

Parramatta District Cricket Club Icon - Robert 'Bobby' Aitken

(By Tom Wood – Club Historian)

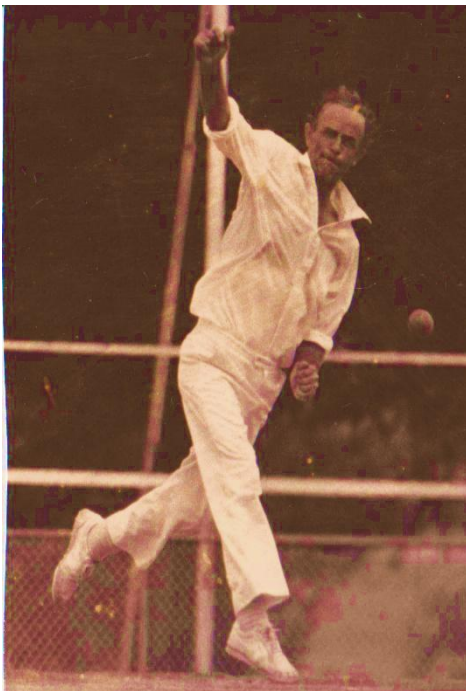


Off-spinning allrounder Bobby 'RA' Aitken was a gifted cricketer.

Between 1960 and 1988 'RA' was one of the most well-known players on the Sydney First grade cricket stage – punctuating 26 seasons at Parramatta with a 2-season stint at the Sydney club. Throughout that period, he proved himself to be an outstanding player, but also won a reputation as a cantankerous, fierce and ultra-competitive opponent, especially when he had his fingers wrapped around a cricket ball plotting the downfall of the bloke holding the bat at the other end of the pitch.

He was an authentic all-rounder endowed with a high level of skill in each department of the game – foremost being his crafty off-spin bowling that combined variety, guile and snappy spin to harvest wickets in abundance – whilst his batting at its peak was not text book in style but it was punishing and aggressive and could quickly alter the course of a game – as befits a long-term baseballer his fielding was sharp and alert especially in 'close to the wicket' positions.

At the Parramatta (Cumberland) club Bobby ranks alongside the wonderful off-spinners who featured for 'two-blues' over the course of the club's long history – Internationals W.P. Howell and Gervys Hazlitt, and NSW rep W.H. Howell. RA holds pride of place as the **club's highest First grade wicket-taker** with a remarkable **715** wickets.



His association with the Parramatta started in 1955/56 where he emerged as a bowler of great promise in the A.W. Green Shield team after snaring **21** wickets @ **6.57**. He started his great career in earnest in 4th grade in 1956/57 and finally retired in 1988/89 – making his First grade debut in 1960/61.

During this long career his wicket-taking deeds were quite amazing – in **all grades** for PDCC he amassed **943** wickets + **23** Rothmans KO wickets, plus a further **74** wickets for the Sydney Club – a total of **1,036 grade** wickets all up. In **First grade** for PDCC he captured **715 wickets @ 23.07** – including **33** 'Five Wicket Bags' with a Best Bowled of 7/30 v. Sydney 1973/74. On five occasions he topped 40 wickets in a season – best 49 in 1973/74.

In all grades for PDCC 'RA' smashed 7,609 runs – including 104* v. Bankstown in 3rd grade in 1960/61 (his only century). In First grade for the club his run total stood @ **5,484 @ 19.50** (H.S. – 98) with 16 half-centuries, he also struck another 422 runs in Rothman KO matches – his all-round performances made him one of only four players to have

completed the **'300+ wickets and 5,000+ runs in First grade double'** for Parramatta, the others being Les Pye, Richie Benaud and Michael Wood.

Bob was a key player in the club's strong 1960s teams, and played alongside older brother John 'JA' Aitken in the 1964/65 First Grade Premiership winning team:

- 1964/65 Premiers – 306 runs @ 61.20 and 20 wickets @ 17.60; 1965/66 Runners-up – 44 wickets @ 19.17; and 1969/70 Minor Premiers and Runners-up – 45 wickets @ 15.78.

Along with 'JA' he was selected in the Parramatta District Cricket Club's **Team of the 1960s**. Many observers believe Bobby Aitken was most unfortunate not to have ever been selected for NSW.

The *'apple doesn't fall far from the tree'* as demonstrated by Bob's three sons Robbie, James and Glenn who over many seasons with the North Sydney club have proved to be outstanding first grade cricketers.

