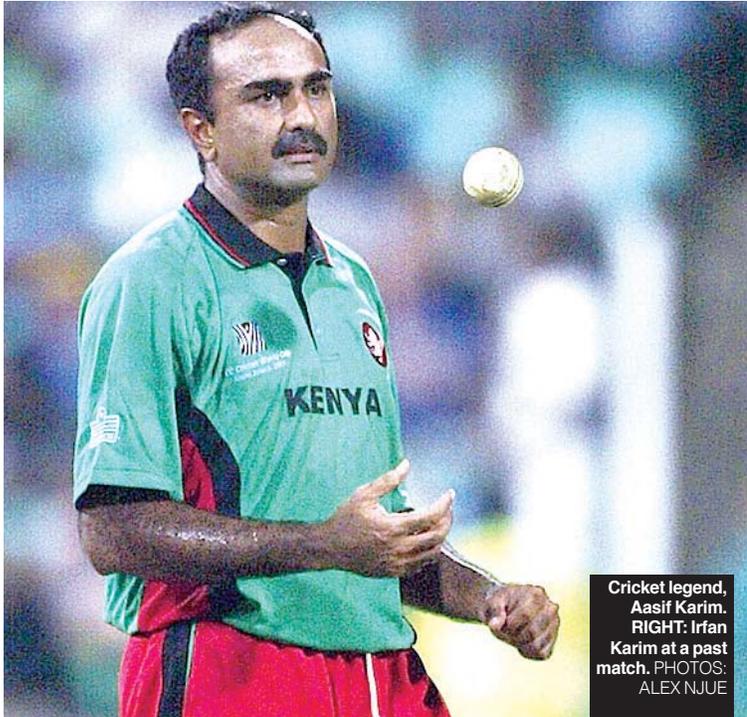


Relatively speaking



Cricket legend, Aasif Karim. RIGHT: Irfan Karim at a past match. PHOTOS: ALEX NJUE

THE SPORTING DYNASTY

- Aasif Karim followed his father's steps to pursue an exceptional career in tennis. He represented Kenya in 1988 Tennis Davis Cup, held in Egypt. However, he had to discard a career in tennis and take up cricket.
- Aasif was born and raised in Mombasa. This is where his love for sports began.
- Aasif has participated in three World Cups as a vice captain (1996), captain in 1999 (England) and team member in 2003 (South Africa).
- Irfan plans to venture later into coaching and mentorship as he garners experience in the cricket world.



A family's legacy built on cricket field

Aasif Karim played cricket for Kenya in three World Cups, as a vice captain in 1996, captain in 1999 and team member in 2003. His son **Irfan Karim** lets us in on his father's influence and impact on his growth in the game playing for the national team and professionally in England

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It is often said that an apple does not fall too far from the tree; that holds true in many cases. Kenya's cricket history cannot be complete without the mention of one Aasif Karim, 52, a dependable left arm spinner who twice skippered his country to the high-levels of the World Cup. A man known for his

dedication to the sport, he often came across as staunch and fearless because of his passion for cricket.

In his father's shoes

His son Irfan, 24, is now slowly fitting into the big shoes, but even he knows it cannot be easy. "He left an indelible mark. Thankfully, I'm under no pressure to meet his mark because

I stand on my own," says the Rothley Park Cricket Club player in England.

The young Karim used to watch his dad play on television and would also accompany him to Nairobi Jaffery's Club in Lavinton. He took interest and wanted to play like him. "He was an ideal model for me and I remember going for net sessions to train. We used to play at

our garden as well. Having this sporting background, it then became so easy to fit in," he recalls.

To his advantage, his parents often encouraged him to pursue his goals and dreams even while in school. He attended Braeburn School all through his growth phase before moving over to Loughborough University, Leicester. "All my life, I was introduced to environments that had strong sporting cultures. In Kenya, for instance, our teachers who were from United Kingdom coached us on the sport," says the towering Kenya team wicket keeper and opening batsman.

According to Irfan, he has been a tad lucky because he is under no real illusion to replicate his father's achievements. "My dad currently operates in the background and never really puts pressure on me. He lets me learn from my mistakes in order to grow," adds Irfan who has a striking resemblance to his father. His discipline and never-say-die attitude has been a trait he reveals came right from his grandfather who was also a sportsman. "Both dad and late grandpa have been instrumental in moulding me. They had focus, discipline and open-

mindedness," states the second born child of four.

The older Karim never shies away from pointing out the wrongs afflicting sport. He's known to ruffle feathers, always speaking his mind. "He believes in order and structures. Many times, he differs with people on principle and that what makes him admirable," says the England-born Sports Science and Management graduate.

Man of principles

To this end, Irfan has represented Kenya in the junior ranks and national teams due to his diligence and hard work. "At only 18 in 2011 I had been picked for a national team role. Under the guidance of coach Mike Hesson of New Zealand, I got to learn a lot as a rookie. My dad was active as well in building my confidence to the required standards. I must say early exposure in the game has improved my all-rounded play and consistency. I did not have to get favours, but work hard enough," he notes.

For all his calm demeanour, Irfan has picked a lot of traits from his dad. "We are kind of similar in terms of our approach to life. Both of us like to tackle issues head-on rather than sweep it under the mat. He is outspoken, but in a respectful way, this is so because he wants to see change effected," he says. His 14-year-old brother is also into sports leaning towards basketball and archery. Irfan believes that the good grounding from the parents will help him going forward.

Irfan has an opportunity to bring glory to the Karim household. "I want to focus on becoming a better player in England for now and also my country. I take nothing for granted and thus my aim is to keep my feet down and perform."

Karim currently runs Safinaz Group of Investments that deal primarily in Insurance, Real Estate and Sports. Off duty, he prefers to relax through playing golf, hanging out with friends and reading.