

# PROFILE of The Week

By Dr. DHANPAUL NARINE

## Ramnaresh Sarwan Calls it a Day!

The stories flow like honey on a freshly baked bun. They are nostalgic and tell of a young man in his prime dispatching the ball to all parts of the boundary. He is nimble, has eyes like the jaguar of his island and is unafraid to take on the opposition. The cricket stories are endless and they will become part of his legend.

But there are other stories that are seldom told. Kishan and Kumarie are standing in the line at Piarco Airport in Trinidad. An immigration officer spots them. He approaches the couple, takes their passports and ushers them to a secluded room.

The television is on and the officer says, 'you can watch your son bat. I will be back later.'

Ramnaresh Sarwan tore into the opposition at Queens Park Oval on that day. He brought victory to West Indies as his proud parents watched the game at the airport. In September 2016 Sarwan retired from all forms of cricket. His retirement should not go unnoticed. Sarwan has legions of fans that will sing his praises. They will say that he is among the best batsman that West Indies has produced. He is fleet-footed, sees the ball early, and is unafraid to go for the hook. But Sarwan was more.

He had all the strokes in his repertoire and knew which he should play for just about every delivery. When Sarwan is on song there is no better sight to watch in cricket. How did it all start and what led him to fulfill an ambition to play with the best in cricket? Ramnaresh Sarwan was born in Zeelandia

on the island of Wake-naam in the Essequibo Islands. His parents are Kishan and Kumarie.

According to Kishan the young Sarwan picked up a cricket bat at the age of three. His was hitting the ball with aggression but there were deft touches as well that would become his trademark.

Kishan explains that Sarwan was given his name in an extraordinary circumstance. He says, 'I have one name that is Dharamchand. When Ramnaresh was born I was not at home. I was working at Burma. My father is Sarwan and my grandfather is Ramnaresh. My father went and registered him as Ramnaresh Sarwan.'

The family moved and Sarwan attended Stella Maris Primary School in Georgetown. He took his cricket with him and represented Stella Maris when he was just ten years old. Sarwan made 49 runs in the final and took his team to victory. He said at the time that his ambition was to play for Guyana and the West Indies. In the 1995-96 season Sarwan realized his dreams. He was selected to play for Guyana against Barbados in the Red Stripe Cup. He was only 15 years old.

A year earlier Carl

Hooper was so impressed with Sarwan's ability that he predicted that the young man would play Test cricket. Sarwan said, 'Hooper's

was to play the way I batted in the nets.' He credits Roger Harper as the person that helped him to build confidence. Sarwan had the chance

occurred in 2002 against Bangladesh at Dhaka.

It was his second Test century, however, that catapulted him into the land of legends.

2009 where he scored a magnificent 291 in the Third Test.

During his career there were problems with his fitness and controversies with the West Indies Cricket Board. Sarwan said that he felt free when he accepted an offer to play for Leicestershire in England. He lived up to his promise and scored heavily for his county. In addition, his presence motivated the youngsters in the county to do well.

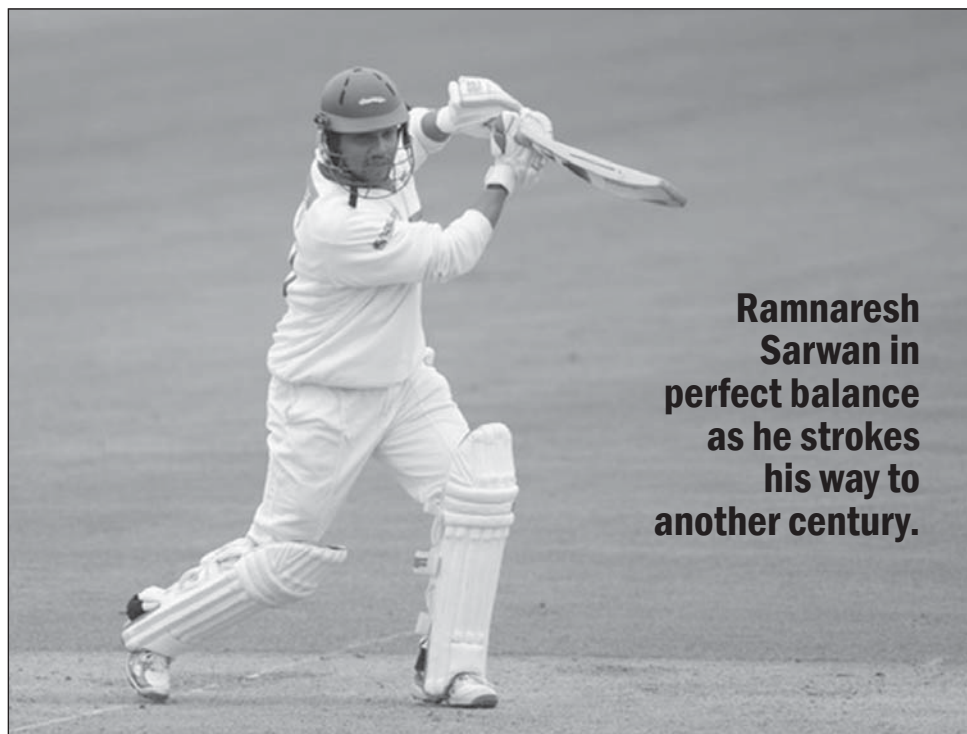
The average fan may see cricket as a game for statisticians. But for Sarwan cricket is hardly about numbers. It is a drama in which willow meets red

in a buffet of glorious strokeplay. The spin and shine of the cherry have beckoned the purists and word-smiths. They rave about line and length and the ability to hit the good balls to the fence.

Sarwan was gifted. The graceful off-drive dented the spirit of the best bowlers. It gave him a place among the legends.

Sarwan retired young, misunderstood and mishandled. There are no regrets. He is happy. Kumarie remains close to her son. She admires his trophies and awards. Kishan smiles. He looks in the distance and says, 'Sarwan was blessed. He had class.' He is right. Sarwan's scored fifteen Test centuries, the same as Kanhai, and he has set records in the one-dayers as well.

As Sarwan brought the curtains down at Stella Maris one couldn't help thinking: if only things were different.



**Ramnaresh Sarwan in perfect balance as he strokes his way to another century.**



**Sarwan's parents Kishan and Kumarie pose proudly with one of his 'Player of the Match' awards.**

words inspired me to really train and work hard.' But there were challenges to overcome. As a youngster Sarwan had to undergo a baptism of fire.

As he puts it, 'I was peppered by pacers since I seen a little boy from Wakenaam. I was intimidated by the fast bowling of the big guys. I was batting well in practice games but I was afraid to play the big shots. The trick

to prove himself in 2000 when he was selected to represent West Indies against Pakistan.

His debut innings of 84 was impressive and it prompted Ted Dexter to predict that Sarwan would have an average of over 50 when he retired. After a disastrous Australian tour Sarwan was determined to prove himself. He would score vital fifties and seventies but he was yet to make a Test hundred. This

West Indies were playing Australia at St. John's in Antigua in 2003 and were set a world record total of 418 to win the game. Sarwan walked to the middle with history against him and his team. By the time he left he had scored a magnificent century with scintillating strokeplay and a barrage of sledging to boot!

The Australian fast bowlers tried everything but Sarwan, ably assisted by Chanderpaul, withstood the torrent. West

Indies went to make the runs and beat Australia and create history. It was the highest successful run chase in the fourth innings of a Test match and a game that is still talked about today.

The versatility of Sarwan was far from finished. He struck six fours in an over against Munaf Patel against India in St. Lucia in 2006. One of his best innings unfolded against England in Barbados in