

## Rupert C. Coogan – A Spin Bowler of Substance

[By Tom Wood – Parramatta District Cricket Club Historian)

Rupert Coogan, in all probability, was the best left-hand orthodox spinner to represent the Parramatta Club. He was a remarkably consistent wicket-taker during his term with the club. The second member of the *'elite brigade'* who had captured over **300 wickets** in **1st grade** whilst adorned in the club's traditional two-blue colours (Leslie Pye was the first).



His career span with Parramatta, then known as Central Cumberland, ranged from **1909/10** to **1924/25**.

Although R.C. Coogan never played for NSW his bowling performances for Central Cumberland entitle him to a place among the club's 'immortals.' A slow bowler who depended on consistent length, change of pace and flight rather than prodigious spin.

His career commenced in 2nd grade, with half-a-season in **1909/10** and concluded when the Northern District Club was formed in **1925/26**. Coogan found himself, together with a dozen other Cumberland 1st and 2nd-graders, living within the boundaries of the new club, and were residentially ineligible to play for Cumberland. There were two breaks in the continuity of his service with Cumberland - in 1910/11 he returned to junior cricket for a season, and - between 1915 to 1919 when he was overseas with the first A.I.F. in World War 1.

Following his debut in 1909/10, he played a further full season in 2nd Grade in 1911/12 and made his initial appearance in **1st Grade** at the start of the season **1912/13**. He was an immediate success, and for the rest of his career was the spearhead of the Cumberland attack. Coogan's chance to be the dominant 1st grade spinner was helped by the failing health of the International G.R. Hazlitt and the fact that L.W. Pye was past his prime, plus no new bowlers of apt skill were produced by the in the early 1920s. Coogan's successes were more meritorious because Club Annual Reports of the period point out that with a few bright exceptions, the team's fielding was generally below 1st grade standard.

This backdrop provided him with two records that were rather unique. The first (which no bowler will want to wrest from him) occurred in the game against Western Suburbs in 1923/24, when **six chances were missed** off his bowling in **one over** (eight ball overs). The second (which every bowler would like, but not many have achieved) is a remarkable one – in every season he played with Cumberland (two in 2nd Grade, nine in 1st Grade) he took the **most wickets** for his team. Meaning that he headed the bowling aggregate **eleven times** in eleven seasons. In addition, he headed the averages once in 2nd Grade and three times in 1st Grade.

For the 1st eleven, he took at least **five wickets** in an innings on **24** occasions, with **9/63** v. Petersham in 1913/14 as his best effort, the remaining batsman was run out. In that match he took **15/134** on a perfect S.C.G. pitch, aggregate figures for one match which no other Parramatta 1st Grade bowler has been able to equal. That season he snared **56 wickets**, an aggregate **record** for the club in the **Belvidere Cup** that still stands (as at 2025), although equalled by former State leg-spinner Jack Treanor in 1957/58.

His remarkable accuracy was shown in the game against Gordon that season, when the Highlanders scored 257, the Australian idol, C.G. Macartney, making 106. Coogan's figures were **6/64** off 30 overs, with 11 maidens – no mean feat on the small Chatswood ground with

Macartney in full cry. Seven years later in 1920/21, after Macartney had scored three centuries against the visiting English team, the pair met again on Parramatta Oval, and this time Coogan clean-bowled the champion first ball, a feat which was probably the proudest moment of his cricket career.

Coogan laid no claims to batting fame, but on two occasions he figured in last wicket stands that turned impending defeat into victory. In 1922/23, Cumberland lost 9/164 in reply to Sydney's 184, but the two bowlers, Fathers and Coogan, clinched a win with a last wicket stand of 27 runs. However, the real thriller occurred in 1923/24. Petersham scored 292, and Cumberland lost 7/151, with E.K. Brown absent. Only F.T. Wright (an all-rounder who batted at No. 7) and two bowlers, F. Brett and Coogan, remained. The Petersham players were debating among themselves whether they should enforce the follow-on. Wright commenced to hit out but finding unexpected support from Brett proceeded to temper vigour with discretion. They added 89 before Brett was adjudged run out. The position appeared hopeless when Coogan joined Wright with 48 runs required, but Rupert proceeded to play the '*innings of his life*.' The remaining runs were knocked off and the partnership realised 62 before Coogan was out for 25, the highest score of his career, and Wright remained, 82 not out.

In private life, Coogan rose through the ranks in the Banking profession to become a suburban Branch Manager. He served on Cumberland's Committee of Management for four years, was Hon. Secretary for one season in 1914/15, Hon. Treasurer in 1920/21 and was a delegate to the NSW Cricket Association in 1920/21 and 1921/22. Of independent thought, he was a forthright administrator, who frequently enlivened proceedings at the meetings, and was a great cricketer and personality.

#### **Career Bowling Statistics with Central Cumberland**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Overs</b>	<b>Maidens</b>	<b>Runs</b>	<b>Wickets</b>	<b>Average</b>
2nd Grade	242	20	1,036	65	15.93
<b>1st Grade</b>	<b>1,615</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>7,279</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>21.59</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,857</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>8,315</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>20.68</b>