dorenagama	2003	Nipuna Ratnayake
1911	J.L Fernando	1958	Srilal W Seneviratne	2004	Mohamed Rizlan
1912	C.C Senaratne	1959	Charlie Joseph	2005	Promodth Fernando
1913	C.C Senaratne	1960	Charlie Joseph	2006	Shameer Munaz
1914	C.C Senaratne	1961	M Muthalib	2007	Selvyn Jamian
1915	R.A.D Joseph	1962	N Dunuwille	2008	Gimhan Dissanayake
1916	R.A.D Joseph	1963	<b>Michael Joseph</b>	2009	Sahan Pallihakkara
1917	J.M Ferguson	1964	<b>Michael Macky</b>	2010	Dulash Kumarasinghe
1918	Jack Anderson	1965	Jayantha Udukumbura	2011	Hiran Wickremasekera
1919	Robert Wright	1966	<b>Nadaraj Nagendra</b>	2012	Kanishka Ranaraja
1920	Louis Joseph	1967	<b>Christopher Sims</b>	2013	Sachin Bulathsinghala
1921	Lionel V Jayaweera	1968	<b>Randy Sims</b>		
1922	George Macky	1969	<b>Randy Sims</b>		
1923	Cecil Bolling	1970	<b>Merri Guneratne</b>		
1924	C Coomaraswamy	1971	Mahes Goonatilleke		
1925	Richard Tennant	1972	<b>Jayantha Monnekulama</b>		
1926	G.R.S Baie	1973	Premalal De Silva		
1927	J Anandappa	1974	Suresh Goonetilleke		
1928	A.H.K Omar	1975	Hiran Jayasundera		
1929	Ronald Ratwatte	1976	Bernard Perera		
1930	D.H Weerasinghe	1977	<b>Thaiyar Mohamed</b>		
1931	W.K Peter Fernando	1978	Russel De La Motte		
1932	W.K Peter Fernando	1979	Mohan Ratnakumar		
1933	Theodore de Silva	1980	Angelo Leanlage		
1934	Lionel V.Berenger	1981	Fazal Majeed		
1935	Bertie Wettawe	1982	Anura Dunuwille		
1936	Bertie Wettawe	1983	<b>Marlon Von Hagt</b>		
1937	Bertie Wettawe	1984	<b>Marlon Von Hagt</b>		
1938	Nugent Nugawela	1985	Angelo Wickramasuriya		
1939	Dennie Roberts	1986	Rienzie Perera		
1940	Ralph Harris	1987	Damian Nadaraja		
1941	Victor Joseph	1988	Ruwan Kalpage		
1942	T.K Hannan	1989	Ruwan Kalpage and		
1943	B Kura		Suresh De Alwis		
1944	George Alston	1990	Suresh De Alwis		
1945	M Zarook	1991	<b>Nuwan Kalpage</b>		
1946	H.G Fernando	1992	Umesh De Alwis		
1947	L.C Fernando	1993	Mohamed Ajaz		
1948	L Pamunuwa	1994	Indika Galagoda		
1949	S.V.A Samaradasa	1995	Nishantha Sirisena		
1950	S Jayasinghe	1996	Shafraz Mansoor		
1951	Bernard Weerakoon	1997	Tharaka Gunaratne		
1952	Bernard Weerakoon	1998	Mahesh Paliakkara		

\*\*Note: The teams in 1904 and 1905 comprised of staff and students. Rev Fr. Andrew Van Langenburg captained the first cricket match played by St Anthony's in 1904 followed by F Whatmore in 1905.



Three of the 10 Antonians Cricket Captains living in Australia - Michael Joseph (1963), Chris Sims (1967) and Michael Macky (1964) pictured here in Dec 2012.

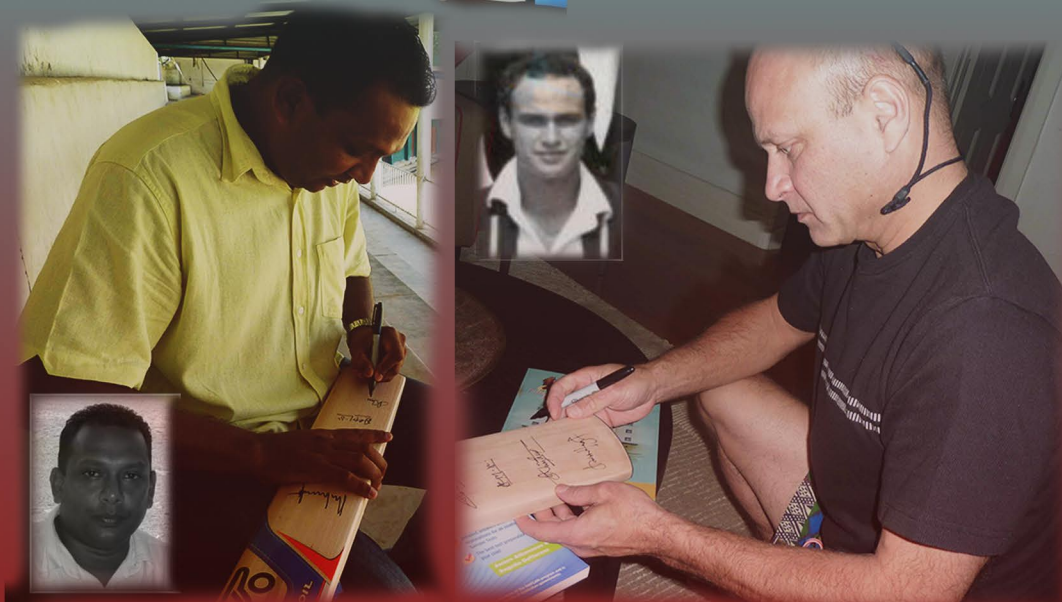
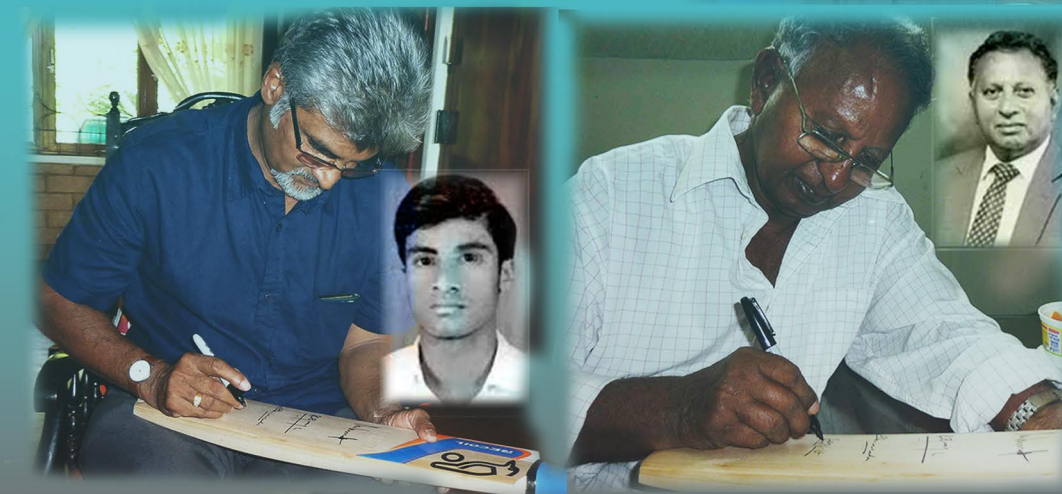


Two of the greatest batsmen produced by St Anthony's ACM Lafir and Marlon Von Hagt pictured in 2011. Both Lafir and Marlon opened the batting and captained college for two years.



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autographed by every single  
Antoninian who has represented  
Sri Lanka at cricket



**ANTONIAN**  
who have represented  
**SRI LANKA**  
at **CRICKET**

**MUTTIAH MURALITHARAN**  
SACK (1989-91); SL (1992-2011)

**RUWAN KALPAGE**  
SACK (1985-89); SL (1993-99)

**MAHES GOONATILLEKE**  
SACK (1968-71); SL (1982)

**A.C.M LAFIR**  
SACK (1950-1955); SL (1954-62)

**PIYAL WIJETUNGE**  
SACK (1987-90); SL (1993)

**MARLON VON HAGT**  
SACK (1979-84); SL (1985)

Further details to come soon on our website [www.antonian.org.au](http://www.antonian.org.au)