

Frederick James Heather

Frederick James Heather's Lifelong Contribution to Cricket

Fred Heather's introduction to cricket started in England. He was born in Godalming, England on January 27, 1890. As a boy, he put up score tins for the Broadwater C.C. (C.C. stands for cricket club). Here he learned to play cricket and eventually captained a team in Cobham, Surrey in 1916. Emigrating to Canada in 1921, he continued to play the game and was a member of the St. George's C.C. that won the Toronto Championship in 1922. Heather also played for the Bell Telephone C.C., the Toronto & District Champions in 1927 and J. R. Robertson Finalists for the Canadian Championship, 1928.

Upon retiring as a player, Fred Heather embarked on a career as a Canadian cricket umpire. He started umpiring in Toronto in the late 1920's. His first international experience came when the Toronto C.C. faced the Bermuda Wanderer's C.C. on August 4, 1931, marking Bermuda's first visit to Canada.

In 1932, he umpired for the "Good Will Tour". This was an Australian team that toured North America featuring Don Bradman and many Australian Test level players. Heather umpired for the Eastern Canada vs. Australia matches. With an estimated 8 000 fans, this set an attendance record for the sport of cricket in Toronto.

Additional experience includes: Sir Julien Cahn's Touring Team (First class caliber team of all-stars), 1933; Cambridge University Vandals, 1934; M.C.C. (England) Tour of Canada 1937, 1951, 1959. Held over three days, the 1951 M.C.C. Tour was the inaugural First Class status match ever held on Canadian soil. The 1959 M.C.C. Tour commemorated the centennial anniversary of England's first cricket team to visit Canada.

Heather also umpired numerous inter-provincial matches for the John Ross Robertson Trophy starting in 1931, emblematic of the Canadian Cricket Championship. In 1951, he umpired for the Lord Atholstan Cup match between Ontario and Quebec. He also had the unique duty of umpiring the match between the Canadian Colts touring team which visited the prestigious Highgate School in London, England in 1967.

In addition to umpiring, Fred Heather contributed to the future success of cricket in numerous roles. He was both Secretary and player for the St. Georges C.C. and the Yorkshire C.C. in 1922 and 1926 respectively. He became a founding member and first Secretary-Treasurer for the Toronto and District Cricket Umpire's Association in 1931. In 1935, he became the first Secretary of the newly formed Umpire's Control Board, responsible for 125 scheduled games and 250 umpire appointments that year. During a 1938 Umpire's Control Board meeting, Heather voiced his concern for the image of cricket stating it was deplorable to light a cigarette during the fall of a wicket. Caring about the future of cricket, Heather started a school for cricket umpires, attended by both umpires and players. As principal and professor of the Cricket Umpire's School,

Heather set the curriculum to ensure a high standard of officials for future Canadian cricket matches. He was instrumental in starting a junior cricket league in Toronto, resulting in the formation of 18 junior cricket clubs in 1931. Heather was the Secretary for the new Toronto Junior Cricket League. This league provided cricket for 300 junior players each season. In 1933, two junior teams from this league were the first to play cricket at the Canadian National Exhibition. Furthermore, Heather was the Vice-President of the Dentonia Park C.C. in Toronto, which won the Godin Cup in 1937 and the Continental Life Trophy in 1938 as City Champions. Heather became the Public Relations Officer for Dentonia Park Cricket in 1941. Financial support for cricket resulted from Heather's fundraising skills which included a donation from Charles Aubrey Smith of the Hollywood C.C. Lastly, Heather authored numerous articles for newspapers and magazines to increase awareness and support for Canadian cricket.

As of August 12, 1961, Fred Heather had umpired in 1 002 consecutive matches without missing a game. He was a Canadian cricket umpire of high caliber for 38 years until his retirement in 1967, making him the longest serving umpire in Canada. Recognizing Fred Heather's achievements, the High Commissioner for Canada requested the honour of his company to attend the ceremony in Westminster Abbey to commemorate Canada's Centennial Year. As one of the first Canadians to be a member of the Association of Cricket Umpires (ACU) of England, he earned "Full Member Status" on June 7, 1968. This association is recognized worldwide and members must pass a written examination with 80% or higher and perform two years of field experience at a level acceptable to the ACU Passing Committee. As the highest level awarded by the ACU, it is equivalent to a Level 5 umpire recognized by Cricket Canada's Umpiring Certification Committee (highest level for Canadian umpires). Furthermore, he was made the first Life Member of the Toronto Cricket Umpire's Association on January 12, 1970. This motion was passed unanimously. The cricket community lost a legend of cricket when Frederick James Heather died February 22, 1976, in Toronto. Fred Heather **transformed** Canadian cricket by giving youth a league to play in, a school for umpires to learn in, and holding cricket to a higher standard through his consistent actions to serve the sport.

Thirty-four years since his death, 2010 has become a year of recognition for Frederick Heather. He became only the ninth person to be awarded the Jack Kyle Development Award for Outstanding Achievement in fostering the growth and development of cricket in Canada. Sport Ontario recognized Heather with the Syl Apps Special Achievement Award. The U.S. Cricket Hall of Fame inducted Heather honouring him as the first recipient of the Golden Age Award for pioneers of cricket. Heather's contributions to cricket were published in the *Cricket Statistician*. Heather's story was added to the Godalming Museum's Wall of Faces, and the Pier 21 National Museum in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Pier 21 has international importance as it acknowledges the significance of immigration to the building of Canada as a nation. Frederick James Heather contributed to the building of Canada through cricket and his story is one to be remembered.