Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2530

Wilson, Rebecca (Betty)

(1921 - 2010)

Born	19211121, Collingwood Victoria Australia
Died	20100122
Occupation	Cricketer, Sportswoman

Summary

Betty Wilson was the first test cricketer, male or female, to complete the match double of 100 runs and ten wickets in a test match.

Details

The daughter of a Hoddle Street, Collingwood, bootmaker, Betty Wilson was a talented, natural athlete who could ‘run like a hare’. She began playing club cricket at the age of ten when, after impressing with her ability to return the ball from the boundary, she was recruited from the crowd to play for the Collingwood Women’s Cricket Club. In her first season, she was voted the club’s ‘most improved player’. Some members of the local community were concerned about her safety, as a child playing amongst adults, especially after she was hit by a ball while batting. Her parents, however, continued to support her involvement, confident that a player with her natural ability would learn from the experience. ‘She has been hit once….she won’t be hit again’, they said.

Timing mitigated against Wilson enjoying an extensive international career. She only played eleven tests because the Second World War prevented her from playing internationally before 1948. She made the most of her opportunities in those eleven tests, however, amassing 862 runs at an average of 57.47, putting her on a par with the current Australian Captain, Ricky Ponting (as of August 2006 it was 58.86) and ahead of a previous Australian test captain Greg Chappell (53.86). Her bowling figures were equally, if not more impressive; in that period she took 68 wickets for an average of 11.81 (in August 2006, Australian champion bowler, Shane Warne, had an average of 25.25). In one match against England, in 1958, she created a record for the number of wickets in an innings (she took 7 for 7 runs). In this match, she was the first test cricketer, male or female, to complete the match double of 100 runs and ten wickets in a test match.

Betty Wilson was successful because she had natural talent and worked hard to exploit it. She trained everyday, unlike most of her team mates, who trained once a week. She left nothing to chance; she even starched her hat so it wouldn’t flop around while she batted. In an age of amateurs, she was ahead of her time in terms of the professional approach she took to her preparation.

In honour of her significant achievements and contributions to women’s cricket, Betty Wilson was admitted to the Australian Sporting Hall of Fame in 1985, the first women’s cricketer to be so honoured. In 2006, she was the first Australian women to be awarded Honorary Membership of the Melbourne Cricket Club. Her name is memorialized in the trophy that Australian Under 21 women cricketers compete for, the Betty Wilson Shield.

Published resources

Book
Wicket Women: Cricket and Women in Australia, Cashman, Richard and Weaver, Amanda, 1991

Site Exhibition
She's Game: Women Making Australian Sporting History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2007, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/sg/sport-home.html

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Article
Women's cricketing great dead at 88, Cooper, Adam, http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-sport/womens-cricketing-great-dead-at-88-20100123-mrf0.html

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection
Betty Wilson interviewed by Nicola Henningham [sound recording]

Author Details
Nikki Henningham

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