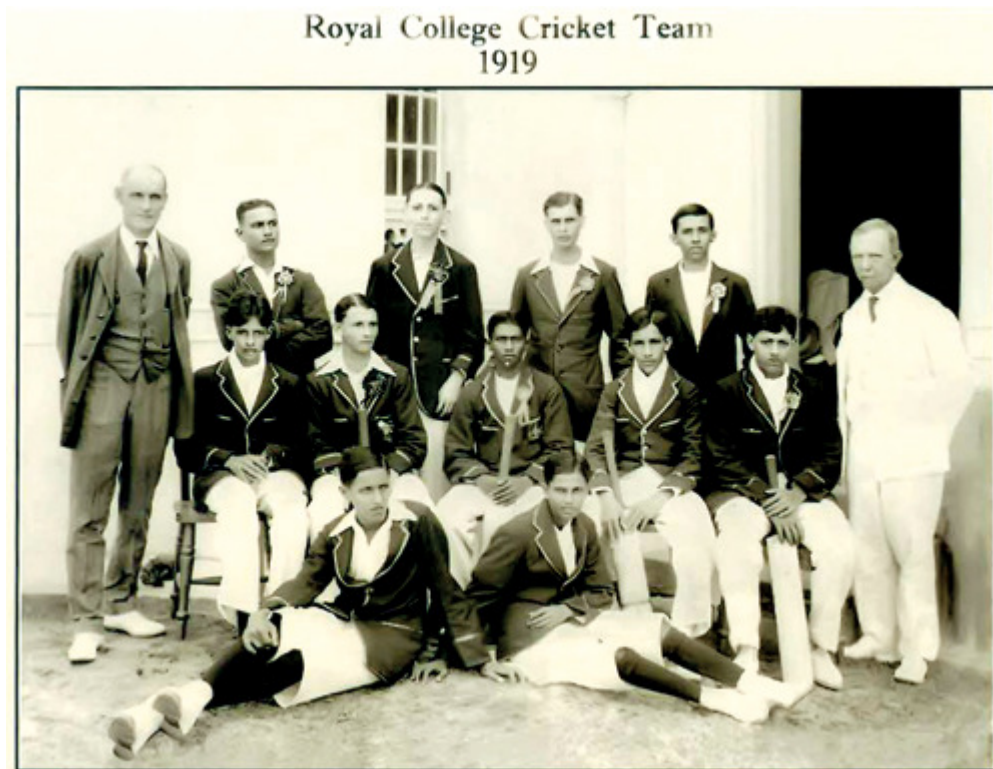


## Won in a Day!

*100 years ago, in 1919, Royal beat S. Thomas' in 1 Day*



This is a story as told to me

by my father, the Royal captain of 1919. He played for Royal from 1916- 1919. Let me take you to the Royal-Thomian cricket match played 100 years ago at the SSC ground on March 21, when, believe it or not, Royal trounced the Thomian's in ONE DAY! The memorable day was March 21, 1919.

The Royal team was captained by Raja A. Sahabandu, my father, that is my connection. This team created a unique record never to be beaten. Records may come and go, but this record can never ever be broken.

This is a tale coming from a father to his Royalist son, say, over dinner/lunch/breakfast or, in the verandah of our house, and when he was playing tennis-ball cricket with his sons. More so when the Royal-Thomian cricket match comes around. The first time I went for the Royal-Thomian was when I was about 6 years, with my father, and now, even at this stage of my life, I do make that trip to see the Royal-Thomian, like a prayer.

From 1916-1918, one L.C. Khoo, a Burmese whose age was a highly guarded secret, captained Royal with success. Those days matches were low scoring ones, with the match starting at 12 noon and ending at 5.30 pm, with a 15-minute break for tea. During this period, Royal had only about 80 students! In the playing XI, my father was the only "dark skinned one", and except for one Ratnam, a Tamil, all others were Burghers. During this period 1916-1919 except for the SSC cadjan pavilion, there were no other pavilions. Only tents, canvass or cadjan pitched all around, flying the colours of both Colleges. There would be no Ice cream bars, not even a Bar. Only soft drinks like lemonade or cream soda or ginger beer. Not even a coke. Tents were generally full with the parents and well-wishers and girlfriends. Yes! Even at that time, nattily dressed girls/ladies in lovely hats, and boys in baggy trousers and shirts. My father said that this was like the Ascot races. All dolled up. When asked about singing and dancing at the match, he said, they did not have "*Hai Hooi Babiachchi*" or "*Suranganeeta malu genella*", but the signature song was:

“Hurrah for Marry, Hurrah for the lamb, Hurrah for the Royal Boys, Who do not care a damn”

And the much loved

“We’ll hang all the Thomians on the College Banyan tree”

And also the ever popular

“She will be coming around the mountain when she comes, when she comes.....”

There were no ‘Papare’ bands.

NO. OF MATCH: 40		DATE: 21st and 22nd March 1919							
VENUE: S. S. C. Grounds									
CAPTAINS: R. A. Sahabandu (Royal) P. B. Bulankulame (St. Thomas)									
RESULT: Royal won by an innings and 32 runs.									
SCORES									
ST. THOMAS'									
1st Innings		2nd Innings							
P. B. Bulankulame, b. Bartholomeusz	...	6	ct. Van Geyzel, b. de Bruin	...	17				
H. Nugawela, b. Bartholomeusz	...	0	run out	...	1				
C. E. L. de Silva, b. Bartholomeusz	...	6	b. de Kretser	...	21				
C. E. P. de Silva, run out	...	4	st. Rutnam, b. de Bruin	...	0				
H. F. Goonewardena, b. de Kretser	...	4	b. Sahabandu	...	5				
C. H. F. Pieris, b. de Kretser	...	0	not out	...	1				
C. H. Davidson, ct. VanCuylenberg, b. Bartholomeusz	...	0	b. de Kretser	...	0				
N. S. Perera, run out	...	7	ct. Sahabandu, b. Bartholomeusz	...	21				
H. Seneviratne, ct. Rose, b. Bartholomeusz	...	0	b. de Kretser	...	1				
N. Kalenberg, b. de Kretser	...	6	ct. Bartholomeusz, b. de Kretser	...	0				
C. Delmar, not out	...	9	lbw. b. de Kretser	...	0				
Extras	...	4	Extras	...	5				
Total	...	46	Total	...	72				
Fall of Wickets :—4, 12, 17, 21, 22, 24, 24, 28, 35, 46.		32, 58, 68, 68, 68, 68, 68, 68, 72, 72.							
ROYAL									
1st Innings									
C. T. Van Geyzel, lbw. b. Seneviratne	...	6							
E. C. Rose, ct. Nugawela, b. Pieris	...	34							
D. R. Rutnam, b. Seneviratne	...	14							
F. C. W. Van Geyzel, b. Seneviratne	...	15							
C. de Jong, b. Goonewardena	...	0							
R. A. Sahabandu, b. Goonewardena	...	0							
A. E. L. Thomasz, b. Seneviratne	...	15							
E. A. de Kretser, b. Goonewardena	...	20							
H. VanCuylenberg, not out	...	28							
J. de Bruin, ct. Bulankulame, b. Goonewardena	...	0							
A. E. Bartholomeusz, b. Seneviratne	...	4							
Extras	...	14							
Total	...	150							
Fall of Wickets :—14, 32, 68, 68, 80, 90, 90, 140, 141, 150.									
BOWLING ANALYSIS									
ST. THOMAS'									
	O	M	R	W	O	M	R	W	
R. A. Sahabandu	...	5	1	19	0	5	2	8	1
A. E. Bartholomeusz	...	13	4	16	5	7	2	25	1
E. A. de Kretser	...	8.2	4	7	3	10.4	3	19	5
J. de Bruin	...	—	—	—	—	5	2	13	2
E. C. Rose	...	—	—	—	—	3	2	2	0
ROYAL									
1st Innings									
H. F. Goonewardena	...	14	3	45	4				
H. Seneviratne	...	12.1	1	34	5				
C. H. F. Pieris	...	7	1	26	1				
C. Delmar	...	5	1	19	0				
C. H. Davidson	...	3	1	9	0				
N. Kalenberg	...	1	0	3	0				

He also said there was no recorded music of any kind during the match (boring!), but at the end of the day, the CCI or the Police band played, all English songs and no Sinhala songs at all. All the boys spoke in English. Sinhala conversations were not heard of. There were no old crocks, band wagons, dust bins being dragged around or motor cars. Only carriages drawn by Horses!! Mode of transport for the boys was the Bicycle. Bicycles

were used for parading the grounds and the streets of Colombo, past the 3 girls' schools- Bishops, Ladies and St. Bridget's, where the boys would stop and do a daredevil dance for the benefit of the girls. *Please don't stop this age old tradition!! You are doing what your forefathers did.* By the way, we did not have a College song at that time.

According to him, the whole team were immaculately dressed in flannels, Cream blazers, mufflers, buck skin boots and Terrel hats.

Going down memory lane, he remembered his 1st year in 1916, with match at the NCC grounds. This was during World War I! There was no revelry at night after the match, as Colombo was blacked out on account of German air raids. We batted first and got a very low score of 101, with my father, who opened, out for 1! Royal fought back and dismissed the Thomians for a lesser total- 100. He remembered Royal's Wijetilake, who was extremely fast, taking 5 wickets. In the 2nd innings, my father batted for over 2 hours and top scored, setting the Thomian about 120 to win. Once again, Wijetilake ran riot and took 5 wickets, and Royal won by a very small margin.

The 1917 match was played at Campbell Park. The Thomians were captained by the one and only S. Saravanamuttu, one of the famous 'Sara' brothers. In this match, Thomian Jansz scored the 1st century in the series. However, my father had his wicket and claimed 3 wickets in the match. The Thomians got the highest score of 275 in the series.

When Royal batted, they were in a bad way, but opener Frasher De Kretser scored a slow 87 runs, and my father stayed with him for over 2 hours. However, we were all out 100 runs behind and followed on. Once again, my father held fort again for about 1 hour, and we managed to escape with a draw, with my father remaining 13 not out at .

He also remembered a peculiar incident. Thomian captain S. Sara was a colossus those days, like W.G.Grace, no one dared cross swords with him. While batting, he had suddenly walked off the field holding his bat like a club, and gone into one of the tents. After about 5 minutes he returned and resumed batting. Not a word to the umpires, nor a word from them. The umpires were too scared to inquire from him the reason for leaving the field. Later, it came to light that Sara had spotted his brother Manickam, a former Thomian captain, being assaulted by some persons in the tent. He had walked straight up to the "fight scene" and thrashed the persons who were assaulting his brother, and walked back!! Imagine if it happens today! There would be pandemonium and war!! Sara is Sara. Talking of the great Sara in the 1917 match, Kretser and my father were batting so defensively to save the match that Sara had bowled underarm to my father and also to De Kretser, but the two Royalists did not bulge. But Sara had carried on, regardless of the hoots, jeers and catcalls. I was told that someone had thrown a tennis ball to the grounds and asked Sara to bowl with that!

The 1918 match had to be abandoned due to a fire!! Yes, Royal was in a bad way in the 2nd innings. We had to get over 200 to win and had lost half the side, when a fire broke out in the SSC cadjan pavilion. The match was stopped. Who started the fire? Was it done purposely? These questions have remained unanswered. Don't even think of it, a Royalist would never resort to these kinds of things! My father was the highest scorer in the 2nd innings.

In 1919, the year my father captained was an eventful year for him. He, and one F.C.N. Vangezel, both scored centuries, putting on over 230 runs for the 6th wicket against Ananda. This record still stands. He was the "Boycott-type" batsman with a steady defence. He even opened bowling and batting for Royal in some matches. One day I asked him what his favourite stroke was. Imagine, he said, "The forward defensive prod." I grinned. For him, "Defence was the best form of attack!"

He also talked about the 1919 Royal-Trinity match. Yes, there were tied matches, even during that period. 3 balls to go, 1 run to win. My father was bowling the last over. 4th ball he found the non-striker outside his crease. Without completing the delivery he had stopped and warned him. The next was a dot ball. The

5th ball he was again outside the crease trying to steal a run. Once again my father stopped and warned him. Came the last ball with still 1 run to win for the Trinitians. The non-striker stepped out again. Third time, my father flicked the bails off and appealed. The appeal was upheld and the batsman declared run out. Thus the match ended in a tie for the first time in the history between Royal and Trinity.

My father recalls that he was compared with every animal born under the sun, hooted, jeered, ridiculed and called names by the Trinitians.

I told him that, in any event, "You gave him 2 warnings, that is more than enough." A gentleman would not stoop to stealing an illegal run, – which the batsman was trying to do. My father was within his right to 'run him out'.

We have all heard of Jack Robertson of St. Anthony's College. He was a present day 'Kohli'. My father said he was truly a genius, and if he was born in another country, he would have played Test cricket and become a celebrity. Jack Robertson, my father said, pummeled the Royalists in 1918, scoring almost a double century in quick time, which followed his 100 in 1917. He was brilliant cricketer and the first Antonian to score a century against us in 1917. He said he was fortunate to see the master scoring 285 runs against the old foe in 1918. This record stood for a long time.

Long long years ago, I eavesdropped when my father chatted with old Royalists about his cricketing days. They engaged in such talk in the same way we enjoy such talks with our friends now. Life is a cycle! Cycle of events. The memories keep you alive and kicking. During this period, we played against Trinity, St. Anthony's and Wesley. In 1919, we played against only 6 schools and never lost a match, with one being tied.

From 1880- the first match, till 1919 there has been only 6 half-centuries. The highest by a Royalist was 87 in 1917 by E. A. de Kretzer (one of the greatest all-rounders the country ever had). The first century was scored in this match by B.T. Jansz of S. Thomas' - 103. My father tells me, it was extremely rare for a team to get 200 runs. There were no coaches and the Royal team was 'helped' by its Principal Hartley! During this period (1895-1919), the first time Royal got 200 was in 1895, when a E.A. Jayatilleke got 72. Highest score in the series at that time.

Now for the 1919 encounter on March 21, 1919 at the SSC grounds. This was match # 40.

As was the practice, the Royal team, dressed in their Blazers, Mufflers and caps, cycled from an agreed place to the College assembly hall on the morning of the match. It was a wonderful sight says my father, with 12 flannelled cricketers riding together .

The team was given the 1st row, with the staff members seated alongside. At 10 am sharp, Principal Hartley enters in cap and gown. Immaculately dressed in cream flannels, the team, students and staff stand to attention. Hartley sits in the Principal's chair and the rest follow. He gives a pep talk about the values of the gentleman's game and how one should conduct oneself as Royalists. All listen in awe, according to my father. All have even forgotten to breathe. For him and the students, Hartley was god-like. A strict disciplinarian and a no-nonsense Principal who, in his spare time smoked a pipe.

After his pep talk his mood changes, becoming more friendly, and invites the team to have refreshments at his official bungalow. All the students march single file into the banquet hall and enjoy (or tries to) the refreshments.

The entertainment over, he once again wishes the boys. He reminds me of our own E.C. Gunasekara (kataya) during our era. ECG was God to us. After the refreshments, the cricketers would get on to their bikes and cycle to the grounds, some carrying their bats across the handle bar, while others carry all their cricketing gear. The captain leading the cyclists. Imagine, a dark skinned person leading an Australian looking white team. There were few or no cars on the road.

My father says that the reception they got when they reached the ground, was fantastic. Parents, students, friends, girlfriends and old boys, about 1,500, all waited till their heroes arrived, clapping, whistling and waiving as the team headed towards the dressing room. Those days there were no pavilions. When the Royalists walked onto field, they had their caps in the hip pockets, as they never wore them till the match started. Usually, the caps were worn in the last session, otherwise they used Terral hats.

A knowledgeable past cricketer had told my father not to bat, if he won the toss, as the 'wicket' would misbehave in the morning. So, when he walked out to toss with P.B. Bulankulame, the Thomian captain, this was playing on his mind. Bulankulame won the toss and my father said his heart skipped a beat, but lady luck was with him that day, for the Thomian captain said he will bat. With much relief my father had rushed back and happily signaled to his team that we were bowling. When the Thomians batted they did not have a clue against our fast bowlers. Bartholomeus took 5 wickets and De Kretsor 3 wickets. They were all out for 46 runs in about 25 overs. No one in the Thomian team reached double figures. One got 7. This was also a record at that time. When Royal batted, they found the two Thomian opening bowlers unplayable, but due to some late contributions, Royal made 150 runs in 42 overs.

The Thomians in their 2nd innings were 9 wickets down at one point. Those days the match commenced at 12 noon and ends at 5.30 pm. When the 9th wicket fell, the time was about 5.25 pm. Then before the next batsman walked in, the batsman at the crease, the tailender had called for a drink. The intention being to continue the match the next day, Saturday, hoping for rain! Then Thomian captain Bulankulame walked onto the field with the 12th man who was carrying the drinks, spoke first with the umpire and then told my father, "Saha, take another ½-hour today and see whether you can get our No.10 out! Our star bowler Kretsor had other ideas, says my father.

This was gladly accepted, and in the very next over, in the additional ½ hour, Kretzer had the last man LBW. My father tells me that, when they appealed, the whole ground appealed in unison, and when he was given out, all hell had broken loose. We won in one day, in about 50 overs.

He remembered the team being carried on the shoulders of some past cricketers singing and dancing. My father, till his last days, remembered the magnanimous gesture of the Thomian captain. That was the way the Battle of the Blues was fought. The Royal team had then gone to the Thomian dressing room and hugged and shaken hands with the Thomians, in typical English fashion, with the captain being signaled out as the true hero. One who played the game in the true spirit of the Battle of the Blues". Can this happen now? I doubt it. Old boys would have invaded the field and removed the stumps!

There was singing and dancing, and Colombo's streets saw the Royalists as well as the Thomians, can you imagine this nowadays?, singing those songs that were popular in those days.

Hartely declared Monday a holiday. On Tuesday there was a special assembly with the 11 cricketers on the stage with the Principal. A singular honour those days. My father remembers that, even some past cricketers were invited to share the honours. This was followed by yet another reception by the Principal, who had given the team a sumptuous lunch. The whole College was a like a beehive, with everyone singing the praises about the magnificent XI. They were the heroes and the cynosure of all eyes.

Soon after, my father obtained a scholarship to Trinity Hall Cambridge and played for Cambridge. He treasured the Cambridge Blazer, which was kept alongside his Royal Blazer, for all of us to see and admire. He also said that, when he went for practices, he was asked to practise with a Tennis ball first. Why he did not know!!

My father returned as a Barrister, but never practised his profession. Instead, played for SSC and coached Ananda for some time.

I remember with a heavy heart, going for the Royal-Thomian, first with my father, then with my mother and my siblings and then alone. As I grew older, with friends, girlfriends and then wife and family. And

now taking the full circle, alone, to watch the Battle of the Blues. I think this is the routine for all Royalists. Young and Old!! To walk on the path of their forefathers.

The feeling we get when we go for the 'BIG MATCH', the big match fever in the month of March, only a Royalist can understand and savour.

My friends tell me that, I am a chip off the old block. Don't let your imagination run riot. What this meant was, he played cricket, never practised his profession. I did not play cricket, but am practicing as a Lawyer! Strange it seems! Anyway, my brother played for his school and his club.

This year, when the Royal captain walks onto the field for the toss, let him remember that, 100 years ago to the day, with a little bit of lady luck and with the true spirit of the Royal-Thomian, we trounced the Thomians in one day. And let me say finally, it can be done. Yes! It can be done. Best of luck Royal!

**Rohan Sahabandu – President's Counsel**

**President of the Royal Lawyers Association.**