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Conrad Hunte in his heyday

CRICKET

Conrad Hunte dies, aged 67

Bridgetown, Barbados - Former West Indies opener Conrad Hunte has died in a Sydney hospital, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) reported yesterday. He was 67.

Hunte, who was elected president of the Barbados Cricket Association in October, died following "a massive heart attack", his sister Hyacinth told CBC radio. He felt ill while playing tennis with friends and died soon afterwards. Hunte was in Australia to address an international conference on social issues.

Hunte, who began his first-class career with Barbados in 1950, played in 44 Tests, scoring 3245 runs at an average of 45.06. He hit eight centuries. He was naturally aggressive as a batsman but when he played for his country he adapted his technique in an effort to give the innings a solid base. He was particularly strong off his legs, chipping the ball through midwicket or glancing fine.

Hunte was an instant success when he played in his first Test series against Pakistan in 1957-58, amassing 622 runs at an average of 77.75. That included 142 in his first match at Bridgetown, 260 in the third at Kingston - his highest in Tests - when he added 446 for the second wicket with Gary Sobers, who made his then-record Test score of 365 not out, and 114 in the fourth at Georgetown.

Hunte's finest overseas tour came in England in 1963 when he plundered 471 runs in the test series to head the averages at 58.87.

The highest of Hunte's three double centuries was 263 for Barbados against Jamaica in 1961-62. His first-class career spanning 17 years brought him 8916 runs at 43.91.

Hunte, who was knighted by the Barbados government a year ago for his contribution to cricket, died just a month after the death of another outstanding Barbados player Malcolm Marshall.

He was a pall bearer at the former West Indies pace bowler's funeral. Marshall (41) died from cancer of the colon. He spent important years with the United Cricket board of South Africa, playing a vital role in its development programme.

Reuters