

NIGEL MORTON – CHAMPION AUSTRALIAN ATTACK PLAYER

Nigel Morton started playing for Glenelg Lacrosse Club in 1996 when the club conducted a school clinic at Forbes Primary School which resulted in his sisters starting to play lacrosse. Nigel was playing football at the time so didn't get involved straight away. Glenelg legends Stuart Robb & Michael Sheidow eventually talked him into giving it a crack and went straight into Under 13's as a 7 year old.

Nigel juggled football and lacrosse for the next few years until he eventually gave up on football to focus on lacrosse. In 1998 Nigel was part of his first lacrosse premiership in Under 13's.



Nigel as a 9 year old in 1998

As a junior, Nigel was known for his stamina and dedication, regularly playing two games in the morning and backing up for a senior match in the afternoon. In 2005, he made his state league debut for Glenelg, which didn't quite go to plan as he ended up with a broken jaw and concussion. Undeterred, he returned in 2006 to secure a regular spot in the team and played a key role in their premiership win that year.

Nigel was a member of the 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2021 state league premiership teams, sadly missing the 2017 premiership due to an injury that kept him out of the game for the year.

Nigel retired from club lacrosse in 2021, finishing on a high with one final premiership after a heartbreaking grand final loss in 2020.

Nigel was selected in his first state team in 2001 for the Under 15 Western Reds. 2001 was the year Ansett crashed which resulted in two S.A. Under 15 boy's teams jumping on a bus for a trip up to Queensland for the national junior tournament – as you could imagine, all went smoothly!

Nigel was selected in S.A. state teams over the next few years, progressing through Under 15's, Under 17's and Under 19's.

Nigel's talent and leadership earned him a place in the Australian Under 19 team in 2008, where he was honoured to be named one of the captains for the world championship in Canada. Soon after he was selected for his first senior South Australian team and continued to shine on the national stage, playing senior lacrosse for SA in 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014 & 2018, Including the All-Star team in 2012 & 2014.

Nigel was selected in the 2014 senior Australian team to compete in the world championship in Denver, where they played off against the Iroquois for the bronze medal, however were not successful.

"The 2018 Australian team was difficult following a season ending injury in 2017, and after multiple conversations with Glenn Meredith about whether I could get my body into shape for the 2018 team, he eventually helped me make my decision to commit, and I'm glad he did. I was able to get back on the track in late 2017, spending the summer getting my strength and fitness back, prior to competing in the last few training camps prior to team selection.

Even after the team was selected, the challenges kept coming with England no longer hosting the event, we sat in limbo for a bit until it was announced that Israel would host the tournament, a shock to many. Once again, a challenging decision to commit with safety and security concerns at the top of everyone's minds. I'm sure we all look back now and are glad we went, it was a great experience.

Maybe it was my slightly shorter pre-tournament training period, but I felt great throughout the tournament. As you get older you learn to manage your body better and even towards the end of the tournament I was still able to compete really well. The bronze medal game in 2018 still haunts me a bit, I have only watched it once. Haudenosaunee are a great team and although we were well and truly in control of the game in the last quarter and a half, they were able to hold us off to secure the win. A few what if moments still sit with me on this one."



Retirement didn't mean stepping away from the game. Nigel transitioned into coaching, taking the reins of the Glenelg Under 13 boys in 2021 and assisting the state league team from 2023 onwards. In 2024, he co-coached the SA U15 Storm girls zone team alongside Glenelg's Chelsea Gilbert, leading a remarkable group of young athletes to victory in the tournament.

Nowadays Nigel channels his wealth of playing experience into coaching, driven by a desire to help shape Australia's future Olympians. Both of his children are following in his footsteps—Mia, now 14, and Cooper, 12, are up-and-coming players at Glenelg, with Mia a member of the 2024 U15 Storm team that claimed tournament honours.

From a young boy encouraged to "give it a crack," to an Australian representative and now a mentor to the next generation, Nigel Morton's lacrosse story is one of passion, perseverance, and family legacy, deeply intertwined with Glenelg.

AWARDS

Glenelg Best & Fairest Awards - 2014,15,16,18 & 21

S.A. leading goalscorer – 2016 (37 goals), 2018 (48), 2019 (53) and 2021 (42)

S.A. MVP Awards (Coaches votes) – 2016 (Joint winner) and 2018

2018 S.A. Memorial Medal (Best and fairest)

TOUGHEST OPPONENTS

My toughest opponent was Tom Vickery, a goalkeeper. I had many good battles against Tom, and played in many with him as a team mate as well, none more so than the 2014 game against Israel. Tom's ability to make saves look easy was amazing, and he wasn't afraid to tell you about it either. Every goal you got on Tom was a good one.

Matt Fuss was another opponent that I had plenty of good battles with, his athleticism and strength made him very tough to beat, he seemed to be able to run all game without getting tired. It wasn't often that I was matched up on by a short stick, but I knew every time we played against Brighton, I would face up against him.

Before he moved over to Western Australia, I also had plenty of good battles with Ben Muxlow, another one that not only had really good strength and athleticism but was also able to run all day against you.

BEST PLAYERS I HAVE SEEN AND WHY?

I viewed the best players by how they influence me and my career, there are obviously a lot of great players from America and Canada and the likes but other than seeing them on TV (You-tube) or playing a game against them, I didn't take a lot of notice of them. I remember as a kid, I had the Gordon Purdie tape that was produced for either the 94 or 98 World team on repeat, but ultimately it was the likes of Stuart Robb, Mike Sheidow, Robert (Henry) Lawson and the Inge brothers that I view as the best players because I could relate better to them, they all did what I wanted to do, in Australia, whilst still managing life. It helps that 3 of these guys played at my club and had a massive influence on what I saw that it took day to day, to be the best.

TESTIMONIALS

Glenn Meredith (Former Australian player and coach)

From the moment I first saw Nigel Morton play at a selection camp in 2012, it was evident he had a unique on-field presence—time just seemed to slow down whenever he was in motion. The smooth, elite stick-handling abilities Nigel possessed are rare anywhere, but especially in Australia. It was no surprise he progressed easily through the program and earned his place on the senior Australian men's lacrosse team, standing out as an elite attack player who could seamlessly float through an offensive midfield role when required. To best describe him with a football comparison, he was like Scott Pendlebury, just had time and room around him almost whenever he needed it.

To give you some insight into Nigel's on-field calm, presence, and elite skill set, in his first game for Australia on the world stage, against Japan, he calmly received a feed from Anson Carter behind the goal, split around his defender and delivered the triple-overtime, sudden-death game-winner, one of his 3 goals on the day and cemented himself into Australian lacrosse folklore from day one.

Another moment that stands out was during that 2014 World Championship semi-final against a stacked Israeli team. We were down by five goals and struggling to find on field winners early, but had just begun clawing our way back and I doubt Nigel would even remember this play, but he drove down the left pipe under heavy pressure and a hard slide, and somehow, with composure and vision only he possesses, spun in a tight space and found Alex Brown, who was behind him, for a pivotal goal. We went on to win that game by a single goal. I genuinely believe very few players would have even known Alex was there, let alone given the ball to him on his shoulder under such pressure.

Fast forward to the 2018 World Championship in Israel, and Nigel once again produced a master class. His five-goal performance in the semi-final against the Haudenosaunee was one of the greatest individual efforts I've witnessed from an Australian player. He almost singlehandedly pulled us back within two goals very late in the game, sadly full time expired just as Nigel was hunting number 6.

These are only three snapshots from an international career filled with standout moments. But in my mind, Nigel Morton, is one of the most skilled and composed players under pressure to ever wear the Australian jersey. Nigel is also a true gentleman in every aspect, on and off the field, and it was my pleasure and privilege to coach him throughout his remarkable international lacrosse journey.

In 2018 the Haudenosaunee coach, Mark Burnam, told me that Nigel was one of the best players he's ever seen.

While Nigel only went to 2 "Worlds" he impacted heavily in both, his legacy in history won't be reflected in how many "Worlds" like some other champions, but his impact was great for those there to see it.

ROD ANSELL (Former Australian player and assistant coach)

Nigel was a very skilful player either as an attack middie or playing purely attack. He had great balance, and read and understood the game very well. He was a "smooth mover" who was able to find time and space very easily and had a very hard and accurate shot.

You always knew something good was going to happen when he had the ball and some of his games at world championships were exceptional, when the pressure was on, he delivered!

Nigel is a great person, team player and a really great player to watch who excelled in both world championships he played in.

TOM VICKERY (Former Australian goalkeeper)

Nigel was a very challenging player to play against. His vision and control with the ball was amazing. You would never know if he was about to feed the ball or shoot. He had great range on his shot so you could never take your eye off him.

He made playing lacrosse look so effortless. Like Roger Federer floats over the tennis court and swings so smoothly, Nigel would carry and turn on a dime and let the shot rip.

I can remember a few times letting him know that 'he was dreaming' with an average shot, only to get blown away not long after with him returning serve. We had a great rivalry playing against each other over many years at club level and some amazing memories playing together for Australia and South Australia, winning a couple of national championships together.

CONCLUSION

Nigel Morton is a product of the very modern era, where the amount of international lacrosse playable is immense. While he only played in two world championships, we don't measure greatness on quantity but quality. As we can read above he was a gifted player where time didn't seem to change, he excelled in the big games and had 2 memorable world championships. He perhaps could have played on but with a family and future to consider that is not always possible as we have seen over many decades, going back to the days of Gandy where lacrosse opportunities had to give way to family and career.

Well done Nigel Morton, you are a champion attack player who served your country well!