

Parramatta District Cricket Club

Raymond Curtis Rowe – The Gentleman

[By Tom Wood – Club Historian]



R. R. ROWE

Ray Rowe won universal recognition as a ‘cricketing gentleman’ who played the game with a strong sense of fair play and respect for its traditions. He was a dyed-in-the wool Parramatta Man from the tip of his ‘bumble-bee’ cap to studs on his boots – born in Harris Park on the 9th of December 1913, educated at Parramatta High School and lived most of his life in Northmead

A modest and friendly man he was widely respected for his outstanding cricket talent, his personal demeanour and his dedicated service to the Central Cumberland District Cricket Club. Firstly, as a brilliant attacking batsman, and later as a committed Administrator – which was evidenced by his long tenure as Club President (1962/63 – 1968/69) and Treasurer (1956/57 – 1967/68), for a significant portion of this time he managed these important portfolios concurrently. He was honoured with **Life Membership** of the Club.

On the playing fields he forged a notable career for Cumberland at grade level and was good enough to represent New South Wales in the first-class arena in the era of Don Bradman. On the 1st Grade stage Ray sat comfortably placed amongst the best batsman of his time – a dashing left-handed stroke-player, possessing robust power for a relatively slight man, acclaimed for his quick footwork he was

not afraid to punch the ball, pulling and hooking to telling effect - but his ‘signature shot’ was the classic off-drive.

Rowe also contributed some handy Left-arm orthodox spinners when required by his team and was an energetic and talented fieldsman. In 1935/36 he was appointed 1st Grade captain at the tender age of 23 years.

During his prolific grade career with Central Cumberland, spanning over 30 years (1931/32 – 194/65, missing 1943/44 and 1944/45 due to Army service in World War II), he became the **first player** to compile **10,000** runs for the club. His complete playing statistics are listed as follows:

Grade	Runs	Highest Score	Average	Wickets	Average
1st Grade	7,194	121	33.30	37	31.18
2nd Grade	3,114	141	34.30		
Total	10,308	141	33.69		

In total he made **16 centuries** in grade cricket [**12 in 1st grade, 4 in 2nd grade**] and added **3** more in the Poidevin-Gray Shield competition. When you factor in, that all his cricket was played on uncovered pitches Rowe’s batting returns are most impressive and signify that this elegant left-hander was an all-time Cumberland great.

One of the proudest of Rowe’s achievements the key role he played as a batsman, in Cumberland’s second **1st Grade Premiership** win in the **1932/33** season – he topped the batting aggregate and averages with **534 runs @ 33.37**, narrowly beating great batting cohort Jack Fitzpatrick (533 @ 31.35) These two highly different styled players, Fitzgerald the classic tough right-handed opener and Rowe the aggressive Left-hander were the backbone of Cumberland’s batting for a decade.

On entering the Cumberland ranks in the 1931/32 season, whilst still a school student, Ray was immediately picked in 1st Grade. After an initial hesitant start in the senior grade he blossomed and considerably raised his profile within the cricketing fraternity with a splendid century against Northern Districts – *“Ray Rowe, the Cumberland colt, with 101 against Northern Districts, picked up form with a vengeance. He hit 15 fours and got them in under 2 hours”* – (“Not Out” in The Referee 13/1/1932).

His performances in his initial 1st grade season, coupled with brilliant batting in the Poidevin-Gray Shield where he made 120 vs. Western Suburbs, 109* vs. St. George and 100* vs. Randwick, raised the interest of the State Selection panel and Rowe was chosen as **12th man** in the last match of the 1931/32 **Sheffield Shield** season against South Australia – a remarkable honour for a 17-year-old just completing his very first season of Sydney Grade cricket.

Continued solid grade form led to Ray Rowe finally making his First-class playing debut, and it was against Douglas Jardine’s all conquering famous **‘Bodyline’ team** of 1932/33. WHAT a DEBUT it WAS – in front of a large S.C.G. crowd, with NSW floundering after the early dismissal of Test stars Fingleton, Bradman and Kippax, the young Rowe

rose to the occasion and combined with another young colt Bill Brown (future Test Opener) in an exhilarating fifth wicket partnership of 101. Rowe contributed a stimulating **70 runs** in just **92 minutes** to register his team's top-score.

Like several of his Cumberland predecessors (e.g. Farquhar, Pye, Cranney, Leabeater) Ray Rowe, despite the undoubted talent, encouraging starts to representative cricket and continued excellence in 1st Grade, didn't fully realize their potential at First-class level. Playing 15 matches for NSW between 1932/33 – 1933/34 he produced a credible 411 runs @ 34.25. Unfortunately, perseverance and encouragement by the State Selectors didn't appear to be allotted to players from the Parramatta based club.

Ray Rowe and some of his best 'Cumbo' mates – Lloyd Cadden, Lou Benaud, Jack Deeth, Jack Fitzpatrick and Mark Bosley, represented a special brigade who enhanced the traditions of the grand old club, which started with Doctor Pringle, W.A. Brodie, Syd Walford, F.A. Iredale and was carried forward by Les Pye, the Waddy brothers and the illustrious Cranney clan.

Still very much a Parramatta resident, Ray passed away in May, 1995 at 82 years of age.

Pictured below Ray Rowe sits on a seat accompanied by two of his greatest cricketing mates – Lou Benaud and Lloyd Cadden -

