

5 Minutes of your time

Roger Slater

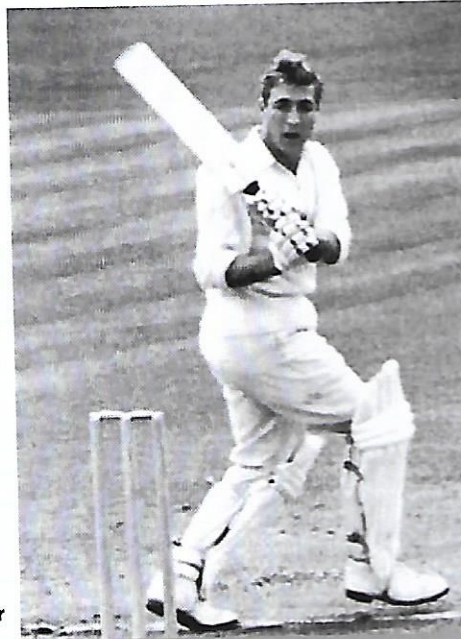
Five minutes of your time, please – with Peter Parfitt

Five Minutes of Your Time is a series of interviews with people from different areas and eras within the game. This one features Peter Parfitt, former Norwich City Reserve and Wealdstone FC Centre Forward, but more famously, Middlesex and England Cricketer and Wisden Player of the Year 1963

Peter, people will most likely remember you for a Test Cricket career that spanned 37 matches and also your first class cricket career of 498 matches for Middlesex and England.

They may not realise that you were also played for Norwich City Reserves before Middlesex offered you a contract. Was there ever the ambition or the opportunity to become a footballer rather than a cricketer?

Actually, I only ever played for Norwich Reserves once and that was in a match against Chelsea Reserves in the London Combination League in the 1954-55 season. I played centre forward and actually scored the only



goal of the match!

At that time I was playing and enjoying Minor Counties cricket and I was set to become a Games Master. I had interviews at Loughborough but during the autumn I played in a match against an 'Edrich XI' and Bill Edrich spoke to me talking about turning professional. A few months later I heard I'd been unsuccessful at Loughborough so I wrote to him and in January the following year I signed for Middlesex!

Once you had joined Middlesex, what was it that introduced you to Wealdstone FC?

It was a bit later actually. When I joined Middlesex in 1955, I went to the club in April, then in the September I started my National Service – I was in the RAF until September 1958 and I played cricket for my camp, the RAF and the Combined Services too.

I went back to Lords in September 1958 and while I was there, a man called Bill Cunningham introduced me to Wealdstone. Bill's mother was in charge of the Player's Dining Room at Lord's and I

think he suggested I went down during the winter. I did and that was that.

(Note; Its likely that Bill Cunningham was a member of the family of William Cunningham who was involved at Wealdstone as one of the original Trustees in 1923)

You made over fifty appearances in best part of three seasons at Wealdstone and scored a few goals along the way. Did you play anywhere

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else afterwards or did Cricket take over?

No, when I stopped playing at Wealdstone, I didn't join anyone else to play regularly, though I did play in the odd FA match. Cricket took over really and in 1961 I was selected to tour India and Pakistan with the MCC at the end of the cricket season.

There was one game against where a particular tackle left a lasting memory on the fans;

I also remember Peter Parfitt and the 'retribution' tackle. Actually, it was more like assault on a Redhill player who had continually fouled Viv Evans. Peter was an enthusiastic player and in the match against Redhill, a tall full back was unable to stop Viv Evans - he was fouling him quite often.

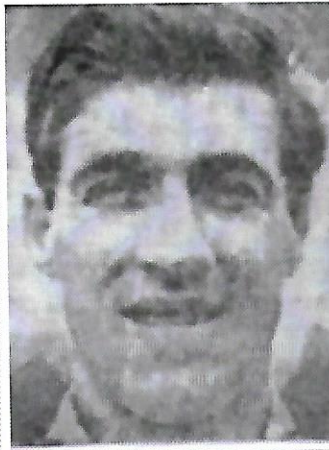
Viv was eventually injured. Peter waited, not for too long, until this player dwelt on the ball in front of the main stand. He then proceeded to fly through the air and hit the opponent somewhere in the thigh region and he despatched him into the railings! (The actual distance grows as the memory fades but it was yards!).

Does that bring back a memory or two?

Yes, I remember that Redhill game which was at Lower Mead. The player concerned was I think

actually an inside forward and those days was regarded as a spiteful player. He never left Viv Evans alone.

The opportunity arose for me to catch him with square shoulder charge as he was turning into me and unfortunately I sent him across cinder track. I was not sent off nor did I have my name taken however!



It was a fairly successful Wealdstone side over the three years you played, coming Runner Up twice in the Athenian League and reaching a number of Cup Finals - do you have any particular memories of the club at that time?

The only memory I have really have of Wealdstone is that whilst I played we were not a great side. Certainly not in the same league as either Enfield or Barnet or

indeed Hendon for that matter. It seemed to me that players were always leaving and others arriving. And of course I was never there at the end of the season (for the Finals) as the cricket season had always started up again.

Have you stayed in touch with any of the players or the club at all since you left?

No, The only person I stayed in touch with for a while was Peter Rogers who was the Coach at the time.

Even at Amateur level football crowds are closer and generally more vociferous than a Championship or Test Cricket crowd - did that affect the way you played either game?

I was never really aware of spectators either at cricket or football apart from when I was touring and playing in India where they could be unpleasant.

There were a number of players in the fifties and sixties that played both Football and Cricket, but as professional sport has moved on they have become a rarity if not non-existent now; Were there advantages to you in combining both 'careers' or would it have been impossible to progress in cricket unless the football career stopped?

My career was Cricket so that took priority. These days, it would not be possible to com-

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line both games because of the extended seasons for both games. For me, football was a means of keeping fit in the Winter months.

Now, a career as an After Dinner Speaker, does football figure at all?

Football did not really feature in my after dinner speaking period although I did meet all

the footballers who were also on the circuit.

You are still living in Norfolk – do you watch Norwich City as a former player?

I live in Norfolk on the North Norfolk coast but I don't watch Norwich play. I am an avid Arsenal supporter going back to the days when Denis and Leslie Compton both played

Five Minutes of Your Time is one of a number of articles produced for the blog at www.2ndyellow.com where there is a regular column on Wealdstone.

Pics - Roger Slater
Graham Smith