

HAT-TRICK!

Profile of Nirmal Nanan by Robert Hardie



After having tasted rich success with overseas players from India in the form of Dilip Doshi and Madan Lal, Meltham looked overseas once more to enhance their chances of success. This time the club looked west to the Caribbean instead of east to Asia. Nirmal Nanan, born on the 19th of August 1951 in Preysel, Trinidad, signed on to play for Meltham Cricket Club in time for the 1977 cricket season. Nanan will go down as one of the best players, if not the best, who has ever donned the Meltham whites and took to the field at Mean Lane.

Nanan was a fine batsman, using his strong, effective right-handed style to great effect. It was almost as if he were waving a magic wand and directing the leather from the willow in any direction he wished his shot to go. His prowess was down to the great West Indies side of the time, learning under the tutelage of the magnificent Garfield Sobers. There were rare occasions when Nanan dabbled with ball in hand, using the odd leg-break or googly ball to mix up his side's bowling attack, but it was with bat in hand that Nanan really came to the fore.



Nanan with the second of his three Huddersfield League batting awards (1978)

Such was his accomplishment with the bat in his three years of Huddersfield League cricket with Meltham that the trophy-winning record he laid down way back in 1979 still stands today.

After scooping a brace of league batting prizes in his first two seasons, the master batsman set about claiming a hat-trick in 1979. The feat was never in doubt, with Nanan collecting his third

consecutive batting award to complete an unprecedented collection of titles. Almost 30 years on from this phenomenal achievement the record still stands today and remains unlikely to be broken by anybody any time soon.

In addition to his own personal achievements, Nanan's impressive batting displays helped Meltham's 1st XI to the Byrom Shield in 1978. This was the third time in the club's history that they had taken the league championship title back to Mean Lane.

Nanan left the club after his record-busting 1979 campaign to continue on with his county championship career with Nottinghamshire, for whom he played from 1971 up until 1980. His first-class career spanned longer than this, however, with Nanan playing first-class cricket from the age of 18 in 1969 up to his retirement from cricket aged 33 in 1984. In his nine seasons of first-class cricket in England, Nanan played 35 matches for Nottinghamshire. In these games he racked up 925 runs at an average of 15.67, hitting three half-centuries; despite his obvious talent at the crease with a bat in his grasp, he never managed a ton in his time there.

Perhaps it was this inability to hit the big scores at the highest level that kept Nanan from ultimately being called up to the West Indies national side at a time when they were the dominating team on the international stage. With players of the calibre of Colin Croft, Joel Garner, Larry Gomes, Gordon Greenidge, Desmond Haynes, Michael Holding, Roy Fredericks, Alvin Kallicharran, Malcolm Marshall, Andy Roberts and the legendary Viv Richards, it was something of an impossible task to be selected for a very strong side. Indeed, Nanan like many other West Indian cricketers, had to watch on from afar as the islanders were victorious in the first two cricket world cups in 1975 and 1979.

As well as Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club, Nanan played top-flight cricket back in his native country, playing for provincial sides South Trinidad and Central Trinidad before and after his time in England. No matter that Nirmal Nanan couldn't break through into his national side - his achievements at Meltham show that he was a fine batsman, as does nearly a decade of first-class county cricket in England, and a hat-trick of Huddersfield League batting prizes speaks for itself.