A long way to the 75th test match

Interviewed by Nishat Tasneem
Written by Sadia Afrin Khan

DARYL HARPER, one of the four umpires fortunate enough to stand in his 75th test match. He started his career as a first class umpire in 1987. In January 1994 he was appointed in his first One Day International (ODI) in Perth. He continued to develop as an umpire, and was rewarded for impressive performances when, in November 1998, he was appointed to stand in his first Test match - the 2nd Ashes Test at the WACA. And now in this November 2008 he is about to stand in his 75th Test match in Dhaka. He has shared his feelings about such an achievement and about his entire career with us just before the match day.

Nishat Tasneem: Only four umpires have ever umpired 75 Tests. How do you feel to reach such a benchmark of 75 Tests?

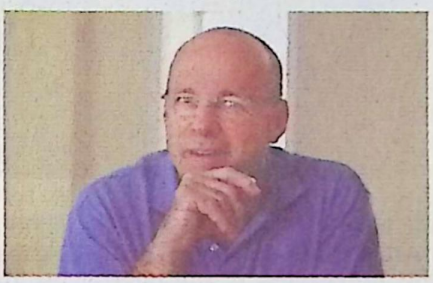
Daryl Harper: When I started my career, I only dreamed of being a Test umpire and I hoped to officiate in one Test. The other umpires have all been my partners and they are Steve Bucknor, David Shepherd, Rudi Koertzen and Darrell Hair. I am now in my 26th season and about to complete 75 Tests. I am very proud to reach this mark and I hope I can add some more Tests after this series in Bangladesh.

Nishat Tasneem: How was the journey so far?

Daryl Harper: The journey has been full of excitement from the first day until the present moment. I started in 1983 and I have had so much fun and met so many interesting people along the way. For the past nine years I have been travelling around the cricket world and enjoying the sights and sounds of different cultures and environments. It is a demanding job; but I enjoy sharing it with my colleagues from all of the other cricket playing nations. I am umpiring this 75th Test with Asoka de Silva from Sri Lanka. We had the honour of working together on the first Test umpired after the I.C.C. introduced the Emirates Elite Panel of Umpires in 2002. That Test was between the West Indies and India in Georgetown, Guyana.

Nishat Tasneem: What inspired you to join the world of sports?

Daryl Harper: As a child, I loved all sorts of games. I played in the streets with my friends until my mother called me inside to eat. My favourite games were Cricket, Australian Football, Baseball, and Basketball. Later on I became a teacher and physical education was my number one subject. I was always playing sports so when I became too old to play; I thought it was natural to take up umpiring.



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Nishat Tasneem: Do you regret any decisions that you have ever made?

Daryl Harper: Well...yes and no. At the time of making a decision, an umpire considers what he has seen and heard. He makes his decision and doesn't consider who is batting or who is bowling. Sometimes it might be the captain, but that is irrelevant. It is the facts that determine whether the batsman is given out or not out.

But as you have seen from television, sometimes we don't make the correct decision. The slow motion cameras and action replays often show that we didn't quite see things correctly. Now I've always said that I strive to be excellent because I know I can't be perfect. So I don't regret any decisions at the moment that I make them...but later on when I see a replay...oops...sometimes I am disappointed that I made a mistake.

Nishat Tasneem: Which has been your toughest decision?

Daryl Harper: My toughest decision came in my home city of Adelaide in 2000 when Australia played India in a Test. The tourists were in trouble at 3/27 in their second innings when their captain, Sachin Tendulkar walked to the wicket. After a couple of deliveries, Glenn McGrath bowled a short ball that was expected to be a bouncer. Tendulkar crouched down to allow the ball to pass above his head. Unfortunately, the ball did not bounce as everyone expected, including me, and the ball crashed into Sachin's shoulder.

There was a huge appeal and after thinking about where the ball pitched, where it struck the batsman and where it was going, I raised my finger and Tendulkar departed.

It was very unusual...but suddenly a huge number of people in India knew my name!

Nishat Tasneem: Do you feel any difference now to when you first started umpiring?

Daryl Harper: When I began umpiring, I was extremely nervous because I didn't know what I was getting into and I didn't want to let anyone down by making a bad decision.

SEE PAGE 29