

Len Leabeater – A Gifted Opener

Len Leabeater was a true Parramatta product – born on 10th July 1906 at Parramatta, educated at Parramatta High School, he died on 1st June 1996 at Port Macquarie. He gave away cricket at the early age of 29 years to focus on his Accountancy career.



A brilliant schoolboy cricketer and soccer player (NSW rep.), he later became a regular 1st grade Soccer player with the famous Granville Magpies team. He commenced playing for Central Cumberland in 3rd grade in **1921/22** and showed great promise as 16-year-old opening batsman. Len made his 1st grade debut in **1922/23** and played a handful of games in that grade in the 1925/26 season with moderate success, finally he cemented a permanent place in 1926/27 and continued to produce a range of great exploits until his premature retirement in **1934/35**. In all grades for Cumberland Len scored **4,432 runs @ 33.07 – 1st grade 3,824 @ 35.40**.

Leabeater was a stylish right-handed opening batsman, possessing a copybook defence and a wide array of punchy attacking shots which he played with frequency and ease. For Cumberland he was prolific in the days of uncovered wickets, he had an abundant period between 1929/30 and 1933/34 aggregating - **705, 548, 625 and 662**. He possessed the ability to amass large scores and made six centuries in 1st grade, the high points being **214** v. Paddington in 1934 and **175 *** v. Petersham – sharing a **273** runs 2nd wicket partnership with Jack Fitzpatrick. His older brother Charlie, an Australian Soccer International, was a leading Cumberland all-rounder and for many years a 1st grade teammate of Len's.

Len Leabeater was yet another Cumberland batsman who despite performing consistently and productively each year in the Sydney 1st grade competition, wasn't afforded an extended trial at first-class level. In Len's case this only amounted to four matches, despite his scoring a brilliant **128** in 1930 on debut against Tasmania and in total he made **315 runs @ 45.00** in a short first-class career span from **1930** to **1931/32**. It is interesting to read newspaper reports on his debut performance:

"He is an accomplished batsman, a stylist with sound defence. Some of his forcing shots when playing back were effected with exceptional strength. His footwork is excellent." (Sydney Morning Herald 24/2/1930).

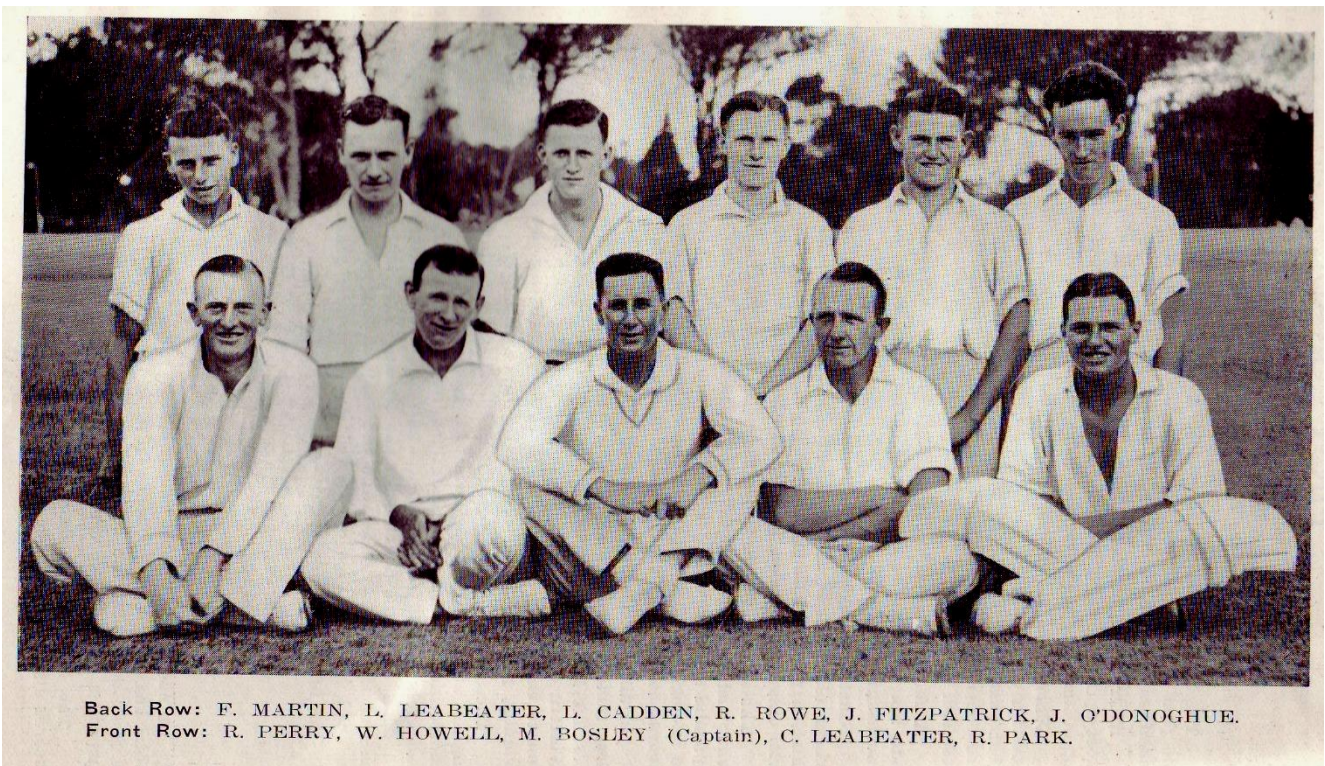
"L. Leabeater, in his first big match, adventurous, then subdued, and finally aggressive, but never a streak between wickets." "Leabeater joined the ever-growing band of batsmen to make a century in their first interstate match. He will remember it for the gruelling heat. A well-knit, sturdy young fellow, he has come on well this season." (Not Out in The Referee 26/2/1930).

Leabeater also represented NSW in both Colts and 2nd X1 matches at various points in his career.

- How's this for Dedication:

In his memoirs former Cumberland & NSW Opening batsman **Len Leabeater** described how in the early 1930s, he, Ray Rowe and a few other First Grade players arranged with the Cumberland Oval caretaker to use a practice wicket for additional training. A direct quote from Len's document – *“on Friday mornings we arose at 5.00am and practiced to 7.00am, hurried home, running most of the way, showered, dressed, quick breakfast, and in my case never missed the 8.20am train to Sydney for work”*.

Len Leabeater was a member of the Central Cumberland First Grade Premiership winning team in 1932/33.



[By Tom Wood – Parramatta District Cricket Club History]