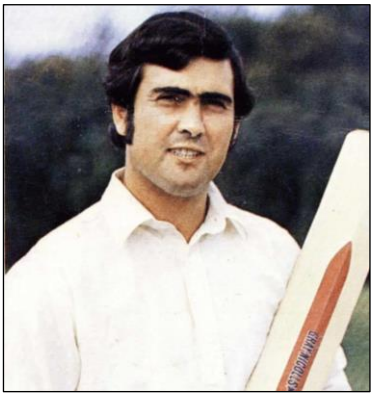
# Alan Turner



Alan Turner was Randwick's first home-grown Australian Test cricketer. Although Randwick had been around since 1900, it wasn't until 1975 when Alan made his Test debut against England at Edgbaston, a couple of weeks before his 25th birthday that a local cricketer made the big-time. That was the first of 14 Tests Alan was to play for a return of 768 runs at an average of 29.53 including a top score of 136.

Alan Turner was born at Camperdown on 23 July 1950. Having played A W Green Shield for Waverley, it was fortuitous for Randwick that Alan's parents moved house to Little Bay where the Randwick Boys High pupil gravitated to the local cricketing ranks. His first season in 1966-67 was spent in 3rd Grade where the left-hand opener topped the batting with 470 runs including 116 against Manly in just his fourth game. His effort helped the side make the Grand Final that season. Soon after he toured South Africa with the Australian Schoolboys.

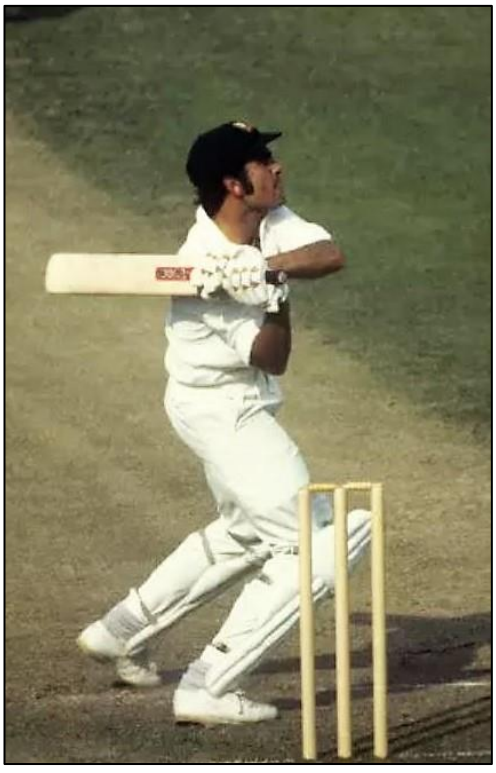
After a brief stint in 2nd Grade the next summer, Turner made his 1st Grade debut and the following season, after a dashing 100* against Balmain at Coogee, the 18 year old was selected for his first Sheffield Shield match. That occasion was the first of 76 appearances "Fitter'n", as he is affectionately known, made for his State over a 10 year playing span. He was also a club hero that season scoring 97 in the Poidevin-Gray Grand Final to enable Randwick to win the competition.

In his first match for NSW playing Victoria at the SCG on 25 January 1969, Alan turned up ready to play but did not own a pair of batting pads. He quickly discovered that in first-class cricket the leg guards didn't come with the ground as they did in Sydney Grade Cricket. Fortunately, he was able to borrow 12th man Col Blackman's gear and went out and made 12 and 89 wearing the "twelfthie's" pads! After his good performance he soon had a cricket gear contract.

Over the seasons which followed, Turner was a consistent run-getter at all levels of cricket. For NSW, he scored 579 Sheffield Shield runs in 1969-70 which included eight 50s in eight matches. He made 65 and 73 against Western Australia and 54 and 55 playing South Australia. And he came close to that elusive century in 1970-71 when dismissed for 97 playing Queensland in Sydney.

Turner made up for that near-miss the following season when he made a second innings 110 against Queensland at the SCG and followed up a few weeks later in Perth with 127 against Western Australia. Alan's form in that match was such that Test stars Dennis Lillee finished with 0-119, Bob Massie 2-106 and Graham McKenzie 2-105. Another century followed in 1973-74, again against Queensland with an even 100 at the 'Gabba.

During the course of his first-class performances, Alan regularly turned out with Randwick. He made 500 for the season in 1968-69 with 476 in 1970-71 and 406 in 1974-75. That latter season he hit his second 1st Grade century when he scored a slashing 115 against Cumberland in a one-day match at Merrylands Oval.



With the inaugural World Cup cricket series programmed as a prelude to the 1975 Ashes tour of England, Alan received the call-up. And he didn't disappoint, hitting 156 against Kent in his initial first-class match in England before recording the first century in World Cup cricket when he smashed 101 before lunch against Sri Lanka at The Oval. He also hit 110* against Essex in a later tour match at Chelmsford.

While he went on to play in three of the four subsequent Ashes Tests, it wasn't until the Fifth Test the following summer in Adelaide that he hit a Test century. On that occasion, he peeled of a mighty 136 against the likes of Andy Roberts, Michael Holding and Lance Gibbs, three of the West Indies greatest bowlers. It was a dream come true for a player whose penchant for the hook shot and natural aggression made him a crowd favourite.

In 1976-77, Turner played three Tests against Pakistan and two on the following tour of New Zealand. In the first against Pakistan in Adelaide on Christmas Eve, Alan and fast bowler Jeff Thomson were involved in an on-field collision. Trying to take a catch off his bowling, Thomson crashed into Turner at short mid-on dislocating his right collarbone. The injury put Thomson out for the season.

After being dazed, Alan recovered and two days later on Boxing Day, opened the innings making 33 before being caught by Zaheer Abbas off Imran Khan. He made 48 in the second innings of the drawn match. Unfortunately, after that series he was omitted for the historic Centenary Test in Melbourne in favour of South Australian David Hookes who had hit five successive centuries in Shield cricket.

Turner also missed selection on the subsequent 1977 Ashes tour. It was on that tour when the "World Series Cricket secret deals" with players by Channel 9s Kerry Packer, were hatched. With the number of player defections, Alan was expected to be a leading contender for the ACB Test Series which would be played in direct competition to the World Series matches staged throughout the 1977-78 season. However, a loss of form saw Alan struggle for runs and he was left out of the First Test against the touring Indians in Brisbane in December 1977.

With a young family and a business career set to take off, later that 1977-78 season, Alan announced his retirement from first-class cricket at the relatively young age of 27. He did so with a record of 5,744 runs from 105 first-class matches with seven centuries and 31 fifties. His highest score was 156. For Australia his 14 Test matches produced 768 runs while his six One-Day Internationals resulted in 247. For NSW he scored 4,171 runs in 76 first-class matches including four centuries and 27 half-centuries. He also rattled up 624 runs in 21 domestic limited overs matches for NSW. A brilliant fielder, he held 80 catches.

And while his premature retirement may have been a blow to cricket at the senior level, it turned out to be a boon for Randwick with the elegant left-hander putting all his efforts into raising the faltering profile of his club. Taking over the 1st Grade captaincy that season, Alan led the team to Randwick's first premiership in 26 years when it went through the competition undefeated. The knock-on effect through the grades also gave the club its first Club Championship since 1944-45.

The following season Alan Turner became Sydney's youngest President when he took over from the retiring Bill Beath before the club chalked up another three 1st Grade premierships in the space of just five years with him a key figure in those successes. His undefeated 230* in the 1979-80 Grand Final against Penrith at Howell Oval with 39 fours and a six, was the highest 1st Grade score in the history of Randwick cricket. And in a memorable moment for Alan and the club, Jack Chegwyn, who made a record 201* in 1941-42, made the trip to Penrith to be the first to congratulate the new record holder as he came off the field.

In 1981-82, Alan stepped down from the Randwick captaincy in favour of the outstanding all-rounder Gary Bensley. The "passing of the guard" was very timely as Bensley, with Turner at his shoulder, led his charges to Randwick's fourth 1st Grade premiership. Alan headed the batting averages that season with 408 runs at 51 which included a brilliant 120* against Mosman at Mosman in just 101 minutes with 16 fours and five towering sixes. He and Alan Campbell put on 106 in an hour for the fifth wicket.

A serious knee injury and increasing business commitments allowed Turner to play just seven matches in 1982-83 and at the end of the season he announced his retirement as a player. In doing so, he brought to an end a 20 years Randwick Cricket playing career which produced 6,087 Grade Cricket runs including 5,369 in 1st Grade with a double century, five centuries and a huge 34 half-centuries. With his Poidevin-Gray runs, his figures totalled 6,372 runs. He held 86 catches and amazingly, for a player of such long standing, he took just one wicket when he bowled Waverley's Dave Gibson in 1975-76!

Despite hanging up his boots, Alan Turner was far from finished with cricket and continued to make a valued contribution to the administration of the game. He remained Randwick President for 10 years and served lengthy terms as a member of the NSW Cricket Board and the SCG Trust. Awarded life membership of Randwick in 1983, that honour was similarly bestowed by the NSW Cricket Association in 1997 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the game at club, State and National levels.

These days, Alan is Joint Patron of Randwick Petersham Cricket with Robin Gardner. His involvement is of great value as he remains one of the most outstanding player/administrators this club and its predecessors have produced. Content to knock the little white ball around the Australian Golf Course of a Saturday morning, the father of three and grandfather of three is entitled to enjoy his cricket retirement with wife Carolyn and his family in the knowledge that the game has been far the better for his contribution.

***Australian World Cup and Ashes Tour team of 1975. Alan Turner is on the right of the front row.***