

Joseph Cameron 'Joe' Wilson – The Man Who Bowled W.G. Grace



Joe Wilson was a gifted cricketer who excelled for the Parramatta District Cricket Club, in the first decade and a half of NSW Premier Cricket (initially known as Electorate and later Grade cricket).

The strongly built Wilson was an attractive left-handed stroke-maker and fine left-arm medium paced swing bowler, who enjoyed a praiseworthy career with the Parramatta club.

A local Commercial Bank Accountant, Joe Wilson went on to captain Parramatta (Central Cumberland) in the Sydney 1st Grade competition, represent New South Wales in Inter-Colonial cricket in 1891/92 and was also selected to tour New Zealand with NSW in

1895, but was unable to obtain leave from the Bank to tour, and in 1903 he migrated to South Africa going on to play first-class cricket for Transvaal.

A well-regarded cricketer Wilson made a heralded arrival at Parramatta in the 1889 season, at this time there was an under-current for a reform to the stagnated club cricket scene across Sydney and this movement resulted in the formation of Electorate Cricket in the **1893/94** season, and Parramatta was one of the eight foundation club to take part in the new competition – J.C. Wilson was a key member of that Parramatta team.

The classy allrounder's playing career, in grade cricket, spanned from **1893/94** through to **1903/04** during which he compiled **1,993 runs @ 24.01**(highlights: **108** v. Leichhardt & **110*** v. Glebe – 1898/99, 140 v. Waverley – 1901/02) and his clever bowling snared **202 wickets @ 17.12** (B.B. – **7/22** v. Burwood – 1897/98), 6/24, 6/45, 6/60).

He Participated in two massive partnerships with Parramatta great Les Pye:

- **220** runs 3rd wicket v. Leichhardt in 1898/99.
- **266** runs 4th wicket v. Waverley in 1901/02.

In this era grade matches were suspended when NSW were playing a home Inter-colonial match and Sydney clubs often organised alternative matches to fill the vacant weekend.

In November 1897 **Central Cumberland** played the **Hawkesbury Cricket Association** at Parramatta. The newly formed Hawkesbury Association travelled to Parramatta keen to take-on the Electorate Club in what was to be a two-day match, unfortunately for the country lads they lost the toss and fielded whilst Central Cumberland compiled **3** for **534** and had planned to continue to bat, the visitors had enough and departed at Afternoon Tea, not to return. Les Pye and Joe Wilson showed absolutely no mercy in amassing a mammoth unfinished **3rd wicket partnership** of **436** runs – Pye **239*** and Wilson **195*** Still the highest ever partnership by Parramatta players in any form of cricket. A local paper wrote this of Joe Wilson – “The 195 by J.C. Wilson must have been a great innings to look at, for the left-hander of Parramatta when going is absolutely one of the prettiest batsmen in the colony.”

Joe was a member of the Parramatta (Cumberland) team that won the club's inaugural **First Grade Premiership** in **1899/00**, his teammates included such notables as Les Pye, Syd Walford, International Bill Howell, Barclay Farquhar and Edgar Waddy.

J.C. Wilson was a very popular figure within the Parramatta community, and at various times he occupied important administration roles within the club, particularly Treasurer (1896 to 1901).

In 1903 he caused a shock when unexpectedly up an emigrated to South Africa - The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate – 3rd October 1903 carried this story on his departure -

“It came as a sudden surprise, on Monday, when it was given out that Mr. J.C. Wilson, the popular ex-bank manager and skipper of the Central Cumberland Electorate Cricket Club, would that evening leave for South Africa. So sudden was it that there hardly remained time to let anybody know, but in spite of the shortness of the notice some citizens of Parramatta mustered in force at Creasey’s Family Hotel, just before 7.30 pm, train started, to toast the health of the genial “Joe”, and to give him a cheer to send him on his way with feelings that the Parramatta boys wished him a safe journey and good luck in South Africa.”

Despite his many cricketing achievements, Joe Wilson will live forever in the annals of the Parramatta Club’s history as – **‘the man who bowled the legendary Dr W.G. Grace for a duck’** at Parramatta Oval in 1891.



On 9th December 1891 the English International team captained by the legendary Doctor W.G. Grace (Cricket’s first super star) was set to play a two day match against Cumberland on the Parramatta Oval - the England eleven v. eighteen of the locals.

Prior to the start of the match W.G. Grace engaged in his notorious gamesmanship, with 1,000 spectators in attendance and keenly awaiting play to get underway he got stroppy and demanded that the teams be designated as twelve v. twenty. Despite knowing that he was the principal ‘draw card’ for the crowd he threatened to ‘pullout’ of the game unless he got his own way.

After winning that point, the good Doctor squabbled again over the toss, Local skipper Nelson Kirby called tails and claimed a win, but Grace picked up the coin and stated, *“heads it is”*. For the sake of the game Kirby reluctantly conceded the toss.

Revenge in cricket is sweet, and the Great Man strolled to crease, with England five wickets down, the crowd buzzing, in anticipation of a block-busting innings from the living legend but Joe Wilson had other ideas and after W.G.P. haughtily addressed a couple of his left-arm swinging deliveries he ‘stunned the spectators’ by uprooting the Doctor’s middle stump for **blob**. Wilson claimed 3/25 in that innings and earned himself many congratulatory drinks at the Bar post stumps.

(By Tom Wood – Parramatta District Cricket Club Historian).

