

BANGALORE MIRROR

City boy will face off against Stuart Binny at World Cup in Australia

Krishna Chandran, an alumnus of Jain University in Bengaluru, has been selected to play for UAE in the tournament. The 30-year-old all-rounder will become the first Malayali to represent that country

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If you thought Stuart Binny will be the lone Bengali who will be playing in the ICC World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, you are mistaken — for there is someone else with a Bengaluru connection who will be seen playing the 2015 World Cup, albeit against the Indian team.

Krishna Chandran, a first division player with Herons and an alumnus of Jain University, will don UAE national colours in the forthcoming World Cup. "I am looking forward to playing against India and also Pakistan. We are all working professionals in the team and cricket is second to our job. In that sense, we are no match to these Test-playing nations; but since UAE is playing a World Cup for the first time since 1973, the excitement is tremendous," 30-year-old Chandran, an all-rounder, said in a telephonic interview with Bangalore Mirror.

His is the story of every struggling cricketer in the country. For the better part of his twenties, Chandran, who lived in Malleswaram and played for Herons Club, was toyed around with by Kerala state selectors. Hailing from Pallakkad in Kerala, he pursued his degree in Bengaluru at the Jain University and even represented Bengaluru University at the World University

Cricket Championship in Mumbai. His ambition, however, was to play for his home state of Kerala in the Ranji Trophy.

Even as he toiled to earn a name in domestic cricket, fate seemed to have bigger plans for Chandran. At the forthcoming 2015 ICC Cricket World Cup in New Zealand and Australia, Chandran will become the first Malayali who will be representing United Arab Emirates (UAE). "I am obviously excited and will be playing against Stuart Binny, with whom I have fond memories of playing first division matches. Life has changed and is rather comfortable here," he says.

Rewind to 2010, and the scenario was bleak. Depleting finances back home, responsibility towards his family as the eldest son who needed to take care of his aging parents had forced this cricketer to consider job options abroad. "Two years after finishing my graduation (2007-09) I played every tournament in Chennai, Kerala and Bengaluru. I was des-

perate to get a job. I tried in banks and Railways under sports quota but nothing worked. In 2004-05, I was given an opportunity to play one day and Twenty20 for Kerala. I was hoping they would pick me for the four-day game in the next season, but the call never came. It was a big disappointment," says Chandran, a middle-order batsman and medium pace bowler.

Chandran's fortunes looked up when he landed in Dubai in February 2010 where he had got a job with a shipping company called Globe Link West Star Shipping.

Here, the company had a cricket team and they were looking for a professional player who would also be keen on working.

Chandran fit into their bill perfectly. After a series of matches, he got a break in another company only 18 months since his first job. Then, he played for Fanatics, a local club and also got to play a lot of games in Umm Al-Quwain on weekends (i.e. Friday and Saturday).

In 2012-13, Chandran was also adjudged as the best cricketer, the first Indian to be accorded this award.

Chandran lives in Dubai and practices cricket after 5 pm, once he finishes his shift.

But it wasn't his biggest break yet. Chandran earned kudos in the Kerala Cricket League, a popular T20 tournament for which Sreesanth



Kerala Cricket League gave Chandran valuable exposure

and Malayalam actor Suresh Gopi are brand ambassadors.

GETS INTO EMIRATES TEAM

His performance here was noted by Dnata, an Emirates-owned company; and he started playing for the Emirates team as the vice-captain. He even toured England with the Emirates team.

It was only in 2014, after Chandran was granted the residentship of UAE (according to the criteria he had lived and worked in UAE for four

years) that he was picked to play the ACC Premier League for the UAE national team.

He also played against the Pakistan A team in a five-match ODI series.

They lost 3-2, but consider this a commendable feat as the Pakistan team comprised seven-eight international players. The UAE team for the World Cup comprises two Indians, two Sri Lankans, two UAE locals; the rest of the players are from Pakistan.

It was a big disappointment when I did not get a chance to play for Kerala

CHANDRAN