

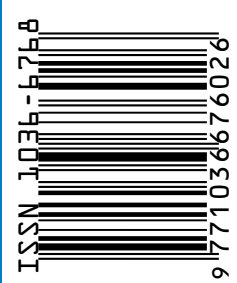
SPORT

TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2012

WEB: www.northernstar.com.au EMAIL: sport@northernstar.com.au



Lismore fields, form ■ PAGE 27



Tons of joy for Chen

From Cambodia's Killing Fields to Williams Reserve at Lennox

By **JOSH SPASARO**
Sports reporter

AS a young boy, Chen Tay's life was under threat and he made it to Australia only by chance.

Fast forward 31 years to last Saturday when he blasted an innings of 214 runs for Lennox Head in a Ballina District fourth-grade cricket match against Alstonville at Williams Reserve, Lennox Head.

It was a club-record knock, surpassing Brian Schweitzer's previous benchmark of 210 in the 2001-02 season.

Tay's innings included 26 fours and 13 sixes.

His sense of humour is remarkable considering he could have lost his life in the gruesome Killing Fields in his native country of Cambodia between 1975 and 1979, when 1.4 million people died.

He fled with his family to a free new land with new hope, eventually making it to Australia in 1980 when he was just two years old.

"We had a sponsor who got us to Australia, so for that I'm very lucky," Tay, now 33, said.

"My earliest memories of cricket are the nightmares I

had when the West Indies kept beating us (in the 1980s).

"My Aussie friends keep taking the piss out of me because I'm a cricket tragic from Cambodia."

And all that friendly banter continued on Saturday despite his amazing knock.

What makes his innings all the more remarkable is that it came in a 40-overs-a-side one-day match where he arrived at the crease with the score at 2-64 in the 12th over.

Tay shared a 232-run stand with Tim Kelly, who hit 94.

Lennox ended up posting 3-373 and not surprisingly won convincingly, bowling out the visitors for 158.

But Tay's heroics were not enough for teammate Dave Greiner to consider it worthy of man-of-the-match honours.

"Dave took 3-9. He's a funny guy and he was joking afterwards that I needed to take a couple of catches and a wicket if I wanted to get the best player on the ground," said Tay, who works as a chiropractor in Ballina.

"Someone brought up Dave Warner's wagon wheel on their phone (after his 180 from 158 balls for Australia in the Third Test against India) at the club after the game

and I kept telling everyone that was my wagon wheel."

Tay had previously dreamt of his record-breaking innings for many nights.

"I've played the game for 15 years and before Saturday I'd never scored 100," he said. "When I got closer to it I thought 'I've been waiting my whole life for this'."

"I got a duck the Saturday before and everyone was ribbing me about that at my church, but that's just the Australian way.

"I only averaged 18 (with the bat) last season but now I'm averaging 73.

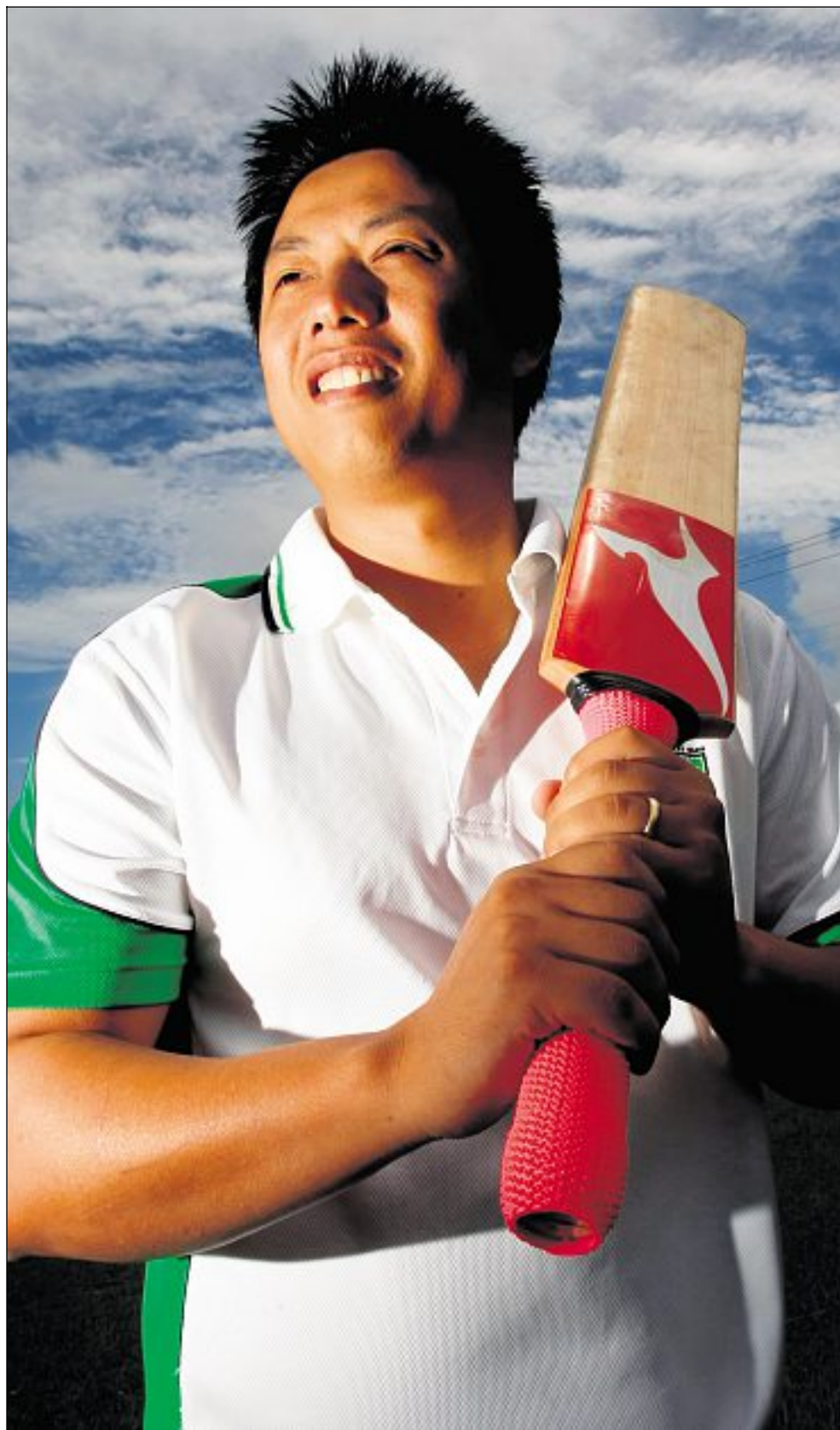
"I woke up really sore but my partner said 'I don't care because you still have to clean your room' so that brought me back down to earth."

Tay thanks cricket for allowing him to never take a day for granted.

"For me, Test cricket is a bit of a parallel to the way you should live your life," he said.

"My life philosophy is 'keep swinging' and on the weekend I did that."

And that is exactly what he and his family did when times were tough in their native land in the 1970s.



CRICKET TRAGIC: Chen Tay scored a double century at the weekend, breaking a club record.

Picture: BLAINEY WOODHAM

Zac Fries high as Taj watches on

By **JOSH SPASARO**
Sports reporter

DIFFICULT conditions did not faze Skennars Head surfer Zac Wightman when he took out the Under-14 boys final during the Billabong Taj's Small Fries event at Yallingup, Western Australia, on Sunday.

The 13-year-old recorded a score of 14.50 points in the final, overseen by fourth-ranked ASP star Taj Burrow, comfortably prevailing over Shaun Manners (Margaret River, WA), who registered 11.90 points.

Zac got off to a flying start in his

heats before conditions became more of a challenge in the finals.

"I had a lot of fun on Saturday and got scores of eight and nine in my first heats," he said.

"Then on Sunday there was a lot of swell and wind which made it hard to get waves.

"A few sets came in and that made things a bit edgy but I enjoy those challenges because then you see who's really up for it and who can handle it."

Zac was surprised to win his final by 2.60 points.

"Everyone told me it looked close

but when I found out I had a bit of a gap I felt heaps better," he said.

The student from Xavier Catholic College at Skennars Head was the Hurley NSW junior champion last July at Under-14 level at Forster but rates his win in WA as a highlight of his blossoming career.

"It's one of the best events I've done," he said.

"Having Taj present the winner's prize to me gave me so much more joy because he's one of my heroes.

"My dad Geoff is a keen surfer, we've been on a lot of trips together and he was so happy to find out I'd

won when I rang him.

"He's working up in the mines in Mackay so he didn't know."

Watching all the best professional surfers last February and March at the Quiksilver Pro on the Gold Coast fuelled Zac's passion to rub shoulders with the best one day.

"I want to make it to the top where Kelly Slater is," he said.

"He's just as good a surfer as the rest but he's won 11 world titles so he's smarter.

"Owen Wright (ASP fifth-ranked surfer from Lennox Head) is also a goofy-foot surfer like me."



AIMING FOR THE TOP: Zac Wightman with Taj Burrow after his win in WA.
Picture: WOOLACOTT / SURFING WA