

## PAUL MOLLISON – LACROSSE BUILDER

Paul was 10 yrs old in 1968 at Sunshine East PS when he saw two lacrosse players throwing a ball in their front yard in Footscray one Saturday morning as the bus he was on pulled up to a stop. While his brother Greg had started playing at Tottenham Technical School, Paul had never seen the game before but had heard about it, and had never seen a stick, but given he usually tagged along with Greg, that's how he started.

“We both started in Mal Taylor’s Saturday morning competition and we used to get up at 6am, take the bus from Sunshine to Footscray then bus to Williamstown to play.

Our first season with Footscray was in 1971 when we both played in the Under 16 team. We missed the first part of the 1973 season as we had moved to NZ, then Sydney. Greg moved back to Melbourne during 1973 and recommenced playing and I hitchhiked down from Sydney on Friday nights and back to Sydney on Sunday afternoons for a few months, the family moved back to Footscray in late 1973”.

A 15 year old hitch-hiked from Sydney to Melbourne and back, each weekend, to play lacrosse!

Paul, one of four brothers to play for Footscray, played senior lacrosse from 1974-1994, where the club progressed from various lower level grades to state league during the late 80's/early 90s.

Paul like a lot of players from the west who played in the box lacrosse competition at Williamstown, was bitten by the box lacrosse bug very early and remained committed to that code of the game, particularly after his selection in the first Australian box lacrosse team to play in Canada in 1978, where Australia played exhibition games against Canadian teams in Edmonton as part of the Commonwealth Games, where in the final match he played in front of a crowd of 11,000.



A proud member of the inaugural Australian box team in 1978

In field lacrosse Paul represented Victoria in the 1975 Under 19 Colts team and the Victorian Under 23 team in 1979.

Paul represented Victoria in box lacrosse for 15 years from 1978-1992 and represented Australia internationally on tours to Canada in 1978, 1980 (Inaugural world championship – The Nations in 80) and again in 1985, before turning his hand to coaching.

Paul was one of a few people who turned Footscray from a struggling club with next to no parents guiding the ship, into a powerhouse from the late 1980's/early 90's, yet during this time he was fully committed to coaching club, state and national box lacrosse teams, his club's state league field lacrosse teams, men and women, as well as Victorian women's teams.

Footscray, unlike many clubs, did not have senior players, coaches or administrators to guide the club through its formation and development, this rested with a few young players, and typically these clubs do not last! Footscray was in a precarious position from its reformation in 1961, and for many years could not field junior teams, and were vulnerable for many of those years until those juniors who went on to play senior lacrosse remained with the club to provide stability and the foundation it required to make it grow.

While there were many, without the dedication of particularly Paul and Greg Mollison, and later their younger brothers Dean and Glenn, that club may well have gone down the road that most clubs go, and that is they fold! So in the late 70's and through the 80's Paul had to combine playing, coaching and administering at various levels. He was also heavily involved in the administration of his club and the state body, later turning his attention to the national bodies of lacrosse, men and women.

## COACHING

While the following is lengthy it is important to highlight how much time and effort Paul invested in coaching lacrosse, both men's and women's.

### MEN'S

1975	Asst. coach	Footscray Under 14
1976	Asst. coach	Footscray Under 16
1977-79,81-82	Coach	Footscray Under 16
1983-84,86-87,89	Coach	Footscray Under 11 & Under 12
1987-88,96,04.	Head coach	Footscray Under 17 boys (Summa comp)
1990,94-95,98.	Head coach	Footscray Under 15 boys
1980-1998 (Excl 88 & 96)	Coach	Renegades senior box team (17 years)
1993-96,99-01	Coach	Footscray state league (7 years)
1997-99	Coach	M.C.C. state league
1982 & 85	Coach	Victorian Under 19 Colts - Presidents
1984	Coach	Victorian Under 16 boys - Presidents
1987-90 & 1999	Coach	Victorian Under 17 boys
1994-98	Coach	Western Metro Under 15 boys
1986,91 & 97	Coach	Victorian Under 19 Colts
1991-94	Coach	Victorian senior men's box
1995-96	Coach	Victorian senior men's
1985	Coach	Australian men's box (Canada and USA tour)
1984	Asst coach	Australian men's box (Canada in Australia)
1981	Asst coach	Australian men's box

In terms of high performance programs, Paul was head coach of the Maribyrnong College Sports Academy Lacrosse Program (2009-10), which was developed to offer all sports to students, with classes tailored to athletic commitment to sport, where the students had on-field training before school (7am start), and after school they were taught gymnastics, weightlifting and under water swimming.

Paul was also head coach in the inaugural year of the Victorian Institute of Sport lacrosse program (1997) and assistant coach from 1998-2001.

## **WOMEN'S LACROSSE**

1997-2012,14-16 Coach of Footscray's senior team (B grade, A grade and SL)

2013 Coach Footscray Under 18 girls

2002-06 Coach Footscray Under 17 girls

2005 Coach Footscray Under 15 girls

1980 Asst. coach Burnaby Clipettes senior team (Vancouver)

2004-06 & 2010 Coach Victorian Under 21

2003-04 & 2009 Coach Victorian Under 15 Victorian girls

On top of the above coaching achievements, Paul coached the Kiwi All-stars women's team at the 2011 ASPAC Championship in Auckland, coached the 2009 New Zealand women's team at the World Championship in Prague, coached the Australian Under 19 women's team in 2007 at the Under 19 world championship in Canada, and in 2005 coached Team Koala (WLA development team) on a tour of the U.S.A.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Paul was on the World Lacrosse - Women's rules sub-committee 2011-21, and in 2022 was chair of that sub-committee.

## **LACROSSE AUSTRALIA**

Paul has been Director of High Performance 2007-08 and 2012-23, was High Performance Manager - Australian women's team program 2009-11, and Director of High Performance – Women's Lacrosse Australia 2000-08. 16 years of continuous service to Lacrosse Australia.



## **STATE ASSOCIATIONS**

- 1982-1991 Board member of Lacrosse Victoria (which at that time was a combined entity of the VWLA and the VALA, which was primarily established to develop lacrosse in schools with a full time development officer, and to provide a retail outlet for lacrosse sticks and equipment)
- 1986-1989 General secretary - Victorian Lacrosse Association
- 1993-1999 & 2001 Chairman - Match Committee - Victorian Lacrosse Association
- 1999-2008 Director of High Performance - Women's Lacrosse Victoria
- 2008-2010 Director of High Performance - Lacrosse Victoria

## **FOOTSCRAY**

Paul was a member of the Footscray committee from 1976-84, served as secretary in 1985, and president from 1986-91, 93-96, 08-13 (26 years in total). This is quite remarkable in that he carried out various other roles with various organizations, and if he wasn't playing he was probably coaching for many of those years.

## **AWARDS**

- |      |                         |   |
|------|-------------------------|---|
| 1984 | Past Presidents Award   | Victorian Lacrosse Association                      |
| 1990 | Life Member             | Footscray Lacrosse Club                             |
| 1991 | Certificate of Merit    | Lacrosse Australia                                  |
| 2003 | Nell Rawlings Award     | Women's Lacrosse Victoria                           |
| 2008 | IFWLA Recognition Award | International Federation of Women's Lacrosse Assoc. |
| 2008 | Life Member             | Lacrosse Victoria                                   |

## CONCLUSION

There are many lacrosse players who play and when they retire they walk away from the game - probably most. There are those who take on coaching to guide players to greatness and success - but not many. There are also selfless, altruistic people who give back to the game, as coaches do, by becoming an administrator of a club, state or national body, but very few. There is not a lot of kudos in doing the hard work of marking out the grounds, balancing the books, running social functions, taking on leadership roles or coaching kids on cold Saturday mornings. There are also very few visionaries or builders who have a dream to take their club, their code, their state body or national body to the next level, to excel, to grow, and those who do, particularly administrators normally have more detractors than assistants!

Having known Paul since he was a boy and having gone through his record, I am staggered how much time and effort he has committed to his club, his state bodies, Lacrosse Australia and men's and women's lacrosse - it is quite astounding.

Paul Mollison has been a player, coach, administrator and more importantly a builder of lacrosse. We have some fine administrators from time to time but we rarely get builders. I am talking about people like Captain Fearon, Mal Taylor, Frank Lansbury, Laurie Turnbull, Noel Jeffrey, etc. They were not only strong administrators but builders of our great game, they had vision, drive and determination, and were not going to be held back or deflected from their vision. Very few though have crossed between men's and women's lacrosse, and very few in particular have emerged in the new millennium.

Paul Mollison's contribution to a struggling club like Footscray (along with his brothers and a few other key members of that club), a club that previously never had the parents and senior people to guide and grow the club, which struggled from its reformation in 1961 until the late 80's, has been a key reason for Footscray becoming a powerhouse in Victorian lacrosse, and as we see this year, their men's and women's teams won their respective state league grand finals. His children, Sarah and Bradley also carry on that tradition at Footscray, Sarah an outstanding player and Bradley a committed and proud life member.

Statistics can be boring and misleading but let's just recap how much time and effort Paul Mollison has put into Australian lacrosse over the last 55 years, a man who is only 68.

In terms of coaching he coached men's teams 61 seasons, women's teams 32 seasons, from which you quickly realize he was during much of his lacrosse career coaching 2-3 teams/year, field and box, and at the same time he was an administrator in various capacities, and a player.

He was director of high performance for Victorian women's lacrosse for 10 years and when the codes unified in Victoria he was director of HP for a further 3 years.

At club level, he was on the committee for 26 years, including 15 years as president.

He was on the committee of LV for 10 years, including 4 as secretary.

From 2007-2023 he has been director of HP for LA for 17 years and prior to that was HP manager for WLA from 2000-2011, which is when the codes merged to form what is now LA. He has given 23 consecutive years of service as director/manager of HP management in Australian lacrosse, and is still going.

In terms of World Lacrosse, he was a member of the WL rules sub-committee for 12 years, including Chair of that sub-committee in 2022.

While he is a fairly modest, retiring type, not looking for publicity, acknowledgement or recognition, Paul clearly deserves it and has packed so much lacrosse into his life, and has done it all in terms of playing, coaching, administering and building.

Well done Paul Mollison, you are a builder and facilitator, you should be very proud of what you have achieved, lacrosse has been good for you but you have done an enormous amount for our great game, and your efforts and achievements need to be publicly acknowledged, recognized and celebrated.

As the young man you saw in 1968 throwing a lacrosse ball with his brother in Essex Street, Footscray, I take my hat off to you.