

JEFF KENNEDY – ONE OF OUR GREATEST

Jeff “Joffa” Kennedy started playing lacrosse at South Fremantle High School as a 12 year old and in 1967 in the W.A.L.A. junior competition. One of his teachers, George Halleen, who played for Subiaco, coached the school team each Saturday, as was ably supported by Lyle Shepherd.

The school team ceased to be in 1971 and Jeff and his mate Derek Swingler, and a few other school players moved to East Fremantle Lacrosse Club, playing in the Under 16 team. Younger brother Gary also started playing about the same time and he also moved to East Freo and in later years represented W.A. and Australia in the 1976 tour.

While Jeff was just under 6’ on the old scale he played around 75kg and was wiry and very nimble, a hard target to hit once he got moving.

Jeff first represented WA in 1971 in the under 17 team. First played senior lacrosse in W.A. in 1972 for East Fremantle in Division 2 and progressed to State League in 1973.

Jeff played state league from 1973 – 1995, where East Fremantle won the senior flag in 1975-76, 1978-81, 1983-85, 1990-92 & 1994 – 13 flags out of 23 years, although with players of the caliber of Kennedy and Cann you would expect that! 10 best and fairest

Interestingly, Jeff represented Australia in senior lacrosse in 1976 before he represented W.A. Jeff was probably the youngest player on the 1976 touring team and he saw this tour as a major learning process, where he predominantly played midfield.

Jeff was selected in the 1977 W.A. team at the national championships in Perth.



Jeff played in every senior W.A. team from 1977 – 1991 and again in 1995 and over the journey Jeff was selected in the Australian All-star team in 1979, 1981-1991 & 1995 – 13 occasions.

Jeff first played international lacrosse in 1976 where he played in the Australian touring team that toured the U.S.A., Canada and England, at the age of 21, playing on the midfield and attack, with impressive stats of 47 shots, 17 goals, 26 assists, a total of 43 points.

Given Jeff's prowess and rising star it was not surprising that he received scholarship offers from 2 of the elite lacrosse colleges in the U.S., Cornell and Navy in 1982, but turned them down for family and business reasons.

Following on from his successful tour with the 1976 Australian team Jeff was selected and played in the following 4 World Championship (1978, 1982, 1986 & 1990), being appointed co-captain from 1982-1990. Jeff was also selected in the 1984 Australian team that participated in the Pre-Olympic World Tournament in Los Angeles. Jeff did not make himself available for international or interstate lacrosse in 1980 due to work and family pressures, when he was possibly at the peak of his lacrosse career.

Jeff retired from interstate and international lacrosse following the 1990 World Championship at age 35.

Off the lacrosse field Jeff is a qualified plumber and welder and has owned and run his own patio business since 1975, retiring earlier this year, and ably supported in business and throughout his lacrosse career by his very capable wife Pat.



AWARDS

East Fremantle best and fairest -10 years -1973, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 84, 86, 87 & 91

W.A. best and fairest player (Regal Lacrosse Cup) 1979, 1986 & 1987

Australian best and fairest player (Isaachsen Trophy) 1987

Best and fairest at a national carnival (Don Hobbs Trophy) 1981 & 1983

MVP and member of the 1982 All-World team

All-World team 1986

W.A.L.A. millennium team as a midfielder

Australian Lacrosse Council Certificate of Merit 1983

Wall of Fame (Fremantle City Council) along with Peter Cann and Steve Mounsey

East Fremantle Lacrosse Club Life Member 1984

W.A. Institute of Sport Hall of Champions in 2004

BEST OPPONENTS?

Alan Bower (“He never let up on you, all over you, very quick, never gave you a minute’s peace”) and Gus Garnsworthy (“Didn’t over-commit, he let you make the mistakes”)

BEST PLAYERS YOU HAVE PLAYED WITH?

Peter Cann (Best attack player of all time!), Evan Jones, Ron Twomey, Ray Duthy, John Butkiewicz, Brian Griffin, Klay Johnson and Graeme Fox. In terms of international players other than Klay Johnson he would rate Brooke Sweet (“Had unbelievable vision, able to find people open, and a great finisher) and John Fay (He played in 82 for East Fremantle and threw 135 goals from the midfield”).

BEST COACH/INFLUENCES?

Klay Johnson was the complete coach, got the best out of you, he knew how to pick you up when you weren’t firing, a smart guy, a motivator, the complete package as a player and coach.

Brother Gary and I always did things together, we were inseparable and grew up together, and he pushed me along. Frank Poat was my first senior coach and mentor, and coached the early state teams I played in, as well as assistant coach for my first overseas tour with an Australian team in 1976.

TESTIMONIALS

PETER CANN

Jeff arrived at East Fremantle Lacrosse Club in the early seventies, young and full of enthusiasm, he was athletic and had developed strong skills from his days at South Fremantle High School.

His lacrosse career was impeccable, marked by an ability to read the play, carry and feed the ball and score goals. Success in the 1975 W.A. grand final (6 goals down at three quarter time) set the scene for one of the best players in the world to perform. While Jeff only threw 3 of the 12 goals in the last quarter, he was clearly the dominant player throughout that last quarter.

The 1976 overseas tour added to his development, adding new skills and more importantly creating a role for Jeff as a leader, on field organizer and outstanding player, and more importantly a big game player.

1982 World Series saw Jeff again display his world class attributes, resulting in his selection in the 1982 All World team and Most Valuable Player award.

Jeff returned to Australia with more enthusiasm and his desire to be part of future Australian teams, and began to develop new skills as a captain, a tactician and creator of attacking plays, which were developed and used by many teams, and still employed today.

Jeff went on to represent Australia at the 1984 Pre-Olympic tournament in Los Angeles, Toronto for the 1986 World Series, and finally the 1990 World Series in Perth, culminating an outstanding career at international level.

At state and club level Jeff was outstanding and demonstrated above average skills, leadership, teamwork as well as input into the many game plans along the way, winning numerous All-Star team inclusions and MVP awards and those outstanding displays on the field lead Western Australia to numerous Australian titles.

Jeff as a player across all levels of the game, but in particular on the world stage, is considered one of the best players to play the game in the modern era, where he demonstrated his superior skills, passion, enthusiasm, leadership, and still to this day, mentoring many players.

One of the world's, Australia's and East Fremantle's greatest lacrosse players - simply outstanding!

RAY DUTHY

Jeff "Joffa" Kennedy was one of Australia's key members of the Australian team from the mid 70's and through the 80's. I had the pleasure of playing alongside him from 1976 to 1986 in those teams and saw first-hand his silky skills as an attack player and midfielder.

His greatest attributes were superb balance, a great game temperament and an instinctive ability to think through situations, read the play and find an open player around the goal and deliver the ball when under extreme pressure. In particular he also had great poise on either hand and was rarely dispossessed, having an innate capacity to avoid contact whilst sliding in and around defence players.

I would certainly rank him as the most accomplished all round player I have played with at international level because of his skill set and leadership, and also one of the most difficult players to combat at interstate level.

GUS GARNSWORTHY

I played against Jeff at interstate level and also with him at international level. There was always a bit of anticipation or cause for concern when preparing to play against him. Jeff was very quick on his feet and could change direction so easily, making defending against him a great challenge. Because of this ability he was very difficult to "lay a body on" or dislodge the ball by stick checking.

He had excellent vision under pressure and could regularly find an open player to feed. An uncanny ability to "work the angles" around goals was another of his attributes. You had to keep the pressure on him when he was attacking the bottom corner of a zone defence. Otherwise he would use any open space to sneak around and get a shot off from the crease. Jeff could also

utilise the angle to the opposite back corner passing across the back of the goal to feed a player in a scoring position. Neither the goalkeeper nor the long poles could intercept the ball.

RON TWOMEY

With 5 players withdrawing from the 1976 Australian team selected, a young Jeff Kennedy was fortunate to be one of the players added to the squad. Jeff's ability was evident from the outset- he had the fitness, composure and confidence required for top lacrosse as well as the technical and tactical skills to contribute to any team by adapting his game to best effect in the day. Jeff of course had a great tour and contributed significantly to our success as a team. In particular he developed the composure under pressure for which he was renowned over the following years.

Over time Jeff developed an innate ability to read and feel how a game was evolving. He knew he could significantly influence the outcome of any game through the focused application of his on field leadership and organisational skills, his speed, stick skills and his relentless drive and commitment to succeed.

Jeff's personal achievements as a player and his contribution to WA and Australian lacrosse are outstanding and I commend him on his wonderful career.

HOW GOOD WAS HE?

Arguably one of our greatest players of all times, his record at all levels speaks for itself, and when asking former champions about all time greats, Jeff's name is always mentioned, and clearly is in a class that very few players have ever achieved, and no doubt 'He amused the creator'.

Great career Jeff Kennedy, one of Australia's very best!