Ron Saggers
1917-87

Ron Saggers could be regarded as Marrickville DCC greatest cricketer. An excellent batsman and wicket-keeper of exceptional skill he played for Australia, NSW and Marrickville with outstanding success. He was also a member of Don Bradman's famous "Invincibles" team to England in 1948.

While he was a classy batsman, it was his polish as a wicket-keeper with an amazing ability to effect stumpings which was on regular display during his international playing career between 1939 and 1951. Sagger's record shows that of his 221 first-class career dismissals, no less than an amazing 75…or 34%…were stumped.

An unusually tall and lean individual for a wicket-keeper, the youngster worked hard on his game and could be found standing behind the stumps in the Marrickville practice nets for hours on end perfecting his skills. Apart from being a brilliant gloveman, he was an excellent batsman and for the past almost 80 years has remained one of the top 10 season run scorers in Sydney 1st Grade cricket after hitting 1,150 runs in the 1941-42 season.

Ronald Arthur Saggers was born at Sydenham on 15 May 1917 and joined the Marrickville club in 1932-33 playing in 3rd Grade, "A" Shires and the premiership-winning Poidevin Gray under 21 years team. Two years later, aged just 17, the promising youngster progressed through 3rds to 2nd Grade before winning a place in the 1st Grade team where he was to remain for the rest of his playing career. In 1936-37 he was appointed captain of the Poidevin Gray team which went through the competition undefeated to take the premiership.

While his wicket-keeping was always of the highest standard he only began to make his mark as a batsman in 1937-38 when he hit his first century for the club, 104* against Cumberland while leading the Poidevin Gray Shield team which again won the competition undefeated. He was the competition's leading batsman with 456 runs at the outstanding average of 91.20. Both records remained in place for the life of the club.

By 1938-39 Ron's batting and wicket-keeping talents were recognised by the State selectors and he represented NSW in the Colts and Second XI teams. The following season he made his Sheffield Shield debut against South Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground as a specialist batsman making 45 and 57 of the 1,888 runs he went on to make in first-class cricket.

Taking over the wicket-keeping duties in 1940-41 for the first time at the senior level, Ron tasted instant success by equalling the world record of seven dismissals in an innings (all caught) against a Combined Queensland team in Brisbane. His three dismissals in the first innings gave him 10 for the match.

With only one first-class match played in 1941-42 due to World War II, Ron starred in Grade Cricket equalling the then highest run aggregate in a season of 1,150 which had been set by the Petersham Test batsman Tommy Andrews in 1929-30. In his mammoth total, the 24 year old Saggers hit scores of 154 (v Manly), 150 (v Balmain), 118 (v Paddington), 111 (v University), 88, 84, 78, 64 and 50. Behind the stumps he caught 18 and stumped 11.

In the years which followed Ron led Marrickville to its first and only 1st Grade premiership in 1943-44, continued as a regular member of the NSW side and in 1947-48 had the distinction of being appointed NSW captain. To cap off an outstanding year, he was selected as reserve 'keeper behind Don Tallon in Don Bradman's 1948 "Invincibles" touring team to England. With Tallon suffering an injury prior to the 4th Test of that series, Ron made his Australian debut at Headingly, Leeds, celebrating with the wicket of Denis Compton caught for 23 off Ray Lindwall. This was also the match in which Neil Harvey made his Test debut.

In 1949-50, Ron was again selected as deputy to Don Tallon for the tour of South Africa but when Tallon withdrew before the ship sailed, Saggers was installed as the No.1 wicket-keeper. Ron 'kept in each of the five Tests in South Africa recording 21 dismissals including six stumpings off leg-spinner Colin McCool.

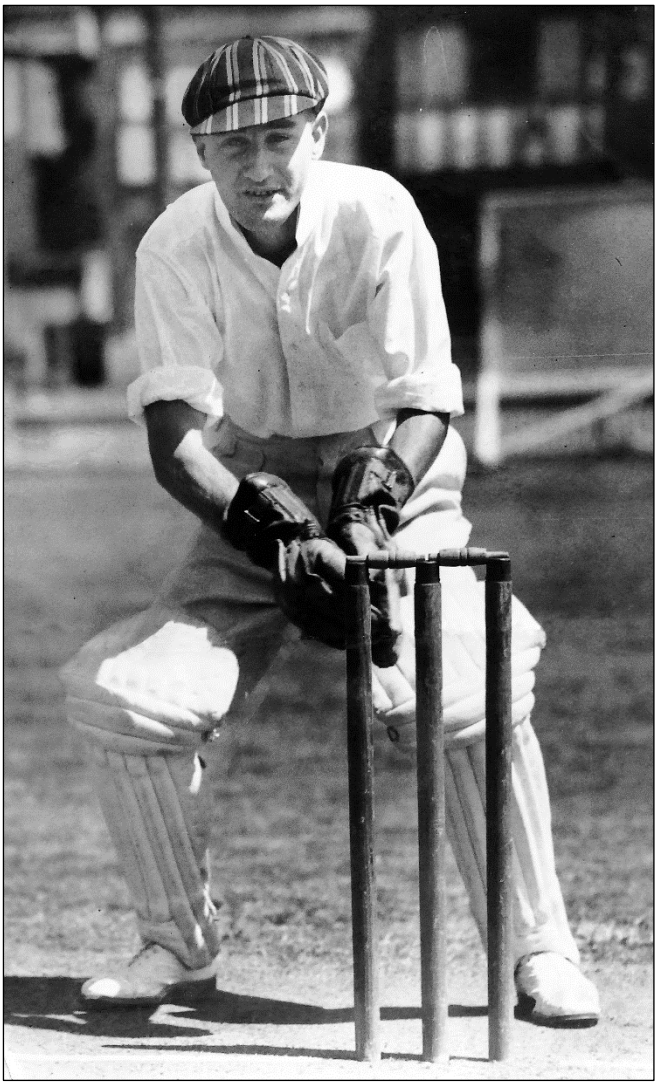
In 1950-51, a knee injury brought a premature end to an outstanding career which included a five years stint as Marrickville Delegate to the NSW Cricket Association between 1945 and 1950. In 149 1st Grade matches over a period of 16 seasons between 1934 and 1951 with Marrickville, Ron Saggers scored 5,644 runs including 10 centuries and 29 fifties. Adding his lower grade scores his total is 6,061. His score of 154 in 1941-42 remained his best. Unfortunately, wicket-keeping statistics were not kept each year and his record behind the stumps is therefore not available. Statistics were however maintained in eight of his 16 1st Grade seasons and they show a total of 190 dismissals of which 123 were caught and 67 stumped. One season which was recorded was the premiership season of 1943-44 in which he caught 21 and stumped five for a final tally of 26.

Ron Saggers also played five seasons of under 21 years Poidevin Gray cricket winning three premierships. In the two seasons he captained the side the premiership wins were with undefeated sides. He scored 940 runs with two centuries in that competition. He also scored 290 in his two Shires seasons as a youngster. All up, for Marrickville in all competitions, Ron Saggers totalled 7,291 runs with 12 centuries at the healthy average of 32.84. Clearly a wonderful cricketer.

When Marrickville merged with Petersham prior to the 1951-52 season, Ron qualified for Manly by moving house to Harbord. However, he played just two matches for his new club when a recurrence of his knee injury brought about his retirement from the game.

One of the State's most outstanding wicket-keeper/batsmen, Ronald Arthur Saggers died at Harbord on 17 March 1987 aged 69.

Ron Saggers the batsman



Ron Saggers the wicket-keeper