

After the dust has settled on the USA team's emphatic win in the ICC America's cup at Ft Lauderdale, DreamCricket got an opportunity to interview Orlando baker, the premier all-rounder for the US team on his thoughts on the tournament and US cricket in general.

DreamCricket- Orlando, first of all congratulations on being crowned ICC America's champions. You have just returned after 2 back to back tours, one being captain of the US team for the WICB tournament in Guyana and then the America's cup in Ft Lauderdale. You must be exhausted?

Orlando- Thanks man, not really exhausted because if you aspire to be a professional player you prepare yourself for tours like these, but I was happy to be home to see my family.

DreamCricket- You led a very young and inexperienced side against Professional cricketers in the West Indies. A lot of people thought that would hurt the youngsters more than help them. What are your thoughts about that experience? Did it make you stronger for the America's cup?

Orlando- Yes it did make me stronger because it help me to see what I was made of while playing with the younger players who are the future of USA cricket, and also got me ready for the America's Cup.

DreamCricket- Steve Messiah said after the America's cup was that this was the best USA cricket team to ever step on to a cricket field. Would you agree with that assessment? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this US squad?

Orlando- Steve has played in many previous US Teams before and if he said that its the best team, I would believe him.

DreamCricket- USA has usually done very well against most of the other nations in the America's cup but we have always struggled against Canada. This time around again the same story was about to repeat itself until you walked into the crease at 81/6 after 31 overs. Tell us about this great rivalry and that game where you played such a big match winning part.

Orlando- The Canada players have a lot of talk and we wanted to shut them up so bad because they keep telling everyone that the USA Team can't beat them. So the night before the game in our team meeting we all agreed as a team that we going to show the Canadians that they are in our town and we'll take no prisoners by beating them. We also had a point to prove to the people here at home in the US especially after what happen in the ICC World Division 5 Tournament in Jersey.

Going to bat with the score 81/6 from 31 overs, the first thing that went through my mind was to get some runs and pull my team out of trouble and then I remembered what we talked about in our team meeting the night before that we have to beat Canada no matter what it takes. We were also playing this game for Imran Awan our fast bowler who had done so well. The Canadians were surprised by my bowling because they have never seen me before and no one knows me from their team. They've seen me now and I know they will never forget me now after those 5 top-order wickets I bagged.

DreamCricket- It must have been a personal disappointment to be dropped down the

batting order after opening the batting for most games in Jersey during the ICC World Division 5 tournament. However you have come back very strong and have emerged as the best first change bowler for the USA team even grabbing 5 wickets against Canada. Have you been putting in a lot more work into your bowling?

Orlando- Yes, but we were playing as a team and anyone who knows me will tell you that I am a team person. It was disappointing to find my self batting so low down the order and knowing that I have never batted there before in my career. It was hard but I just kept telling myself that my time will come and it did come against Canada.

I work hard on my bowling just the same way I do on my batting. At practice I bowl like when I am in a game because what you put in at practice is what you going to get out at game time. Ask any of the batsmen and they will tell you that at practice I don't bowl balls for them to simply drive because I don't practice to work in batsmen bats.

DreamCricket- USACA teams in the past have had reports of internal squabbles and poor management. However it appears that USACA have got the right people to manage and coach the team to bring about that team spirit and unity. How was this tour managed differently from the past?

Orlando- The spirit and the unity was top class. The manager is one of best I have played under and I have played in a lot of teams with different managers but Imran Khan is special and a very good manager for USA Cricket as he is always on top of things. He looks out for his players in whatever way he can. He may not be as powerful as previous managers but all of us as players respect him to the fullest. We couldn't ask for more from him and I personal want to say thanks to him for all that he has done for me and the team over the past few weeks in Guyana and Fort Lauderdale

On Lambert what can I say, he is a leader. We as players respect him and thats what makes his and our job easy at the end of the day. He believes in us and we do in him as the coach. He is a champion coach, there is not question about that. Well done Lambert.

DreamCricket- Do you think we have made a statement to the ICC after this emphatic win and is there any chance that the ICC might give the US another shot at qualifying for the 2011 world cup?

Orlando- Well we leave that up to ICC now.

DreamCricket- Bakes, after leading the development team of youngsters to Guyana, who do you think are our brightest prospects to take the US onto the 2015 world cup?

Orlando- Stephen Taylor, Akeem Dodson, Gergory Sewdial, Abhijit Joshi, pace bowler Timroy Allen are all bright future for US Cricket and I just hope USA Cricket keeps a close eye on these players. I was impressed with them in Guyana and I did have a chat with them all and let them know in a few years time they will be the ones on front line duty in the battle field for the USA Cricket Team.

DreamCricket- The Canadian cricket board offers contracts to their players which allows their players to focus on cricket. Our team is composed of all amateurs who have to take off from work to play and pretty much only play cricket on weekends. How much of a difference do you think that makes to the development of cricket in America?

Orlando- The big difference between us and the other teams is that we have players

working 9 -5 jobs and we expect them to compete against the rest of the teams. The players on other teams are contracted players by their country boards, so it's hard for us to compete with them. When players have contracts they don't have to worry about their job. Whenever there is a tour coming up they can pack up and leave because their job is to play cricket. Yes, all of us players in America are amateurs because we don't have contracts and we have to go to work and then find the time to come and play for our country.

Here in America we have all the resources to make all the players contracted players and this is necessary for the cricket to be on the same level as the rest of the teams that we play against. Look, Nike as sponsors have done it for all US sports that I know of, whether it's tennis, basketball, track-field, whatever sport you can think of but why not cricket? Can't they do the same for cricket. I'm sure they can, but the question is has anyone from USACA ever approached them for sponsorship? That's the question we need to ask.

Without sponsorship, cricket is going to be hard to develop the right way in America.

DreamCricket- Good luck Bakes, we hope to hear a lot more about you on the International cricket front as the USA's leading all rounder. What would be your parting advice to young and upcoming US cricketers?

Orlando- My advice to the upcoming US Cricketers is to be sure about what they really want out of the game of cricket and how far they want to go, then work hard on their game everyday and listen, because you never too old to learn something new, respect the game, your coach, team mates, and most of all believe in you self that whatever you Set out to do you can achieve it at the end of the day.