

# Bowling them over

**Donna Symmonds from Barbados in the West Indies is a world-class sports broadcaster. The SABC invited her to be a guest broadcaster during the one day cricket series between South Africa, Pakistan and the West Indies. She talked to Pearl Majola**

**A**s a young girl, Donna Symmonds was a star tennis player and represented her country, Barbados, in the under-18 tennis league. She quit tennis for university in Britain. After qualifying as a lawyer, Symmonds was keen to practise law at home in Bridgetown.

Her career as a broadcaster started when the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation asked her to stand in for one of their broadcasters who was sick. Later when there was an opening in the cricket broadcasting team, the dynamic Symmonds took a shot at it.

Symmonds, who broadcasts on both radio and television, says she prefers radio.

"On TV you are talking to people watching the game for themselves, as well as listening to what you are saying. But on radio, listeners depend entirely on the broadcaster. This is where creativity is needed. The broadcaster has to set the mood and create a picture of what is taking place in the listener's mind," she explains.

Although Symmonds has become very popular with cricket fans all over the world, she has come up against male chauvinist attitudes. She tells what happened when she was supposed to commentate on a match between her home team and India in 1989.



Photo by The Star Newspaper

"India objected, saying Indian audiences would not take too kindly to a woman's voice commentating on the traditionally male-dominated sport," Symmonds recalls.

"Luckily the match was on our home ground and the West Indies team insisted that I be on the broadcasting team. Otherwise there would not be any broadcast of the match. The Indians had to give in, of course," she says, smiling.

"If people realised that sportswomen are as good as men, they wouldn't look down on women," says Symmonds. "But I have always enjoyed the support of my colleagues and even the players. They treat me

like a professional and that makes my job much easier."

Symmonds has grown to love cricket. Her work on television and radio takes a lot of time. She often has to travel to do this job. But this has not drawn her away from the other love of her life, working as a lawyer.

During her South African trip, she bowled over the sports fans, as she has done in many other cricket-loving countries. This is a challenge for South African women who hardly feature in sports broadcasting. Symmonds certainly proves a determined woman cannot be held back. ✪