

Dave 'Ripper' Watson – Promise Lost

The David Watson story represents a very sad moment in the Parramatta District Cricket Club's enduring history. It is about a young 23-year man with a glowing future as a cricketer and journalist beckoning, only for it to be snatched away by a tragic road accident.

Within hours of appointment to a senior editorial position with one of the Cumberland Newspapers' major publications, the rising young journalist and gifted cricketer David William Thomas Watson, that many experts touted as a definite State player of the near-future, perished on Wednesday 22 March 1961 when his new sedan crashed against a roadside tree on North Rocks Road, Parramatta – his childhood friend Kerry Alexander also killed in this accident.



As a cricketer Dave was a right-arm opening bowler who possessed the much sort after commodity of '*genuine speed*', his arsenal also contained a sharp, dipping inswinger that often curtailed a groping batsman's visit to the crease and added to that he had displayed a propensity to snatch large bags of wickets when on song.

In the fleetingly short time span of his playing career with the Parramatta (Central Cumberland) Club – **1956/57 to 1960/61**- his performances marked him as a rare and exciting fast bowling prospect, one the club expected to witness prosper over many ensuing seasons. His premature death robbed both David and the Parramatta club of seeing that story unfold.

That Dave was able to grow up and become a menacing fast bowler was a wonder. After breaking his right-arm in a childhood game of leap-frog, a chance inspection by the local doctor revealed the arm was cancerous. The affected bone was removed, leaving him with one bone in his right wrist.

He overcame that setback and flourished as a cricketer at The Kings School Parramatta, where his closest friend was Jon Erby who later became a fine opening batsman for Parramatta and Sydney University. In 1956 he was a major contributor to Kings undefeated G.P.S. First grade premiership win – he destroyed St. Joseph's whilst claiming a school record **17 wickets for 95 runs** in the match.

Following the completion of his commitments with The Kings School, he decided to '*throw his lot*' in with Central Cumberland and joined the club's Fourt grade team at Christmas 1956 where made a solid start to NSW Premier Cricket (Grade) career by snaring **14 wickets @ 14.92** – highlighted capturing **5/24** v. Northern District. He also played a Third grade match and claimed **2/23**.

It was in his second season 1957/58 that he started to shine, producing a phenomenal performance in the opening Third grade match – capturing **13 wickets for 25 runs (7/8 and 6/17 v. North Sydney)** – after which he rapidly rose to play Second grade and further demonstrated his potential by grabbing **7/63 v. Bankstown**, this led to his First grade debut that season, he became Parramatta District Cricket Club **First Grade Player Number – 346**.

The 1958/59 season was one of consolidation during which he played Second and Third grade with continued success. In Third grade his form was ‘*red hot*’ – skipper Alan Cramond stated in the Annual Report that “at times Dave was really devastating” – evidenced by a season’s haul of **34 wickets @ 8.75** (best – **6/27 v. Sydney University, 6/31 & 4/34 v. Mosman, 3/20 v. Glebe**). His Second grade effort returned 7 wickets @ 9.60 (best – **5/22 v. Paddington**) and his performances in the Poidevin-Gray Shield (10 wickets @ 10.00) helped the Cumberland reach the Semi-finals.

Dave’s star shone brightest in 1959/60 when he produced a spectacular First Grade bowling performance in capturing **40 wickets @ 12.65** (best – **6/22 & 5/33 v. Glebe, 6/26 v. Randwick, 5/27 v. Paddington, 3/28 v. Gordon**) this won the NSWCA 1st grade bowling average.

That season he formed a very dangerous new ball partnership with future NSW Deputy State Premier Ron Mulock who topped the NSWCA First Grade wicket-takers with 49 wickets @ **14.93**.

This great season’s performance earned Dave selection in the **NSW Colts** squad for the 1960/61 season.

In total ‘Ripper’ snared **148 wickets @ 14.04**, including **51 @ 18.39** in his brief **1st grade** career – these fine figures were a testimony to his untapped potential.

Parramatta Statistics

Grade	Wickets	Average	Best Bowled
4th Grade	14	14.92	5/24
3rd Grade	49	7.94	7/8
2nd Grade	34	15.94	7/63
1st Grade	51	18.39	6/22
Total Grade	148	14.04	7/8
P. G. s	13	14.84	4/11
Total Club	161	17.33	7/8

[By Tom Wood – Parramatta District Cricket Club Historian]