



Clive Hubert Lloyd

MR. CHANCELLOR, I speak now of heroes. It behoves us, when we are privileged to find ourselves in the presence of greatness, to make sure that we prove equal to the occasion. We are now in the presence of greatness, in the person of Clive Hubert Lloyd.

Let the roll-call of honours speak: Order of Australia, Order of Jamaica, Order of Roraima, Chaconia Gold medallist, honorary Master of Arts of the Universities of Hull and Manchester — a world geography of honour:

Clive Lloyd has set many records in his time. Today he sets another. This is the first time that this University will have conferred an honorary degree on an athlete for his prowess on the field of sport. The gesture is doubly historic because it symbolises the idea of West Indianness and the potential of the West Indian people. In honouring Clive Lloyd, we honour West Indian cricket and the men whom he led. No one is more seized than he of the awesome significance and responsibility of the position which he has held. He says:

"The pattern of my captaincy of the West Indies team was to a great extent dictated by the fact that the game is so terribly important for us in the Caribbean. It's much more than a game. It carries with it all sorts of aspirations and hopes of West Indian people."

But we are in danger of waxing too philosophical. Let us stick to the game in hand. I ask you, therefore, Mr. Chancellor, to imagine that you are on the cricket ground at Bangalore in India. It is the 26th of November 1974. The first innings have already been completed and the West Indies led, but by only 29 runs. The West Indies are at bat again, and those wily Indian spinners, Prasanna and Chandrasekhar, have put India into a strengthening position, having disposed of Kallicharan and Richards within a space of four overs.

Now, any well-thinking West Indian supporter would be anxious for the Captain coming in to bat at this juncture, because it is his first Test match as Captain, and he had made only a modest 30 in the first innings. Such a supporter would be well-thinking and reasonable, indeed. He would also be wrong. For this Captain is no ordinary man. He is Lloyd. I continue the story in the words of the Indian commentator Dicky Rutnagur:

"The Indians bowled with admirable spirit in the face of Lloyd's onslaught but it was a vain hope. Besides using the sweep to such great purpose, Lloyd stepped forward and drove with effortless power, or rocked back and cut."

Lloyd went on to make 163 chanceless runs, of which the first hundred, says Rutnagur, "*must constitute one of the most rapid centuries in Test cricket.*" West Indies won by 276 runs, and the Captain remembers that victory and his innings as one of the high-points of his life.

That life began in Georgetown, Guyana, on 31 August 1944. He was born into modest circumstances, the eldest of six children. Cricket was part of his life from early, and his ambition soon set itself towards excelling at the game. His backyard stood back to back with a neighbouring backyard. There was an opening between the two, and there he had his first cricket pitch. And just a hundred yards or so away was a landmark and inspiration, the Demerara cricket ground. As youngsters, in order to get on to the field to watch the players at practice, or to 'get a play' himself, he and his mates sometimes had to call upon their ingenuity and diplomacy, in the shape of a half-bottle of rum to bribe the groundsman.

But progress towards realising his ambition was not without its setbacks. When he was fourteen, and already Captain of his high school team, his father died and he had to cut short his schooling in order to take a job. Even before that, physical injury had begun to threaten him, as when he contracted tetanus as a result of a leg injury and came near to death. But even here we see his capacity to turn misfortune into advantage, because it is recorded that while he was confined to bed he grew a miraculous six inches in one month. We must acknowledge, too, the support of his mother, a strong and courageous woman, in those fatherless years.

Having established himself on the West Indies team, he tempered his steel in the demanding professional medium, first of the Lancashire League, with Haslingden Club, then with the Lancashire county team itself, of which he was eventually to become Captain. They revere him in Manchester and its environs. They remember how, almost single-handedly, he made Lancashire into the champion limited-overs team which it became. They remember, for example, a match against Middlesex at Old Trafford, when, as one reporter put it. *"He looked as sweetly tuned as the finest Stradivarius. Lancashire did not beat Middlesex. Clive did."*

He got his place on the West Indian team as a batsman, but from the beginning his fielding was a marvel. He had served a testing apprenticeship as a boy fielding to the players practising on the Demerara cricket ground. A hallmark of his legendary prowess in the covers was the factor of unlikeliness and surprise. For this I have no words better than those of the incomparable Arlott:

"He ambled, apparently abstractedly in the field, sun hat brim folded up like some amiable Paddington Bear, but upon the cue of a stroke played near him, he leapt like some great cat into explosive action."

Clearly, not for nothing did he earn the nickname 'Supercat'.

So much for the fielding. As for the batting, another choice detail will suffice. Power and magnitude were integral to his art. His namesake and former Lancashire Captain David Lloyd recalls a six which he once hit against Surrey:

"He struck (the ball) a mighty blow. We seemed to watch it and watch it and watch it. . . it seemed never to stop rising, it cleared the ground and landed across the road against Archbishop Tension's Grammar School even further away. I have never seen a hit like that. That (was) a West Indian hit."

The fielding, the batting, even the bowling, which proved crucial at times — but finally, crowningly, the captaincy. He led the West Indies in 74 Tests. No other captain in the history of cricket has led his country more than 50 times. These 74 matches included 36 wins and only 12 losses, with a record-breaking 11 consecutive victories. In one-day internationals, he led the team to 66 victories in 84 starts. As his successor, Mr. I.V.A. Richards has acknowledged. *"He gave us the habit of Winning."* He elicited a new fighting spirit and professionalism from his men, having taken to heart Kerry Packer's advice that the only good loser is the one who loses often.

By his principled and forthright actions and example during the Packer crisis, he helped to save the game, and to win for the West Indies team the improved conditions of service which were a necessary factor in the new professionalism. There have been a few who have sought to belittle the quality of his captaincy. But we are not here to fend off the suspect deliveries of small men. Let us take example from the man we praise. Nothing becomes him so much as the calm dignity with which he shrugs off the rancour and carping of detractors. A modest, philosophical man, ever ready to acknowledge his mistakes, but fearless and articulate in defending his principles and his team when he knew they were right. And if he succeeded in fostering a winning team-spirit on the field, this was helped by the model spirit which has sustained him in the privacy of that other team, the family, thanks to the understanding, good sense and love of his lovely wife, Waveney.

For all these things, we are forever in his debt. We hail the man – Hubert, Groover, Supercat, the Skip.

Mr. Chancellor, I give you a hero: Lloyd of Guyana, Haslingden, Lancashire and the West Indies, and I invite you, by the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of this University, to honour him with the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

University of the West Indies,
Mona Campus
November 16, 1985