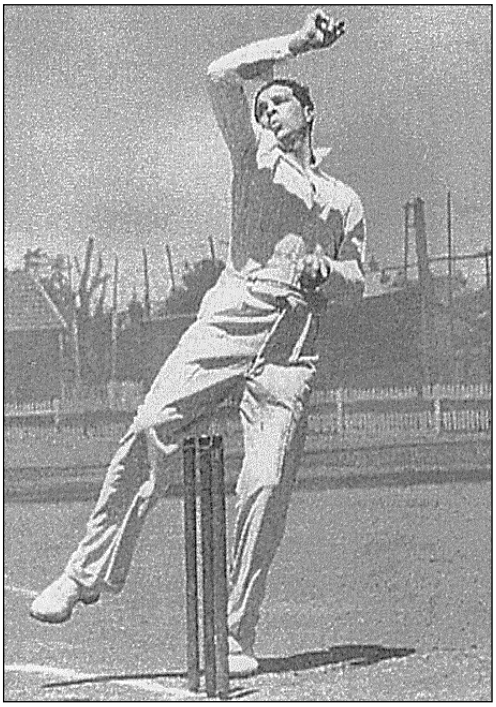
Ernie Toshack
1914-2003



Ernie Toshack, a member of Don Bradman's 1948 "Invincibles", holds a special place in the history of Randwick Petersham Cricket. Not because of his first-class and Test cricket on-field exploits, but because he is the only cricketer to have played first-class cricket while a member of the three clubs behind Randwick Petersham – Petersham, Marrickville and Randwick.

Ernest Raymond Herbert Toshack was born in Cobar, NSW, on 8 December 1914 and played most of his cricket in the bush, first at Cowra and later at Lithgow. Although he batted right-hand, he bowled left-arm medium and spin. When he was 29 he ventured to Sydney to play Grade Cricket. Surprisingly, his first choice club Petersham couldn't find a spot for him and it was Marrickville where Ernie made his Grade debut – in 3rd Grade. In the only match he played in that grade, he took 10 wickets (6-40 and 4-16) against Glebe. Promoted to 2nd Grade he took 9-94 in his only game and was immediately promoted to 1st Grade where he took 7-35 in a losing 1st Grade match against University. His 6-22 to dismiss Manly for just 59 however, resulted in a resounding win for his team.

After taking 7-60 against Glebe in the first round of 1945-46 and 5-82 v Petersham shortly after, Ernie made the NSW side where he opened the bowling with champion fast bowler Ray Lindwall. His progress was dynamic and he made his Test Match debut that same season against New Zealand in Wellington where he took 4-12 and 2-6.

Petersham soon discovered the error of their ways and invited Ernie to join their ranks which he did in 1946-47. That season he played against England at Brisbane and returned match figures of 9-99, twice gaining the wicket of the great Wally Hammond. The following season he played for Australia against India and had the remarkable figures of 5-2 from 19 balls in the first innings and 6-29 in the second—match figures of 11-31. His first innings performance remains the record for taking five wickets in the least number of balls. Interestingly Australia's Shane Watson almost surpassed Ernie's great performance when he took five wickets in 21 balls against South Africa in the First Test on the 2011 tour.

It was no surprise that Ernie Toshack was selected in Bradman's 1948 Australian team "The Invincibles" to tour England. He took 50 wickets at 21.12 on the tour including 11 in Tests with best figures of 5-40 in the Lord's Test. Prior to the Fifth Test, Ernie's left knee, which had troubled him for most of his career, finally gave out and brought to an end his time as an Australian cricketer. Despite his somewhat short career, Ernie was a true "Invincible" in that he never played in a losing Australian team. Interestingly, the 1948 touring team included Marrickville wicket-keeper Ron Saggers and former Marrickville batsman Bill Brown.

The following summer Ernie joined Randwick after he opened a smallgoods business at Kingsford. Ernie won the bowling average in the first of his two seasons with the 'Wicks. He played two first-class matches in 1949-50 while he was with Randwick. The second of those was his 48th first-class match and his last when he took 4-68 against Western Australia in a Sheffield Shield match at the SCG. In his first-class career he played seven matches while with Marrickville, 39 when a member of Petersham with the final two, as mentioned above, played during his time with Randwick.

Ernie Toshack was a unique cricketer. He was one of a rare breed, a left-arm bowler who batted right-handed. He regularly opened the bowling for NSW with Ray Lindwall and after the ball had worn, would revert to spin with uncanny accuracy and variety. Whether bowling pace or spin, he used the same eight paces run up. Toshack took 59 wickets for Marrickville, 31 for Petersham and 27 for Randwick. In first-class cricket he took 242 wickets including 47 in 12 Tests for Australia. He was a member of Marrickville when he played his first Test and was with Petersham in the remaining 11. He died on 11 May 2003 in a nursing home at Bobbin Head aged 88.

Because of his unequalled association with Randwick Petersham Cricket, the Management Committee of the club saw fit to honour his memory with the introduction of a special annual award. The award is known as the Ernie Toshack Memorial Award and is presented each year to a person who the Management Committee determines has made a significant contribution to the club, either directly or indirectly through the founding clubs over an extended period of time. Club "legends" Phil Tresidder and Noel Hughes jointly were named as the first winners in 2003.