

2. THE BIRTH

The stage was, thus, set for the arrival of a new body that could centrally control and manage the growing activities. The four Gymkhanas undoubtedly looked after their restricted interests ably and effectively. But that was not enough. Besides, the Board of Control for Cricket in India, the national federation which was formed in 1928, could not affiliate stray units. What is needed was a State or Provincial body which could cater to larger interests in a wider area.

The geographical limits of the then Bombay Presidency extended from Sind in the north to Karnatak (excluding Mysore State) in the South. Sind, however, had an independent cricket body, which was affiliated to the Board of Control for Cricket in India separately. One unit, therefore covering the entire jurisdiction, excluding Sind had to be brought together under the control of one body. The four Gymkhanas in Bombay led by the Bombay Gymkhana, earnestly set to that all - important task in the year 1927-28.

The Quadrangular Committee, which was formed by the representatives of the four Gymkhanas, met every year to organise the famous annual tournament. This was an excellent forum and a spring board to launch the new Provincial Association. The sequence of events, which at this point of time developed in amazing rapidity, are chronicled below to give my readers a precise indication of how and when the Association was actually born.

(i) 6th August, 1928

The Quadrangular Committee met at the Bombay Gymkhana, and had on its agenda the following item for consideration :

'The formation of a Bombay Cricke Association' .

The members who attended the meeting were Mr. J. F. Macdowell (in the chair), Messrs. N. M. Chinoy, W. J. Cullen, H. Jasdanwalla, D. B. Lam and R. J. O. Meyer (Hon. Secretary).

The Committee took cognisance of the difficulties it will have to encounter in the form of "(a) Size, scope, rules etc. of the Association, (b) finance, (c) the secretaryship and (d) the difficulty of getting hold of the numerous clubs and interesting them in the matter". And yet the Committee boldly took the following momentous historical decisions.

- (a) It was decided that two members from each of the four Gymkhanas should be appointed to form **the first committee** (bold mine), with the President of the Bombay Gymkhana as Chairman;
- (b) A temporary fund to be raised by a small subscription from each Gymkhana;
- (c) The following gentlemen were elected to be the members of the Committee : Messrs. N. M. Chinoy, D. B. Lam, H.D. Kanga, J. F. Macdowell & F. G. Travers. The Hindu Gymkhana, whose representatives were not present, was to be requested to nominate two members on the Committee.
- (d) Mr. Macdowell and Mr. Meyer agreed to take over the responsibilities of Secretaryship temporarily;

(e) It was decided to give a press note inviting the attention of the interested clubs and announcing that "an attempt was being made to form an Association under the name of "The Bombay Presidency Cricket Association (excluding Sind).

An interesting situation arises. Should 6th, 1928 be taken as the foundation date of Bombay Cricket Association? Sceptics would not, concur especially as in the clause (e) it has stated that 'an **attempt** was being made to form an Association'. It did not declare that an association was formed' !

Nevertheless, the Committee appointed at the meeting continued to effectively function. It held its meeting on 1 st October, 1928.

(ii) 1st October, 1928

The title of the minutes significantly declare that this was a **joint meeting of the Quadrangular Committee and the Bombay Presidency Cricket Association (excluding Sind)** held at the Bombay Gymkhana.

Attendance of the members shows that Messrs. N. M. Chinoy, W. J. Cullen, P. R. Dalvi, H. Jasdenwalla, M. D. Pai and R. J. O. Meyer (Hon. Secretary) were present, with Mr. J. F. Macdowell in the chair.

This reveals that the Hindu Gymkhana had sent its representatives to attend the meeting. Could, then, this be deceived as the **First Committee**? If so, the unique honour of being the First Secretary of the Association should go to Mr. R. J. O. Meyer.

The meeting took some very meaningful important decisions, which are given below:

(a) **Nomenclature of the Association** : It was decided that the Association be named as 'The Bombay Presidency (Proper) Cricket Association'. The other suggestions was to name it as The West of India Cricket Association, which was not accepted.

(b) It was decided to enool clubs alone as the members of the Association at first. The Chairman was requested to frame rules regarding subscription, membership etc.

To me, therefore, 1st October, 1928 seems to be the most obvious date to be reckoned as the foundation date of the Bombay Cricket Association. The Association was baptised on that day and since then for seven years, it continued to operate under that style. It also received the recognition of the Board of Control for Cricket in India as it revealed from the fact that since this date regular correspondence regarding cricket affairs began to take place between the two organisations.

Another important event that lends weightage to this view is given below. This concerns the formation of the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

The **Provisional** Board of Control which was formed on 10th December, 1927, stood retired and a real Board came into being at a meeting held in Bombay in December 1928. This was in accordance with the earlier resolution of the Board adopted on 10th December, 1927 stating that "as soon as eight representatives of **territorial associations** have been nominated, the original members of the Provincial Board will automatically cease to hold office and the Board with them consist of the representatives of the **Association formed**". (bold mine).

Dr. H. D. Kanga who attended the meeting in December, 1928, at which the Provincial Board retired and the new real Board was formed, was deemed to have represented Bombay at the meeting. Therefore, Bombay Cricket Association as a territorial Association must also be deemed to have been formed before December, 1928. Otherwise, Dr. Kanga's attendance at the meeting to form the new Central Board becomes meaningless and ineffective.

There is still another matter which persuades me to accept 1st October 1928 as the Foundation Date of the Association.

Subsequent to the joint meeting of the Quadrangular Committee and the Bombay Presidency Cricket Association (except Sind) held on 1st October, 1928 began to hold its meetings independently under the name of 'Bombay Presidency (Proper) Cricket Association'. The first meeting of this Committee held on 4th March, 1929 in the Bombay Gymkhana under the Chairmanship of Sir Reginald Spence and the Secretaryship of Mr. R. H. Melcod (**Not** Mr. R. G. O. Meyer). From then onwards, there was no 'looking back', and although changes in the office bearers took place almost at regular intervals due to the Englishmen going on 'Home Leave' for long durations, the Association continued to operate effectively and organise systematically the cricket events in the metropolis of Bombay.

What has bewildered me most, therefore, is the question: If the Association received its First nomenclature on 1st October, 1928, if it started functioning as the organising body from that date, if its representative officially attended the meetings of the National Federation viz. The Board of Control for Cricket in India since that date, **why** should the year 1930 be taken as the year of Establishment by the Bombay Cricket Association, instead of the year 1928?

It is, indeed, in modern parlance, a million-dollar question !

This entailed a deep study of papers available in the files maintained at the Bombay Gymkhana, Islam Gymkhana and the Board's office at Bombay. It was essential to find out a convincing answer to this baffling question. The printed copies of the Memorandum of Association & Rules of the Bombay Cricket Association declare 1930 as the year of its Association was celebrated in 1954-55; and now based on this record, the Golden Jubilee to mark the end of the 50 years of existence, is being celebrated in 1980-81 ! Why? How? This could not be just 'madness' and if even it was so, I felt there was some 'method' in it.

And I did find an explanation !

What attracted my attention most were the following facts:

- (a) The Bombay Presidency (Proper) Cricket Association continued to function under the style till 2nd December, 1929. At its meeting held on that date, a significant decision was taken which is recorded in the minutes of the meeting under the heading 'Rules of the Bombay Presidency (Proper) Cricket Association'. Following is the wording of the decision.

"These (Rules) having been circulated to members were passed and it was **resolved** that the Hon. Secretary write to Bombay, Parsi, Hindu and Islam Gymkhanas to nominate a member to be appointed to the Bombay Presidency (Proper) Cricket Association Provisional Committee. Also that a copy of the Rules to be sent to Poona and Catholic Gymkhanas for their information" .

(b) The two subsequent meeting of the B.P. (P) C.A., one held on 30th January, 1930 and the other on 28th March, 1930 are recorded as the meetings of the **Provisional Committee** of the Bombay Presidency (Proper) Cricket Association. At both these meetings, amongst other items, points concerning additional, alterations to rules, the territorial limits of the Association, funds of the Association etc. were discussed and final decisions taken. It seems the process of the finalising of the rules started at the earlier meeting held on 2nd December 1929 was completed at the meeting held on 28th March, 1930. At the end of the meeting it was decided that:

"Letter be sent to Poona Gymkhana, Poona, Baroda, Ahmedabad and Surat districts advising **that this Association has been formed** (bold mine) and that they be invited to join and nominate a representative to the committee".

(c) With the constitutional formalities completed, the regular (no more provisional) committee of the Bombay Presidency(Proper) Cricket Association met at the Bombay Gymkhana on 10th November, 1930.

This historical perspective clearly indicates that the pioneers of the Association took 1930 as the year of establishment mainly because of the Association gave to itself a constitution in that year, although the fact remains that it actually started functioning on 1 st October, 1929, the date of baptism ! I find in this an interesting parallel to the History of Indian Independence. India tore its shackles of imperialistic slavery and attained freedom on 15th August, 1947, as a mark of which the Independence Day is solemnly celebrated every year on that day. Yet it was only two years after that India gave itself a Constitution, as mark of which India celebrates its Republic Day every year on 26th January, in great. pamp and splendour ! Let 1930, therefore, be taken as the landmark to celebrate the Association's Jubilees, but in future let 1st October also be remembered as a Foundation Day of the Association.

That is the history of the Birth of the Bombay Cricket Association. Before I proceed to narrate the history of the first few post-natal years, when the Association had teething problems, let me state two facts for which no convincing explanation is available.

1. Although the Association started functioning from 1 st October, 1928 and although it got a constitutional existence on 30th Nov. 1930 its First Annual General Meeting was held only on 30th March 1933, three years after it attained a constitutional existence! Probably for this reason the Committee during the period from 16th August 1932 to the date of the first annual general meeting is once again designated as the Provisional Committee.

2. The Association continued to function as the Bombay Presidency (Proper) Cricket Association till the year 1935. The last meeting of the committee under that nomenclature was held on 5th June, 1935 in the Islam Gymkhana. The change in the nomenclature was effected thereafter and the first meeting of the committee under the name of the Bombay Cricket Association was held on 15th October, 1935 once again in the Islam Gymkhana pavilion.

This is another landmark to remember!