

CAPTAIN TUBBY CALLS IT A DAY

'I lost the urge to play'

by PAUL HAIGH

STUMPS have been drawn on the career of one of the most popular sportsmen this country has seen.

Mark Taylor, the boy from Wagga, Northern District opener, NSW and Australian captain, has decided his playing days at the elite level are over.

Now at 34, with a bright future ahead of him, either involved in cricket or with other ventures, the nuggety left-hander has retired from international cricket.

On Saturday when he played for Northern District at Waitara Oval it was his last time on the wicket while holding the mantle of Australian Test captain. (Match report on page 65)

His career began in 1989, playing 104 Tests, leading Australia to glory for the past 50 Tests of his career, including 26 victories and a winning percentage of 52 per cent, made 7525 runs at 43.50, took a world record 157 catches for a fieldsman and helped build Australia into the most dominant nation in world cricket.

Two years ago, Taylor fought the greatest personal battle of his career, when he failed to register a half century in 21 consecutive innings and critics were calling for his blood.

Taylor refused to buckle under the adversity, his captaincy got even better eventually riding the trough of self doubt to score seven centuries in the past 18 months and save his career.

In October last year against Pakistan he equalled Sir Donald Bradman's batting record of 334.

But now it's time to do other things, like devote as much time as he can to his wife, Judi, and two boys, William and Jack, sit back and plan for what lays ahead, and still play cricket for NSW and Northern District (which honoured him with life membership last year).

Taylor made his own decision to depart on his terms, while at the peak of his powers as a captain.

At a press conference on Tuesday, the man named Australian of the Year last week, said it was time to go.

The Australian Test squad for the upcoming tour of the West Indies is announced next Monday.

Taylor felt the desire to tour and play wasn't "igniting" the motivational fires to continue. "I really feel since the Adelaide Test match, when we secured the Ashes, I started to lose the urge to play Test cricket," Taylor said.

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Young fans look on as Mark Taylor makes his way from the dressing room at Waitara Oval
Photo: SAMANTHA STUDDERT