



PHILPOTT Peter Ian, OAM (Peter, "Percy") 1934- At Shore 1961-1973 (Master)

NSW 1955-1967, Australia 1965-1966

Wrist-spinner, batsman, brilliant slips/gully fielder

First-class career. 76 matches: 2886 runs (31.36), 4 centuries; 245 wickets (30.31); 55 catches

Test career. 8 matches; 93 runs (10.33), 26 wickets (38.46); 5 catches.

Peter Philpott's name is still recalled with gratitude and affection in Lancashire, especially in the neighbourhoods of Ramsbottom and Rossall School. He was the overseas professional whose 1069 runs and 82 wickets took Ramsbottom to second place in the Lancashire League in 1960. He was coach at Rossall School in more recent years, and left behind him there memories of a great teacher and a good friend to many boys and staff. His career as a player, and as a teacher and coach in Australia and all round the world, is one of a distinction matched by very few, even though his Test career was relatively short. It was only right and proper that his contribution to education, cricket, and to the community at large, was recognised in 2004 by the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia.

A wrist-spinning all-rounder, Peter's career overlapped with that of Richie Benaud, and so he did not receive the recognition which his all-round abilities undoubtedly merited. Despite a congenital heart condition, he was an outstanding cricketer. He played First Grade for Manly aged 15, and at 16 was one of the youngest players ever selected for the State practice squad. In 1955 he played his first Shield matches, and scored 71 and 39 against Queensland in his debut. For a few seasons, Shield cricket took second place to his teaching career and to his time as a professional in England as described above. In 1963 he announced his retirement, but he was soon back in the game. At Sydney in January 1964, captaining NSW against Queensland, he made his highest score, 156, and followed it up with five wickets in the match. Later that month, against Victoria, he took 3/45 and 7/71, to lead NSW to a six-wicket victory. In November 1964, he scored 125 (batting at No.3) and took 6/65, against Western

Australia. In January that season he took 4/45 and 3/32 against South Australia. Unsurprisingly, Peter was selected in the Australian side to tour the West Indies in 1965. On this tour he took 49 wickets, including 18 in Tests, making him by far the leading wicket-taker. With his second ball in Test cricket he secured the wicket of none other than Conrad Hunte. The tour was a great success for Peter, although we have to note that the West Indies won the series.

England were the visitors in 1965-66, and having taken 3 admittedly rather expensive wickets against the tourists, Peter was selected for the first Test. He took 5/90 in the first innings, including Boycott and Edrich, two of the most highly regarded England batsmen. He seemed set for another good series, but injury and some loss of form meant that the third Test was his last.

In the 1966-67 season, Peter enjoyed several successful matches. Against Queensland in Brisbane he scored 78 and took 5/94. At Perth, against Western Australia, he took 7/83 and 4/68 to assist New South Wales to victory in a close match. At Adelaide he scored 119 not out, going in when NSW were 209 behind with five wickets down, and secured a first innings win. At the end of the season, chosen to tour New Zealand in one of two Australian sides to tour that year, he enjoyed fair success without achieving the heights of his West Indies tour. And so his first-class playing career came to an end. He continued to play for Manly for several seasons, but coaching became his major contribution to cricket. In 1971-72, he was coach of the Champion Shore First XI; his side, containing five players who played First Grade for their clubs after leaving school, and one who played for the State, won every match. He was widely considered to be the best coach in Australia, and went, as assistant manager to England with the 1981 side. He has written coaching books, and has been in demand all over the world for the unique style, and infinite wisdom, with which he imparted his cricket knowledge.

Picture a Level 2 cricket coaching course at the Sports Academy at Narrabeen. The would-be coaches, schoolboys, there to provide the coaches with someone to coach, are expectant, as are their parents, interested to discover what insights will be revealed by the morning's teacher. Into the middle of the group comes Peter Philpott. He nominates one boy to assist him. He starts with both in a kneeling position some 10 metres apart, as he explains and demonstrates how one bowls the different types of delivery. The distance between him and his assistant increases, until the two are 20 metres apart. Peter then bowls each of the deliveries he has been explaining, each on a perfect length, and leaves the scene to a standing ovation. Such a complex art, explained in such simple terms, yet without talking down to anyone. One can understand why Peter ("Percy") Philpott has been described as "a born communicator".