

## **ALLAN JENNINGS – AUSTRALIAN LACROSSE CHAMPION**

Allan Jennings started playing lacrosse in 1953 at 11 years of age with the Under 13 team at Burnside Lacrosse Club after neighbour Don King, who had played for Sturt, lent AJ a wooden stick. He continued playing over the next 8 years with Burnside, progressing from C (Under 16) to B then A grade (Burnside first entered A grade in 1959). Allan captained the 1955 Under 16 team which won the first junior premiership for the Club.

His school team was Norwood Boys Technical High School where he played from 1953-57. When the 1953 senior national championships were played at Unley Oval, Allan's team, Norwood, played a curtain-raiser against a combined team from Nailsworth and Croydon schools.

In 1957 Allan was awarded the best and fairest in the schools competition and scored 267 goals across three grades at Burnside at age 16. He also won the A grade best and fairest award for Burnside in 1959 & 1960.

In 1961 due to Burnside being unable to field a team in A grade Allan transferred to Sturt where he remained for the rest of his playing career.

During that 30 year reign Allan won the Sturt best and fairest award in 1961, 62, 64, 69 and 71, and was the only player to play in the 3 winning A grade premiership teams of 1965, 1985 & 86.

In 1962 Allan broke the goal scoring record in S.A., held since 1938 by Mr. J.D. Lees, who sent Allan a telegram of congratulations, throwing 139 goals. In 1971 he scored 17 goals in a club match against his former club Burnside. He was also the top league goal scorer in 1985 (Tied with Peter Brown – 83 goals) and 1986 (66 goals), in his 40's.

Allan played league for Sturt from 1961 until 1989, although was asked to come out of retirement due to a shortage of numbers to play his last league game, on his 50th birthday, Sunday, 5 March 1991, against North Adelaide at their home field, where the temperature reached 38 degrees!

Allan was selected in the S.A. junior team in 1955-56, as captain in 1956, the S.A. Colts team in 1959-60, vice-captain in 1960, and the senior team in 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968 (Vice-captain), 1970 (Captain), and 1974.

In 1959 at the age of 18 Allan was selected in the S.A. senior team that played the combined U.S.A. side from Washington & Lee University and University of Virginia (Scoring the highest amount of goals in a match (5) against the visiting team during their Australian tour).

A. Jennings passed J. D. Lee's record of 123 goals which has stood since 1938 when he scored nine for Sturt against Brighton Blackfeet in district lacrosse on Saturday  
Jennings took his total to 131.

In 1974 Allan played in the S.A. state team against England at Hindmarsh Stadium where Allan was named best on the ground, throwing "A bucket of goals" in that game.

In 1980 he was selected in the S.A. box team to play in the inaugural Australian Box Lacrosse Championship in Perth.



While Allan probably would have been a walk up start for the 1962 inaugural overseas Australian tour based on his form leading up to the tour, he did not apply given he had just finished his apprenticeship and simply couldn't afford the tour, but possibly more interesting was that little to no fundraising took place in S.A. and many of the players, who may well have applied, were not aware of the tour until a few months prior to the team's departure, largely due to Laurie Turnbull's intervention, seeking to get the best team possible. Only 2 players from S.A. were on that tour, despite S.A. winning the carnivals on both sides of the tour (1959 & 1962).

Allan Jennings was the dominant player at the 1962 Australian carnival, winning the Don Hobbs Trophy for best player of the tournament and selected in the All-Australian team.



Coming in for a “Bit of attention” in a lead up game in San Francisco 1967  
But he still scored in the bottom corner! (Brian Griffin behind)

Allan was selected in the 1967 Australian team that participated in the inaugural world championship in Toronto and came runners-up to the U.S.A.

In 1980, at the age of 39, following the inaugural box lacrosse championship in Perth, Allan was selected in the Australian box lacrosse team to play in the inaugural box lacrosse world championship, “The Nations in 1980”, in British Columbia, Canada.

### **BEST PLAYERS AND OPPONENTS?**

Peter Collett was probably was one of the very best defenders he saw and played against along with “Chopper” Pearce and Ralph Turner.

In terms of midfielders and centres he considers Ross Keen, Dudley Hamilton, Noel Jeffery as some of the greatest, along with John Butkiewicz and Warren Hobbs from the modern era.

Allan in particular admired the brilliant attack player Allan Gandy, he was the pinnacle, along with Graham Lines and Barry Benger.

The goalies who made the biggest impression and made Allan’s life difficult were Doug Fox and Bruce Neill.

### **COACHING AND ADMINISTRATION**

Allan was playing coach for Sturt’s A grade team in 1972 & 1973 (As well as Under 16 coach in 1973), and co-coach with Paul Lynch in 1975, and assistant coach in 1999. In 1986 he was appointed coach of the South Australian team that toured Texas in conjunction with the S.A. Jubilee 150 celebrations, playing in most games including the match at “The Cotton Bowl”.

## AWARDS

- 1960 S.A. Amateur Sports Club's Memorial Trophy
- 1962 Winner of the Don Hobbs Trophy (Most outstanding player at the senior carnival)
- 1962 Isaachsen Trophy (Best and fairest player in senior grade across Australia)
- 1963 Isaachsen Trophy
- 1966 Runner-up in S.A. Lacrosse Memorial Trophy (lost on a count back)
- 1974 West End trophy for S.A. Lacrosse sportsman of the year
- 1974 I.Wiles plate for best and fairest – England vs S.A.
- 1978 Life member of Sturt Lacrosse Club
- 1986 S.A. All Stars team (Selected by the state league coaches)
- 1999 Australian Lacrosse Council certificate of merit



Allan pointing to one of the years he won the Isaachsen Trophy

## **TESTIMONIALS**

### **ROSS KEEN (The late and former Australian champion midfielder)**

AJ like most forwards of that era was well balanced, quick and very agile. Again always on the move, not necessarily covering a big area but manoeuvring his opponent in such a way as to make it difficult to see the other feeding an attacking teammate. He had very good shot selection. I always found him a tough, clever and fair competitor.

### **MICHAEL RAGGATT (Former Australian champion attack player)**

Allan is without doubt or question, one of the greats of our game! He's certainly a legend in SA.

I saw him as a great player, fierce, fair & a mighty competitor. He "could do it all". He was well balanced, had great stick skills, a wonderful goal sense & and great shot, all virtues that make up an exceptional attacker.

He excelled at club and interstate levels and not surprising to me, he still holds the goal scoring record for an Interstate contest...yet to be conquered!

The lead-up to my first Interstate game against the Vics was in 1966 & it was such a pleasure to play & train alongside him. I then saw first-hand that he was the "real deal", a champion player & quality man. On field he was agile, smart, sly as a fox, uncanny, cheeky & confident. He withstood a heavy body check with ease & often with a grin. Off field he was a thorough gentleman, always giving of his time to help, he was modest & always good company.

As with all great players, he seemed to have lots of time in his moves & was always in control. When under pressure he was particularly outstanding. When it got tough, he would really shine & rarely "lowered his colours".

History proves him an exceptional attacker, a master against the best around!

Over the years, his trademark was to give his best to the contest & continue to deliver a high quality performance. He has my utmost respect.

### **PETER HOBBS (Former Australian defender)**

A fine and outstanding champion attack player who played close to goal.

Allan was an outstanding shot for goal whether from close or further out. He was just so strong, his ball retention attributes made him very hard to strip the ball from when he had it. A defender had to negate his attacking thrusts but with his speed, strength & agility watch out, because he would be past you and into goal. So quick over the ground you could not afford to be off balance.

I feel sure that teams concentrating on Allan alone then opened the door for the depth of the Sturt side to slip through.

His career whether in club or interstate lacrosse was a career of a champion but he was very humble one indeed. A fine sportsman and a great human being.

## **PETER COLLETT (Former Australian defender)**

Allan Jennings would have to be the ultimate competitor, and in my opinion a true legend of lacrosse here in Australia. Allan and I were both members of 1967 Australian Team that played in the inaugural lacrosse world championship in Toronto, Canada. He scored goals in all games in the series and greatly helped the team achieve a silver medal in that tournament.

In his playing days Allan was a right-handed, sure-footed attack player with the ability to withstand considerable pressure from opposition defenders and worked hard on getting a shot away on goal. Being a defender myself I quickly learnt that Allan was a player that had to be closely guarded or else you would suffer the consequences. He would have you for dinner if you let your concentration slip. He was a very determined, level headed player, gifted with impeccable stick work and goal shooting ability. Allan played senior state lacrosse for eleven years and gave it his all. He was vice captain in 1968 and captain in 1970.

Away from lacrosse you couldn't meet a nicer guy. He is a witty, jovial character and a thorough gentleman. He values the meaning of sportsmanship and the spirit of the game. Congratulations Allan on an outstanding lacrosse career.

## **CONCLUSION**

Allan Jennings traversed the hickory era where the equipment was basically gloves and sometimes helmets, and the modern era of plastic sticks, helmets, gloves, arm guards, etc, proving to be a champion in both eras. He played with a hickory stick for virtually all of his lacrosse career, purchasing a hickory box stick in 1967 in Canada, and staying with it throughout his career, including his return to Canada as part of the Australian box team in 1980.

Top forwards like Allan Jennings with little protective equipment took a lot of punishment in the hickory era, but Allan Jennings was able to endure that treatment and still score heavily, regardless of the level of lacrosse. When the plastic era arrived he adapted and still dominated using a hickory box stick. He was an aggressive goal scorer and always in the thick of it, ready to take on any defender, and able to readily score goals.

Well done on a fabulous career AJ, one of our champion attack players, and certainly one of South Australia's very best!