

## Parramatta District Cricket Club - Lou Benaud 'The Teacher'



Louis Richard Benaud was born at Coraki, Northern NSW on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1904 and died at North Parramatta on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1994.

Lou achieved the persona of a cricketing sage within the Central Cumberland club. Quiet and gentlemanly, he deeply cared about the ethics and traditions of the game he loved and endeavoured to play and coach with the '*Spirit of cricket*' in mind. His knowledge and philosophies on the game are probably best illustrated by the way they contributed to the development of his sons Richie and John - both dynamic attacking cricketers – both representing Australia in Test cricket.

He first came to notice in 1923/24 whilst still a pupil at Parramatta High School, when he performed an incredible bowling feat with his right-arm leg-spinners. Marysepean River Association match Lou playing for the Penrith Waratahs against St. Marys, captured all **Twenty of the St. Marys wickets in the match - 10/30 (including a hat-trick)** in the first innings and then **10/35** in the second. On the back of this sensational effort and his previous season's High School performances Cumberland officials sought out Lou, and he decided to join the club in **1924/25**. Taking 22 wickets @ 23.00 in 2nd grade and making his 1st grade debut in the last match of the season at the hallowed Sydney Cricket Ground.

However, at this point Lou's Sydney grade dreams were paused for a dozen years whilst he pursued his livelihood as a School Teacher. The Department of Education posted him to a variety of NSW country districts over this time (eg. North Casino, Koorawatha and Jugiong), and in those days leading up to the Great Depression era teachers went where they were placed. He was still able to satisfy his appetite for cricket by playing in the local country competitions.

Fate in the person of former Cumberland player H.W. 'Banner' Edwards stepped in. The then Principal of Burnside Public School he assisted in getting Lou to transfer from Jugiong to Burnside in August 1937. The Benaud family then took up residence in North Parramatta and Lou resumed playing for Central Cumberland in the 1937/38 season.

This second phase of his career extended from **1937/38** through to **1955/56**. His cagey, thoughtful leg-spinners that were delivered with a round-arm flourish and extracted plenty of turn plundered a rich harvest of wickets. In **all grades** he snared **594 wickets @ 19.52**. His bowling feats were highly impressive:

- The **fourth** Cumberland player at that time to capture 300 wickets in 1st Grade – (the others were Les Pye, Rupert Coogan and Marc Bosley). He ended with **360 wickets @ 20.85** in 1st grade for Cumberland.

- Captured **5 wickets** or more in an innings **20** times in 1st grade and a total **38** times for the club.
- In the **1942/43** season set a **club record** for the most wickets in a season **78** (32 in 1st grade and 46 in 2nd grade).
- **1939/40** – **52** wickets @ 19.92 and **1947/48** – **54** wickets @ 14.30 in 1st Grade.
- Best bowling in 1st grade – **7/35** vs. St. George **1947/48**.

1946/47 was a momentous season for Lou he was joined in 1st grade by his son Richie (a future Test captain).

As a batsman he best fitted the useful, determined fighter category and put together plenty of handy scores whilst compiling **2,554** runs in all grades for the club. He was part of a unique batting performance in 1952/53. Richie won the 1st grade batting average with 196 runs @ 49.00 and Lou replicated this by taking out the 2nd grade averages with identical figures 196 runs @ 49.00.

On several occasions Lou filled-in as 1st grade captain, and between 1951 and 1954 he was skipper of the 2nd grade team.

Like a lot of committed clubmen of his generation, who participated in assisting the club in vital administration roles, Lou Benaud served Cumberland in a variety of spheres. He served for several years on various club selection and grading panels, was a member of the Management Committee from 1945/46 to 1964/65 and undertook two stints as Manager / Coach of the A.W. Green Shield team – 1945/46 to 1947/48 and 1958/59 to 1963/64.

Belatedly in 2010 Lou Benaud was awarded posthumously **Life Membership** of the Parramatta District Cricket Club, an honour he so richly deserved as a reward for the great service he afforded the club.

My favourite personal Lou Benaud story relates to 1982, when John had come back to captain Parramatta's 1st grade team. I was a member of that team and had been playing 1st grade for many years at this point. Well, Mr. Benaud as I'd always called him from my A.W. Green Shield days, used to sit quietly by himself at the Northern end of Old Kings Oval watching the game. I wandered up to sit down and talk to him. He asked me how I was going, I said I'm getting old, I'm now 34 and I'm thinking of retiring – *Lou said, "nonsense son, you've got years and years ahead of you – I was 34 years when started regularly playing 1st grade."* – (T. Wood).

**Lou Benaud's career statistics with Cumberland were:**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Highest Score</b>	<b>Runs</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Wickets</b>	<b>Runs</b>
<b>1st</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>1,257</b>	<b>12.09</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>20.85</b>
2nd	54*	963	16.09	164	18.84
3rd	59	334	14.52	70	14.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>2,554</b>	<b>13.66</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>19.52</b>

(By Tom Wood – Parramatta District Cricket Club – Historian)