

## ASHLEY COWAN (G88-93)

Ashley was born in 1975 in Hitchin in Hertfordshire. He made his first-class debut for Essex against Derbyshire at Chelmsford in August 1995 and picked up his first wicket in first-class cricket during the following Championship fixture, against Yorkshire at Headingley – the victim was Darren Gough.

The right-artermer cemented a regular place in the 1st XI in 1996 when he picked up 37 Championship wickets – including a hat-trick against Gloucestershire at Colchester. 1997 proved to be his most rewarding campaign, when his domestic performances earned him a spot in England's squad to tour the West Indies.



Cowan finished second in Essex's Championship bowling averages with 52 wickets @ 25.65, and was the County's leading wicket-taker in the AXA one-day League and NatWest Trophy.

In the NatWest Trophy he enjoyed one of his finest hours (or closer to three) when he ensured Essex took a firm grip of the Final against Warwickshire at Lord's from the off. His dismissal of former team-mate Nick Knight in the first over was the prelude to an outstanding analysis of 12-3-29-3. Essex's nine-wicket victory provided Cowan with the first of two knock-out winner's medals in consecutive seasons as the County returned to Lord's the following season in the Benson and Hedges Cup Final. Cowan again picked up three wickets as Leicestershire were brushed aside.

In between these crowning glories came a largely undistinguished trip to the Caribbean with England, where he was restricted to just three first-class matches in between the Tests. Unfortunately the national team selectors never came knocking again but Essex were to be treated to a number of match-winning displays in the years to come as he bestrode the domestic stage.

The period between 1999-2000 proved to be his most consistent when he posted Championship returns of 44 wickets @ 28.40 and 47 @ 24.76 in consecutive seasons.

By 2002, injuries had begun to take their toll, however, as he was restricted to nine Championship appearances. Nevertheless, his 29 wickets @ 28.17 played a crucial part as Essex won the Second Division title. In addition, he led the way with 19 wickets to help Essex gain promotion from the National Cricket League, not to mention his ever present record as the County again reached the Benson & Hedges Cup Final – this time losing to Warwickshire.

Cowan missed the whole of the 2003 campaign after undergoing major knee surgery but his courage and determination brought him back into first-team contention midway through the following season.

A constant battle against form and fitness meant the 2005 season was one in which Cowan largely took a watching brief.

Although the majority of Ashley Cowan's finest moments in an Essex shirt have come with ball in hand, he did make a thumping 94 against Leicestershire at Grace Road in 1998 – sharing a last-wicket stand of 102 with Peter Such.

To quote from his own website ( <http://www.ashleycowan.org/index.htm> ) "With either bat or ball in hand, one thing was certain about Ashley Cowan the cricketer – he didn't die wondering."

In his first class cricket career he took 284 wickets at an average of 32.86 runs each. He also scored 2268 runs.