



### **Bede Ryan #503 (2011)**

Bede Ryan passed away in Brisbane on 20th May, 2011 following an illness which rapidly overtook him. He was farwelled among family and friends in bright Brisbane sunshine. The following obituary was written by Peter Langston.

It's a long way from an austere Uralla orchard on the verge of WWII to the warming sunshine of a late autumn in Brisbane this week. For Bede Ryan, it was a journey he celebrated with friends and family as we gathered in farewell. Unlike most, it was not work or success at sport which was prominent in making his life of note but rather the quality of the relationships he achieved and generously maintained.

In the mid 1950's, he was just sixteen, a stripling and the youngest of a brood of nine. He was already a fine sportsman but had his sharp eyes – his Bedey Eyes in fact – fixed on a spot in the Air Force but the death of his father took away that dream. He had to run the farm.

Bede's reputation as a cricketer was earned. His flair and natural ability took him into first grade with the dominant Uralla at just 17, in a team of bonafide stars. Bede never forgot the impact older Uralla players had at a time when Uralla fielded two 1st grade sides. By the early 1960's, he had formed a strong opening partnership with Wally Taylor, regularly peeling off three figure opening stands, including 329 against Waratahs on a February afternoon in 1962.

Bede would later play for St Peters and Waratahs, where he made stacks of runs, took plenty of wickets and won premierships but like most of the talented, the stats meant very little. His main endeavours were directed into developing young players, but with Bede it was more than skills that were taught. As he had learned so he sought to teach and young bloods were painted rich portraits about the game and their responsibility as its new custodians.

In his last days, many of those who sent messages of love and support to him and his family were these same young men who were smart enough to listen on their way to manhood. That alone speaks of his success.

Like many, my experience of Bede Ryan was of a man of great humour, strongly held ideals who didn't suffer fools but gave them every chance not to become one. He was an honourable man. He was a mate.

Of course he loved golf and his beloved Dragons and most sports but he invested his core in something far more important.

The real story of Bede Ryan can be told by anyone he was close to. At his funeral, sons Paul

and Daniel spoke of the simple things a man loves and pursues and symbols of Bede's were placed as reminders – his dog's collar, flowers from his garden, his rosary beads and prayer book, a signed canvas by family and friends, a cricket cap and his St. George Illawara Dragons scarf.

Bede leaves wife Denise, children Paul, Louise and Daniel and their families with the legacy his fierce and loyal love created and sustained right until the final ball was bowled. His legacy was in their words, their actions and all over their faces – a legacy we would all envy. It was in the wonderfully fitting touches which so typify the close knit Ryan's.

After all the words were said and his soul farewelled to God, those present lined the start of his final journey, each with a red or a white balloon in hand. As the hearse crept past, "When The Saints Going Marching In" boomed from it in New Orleans jazz style and seventy five people applauded his innings, then released the balloons in the same manner in which we had just let Bede go and they rose and rose, caught on the breeze and gradually faded from view.

The memories never will.