

= Ron Hamence =

Ronald Arthur Hamence (25 November 1915 ? 24 March 2010) was a cricketer who played for South Australia (SA) and Australia . A short and compact right @-@ handed batsman , Hamence excelled in getting forward to drive and had an array of attractive back foot strokes . Already the youngest Australian to play district cricket , he was also , from the death of Bill Brown in 2008 until his own death in 2010 , the oldest surviving Australian Test cricketer .

While Hamence only played three Test matches for his national team , he had a successful domestic career , being called South Australia 's most successful batsman in 1950 . He played 99 first @-@ class matches from 1935 until 1951 , which brought him a career total of 5 @,@ 285 runs that came at an average of 37 @.@ 75 runs per innings and included 11 centuries . He scored two of these centuries in his first and last first @-@ class matches .

= = Career = =

Born in the Adelaide suburb of Hindmarsh , Hamence was the cousin of Charlie Walker , a fellow Australian cricketer . At 15 years and 25 days , Hamence became the youngest district cricketer in South Australian cricket history when he made his debut for Adelaide club West Torrens in 1930 . While playing with the SA team , he worked as a public servant at the Government Printing Office . He was a compact batsman preferring attack over defence , however he suffered a weakness throughout his career against fast bowling .

He joined South Australia part way through the 1935 ? 36 season , and in March 1936 , he scored a century (121) on his first @-@ class cricket debut against Tasmania at the Adelaide Oval . This was to be his only match of the season , which left him with a debut season average of 121 @.@ 00 . At the start of his first full season , he followed this up with scores of 16 and four against the touring England team and Victoria and seven and 19 against New South Wales . On Christmas Day , 1936 , however , he scored his second first @-@ class century , 104 against Queensland in the first innings . He would go on to score 52 in the second .

Scores of three not out , 28 , 27 , 35 and four followed before his next significant score , 52 , against Queensland on 12 February 1937 . He ended the season with 336 runs , one century , and an average of 30 @.@ 54 . He then suffered his worst period of form thus far at the start of the 1937 ? 38 season , failing to reach double figures from 17 December 1937 until early January 1938 , when he scored 64 in the second innings , against Victoria . He followed this with 49 against New South Wales , and ended his third season with 283 runs at an average of 21 @.@ 76 . He did not play another cricket match until 16 December 1938 at the start of the next season , however he returned with a score of 90 against New South Wales , and followed that up two matches later with 84 against Victoria . He narrowly missed out on his third century in November 1939 when he was caught by Morris Sievers for 99 against Victoria . He scored 41 , 12 , 6 and 20 to see out the rest of the year , ending with 239 runs at an average of 47 @.@ 80 , his most successful full season thus far .

In 1940 , he began the year with 26 and two against Queensland , and then a 43 against New South Wales . A series of low scores followed until he hit a vein of strong form beginning in February of that year . He scored 63 against Western Australia on 16 February 1940 in his last match of the 1939 ? 40 season . He began the following season with 41 in the following match against New South Wales . Hamence then enjoyed great success against Victoria , where he scored 130 and 103 not out in one inter @-@ state match , and then 85 and 62 in the next . Following this , in a match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground between two representative selections to raise money for the war effort , he played for Don Bradman 's XI and scored 73 and 35 . He returned to play for South Australia for a match against New South Wales , where he scored 31 and five . He ended the 1940 ? 41 season with the highest average for a single season he would achieve in his career , 569 runs at 63 @.@ 22 , with two hundreds .

= = = Second World War and after = = =

Hamence was not to play another first @-@ class match until December 1945 after the end of the Second World War . During the war , he served for four years with the Royal Australian Air Force . Upon his return , he immediately hit form for South Australia against New South Wales where he hit 74 not out and 75 in a match starting 14 December 1945 . He then scored 56 against Victoria on 18 January , and then after three single figure scores he hit 76 against Queensland . He then experienced a drop in form , with only one significant score , 46 against Wellington , for seven innings . He ended the 1945 ? 46 season with 332 runs at 36 @.@ 88 . At the start of the 1946 ? 47 season , however , he enjoyed his greatest success thus far , scoring consecutive centuries in three innings from 15 November 1946 until 19 December : 116 against Victoria and 132 and 101 not out against New South Wales , the latter followed up by a score of 48 in the second innings . This was followed by a career @-@ best 145 against the touring MCC team on 24 January 1947 , and 63 against Queensland on 21 February . He ended the season with 675 runs at 56 @.@ 25 .

= = = International debut , England , India and the Invincibles = = =

These centuries led to his debut for Australia in the Fifth Test at Sydney on 28 February 1947 . Hamence scored 30 not out in the first innings as Australia made 253 in response to England 's first innings 280 . England managed 186 in response and Australia , set 213 to win , reached it in 52 @.@ 2 overs . However Hamence made only one in his second innings . He returned to domestic cricket , however over six innings his highest score was 27 .

Nevertheless , Hamence was picked to play in the Second and Third Tests against the touring Indian cricket team in Australia in 1947 ? 48 . He made 25 in the first innings of both matches , with the first , starting 12 December 1947 , ended in a draw before Hamence could bat again . In the Third Test , which started on 1 January 1948 , Australia achieved victory with centuries from Don Bradman and Arthur Morris meaning Hamence was again not needed to bat in the second innings . He was then replaced by Neil Harvey for the final two Tests .

Returning once again to domestic cricket , Hamence scored 85 and 66 against Queensland , and this kept him in the running for a place in the national team , as he toured with The Invincibles in England in 1948 . He was not selected to play in any of the Tests , however he reiterated when interviewed in 2008 that he felt no resentment over not having played . Hamence was a popular member of the touring squad and his cheerful nature and splendid tenor voice added to the good spirits of the team . His success in the warm up games was mixed , scores of 92 , 46 and 49 not out against Cambridge University , Essex and Lancashire mixed with a duck , seven , one , three , two and five against other counties . Against Somerset , approaching his first century of the tour , the Australian players , keen to see Hamence succeed , left their card games to applaud only to see him dismissed for 99 , his highest score for the season . He also faced Scotland for two matches in August 1948 , scoring six and 15 . Overall on the tour he played 19 matches scoring 582 runs at an average of 32 @.@ 33 .

His touring colleague Sid Barnes criticised the omission of Hamence from much meaningful cricket on the tour . He wrote : " For instance , against the Gentlemen at Lord 's we were 532 when Hamence came to bat . Brown got 120 , Bradman 150 , Hassett , not out , 200 and Miller 69 . Hamence was left not out with 24 . This was an innings in which he could have been sent in first wicket down , where he batted with his interstate team ... Despite this , Hassett still went in before Hamence in the next game , against Somerset ... Hamence batted No. 6 ... but he should have been sent in No. 3 . " Bradman , following the Invincibles tour described Hamence as " a fine batsman of the strictly orthodox type . Very sound and reliable with his game based on driving " and a " very safe fieldsman " .

Barnes reported that Hamence , along with the other frequent omissions Colin McCool and Doug Ring , termed themselves the " Ground Staff " . He added : " In the dressing room during county games they would break out into ironic song about the few chances they got . " Bradman did later state that " because of the strong array of batsman ahead of him , [Hamence] seldom had an opportunity to make big scores " but " was an extremely useful reserve who could have been played

in the Tests with confidence " .

= = = Return , retirement and later life = = =

Hamence scored 58 and 45 in his first match upon return to Australia , playing for Bradman 's XI against a team captained by Lindsay Hassett on 3 December 1948 . He then scored a career best 173 against New South Wales , and 55 the following match against Queensland . He then faced Western Australia for his 91st first @-@ class match , scoring another century when he hit 117 against Western Australia . Hamence then suffered a loss of form , not exceeding 31 for 11 innings . He scored a 53 against New South Wales , 64 not out against Queensland and 58 against Victoria , however he then scored nine , one and five in his next three innings . A 48 and 78 against New South Wales and Western Australia followed , however it was becoming clear that his form was waning . Hamence played his final match against Freddie Brown 's MCC team on 27 October 1950 , scoring 114 in the first innings as South Australia reached 350 , and then seven in his final innings before being run out by Bob Berry . His final full season saw him score 418 runs at 32 @.@ 15 .

In total , Hamence played 69 matches for South Australia , scoring 4 @,@ 244 runs at an average of 38 @.@ 93 , with 11 centuries and 22 fifties . Aside from his 52 @.@ 75 average for Bradman 's XI , South Australia was to be Hamence 's most successful team . Of his eleven centuries , three were scored against Victoria , against whom he had an average of 41 @.@ 75 , however he scored the most runs , and his highest score , against New South Wales . In 2001 , Hamence was awarded the Centenary Medal for services to Australian society through the sport of cricket .

He died in an Adelaide nursing home , aged 94 , in 2010 .

= = Test match performance = =