



2008 INDUCTEES, from left, Mohamed Baksh, Jefferson Miller, Mascelles Bailey, Gordon Greenidge and Desmond Haynes.

Greenidge, Haynes cricket's greatest ever opening pair

Former West Indies' batting stars Gordon Greenidge MBE and Desmond Haynes were hailed as the greatest ever opening pair in the history of the sport of cricket at this year's Cricket Hall of Fame's annual Induction Ceremony, held at the Marriott Hotel, downtown Hartford, Connecticut, Saturday, September 20.

The duo was among the latest group of individuals which included Jefferson Miller of Florida, Mascelles Bailey and Mohamed Baksh of New York, to be inducted into the prestigious institution. Miller, Bailey and Baksh were honored for their contributions to the sport in the U.S.

Two others, the Rev. Canon Wilborne Austin, rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Bloomfield and Harland Henry, Manager of the Small and Minority Business Services Unit in the Office of the Secretary of State, received Presidential awards for their contributions to the Hall of Fame and the community. Henry was also presented with a proclamation by Leslie Mara, Deputy Secretary of state.

"When I look at Haynes and Greenidge, I recognize genius, talent and greatness," Master of Ceremonies Rudolph Cohen, another former West Indies player, said as he addressed the gathering. "Their careers were intertwined, they developed together, grew up together so the Cricket Hall of Fame made a wise decision to induct them together."

Haynes and Greenidge, both native Barbadians, who formed a formidable opening partnership in Test cricket, were acclaimed as integral to the success of the West Indies team in the 1980s which became world champions, a position which the team held for a number of years.

The very exciting and impressive ceremony which attracted about 300 patrons, featured dance performances by a young Barbadian group and video presentations which highlighted the historic Olympic 100 meters finals won by the flamboyant Usain Bolt of Jamaica and Greenidge, Haynes and other former cricket stars in action during their illustrious careers.

Mayor Eddie Perez presented all the inductees with proclamations which acknowledged their accomplishments in the sport and which declared Saturday, September 20 as “Cricket Hall of Fame Day” in the city of Hartford. He congratulated the Hall of Fame and wished them success in their future programs.

On Friday, September 20, the inductees were officially welcomed to the city at a luncheon reception held at City Hall. Councilwoman Veronica Airey-Wilson, who hosted the reception, wished them well and encouraged them to take in as many sights of the city before their departure. She then presented each of them with a pictorial book on Hartford.

In their response after their induction, almost all of the inductees made strong appeals to the Board of the United States of America Cricket Association (USACA) to do everything in their power to move the game, the second most popular sport in the world, to a higher level in this country.

Haynes, who attributed his success in life to his grandmother, called on members of the USACA to get rid of petty jealousies and work together for the sake of the sport, recommending that they should seek help from the West Indies Cricket Board to get the game on the right track in this country.

“A lot of people instructed me in my development,” he said, “but once I got into the team I wanted to make my association with Greenidge a long partnership and the only way to make it happen was compensate Greenidge, who had already been established as a competent opener. I learned a lot from him (Greenidge) during our times at the crease,” he said.

Greenidge, who migrated to England at an early age, enlightened the audience on some of the trials and difficulties he encountered while growing up in that country, explaining how he eventually triumphed to become a top class cricketer.

“Growing up in England changed me completely,” he said. “I encountered people who tried in every way to make life difficult for me. Cricket was not high on the agenda at the school that I attended, tennis took the forefront. You did not see much black people playing tennis. I tried playing soccer but since cricket was my first love I decided to pursue the sport by joining a nearby club. Cricket made me what I am today,” he asserted.

Greenidge closed his remarks by making a strong appeal to the officers of USACA to work towards the establishment of a development program for youths.

Miller, one of the visionaries who was instrumental in the establishment of a \$70 million sports complex in Lauderhill, Florida, which includes a first class cricket field, also made a strong plea to the USACA, the caretakers of the sport in the U.S., to work together to bring improvements to the sport.

“We have worked hard to get the stadium,” Miller pleaded, “so please do not let it go to waste. Bring international cricket to Florida and other sites in the country. We need to do better. We need to get the youths involved and try to develop an approach like in soccer and have cricket moms to help spread the word,” he said