

Costa Rican Cricketers Go to Belize

The first Central American Cricket Championships took place March 18-20 at Lord's Bank cricket ground near Belize City, representing a giant step forward for cricket in the region. Participants were Belize, Mexico and Costa Rica, the latter represented by members of the Costa Rican Cricket Association.

Although all three countries are International Cricket Council (ICC) affiliates, their levels of cricketer skills and experience were markedly different. Belize failed to obtain promotion to ICC associate status last year, but for technical reasons rather than inadequate playing ability. Mexico has considerable league and international match experience, as well as a selection of good Indian and Australian players to draw from. In this company, Costa Rica was the overwhelming underdog. Indeed, the order of finishing was as predicted: Belize first, followed by Mexico and Costa Rica.

The first day of the championship, Belize "produced a powerful performance to overpower a spirited Costa Rica, (whose) inexperience at this level was obvious," according to a game report by ICC Regional Development Officer Grant Dagnmore. Though Belize won by a whopping 281 runs, Costa Rica's "...obvious enthusiasm and determination (were) a credit to the entire... team," Dagnmore writes.

On day two, Costa Rica appeared to have a better chance against Mexico, but the more experienced team proved "too strong for a plucky Costa Rican side," according to Dagnmore. Nonetheless, the underdogs "produced an improved performance in the field and some outstanding catches were ultimately held" (though sadly not by yours truly, whose hat seemed to get in the way). Mexico won by 143 runs, eliminating Costa Rica from contention.

In the final on day three, Belize beat Mexico handily by 78 runs. In addition to the satisfaction of being the first winner of this championship, the event afforded Belize important preparation for its participation in the upcoming ICC Division 2 Championship to be held next month in Argentina.



Photo courtesy of ICC, Americas

Team Costa Rica shown above at Lord's Bank cricket ground in Belize are, from left, in back, Mickey Peart, Barry Ashworth, Tim Baker, Richard Blingworth (captain), Head Rogers and Bryan Mitchell (vice-captain); and, in front, Steve Bryant, Chris Pressat, Roger Mathanda, Johnnie Lambert, Lofly Barnes and Dave Crip. Absent are Dewald Bullfinch and umpires Mike Power and Philip Chesterton.

For Costa Rica, just being in the championship was a quantum leap forward compared to its recently established league play and past informal visits to Nicaragua and Panama. The squad, which included the Costa Ricans' on-accident with ICC rules, gained valuable experience and got a better feel for ICC-type rules and play. All team members enjoyed the trip, the cricket and the hospitality of the Belizeans, and are grateful to sponsors Cally Bott, Hood Club del Mar, Motons Británico-Land Rover, TACA airlines, ICC, Americas and two association members who, by doubling up on the

players' individual contributions, made the trip a reality.

Plans are to hold the second Central American Cricket Championship in Mexico City in 2007, with the chance of new teams from Guatemala and El Salvador entering and possibly leveling the playing field for Costa Rica.

For full scores, e-mail association secretary Francis Houghton at frange23@aol.com. New players and members are welcome and may contact the writer at 561-8756 or e-mail match secretary Johnnie Lambert at johnniecr@aol.com.

-Richard Blingworth