

Global T20 tournament brings world-class cricket to York Region

By Jake Courtepatte

Cricketers of York Region, unite: the world's top batters have descended on King Township.

The month of July marks the inaugural edition of the Global T20 Canada, a 20-over international cricket tournament bringing the best of the best to compete under the banners of Canadian cities.

"I believe this is a beginning of building Canada as a cricket nation," said Canada Cricket president Ranjit Saini.

The Toronto Nationals, Montreal Tigers, Winnipeg Hawks, Edmonton Royals and Vancouver Knights join a Cricket West Indies B team at the tournament, taking place at the Maple Leaf Cricket Club just north of King City.

The five Canadian squads each have a budget of roughly US\$550,000, ranging from a \$3,000 lump sum to in excess of six figures for the three-week tournament, featuring international talent well-known to longtime cricket fans.

Headlining the teams are names like Darren Sammy, Chris Gayle, and Dwayne Bravo, all of the West Indies, while former Australian captain Steve Smith will bat for the Toronto Nationals.

"20-over" cricket, formed for the first game just fifteen years ago, brings an abbreviated version of the game to Canada that Saini and tournament director Jason Harper hopes will garner interest from a budding cricket nation.

"It's vibrant, it's loud, it's colourful, it's consistent action," said Harper. "There could be a six, a four, a wicket at any moment.

Because in those 120 balls the batting team is trying to get as many runs as possible and in those 120 balls the bowling team is trying to get as many wickets as possible ... That adds an element of theatre to the game: that big finish."

A normal T20 match lasts around three hours, according to Harper, or about the same length as a traditional North American baseball game.

Opening in late June, the tournament runs through to July 15 with a packed schedule, bringing close to one hundred of the world's top cricketers to Maple Leaf Cricket Club.

Opened in 1954, the grounds contain five cricket facilities, and remains only one of two grounds in Canada licensed to host international tournaments of this magnitude.

In recent years, it has become known as the primary cricket venue in Canada, stripping the title from the Toronto Cricket, Skating, and Curling Club.

"The Greater Toronto Area has a large base of cricket fans, much in part for its diversity," said Harper, who added the venue will start with roughly 7,000 seats available. "The demographics are prime to host the tournament for the first time."

According to Harper, the venue attracted around 12,000 fans for an international test tournament in 2008.

Tickets, as well as more information, can be found at www.t20.ca.

Tickets start at \$30 and can go all the way up to \$22,124 for an air-conditioned box that seats 20. A season pass for one will cost you from \$475 to \$1,555, depending on what package you pick.

Broadcasts can also be seen on Asian Canadian network CBN, or online via streaming site Hotstar.