

M A R K P E E L



GILLY

THE TURBULENT LIFE OF
ROY GILCHRIST

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Chapter 1

‘Country Boy’

OF ALL the outposts of the cricketing universe few can match the vibrancy and passion of Jamaica, the third-largest island in the Caribbean, some 90 miles south of Cuba. Yet behind its natural beauty and the cultural vibrancy of its mixed-race population, which has made it a popular holiday resort, there lies a troubled past, the legacy of a malformed social system based on prejudice and oppression. This system can be traced back to the Spanish, who first colonised the island following the arrival of the explorer Christopher Columbus in 1494. They enslaved most of the indigenous Arawak Indians and imported large numbers of African slaves to Jamaica as labourers, a process greatly expanded by the British, who conquered the island from the Spanish in 1655.

It was under British rule that many plantations for sugar, cocoa and coffee were established, built on extensive use of slave labour. In the 18th century the sugar industry flourished, bringing untold wealth to the mother country and the Jamaican planters, although their callous exploitation of the slaves – more than three million Africans were forcibly transported to the British colonies in the Caribbean – provoked numerous slave uprisings, especially in Jamaica in 1765 and 1831.

Despite the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and the emancipation of slavery in the British Empire in 1834, conditions for migrant black labour remained wretched as the Jamaican sugar industry, facing competition from large estates in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, declined. Their plight, exacerbated by drought, disease and crop failure, inflamed racial tensions, culminating in the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, an uprising which was brutally suppressed by Governor Edward John Eyre.

The removal of Eyre and the establishment of direct rule from London brought about the growth of the country’s infrastructure, but the island’s white elite continued to exercise economic and political power, not least on the plantations which had changed little since emancipation. Detached from the native population through family ties, education and membership of the same exclusive clubs, that elite looked down on the black man as an inferior being – ill-qualified for leadership and responsibility.

It wasn’t simply racial divisions that wracked Jamaica. Class divisions were also apparent on the plantations, in the professions and in cricket clubs as a gulf opened up between the educated black middle class and the masses. This continued even after independence in 1962.

In contrast to the privileged lifestyle of the white plantation elite, the majority of Jamaicans continued to suffer from extreme poverty and discrimination manifest in the plethora of strikes during the First World War. During that war, 15,600 West Indians, the majority from Jamaica, enlisted with the British West Indies Regiment, but were still subject to extreme racial discrimination. The 9th Battalion revolted at Taranto in Italy in December 1918. Returning home with a commitment to social and political change, these soldiers found a champion in Marcus

Garvey, the Jamaican-born political activist and black nationalist, who, through his Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded in 1914, helped create a sense of national consciousness and black self-empowerment throughout the Caribbean.

This new sense of working-class solidarity and protest was evident throughout the depressed 1930s when the markets for sugar and bananas collapsed, forcing down wages and creating mass unemployment. The decline in living standards, in addition to peasant unrest with the outdated land-tenure structure and general racism, spawned hunger marches, violent strikes and political protest. In Jamaica, the turbulence led to the emergence of the charismatic Alexander Bustamante as the principal spokesman of the industrial working class and the formation of the left-wing People's National Party, co-founded by Norman Manley. According to his son, Michael Manley, himself a future prime minister of Jamaica, 'This organisation became both the symbol of Jamaica's emergent nationalism, the means through which nationalist energies were directed and the organisation which mobilised the demand for independence.'

The civic and labour unrest across the Caribbean prompted the British government to appoint the Moyne Commission to study conditions there. Its findings led to better wages and a constitution for Jamaica that inaugurated a period of limited government. The first general election under universal adult suffrage was held in December 1944 and the following year Bustamante, leader of the conservative Jamaica Labour Party, took office as the island's first chief minister.

Against a growing climate of unrest, Roy Gilchrist was born on 28 June 1934 at Seaforth, a small, residential town in the parish of St Thomas at the south-east end of the island. Despite its proximity

to the capital Kingston, St Thomas is renowned for its mountainous terrain and pristine coastline; it also happens to be the poorest of Jamaica’s 14 parishes, blighted by unemployment, poor facilities and illiteracy. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the parish capital, Morant Bay, was the site of the greatest civil unrest in Jamaica’s history. One of the largest employers in the area was the Serge Island sugar estate, founded around 1750 by John Garband and named as an island because it was situated between the Negro and Johnson rivers. In December 1937 it became the scene of a bitter labour dispute when cane workers, spurred on by outside agitators, went on strike for higher wages, leading to mass arrests.

It was there that Gilchrist’s parents, Charles and Lucy, lived and worked. Little is known about them. Throughout his life Roy was always reticent about his upbringing, even with close friends and family, but it seems likely that Charles Gilchrist met Lucy Davis in Panama, to where many Jamaicans had migrated to work on the construction of the Panama Canal between 1904 and its opening in 1914. In his autobiography, Roy’s only reference to his parents were the occasions he took over his father’s job on his day off and their subsequent move to another farm on the estate, which meant a long walk to see them. From other sources we learn of two visits to his mother in Jamaica – Christmas 1960 and Christmas 1961 – but that is it. Extra-marital relationships, illegitimacy and large families were extremely common in Jamaica and while there is no cast-iron proof that Gilchrist was illegitimate, it seems likely that many of his siblings were. Mystery surrounds the exact size of his family. Newspapers of the time asserted that he was the youngest of 22 children but others disagree. The Jamaican historian Arnold Bertram wrote that he had 19 siblings; C.L.R. James, who investigated his background, put the number at 21,

while Chester Watson, the Jamaica and West Indies fast bowler, was told he was one of 26. Whatever the true number, only two of his siblings are mentioned in his autobiography: John, a successful businessman, and Samuel, who remained on the estate. A sister, Gertrude Gordon, later lived in the USA, but Roy had little contact with her.

With such a large family to tend to in addition to their long hours at work, parental time with the young Roy appears to have been limited. Given his obsession with playing cricket, this might not have bothered him too much in childhood, but growing up without a firm guiding hand had its consequences, not least in the public arena. Throughout his career, Gilchrist depended on father figures such as Bill Stewart, Frank Worrell and Chester Watson to help bring stability to his life. But hard though they tried, they couldn't compensate for his lack of life skills, a problem exacerbated by his father's unwillingness to send him to school, something he later resented. For not only did his lack of education deepen his inferiority complex, it also left him blind to alternative points of view or to subtle nuances of behaviour, leading to arguments developing out of nothing and to rifts in friendships.

Yet whatever the hardships of his formative years – and at least there was always enough to eat – Gilchrist depicted them in rather romantic terms. 'Life was good and life was pretty easy,' he wrote in his autobiography. 'Gilly junior got away with most things because out there and on that estate, everyone thinks, talks and plays cricket and that was one thing I could do really well.' Playing the game all the year round at every conceivable opportunity, Gilchrist teamed up with the Gordon brothers and at dusk after they'd finished, they went along to a nearby bridge to ogle the local girls and engage in some irreverent banter with them. Forming

a particularly close relationship with Albert Gordon, Gilchrist thought him a wonderfully gifted cricketer who could have gone far in the game had he displayed the necessary commitment.

Another cricketing mate was Hedley Reid, a useful wicketkeeper, who worked in the estate rum shop; later he became a neighbour of Gilchrist’s in Manchester, by which time Reid was no longer playing cricket.

Ever since cricket was introduced to Jamaica in the middle of the 19th century as a leisure pursuit by British officers, it remained part of the imperial order. Blacks were encouraged to take it up as a means of deterring them from rebellious activity, but only in an inferior capacity as bowlers and fielders. All power remained with the white elite through their membership of the most exclusive clubs, the captaincy of the island XI and their control of the Jamaica Cricket Board. Yet following in the footsteps of the charismatic Trinidad and West Indies all-rounder Learie Constantine, whose exploits in the 1920s and 1930s inspired black West Indian cricketers, Jamaica found a true hero in George Headley. Born in Panama to West Indian parents in 1909 – his father had moved there as a construction worker on the Panama Canal – Headley overcame poverty and prejudice to become one of the greatest players of all time. Making his debut for West Indies in 1930, he quickly established himself as a batsman of the highest class who challenged the old stereotype that only whites could bat at the top of the order. In addition to his prodigious run-scoring that led to him being nicknamed the ‘black Bradman’, his tactical acumen and dignified personality in the face of injustice made him ideally qualified to captain his country. Although that honour eluded him, aside from one Test against England in 1948, he helped give a voice to the new mood

of black consciousness throughout the cricket-playing Caribbean, where a new generation of black cricketers, led by the Barbadian trio of Everton Weekes, Frank Worrell and Clyde Walcott, had come to the fore.

Despite Jamaica being the largest of the cricketing islands in the Caribbean and the leading player in the evolution of West Indian nationalism, it assumed a secondary role in the development of its cricket. Located some 1,500 miles from Barbados and the other cricketing centres in the eastern Caribbean, Jamaica was absent from the inter-territorial contests that originated in the 1890s and she didn't play regular first-class cricket until 1964. Her peripheral status saw her patronised by Barbados, Trinidad and British Guiana, which in turn bred a resentment complex. According to Worrell, a Barbadian who moved to Jamaica, 'Few Jamaicans can bear even the mildest exposure of their weaknesses. Even fewer seem willing to make themselves unpopular by drawing attention to the shortcomings of their fellow countrymen ... even when they are willing to concede they exist. Instead, they dwell on the failure of non-Jamaicans.'

In a community such as Jamaica, where nearly everyone embraced cricket, makeshift games sprang up all over the island: in fields, in the street or on the beach with bats made of coconut branches, balls of adaptable fruit encased in cloth and stumps of wood or sugar cane. To the accompaniment of large, vociferous crowds and rapturous music, these games bristled with aggression, pride of place going to those who batted with panache and bowled with fire. And it was each man for himself, since local rules dictated that the only way one got to bat was to dismiss the batsman, which, in terms of catches, meant the fielder rather than the bowler. With no umpires and no lbws allowing batsmen to

stand in front of their stumps, many a bowler developed a callous streak by bowling as fast as they could in order to hurt those batsmen who placed their legs in the way of the target.

Whether it was their athleticism, the hard pitches in the Caribbean, or the opportunity to release pent-up tension about their lot in society, the West Indies have produced a long list of fast bowlers, all black, dating back to George John pre-1914 and continuing with George Francis, Learie Constantine, Herman Griffith, Manny Martindale and Leslie Hylton. Now, after an absence of real pace in the post-war era, a new generation led by Gilchrist, Wes Hall, Lester King, Charlie Griffith and Chester Watson was fast emerging.

Like Hall, and, later, Michael Holding, Gilchrist didn't begin life as a quick bowler. He used to bowl spin, taking a quiet pride in the ability to 'turn them a bit', and was encouraged to become an off-spinner by Jack Mercer, the Glamorgan and Northamptonshire cricketer, who coached in the sugar estates in Jamaica. In the nets, however, he liked to bowl fast and the more he experimented the more he discovered a raw talent. Encouraged by the foreman of his estate, he began to dream big. He was greatly helped in his endeavours by Tom 'Godfather' Smellie, a popular sportsman from Morant Bay. Smellie, a fast bowler himself, not only provided plenty of support and technical expertise, he also drove him hard. Although a stockily built 5ft 7in and eight stone in weight, hardly the prototype physique of a fast bowler, Gilchrist developed great strength of shoulder, elbow and calf by weightlifting at a local club, and gained propulsion from a speedy, rhythmic approach to the wicket before unwinding with a huge leap in his delivery stride and an explosive whirl of his arms. Asked why he left the ground, Gilchrist would respond,

‘Power, I was short, and I had to get as high as possible. I was small, so I had to throw everything into it.’

Intimidation was nothing new in a fast bowler but Gilchrist bore hostility towards the batsman more than most in his fanatical determination to succeed. ‘I play to win,’ he used to say. ‘I don’t like losing. I don’t think there is any such thing as a good loser. Everyone wants to win.’ While most fast bowlers derived little satisfaction from hurting a batsman, especially blows to the head, Gilchrist wasn’t burdened by such guilt, figuring that any emotion on his part might build up the batsman’s confidence. He wrote, ‘When I was young, very young to the game of cricket, I bowled the only way I knew – *flat out*. And there were those who felt that I was not being fair because I was bowling flat out at batsmen who were young. I was told firmly that this would not do.

‘It did not seem to matter that I was young too. “Why,” I asked them, smiling and trying to be fair, “does it make a difference when I am young and the batsman is young and we are both trying to play the game as we think right?”’

Having made his mark with the Seaforth community team, Gilchrist came to the notice of the wider public when opening the bowling for Serge Island in the Crum Ewing sugar estates competition. Although the Jamaica Cricket Board was negligent about promoting the game in the rural areas, the interest taken by the sugar estates did help provide opportunities for the plantation poor to play with the more fortunate on well-appointed grounds in front of passionate crowds. The 1950s was the heyday of sugar estate cricket. They all had a loyal body of support that added to the sense of occasion at these keenly fought games and Serge Island, with its quaint, rustic ground nestled in a bend of the Johnson River, was no exception. Given the high standard of the

cricket, sugar estates went in search of talented cricketers and with people attracted by the better-paid jobs and higher status on the estates, there was no shortage of recruits.

In 1953 Gilchrist enhanced his profile by taking 6-13 against Innswood, who were dismissed for 33, and 5-26 against Gray's Inn Central. The next year, Serge Island won the Wright and Holgate trophies and Gilchrist topped the bowling averages in three tournaments. Ed Allen, later a good friend in Manchester, recalls playing for the neighbouring community of Beacon Hill at Serge Island and being aware of all the local talk about this little man who bowled really fast. Facing up to Gilchrist with the crowd roaring encouragement as he bounded in on his long run, Allen didn't see the ball. Not only was he lightning fast, he later recollected, he also exuded menace.

Gilchrist also represented the parish of St Thomas in the inter-parish Nethersole Cup and although he was dropped after his first match against Portland he was soon back in favour, cementing his place with 7-3 against the St Thomas Police, who were all out for 13. Describing that game as one of his greatest, he was later to write that 'I don't think I've ever done anything better than that. The thrill of that performance still lingers on.'

In late 1954 Gilchrist left St Thomas for the parish of St James, located on the north-west end of the island. For a time, he worked for his brother John, who gravitated from his job as a cabinet maker on the Serge Island estate to running two hairdressing salons and a rum bar in the tourist resort of Montego Bay, the capital of St James. Thinking that Gilchrist might have a future in barbering, John took him in and taught him the essentials, but although Gilchrist quite enjoyed the work and living with his brother and his wife, an ex-nurse, his commitments in the

salon restricted his opportunities to play cricket. He thus gave up hairdressing and returned to the plantations.

One of the sugar estates he worked on was the Rose Hall Estate, some ten miles from Montego Bay, and former home to the notorious Annie Palmer, a society beauty whose tyrannical treatment of her slaves led to her killing in a slave uprising in 1831. Out of curiosity, Gilchrist and his workmates used to visit the dilapidated Georgian mansion, formerly one of Jamaica's great plantation houses, where she lived and which was never occupied again following her strangulation. He wrote, 'It always had us frightened, but we still went there and looked and explored. It made us feel somehow big and famous, living on an estate where a celebrity like Alice [sic] Palmer had lived and died.'

From Rose Hall, Gilchrist drifted in and out of work, including a brief spell at the Longpond Estate in the parish of Trelawny, before getting a job in a machine shop on the neighbouring Vale Royal Estate. It was while playing for Longpond that he first made an impression on Jackie Hendriks, later the Jamaica and West Indies wicketkeeper, and his team of party-loving friends in a 'curry goat' match. This type of game was a well-established Jamaican tradition whereby rural clubs would play host to their city counterparts in weekend friendlies, in which the local hospitality, featuring a sumptuous goat-curry lunch and raucous music, was as important as the cricket. Not on this occasion. Bowling on a concrete wicket covered by a decaying piece of matting, Gilchrist was so frighteningly fast that the opposition had little stomach for the fight and were shot out cheaply.

Another to be awestruck by his intimidating pace and his aggression towards batsmen was all-rounder Whit Stennett, later a good friend in Manchester, when playing for St Anne's Bay

against Trelawny. He found it curiously exciting watching him run up to the wicket and then his huge leap in his delivery stride. ‘I was rather amazed that a man who bowled with such hostility and venom would be so quiet, almost shy to a point,’ recalled Stennett. ‘My opening gambit to him was, “Paceman, do you touch the iron?” meaning did he do weight training. He did and he felt that I had the ability to make myself into a useful medium-pacer with a deadly yorker. It was quite flattering.’

Playing for St James parish in 1955, Gilchrist immediately made his name in the Hart Cup competition. He also impressed the legendary George Headley, who’d returned to Jamaica that year as national coach with a remit to develop the game in rural areas. On seeing Gilchrist bowl for the first time, he was amazed how such a slight physique could generate such speed. He invited him to his coaching sessions, where he also came under the tuition of Headley’s childhood friend Dickie Fuller, a genial giant of a man who played one Test against England in 1935. Gilchrist was also selected to play for a combined parish side under Headley’s leadership against the touring Australians, but persistent rain deprived him of his first taste of the big time, much to his disappointment. ‘This was a real stunning blow for me,’ he wrote, ‘for I was making a bit of a name for myself and I had hoped to enhance it further in the game with the Aussies.’

He did, however, enjoy a major piece of good fortune when Kingston businessman Bill Stewart, a man Gilchrist alluded to as his ‘fairy godfather’, took his private team, the Musketeers, to the Vale Royal Estate, Trelawny, for a holiday game. Stewart, a light-skinned manager of a commercial establishment on the Lascelles Wharf, dealing with ships and goods, was a man of trust, compassion and good judgement. Having noted Gilchrist’s

prodigious talent and feeling it was being wasted, he invited him to the capital Kingston, a bustling, overcrowded city, and offered him a job and good-class cricket. Gilchrist immediately accepted and Stewart went out of his way to look after him when he arrived in the city. Appreciating that he would like to live on his own, Stewart found him a flat, bought him furniture and helped him set up home. He gave him a job as a forklift operator, teaching him how to drive one of the small engines which carried goods up and down the wharf and in the warehouses. It wasn't a demanding job but Gilchrist mastered it and proved himself to be a willing worker. Stewart certainly didn't think him a paragon of virtue but Gilchrist, he said, would do anything he told him to do and would never resort to anything which he thought would offend him. 'I love Gilchrist as a son,' he later told C.L.R. James, 'almost as much as my own son.' They were feelings amply reciprocated. Placing Stewart on a pedestal with his brother John, he wrote, 'They took hold of that little fellow called "Gilly" – that's what they call me – and changed him into a man. They changed him from a little boy with dreams to a man who saw his dreams coming true.'

Gilchrist enjoyed the job nearly as much as playing for Stewart's Musketeers, one of the strongest weekend sides on the island, which included future Test opener Easton McMorris and Colin and Neville Bonitto, all of whom represented Jamaica. In one game he came across Frank Worrell, one of the West Indies' finest batsmen, for the first time. Worrell sat in a room in the pavilion reading a book on philosophy, oblivious to the mayhem Gilchrist was causing in the middle. Eventually he asked a teammate, 'What's going on?', whereupon he was told that Gilchrist was terrifying everyone with his pace. Worrell put on his pads and an old sunhat, marched out and scored 84 at a run a minute. On

his return, he removed his pads and said, ‘See boys, Mr Gilchrist can be hit.’

Gilchrist’s coming to Kingston in his attempt to play first-class cricket was a rarity in those days, since Jamaica’s highly polarised society offered few opportunities to those emanating from the provinces. Most players representing the island in inter-colonial cricket graduated through the elite schools such as Kingston College, Wolmer’s and Jamaica College and exclusive clubs such as Kingston, Melbourne and Kensington. With Stewart’s help, Gilchrist was signed up by Wembley, a club with a broader social intake than most, but this didn’t stop him being referred to as ‘country boy’ or subjected to racist asides. In those days, he kept his own company, rarely answering back and causing little trouble to his captain Colin Bonitto, but the insults left him sensitive to slights – real or imaginary – thereafter and enhanced his suspicion that his plantation background earned him a harsher disciplinary record than was proportionate.

Wembley was one of 12 clubs that participated in the Senior Cup, Jamaica’s leading cricket tournament, each match played over two Saturdays. Before their opening game in March 1956 they claimed that they had unearthed a sensational fast bowler in Gilchrist, who, they predicted, would make an imposing first appearance. Their words proved uncannily accurate, since after Gilchrist’s 6-60 against that season’s champions, Kingston, he was described by the island’s leading newspaper, the *Jamaica Gleaner*, as the best prospect seen in the competition for a very long time and a future West Indian fast bowler in the making. ‘Displaying an easy run, and good action, Gilchrist bowled accurately and untiringly from both ends, and had most of the Kingston batsmen groping in the dark.’

A month later he went one better with seven wickets against the University of West Indies, who, needing only 64 for victory, were bowled out for 41, their batsmen beaten for sheer pace.

He was equally aggressive in his 7-50 against Garrison, helping Wembley to a nine-run victory. On one occasion the ball took the edge of the bat, flew past the slips and nearly went for six. No wonder the soldiers thought seriously of retreat and taking evasive action in the general direction of square leg. 'This is the second time this season that Wembley has scored fewer than 109 runs and won, and on both occasions, they were saved by the hostile fast bowling of this mild and peaceful fast bowler,' wrote Sydney 'Foggy' Burrowes in *Public Opinion*, a nationalist Jamaican tabloid. 'This wild Bill Elliott of the cricket field seems to be an admirable marksman and the 14 wickets he took in both these games were all bowled and lbw.

'Gilchrist played cricket in the Country parts up to last year without attracting undue attention, but his opportune arrival in the Corporate Area makes him a certainty for the Corporate Area and St Catherine team to go to Antigua.'

Not every batsman fell prey to his pace. The following week West Indies batsman Collie Smith hit a century off him, exposing his lack of variety and genuine surprise that any batsman should gain the upper hand over him.

Gilchrist's 26 wickets at 11.80 in the Senior Cup not only placed him third in the competition's bowling averages, it helped win him a place on the Jamaican Colts' tour to Antigua. There they played against both the Combined Windward-Leeward Islands Colts and British Guiana Colts, and although he took only one wicket, his pace gained the attention of his opponents.

Chosen for the Jamaica trials, Gilchrist was again among the wickets, impressing Vince Lindo, a talented all-rounder with the Garrison club. He recalled his deceptive action, especially the complete circle with his arms before delivery, making it harder for batsmen to pick up the line and length of the ball, and his prodigious appetite. In one game in which Gilchrist was playing, he ate all the tea, leaving none for the other players. ‘Roy had a very good appetite and you didn’t argue,’ Lindo commented.

Gilchrist’s exploits won him selection for Jamaica in the four-way inter-colonial held at Georgetown, British Guiana. Consigned to field first against a very strong Guyanese batting line-up on a placid Bourda Oval wicket, Gilchrist still managed to turn heads on the opening morning by working up real pace. He soon dismissed Glendon Gibbs and had his moments against West Indies opener Bruce Piraudeau and promising tyro Rohan Kanhai, but in perfect batting conditions the pair stood firm and gradually took control. Both scored centuries and although Gilchrist eventually dismissed Piraudeau and had Clyde Walcott lbw for 26, there was no respite, since two promising newcomers, Basil Butcher and Joe Solomon, both scored centuries, adding an unbeaten 281 in their side’s 601/5 declared.

Butcher, playing against Gilchrist for only the second time, later recalled that he was the fastest bowler he ever saw. ‘So when Statham and those [English] guys were bowling, they weren’t bowling at any pace to scare anybody.

‘Gilly was a serious cricketer. I remember I pushed this ball past Gilly at Bourda, and Gilly took off and saved one run. Gilly and Lance Gibbs had the same competitive mentality.’

He finished with 3-129 and won the admiration of others besides his captain Allan Rae, the former West Indies opening

batsman. Seymour Coppin, the sports editor of the *Barbados Advocate*, tipped him as the leading West Indies fast bowler for the 1957 tour to England, and the Trinidad manager Harold Burnett, himself a former first-class cricketer, thought his bowling the fastest seen in the Caribbean since Manny Martindale in the 1930s. It was a view with which the former West Indies all-rounder Ben Sealey concurred. He called Gilchrist the most sensational pace-bowling discovery in the previous 20 years, rating him much more astute than any other West Indian fast bowler in the post-war era. If the selectors failed to pick him for the forthcoming tour of England, he averred, they would be guilty of an 'unpardonable sin'.

Philip Thomson, *The Cricketer's* special correspondent in the West Indies, alerted British readers to his great promise. 'Playing in first-class Intercolonial cricket for the first time, the 20-year-old youth with the long run showed that he had the pace to get the ball to lift even on the docile Bourda wicket. ... A small man he is nevertheless square of shoulder, can bowl long spells, and is at the moment the most talked of-cricketer in the islands.'

These accolades delighted 'Strebor' Roberts, the sports editor of the *Daily Gleaner*, but warned Gilchrist that he would need to work harder if he was to fully realise his potential.

Gilchrist's raw pace attracted the interest of the West Indies selectors, who picked him for the two trial games in Trinidad that would help determine their team to tour England. Before the departure of the Jamaican players, in a practice on some makeshift concrete wickets at Kingston Racecourse, Jackie Hendriks recalls guiding a well-pitched-up ball from Gilchrist through the covers, much to the approval of the large crowd, but their cheers infuriated

Gilchrist, who then bowled a really quick ball that hit a little boy in the crowd yards behind the wicket.

At practice at the Queen’s Park Oval, Port-of-Spain, he was the biggest attraction. Making the ball rear nastily against several Guyanese batsmen, he persuaded their captain Clyde Walcott to withdraw them for their own safety and when Walcott batted, he opted for an all-spin attack. In the two trials, played on the flattest of surfaces, Gilchrist was the most successful fast bowler with eight wickets, including the prized dismissal of Walcott in the first game and that of Everton Weekes in the second. (He also dislocated wicketkeeper Hendriks’s finger.) Although prone to spells of waywardness, it was a performance good enough to win him a berth on the boat to England, along with five other Jamaicans. One local writer enthused, ‘It was again encouraging to see a ring of fieldsmen around and behind the wicket when a West Indian was bowling in a first-class match,’ while Strebtor Roberts wrote, ‘Roy Gilchrist’s rapid rise to the top is another Ramadhin-Valentine story. To have made a West Indies team in one season of Senior Cup cricket is a remarkable achievement.’

While delighted with his inclusion, Gilchrist was disconcerted by the exclusion of Leeward Islands wicketkeeper John Reid, which he attributed to the arbitrary manner in which the WICBC ran the game. Throughout its history West Indies cricket had been bedevilled by inter-island rivalries which helped account for some flawed selections, not least during the mid-1950s over the position of wicketkeeper when Alfie Binns, Clifford McWatt and Clairmonte Depeiazza were all tried but found wanting.

According to Gilchrist, Reid’s flawless exhibition during the trial game made the other ’keepers look like ’stoppers’ and he ascribed his omission to the fact that he played for the lowly

Leeward Islands. Equally controversial was the inclusion of the Cambridge-educated Gerry Alexander, subsequently to be Gilchrist's nemesis, especially since he'd yet to play for Jamaica. Comparing his ability to Reid, Gilchrist thought he looked like a novice whose selection owed much to his contacts, although he subsequently credited him with a tremendous improvement.

Before departure Jamaica hosted the Duke of Norfolk's touring side, which comprised England players such as Willie Watson and Tom Graveney and the former West Indies batsman Roy Marshall. Desperate to dismiss Marshall, whom he highly rated, Gilchrist saw wicketkeeper Alexander, making his debut for Jamaica, drop him off his first ball, much to his frustration. In that first game, in which he took 5-110 in the first innings, he broke Hampshire wicketkeeper David Blake's wrist and although he did little thereafter in the three-match series, the tourists were impressed enough by his hostility to warn their team-mates back home about the hurricane fast approaching.