

MCA 50th Anniversary Banquet — Inaugural Speech

By Masaoood Yunus, President, Minnesota Cricket Association

Good evening, everyone.

Tonight, we are not just celebrating a milestone — we are celebrating a *movement*.

Fifty years ago, a handful of dreamers stood on uneven fields with taped tennis balls and bare passion. They had no turf wickets, no crowd, no sponsors — just love for a game that reminded them of home and community. Those dreamers became pioneers. And those pioneers laid the foundation for what we proudly call today — *the Minnesota Cricket Association*.

From those humble beginnings in 1976 to this magnificent hall tonight, we have journeyed across generations. We have built not just an organization, but a legacy — a legacy of sport, culture, and belonging.

Our growth story is extraordinary.

From a few community clubs to more than **60 registered teams**, youth academies, women's leagues, and the powerful Minnesota Premier League — MCA today represents one of the largest and most organized cricket ecosystems in the United States.

And that growth did not happen by chance. It happened because of *you* — the players, parents, volunteers, and coaches who have given your weekends, your energy, and your hearts to the game.

To the *parents* — who drive their kids from one ground to another, who cheer under the sun, who pack snacks, score games, and teach teamwork — you are the real heroes of youth cricket.

To the *players* — young and old — who wear their jerseys with pride, who celebrate victory with humility and face defeat with courage — you are the soul of MCA.

And to our *pioneers and past leaders* — thank you for carrying the torch when cricket was still finding its footing in this country. Your vision built the platform we stand on tonight.

We also owe a huge debt of gratitude to our partners and sponsors.

Your faith in us has turned local tournaments into statewide festivals. You believed in our mission to bring cricket into schools, parks, and communities — and because of that, thousands of youth today call cricket their first love.

But as we celebrate this golden milestone, let's also look ahead.

Cricket in the United States is on the verge of something historic. The game we once played quietly in local parks is now being broadcast in stadiums, discussed in boardrooms, and embraced by schools and cities.

And Minnesota — *our home* — is at the forefront of that change.

We are not just keeping up with the game — we are *leading it*.
We are producing home-grown players who represent at national levels.
We are building partnerships with cities and schools to create permanent cricket facilities.
We are shaping the next generation — one that is diverse, inclusive, and proudly Minnesotan.

As we step into the next chapter of MCA, our mission is clear:

To strengthen our foundation, to elevate our standards, and to inspire the next 50 years of cricket excellence.

We will continue to grow our youth academies, expand our women's cricket, invest in infrastructure, and create opportunities for every child — regardless of background — to pick up a bat or a ball and dream.

Because cricket, for us, is not just a sport.
It's a bridge between generations.
It's a language of unity.
It's a heartbeat that connects Minnesota to the world.

So tonight, as we raise our glasses to fifty years of passion, purpose, and perseverance —
Let us honor those who built the road behind us,
Celebrate those who walk it with us,
And inspire those who will lead it after us.

Here's to MCA — 50 years strong, and just getting started.

May the next innings be even greater.
May our spirit stay unbroken.
And may Minnesota always be — *the home of cricket in America*.

Thank you, and let's celebrate our legacy — together! 🏏🌟