

Heinrich Strydom: Occupying the crease of success

Bertie Jacobs

The opposition's leading speed merchant storms in, eyes ablaze and nostrils flaring. The red ball that is tightly gripped in his right hand becomes a projectile of fierce force, aimed at that sweetest of targets just outside off-stump.

The batsman loosens his wrists, his gaze is transfixed on the ever-growing dot hurtling towards him at speeds far exceeding 140 kilometres an hour. He raises his bat and steps forward. His body position is low and drives from the front foot, the willow meeting the ball at a perpendicular angle to the ground.

The effect, as is the case with most perfectly executed cover drives, is a fielder scurrying hopelessly to try and avoid the inevitable: runs. Runs of the boundary kind.

For the CEO of the Dolphins and KZN Cricket Union, Heinrich Strydom, there are few sights and sounds that elicit the same satisfaction on a cricket pitch: "As an ex-opening batsman, the sound of bat on ball is certainly up there, along with the sight of a smooth cover drive. The thing I love most about cricket is probably the fact that it is a team game with an individual factor to it."

It is also a game of numbers and of statistics. Fans and pundits alike pore over figures encompassing strike rates, averages, economy rates, run rates and enough data to boggle the layman's mind. Heinrich, an alumnus of the North-West University (NWU) is a qualified char-

tered accountant who completed his Master's degree in taxation and his MBA at the same university. It is this union between passion and profession that has culminated in the 40-year-old being thrust into positions of great responsibility from a young age.

"I was in my final year of articles at Questus Incorporated, a local audit firm, when I was approached by the then North West Cricket Union CEO Jacques Faul and the financial director HP Prinsloo to become the financial manager of the union.

This was a wonderful start to my administration career as I was also allowed to keep my cricket-playing career alive. In 2012, I became the CEO of the North West Cricket Union and the general manager of the Lions franchise. In 2017, I became the CEO of the Dolphins franchise and the KZN Cricket Union," Heinrich explains.

Before making his mark with a calculator behind a desk, it was his exploits as an accumulator on the field for the NWU that caught the eye and led to a first-class debut.

"It was a magical moment when I finally made my first-class debut for the North West Dragons. It was

something I dreamt of as a youngster and to have that dream fulfilled was a very special feeling. One of my proudest moments was when I was selected as captain of the SA Universities team in 2007. I shared the field with some incredible players and got coached by some wonderful coaches. The ups and downs of being a cricket player have certainly taught me some incredible life lessons. In terms of the position I am in now, it gave me great insights on what players need."

There is a cricketing term called 'the corridor of uncertainty'. It is an area on the pitch that,

if the ball is placed there correctly and it follows a certain trajectory, it bamboozles the batsman. If he leaves the delivery, it might nip the stump. If he plays at it, he might get caught. Should he play a defensive stroke, or should he look to have a go at it? With Heinrich at the helm of cricket's health, there is certainty of the outcome.

"I had the opportunity to visit the Lord's Cricket Ground in London. What stood out for me was the great respect for history and tradition, while incorporating a focus on the future and remaining relevant in an ever-changing society. The symbolism depicted by the weather-vane, Father Time, was probably



Heinrich Strydom, the current CEO of the Dolphins and KZN Cricket Union, is a proud Potchefstroomer and NWU alumnus.



Heinrich Strydom (left) together with one of his mentors, Jacques Faul. Both Heinrich and Jacques are former CEOs of North West Cricket. Photo: Hester Parsons.

the ultimate reminder of what we as administrators should be striving for. Law 16, subsection 3 of the game's official rules states that: 'After the call of time, the bails shall be removed from both wickets.' We are all merely temporary custodians of this beautiful game and we need to leave it in a better state than we found it in.

We need to be relentless in our quest towards excellence and we need to wake up every day and fight the good fight to ensure the future of a game that has given so much joy to all of us."