

PETER CANN – AUSTRALIAN LACROSSE CHAMPION



As Peter explains the reason he started playing lacrosse was that he couldn't get a game in the local football team! Peter commenced playing lacrosse with the Fremantle Lacrosse Club in 1960, age 10, and played in six underage grand finals, represent Western Australia in Under 16's in 1965 in 1966 and Colts in 1967 and 1969.

After football training one night Peter was watching the Fremantle juniors training when Jack Brewer Senior, who also lived in Tamar Street, Palmyra, approached him and asked him if he would like to have a go and gave him a stick. At the end of the session Peter went to hand back the stick but Jack said to keep it, and encouraged him to bring it back next Saturday and have a game! The rest is history. At the time 12-15 of his mates lived in Tamar Street or nearby.

Peter played in the Fremantle senior team from 1967 -1970, which won the A grade Premiership in 1970. In 1971 Peter was approached to transfer to East Fremantle as a playing coach, which he accepted for that year, where he remained as a player until he retired in 1990. During his career at East Fremantle the senior team won a majority of premierships from 1976-1990, Peter was the first player to throw 100 goals for the club in 1975, received an award for the highest goal scorer for the club from 1975 – 1985 (1156 goals, where he threw over 100 goals in each season, including 181 in 1978).

Peter Cann started his representation for W.A. as a junior in 1965 and 66, colts in 67 and 69, with his first game in the senior team against the touring American Lancers in 1970 and remained a member of the W.A. team playing in national championships from 1970-1990, with W.A. particularly dominant in the 1980's, winning 7 championships – 1972, 1981-82, 1984-85 and 1988-89). Peter was selected in the Australian All-Star team on many occasions.

Peter Cann was selected in every Australian senior lacrosse team from 1976-1990, which were the 1976 and 1990 touring teams and the 1978, 1982, 1984 & 1986 Australian World Series teams. While he may not have been selected Peter was not really aware of the 1972 tour and where it was going and was told in 1973 that he had a choice to make in 1974, keep his job as a fireman or apply for the Australian team! Nonetheless his career was clearly on the ascendency from 1976 and he never looked back.

Awards received during his international career include MVP in 1976 (Toronto, Canada), best attack player in 1978 World Series (Manchester, England), All World lacrosse team in 1982 (Baltimore), All World lacrosse team in 1984 (Pre-Olympic World Series – LA, USA), MVP and All World lacrosse team in 1986 World Series (Toronto, Canada). It should be noted that the concept of World lacrosse teams for championships was not introduced until 1982, thus given Peter was MVP attack player in 1978 it would be a reasonable assumption that he would have been selected in the World team in 1978 had such a team been selected. What is perhaps more amazing is that he was selected in the 1990 Australian team at the age of 39!



Above Peter is being presented with the 1986 MVP award by Jim Ulman of the ILF following the World Games in Toronto, Canada.

TESTIMONIALS

John "Keka" Butkiewicz - I would put him up as one of, if not the best forward in my time. What differentiated him was that he performed well against all opposition, particularly the best, ie. USA. Probably known best for his quick stick goals working with Kennedy, however had a very good shot as well. Never intimidated, the opposition always had to work on developing a strategy to stop him.

Bill Stahmer - it was very obvious the partnership he had with fellow East Fremantle team mate Jeff Kennedy, he had an innate ability to cut the crease and quick stick the ball goal ward from any angle and he also mixed his speed of shooting, his body strength, 5-10 yard acceleration and timing carried him through to the top of attack players worldwide.

Ray Duthy - Peter "Flash" Cann was the most dominant goal scorer in the Australian team in the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's. His greatest attributes were his innate and instinctive ability to know when to time his cuts across the crease and to receive and shoot in the one motion before goalkeepers could react. His speed in front of goal was also a major contributing factor. I would certainly rank him with the attacking modern era greats of the game alongside Gandy, Griffin, Raggatt, et al in Australia, but also with the top U.S. and Canadian players of that time.

Alec Inglis - I was fortunate to coach Peter from 1978-86 as Australian coach and assistant coach. Peter's quick stick was the fastest I have seen, and amazed every team we played against and they did try many and varied ways to stop him. He was constantly put under pressure from his opponents but his balance and skills always shone through.

His speed, ability to read the play and his game temperament were exemplary. His shooting percentage was always one of the highest on the team. The awards Peter received at world championships speak highly of his consistently brilliant performance. Peter was an exceptional lacrosse player.

Tom Hardy - the nickname 'Flash' started to take hold in Manchester 1978, describing perfectly his extraordinary 'Quick stick' skills virtually taking and shooting the ball in one action, the best I have ever seen and that includes Michael Raggatt, a master of the same art. Peter was a goalkeeper's nightmare being able to virtually change the direction of the ball in flight!! Another of Peter's great attributes was always being able to stay on his feet, powerfully playing through the roughest of treatment by the toughest of defenders. Peter was extremely strong and broad with a low centre of gravity and explosive power, not the fastest in the team or having great endurance, but those first few perfectly timed explosive steps made him hard to defend.

Peter was a big game player, the higher the level, the more important the game, the more he shone, he was extremely competitive but had a calm and thoughtful approach to the game, he worked out his strategy and played it out to perfection.

Peter was also renowned for how hard he threw the ball, as did Brian Griffin, even when he was just practising.

BEST PLAYERS I HAVE PLAYED WITH? (In no particular order)

Jeff Kennedy, John Butkiewicz, Steve Mounsey, Brian Griffin, Ray Duthy, Gus Garnsworthy, Peter Morley and Brooks Sweet.

BEST OPPONENTS?

Mark Greenburg (USA), Jeff Moukkley (England), Denis Townsend (USA) and Chris Hall (Canada). As far as Australian opponents go Peter felt it was a very tough choice but came up with the Barry Thompson from S.A., with Steve Mounsey from W.A. a close second.