

Every year Colorado has been invited to the Philadelphia International Cricket Festival (PICF in short). It is an invitational only tournament and some of the veterans (Dan Ruparel from CSCC and Shailesh Patel from LCC) from the league have been going for almost 20 years now. This year was the 22nd anniversary. Of course other than it being a cricket festival which always happens first weekend of May (starting the Thursday before and through Sunday), it is for a cause. It is a charitable event played to promote the game of cricket as well as for youth development around sports and education.

Anyone who has done this tour before (which was primarily Littleton Cricket Club) waits for the final confirmation of the participation towards end Nov/Dec of the year. There is a registration fee to play in the tournament as we play in grounds which are private grounds for members only. These are grounds which are well maintained for lawn tennis and also use it for cricket in spring/summer. These grounds date back to 1850s. They belong to Merion, Germantown & Philadelphia Cricket Club. This year we brought with us the Colorado State Flag which was hung along with other Country flags. There is international representation in this festival from teams coming from England, Australia, South Africa, West Indies, Canada etc.



The team from Colorado which in the past few years has been plentiful (have been traveling with 14 members) usually starts coordinating the air tickets, car rental, hotel stay (usually stay at the festival sponsor Marriott in a place called Conshohocken in suburbs of Philly). Most of us try to take the Wednesday morning flight to land there by late afternoon. We had a Welcome Reception where we meet and greet the various teams and members. The rules, the tournament schedule are all explained in this gathering. This year it was pouring rain and everyone was worried if the tournament will get going as the roads and grounds were flooded.



We played 5 games (lost two but won 3). The first one was played under indoor rules and we lost. The second one that afternoon was against the Toronto team which has couple of Canada International players as well as under-19 players. They ended up being the tournament champions and have been bringing a strong team year after year. If Colorado has to compete, we got to aim for playing against teams like those at the state level. Friday and Saturday games were better suited for us with the Saturday game won of the last ball. What a nail biter it was.

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Saturday night is the banquet night with the Guest of Honor being Dennis Lillee. Other than fine dining and wine, the touring team got up close and personal with Dennis. Since Mr. Lillee does not like to give speeches, it was more of a Q&A format. It was amazing to hear him talk about bowling in pair with Thomo, his time with MRF Foundation, coaching Zaheer and Michael Johnson.

Sunday culminates with the finals but before that is a sumptuous brunch. This year's Colorado touring players were: Sandeep (CCCC), Ramesh (LCC), Jay (LCC), Dharam (LCC), Shailesh (LCC), Dan (CSCC) and Rakesh (Ex CCL player). The team built a great camaraderie, lot of fun on Friday night (free night) which traditionally has been with an extravagant dinner invitation at one of the locals (Gopal Bhai and wife) with BBQ, delicious Indian food, beer, wine. After so much fun, it is always tough to join work on Monday but we all look forward for the 2015 trip. In the past Guest of Honors have been Jonty, Shaun, Richie Richardson...guess who will be next year!!