WOOLLER, WILFRED (1912-1997), cricketer and rugby player

Name: Wilfred Wooller
Date of birth: 1912
Date of death: 1997
Spouse: Enid Mary Wooller (née James)
Spouse: Gillian Wooller (née Windsor-Clive)
Parent: Ethel Wooller (née Johnson)
Parent: Wilfred Wooller
Gender: Male
Occupation: cricketer and rugby player
Area of activity: Sports and Leisure Pursuits
Author: D. Huw Owen

Wilfred Wooller was born at Wentworth, Church Road, Rhos-on-Sea, Denbighshire, on 20 November 1912, the son of Wilfred Wooller, builder and contractor, and his wife Ethel (née Johnson, died 1924). He was educated at John Bright Grammar School, Llandudno, Rydal School and Christ's College, Cambridge. He married 1) Gillian Windsor-Clive (1922-1961) of St. Fagans Castle in 1941, divorced in 1946, and 2) Enid Mary James of Ogmore Vale in 1948, with whom he had three sons and two daughters.

Whilst still a pupil at Rydal School he played rugby for Sale, and then represented Wales in 1933 against England in the memorable match when Wales won for the first time at Twickenham. He was awarded 18 caps between 1933 and 1939, playing a key role in the victory over New Zealand in 1935, and captained Wales against Ireland in 1937. A Cambridge Blue in 1933, 1934 and 1935, he played for Cardiff from 1936, captaining the team in the 1938-9 and 1939-40 seasons.

He also played cricket for Colwyn Bay and Denbighshire whilst at school, and then for Cambridge University in 1935 and 1936, thereby becoming a Double Blue. After leaving university with a degree in archaeology and anthropology in 1936, he moved to Cardiff to work in the G.L.M. coal-exporting business based in Cardiff Docks. He joined the St. Fagans cricket club before playing his first match for Glamorgan in 1938, when he took three wickets for 22 runs in his first bowling spell and had first-innings figures of 5-90. He continued to impress as a fast-medium bowler and hard-hitting batsman, scoring his maiden century and taking five wickets for 69 runs in the victory over the West Indies in 1939. Whilst serving in south-east Asia during the Second World War, he was captured in 1942 and held captive for the rest of the war at the notorious Changi prison in Singapore.

After the war he resumed his cricketing career and assisted Johnnie Clay's efforts to rebuild the Glamorgan club. He became the assistant secretary in 1946 and captain in 1947 when he scored more than 1,000 runs for the first time, shared a record seventh-wicket partnership of 195 with Willie Jones against Lancashire, and captured 79 wickets. A strong leader, he led Glamorgan in 1948 to their first county championship title. He was a fearless short-leg fielder and in the 1950s often opened both the batting and bowling. In 1954, at the age of 41, he achieved the double, scoring 1,059 runs and taking 107 wickets. Business commitments, including his insurance business, may well have prevented him from playing for England but he was an England Test selector from 1955 until 1962.

Despite occasional disputes with the club's committee, Wooller continued as captain of Glamorgan until his retirement as a player in 1960, but he also played once again in 1962. He served as the club's secretary from 1961 until 1978, and was elected President in 1991.

Other sporting activities included playing football for Barry Town and Cardiff City, for whom he once scored a hat-trick as centre-forward, and representing Wales at squash rackets and the Cardiff Athletic Club at bowls.

He was also a prominent sports commentator, covering rugby and cricket for the *Sunday Telegraph* and commentating on cricket for BBC Wales; one memorable occasion was his commentary when Gary Sobers hit six sixes in one over at Swansea in 1968. He eagerly participated in debating controversial issues and was an outspoken defender of the involvement of South African rugby teams in Britain.

Wilfred Wooller died at Llandough Hospital in Cardiff on 10 March 1997, and was buried in Thornhill cemetery two days later.

Author

D. Huw Owen

Sources

Andrew Hignell, *A Who's Who of Glamorgan County Cricket Club 1888-1991* (1992)

Andrew Hignell, *The Skipper, A Biography of Wilf Wooller* (1995)

Andrew Hignell, *Cricket in Wales* (2008)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: Wilf Wooller

Additional Links

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Published date: 2015-02-18

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Owen, D. H., (2015). WOOLLER, WILFRED (1912-1997), cricketer and rugby player. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 3 Oct 2024, from https://biography.wales/article/s10-WOOL-WIL-1912

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