

Parramatta District Cricket Club

'The Sweeper' - Wilfrid Ewens

(By Tom Wood – Club Historian)

Originally from Blacktown Wilfrid Ewens was yet another young cricketer to come to Cumberland from the Parramatta High School nursery – he started his journey with the Cumberland in A.W. Green Shield team in 1946/47.



1948/49 4th Grade captain Bill Irwin had this to say about the young Wilf in the Annual Report – *“An excellent prospect with the bat; in him Cumberland appear to have unearthed a young player of exceptional promise. Has any amount of confidence. He was promoted to 3rd grade mid-way through the season.”*

Also an A Grade Tennis player, the right-handed Wilf possessed nibble footwork and his repertoire contained a fine array of strokes – his sweeping of spinners was peerless – with excellent cricket savvy and a sound temperament he was able to read and adapt his batting to the mood of the game - be it bold stroke-play or fighting doggedly on a ‘sticky wicket’ to resurrect a floundering innings.

Like a lot of young players, after making his 1st grade debut in 1949/50 Wilf couldn’t establish a secure spot in the top grade, until after being re-instated to 1sts late in 1951/52 when he scored a stylish 108 v. Manly – the confidence he gained from this innings became the platform for an outstanding career throughout the remainder of the 1950s. Indeed 1951/52 was a real landmark year for him, his

potential vividly highlighted by the making of four centuries during the season – 122 in 2nd grade, 108 in 1st grade, 118 & 101* in the Poidevin-Gray Shield – his P. G’s average being a Bradman-like 145.50.

For the decade concluding with the 1959/60 season Wilf proved to be Cumberland’s most consistent and bankable batsman - yet another ‘Cumbo’ desperately unlucky in the eyes of many grade cricket pundits not to have been selected to play Sheffield Shield cricket. He led the club’s 1950s 1st grade run scorers with **3,791** – ahead of such Cumberland notables as Bert Alderson 2,898, Wally Cornock 2,888, Richie Benaud 2,303 and Ron James 2,219. His best season was recorded in 1956/57 when he compiled **665** runs @ **60.50**, and he also exceeded the coveted ‘500 runs’ milestone in 1955/56 (529) and 1959/60 (531), a fine effort in an era of uncovered pitches – topped the 1st grade batting aggregate on five occasions.

In all grades Wilfred compiled **10 centuries** for the club [1st grade 6, 2nd grade 1, 3rd grade 1 & P. G’s 3]. Probably his most memorable batting performance was against Northern Districts at Waitara Oval in 1959, in a Cumberland total of 168 runs Wilf made a wonderful 101 not out. To compliment his batting ability, he was also a gifted fieldsman, especially ‘close to the wicket’ where he snared some amazing catches off State leg-spinner Jack Treanor in his total of 68 1st grade catches.

Always ready to speak up Wilf also applied his energies towards the administration of the club and was well known for debating his points of view, and an extract from Cumberland’s 1957/58 Annual Report lends a hint to this – *“Long been an active member of the Committee of management and meetings were frequently enlivened by his pungent, but always constructive comments.”*

In his last couple of seasons Wilf was making the long trek from Bathurst on Friday nights to play for Cumberland each Saturday, and after the 1960/61 season he left the Sydney grade cricket scene to further his career as an educator in Bathurst. After moving back to Sydney prior to the start of the 1969/70 season and desiring to have a ‘last hurrah’ with his old club – he was still a good enough batsman at 40-years-of-age to be selected straight back into the 1st grade team – scoring 275 runs @ 27.50 from the middle order, because of the strength of the team’s early order batting that season he his opportunities were restricted but his experience and advice was of great benefit to the younger players in the team and assisted Cumberland to win the minor premiership.