

OBITUARY

Hunte the cathedral builder leaves behind a monument

BY LUKE ALFRED

Among his many accomplishments, former West Indian Test opener Conrad Hunte, who died of a heart attack in Sydney on Friday, was an extremely smooth after-dinner speaker.

I once attended a function at which he gave the main address and remember his using the metaphor of a medieval cathedral erected by people who would never see the completed work, to illustrate a point about the selflessness demanded of

those involved in cricket development.

It was a suggestive idea, one that said as much about the man as it did about the work that needed to be done. It showed Hunte's ability to think beyond the needs of the present and the immediate future, a priceless attribute in a culture not known for the quality of its strategic thinking. South Africans will remember Hunte as a man who brought both dignity and compassion to a United Cricket Board desperately in need of authoritative

black figures in the early part of this decade. He worked for the board for seven years, finishing off as coach of the South African women's team he took to the World Cup in India in 1997.

"He had such an infectious laugh," said Shan Cade, the manager of the side. "When we couldn't find him we just used to listen out for his laugh and sure enough, we always managed to track him down."

Cade remembers that Hunte was unable to turn down requests and at one stage of the tour she had to ask

for security around him to be stepped up, so incessantly was he pestered by fans and journalists.

"He was invited by the sister of the Maharaj to visit the palace in Baroda," she said. "We were playing against Pakistan but he had played there in 1957, 40 years before. It was a joy to be with him, he always had time for people. He was a real humanitarian."

Linda Olivier, the national women's player, has equally fond memories of Hunte.

"The fact that Conrad is not with

us is going to be a great loss, not only for women's cricket but for cricket in general," she said. "He was a bubbly, lively person, a person of great integrity, we're really going to miss him."

Hunte, a religious man from an impoverished background, was not without his idiosyncrasies.

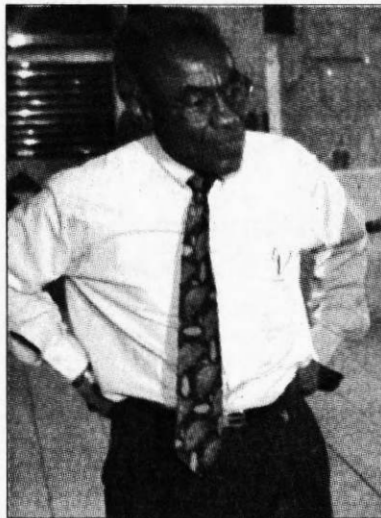
"He was a terrible driver," Cade said. "I closed my eyes whenever I travelled with him. We once travelled to Bloemfontein for a tournament there. We got lost. I had to phone home for directions. He had

no anticipation whatsoever - he just used to stop."

Hunte, a wonderful ambassador for Barbados, West Indies cricket and the game in general is survived by his wife and three daughters, one of whom, Roberta, lives in Johannesburg.

"We always used to joke with him that he should have had sons," said Cade. "but he loved his daughters, he really lived for them."

Hunte played 44 times for the West Indies and scored 3 245 runs at an average of 45.06.



Conrad Hunte: South Africa, November 1998
PHOTOGRAPH: REUTERS