

## 139th Battle of the Blues at the SSC

INDIKA WELAGEDARA

S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia will hold a slight edge over Royal College and are confident of holding the upper hand and pressing for a win when they meet their traditional rivals in the 139th Battle of the Blues three-day cricket encounter which will take place at SSC grounds from tomorrow. This match is played for the prestigious D. S. Senanayake Memorial Shield.

The Mount Lavinia boys are famous for their fighting qualities and they last proved what the Thomian grit is all about at the centenary year's encounter in 1979 when hero of the game Mahinda Halangoda (former SSC captain) with a spectacular unbeaten innings of 70 teamed up with fast bowler C.P. Richards 20 not out (playing only his second match for the season) figured in a match saving unbroken 91-run partnership for the ninth wicket to earn a honourable draw.

Recalling that innings Halangoda said: "It was a team game, not only me and Richards who saved it that day but we all did it. We all had a role to play and we did it for our College and our alma mater."

Our College motto is "Be Thou Forever" and the determination and our preparation helped us. Even today I think it's about the person's attitude, not giving up but to commit yourself and work towards your goals and think that nothing is impossible. The Thomians are not dead until they are buried."

The Thomians have been shaping well with six wins against Dharmapala College Pannipitiya, Zahira College Maradana, Maliyadeva College Kurunegala, Prince of Wales College Moratuwa, Nalanda College and Lambini College and are unbeaten this season.

The Thomian team is a blend of experience and youth. They have the services of Kalana Perera, who has turned out to be a vital cog in the Sri Lanka youth team playing in the ICC Under 19 World Cup in New Zealand. In four matches this season, Kalana has taken 31 wickets with the best bowling of 7 for 37 against Zahira College.

Third year coloursman Dellon Peiris (son of rugby referee Dinka Peiris) is the captain of the side. Besides his useful contributions as a right hand middle order batsman by scoring over 450 runs this season, Dellon has shown great success as a left arm leg spinner as well. He has shown no mercy on batsmen

# THOMIANS hold the upper hand



S. Thomas' College cricket team: Seated (from left): Thevin Eriyagama, Kalana Perera, Dellon Peiris (captain), Dulith Gunaratne (vice captain), Sithara Hapuhinna, Manthila Wijeratne. Standing (from left): Vishud Perera, Ryan Fernando, Shalin de Mel, Manisha Rupasinghe, Tehan Schaffter, Mohamed Azaam, Semal Samarawickrama, Shannon Fernando, Kishan Munasinghe, Dimithra Wimalasuriya. (Picture by Herbert Perera)

with his deadly leg breaks, taking over 60 wickets. On four occasions, he has taken five wickets or more.

The highest run getter for the Mount Lavinia boys is right hander cum middle order batsman Maneesha Rupasinghe who has scored nearly 700 runs. Top order batsman right hander Manthila Wijeratne, has also shown great

form scoring over 600 runs with some impressive knocks.

Wicket-keeper and left-hand top order batsman Sithara Hapuhinna, has aggregated nearly 600 runs with a top score of 63.

Among the others who are capable of keeping the scoreboard moving are right hander Kishan Munasinghe

together with left hander Dulith Gunaratne both have scored over 400 runs each along with right hand batsman Shalin de Mel who has nearly 400 runs under his belt.

Sharing the new ball attack are left arm paceman Kalana Perera and right arm medium pacie Thevin Eriyagama who has captured nearly 30 wickets.

But the deadliest weapons in the Thomian bowling armory will be the left arm leg breaks of Shannon Fernando, who has a total of nearly 70 wickets. He has produced a season's best analysis of 7 for 66 against Wesley College.

Although S. Thomas' will be over dependent on Shannon and Dellon

there are a few others who could pose a serious threat to the Royal batting line up like left arm leg spinner Pavith Ratnayake who has 20 wickets to his credit.

D. S. Senanayake, who became the first Prime Minister of independent Ceylon, donned the Thomian cap in 1901 and 1902. Other notable S. Thomas' players who have played in the Royal Thomian cricket match are Dudley Senanayake, Vernon Prins, Michael Tissera, Anura Tennakoon, Buddy Reid, Manu Ponniah, Bradman Weerakoon, Duleep Mendis, Guy de Alwis, Mahinda Halangoda, Aruna Gunawardene, Saliya Ahangama, Kaushik Amalean, Kapila Wijegunawardene, Johanne Samarasekera, Nisal Fernando, Manoj Mendis, Jeevan Mendis, Kaushal Silva, S. Saravanamuttu, P. Saravanamuttu, M. Saravanamuttu, Mevan Pieris (Snr), Ranil Abeymahe, Shantha Kottegoda and Michael Jayasekera to name a few.

The first century in the series came in the 38th encounter in 1917, when Thomian batsman B.T. Janz scored 103. David Ponniah (100 not out in 1967) and Manoj Mendis (124 in 1992) remain as the only Thomians to score centuries on debut.

The rare occasion of scoring more than one century during their Royal Thomian careers is shared by Thomians Duleep Mendis (1971 & 1972), his nephew Manoj Mendis (1992 & 1993) and Ashan Pieris (2005 & 2007). Only three Thomians have achieved a rare batting double (a century and a fifty) in the same game. They are Willie Jayatileke (62 & 110 not out) in 1937, former Colts CC opener Dharmika Balanukulame (108 & 72) in 1984 and present Sri Lanka all rounder Jeevan Mendis (111 & 54) in 2001. Ex-Thomian and Sri Lanka Test skipper Duleep Mendis, who steamrolled the opposition with 184 in 1972 is still S. Thomas' College highest individual scorer.

This year the S. Thomas' is coached by experienced coach Dinesh Kumarasinghe (nephew of famous Sri Lankan and CR & FC rugby player Dadas de Almeida), who has nearly 30 years of experience in cricket coaching. So far out of the 138 encounters that have been played, the Thomians have won on 34 occasions with their last win coming in 2007 under Ashan Peiris.