

NOORALI NASSER

“By Sports Correspondent”

Noorali Nasser or “Nunu” as he is popularly worldwide known as needs no introduction within the community and the sports fraternity. He is a complete sportsman for many clubs he has played for, in Tanzania and Kenya.

The name “Nunu” has been woven in the tapestry of cricket, volleyball, football and hockey right from his youth days in Zanzibar where he was instrumental in helping his school achieve fantastic wins. Noorali all along displayed his superb all round skills and ability. He is natural at any sport to which he adapts admirably, quickly and fairly well.

Noorali, born on 27th March, 1951 in Zanzibar projects the dignity of a polite and humorous gentleman. He is a pleasant personality who commands great respect from his contemporaries. It is also his amiability that makes one and all accessible to him.

Noorali reminds me of a smart young boy in white shorts playing cricket, stylishly holding his bat and thrashing tennis ball in the gullies of Kiponda, Malindi and Sokomohogo in Zanzibar, in the 1960's. His tennis ball cricket was played mainly at Mnazi Moja ground. The confidence he exuded heralded the coming up of a potential cricketer.

Noorali was completely obsessed with sports, and his cricket career began in Zanzibar at the tender age of 14 when he represented Hindu Union Secondary School in the championship match against the strong Ithna-asheri Kiponda Secondary School team, foreseeing an innings that unleashed a series of strokes, exhilarating drives and square cuts. He modestly and majestically raised his bat in acknowledgement of the rapturous applause as he approached the pavilion of Lumumba College scoring 52 runs to help his school team achieve an implausible win. That was his first hero's welcome way back in 1965.

Early 1967, Noorali moved to Dar es salaam and joined Shabaan Robert Secondary School.

Noorali is pragmatic, principled, and thorough disciplinarian. In 1969 under his firm authentic, shrewd and dominant leadership, he guided Shabaan Robert Secondary School through to win the great “Isherwood Cup” and “Mrs. Kolet Cup” in an open Tanzanian Secondary Inter Schools Championship tournaments, both in cricket and volleyball respectively.

In the same year, Noorali was selected to play for Tanzania XI in the Mini Triangular Cricket Tournament between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania that was staged in Nairobi Gymkhana ground. He excelled both in bat and bowl, and displayed an incredible all round performance.

Following this success, Noorali was offered to join the great Upanga Sports Club that already consisted of 7 Tanzanian National Team players. Among the names were Babu Chohan, Praful Mehta, Vasant Tapu, Pranlal Divecha, Rajni Vaghela, Kishore Gajjar and Ramnik Valumbia.

One of the most notable bowling achievements of the league for Upanga Sports Club was when Noorali claimed 5 of Ithna asheri Union's wickets of Mohamed Nathoo, Amir Yusuf,

Mahmood Nurmohamed, Yusuf Kabana and Bashir Tejani. In absence of Vasant Tapu, Noorali opened the bowling for Upanga with Pranlal Divecha (the East African opening bowler). In batting, Noorali has performed innumerable rescue acts for Upanga.

He later represented Tanganyika XI against the strong visiting London Team at Dar Gymkhana ground, when he proudly claimed the wickets of Graham Gooch and Emburey. Noorali ended up with the bowling figure of 2 wickets for only 2 runs.

1970-72 Noorali was overseas in United Kingdom, pursuing his further education in "A" levels.

Time has moved on very fast but at times it is also pleasant to let nostalgia overcome Noorali's other indulgence. History witnessed that in 1973, the fierce rivalry between Mombasa Eaglets and Jaffery Sports Club attracted huge crowds. Drum beats and trumpet blaring provided festive environment at the ground. Mombasa Eaglets had a large number of supporters and they thronged the ground in hundreds. At times tempers flared among spectators and even fist-fights broke out which momentarily tensed the situation but then livened up the proceedings. After the victory supporters took out procession through the streets of Mombasa. Indeed those were the good old days.

In 1973/74, Noorali will mostly be remembered as one of the best tactician in the history of Mombasa Eaglets Cricket Club when he earned the honour and title of "Diamond" for his notable everlasting and shining performances both in batting and bowling for his club. He was an all rounder of proud potential. His exuberant and flamboyant style on the field earned him the reputation of 'fielder par excellence'. The fascinating aspect of his fielding was the accuracy of his throws that would rattle stumps from very odd angles, probably the finest fielder at the Coast- a nightmare for batsmen leaving the crease. Noorali was the vice-captain of Mombasa Eaglets.

In 1973, Noorali was selected to represent CCA XI in a friendly match against Tanzania XI at Kinondoni ground, Dar es salaam. He opened the bat for CCA XI and went on to score a sparkling innings of 55 runs against the fierce bowling attack of Pranlal Divecha and Vasant Tapu (both East African bowlers).

In 1974, Noorali left for United Kingdom to pursue his further education in Accountancy. His English three-counties Cricket League for Winget, Gloucestershire records a lot of accomplishments, honours and awards both in bowling and batting.

Besides cricket Noorali also excelled in such other sports as football , volleyball, and hockey.

FOOTBALL As a footballer, Noorali in his prime time, played for Agakhan Club in Dar es salaam. He was a centre forward whose game combined pace, acceleration, balance, two-footedness, goal-scoring and the ability to beat defenders.

The football match in 1969 between "Agakhan Club" and the Tanzanian National Team Champions "Young Africans" still stands most persistently in Noorali's mind. This was a friendly match arranged for Young Africans in preparation for their quarter final game against Asante Kotoko in the Africa Club Championship. Young African led 2-1 at half time. Agakhan Club

finally lost 5-2. Most notably Noorali scored 2 goals against the great Young African goalie Eliyas.

HOCKEY In 1968, Noorali played for Schools Combine who emerged winners of the Tanzanian Valsan Knockout Cup tournament. Later he joined the "Young Rovers" to participate in the Gold Cup Hockey tournament in Nairobi, Kenya.

VOLLEYBALL In 1968 Young Challengers almost defeated Union Sports Club (Tanzanian Champions) in a 3 a side Semi Final volleyball game. Noorali was the architect playing a vital role for Young Challengers and whose placings won him fame from most of the spectators.