

Gary Gilmour



<https://www.cricknet.com.au/news/gary-gilmour-passes-away-aged-62/2014-06-10>

Gary Gilmour's all-round capabilities as a genuine strike bowler and a fearless striker of the ball meant he provided a template for the limited-overs player of the future, albeit with an approach to the game that was firmly steeped in the past.

Gilmour, who died today aged 62 after a long battle with illness that included a liver transplant in 2005, played just 15 Tests and even fewer one-day internationals but his place within Australian cricket folklore remains indelibly writ.

That is due largely to his remarkable performance in a semi-final of the game's first World Cup in which he captured 6-14 from 12 consecutive overs (in a 60-over game) of unplayable left-arm swing and then rescued his team with a typically belligerent, unbeaten 28 batting at number eight.

"Nobody had more talent than that bloke – as much as Garry Sobers," Greg Chappell said of his former teammate in the early 1980s.

Australia was on the brink of humiliation at 6-39 on that day when the free-swinging Gilmour came to the crease, but with Doug Walters (20no) he saw his team across the line.

"Sometimes 28 is worth a century," Chappell said.

In 2002, Wisden rated that bowling spell against England, under heavy skies and on a seaming pitch at Headingley, as the greatest in the history of one-day internationals.

The fact that it was Gilmour's first match of that tournament, in a team that also featured Dennis Lillee, Jeff Thomson and Max Walker, was even more remarkable and it lifted Australia into the historic first final which they ultimately lost to the West Indies.

Such was Gilmour's mercurial talent, combined with sometimes fragile self-confidence, a less-than-Spartan approach to training and a debilitating foot injury, he played only one more one-day international after that final.

However, his limited overs record of 16 career wickets at an average of 10.31 hinted at what might have been, and would be envy of many a contemporary white-ball cricketer.

It was his World Cup performance that ensured the laconic lad from Newcastle became a local crowd favourite, an appeal that grew into something of a cult following when he joined the cream of the game in signing with World Series Cricket two years later.

When once asked how best to bowl at the hard-hitting former West Indian captain Clive Lloyd, Gilmour famously suggested “with a helmet on”.

He was also an early member of the ‘promising allrounder’s club’ to have been heralded as the next in Australia’s proud lineage that had previously produced the likes of Keith Miller and Alan Davidson.

Due to their not dissimilar left-arm bowling styles, Gilmour was tagged ‘the next Davidson’ seemingly from the time he scored 122 in his maiden Sheffield Shield outing for New South Wales against South Australia in the summer of 1971-72.

It was the first of 42 matches for the Blues.

Like Davidson, Gilmour was essentially a bowling allrounder and with limited-overs cricket in its infancy before its vast potential was realised by Kerry Packer, his more productive field was the Test arena.

He announced himself with a half-century and four wickets on debut against New Zealand in 1973-74 at the MCG.

But even though his late swing was well suited to English conditions, he played just one Test there – again at Leeds, during Australia’s 1975 tour in a match best remembered for the fact it was abandoned when the pitch was vandalised on the fourth evening.

By that stage, Gilmour had captured nine wickets in the match as Australia eyed a famous victory.

He went on to collect 54 Test wickets at 26.03 and scored 483 runs at 23 with a highest score of 101 (including 86 scored in boundaries) against New Zealand in Christchurch in 1977.

That innings, which came off 146 balls, was part of a 217-run stand with Walters that took just 187 minutes and which remains the Australian record for the highest seventh-wicket partnership in Tests.

However, his career was probably best encapsulated during the 1975-76 homes series against the West Indies when, in sight of his first Test century having reached 95 from 94 balls he attempted to reach the milestone by smashing spinner Lance Gibbs over the long-off fence.

Even a batsman of Gilmour's immense power and gifted timing would struggle to clear the long boundaries at Adelaide prior to the introduction of perimeter ropes, and he was caught by Michael Holding just inside the fence.

"I couldn't play under today's conditions, what with the travelling and training and scientific aspects," Gilmour once said.

"It's not a sport anymore, it's like going to work.

"You know how some mornings you get up and don't want to go to work - that's how I'd feel playing cricket these days.

"I'd clock on for a sickie."

The foot injury restricted his involvement in the historic Centenary Test of 1977, which was his final appearance for Australia as he joined so many of his team-mates from that match who joined the World Series revolution.

Following that sojourn, during which he was immortalised in the 'C'mon Aussie C'mon' jingle – "Gilmour's wielding willow like an axe" – he moved back to his home town of Newcastle.

As his health began to suffer, the cricket community rallied around him to help raise money for the cost of treatment associated with his liver transplant.

Many of those former friends and team-mates paid tribute to Gilmour today, including Cricket New South Wales Chairman John Warn who noted that his passing would be felt deeply in the cricket world and beyond.

"Gary's passing is a great loss for Australian cricket and on behalf of my fellow directors, the staff of New South Wales cricket and the wider cricketing community our deepest sympathies are offered to his wife Helen and immediate family," Warn said.

"Gary was a well loved and respected member of the New South Wales Blues and his contribution to cricket within the State was immense.

"He was a man who enjoyed the challenge of competition and never gave anything less than 100 per cent when it came to representing his home State.

"He will be sadly missed."

CA Chief Executive Office James Sutherland also weighed in with a touching tribute.

"Gary was a captivating talent and one of the best swing bowlers our country has seen," Sutherland said. "Gary had the rare ability to single-handedly turn a game and his memory will live on in Australian cricket.

“Anyone who witnessed Gary in full flight during the 1970s will remember fondly the way he ripped through batting line-ups with his swing bowling.

“Our heartfelt condolences go out to Gary’s family and friends.”

Australia coach Darren Lehmann released a statement on behalf of the national side.

“On behalf of the Australian cricket team, I take this opportunity to pass on our condolences to the Gilmour family following the passing of Gary earlier today,” Lehmann said.

“Gary was a decorated player for Australia and New South Wales and will certainly be sorely missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Gilmour family during this difficult time.”

Gilmour passed away at the RPA Hospital in Sydney, and is survived by his wife Helen, daughter Brooke Drelincourt and sons Ben and Sam.