



Sir Everton DeCourcey Weekes

Chancellor, tonight we are about to complete the process of honouring and consecrating West Indian cricket's holy trinity, by recognising the glorious trysts of Sir Everton DeCourcey Weekes, the most prolific run-machine of the immortal 3 Ws. For 20 years this triumphant trio - the greatest batting trio in cricket history - inspired the once and future Nation of the West Indies. After 40 years the Cave Hill Campus repays in part the debt of all West Indians to the boy from St. Leonard's Boys.

Everton DeCourcey Weekes was born on February the 26th, 1925, one year after Frank Worrell and one year before Clyde Walcott. They were all birthed in Bridgetown, within a mile of each other and a mile of the holy ground of Kensington Oval. At St. Leonard's young Everton was a member of the cub pack, the scout troop and the school choir, all a good grounding for a team player and for recruitment into the army at age 18. He played for Westshire in the Barbados Cricket League as a child prodigy of 13, then for the Garrison Sports Club followed by Empire in 1947. He teamed up with the other Ws for the first time against Trinidad and Tobago in 1945, and scored his first first class century against our Guyanese cousins in 1946.

There was no looking back. His first test was against the MCC in 1948, and his first century in the final test was followed by four more in India, creating the most enduring record in cricket history of five consecutive test hundreds. And his test average of 58.6, the highest West Indian average, has endured for almost as long, while his 8,000 runs in the Lancashire league were scored with an average of 91.

Chancellor, as an armchair critic who reads more cricket than I watch, I would not be so presumptuous as to praise such a hero in my own paltry words. Let me quote the experts:

Of his 279 in 235 minutes at Trent Bridge, 1950: "I have seen them all since Victor Trumper and including Bradman; I have never seen a more brilliant array of strokes nor heard the ball so sweetly struck." The great English batsman George Gunn. Poetic words for poetic strokes!

Keith Sandiford in *Cricket nurseries of colonial Barbados*: "Weekes seemed quicker, more businesslike, more violent... he scored his runs in a brisk, rather Bradmanesque manner, without the suggestion of risk of danger."

India, 1948: "His test figures of 779 runs, average 111, made it look as if he had a mission to punish bowlers" - Frank Birbalsingh. And again: "He exhibited a startling capacity for invention matched only by Kanhai and Headley..."

John Arlott: "Everton Weekes was the most explosive cricketer of all. He had incredible speed of footwork and strokemaking. He was like Bradman but more extravagant."

"Once Everton Weekes had a bowler on the rack he never allowed him to climb off. This killer instinct seemed much in common with Rocky Marciano." Henderson Dalrymple.

And finally: "Weekes was described after the 1950 tour as having batted with a hammer," quoted by Hilary Beckles in *Liberation Cricket*. Poetry and power!

Power, poetry, precision, speed, extravagance, inventiveness, aggression, explosiveness: a plethora of superlatives describing the many components of a hugely successful phenomenon - all governed by a cerebral and disciplined approach, which could apply those talents to any sport he chose - football, table tennis or bridge.

Off the field Sir Everton has served Barbados, the West Indies and cricket in many ways, as commentator, as first cricket coach of the government of Barbados, and as manager of the West Indies Team in 1967.

Chancellor, as long as cricket inspires the West Indies and the University of the West Indies studies cricket, the legends of the 3 Ws will live on; and central to the legends and lore will be Sir Everton DeCoursey Weekes, on whom I now invite you, by the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of our University, to confer the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.