



## THE STRANGE CAREER OF ANDY GANTEAUME BY KEITH A.P. SANDIFORD

It is not often that a batsman can lay claim to a higher individual average than that of Australia's Donald Bradman. But Andrew Ganteaume of Trinidad and the West Indies has been able to make such a boast for more than 50 years. He is the only player to have registered a century in his solitary Test innings and to have finished his Test career with an average of 112 runs. So he has carved out a unique place for himself in the history of the sport. His record is so extraordinary that it requires an explanation and careful analysis. Cricketers are not usually discarded after such a successful début.

Born in Port-of-Spain on 22 January 1921, Andrew Gordon Ganteaume was a dapper little batsman who exhibited an almost perfect technique in his younger days. He had a fine repertoire of scoring strokes but was regarded, by the Caribbean standards of his generation, as a predominantly defensive player. For decades he served as a bulwark for the Maple Cricket Club and was one of the best cricketers in the North of Trinidad. He often represented the North against the South and was always the most difficult batsman to dislodge throughout the colony during the 1940s and 1950s.

Andy Ganteaume was the victim of circumstances. He was good enough, at his peak, to have represented the West Indies in several Tests. He was an accomplished right-handed opening batsman, a fine fieldsman and a capable reserve wicket-keeper. But he emerged in the wrong place at the wrong time. In Ganteaume's day, Caribbean cricket was bedevilled by parochialism, racism and snobbery on the one hand and by administrative penury and incompetence on the other. The West Indian Cricket Board of Control (WICBC) was totally dominated by a handful of rich white families and governed by such old-fashioned principles as quotas and white captaincy.

The pernicious quota system limited each island or territory to a maximum number of representatives when the West Indies were on tour; racism simply meant that non-white players had to be noticeably superior to their white counterparts to merit selection; and the lack of funds often meant that a majority of locals had to be selected for Test matches at home to save money on passages and accommodation. Thus, for instance, during the MCC tour of 1929/30, eight Trinidadians played for the West Indies at Port-of-Spain and an equal number of Jamaicans appeared in the Test match at Kingston.

Ganteaume was doubly jinxed in that he emerged at the same time as the famous Stollmeyer brothers, Jeffrey and Victor. He had to vie with them for a place even in the Trinidad XI. Another Trinidadian contemporary was Gerry Gomez, an important member of the prestigious Queen's Park Cricket Club. They were very influential in Caribbean cricket at that time and could often determine who was selected and who was not. Andy always felt that they saw him as a rival more than a compatriot. His fans have continued to believe that he would definitely have been selected for the tour of India in 1948/49 had they been more supportive of his claims. First-Class Début at Twenty

Andy was only 20 when he made his début for Trinidad against Barbados at the Queen's Park Oval (Port-of-Spain) in February 1941. With both

Stollmeyers in the squad, he gained his cap only because of an injury to S.Samaroo, the regular wicket-keeper. Batting at number eight, he made a sterling 87, the top score for his side, and helped Trinidad to win by nine wickets after amassing 452 in their first innings. Ganteaume featured in three valuable partnerships: 62 with Rupert Tang Choon (38) for the seventh wicket; 103 with Prior Jones (43) for the eighth; and 42 with S.M.Ali (33) for the ninth. He also kept wicket competently enough, catching Roger Blackman off Tang Choon's bowling in the second innings and conceding only 15 byes in an aggregate of 633.

Despite this promising start, however, Ganteaume was discarded for the next two matches after Samaroo's recovery. He reappeared in July 1942 when Trinidad collapsed for a paltry 16 runs on a devilish pitch at Bridgetown. Derek Sealy (8/8) and E.A.V.'Foffie' Williams (2/8) were utterly unplayable. They required only 103 deliveries to send the visitors packing. Opening with Victor Stollmeyer, Andy batted defiantly for 9 runs. Victor scored 4, Gomez was left unbeaten at 3, and the rest of the scorecard (including extras) was littered with ducks. Ganteaume had thus top-scored in both of his first two innings in first-class cricket.

Even so, as long as the Stollmeyer firm remained intact, Ganteaume had to bat lower down in the order – if he was selected at all. It was at number four that he made a cultured 97 against British Guiana at the Queen's Park Oval in March 1944, top-scoring for Trinidad once more. Yet, by February 1945, he was out of the side again. When the two Stollmeyers were unavailable for the tour of British Guiana in October 1945, Ganteaume had to be restored. He registered a half-century in both matches of the two-game tournament, averaging 39.75 in his four innings. His defiant 68 in the opening encounter was again the top score in a total of 191 when his colleagues struggled against the skilful bowling of Berkeley Gaskin (6/60) on a difficult strip. His 57 in the first innings of the second encounter demonstrated that he was more than a strictly defensive batsman, as he dominated an opening stand of 62 with H.J.B.Burnett (21) before departing at 83/2.

In January 1946, when Jeffrey Stollmeyer was unavailable, Ganteaume had a chance to open the innings with Victor. The latter was a fine stroke-player who had toured England with the West Indian squad in 1939. Serious illness that summer had kept him out of the first two Tests, but he had the distinction of scoring a very good 96 in his solitary opportunity in the third Test at The Oval. Against Barbados at Port-of-Spain, Ganteaume and Victor enjoyed a fruitful opening partnership which yielded 112 runs before the elder Stollmeyer was caught by Clyde Walcott off John Lucas for 67. Andy proceeded quietly towards his first century in first-class cricket. At 264/2, he fell lbw to George Carew for 112. This number was almost like some recurring decimal in the story of his life. The second-wicket partnership with the promising Kenny Trestrail had added 152.

One week later, in the second innings of the return match, Ganteaume was unfortunately run out for 85 at 248/2 when he appeared heading towards another first-class hundred. The young Trestrail, who had himself been run out when batting with Ganteaume in the first innings, made a superb 151. Their partnership had been worth 207. A Regular Opener at Last

These performances led to Ganteaume's promotion as Jeffrey Stollmeyer's regular opening partner after Victor's retirement in 1946. When both were available, they played together in this capacity for Trinidad until 1956. Altogether, in nine matches, they shared 14 opening stands from which 968 runs accrued and averaged the very fine 69.14 runs per partnership. On 50% of their opportunities, they scored more than 50 runs before being separated and four of their opening stands produced more than 100 runs each. Their best was 286 against Jamaica at Port-of-Spain in January 1950. They also put on 130 against Jamaica at Kingston in July 1946, 111 against British Guiana at Port-of-Spain in March 1947, and 118 against Barbados at Bridgetown in March 1951.

It is of some interest now to reflect that Ganteaume, who was so often dismissed as a plodder, did not always allow himself to be outshone by his more famous partner. He made 36 in a stand of 63 against British Guiana at Port-of-Spain in March 1947, 68 out of 118 against Barbados in March 1951, and (much more impressively) 147 before being dismissed at 286/1 in January 1950. These bursts suggest that Ganteaume had the capacity to score at an acceptable rate when he was in the right frame of mind. Occasionally, too, his defensive play was dictated by the requirements of his team. Thus, for instance, when he persevered to score 159 against Jamaica at Kingston in July 1946, his resolute innings permitted Trinidad to reach a respectable total of 336 runs.

By the time the MCC invaded the Caribbean early in 1948, Ganteaume had made a name for himself as one of the finest opening batsmen in the archipelago. He significantly enhanced this reputation in the winter of 1947/48. In the two colony matches against the tourists, he scored 243 runs at an average of 81. In the first game, he made 101 and 47\*; in the second, 5 and 90. The century, his third in first-class cricket, occupied almost five hours. His critics complained that he had scored too slowly. Even so, it is useful to remember that Ganteaume (already out) had made more than half the total when the first day ended with Trinidad at 192/3 in five hours of play. Stollmeyer (16) and Trestrail (53) had scored no more rapidly themselves against bowling that was tight and largely defensive. That Innings

Then came the famous innings which is still discussed by bewildered cricket statisticians and historians everywhere. An injury to Stollmeyer left an opening which the selectors asked Ganteaume to fill. He was most fortunate that this match was being played in Trinidad. Had it been scheduled for Barbados, Stollmeyer's place would, in all likelihood, have been filled by A. M. 'Charlie' Taylor, who had just struck a sparkling 161 against the tourists.

Ganteaume thus made his Test début, at the age of 27, on 11 February 1948. Going in to bat with George Carew on the second afternoon facing an England total of 362, Andy dropped anchor while his partner, in Wisden's words, gave "a dazzling exhibition". Within just over two hours, play ended with the score at 160/0, Carew 101\* and Ganteaume 52\*. Early on the third morning, Carew departed, lbw to Jim Laker, for 107 at 173/1. This was then a West Indian record for the first wicket. It prevailed as such until J. Stollmeyer and Allan Rae achieved 239 against India at Madras in January 1949, and stood as the Caribbean record for the first wicket against England until Roy Fredericks and Lawrence Rowe added 206 at Kingston in February 1974.

Ganteaume continued his vigil. A more belligerent Everton Weekes struck 6 fours in a brief innings of 36 before being bowled by Harold Butler for 36 at 226/2. The partnership had produced 53. A splendid display by Frank Worrell, appearing in his maiden Test, then followed. Ganteaume reached his century (out of 279) in 270 minutes. Gomez, the captain, felt that the scoring rate ought to be accelerated. He despatched an urgent message in this sense to Ganteaume, who promptly gave his wicket away, at 306/3, after scoring 112. He was caught by Jack Ikin at extra cover off Dick Howorth's bowling. He had hit 13 fours and batted for almost five hours. His off-driving, in particular, had been most impressive.

The match ended in a draw, mainly because of the weather. Rain curtailed play by two hours on the fourth day, leaving the West Indies (497 & 72/3) too little time to make the 141 runs needed for victory on the final afternoon. From all reports, Gomez was extremely unhappy with Ganteaume's rate of scoring. Like most West Indians then, he firmly believed in 'Calypso Cricket' and felt that it was imperative to 'keep up with the clock'.

Judged by today's standards, however, Ganteaume's rate of progress was eminently satisfactory and so too was his approach. A maiden century in four and a half hours can hardly be regarded as 'dawdling'. He was also keen to hold up his own end while the more aggressive partners forced the pace at the other. But Gomez and the majority of contemporary West Indians apparently had not yet learnt the value of occupying the crease. The Supreme Penalty

Ganteaume was destined to pay the supreme penalty for his so-called pedestrian approach: he was never selected again. Even in the following Test, when Stollmeyer was still indisposed, John Goddard, the new captain, chose to open the innings himself with Carew at Georgetown. And when Carew was dropped for the next Test at Kingston, Goddard opened the innings with Stollmeyer. When the team to tour India was chosen, the selectors placed their faith in Carew, Rae and Stollmeyer. The choice of the ageing Carew was particularly unfortunate. Already 38 years old, he was but a shadow of his former self. Obviously out of condition and sadly out of form, he soon became little more than a passenger during the arduous tour of the sub-continent. It was all right for Stollmeyer to claim, many years later in his *Everything Under The Sun*, that Ganteaume was quite unlucky to have been overlooked for that tour. But the general impression throughout the Caribbean at the time was that Ganteaume had not received the support he deserved from the ruling triumvirate (Goddard, Gomez and Stollmeyer).

This was a pity and an injustice. In 1948, Ganteaume had reached his peak. In 21 first-class matches, he had registered 1,418 runs at an average of 40.51 per innings. He had struck four centuries and seven fifties in addition. In the early 1950s he played well against Jamaica and Barbados, but by this time found himself competing with the white (and much younger and more aggressive) Roy Marshall of Barbados and Bruce Pairaudeau of British Guiana. There was never any real hope of his touring England in 1950 or Australia in 1951/52. In any case, in 1950, once Gomez, Prior Jones, Lance Pierre, Sonny Ramadhin and Stollmeyer were chosen, Trinidad's quota had been exhausted.

Apparently trying to appease his conscience, Stollmeyer committed a second blunder in an effort to correct the first. In 1957, when Ganteaume had reached the same stage that ought to have disqualified Carew in 1948, Stollmeyer lobbied successfully for his inclusion in the team which toured England under Goddard. By this time, Ganteaume had lost his form and his confidence. He had not in fact played well (or even regularly) in territorial competition since 1951. His highest score in that six year span was 38 (against Barbados in October 1956). Predictably, the tour was a disaster. Such veterans as Nyron Asgarali (37), Ganteaume (36) and Goddard (38) should never have been selected at all when such superior (and younger) batsmen as J. K.Holt (34), Conrad Hunte (25) and Cammie Smith (24) were available. In 19 first-class matches that summer, Ganteaume mustered only 800 runs (av: 27.58). His best effort was 92 against Glamorgan at Swansea in August.

Effectively, the tour of 1957 brought an end to Ganteaume's very curious first-class career. He took part thereafter in only two games and with negligible results. Altogether, he played 85 innings in 50 first-class matches during 1941-63, scoring 2,785 runs (av: 34.81), including five centuries. His highest score was 159. He also recorded 34 catches and 3 stumpings.

Ganteaume's career epitomises the whimsical nature of West Indian Test selection in those days. A small coterie of influential white men made all the important decisions and did not often use their commonsense. Ganteaume, who worked for many years as a clerk in the Trinidadian civil service, now remains the answer to one of the most famous trivia questions in international cricket: Who is the only batsman to end his Test career with a better average than Sir Donald Bradman's?