

Arthur Howell – A Bowling Allrounder

Arthur Howell was the 'black sheep' of the Howell clan that played so successfully for Cumberland, his father Test player W.P. Howell and two brothers, State player W.H. Howell and Norman were all off-spinners, he broke the mould being a fast-medium bowler.



Arthur crafted a magnificent playing career with Central Cumberland as a bowling all-rounder and across all grades he plundered a remarkable **706 wickets @ 18.97** to reign as the Club's second highest wicket-taker (Bob Aitken holds the top slot), and he complemented these efforts with a handy **3,969 runs @ 14.23** (best – **101** in 2nd grade). His lengthy engagement with Cumberland extended from **1933/34** to **1956/57**.

Befitting his farming upbringing he was a tall, deep-chested and powerfully built individual who delivered the ball at a lively pace, and obtained good bounce, whilst as batsman he was a dangerous operator always keen to despatch the ball to the distant boundaries. The club's annual reports are dotted

with tales of his big-hitting exploits.

As a 1st grader Arthur met with plenty of success and his fast bowling claimed **198 wickets @ 26.05** – his best return being 29 wickets @ 26.14 in 1943/44. He appeared in 1st grade right up to 1950/51, but the bulk of his top-grade cricket was played by 1946/47. As a new ball bowler Howell toiled away, and his endeavours yielded some splendid 'moments in the sun'. Evidenced by wicket hauls over the years of **5/32**, **6/52**, **5/54**, **5/56** and best of **7/47** v. Paddington in 1943/44, a nice note on this performance which typifies reports on Arthur appeared in a local newspaper: *"After delivering a load of peaches, Arthur Howell "stepped off" at Parramatta oval and took 7/47 in a first-grade comeback against Paddington. Howell, a wholesale fruiterer, who owns a farm at Emu Plains, parked his lorry outside the ground, under the supervision of the gatekeeper, while he dismissed Paddington's strong batting line-up"*.

His dangerous, robust hitting was always very handy to the team down-the-order, and he contributed **1448 runs @ 14.06** – all in an entertaining 'no nonsense manner', with his standout performance being a swashbuckling 96 in a mere 39 minutes v. Gordon in 1943/44 (6x6, 11x4) – this innings rescued Cumberland from the jaws of defeat, going in at 7/101 he added 137 runs with Doug Kennedy to guide his team to victory.

1943/44 was indeed a signature year for Arthur because he claimed a mammoth **70 wickets @ 16.20** (29 in 1st grade and 41 in 2nd grade).

In the lower grades his wicket-taking performances were prolific – **400 @ 16.15** in **2nd grade**, **90 @ 16.20** in 3rd grade, and **18 @ 17.61** in 4th grade. After the first flush of youth faded Arthur reduced his pace and became a crafty exponent of medium-pace, which enabled him to enjoy such longevity in his career. In his later seasons he captained the 3rds in 1955/56 and the 4ths for half a season in 1956/57 prior to relocating to Darwin in his employment.

The 2nd grade stage probably witnessed most of Arthur's paramount performances with ball and bat. High spots were 1943/44 as referred to above; **43 wickets @ 14.07** in 1948/49 that included a spectacular all-round effort against Paddington when he snared **7/36** and backed it with his maiden grade century (**101**), sharing a 10th wicket partnership of 122 with Doug Kennedy; in 1951/52 he

performed the rare feat of securing **61 wickets @ 18.21** with two wonderful bowling efforts the highlights: **6/21** v. Glebe (including **4 –in – 4 balls**), and the routing of Manly with **7/33 & 6/35**.

In 1953/54 he dropped back to 3rd grade to pass on his experience to the club's rising young players and in the process enjoyed himself against Paddington by grabbing **5/12**, and hammering Gordon's attack to the tune of **78** runs in a blistering **20** minute assault – 1954/55 saw him take **6/50** in the Semi-Final against Wests, and in his final full season with the club in 1955/56 he was still able to snatch **7/32** v. St. George and **5/27** v. Randwick.

Tales are still told today of Arthur's legendary trips across Sydney to games when he often ferried young team-mates on the back of his flattop fruit truck, with them clinging on for life as he swerved around corners or came to a jolting halt.

Perhaps the 1st grade captain's comments in the 1946/47 Annual Report are the best closing remark on this fine Cumberland player – *“In spite of the fact that this player travels further than any other member of the side, he was the only one to play every match. No cricketer gets more pleasure out of his game than Arthur”*.

(By Tom Wood – Parramatta District Cricket Club Historian)