



Brian Charles Lara

Chancellor, greatness is far easier to recognise than to describe. Here stands before you a genius to whom only the greatest writer can do justice. What bitter irony then that the man most capable of this did not live to see him play. CLR James, who described cricket as the most complete expression of popular Caribbean life and who is the greatest writer of any book on cricket, died in the very year that Brian made his international debut.

Chancellor, I will fall far short of the crease. My words are incapable of giving form to the most elegantly devastating batsmen of any era. Let us consult a higher authority. Let us transcend this place, to a realm "Beyond a Boundary", to cricketing heaven!— where resides only the greatest, and where we shall find Archangel CLR James. Our time there will be short and our connection necessarily weak. You see, Chancellor, angelic language is soft and spoken once. So do strain your ear!

Listen: "I wish that I had lived to see him on Earth. No West Indian batsman has been as much, as complete. It is as if he is the incarnation of all his great predecessors. As if greatness, lost in time and space, has come together in one. Infinite successions from Headley, Weekes, Worrell, Kallicharan, Kanhai, Rowe and Richards have amassed themselves into the depth of his being. His easy, erect stance, all grace and elegance, always there in advance. The high backlift, as if about to commit some pre-meditated act of violence... and then the ball will travel, in all his strokes, even the most defensive. He saw the ball earlier, played it later and played it better. The flick of the wrist, the

swivel and the pull, the rasping cover drive, the dance down the wicket that could either tame the viperous spin or equally discard it, ignominiously, back over the bowler's head. His spirit is untameable. He has had the power to transform the most magnificent and grand cricketing coliseums into mere billiard tables, striking the ball with precision into his chosen pocket. Such appreciation for angles could have only come from careful study. Study of the sunbeams as they peered above the mountain tops to pierce the mist enveloping Cantaro, bringing morning to that sleepy village''.

Hello... Hello. Chancellor, we seem to have lost our contact with heaven!

But while he was quite rightly being celebrated in heaven, here on earth there was baying for his blood. Why is it, Chancellor, that great men often have to face and endure such torture? His lips remained silent. But his bat and brilliance did the talking. His 400 not out is the record for the highest score in test cricket. Brian Lara is the only batsman to have held, lost then regained this record. Five hundred and one for Warwickshire is the record for the highest first class score and the only quintuple century ever recorded at this level of the game. He is the only batsman to have scored a century, double century, triple century, quadruple century and quintuple century. His match winning 153 against the mighty Australian touring team of 1999 is described as being amongst the best ever played in the long history of the game.

In the final analysis, the scores, the averages, the achievements, the exploits have all exceeded the bounds of what we thought were reachable. There was first Mozart then Einstein and now Lara.

*Chancellor, let us restore the lost tradition of the ancient Greeks. Let us open the gates to welcome one of our greatest sportsmen in triumph. Let us remove the walls around our great bastion and receive him – he who has used his bat like a magic wand, bewitching us with its mastery – a bat that has created breezes that have given rise to winds which have lifted our hearts, bringing courage and honour and hope and pride — and confer upon him the title of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.*

St. Augustine Campus

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