

# SONNY RAMADHIN

(The Houdini of spin, sheer wizardry, mesmerizing, spinning a web of mystery, cap on, shirt sleeves buttoned at the wrist.)



Cricket history records that Sonny Ramadhin of Trinidad and Tobago and Alfred Valentine of Jamaica, versus England at Lord's in June 1950, heralded a new era, the coming of age, of West Indies cricket, after soundly trouncing our colonists, the Brits in their own back yard. Sonny Ramadhin, "Ram" to some, is the greatest spin bowler ever to be produced by Trinidad and Tobago, and along with that pal of his, Valentine, is immortally heralded in at least 3 calypsos recorded around that time: Victory Test Match/Cricket Lovely Cricket by Lord Beginner ("With those little pals of mine, Ramadhin and Valentine"); Ramadhin on the Ball by King Radio ("We want Ramadhin on the ball"); Cricket Calypso by Lord Kitchener ("Ramadhin, you deserve a title, Sir Ramadhin, followed by a medal"). Adjectives to describe his bowling consisted of befuddling, baffling, cunning, wily, match-winning, destructive, mysterious, bewitching, tantalizing, unplayable, ambiguous and unflagging, such was the nature of his effectiveness at the Test level. Colin Cowdrey and Denis Compton, both famous English batsmen described Ramadhin as "a mean spinner who demolished England on a number of occasions" and "the best match winning bowler in the world" respectively.

His match winning figures of 11 for 152 (5-66, 43 overs and 6-86, 72 overs!) in that famous victory at Lord's in 1950, volumes on which have been written, remains the best match analysis by a West Indian versus England at that venue, and contributed largely and singularly, to a turning point in the fortunes of West Indies cricket.

England v West Indies, 1950, 2nd Test  
Lord's, London  
24,26,27,28,29 June 1950 (5-day match)

**Result:** West Indies won by 326 runs  
4-Test series level 1-1

**Toss:** West Indies  
**Umpires:** D Davies and FS Lee  
**Test Debuts:** WGA Parkhouse (Eng).

West Indies 1st innings		R	M	4	6
AF Rae	c & b Jenkins	106	280	15	0
JB Stollmeyer	lbw b Wardle	20			0
FMM Worrell	b Bedser	52			0
ED Weekes	b Bedser	63	90	10	0

+CL Walcott	st Evans	b Jenkins	14		0
GE Gomez	st Evans	b Jenkins	1	0	0
RJ Christiani		b Bedser	33		0
*JDC Goddard		b Wardle	14		0
PEW Jones	c Evans	b Jenkins	0	0	0
S Ramadhin	not out		1	0	0
AL Valentine	c Hutton	b Jenkins	5		0
Extras	(b 10, lb 5, w 1, nb 1)		17		
Total	(all out, 131.2 overs)		326		

FoW: 1-37 (Stollmeyer), 2-128 (Worrell), 3-233 (Weekes),  
4-262 (Walcott), 5-273 (Rae), 6-274 (Gomez),  
7-320 (Goddard), 8-320 (Christiani), 9-320 (Jones),  
10-326 (Valentine).

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Bedser	40	14	60	3
Edrich	16	4	30	0
Jenkins	35.2	6	116	5
Wardle	17	6	46	2
Berry	19	7	45	0
Yardley	4	1	12	0

England 1st innings			R	M	B	4	6
L Hutton	st Walcott	b Valentine	35				0
C Washbrook	st Walcott	b Ramadhin	36				0
WJ Edrich	c Walcott	b Ramadhin	8	90			0
GHG Doggart	lbw	b Ramadhin	0				0 0
WGA Parkhouse		b Valentine	0		30		0 0
*NWD Yardley		b Valentine	16				0
+TG Evans		b Ramadhin	8				2 0
RO Jenkins	c Walcott	b Valentine	4	35			0
JH Wardle	not out		33				6 0
AV Bedser		b Ramadhin	5				1 0
R Berry	c Goddard	b Jones	2				0 0
Extras	(b 2, lb 1, w 1)		4				
Total	(all out, 106.4 overs)		151				

FoW: 1-62 (Hutton), 2-74 (Washbrook), 3-74 (Doggart),  
4-75 (Parkhouse), 5-86 (Edrich), 6-102 (Evans),  
7-110 (Yardley), 8-113 (Jenkins), 9-122 (Bedser),  
10-151 (Berry).

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Jones	8.4	2	13	1
Worrell	10	4	20	0
Valentine	45	28	48	4
Ramadhin	43	27	66	5

West Indies 2nd innings			R	4	6
AF Rae		b Jenkins	24		0
JB Stollmeyer		b Jenkins	30		0
FMM Worrell	c Doggart	b Jenkins	45		0
ED Weekes	run out		63		0
*JDC Goddard	c Evans	b Jenkins	11		0
+CL Walcott	not out		168	24	0
GE Gomez	c Edrich	b Bedser	70		0

RJ Christiani	not out	5	0
Extras	(lb 8, nb 1)	9	
Total	(6 wickets declared, 178 overs)	425	

DNB: PEW Jones, S Ramadhin, AL Valentine.

FoW: 1-48 (Stollmeyer), 2-75 (Rae), 3-108 (Worrell),  
4-146 (Goddard), 5-199 (Weekes), 6-410 (Gomez).

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Bedser	44	16	80	1
Edrich	13	2	37	0
Jenkins	59	13	174	4
Wardle	30	10	58	0
Berry	32	15	67	0

England 2nd innings (target: 601 runs)				R	M	4	6
L Hutton		b Valentine		10			0
C Washbrook		b Ramadhin		114	330	14	1
WJ Edrich	c Jones	b Ramadhin		8			0
GHG Doggart		b Ramadhin		25			0
WGA Parkhouse	c Goddard	b Valentine		48			0
*NWD Yardley	c Weekes	b Valentine		19			0
+TG Evans	c Rae	b Ramadhin		2		0	0
RO Jenkins		b Ramadhin		4			0
JH Wardle	lbw	b Worrell		21			0
AV Bedser		b Ramadhin		0		0	0
R Berry	not out			0		0	0
Extras	(b 16, lb 7)			23			
Total	(all out, 191.3 overs)			274			

FoW: 1-28 (Hutton), 2-57 (Edrich), 3-140 (Doggart),  
4-218 (Parkhouse), 5-228 (Washbrook), 6-238 (Evans),  
7-245 (Yardley), 8-248 (Jenkins), 9-258 (Bedser),  
10-274 (Wardle).

Bowling	O	M	R	W
Jones	7	1	22	0
Worrell	22.3	9	39	1
Valentine	71	47	79	3
Ramadhin	72	43	86	6
Gomez	13	1	25	0
Goddard	6	6	0	0

Best descriptives of Ramadhin's bowling action: he could make the ball break in either direction by a flick of his fingers and an imperceptible turn of the wrist; his unorthodox attack was the off break spun with the middle finger down the seam ; he ran, delivered and followed through in one quick whippy motion, an all-in-one type of action combined with accurate length, unerring direction and crafty variations of flight and pace; Wisden 1951: "No blame could be attached to the pitch...Ramadhin bowled with the guile of a veteran. He pitched a tantalizing length, bowled straight at the wicket and spun enough to beat the bat. No English batsman showed evidence of having mastered the problem of deciding which way Ramadhin would spin."

But who was Sonny Ramadhin before the start of his meteoric almost overnight rise to stardom on the world cricket stage in 1950?

He was born on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1929 in St Charles Village (very close to the more well known Esperance Village) described as a most rural of rural villages, in South Trinidad (south of San Fernando) to parents of East Indian heritage. He was orphaned at the very early age of about four and raised along with his brother Ramsamooj, by their grandmother and uncle Soodhai and aunt Sumintra. Theirs was a modest wooden house in a largely agricultural village hardly a place with any cricketing facilities or cricketing history, yet cricket flourished albeit of the variety with the lime or orange, coconut bat and asphalt or dirt road, bowlers pelting their hearts out and batsmen resolutely protecting whatever served as their wicket.

An article in the Sunday Guardian July 1950 described: “Ramadhin appears to have been a well liked fellow in the village. Quiet and sly before elders, he was swift and spell-breaking before his friends; a little daring and a breaker of rules, mostly cricket rules”. Consistent with this, Andy Ganteaume describes him as “a very quiet man who didn’t say much.”

Young Ramadhin, a right hander with both ball and bat who also played volleyball, was introduced to cricket at the Canadian Mission School, Duncan Village and after leaving school at the age of 16, practiced with the district’s Palmiste Club. He played his first representative game for them in 2<sup>nd</sup> division cricket at the age of 17, after mesmerizing the batsmen in the nets with his turn from off or from leg without change of arm or body action (the original “Doostra”). The very next year they emerged as victors winning the Callender Cup trophy and cricket aficionados began to take note of the mystery bowler, Sonny Ramadhin.

At the age of 19 he was employed by the Trinidad Leaseholds Oil Company as a store keeper and under the tutelage and encouragement of Clarence Skinner of the company became the star of the Leaseholds Team. It was his friend Sonny Beekie, also a good cricketer who introduced his name sake to Skinner. Slimly built at 5’ 4” he represented a youth (colts) team, South Trinidad versus North and his impressive performance saw him playing against some of the best players in the country, in 1949, playing for the Leaseholds Team. Such was his success that he was invited to take part in trial games for the inter-regional series against Jamaica which no doubt would have seen him playing at the Queen’s Park Oval. His 22 wickets for 264 in the trials saw him trust into the Trinidad team on January 26, 1950 versus Jamaica where he took 5-39 and 3-67, with news of the mystery bowler spreading rapidly. So here we are early 1950, and the raw inexperienced Sonny Ramadhin is on the boat to England, raising many eyebrows throughout the region (Rama-who?). He made an immediate impact and had the opponents groping and grovelling as he spun his web of mystery, bowling with his characteristic cap on, shirt sleeves buttoned down at the wrist. It was sheer wizardry, mesmerizing spin bowling its best, the Houdini of spin had arrived on the world cricketing stage, the first player of East Indian origin to represent the West Indies in a Test match.

Up until then the West Indies had never won in 9 previous tests on 3 previous tours of England so when England won the first Test at Manchester by 202 runs there was little evidence of what was to follow: his previously mentioned match winning figures of 11-152 (5-66 and 6-86) in June of 1950 at Lords, along with his “spin twin” Alfred Valentine and the batting exploits of Rae, Worrell, Weekes, Walcott and Gomez, heralded a new era in West Indies Cricket. The West Indian people had fallen for the mesmerizing charms of Sonny Ramadhin. Such was his bowling dominance of that series of 1950 that in leading the bowling averages he sent down 986 overs (379 maidens, 1,924 runs, 125 wickets). History had been made and as the saying goes the rest is just that.

What follows is a summary of his cricketing exploits, a careful examination of which will show his phenomenal longevity and success in first class cricket. When he retired from first class cricket in 1965, he was still the leading West Indian wicket taker in Tests with 158 scalps. Like the famed trio, the 3 Ws (Worrell, Weekes, Walcott) so became Ramadhin and Valentine, inextricably linked in the annals of cricketing history.

Sadly, in spite of his wishes, his offer to serve cricket in his homeland during and after his playing days in England, went unheeded and today he continues to reside in Oldham, Lancashire, England having retired from running the White Lion Pub in Lancashire with his wife June. They have 2 children, a son and a daughter. Their grandson, Kyle Hogg, is an excellent cricketer.

Through the years Sonny Ramadhin liked to cycle and dabble in mechanics and developed a love for the game of golf.

**TEST CAREER: BOWLING (1950–1961) 43 TESTS**

	<b>Balls</b>	<b>Mdns</b>	<b>Runs</b>	<b>Wickets</b>	<b>BB</b>	<b>Ave</b>	<b>5W Inning</b>	<b>10W Match</b>
West Indies	13,939	813	4,579	158	7-49	28.98	10	1

**FIRST CLASS CAREER BOWLING (1949-1965) 184 MATCHES**

Overall	44,937	2,530	15,345	758	8-15	20.24	51	15
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Batting: As a tail end batsman he worked hard to hone his skills and became difficult at times to remove producing a stubborn 44 versus New Zealand, at Dunedin February 1st, 1956.

### **CRICKET TEAMS PLAYED FOR (1940s–1982)**

- Canadian Mission School, Duncan Village, San Fernando.
- Palmiste Club, San Fernando.
- Leaseholds (Trinidad Leaseholds Oil Company).
- South Trinidad (Colts & Senior)
- Trinidad and Tobago.
- West Indies (1950 – 1961)
  - 1950 – Tour of England (4 Tests).
  - 1951-52 – Tour of Australia (5 Tests).
  - 1952 – Tour of New Zealand (2 Tests).
  - 1953 – Vs. India in the West Indies (4 Tests).
  - 1954 – Vs. England in the West Indies (5 Tests).
  - 1955 – Vs. Australia in the West Indies (4 Tests).
  - 1956 – Tour of New Zealand (4 Tests).
  - 1957 – Tour of England (5 Tests).
  - 1958-59 – Tour of India (2 Tests).
  - 1959 – Tour of Pakistan (2 Tests).
  - 1960 – Vs. England in the West Indies (4 Tests).
  - 1960-61 – Tour of Australia (2 Tests).
- Crompton, Central Lancashire League (1951-1956).
- Commonwealth XI (to India and Ceylon and later in England).
- Ashcombe Park (1958-61)
- International XI (1961/2)
- E.W. Swanton’s Commonwealth XI (1964, tour of the Far East).
- Radcliffe (1963) Central Lancashire League.
- Lancashire (1964-5).
- Liversedge (1966): Yorks.
- Wakefield (1967-8): Yorks.
- Natwich (1970-1): NSL.
- Littlelever (1972-3): Bolton League.
- Heaton (1974-5): Bolton League.
- Lever (1980-62): Bolton League

- The highest number of balls bowled by one player in a Test is 774 by Sonny Ramadhin, West Indies versus England at Edgbaston 1957 including the highest in one innings of 588 as Peter Mary and Colin Cowdrey, most unsportingly, padded England to safety.
- Charlie Davis, known for his spin bowling playing skill recalls that at a benefit game at the Queen’s Park Oval in the early 70s: “I couldn’t read the man and this was Ramadhin in his 40’s and I had not retired as yet!”
- Best Test Bowling Performances:
  - 5-66 England, Lords 1950 (43-27-66-5)
  - 6-86 England, Lords 1950 (72-43-86-6)...yes, 72 OVERS!
  - 5-26 India, Barbados 1952/3 (24.5-11-26-5)
  - 6- 23 New Zealand, Dunedin 1955/6 (21.2-13-23-6)
  - 7-49 England, Edgbaston 1957 (31-16-49-7)

- Ramadhin finished his 43 Test career on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1961, after the second Test at Melbourne Australia. His second-to-last Test match was in the famous Tied Test at Brisbane December 4-9, 1960.
- Analysis of 43 Tests played: 12 series, 1950-1961, 4 against England (18 Tests) 3 against Australia (11 Tests) 2 against New Zealand (6Tests) 2 against India (6 Tests) 1 against Pakistan (2 Tests).
- Some of his Awards and Honours:
  - Wisden Cricketer of the year 1951
  - Honorary member of the MCC/UK
  - Life member of the QPCC/TT
  - Humming Bird Gold Medal 1972/TT
  - Chaconia Gold Medal 1995/TT
  - Inductee WITCO Sports Hall of Fame 1985/TT
  - Honoree, 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1995 of Indian Arrival in T&T
  - Millenium Award, 2000, Ministry of Sports/TT
  - Annual "Sonny Ramadhin" lecture series inaugurated 2004 UWI, Trinidad/TT
  - Hall of Fame inductee 1985/TT
  - Benefit, along with Valentine, 1995/TT
  - Road named in his honour at Balmain, Couva/TT
  - Featured on Trinidad & Tobago postage stamp 1988

Ramadhin was shown as KT Ramadhin when he came to England in 1950. He explains why. "The kids at school had called me Sonny so I adopted that. But when I got to England they insisted that nobody could go through life without initials. The next time I picked up the paper I'd become K T Ramadhin. I never did find out what my new English names were supposed to be."

