

= Wilton St Hill =

Wilton H. St Hill was a West Indian cricketer who played in West Indies ' first Test match during their inaugural Test tour of England . A right @-@ handed batsman who played in a variety of batting positions , he represented Trinidad in first @-@ class cricket between 1912 and 1930 and played in three Test matches in total . Although his Test record was poor , he was highly regarded in Trinidad . In particular , writer C. L. R. James considered St Hill to be among the top batsmen in the world and dedicated a chapter of Beyond a Boundary to him . At the peak of his career , Lord Harris described him as the best batsman in the West Indies .

Establishing an early reputation playing for the Shannon Club in Trinidad , St Hill was selected for Trinidad in 1912 and played in every Inter @-@ Colonial Tournament until 1930 . Although he missed selection for the 1923 tour of England , he played for representative West Indian sides in 1926 against the Marylebone Cricket Club ( MCC ) and scored a century against the tourists for Trinidad . Success in trial matches led to his selection for the 1928 tour of England where he failed badly . In 1930 , he hit another century for Trinidad against MCC and was chosen for one final Test , after which he did not play any further first @-@ class cricket .

One of the first successful black batsmen in the West Indies , St Hill was an enigmatic character who refused to compromise his playing style . Towards the end of his career , his aggression while batting , even when out of form , resulted in his dismissal without scoring many runs .

= = Early life and career = =

St Hill was born on 6 July 1893 in Port of Spain , Trinidad , and according to C. L. R. James , his family were lower middle @-@ class . He had two brothers who played first @-@ class cricket for Trinidad , Cyl and Edwin ; the latter also played Test matches for West Indies . Cricket in Trinidad at the time was divided along racial lines . For cricket clubs on the island , the colour of a player 's skin was crucial . St Hill played for Shannon , a club associated with black lower middle @-@ class players such as teachers or clerks . Another club , Maple , was associated with middle @-@ class people but would only accept men with a lighter skin tone . When someone said to St Hill that Maple would welcome a player as good as him , he replied , " Yes , but they wouldn 't want my brothers " , both of whom were darker skinned . By 1912 , St Hill found a job in a department store and remained in this position all his life . By this stage , he had established a good reputation as a batsman and was popular with players and spectators .

= = First @-@ class cricketer = =

= = = Playing for Trinidad = = =

St Hill was chosen to play for Trinidad in 1912 and made his first @-@ class debut against British Guiana in the Inter @-@ Colonial Tournament . Batting at number nine in the batting order , he scored four runs in his only innings and did not bowl in an innings victory by Trinidad . He retained his place in the tournament final against Barbados and after another failure batting at number eight , he was more successful , scoring 59 not out in the second innings from number nine , sharing a last wicket partnership of 67 . However , Barbados won the match easily . St Hill 's only other matches before the First World War were both against the Marylebone Cricket Club ( MCC ) in 1913 . Now batting at number three , St Hill scored 76 runs in three innings with a top score of 33 . There were no inter @-@ colonial matches that season and the First World War suspended first @-@ class competition .

When cricket resumed in February 1920 , St Hill was selected in two matches against Barbados as Trinidad travelled to Barbados . Trinidad were heavily defeated in both games . St Hill scored 18 and 41 in the first game opening the batting , and after scoring two runs at number four in the second game , reverted to opening and scored 96 , sharing an opening partnership of 140 with C. P.

Cumberbatch . The next tournament took place in Trinidad during September 1921 , and St Hill scored 104 runs from number three ? his maiden first @-@ class century ? as Trinidad defeated British Guiana . The final against Barbados was affected by rain and left drawn when Barbados had to catch the boat home ; St Hill scored six runs , batting at number three , and 48 batting at number six . In the inter @-@ colonial matches of September 1922 , St Hill continued to bat in a variety of positions , batting at numbers three , five and six , as well as opening the batting . However , he scored just 49 runs in four innings . Although Trinidad reached the final , they were once more heavily defeated by Barbados .

C. L. R. James believes that St Hill planned to play professional cricket in England around this point , but his failure in the trial matches meant that he was not selected to tour England with the West Indies team in 1923 . James records how upset St Hill 's supporters were by his omission and they believed the West Indian selectors feared a black batsman being successful in England . He also describes St Hill became more single @-@ minded and less willing to moderate his approach after this decision .

When St Hill played in Trinidad 's next match in February 1924 , he was joined in the team by his brother Edwin , who took six wickets on his first @-@ class debut . St Hill was less successful , batting at number five and scoring 6 and 23 , but Trinidad once again defeated British Guiana to reach the final against Barbados . In the final , he was promoted to open the batting but did not reach double figures in either innings and a century from George Challenor helped Barbados to win the tournament once again ; by this point , they had won all but one of the matches played against Trinidad in the years St Hill was in the team . St Hill played in a non @-@ first @-@ class match against the Windward Islands later that year , scoring a fifty in the second innings .

= = = Best batsman in the West Indies = = =

Playing at home in the Inter @-@ Colonial Tournament , Trinidad once again defeated British Guiana in February 1925 and St Hill opened the batting to score 13 and 29 . Playing Barbados in the final , Trinidad won a very close match by 13 runs . St Hill , batting at number three , scored 66 and 64 , having not scored a first @-@ class fifty since 1921 . As winners of the competition , Trinidad qualified for the final without playing another team in October 1925 ; British Guiana defeated Barbados but lost in the final . St Hill , remaining at number three , scored 100 in the first innings , but was dismissed for a duck in the second as Trinidad gained a narrow victory by two wickets .

The following January , the MCC toured West Indies . The tourists played matches against a representative West Indian side for which St Hill was selected . In the first match in Barbados , he scored just one run in his only innings batting at number four and the home side just managed to secure a draw . The MCC then played two games against Trinidad both of which were drawn . St Hill batted at number three in both matches . In the first , St Hill scored 45 but in the second he scored 20 and a two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half hour 105 . Lord Harris , having seen this innings , described St Hill as the best batsman in the West Indies . In the remaining two representative matches , St Hill scored 32 , 36 and 72 batting at three or five . In the three representative games , St Hill scored 141 runs at an average of 35 @.@ 25 , but the MCC won the series 1 ? 0 .

As defending champions , Trinidad again qualified for the final of the Inter @-@ Colonial Tournament in January 1927 and faced Barbados , the home team on this occasion . In a high @-@ scoring match which lasted for eight days , Barbados recovered from being 384 runs behind after the first innings . St Hill contributed a first innings duck and a score of 18 in the second innings , batting down the order . Later in the year , St Hill took part in the trial matches for the 1928 tour of England . Playing for British Guiana and Trinidad against Barbados and Jamaica , he scored 144 , the highest innings of his career . St Hill was particularly severe on the bowling of George Francis , a bowler who had represented West Indies . In the other matches , scores of 45 , 44 and 71 , secured his place in the touring team .

= = = Failure in England = = =

Expectations for St Hill were high before the tour and Lord Harris predicted St Hill would be a success in England . In a preview of the 1928 English cricket season , The Times commented that the West Indies team was an unknown quantity but singled out St Hill as one of two promising batsmen on the team . The same newspaper later noted his exciting batting style , and described him as " one of the best batsmen on the side , from whom much is expected later on " . However , all the touring batsmen were hampered by a cold , wet summer and humid conditions which helped the ball to move through the air . Furthermore , they had to deal with pitches on which the ball spun further and travelled slower after bouncing than they were accustomed to in the Caribbean . St Hill would not or could not adapt his usual attacking style to the unfamiliar conditions . According to James , he was " a horrible , a disastrous , an incredible failure " . Making a succession of low scores , he passed fifty only once in first @-@ class games , against Oxford University and scored one century in a minor match against Durham . He played 35 innings in total and reached double figures only 15 times , while in first @-@ class matches he reached double figures just eight times in 25 innings . Despite his poor form , St Hill played in the first two Test matches , making 4 and 9 during West Indies inaugural Test , batting at number five and scoring 3 and 38 in the second Test , batting at number four . West Indies lost both games and lost their first Test series 3 ? 0 . After the end of July , St Hill only played once more on the tour . In total , he scored 262 first @-@ class runs at an average of 10 @.@ 91 . Wisden Cricketers ' Almanack described St Hill as the " big disappointment " of the tour , noting that he tried to attack the bowling too early in his innings and therefore rarely succeeded . Nevertheless , the correspondent commented on his range of shots on the off side .

= = = End of career = = =

Following St Hill 's return to the West Indies , the Inter @-@ Colonial Tournament took place in Trinidad during January and February 1929 . The home team defeated British Guiana before beating Barbados by an innings in the final . St Hill batted at number three throughout but managed scores of just 4 , 23 and 5 . However , Trinidad could not defend their title in October as British Guiana defeated the team by four wickets . St Hill batted at number seven in the first innings and three in the second innings but made just 11 runs in the match .

The MCC toured once again in early 1930 , where the team played two games against Trinidad , although St Hill only appeared in the first . Again batting at number three , he scored 16 in the first innings but accumulated 102 in the second ? his final first @-@ class century . Concentrating on defence , St Hill batted for four hours showing more patience than he had done before . James wrote that " the eagle had clipped his own wings at last " . St Hill was selected for the Test on his home ground in Trinidad and had his best match statistically . Batting at number three in the first innings , he scored 30 and opened the batting to score 33 in the second innings . Wisden described him as batting steadily , but West Indies lost the match and St Hill did not play any further Test or first @-@ class cricket . In three Tests , he scored 117 runs at an average of 19 @.@ 50 and in 43 first @-@ class games , he hit 1928 runs at 27 @.@ 15 with five centuries . He also took five wickets .

By 1931 , St Hill remained successful in local Trinidad cricket , but one newspaper report suggested that he had " fallen off considerably " in terms of form , and was unlikely to play for West Indies again . Very little is known about the remainder of his life . There are no details about his death , although he is believed to have died around 1957 . When former West Indian cricketer Learie Constantine wrote about him in 1957 , he noted that St Hill was dead . In 1984 , he was entered into the Trinidad and Tobago Sports Hall of Fame .

= = Personality , style and technique = =

C. L. R. James described St Hill as " about six feet or a little under , slim , wiry , with forearms like whipcord . His face was bony , with small sharp eyes and a thin , tight mouth . " A reserved man ,

Hill kept his opinions to himself . Off the cricket field , James described him as partial to the " good things of life " .

St Hill was one of the first successful black batsmen in West Indies . As a batsmen , St Hill 's performances reached their highest standards on the biggest occasions and against the best bowlers . Although not possessing quick footwork , he was capable of quickly judging where the ball would land . This enabled him to get into position quickly gave him extra time to play shots , which he often delayed until the ball was very close to him . Many of his runs were hit behind point and square leg . St Hill 's favourite stroke was the leg glance ; the shot carried the risk of falling leg before wicket ( lbw ) if he missed but his placement was very precise . He also played a range of cut shots . If a bowler restricted his scoring , St Hill improvised attacking shots to break free . Learie Constantine wrote a description of an innings he saw St Hill play as a young man . Facing the fast bowling of George John , St Hill " flicked his wrists and the ball flew to the boundary faster than sound . The next went the same way . The boy batted from his wrists ; he never seemed to use any force . I don 't believe he had the strength even if he so desired . His was just perfect timing . " However , he always insisted on playing his own style of game , whether he was in form or not . The result was often his dismissal without scoring many runs . This was the case in England in 1928 . After 1926 , St Hill was never the same batsman and according to James was as likely to get out cheaply as he was to make a big score .

St Hill possessed a presence which compelled attention when he was batting . James wrote : " Fires burned in St Hill and you could always see them glow . " When playing for Shannon , he insisted on the highest standards , and even though he was not captain , he would take over if the game was going against his team . James also wrote that he never understood St Hill as he did others : " His eyes used to blaze when he was discussing a point with you ; but even within his clipped sentences there were intervals when he seemed to be thinking of other things , far removed . "

St Hill 's batting success was significant for many in cricket . Writer Grant Farred observed : " In St Hill the masses that watched the game ... saw a vision created in which anger and resentment at the ' pervading humiliation ' they suffered was distilled into a finely tuned batsman . " At the time , black Trinidadians had no democratic outlet for their feelings and opinions . Farred writes that St Hill 's batting " represented a victory over the forces that held sway over this community 's life in all other walks of life " . St Hill 's many followers in Trinidad identified with his successes and his ability to compete with equality on the cricket field as a sign that they successfully take part in other aspects of life which had been closed to them .

= = Beyond a Boundary = =

St. Hill is the subject of a chapter in Beyond a Boundary by C. L. R. James , published in 1963 . The book is regarded by many critics as the greatest book on cricket and one of the best books on sport . James wrote : " In my gallery , [ St Hill ] is present with Bradman , Sobers , George Headley and the three Ws , Hutton and Compton , Peter May and a few others . " He describes his character and play , and writes about how much St Hill 's success meant to black Trinidadians as he was " one of us , performing in excelsis in a sphere where competition was open ... Wilton St Hill was our boy . " Reviewing the book in Wisden in 1964 , John Arlott wrote : " The essay on Wilton St Hill must be the finest portrait of a cricketer ever created in prose ? or , for that matter in verse or paint either " .

James concluded the chapter : " He saw the ball as early as anyone . He played it as late as anyone . His spirit was untameable , perhaps too much so . There we must leave it . "