

## Player Profile

*Name:* Alice Henderson

*Position:* All rounder (spin)/Opening batsman (preferred)

*Age:* 16

*Games played:* Technically? None. Not recognised, anyway. I've played plenty of pre-season games and filled in for my brother, Adam's team, when they've been short. But I'm not officially registered with a club. Yet.

*Top Score:* 138 no, which I also scored on my debut, but it's not an official record.

*Favourite player:* Alex Blackwell

*Ambition:* To be a professional cricketer

The summer after I turned eight, Mr Williams, the Phys. Ed. teacher, announced over the PA that if anyone wanted to play cricket for the school, they should line up by the bottom gate after the first lunch bell. My older brother Adam and I had grown up on cricket, so it was a no-brainer for me to be down by the gate that day. When Mr Parkinson turned up, he asked what I was doing there. When I told him I wanted to play cricket, he laughed. I had no idea what was so funny about that, but he pointed towards the netball courts and told me that I should be over there with the girls. Before I could protest, Mr Williams had turned up and told Mr Parkinson I could at least have one training session and see how I went.

Adam, of course, thought it was hilarious that I was the only girl at training, and when we got home that afternoon he couldn't wait to tell my parents how I'd embarrassed myself for thinking I could play cricket with the boys. My parents gave each other a funny sort of look, and my grandma said, "If Alice wants to try her hand at cricket, then she should go for it."

My parents agreed, eventually, and Adam wasn't impressed at all because cricket had always been his thing. He'd started playing for a club side when he was seven, but it never occurred to me that I could play. Not until that day at school. And even though Adam and I had played backyard cricket together since I could hold a bat by myself, training that day and actually learning about it was like a light bulb came on. I'll be forever thankful to Mr Williams, because that first training session cemented my dream – to play cricket for Australia. I had no idea that I couldn't do that of course, but every other kid playing cricket dreamed of putting on the baggy green so why not me? I have no idea why, but it didn't occur to me that there weren't any girls in the Australian team that I watched on TV. I think it was because I never

saw myself as one of the girls. I was never one for playing with Barbie dolls or wearing skirts.

I trained with the junior school team three days a week and the other two lunch hours I spent in the nets with whoever else came down. Adam steered clear of me because it was apparently embarrassing for him having to train with his little sister. It got easier once he left to go to high school. The boys in my team didn't ever think twice after that first year about whether I'd be in the team or not for school and in our last year, when we got a new Phys. Ed. teacher who told me I had to play something else over the summer (meaning netball), my team mates threatened a boycott so he'd have no-one to coach. I bet he was glad he relented that year, because after fifteen years of trying, we won the senior primary school cricket trophy after beating Norths in the final, and I had the best bowling average for the district. Not bad for an all-rounder against boys who played club every week.

Once I got to high school, the only taste of cricket I got was training with Adam's club team since we didn't have a girls' team at school. By now Adam had grown up enough to let me tag along with him to his club training a couple nights a week, and his coach let me roll my arm over or jump in and bat against the bowlers when they were trying out new deliveries. I wish I could've played with the team on weekends, but Mum said that was a bridge too far. I don't know what they were so afraid of, letting a girl play in a boys' team but Dad just said that at least I got to train. And besides, when they had non-league tournaments or social games, they sometimes let me be 12th man or even be in the run-on side. There is no better feeling than stepping onto the field in the morning in starched whites and hearing the first crack of the ball on bat during a match.

I'm finally going to get a chance to play this weekend though, since there's a pre-season competition on, and the local coaches have banded together to bring up a scout from the city to have a look at some of the boys to see if there's anyone good enough to play in grade cricket down in Brissy over summer. We haven't had many boys go down and be a success for a long time. Not since Adam's coach went down and played for Brothers nearly twenty years ago.

Rumour has it he was being primed to play for Queensland, but did some serious damage to his shoulder one off-season which stopped him from bowling. He ended up coaching down there for awhile before he came back up here with his wife and kids and took over the head coach job at Adam's club, the Devils.

Adam's been excited about the scout coming up for weeks, and he's had me at the nets every

afternoon helping him prepare for the game, and down at the indoor sports centre where he works, I help him train during his lunch breaks. I have no idea whether Adam's good enough to play grade cricket in Brisbane or not, but he was the youngest player to be named in the senior side for the Devils four years ago when he was only fifteen and last year he smashed Rodney's Burns' thirty year-old bowling record when he took six wickets for eight runs off of his ten overs.

Man that was a great game to watch. Adam just kept putting that ball in the same spot almost every delivery and just when the batsmen would get used to the length he'd spear one in short or bowl a toe-cruncher. And fast. It was the quickest he'd ever bowled. Four of his wickets were clean bowled and the other two were LB's. The Turtles never stood a chance after that.

So that's why this scout thing is a big deal. Adam's determined to put in a great game, which is why I'll be playing in the other team. The district coaches have picked their A side, which Adam will be playing for and is supposed to be the best players from each team, and a B side, which I'll be playing for and basically consists of everyone else who can make it to the game.

Picking an A side is supposed to make it easier for the scouts to know who to look at, and I'm glad that Adam gets a shot to maybe head to the city and play his way up to the top. Me? I'm just happy to be playing in a proper match. I mean, I am one of the best batters the Devils have, but since I'm not technically a registered player, I have to play in the B team. I'm not one to toot my own horn or anything, but that's the truth. If they'd let me play competition, my name would be up on the honour boards in the club rooms. Instead, I have to be content with keeping my own scores, and though it will never be officially recognised, my 138 against Brothers in my debut match two years ago is still the top score for the club.

So anyway, this tournament is important for Adam, and it's his best chance to get noticed, so we've been training hard to get him in ready to impress the scouts. And in a few years' time when he's doing an interview on TV before his debut for the Queensland side, he'll be thanking me for helping him get there.

Funny thing though – I never really dreamed that could be me.