

= Colin McCool =

Colin Leslie McCool ( 9 December 1916 ? 5 April 1986 ) was an Australian cricketer who played in 14 Tests from 1946 to 1950 . McCool , born in Paddington , New South Wales , was an all @-@ rounder who bowled leg spin and googlies with a round arm action and as a lower order batsman was regarded as effective square of the wicket and against spin bowling . He made his Test début against New Zealand in 1946 , taking a wicket with his second delivery . He was part of Donald Bradman 's Invincibles team that toured England in 1948 but injury saw him miss selection in any of the Test matches .

A good tour of South Africa in 1949 ? 50 was followed by a lack of opportunity in the next two seasons , leading McCool to sign a contract to play professional cricket in the Lancashire League in 1953 . Three years later , Somerset County Cricket Club recruited McCool where he was a success , especially as a middle @-@ order batsman ; he played five seasons and saw the club achieve its highest place in the County Championship since 1892 . He retired from cricket in 1960 and returned to Australia to work as a market gardener . He died in Concord , New South Wales on 5 April 1986 .

= = Early career = =

As a child growing up in Paddington , McCool attended Crown Street State School ? earlier students included Victor Trumper and Monty Noble . He played his childhood cricket on concrete wickets in Moore Park and learnt to bowl from reading Clarrie Grimmett 's instructional book , Getting Wickets . McCool played his early grade cricket with Paddington Cricket Club before coming to the notice of the New South Wales selectors . He made his first @-@ class début for New South Wales against " Rest of Australia " in March 1940 , making 19 and 15 and taking one wicket . While the Australian Cricket Board suspended the Sheffield Shield competition at the end of the 1939 ? 40 season , at the request of the Australian government , a series of matches were arranged to raise money for wartime charities in the following 1940 ? 41 season . McCool played in six of these matches for New South Wales , scoring 416 runs at average of 52 @.@ 00 and taking 24 wickets at an average of 23 @.@ 50 .

McCool enlisted on 12 September 1941 and served as a Pilot Officer with the No. 33 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force ( RAAF ) . Stationed in New Guinea , McCool had reached the rank of Flight Lieutenant when he was discharged from the RAAF on 18 September 1945 .

After the war , he moved to Brisbane and was selected in the Queensland cricket team . Playing for Queensland , he formed a formidable partnership with wicket @-@ keeper Don Tallon . He was selected in the Australian team to tour New Zealand in 1945 ? 46 , making his Test début at the Basin Reserve in Wellington . He made seven runs in Australia 's only innings and took a wicket with his second ball in Test cricket ; the last man dismissed in the Test , Don McRae .

= = Test player = =

The following season , Wally Hammond 's England cricket team travelled to Australia for the 1946 ? 47 Ashes series . In a warm @-@ up match before the series , McCool performed well for Queensland against the English tourists at the Brisbane Cricket Ground ( the ' Gabba ) , taking nine wickets and " the English batsmen seemed like rabbits fascinated in the presence of a snake " . He was selected for the First Test at the same ground the following week . He just missed out on a century on his Ashes debut , scoring 95 and only bowling one over as Australia won the Test by an innings and 332 runs . In the Second Test at Sydney , McCool took eight wickets , including the prize wicket of Hammond twice . Australia won by an innings and 33 runs . The Third Test at Melbourne saw McCool make his maiden Test century , 104 not out in a drawn match . The Melbourne businessman and underworld figure , John Wren had promised McCool one pound for every run he made that innings ; this was at a time when ten pounds was the average weekly wage in Australia . The cheque ? given to McCool the next day ? allowed him to place a deposit on a house .

He played in the remaining two Tests , making 272 runs at an average of 54 and taking 18 wickets at just over 27 apiece . He took 5 / 44 in the Fifth Test . Wisden Cricketers ' Almanack wrote that his batting featured " wristy cuts " and " vigorous hooks " , opining that there were " few better players of spin bowling on a difficult pitch " . Wisden said that his slow and loopy leg spin was " a clever mixture of leg @-@ breaks and googlies " .

India toured Australia for the first time in 1947 ? 48 . McCool played in three Tests without much success , scoring only 46 runs and taking only four wickets . Nevertheless , he was selected as part of Australian team to tour England in 1948 that would be known as the Invincibles . He took 57 wickets on the tour but bowling for long periods caused him to continually tear a callus on his third finger , used to impart spin on the ball . As a result , his captain , Don Bradman , felt compelled to leave him out of the Test matches , feeling that his finger would not be able to handle the necessarily long bowling spells . This decision was aided by the then existing rule allowing a new ball to be used every 55 overs , allowing Bradman to use his fast bowlers more often . For the rest of his career , McCool was troubled by the skin rubbing off his spinning finger . McCool and his fellow fringe members of the squad , Ron Hamence and Doug Ring , would refer themselves as the " ground @-@ staff " as it was unlikely that the tour selectors would include them in the Test team that tour . The cricket writer Alan Gibson , who knew McCool well in his later cricket career at Somerset , wrote that the omission " distressed him greatly at the time , though he could be philosophical enough about it later " .

He played in all five Tests on tour against South Africa . He took 51 wickets in all matches , including 5 / 41 in the Second Test at Newlands . In 1950 ? 51 , McCool was the leading wicket taker in the Sheffield Shield competition , however he was not selected in the Test team against the touring English ; nor against the West Indies the following season .

= = English cricket = =

Prior to the 1953 Australian team to tour England , McCool signed a professional contract with Lancashire League team East Lancashire , replacing fellow Australian leg spinner Bruce Dooland . In his first season in the league , he was the leading wicket @-@ taker with 93 wickets at the low average of 10 @.@ 2 runs per wicket , and he also made 678 runs at an average of 33 @.@ 9 . The following year , he played less often : his 547 runs came at the better average of 42 @.@ 1 but his 52 wickets cost 13 @.@ 1 apiece , and East Lancashire , who had finished either first or second in the Championship ten times in the previous twelve seasons , finished 10th out of 14 . He did not return to East Lancashire for the 1955 season due to being contracted to play county cricket for Somerset . The cricket writer Alan Gibson , who knew McCool well , wrote that " after he had made the decision to come , an extension of the qualifying period for overseas cricketers kept him waiting even longer " .

Delayed by the change to the rules , McCool had a five @-@ year stint from 1956 in English county cricket . Somerset , having finished on the bottom of the County Championship table for the four years between 1952 ? 1955 , had embarked on a renewal programme . Part of the programme involved a vigorous recruiting campaign , including an offer to McCool that saw him return to first @-@ class cricket at the age of 39 .

At Somerset , McCool was an instant success as a batsman , scoring 1 @,@ 967 runs in his first season , including three centuries and a highest score of 141 . After four seasons , Somerset came off the bottom of the County Championship ( to 15th out of 17 ) , and Wisden was in no doubt of McCool 's influence : " Much of the credit for the all @-@ round improvement went to one man ? McCool , " it wrote . " At the start of the season it was hoped that the former Australian Test leg @-@ break bowler would lend power and variety to the attack . From that viewpoint his 45 wickets at over thirty runs apiece might be counted disappointing . But with the bat McCool exceeded all expectations . He was one of the most consistent scorers in the country and he failed by only 34 to reach 2 @,@ 000 runs in his first season of county cricket . McCool was the backbone of a mediocre batting side , and he never departed from his natural attacking style . " Against the touring Australians that season he made 90 and 116 , the first innings 90 coming out of 139 in two @-@

and @-@ a @-@ half hours and including 15 fours , the second innings century out of 167 in just 95 minutes , with four sixes and 14 fours . Wisden reported that he was " very severe on [ Ian Johnson ] and [ Jack Wilson ] " .

Over the 1956 / 57 new year , McCool was one of a party of 12 cricketers , all but one of them Test players , who made a brief trip to India to play two first @-@ class matches in celebration of the silver jubilee of the Bengal Cricket Association in a side raised by the Lancashire secretary Geoffrey Howard . McCool did not play in the first match and in the second , he replaced Jock Livingston , the team 's only wicketkeeper , who had been taken ill during the first game . McCool made only 23 and 1 with the bat , but he stumped Vinoo Mankad off the bowling of Dooland , one of only two stumpings in his career as a very occasional wicketkeeper .

Back in England in 1957 he was joined at Taunton by another Australian , Bill Alley , but still finished as the leading scorer for the county with 1 @,@ 678 runs in all matches , to go with 44 wickets . In the wet summer of 1958 Somerset finished third in the Championship , their highest position since 1892 . McCool 's contribution was 1 @,@ 590 runs and 46 wickets at , for him , the low average of 23 runs each . In this season , McCool made his highest score for Somerset ? 169 out of a total of 314 against Worcestershire at Stourbridge ? and in the last match of the season he produced his best bowling figures of his career , taking eight second @-@ innings Nottinghamshire wickets for 74 runs on what Wisden described as " a sporting pitch " .

In contrast to 1958 , the 1959 season was hot and dry and McCool 's figures improved : he made 1769 runs at an average of more than 40 runs per innings and took 64 first @-@ class wickets , more than in any other Somerset season . McCool 's final season with Somerset before his retirement was 1960 , and he signed off with 1 @,@ 222 runs and 29 wickets .

In 138 matches across the five seasons for Somerset , McCool made 7 @,@ 913 runs at an average of 33 @.@ 82 . He also took 219 wickets at 28 @.@ 05 but in his five years with the county he was never the first @-@ choice spin bowler : in his first two seasons , Somerset used Australian @-@ born slow left @-@ arm orthodox bowler John McMahon as the main spin bowler , with young off @-@ spin bowler Brian Langford also bowling more than McCool . When McMahon left , Langford took over as the top spin bowler , and by 1960 was bowling four times the number of overs that McCool took . But McCool had also lost some of his control at this stage : " He could do beguiling things with the ball , though length and line seemed to become a decreasing consideration , " says the history of Somerset cricket . He also made 146 catches , many of them at first slip , where he stood " rather deeper than usual " . His influence on Somerset 's recovery from the trough of the early 1950s was considerable . A later Somerset history says : " Occasionally some of the younger pros didn 't relish the way he treated them . Maybe they also resented that his salary was well in excess of their own . But their respect for his competitive approach and sheer experience was undeniable . "

= = Playing style = =

McCool had a round @-@ arm bowling action , releasing the ball with his arm almost parallel to the ground . Before he developed problems with the skin on his spinning finger , he was , in spite of his unorthodox action , able to generate sharp spin . The cricket writer , Jack Pollard said of McCool , " [ McCool ] was almost unplayable on badly prepared pitches , so wide and sharp was the turn of his leg @-@ breaks . " and that he " made even State [ i.e. first @-@ class ] batsmen look inept " . On the advice of coaches and ex @-@ players , McCool attempted to alter his action to a more orthodox style on several occasions but always returned to his natural style .

A short man but with a strong build , as a batsman he was a vigorous hooker and a wristy cutter , scoring mostly square of the wicket . He was particularly good against spin bowling , even on difficult pitches .

During his time at Somerset , he was known for " [ turning ] a match with his cracking strokes in an hour . " Alan Gibson wrote : " We hardly think of him as a stylist , and he was mostly a back @-@ foot player , getting the greater number of his runs in the segments fanning out from point and square @-@ leg . But he was enjoyable to watch , compact , tidy , combining powerful hitting with

delicate placing . In the best Somerset tradition , he was always after the bowling , and in the best Australian tradition , he always relished a fight . " But he also adapted his style to suit English pitches : in an early innings for Somerset , he was out trying to hook a ball from Trevor Bailey . " The hook , he decided , was a stroke to be used sparingly on English pitches ... McCool was constantly amending his technique that season [ 1956 ] , whenever he spotted a flaw in his method . Again and again he held the Somerset batting together . Nothing in his previous experience had equipped him for the task of holding up a losing side in a damp English summer . "

He was renowned for his catching , often spending an hour at a time practising catching a ball thrown into the side of a roller normally used to prepare the cricket pitch . Journalist and former team @-@ mate Bill O'Reilly said after McCool's death in 1986 : " If Colin had played in the last 10 years , he would have been regarded as one of the greatest all @-@ rounders ever in Australian cricket . He was a great batsman , [ ... ] a wonderful bowler and one of the best slips fieldsmen I have ever seen . "

= = Personality and personal life = =

Accounts of McCool in his Somerset period portray him as a thoughtful but slightly aloof character . " Off the field he was a quiet man , " wrote David Foot . He was " a contemplative pipe @-@ smoker in the corner of the dressing room , " says another account , and somewhat intolerant of others who appeared less committed than he was . " Occasionally some of the younger pros didn't relish the way he treated them . Maybe they also resented that his salary was well in excess of their own . "

Alan Gibson wrote about him more volubly : " He thought about the game a lot . Many Australian cricketers do , more than English cricketers probably , but McCool was in some ways an untypical Australian . He had a diffidence and gentleness , which do not always spring to mind as familiar Australian qualities : but he had plenty of Australian determination . "

Gibson wrote that McCool " did not quite come to terms with the West Country " . He went on : " He missed the sunshine . ' There 's no winter , ' he said , ' and the beer 's better . And the f----- off @-@ spinners don't turn . ' I think an additional reason was that he found some difficulty in accepting the conventions of English cricket as it was then . There was a Somerset committee member , who liked and admired him , and would greet him with , ' Morning , McCool ' . That committee member was seeking to be courteous . He would have thought it pompous to say ' Mr McCool ' , and impertinent to say ' Colin ' . But it infuriated Colin . He thought it a reflection on his status . He would have preferred something like ' Hi , Col , you old bastard . ' The worlds were too far apart . "

McCool was given a testimonial season by Somerset in 1959 after just three years with county and the circumstances were unusual enough for it to be remarked on in the county's Year Book , published in the winter before the season . " Although Colin McCool has played for the County for three seasons only , this Testimonial is a fitting reward for his valuable services as an all @-@ rounder and off the field , where his influence is most marked . "

After retirement from first @-@ class cricket at the end of the 1960 season in England , McCool returned to Australia , taking up market gardening with a specialty in rare blooms at Umina Beach on the Central Coast of New South Wales . He continued playing club cricket in the Newcastle competition for Belmont until rheumatism forced him to retire from all forms of cricket aged 55 : " Rheumatism in my right hand made it embarrassing for me to continue . It was alarming to an old pro like me who prided himself on length and directions to have the ball slip out of my fingers out of control . "

McCool was the author of two books on cricket : Cricket is a Game , which was an autobiography , and The Best Way to Play Cricket , both published in 1961 . John Arlott , reviewing them in Wisden 1962 , said the first was " full of trenchant good sense , humour , anecdote and shrewd observation " . The second book , Arlott wrote , was " to the best of this reviewer's knowledge , the first cricket book to be initially published in the modern paper @-@ back format " . It was , he added , " full of good instruction and ... sets down some genuine cricket wisdom with freshness and vitality " .

He married Dorothy Evelyn Yabsley in 1943 in Sydney . His son , Russ McCool , who was born in

Taunton , played one first @-@ class match for Somerset in 1982 , in addition to playing for New South Wales Colts and New South Wales Country .

= = Test match performance = =