

## Profile of Clare Taylor

By Peter Redding

Clare Taylor is arguably the most gifted all-round sportswoman that Britain has ever produced. She is best remembered for her starring role in England's Cricket World Cup triumph in 1993 but it was two years later that she achieved the unique feat of playing in the World Cup in two different sports, when she went on to play in football's equivalent in Sweden.

Clare's story began in Huddersfield, where she attended a Golcar match for the first time. "I started watching Golcar in 1977. John Cooper was the captain and was my form teacher at Moor End and we thought it would be a laugh to watch him play". Cooper became the first person to recognise her sporting prowess as she warmed up with the team before matches. The following year she agreed to become the scorer for the men's team, always wanting to be involved in the game wherever possible.



Her first taste of competitive cricket came in 1987 when she played for Wakefield Ladies in the National Premier League. The rise to fame was a swift one because only a year later she was wearing the Three Lions. "I was selected to play for Yorkshire in 1987, then at the end of 1988 I was playing in my first World Cup so it was a pretty quick rise up the ranks - that was my big break".

Shortly after her cricket career took off, her big break in football arrived. She moved to play for Liverpool in the Women's Premier League in 1991 and would later appear in the Women's FA Cup Final at Wembley in 1995. For several years she played cricket in the summers and football in the winters just as Denis Compton had done after the Second World War. Clare's football career allowed her to play at stadiums such as Anfield and Highbury and play against the likes of Mia Hamm, arguably the most famous women's footballer.

Cricket World Cups brought out the best in Clare. Her 26 appearances produced 36 wickets at a cost of just 13.94 each and an even more impressive economy rate of 2.1 runs per over. She maintained an economy rate of fewer than 3 over the course of her career and this was largely due to her ability to bowl consistent lines with her medium pace. "My strength was that I consistently put the ball in the right areas. I always looked to move the ball away from the bat. Sometimes I lacked variation but bowling in the right areas was the key. I wasn't really patient with the bat but I could be with the ball".

After the disappointment of finishing runners-up in her first World Cup, Clare gained her winners medal in the 1993 tournament. She claimed 14 wickets in the competition including figures of 2 for 27 in the final win over New Zealand at Lord's. In 1995 Taylor won a medal at the European Championships in Dublin, picking up 1

for 23 in the final win over Ireland. It was a surreal achievement given that only a month earlier she was playing for England in the Football World Cup. This further emphasised the level that she had reached in both sports.

Taylor would go on to play in three more World Cups in 1996, 2000 and 2005. Her performances in the 2000 showpiece yielded 14 wickets and she was the second most prolific bowler in the tournament as England reached the semi-finals. The 2004/5 World Cup was also memorable because it was in the match against Ireland that Clare made history. With the wicket of Miriam Grealey, she became the first English woman to take 100 One-Day International wickets. She continued playing for England until 2005 when she played her final One Day International against Australia.

Clare also represented England in 16 Test matches, claiming 25 wickets. Her best figures were 4 for 38 against India at Hyderabad in 1995/6. It was certainly the one-day game that saw the best of her, however. She was the first English woman to play 100 One Day Internationals and is the leading wicket-taker for England. She is third in the overall world list; only Cathryn Fitzpatrick of Australia and Neetu David of India have taken more wickets as of April 2007.

Taylor's domestic cricket career was also decorated with honours. She won 11 county championships in 12 seasons with Yorkshire. In 2000 she began playing for Otago in New Zealand's domestic competition.

Having achieved so much in sport, Clare is in a good position to offer advice to those looking to play the game. "For any young girl getting in to the game now, I would say make sure you enjoy it and work as hard as you can to do your best; don't go in half-hearted, it should be all or nothing. I got into cricket mainly through scoring for Golcar, I learned heaps about the game when I was doing that."

Taylor also believes that women have become more accepted in the game. "When I started John Cooper and David Thorpe were very supportive and attitudes towards women playing male sports have improved slightly over the years, but there is still a long way to go as a lot of the national organisations pay lip-service to the women's game rather than really getting behind it. The women's game needs to be successful on the field and have good publicity to keep numbers coming into the game but it is in a fairly healthy state at the moment".

More honours came her way in 2000, this time off the field, as her services to women's sport were recognised with an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. "Receiving the MBE from Prince Charles was a very special day. I am a big royalist so I loved all the pageantry and it was great to meet other people who had done amazing things. Being given an MBE was also recognition for women in sport in general". A year earlier Clare was also made a Sporting Ambassador for Sport England, promoting healthy lifestyles to young people in her area. In 2004 she was presented with an honorary degree by Huddersfield University after being nominated by Golcar Cricket Club.

Clare has always enjoyed being part of the game, whether it be scoring or playing and it has come as no surprise that she has now taken to coaching. In October 2006 she became the Women's Cricket Development and Coaching Officer of the Otago State team in New Zealand, accepting a three-year contract, having served as Player/Coach the previous season. Her career in sport is thriving as she continues to stay involved in the game she loves.

## Career Record

### Batting and fielding averages

	Mat	Inns	NO	Runs	HS	Ave	100	50	Ct	St
<b>Tests</b>	16	21	7	226	43	16.14	0	0	5	0
<b>ODIs</b>	105	56	21	303	29	8.65	0	0	28	0

### Bowling averages

	Mat	Balls	Runs	Wkts	BBI	BBM	Ave	Econ	SR	4	5	10
<b>Tests</b>	16	2383	1011	25	4/38	5/95	40.44	2.54	95.32	2	0	0
<b>ODIs</b>	105	5140	2443	102	4/13	4/13	23.95	2.85	50.39	2	0	0

Stats correct as of April 2007

Source: [www.cricinfo.com](http://www.cricinfo.com)