

= Norm O'Neill =

Norman Clifford Louis O'Neill OAM (19 February 1937 ? 3 March 2008) was a cricketer who played for New South Wales and Australia . A right @-@ handed batsman known for his back foot strokeplay , O'Neill made his state debut aged 18 , before progressing to Test selection aged 21 in late 1958 . Early in his career , O'Neill was one of the foremost batsmen in the Australian team , scoring three Test centuries and topping the run scoring aggregates on a 1959 ? 60 tour of the Indian subcontinent which helped Australia win its last Test and series on Pakistani soil for 39 years , as well as another series in India . His career peaked in 1960 ? 61 when he scored 181 in the Tied Test against the West Indies , and at the end of the series , had a career average of 58 @.@ 25 . His performances on the 1961 tour of England saw him named as one of the Wisden Cricketers of the Year . Thereafter his form was less formidable , characterised by nervousness and fidgeting at the start of his innings . Persistent knee problems as well as a controversial media attack on the legality of West Indian bowler Charlie Griffith saw him dropped from the Australian team after 1965 . O'Neill also bowled occasional leg spin and was regarded as one of the finest fielders of his era . He later became a cricket commentator and his son Mark O'Neill also played cricket at state level .

= = Early years = =

The son of a builder , O'Neill was born in Carlton , New South Wales . He had no cricketing associations on his father 's side of the family , but his maternal uncle , Ron Campion , played for the Glebe club in Sydney Grade Cricket . Campion trained for cricket near the O'Neill family home , at Bexley Oval . O'Neill accompanied his uncle to cricket from the age of seven and was given batting practice at the end of each session . At Bexley Primary school , O'Neill was denied a chance to play cricket as the school did not field a team . Moving on to Kogarah Intermediate High School , O'Neill played cricket in defiance of a teacher who recommended that he take up athletics . As a teenager , O'Neill idolised Keith Miller after his uncle took him to the Sydney Cricket Ground : O'Neill saw Miller play that day and was impressed with the way he hit the ball off the back foot .

Under his uncle 's guidance , O'Neill joined the St George Cricket Club club , in the Sydney Grade competition . He steadily moved up through the grades and broke into the first grade side at the age of 16 . Sensing his potential , the club 's selectors informed him that regardless of form , he would play the full season , which allowed him to be uninhibited in his batting . He made 108 in seven innings . The next season , he was out 12 times leg before wicket in 15 innings , and run out in the other three . O'Neill attributed his failures to over @-@ aggressiveness and resolved to improve his patience . In the second match of the new season , the 17 @-@ year @-@ old O'Neill made his first century . With all five state selectors onlooking , he made 28 in the next match and was called into the state squad .

= = Shield debut = =

O'Neill made his debut for New South Wales at the age of 18 against South Australia during the 1955 ? 56 season . His lack of contribution was highlighted against the backdrop of his team 's crushing innings victory : O'Neill failed to score a run or take a wicket . New South Wales bowled first and had South Australia at 6 / 49 when Miller introduced O'Neill 's occasional leg spin , presumably to ease the debutant 's nerves by bringing him into the game . The home team struck 18 from three overs . O'Neill was listed to bat in the lower middle order but after the top order had made a big start , Miller brought O'Neill up . He came in against the second new ball and was clean bowled . O'Neill was dropped and did not play another match for the season , but had gained invaluable experience .

O'Neill steadily rose in the 1956 ? 57 season . At the start of the season , with many players still on international duty during the closing stages of the tour to England and the subsequent stopover in the Indian subcontinent , O'Neill was recalled and made 60 and 63 not out against Queensland at the start of the season . This saw him retain his place when the Test players returned . After making

a pair of single @-@ figures scored , he made a sequence of three 60s against South Australia , Victoria and Western Australia , He was rewarded with selection in the one @-@ off match between Ray Lindwall 's XI and Neil Harvey 's XI , which doubled as a national selection trial , before making his first ton (127) against South Australia . He ended the season with 567 runs at 43 @.@ 61 , and earned selection for a non @-@ Test tour of New Zealand under Ian Craig , in a team composed mainly of young players . He made 102 not out in the only " Test " match that he played , helping to set up a ten @-@ wicket win. heading the tour averages with 218 runs at 72 @.@ 66 . Despite this , he was overlooked for the 1957 ? 58 Test tour of South Africa . It was regarded as one of the most controversial decisions of the decade .

O 'Neill responded during the 1957 ? 58 Sheffield Shield season weakened by the absence of the Test players , aggregating 1 @,@ 005 runs at 83 @.@ 75 and taking 26 wickets at 20 @.@ 42 with his leg spinners , thus topping the national bowling and batting averages . Prior to the season , he had never taken a first @-@ class wicket . In the opening match of the summer , he took 3 / 74 against Queensland . He then took a total of 5 / 51 scored 33 and 48 not out in a six @-@ wicket win over Western Australia before taking 3 / 52 and adding two fifties in the return match . He then broke through for his first century of the season , scoring 114 and taking 3 / 44 in a ten @-@ wicket win over South Australia . However , he reached more productive levels in the second half of the season .

This comprised 175 against Victoria , 74 and 48 against Queensland , 125 and 23 * against South Australia and 233 against Victoria . His 233 was made in little over four hours and featured 38 fours . It was the first time that a New South Welshman (let alone a twenty @-@ year @-@ old) had scored 1 @,@ 000 in a Shield season . Bradman and Bill Ponsford were the only others before him . He added 12 wickets in the final four matches , including 2 / 50 and 4 / 40 in the match against Queensland . O 'Neill 's performances played a large part in his state 's fifth consecutive title .

These performances led former Test leg spinner Bill O 'Reilly to compare him to Bradman and former Test opening batsman Jack Fingleton to lament his non @-@ selection for the South African tour and its reflection on the plight of Australian cricket .

At the time , his employers refused to make allowances for him to play sport , forcing him to begin work at six in the morning . As a result , he considered moving to South Australia , where a grocery magnate offered him employment and financial incentives . However , he stayed after state officials intervened , with Sir Ronald Irish , the Australian chairman of Rothmans , providing him with a job in Sydney . At the time , O 'Neill had another offer . Having represented his state in baseball and been nominated in the All @-@ Australian team in 1957 , he was approached by the New York Yankees , having had experience at a pitcher and short stop . O 'Neill was offered a fee more than 25 times that for a single Test match , as well as travel costs and accommodation , to trial with the Yankees . He agreed , but Irish dissuaded him less than a week before his scheduled departure .

= = Test debut = =

Identified as a future Test prospect , he was selected in a Western Australia Combined XI for a match against the touring England cricket team at the start of the 1958 ? 59 season in Perth . Prior to the match , O 'Neill was hounded by the media . The tourists decided to test him with short @-@ pitched bowling , especially Fred Trueman . O 'Neill decided to abstain from hooking , while attacking the spin of Jim Laker with a series of sweep shots . After four and a half hours of uncharacteristic restraint , he compiled 104 with an emphasis on off side play . He took a total of 2 / 67 , removing Fred Trueman and Arthur Milton .

He scored 85 against Western Australia and then made 84 not out for New South Wales against England . He was selected for an Australian XI , which played the tourists in a dress rehearsal before the Tests . He made one and two as Australia were crushed by 345 runs .

Nevertheless , O 'Neill was selected to make his debut in the five @-@ Test series against England , playing in all of the matches . The First Test in Brisbane was a low scoring match described by Australian captain Richie Benaud as producing " some of the slowest and worst cricket imaginable " , O 'Neill made 34 in Australia 's first innings of 186 to help secure a lead of 52 . He then top @-@

scored with an unbeaten 71 in the second innings , guiding Australia to an eight @-@ wicket victory . O 'Neill scored 71 of the last 89 runs scored while he was at the crease , refusing to be dried up by the England 's usage of leg theory . It enlivened a match plagued by time @-@ wasting , and best remembered for a depressingly slow innings by England 's Trevor Bailey , who scored 68 from 426 balls in seven and a half hours . England captain Peter May described O 'Neill 's innings as " sparkling " and said that it made " everything which had gone before look even more wretched " . Retired English player Ian Peebles , writing in the Sunday Times , said " Although O 'Neill is in the very early stages of his career , it is already something of an occasion when he comes to the wicket , and one can sense the expectancy of the crowd and the heightened tension of the opposition " . Wisden opined that O 'Neill had " saved a game that had been tortuous for days " . For his part , O 'Neill said that the dour play was " unbelievable " and that he was " just about falling to sleep " in the field .

He struck 77 in the rain @-@ affected drawn Third Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground and followed this with 56 in the Fourth Test in Adelaide . Despite making a duck in the Fifth Test , he ended the series as the second highest runscore with 282 at 56 @.@ 40 as Australia took the series 4 ? 0 . He bowled two overs without success . Outside the Tests , O 'Neill scored 155 and 128 against Victoria and Western Australia respectively as New South Wales completed their sixth successive Sheffield Shield win .

= = Career peak = =

The following season O 'Neill was Australia 's leading batsman during the 1959 ? 60 tour to Pakistan and India , where he was a part of the last Australian team to win a Test on Pakistani soil for 39 years . After a quiet match in the First Test eigh @-@ wicket win in Dacca in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) , in which he scored two and 26 not out , O 'Neill played a key role in the victory in the Second Test in Lahore that was to Australia 's last in Pakistan until 1998 . O 'Neill made his maiden Test century of 134 in the first innings to give Australia a 245 @-@ run lead . He then took his maiden Test wicket in Pakistan 's second innings , that of Shujauddin . This left Australia chasing a target of 122 in the last two hours on the final day . The chase was on schedule with O 'Neill partnering Neil Harvey when the Pakistanis began wasting time to prevent an Australian victory . This was implemented by swapping fielders very slowly when the left and rightt @-@ handed combination of Harvey and O 'Neill took a single , and overs began taking seven minutes instead of three . To counter this , Harvey deliberately backed away when a ball was aimed at the stumps and threw away his wicket by letting himself be bowled for 37 . This allowed Benaud to come in and bat with O 'Neill so that the two rightt @-@ handed batsmen would give no opportunity to waste time by switching the field . Benaud then threatened Pakistani captain Imtiaz Ahmed with a formal complaint over the time @-@ wasting , and proceesings returned to their normal pace . Australia made the target with a few minutes to spare , with O 'Neill on 43 . O 'Neill failed to make double figures in the final Test , which was drawn , but ended the series with 218 runs at 72 @.@ 66 . In another tour match , against the President 's XI , O 'Neill scored an unbeaten 52 in a low @-@ scoring match as Australia stumbled to their target of 116 with only three wickets in hand .

O 'Neill 's performances in Pakistan was such that the parents in one cricket @-@ following Karachi family named their new son Anil for its resemblance to O 'Neill . Anil Dalpat went on to become the first Hindu to represent Pakistan , playing nine Tests in the 1980s as a wicketkeeper .

On the five @-@ Test Indian series which followed , O 'Neill started slowly , aggregating 60 runs in the first two Tests , which were shared 1 ? 1 . He returned to form with a leg @-@ side dominated 163 in a high @-@ scoring draw in the Third Test at Brabourne Stadium in Bombay . After scoring 40 in an innings victory in the Fourth Test in Madras , Australia needed a draw in the Fifth Test in Calcutta with four players injured or ill , while Benaud had a dislocated spinning finger . O 'Neill scored 113 in the first innings to help a depleted team take a 137 @-@ run first innings lead and prevent India from squaring the series . He was Australia 's leading scorer in the Tests , with 376 runs at 62 @.@ 66 . He also made his highest first @-@ class score of 284 , against an Indian President 's XI in Ahmedabad . He was the top scorer for the whole subcontinental Test tour , with

594 runs in eight matches at 66 @. @ 00 .

He returned to Australia and played in one match for New South Wales at the end of the 1959 ? 60 season , scoring 175 as his state defeated Western Australia and won a seventh Shield in a row . Prior to the following Australian summer , O 'Neill was part of an International Cavaliers team that toured South Africa . He scored 133 runs at 21 @. @ 83 .

In the lead @-@ up to the 1960 ? 61 home Tests series against the West Indies , O 'Neill scored 156 not to set up an innings win for his state over the tourists . He then struck 181 in the first innings of the opening match at Brisbane , his highest Test score . The innings prompted team @-@ mate Bob Simpson to say " if God gave me an hour to watch someone I 'd seen , I 'd request to see Norman O 'Neill . He had the style . " Australia took a first innings lead and O 'Neill made 26 in the second innings as Australia collapsed towards a likely defeat before recovering ; the match ended in the first Tied Test in history . This was the peak of O 'Neill 's career . Having played 14 Tests , he was averaging 67 @. @ 68 with the bat .

He then struck 114 as his state defeated the tourists by an innings , and he made 40 and a duck as the Australians took the series lead in the Second Test . He made 70 and 71 in the Third Test loss in Sydney , one of the few players able to combat Lance Gibbs effectively , top @-@ scoring in the first innings and second top @-@ scoring in the second innings . He then made 65 in the second innings in the Fourth Test at Adelaide , where Australia held on by one wicket for a draw . He contributed 48 in the second innings of the Fifth Test as Australia appeared headed for a series victory . However , a late collapse ensued , and Australia scraped home by two wickets to take the series 2 ? 1 . O 'Neill ended the series with 522 runs at 52 @. @ 20 . O 'Neill gained attention during the summer for frequently losing his wicket by impulsively sweeping . This was attributed to the dominance of his bottom hand , which saw his bat swinging across the line of flight of the ball . Despite the criticism , he was at the peak of his international career , having made 1398 runs at 58 @. @ 35 in his first 18 Tests .

= = Wisden Cricketer of the Year = =

O 'Neill was selected for the tour of England in 1961 , and he warmed up by scoring centuries in consecutive matches against Tasmania for the Australian squad . During the English summer , O 'Neill scored 1981 runs at 60 @. @ 03 , narrowly missing becoming only the fourth post @-@ war player after Don Bradman , Neil Harvey and Bill Lawry to make 2 @, @ 000 runs in an Ashes tour .

In the third match against Yorkshire , which was O 'Neill 's second for the tour , he scored an unbeaten 100 marked by his cover driving . He followed this with a 74 against Lancashire before a 124 two matches later against Glamorgan , which was described by Wisden as the best of the season . He scored 73 against Gloucestershire and made 122 on his first appearance at Lord 's , against the Marylebone Cricket Club , in what was effectively a dress rehearsal for the Tests . Australia went on to win by 63 runs . In the next match against Sussex , O 'Neill was carried from the ground after suffering a knee injury , and after failing to bat in either innings , it appeared he would be sidelined for a substantial period .

However he recovered to be selected for the First Test at Edgbaston , just five days later . He made 82 as Australia scored 9 / 516 declared and took a 321 @-@ run first innings lead , but England could not be dismissed in the second innings and salvaged a draw . He continued his form with an unbeaten 104 against Kent between the Tests .

The " Battle of the Ridge " in the Second Test at Lord 's ? the home of cricket ? was an unhappy one for O 'Neill . On an erratic pitch with a visible ridge that caused uneven bounce , O 'Neill made one and a duck as an Australia scraped home by five wickets in a low @-@ scoring match .

He returned to the county matches and scored 162 against Lancashire , before scoring 27 and 19 as England squared the series in the Third Test at Headingley . O 'Neill then scored 142 against Northamptonshire , but the hosts were able to tie the scores when stumps were drawn with four wickets in hand .

After rectifying a technical fault , O 'Neill made 67 in the second innings of the Fourth Test at Old Trafford with the series tied at 1 ? 1 , helping Australia take a narrow victory to retain the Ashes .

Heading into the final Test , O 'Neill had a consistent run , scoring three fifties in four innings . He made his first century against England in the Fifth Test at The Oval with 117 as Australia drew the match to take the series . He did so after being given a " lucky coin " by a spectator and being dropped at second slip when he was on 19 . He scored 324 runs at 40 @. @ 50 in the Tests and was subsequently named as one of the five Wisden Cricketers of the Year for 1962 . Following the Tests , O 'Neill added four half @- @ centuries in five innings in a consistent run towards the close of the tour . He left English soil with 138 against Minor Counties , in a non @- @ first @- @ class match . In all first @- @ class matches , he made seven centuries , and his run aggregate was second only to Lawry , who made 2 @, @ 019 runs .

= = International decline = =

After this tour , his form began to decline , as he became prone to uncertain and fidgety starts to his innings , which earned him the nickname " Nervous Norm " . A persistent knee injury increasingly troubled him and was to end his career . The 1961 ? 62 Australian team was purely domestic with no touring Test team , and New South Wales completed their ninth Sheffield Shield title in a row , O 'Neill had a poor season , scoring only 377 runs at 25 @. @ 13 , passing fifty only twice .

The 1962 ? 63 home Ashes series was Australia 's first Test matches in 18 months . After an unproductive season last year , O 'Neill started the new summer with 15 and 2 / 30 for a Western Australia Combined XI against Ted Dexter 's Englishmen . His victims with the ball were Dexter and batsman Tom Graveney . He then made his first century in over a year , scoring 131 against Western Australia for his state . O 'Neill completed his preparation for the Tests by helping New South Wales to defeat Dexter 's men by an innings . He scored 143 and took 2 / 36 , removing Graveney and leading batsman Colin Cowdrey .

O 'Neill made 56 in the First Test drawn at Brisbane but failed to pass 20 in the next two matches , which were shared by the two teams . After his wife made him a pair of " lucky lemon socks " , he scored 100 in the first innings of the drawn Fourth Test in Adelaide , which turned out to be his last Test century with fifteen Tests before the end of his career . With Alan Davidson injured during the match , O 'Neill was required to bowl substantially , conceding 49 runs in what was his most expensive performance to date . He scored 73 in the Fifth Test in Sydney to finish the series with 310 runs at 34 @. @ 44 , substantially below his career average of 53 @. @ 8 prior to the series . He also took two wickets , one in each of the Third and Fifth Tests , removing Fred Titmus and Dexter respectively . Outside the Tests , O 'Neill struggled and passed 25 once in eight other non @- @ Test innings . This was a 93 against arch @- @ rivals Victoria , which was not enough to prevent defeat . Victoria went on to win the Sheffield Shield and end New South Wales ' nine @- @ year winning streak .

At the end of the season , he embarked on a tour with the International Cavaliers , which toured Africa , mostly playing against provincial teams . He played in seven matches and had a productive series , scoring 541 runs at 41 @. @ 54 including a century and four fifties . He also bowled more frequently than usual taking seven wickets at 53 @. @ 29 .

The following season in 1963 ? 64 , O 'Neill started poorly , passing 12 only once in his first six innings . However , he was retained for the team for the First Test against South Africa in Brisbane , where he scored 82 and 19 not out in a drawn match . He continued his resurgence with 36 and 61 not out the following fixture against Victoria , but was injured during the second innings and forced to retire hurt . This meant that he missed the Second Test , which Australia won by eight wickets . O 'Neill returned and scored half centuries in each of the next two Tests . He also took two wickets to end the series with 285 runs at 40 @. @ 71 and three wickets at 32 @. @ 33 . He added a further two half @- @ centuries in the remaining Shield matches .

O 'Neill retained his place for the 1964 tour to England , and scored a century against Western Australia for the touring squad before departing for the northern hemisphere . After failing to pass 16 in his first two outings , he struck form against Glamorgan , scoring 65 and an unbeaten 109 . He then added 151 and 17 not out , leading the way as the Australians defeated the MCC by nine wickets in a dress rehearsal for the Tests . However , O 'Neill scored 98 in the first four innings of

the opening two Tests and was forced out of the Third Test with a knee injury , the only non @-@ draw of the series , which Australia won . Nevertheless , he passed 50 in each of the four tour matches during this period , including a 134 against Yorkshire and 90 against Northamptonshire .

O 'Neill returned for the final two Tests and ended the series with only 156 runs at 31 @.@ 20 in five Tests without passing fifty and going wicketless . He added another century against Kent and two further fifties in the closing stages of the English summer .

His 1964 ? 65 tour of the subcontinent on the way back to Australia was even worse , a far cry from his leading role in the previous tour to the subcontinent . After making 40 and 0 in the First Test win in Madras , he was unable to bat either innings in the Second Test in Bombay after being hospitalised due to persistent vomiting , injury as Australia ceded their series lead . He missed the remainder of the series , the Third Test in Calcutta and a one @-@ off Test in Pakistan . Upon his return home , he has a shortened domestic season before Australia left for the West Indies . In five domestic matches , he scored 357 runs at 59 @.@ 50 , including a 133 not against South Australia .

O 'Neill started the 1964 ? 65 tour of the West Indies strongly , scoring a century in the first match against Jamaica . He was often injured during the tour , but was at his most productive with the bat since the last series against the Caribbean team four years earlier . He made many starts , passing 20 in six of his seven Test innings , but was unable to convert them into big scores . In the First Test , O 'Neill was struck on the hand by Wes Hall and was sent to hospital for X @-@ rays after a break was suspected . During the Second Test , it was the turn of Charlie Griffith to send O 'Neill to hospital , after hitting him on the forearm and causing a large bruise . His 51 and 74 * in the Fourth Test at Bridgetown , Barbados , the last Test of his career , was the only time he passed 50 for the series . He ended with 266 runs at 44 @.@ 33 , missing the Fifth Test due to a broken hand . He managed a healthy return with the ball , taking nine of his 17 Test wickets in the series with an average of 25 @.@ 55 . This included his Test best of 4 / 41 with his leg @-@ spin in the Second Test in Port of Spain , Trinidad . In this match , he cleaned up the hosts ' tail in the first innings , removing Jackie Hendriks , Wes Hall , Charlie Griffith and Lance Gibbs .

At the end of the tour , O 'Neill garnered controversy by writing outspoken newspaper columns accusing opposition pace spearhead Charlie Griffith of chucking . He was one of several Australians who took exception to Griffith 's bowling action , and he put his name to a series of feature articles in Sydney 's Daily Mirror . These labelled Griffith as " an obvious chucker " , saying the hosts had been " wrong to play " him . O 'Neill stated that " If he is allowed to continue throwing , he could kill someone " . O 'Neill also expressed his desire to not have to face bowling that he deemed to be illegal . When the Daily Mirror syndicated the columns , London 's Daily Mail ignored an embargo and printed the pieces while the Australians were on their homeward flight , putting O 'Neill in breach of his tour contract , which forbade players from commenting in the media during tours .

The West Indies lodged an official complaint with Australia , and the Australian Cricket Board replied that it deplored the published comments , although noting that as O 'Neill 's touring contract had expired at the end of the tour , the point was moot . Nevertheless , the ACB changed its stance on players ' writing , so that they could no longer comment on a tour until three months after its conclusion . The event is often perceived to have been a factor in O 'Neill 's eventual departure from the national scene .

Outside the Tests , O 'Neill performed strongly in three matches against regional teams , scoring centuries in each of them . He scored 125 , 125 , and 101 in his only three innings , against Jamaica , Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados .

= = Retirement = =

The following season , O 'Neill was overlooked for selection in all five Tests against the touring England team . Returning to New South Wales , he scored 473 runs at 39 @.@ 42 , including two centuries .

O 'Neill was omitted from the squad that toured South Africa in 1966 ? 67 , ending his Test career . He continued his Shield career while his former teammates were on the other side of the Indian

Ocean , compiling 741 runs at 74 @.@ 10 in a strong season . He started the season with 117 against Western Australia , before scoring a pair of 78s in the return match , helping his team to a tense 13 @-@ run win . He then scored 128 and 22 not out against Victoria and finished his season with 160 and 80 against South Australia , scoring a majority of his team 's first innings score .

As a result , he was selected for an Australian Second XI to tour New Zealand . He scored 69 runs at 17 @.@ 25 in two international matches and made his last first @-@ class century , scoring 101 and 58 not out against Auckland .

O 'Neill retired upon his return to Australia due to a knee injury . He left a reputation as a highly entertaining batsman who did not manage to fulfil his early promise . " A disappointment he was , perhaps , but his cricket will be recalled when those of lesser gifts are forgotten " , opined the writer EW Swanton .

In 61 matches for New South Wales , he scored 5419 runs at 52 @.@ 61 . He compiled 3879 runs at 61 @.@ 57 for St George in grade competition before transferring to Sutherland in the 1965 ? 66 club . He scored 168 on his new club 's first day in the competition .

A cigarette salesman by trade , he became a commentator in retirement . He married Gwen Wallace , a track and field athlete who won relay gold for Australia at the 1954 British Empire and Commonwealth Games . They had two sons and a daughter . Their eldest child Mark O 'Neill represented New South Wales and Western Australia in the 1980s . O 'Neill also co @-@ owned a racehorse with Richie Benaud , Barry Jarman and Ray Steele , named Pall Mallan , and it won a race in 1961 .

O 'Neill died at the age of 71 after a long battle with throat cancer .

= = Style = =

Standing six feet tall , O 'Neill was compared to Don Bradman upon his entry into Test cricket . At his best , he was a dynamic stroke maker who was a crowd favourite because of his ability to score at a high pace , in particular with his power off the back foot . He was noted for his nimble footwork , which he used to negate spin bowling ; however this slowed in his later career as he put on weight . O 'Neill particularly liked to sweep the slower bowlers . He often put too much emphasis on his right hand , allowing a large space between his hands on the bat handle , and then turning his right shoulder too square towards the bowler . The renowned English batsman and captain Wally Hammond said that O 'Neill was the best all @-@ round batsman he had seen since World War II . O 'Neill 's tall build , strength and good looks also drew comparison to his boyhood idol Keith Miller . Despite the comparisons to Bradman , O 'Neill was much taller and broader , and was often impetuous whereas Bradman was known for his patience and lack of rashness . O 'Neill was also criticised for hitting across the line early in his innings .

O 'Neill was highly regarded for his style and entertainment values . Teammate Alan Davidson said " once set he was the most exhilarating player you 'd ever want to see ? he was dynamite . He 'd play attacking shots off balls other people would only think of defending . He had wonderful skill and technique . His shots off the back foot down the ground off fast bowlers ? you can 't really describe how good they were . " His captain for Australia and New South Wales , Richie Benaud said that he was " one of the greatest entertainers we 've had in Australian cricket " . O 'Neill 's style led the British writer EW Swanton to say " the art of batting , he reminded us , was not dead , merely inexplicably dormant " Wisden opined that " A high innings by O 'Neill is a thing of masterful beauty . His stroking is delectable , immense in its power . "

Later in his career , O 'Neill became a nervous and superstitious batsman , particular at the start of an innings . He wrote " batting is a lonely business " in his 1964 autobiography Ins and Outs , opining that he sometimes found first @-@ class cricket to be " depressing and lonely " .

He was regarded as an excellent fieldsman at cover , with a powerful and accurate throw , described by Wisden as a " dream throw " honed from a junior career as a baseballer . He was named as utility player in the 1957 All Australian baseball team , and his ability was such that he was approached by Major League Baseball scouts . Before the retirement of Neil Harvey , he and O 'Neill fielded in tandem in the covers and the pair were regarded as the finest fielding combination of

the time .

= = Test match performance = =