

## Craig Thomas Bayldon – A Cricketer to Be Reckoned With

Craig Bayldon was another in the long line of gifted cricketers to have represented the Parramatta District Cricket Club with considerable distinction at 1st Grade level. Predominantly a bowling all-rounder, he's a member of an exclusive group of just eleven bowlers to have captured '**300**' wickets in 1st grade for the club.



A dynamic style of cricketer by nature, for most of his time at Parramatta he was a strong, attacking right-armed new ball bowler blessed with a sharp turn of speed, mixed with a dose of hostility and competitive nature. Batting left-handed Craig liked to give the ball a decent thump and when in the groove could be very destructive and he particularly enjoyed assaulting slow bowlers.

Parramatta District Cricket Club 1st Grade player number: **461**.

In 1996/97 he showed his adaptability, when after persistent issues with groin injuries he completely changed his game, and converted to bowling slow leg-spinners for the remainder of his career. This conversion proved to be a very successful transition, and he claimed many wickets for Parramatta and later the Hawkesbury club with his big spinning 'leggies'.

Craig experienced a meteoric rise through the grades at the Parramatta club. After debuting in 4th grade in the 1985/86 season as 17-year-old fledgling all-rounder his genuine pace '*caught the eye*' of club officials (always searching for likely pace spearheads) and with only a handful of 3rd and 4th grade games he was elevated to 1st grade – complementing another fast-bowling colt Neil Jones in forming a very lively and promising new ball partnership which assisted the 1sts to qualify for the Semi-Finals. The then 1st Grade captain Bob Aitken in the Annual Report penned this comment on Craig: "*A rare gem, opening bowler, top order bat, good fielder (17-years-old) promoted on potential alone and proved the point he could go all the way*".

Between 1985/86 and 1997/98 he etched out a highly rewarding career in 1st grade at Parramatta, claiming **309 wickets @ 23.84** and making **2,145 runs @ 16.01** (including 8 half-centuries, the best being 80 v. Randwick). In all Craig seized **12 x 5 wicket** hauls whilst bowling for the two-blues – the best being **6/32** v. Wests - 1985/86, **6/67** v. N. D's – 1988/89, **6/28** v. Balmain – 1989/90, **6/40** v. Penrith -1990/91.

His best season's performance with the ball was 1995/96 when he hit his peak with 39 wickets @ 18.05, but perhaps his most satisfactory season occurred in 1993/94 when his lethal opening partnership with Neil Jones was one of the major forces that projected Parramatta into the 1st grade premiership Grand Final against a star-studded Bankstown team.

At various stages Craig caught the eye of the representative selectors, and it was most probably his injury-plagued disruptions that prevented him from playing first-class cricket, nether-the-less he represented the **NSW Under19** State team in the 1986/87 season and the **NSW Colts** in 1989/90.

A mark of his playing success as a member of the Parramatta club can be gauged by the fact that he won the club's coveted '**Cricketer of the Year**' (Bill Anderson Memorial Trophy) on **three** occasions (second only to Michael A. Wood) – 1992/93, 1995/96 and 1997/98.

In 1995/96 and 1996/97 Craig had the honour of captaining the Parramatta District Cricket Club's 1st eleven.

His playing days with Parramatta were rounded-off with an outstanding all-round season in 2nd grade in 1997/98 – he was most unlucky to be graded in the 2nds, but with a luxury of class spinners at the club, off-spinners Greg Davidson and Robbie Aitken (jnr.) were selected in 1st grade ahead of him. Craig put his disappointment aside and rattled off **601 runs @ 37.54** – highlighted by blockbusting **162** against Manly at Manly Oval and his leg-breaks grabbed **31 wickets @ 26.06**.

After departing Parramatta, he continued to play 1st grade for the Hawkesbury club where he claimed another 120 1st grade wickets.

His playing statistics for Parramatta District Cricket Club were:

Grade	Runs	Highest Score	Average	Wickets	Average
Poidevin-Gray	227	49	25.22	19	20.42
4th Grade	41	27	10.25	7	10.57
3rd Grade	141	53	28.20	8	18.63
2nd Grade	671	162	30.50	41	25.88
<b>1st Grade</b>	<b>2,145</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>16.01</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>23.64</b>
<b>Total Club</b>	<b>3,225</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>18.13</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>23.54</b>



**[By Tom Wood – Parramatta District Cricket Club Historian]**