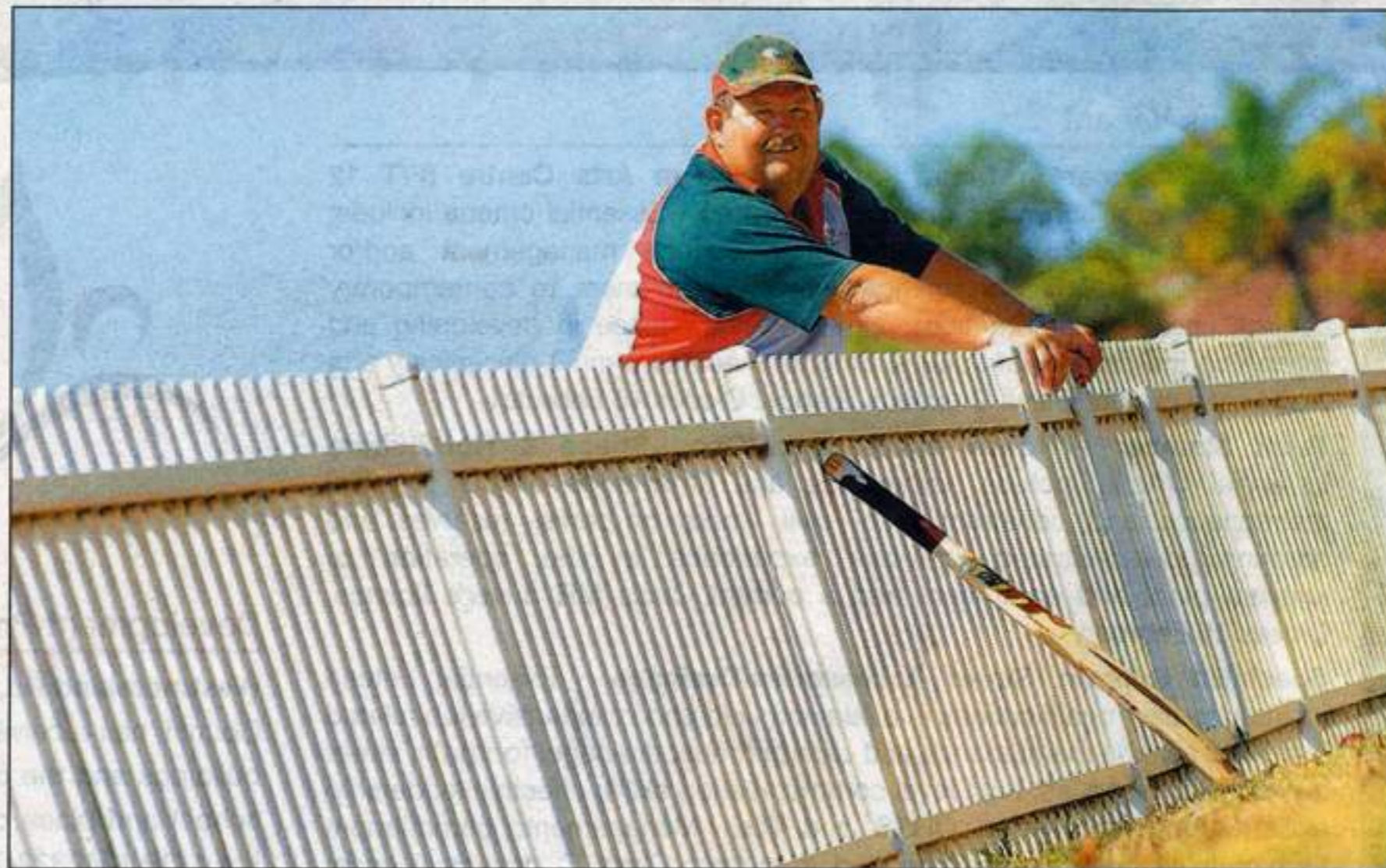


Mentor leads by example

The accolades are continuing to pour in for one of the Macarthur region's best cricket coaches who proudly represented NSW at the prestigious Allan Border Medal last week, reports **VERA BERTOLA**.



Macquarie Fields' Sgt Peter Lonergan has devoted years to coaching junior cricketers.

Picture: ROBERT POZO

PETER Lonergan readily admits he's a poor cricketer.

He says "average" is the appropriate description for both his batting and bowling skills though he did have some "moments" in the field.

He recalls that he won a bowling award – once – and it "knocked the heck" out of him.

But, in a fair world, most of us generally find our forte, and thank goodness Sgt Peter Lonergan, of Macquarie Fields police, did.

And he didn't have to go far to find it.

Peter is an exemplary cricket coach, one of the best in the region, and last week he represented NSW at the prestigious Allan Border Medal presentation evening in Melbourne.

The invitation to attend was an acknowledgement of his success as the 2007-08 NSW district cricket coach of the year.

Peter has a photo of himself standing alongside Border, the esteemed former Australian captain, as a keepsake of what he

says is the highlight of his sporting career . . . so far.

The career policeman started playing cricket, like most Australians, as a youngster, and when he was 15 turned his hand to coaching at his local club.

About 11 years ago he stepped up a level and started looking after Camden District Junior Cricket Association's representative teams.

Some questioned his credentials when he moved into representative level with only one club premiership to his name.

Sgt Lonergan himself is a bit testy about how success is qualified, and quips that trophies aren't the only gauge of achievement.

"My success at a club level was seeing kids go on and stay in the sport," he said.

"My major success was when they were out on the field playing and not getting into strife."

He said he considered representative cricket "more serious" so obviously success was interpreted differently as well.

"My best moments have been

when I've seen kids go on to make something of themselves, and they grow as people as well," he explained.

"My pet hate is when they don't play to their ability."

Peter often uses Steve Waugh as a role model for his young charges.

"He is the epitome of the sportsman who did it tough and toughed his way to become one of the best players this country has ever seen," he said.

"I tell the kids: 'If you want to get anywhere, follow him. He used his guts and determination and did the best with what he had.'"