



Former Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, left, views exhibits at the Cricket Hall of Fame. At right, former Minister of state Delano Franklyn is presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from president Shirley Matthews.

Plans to induct Lawrence Rowe put on hold

By STAN WALKER

Former Jamaican and West Indies star batsman Lawrence Rowe is one of the top nominees for induction into the Cricket Hall of Fame this year. Besides George Headley, Rowe who now lives in Florida is regarded as one of the greatest cricket talents ever to come out of Jamaica and the West Indies. The 302 runs which he scored against England in 1974 is one of the greatest innings ever played by a West Indian in Test cricket, a large number of sports writers in the region have agreed.

Director of the Hall of Fame Michael Chambers said that he is very delighted with the nominations that have come in favoring Rowe, but because of some feedback that he is getting in relation to Rowe's visit to South Africa with a West Indian rebel team during the apartheid days, he has decided to put his induction on hold.

"I would like to get an official notification from the Jamaican cricket authorities and political leadership that the ban that was placed against him has been lifted and that they have forgiven him for what many term just a mistake," he said.

Chambers also had the opportunity to put the issue to former Jamaican Prime Minister P. J. Patterson, and former Minister of State Delano Franklyn, who recently visited the Hall of Fame. While Patterson was in Hartford to be the keynote speaker at the West Indian Social Club's 60th anniversary, Franklyn was here to promote his two latest books "Michael Manley, The Politics of Equality" and "Sprinting into History."

Two ardent cricket fans, who said that they were impressed with the displays at the Hall of Fame, they were asked to give their feelings on the issue, and to offer any assistance that they could to help Chambers obtain the information that he is seeking from Jamaica.

Patterson who seemed to be very excited about the nominations that have come in for Rowe, promised that when he returns to Jamaica he will mention it to the president of the Jamaica Cricket Board and suggest to him that he formulate a discussion with the Minister of Sport on the matter and to submit a letter to the Hall of Fame as soon as the discussion is completed.

"Speaking personally, we were upset with Rowe at the time," he said. "Then Prime Minister Michael Manley is a cricket man. We were very disappointed but we all make mistakes in life but there will come a time for forgiveness."

He mentioned the situation which developed with another of the island's sports hero, Merlyn Ottey, who took out citizenship in another country and ran for them in the Olympics. "It was decided afterwards to forgive her and restore her successes as a top athlete of Jamaica," he said.

Franklyn, who said that Rowe happens to be one of the best batsmen that he has ever seen, supported the director in his decision and promised to do some research on the issue when he returns home. "I will inform you of my findings as soon as I am able to," he said.

Former Gleaner sports writer Tony Becca, who was inducted into the institution in 2005, was also approached to give his views on the issue. Showering Rowe with high praises, he said, "I will support the

induction of Rowe. There is no question about it; he is a great Jamaican and West Indies cricketer.

“It is true that he did go to South Africa, but all men make errors and all should be forgiven. I have been to South Africa three times, and I believe based on what I have heard and seen in South Africa that the visit of the Rebel West Indies team in 1983 and 1984 assisted in the breaking up of apartheid. As far as the Jamaican people are concerned they seem to have forgiven him. Every time he comes to Jamaica he is welcomed wherever he goes.”

Becca also said that Manley forgave him to the extent that before he (Manley) died, he was trying to get Rowe to come to Jamaica as a coach. Manley told me that himself. I believe that he should be seriously considered for and given the honor.”

Despite his decision, Chambers has indicated that regardless of the results of his request for the official statements from Jamaica, Rowe will definitely be among the top candidates for induction in next year's class.