



Jul 15, 2024 16:36 BST

Sporting legends Dean Headley, Norman Cowans, Devon Malcolm, Dalton Grant and Tony Jarrett join celebrations at African Caribbean Cricket Festival

- African Caribbean Cricket Festival hosted on Sunday (14 July) at Northamptonshire County Cricket Ground for a second year, celebrating Black and African Caribbean communities in cricket
- More than 1,000 attended the event, with former England cricket and British athletics stars Malcolm, Headley, Cowans, Grant and Jarrett among the famous names

- **With the backdrop of the West Indies Test Series against England, the day featured two showcase T20 matches, All Stars and Dynamos sessions for over 100 girls and boys, live entertainment and West Indian food**

England cricket legends Dean Headley, Norman Cowans and Devon Malcolm, as well as former British athletics heroes Dalton Grant and Tony Jarrett, were among the stars at the African Caribbean Cricket Festival on Sunday, hosted by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) in partnership with the ACE Programme and Northamptonshire County Cricket Board.

The event, now in its second year, celebrates the legacy and influence of Black communities in cricket while inspiring younger generations to connect with their cricketing heritage.

More than 1,000 attended the event at Northamptonshire's County Ground, including over 100 young girls and boys from all over the country who took part in All Stars and Dynamos cricket sessions with a helping hand from the cricketing legends.

Malcom, Headley and Cowans are all trailblazers in their own right. Malcom, once one of the fastest bowlers in world cricket, and now a passionate advocate for getting more Black youngsters into cricket as the ECB's Black Communities Liaison Officer, led on organising the festival. Cowans is best remembered for his sensational, match-winning role in one of the greatest Tests of all time – as England looked to keep The Ashes alive in the 1982-83 Boxing Day Test in Melbourne. Headley, born into cricketing history, was the first Test cricketer to be both the son and grandson of Test cricketers; his father Ron and grandfather George both having played for West Indies.

The trio were joined by legends from the British athletics world – sprint and hurdling star Tony Jarrett, a Commonwealth Gold and World Championship silver medallist in the 110m hurdles, and high jumping Commonwealth Gold medallist Dalton Grant.

All these stars have paved the way for younger generations of Black cricketers whose talents shone on the pitch at Sunday's event which featured two T20 showcase matches soundtracked by live DJ Mr Fix-It and surrounded by authentic African Caribbean food, music and culture, including a heated Dominoes tournament featuring teams from all over the country. Dominoes,

like cricket, holds a special place in the history of the Windrush generation, serving as a symbol of community and resilience.

Teams taking part in the cricket matches throughout the day were African Caribbean Engagement (ACE) Academy, Northamptonshire's Academy, the Caribbean Cup XI and Windrush Trophy XI.

With blessings and prayers from Reverend Michael King, the matches got underway and it was victory for the ACE Academy over Northamptonshire Academy in the first game. Quickly followed by Windrush Cup XI finishing the day taking the win over Caribbean Cup XI with a nail-biting super-over, the day highlighted the skills of talented young Black cricketers, amid work being carried out across cricket to break down barriers and create opportunities for Black and other ethnically diverse communities.

The event was organised as part of the Raising The Game initiative – a rallying cry, spearheaded by the ECB, to the whole game to make cricket the most inclusive sport, with some of the food put on by the ECB's Taste Of Cricket campaign, which uses the power of sharing food in cricket to bring different communities together.

England legend and ECB Black Communities Liaison Officer, Devon Malcolm, said: “I’m incredibly proud of today’s event, it’s been a brilliant celebration of the Black community in cricket. There’s still plenty of work to be done to get more young people from this community into the game but events like this give me the hope and the knowledge that we are one step closer to where we need to be.”

An important part of the ongoing work engaging the Black community is with the ACE Programme who played no small part in the day’s festivities – running coaching and taster sessions for the kids, inviting the communities in which they work and fielding their Academy team for the match.

ACE, which was originally established by Ebony Rainford-Brent in 2020, works to engage a new generation of children and young people from Black communities within the recreational game and talent pathway. Their latest statistics indicate one in five players who have made it to one of the ACE’s elite academies have gone on to join the county cricket structure meaning they are on the pathway to become professional players. Following its successful expansion in Birmingham and Bristol during 2021, ACE is using the

continued financial support from the ECB to support programmes in Nottingham, Manchester, Sheffield and additional London boroughs.

England cricket legend, Norman Cowans, said: “Today has been incredibly fun! Seeing kids enjoy cricket just as I did at their age is heartwarming. Bringing together people from across the country to celebrate with high-class cricket, food, music, and even dominoes is a fantastic way to remind everyone of the pivotal role Black communities have and will continue to play in cricket, providing continued investment and support is given.”

British athletics legend, Dalton Grant, said: “Today, I stand alongside England legends from various sports, all united by our passion to inspire more people who look like us to get involved in sport. This event demonstrates how cricket can bring people and communities together. I am honoured and humbled by experiences like these, where the impact of the ACE Programme and ECB’s efforts is clearly visible. Many individuals here might not have considered sport without their initiatives, and I am privileged to be part of this day.”

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