

= Jack Marsh =

Jack Marsh (c . 1874 ? 25 May 1916) was an Australian first @-@ class cricketer of Australian Aboriginal descent who represented New South Wales in six matches from 1900 ? 01 to 1902 ? 03 . A right @-@ arm fast bowler of extreme pace , Marsh was blessed with high athletic qualities and was regarded as one of the outstanding talents of his era . His career was curtailed by continual controversy surrounding the legality of his bowling action ; he was no @-@ balled multiple times for throwing . As a result of the debate over the legitimacy of his action , Marsh never established himself at first @-@ class level and was overlooked for national selection . In contemporary discourse , Marsh 's lack of opportunities has often been attributed to racial discrimination .

Born into the Bundjalung people at Yulgilbar on the Clarence River in northern New South Wales , Marsh first made an impression as a professional runner , travelling to Sydney and then competing interstate , winning races as a sprinter and a hurdler . While in Sydney , Marsh began competing in the local club cricket competition and his action quickly came under scrutiny . He was first no @-@ balled for throwing in 1897 , but it was not until 1900 that he came to prominence in a trial match against the New South Wales state team . Marsh dismissed leading Test cricketers Victor Trumper and Monty Noble , but was called for throwing . Marsh vowed to prove the legitimacy of his action by bowling with his arm encased in splints , which prompted the umpire to resign in humiliation . Having topped the bowling averages in the local competition , Marsh was selected to make his debut in the Sheffield Shield . He made an immediate impression and led the first @-@ class bowling averages for the season after three matches . He was no @-@ balled in his second match by Bob Crockett , but things came to a head in his fourth match when the same umpire no @-@ balled him seventeen times , leading to angry crowd demonstrations . The cricket community was divided on whether Marsh 's action was fair and various theories were propounded , which sought to show a motive for foul play against Marsh . The most popular of these theories was that Marsh was scapegoated in a campaign against throwing and was a soft target because of his race .

Marsh only played in two more first @-@ class matches , which came in the two seasons following his no @-@ balling . In a later season , the touring England cricket team objected to his selection in an opposition team . There were calls for Marsh to be selected for Australia , but Noble , the New South Wales selector , refused to select him , citing his controversial action . In later years , Marsh turned to alcohol and was briefly jailed for assault . He was killed in a brawl outside a pub ; two men were charged with manslaughter but were acquitted .

= = Early years = =

Marsh was born into the Bundjalung people at Yulgilbar , which sits on the Clarence River in northern New South Wales . His surname is believed to have possibly derived from that of Francis Henry Marsh , whose property Camira was separated from Yulgilbar by the Richmond Range . Details of Marsh 's itinerant pre @-@ cricket life are scarce , because Aborigines were not on the electoral roll and Marsh had no written correspondence with others because he was illiterate .

Marsh made his first impression in the sporting arena as a professional runner , following his brother Larry to the Sydney athletics tracks in 1893 . A sprinter and hurdler , Marsh had several wins in notable races . He was known for his rapid acceleration , which accounted for him being particularly strong over 75 yd . Aside from his victories in New South Wales , he travelled to race in Queensland and Victoria . As with some other Indigenous runners , Marsh was exploited by his trainer and was suspended for " running stiff " in Sydney in 1895 . A more recent study by Max Bonnell has come to the conclusion that Marsh was a world @-@ class sprinter . He found that The Referee , the leading sports publication in Australia at the time , reported that Marsh had covered 100 yd in 9 @.@ 8 s , which was equal to the amateur world record set by American John Owen in 1890 . Marsh had also posted a time of 9 @.@ 9 s in the previous year . Eight years later a publication briefly noted that Marsh 's time was an Australian record .

Marsh also gained prominence in the inner @-@ southern Sydney suburb of La Perouse , which had a large Indigenous population , by demonstrating his boomerang skills . Marsh , while throwing

boomerangs , was spotted by cricket officials and he was persuaded to take up the sport .

= = Club cricket = =

Marsh began playing cricket in a competition based around Moore Park , near central Sydney , representing South Sydney . Marsh 's career was surrounded by controversy from the outset . In November 1897 , he was no @-@ balled for throwing by William Curran in a match against Paddington . Following its merger with South Sydney , Marsh played for Sydney Cricket Club . Marsh 's second no @-@ ball incident at club level came when he played for a Colts XV against the New South Wales state team in a trial match in November 1900 , before the start of the 1900 ? 01 Sheffield Shield season . Curran called him on the first day of the match . Marsh had an eventful day , bowling Test batsmen Victor Trumper , Frank Iredale and future Test player Bert Hopkins . Trumper was widely regarded as the finest batsman of his era , which was regarded as the " golden age " of cricket , and he was seen as one of the most stylish batsmen of all time . Marsh also collected the wickets of Test batsmen and future Australian captains Monty Noble and Syd Gregory .

The calls of throwing so infuriated Marsh that at the end of the day 's play , he announced that he would wear splints when he was bowling the next day . Marsh took this action to ensure that his elbow was kept straight and to demonstrate that he could bowl fast without throwing . Marsh had previously performed such an exhibition to ground members and the requisite splints and bandages were acquired from the nearby St. Vincent 's Hospital , in order to bind his bowling arm . The hospital provided a medical certificate stating that Marsh could not move his elbow while encased in the splints . Marsh was proactive in attempting to defend the legitimacy of his bowling action . Marsh 's intentions were published in the Sydney Morning Herald and Curran was made aware that Marsh would seek to challenge him .

Marsh and his club sought a speedy resolution to the problem because Sheffield Shield matches were due to begin in a matter of weeks . They perceived a danger that other umpires in the Sydney competition would follow Curran 's lead and call Marsh , effectively outlawing him , resulting in the loss of the club 's leading strike bowler . By wearing the splints , Marsh showed his belief that Curran would call him on the second day . This never happened , because Curran withdrew from his position by the luncheon adjournment on the second day , believing that he had been humiliated . Curran 's resignation was widely criticised by the media and he was reprimanded by the First Grade Committee for his action . Bowling " as fast as ever " , Marsh went on to finish with 6 / 125 from 33 overs as New South Wales were bowled out for 320 .

= = First @-@ class debut = =

Marsh made his first @-@ class debut when he was selected for the New South Wales team to play South Australia at the Adelaide Oval in December 1900 , just a month after he was no @-@ balled for throwing . The selection indicated that the state selectors were prepared to overrule Curran 's judgment . In a high scoring match , Marsh was the most successful of the New South Wales bowlers , taking five wickets for the loss of 181 runs (5 / 181) . Clem Hill scored 365 not out , which remains the highest individual score compiled at the Adelaide Oval in a Sheffield Shield match . At the time , South Australia 's total of 575 was the highest ever score against New South Wales in the competition . Marsh took two early wickets to have South Australia 2 / 43 before Hill amassed his triple @-@ century . He returned to take three of the last four wickets , displaying an ability to break through the defences of batsmen ? all of his wickets were bowled .

A week later , Marsh 's action was again under scrutiny when he played his second shield match against Victoria in Melbourne . While Richard Callaway ? the New South Wales umpire officiating the match ? was satisfied with Marsh 's bowling action , his Victorian counterpart Bob Crockett was concerned with the twisting of the bowler 's wrist . Crockett no @-@ balled Marsh three times in the match , but was reluctant to elucidate on the reasons for his call . Marsh took 3 / 39 and 3 / 51 respectively , dismissing Test batsmen Peter McAlister , Warwick Armstrong , Jack Worrall and

Frank Laver . Marsh bowled three of his victims .

According to cricket historian Bernard Whimpress , the early signs of a conspiracy against Marsh were raised by a journalist from The Age of Melbourne by the name of Old Boy . The journalist set a possible agenda by raising a question about Marsh to Crockett on the day before the bowler was called , possibly predisposing the umpire to take action . If Old Boy could be relied on , then observers suspected that Marsh 's faster and slower ball were dubious . The reporter did not specify which ball he questioned , except to say that one ball per over was doubtful . The events in Australia occurred against a backdrop of a throwing frenzy in England . A fortnight earlier , the captains of the English county teams had drawn up a list of prohibited bowlers . In Australia , Jim Phillips had set the tone by no @-@ balling Australian Test bowler Ernie Jones . The events in England were seen as a catalyst for a clean @-@ up campaign against dubious bowling actions . Historians regarded Marsh as a prime target due to his Indigenous heritage and his supple wrist action .

Marsh 's third Sheffield Shield match was the return fixture against South Australia in January 1901 at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) ; New South Wales reversed the result of the corresponding match three weeks earlier . South Australia batted first and were bowled out for 157 , with Marsh taking the leading figures of 5 / 34 . These included the prize wickets of Hill and George Giffen , Test players who went on to be inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame . New South Wales then piled on 918 before completing an innings victory by bowling the visitors out for 156 in the second innings . The margin of an innings and 605 runs set a new record for the largest victory in first @-@ class history . Marsh took 5 / 59 and did the bulk of the damage , removing five of South Australia 's top six specialist batsmen , at one stage reducing the visitors to 6 / 114 . Marsh bowled six of his opponents and was not questioned by either umpire . At this point , Marsh led the first @-@ class averages in bowling , with 21 wickets at a bowling average of 17 @.@ 38 in three matches . The match was Marsh 's career high point ; it was to be the only ten @-@ wicket match of his brief career .

The controversy over Marsh 's bowling action came to a head in the return match against Victoria at the SCG . The fixture had been slated for the Australia Day weekend but it was postponed by a week when Queen Victoria died . By the time the match was under way , public interest had started to wane . Some three decades later , J. C. Davis reflected on the match , noting that it stirred many memories , " some fragrant and some rather unpleasant " . The unsavoury incident that he alluded to was Crockett 's continual no @-@ balling of Marsh for throwing .

New South Wales batted first and were bowled out on the first afternoon for 170 . When the Victorians began their response , Crockett called Marsh for throwing three times in his first over , provoking rowdy responses from the spectators . The Sydney Mail said the crowd reaction was " a lot of abuse and unfair criticism " of Crockett . He was no @-@ balled a further two times in his second over and five of Victoria 's first nine runs were extras . Despite this , Victoria started poorly , losing five wickets by the time it reached 50 runs . Of the five wickets to fall , Marsh bowled future Test captain Armstrong and McAlister . The crowd showed its sympathy for Marsh when he rattled Armstrong 's stumps ; they cheered him loudly and verbally attacked Crockett . Marsh was called a total of 17 times during the innings , the most in a single first @-@ class innings in Australia . The calls produced angry reactions from the spectators on the hill of the Sydney Cricket Ground , who jeered " Crock ! Crock ! Crock ! " , regarding the umpire ? not the bowler 's arm ? as being crooked . Marsh went on to take 2 / 68 . At one point Marsh lost his temper and deliberately threw three consecutive balls . Despite the repeated calls , the captain Syd Gregory kept Marsh bowling from Crockett 's end ? who was suspected of being biased towards his own state ? rather than allowing Marsh to be examined by Crockett 's partner .

= = Reaction to Crockett = =

Crockett 's calls provoked a varied response from the media , which often ran counter to their state allegiances . The New South Wales journalist Davis felt that Marsh 's deliberate throws raised " uncertainty " , while the Australasian 's cricket writer Tom Horan ? a Victorian who went by the pen name Felix ? felt that Marsh was a soft target for Crockett , whom he regarded as a suspicious

character . Curran 's previous calling of Marsh in the Sydney competition had strengthened Crockett 's position away from his parochial state base . The Victorian umpire was regarded as a tough @-@ minded umpire , much like Jim Phillips , who had triggered the current round of throwing calls in Australian cricket . Crockett was commended for his willingness to call Marsh in the face of public anger and for doing what others would not . When Marsh bowled from the other end in the second innings of the match , his action was deemed by Crockett 's umpiring partner Sammy Jones to be fair . By this time , Marsh 's confidence was low . He took his worst ever first @-@ class figures of 1 / 105 as New South Wales lost by one wicket . His only wicket was Test player Charlie McLeod , bowled for six .

Whimpress tabled various hypotheses for Crockett 's actions . At the time , Crockett was 37 years old and was ready to emerge from the shadow of Phillips , the eminent Australian umpire of the time . When Crockett called Marsh , it was his 29th match as a first @-@ class umpire and the no @-@ balling was seen in some quarters as a signal that he felt ready to officiate in Test matches . A cynical view of Crockett 's calls held that if throwing was to be eradicated then the umpire was going to choose a soft target . This theory ruled out the calling of a fellow Victorian , his state of origin . The same line of reasoning concluded that a New South Welshman would be called , and likely not a high profile Test player like Noble or Jack Saunders . Those who adhered to this hypothesis believed that it would be easier for Crockett to target someone who had a previous stigma of throwing and that Marsh ? an aborigine who led the bowling averages with 21 wickets at 17 @.@ 38 ? was an ideal target .

At the time , the alteration to the no @-@ ball law made by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) in 1899 was yet to be implemented in Australian first @-@ class cricket . This change allowed the umpire to call a throw from either end , whereas the law previously barred the umpire at square leg from doing so . The non @-@ implementation of the law diluted the power of Australian umpires , since the bowler could be switched to the other end and made immune from being called by the first umpire . As a result , Gregory 's unwillingness to switch Marsh to the opposite end surprised cricket observers . Australian administrators had been under pressure from England to crack down on dubious bowling actions . English captain Archie MacLaren had asserted that " If Australia expects an English team next September they will have to play according to the new reading of the law at home " . It was speculated that because Crockett was a lifelong employee of the Melbourne Cricket Club , which organised and sponsored English tours to Australia , he was under pressure to no @-@ ball bowlers in order to curry favour with English administrators .

= = Incidents against England = =

The controversy over Marsh 's bowling action again reared its head during the 1901 ? 02 season , when MacLaren led his English tourists to Australia . The English played in a match at Bathurst where Marsh was selected , but MacLaren refused to play against him . Noble , who selected the New South Wales teams , used the complaints about Marsh to ignore growing calls to have the bowler selected for New South Wales and Australia . Without state backing , the remainder of Australia 's selectors were happy to rely on Noble 's state @-@ level veto to ignore Marsh . Marsh 's only first @-@ class match of the season was against Queensland in Brisbane . At the time , Queensland was not yet in the Sheffield Shield , so it was a one @-@ off match . The match was the subject of much media attention because it was the first time that two aborigines had played in opposing teams at first @-@ class level . Queensland 's Indigenous player was Alec Henry , another fast bowler who had been accused of throwing . The New South Wales team travelled north to the match by train , making a stop at Ipswich . As part of the media promotion of the match @-@ up between the pair , Henry was taken to Ipswich station to meet Marsh . Marsh was reported in the media as having said " Say old man , toss me up a soft one so I can get a smack at you " . Marsh took 2 / 64 and 3 / 67 in a drawn match , and bowled three of his victims , who were unable to cope with his pace . Marsh and Henry dismissed one another , each being bowled for nine to create a symmetry in the scorecard .

Marsh was again overlooked for selection during the 1902 ? 03 Sheffield Shield season . He played

his only first @-@ class match of the season against Queensland , in another one @-@ off match . In the last first @-@ class fixture of his career , Marsh scored his highest first @-@ class score of nine not out as New South Wales were bowled out for 191 . He then took 2 / 39 in the first innings as New South Wales took a 60 @-@ run first innings lead . He finished his career with 3 / 23 in the second innings , including a final burst of 3 / 0 , to help his team to a victory . Later in the season , Marsh played in a match for New South Wales against Australia , which was not first @-@ class . He took the wicket of Clem Hill as the match ended in a draw .

Marsh was never selected again , although he continued to dominate grade cricket . He was the leading wicket @-@ taker for three consecutive seasons from 1901 ? 02 to 1903 ? 04 , taking a total of 158 wickets at an average of 10 @.@ 94 .

Two years later against Plum Warner 's MCC team , there were further calls for Marsh to be selected for the Test team as Australia fell 1 ? 2 behind in the Ashes . Marsh had taken 5 / 55 against the Englishmen in a match at Bathurst , delivering a mixture of fast bowling and off spin . His victims included George Hirst and Warner himself . No formal complaint about Marsh 's bowling was lodged by the English but his bowling did raise eyebrows . The general consensus among the English touring party was that Marsh 's bowling was unfair , with Warner describing him as a " shier " , a 19th @-@ century term for a thrower . Warner asserted that no English umpire would tolerate such a bowling action . Despite this , the English players described him as the best bowler that they had faced on the tour . Warner and Noble were confident that Crockett would no @-@ ball Marsh out of the match if the Australian Test selectors picked the bowler . As a result , Marsh was effectively excluded from the Australian side and his first @-@ class career was limited to just six matches in which he took 34 wickets at an average of 21 @.@ 47 . The Australian Test batsman and captain Warren Bardsley rated Marsh alongside Fred Spofforth and England 's Sydney Barnes . The comparison to Barnes was praise indeed ; Barnes was the only bowler in Test history with over 120 wickets to have a bowling average under 20 , with 189 wickets at an average of just 16 @.@ 43 . Bardsley said that the only reason that Marsh was " kept ... out of big cricket was his color " . Jack Pollard said that Marsh " was clearly the best Australian bowler of his time but unfortunately that was a period when the White Australia policy prevailed . Marsh 's name was scratched from the list of players ... by an official who was simply carrying out the racist customs of the day . "

Popular with teammates and known for his sportsmanship , Marsh was regarded as an average fielder and had minimal batting skill , with a batting average of 5 @.@ 00 . He played out his days in the Sydney competition and topped the bowling aggregates from 1901 to 1904 . Les Poidevin described Marsh as " a well set @-@ up , perfectly built ... man , with an ebony @-@ black , smooth , clear shining skin and twinkling black eyes " who " is quite good looking " . Marsh was short for a fast bowler standing 5 ft 7 ins (170 cm) tall . In later years , Marsh experimented with the googly . Photographs of Marsh often show him fashionably dressed in a suit and sporting a moustache .

= = Later years = =

When Marsh 's cricket career ended in 1905 , he resumed professional sprinting ; in 1906 , he ran against Arthur Postle at a meeting organised by John Wren in Melbourne . The race was organised to give Postle , then Australia 's fastest man , a chance to break the 100 @-@ yard world record . In front of 12 @,@ 000 spectators on a wet track , Marsh starting from a two @-@ yard start maintained an early lead until Postle caught him on the line . Postle was declared the winner with a 10 @-@ second time , but some observers claimed that it was a dead heat . He retired from competitive sport after the race .

Marsh joined Alexander 's Hippodrome Company , travelling around Australia in a sideshow , where his cricketing fame brought much attention . His activities thereafter are unclear , but it is likely that he became an itinerant worker . In retirement , Marsh drank heavily and was jailed for 14 days for committing an assault in Melbourne in 1909 , something he blamed on alcohol .

Marsh died after an assault caused by an argument outside the pool room of the Royal Hotel in Orange , New South Wales . Two people were charged with manslaughter , but they were acquitted . Marsh was buried in an unmarked grave . The Bulletin wrote in Marsh 's obituary that he was " a

darkly troubled man with manners which white brothers found impossible to put up with " .

= = Legacy = =

The Jack Marsh History Lecture , held annually by the Sydney Cricket Ground Trust , is named in Marsh 's honour .