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Playing Number

5

1955, 58, 59:
1970:
1967:
1980:

Pt Adelaide Lacrosse Premiership player
Life Member Woodville Lacrosse Club
Australian Lacrosse Council Certificate of Merit
Life Member Australian Referees Association

I used to play back yard cricket on a vacant block of land on Oval avenue. All the lads from around the Woodville South area would congregate most nights after school and have a bash. Some of them finished up being very good cricketers, but I didn't stay with it. When I turned 15 I thought it was time that I did something in the way of sport so I started at the Port Adelaide lacrosse club. Lacrosse has really been the only sport I have played.

In my first year I played C Grade and I was made captain, which was probably because I had a brother playing in A Grade. Most of the team had never played before and we lost nearly every match that year. But that didn't deter us and a few years later we went on and won the C- Grade premierships.

I don't know what it was about lacrosse. I just loved playing and I still do love watching. It was a fast game and it was a gentleman's game. I mean we used to be terrible enemies on the field but once the game was over we were the greatest friends. You make a lot of friends in lacrosse. Before the match we always went out and shook hands and if a bloke got a goal, you would go and say "that was well done", even though he had got around you. You would pat him on the back. At age 38 I retired from playing and took up refereeing. I enjoyed that

too and I refereed for 12 years. I used to read the rules about 4 or 5 nights a week until I knew them all by heart. That is one of the big things about refereeing — you must know the rules and you must know the interpretation and the only way to do it is to just keep reading them.

If you can keep a group of blokes together you will win an A-Grade premiership. You will never keep them all together, but the nucleus of our team we stuck together. Between 1955 and 1959 there was only one different player, the team was basically the same and we won premierships. I think that's one of the secrets of how you win. When you look at football, it's much the same. Get a good team, work on it and bring them up to somewhere near the premiership stuff. The dedication has to be there. If you take something on you have to be dedicated; it's no good going into something half-heartedly. I can't think of anyone that wasn't dedicated, that's what won us premierships - dedication and hard work.

The blokes in those successful teams also learned to work together. Like in the building trade, if you have a team of blokes that work together, you get a better building than if you have a team of blokes that don't work well together.

And friendships play a big part. You can't have someone upsetting the applecart, because then you don't get the best out of the other blokes. It's like being married. You have to work together, not against one another. You have to have people who are compatible with one another and who work together. Make allowances that's how you win premierships. That's how we won the 3 premierships in my era.

I started off as a centre man but I couldn't run fast enough for that, so I tried defence and that's where I stayed. Newland Parr was always a role model and I got number 5 when he retired. I think Schicker has number 5 now; he's a good player. I was never a star player but I was reliable, I was always there, I was never late. We won 3 premierships while I was playing so I must have been alright because otherwise they would have kicked me out. Our aim was always premierships. We didn't go out there for fun and we took it all very seriously and planned tactics and that sort of thing. Great days they were.

They didn't have nightclubs in those days. So we used to go to a lot of dances and Black and White nights. That was the thing. The association always put on a dance and you would see all your mates from the other teams.

We had bus trips to Jamestown and train travel to Coburg on lacrosse playing trips. I was always a non-drinker, and when we used to go on the trips everyone including the bus driver, would be tipsy by the time we left home — I would be the only sober one there.

Ralph Turner was a wonderful backman. His anticipation was beautiful and nobody could get past him. He's a very big man, tall and heavy in weight but he was very quick on his feet. He was just a great player and I think he was in the all Australian team and state games. You could always rely on Ralph Turner to back you up. If a player got around me, Ralph would get him. One time at the Adelaide Oval Ralph put a fella over the picket fence. It was a bump. I don't think he got hurt because he didn't even touch the fence. Ralph was a very rigorous player and he is still a friend now.

Don Woods was the only other player that I thought was better than Ralph. Don would come to our place for tea on training nights. He was very skilful.

Graham Lines was a very good player, an excellent centreman, who could run all day.

Ken was a good player. Ken Forrest played every position on the field in A-Grade lacrosse and he excelled himself in every one of those positions. He was just a natural born lacrosse player, a smart player. He coached as well, which I think is a great thing in lacrosse if you can do that. To impart knowledge to the younger kids is great for the future of the club.

John Inge was good in goals but he used to talk a lot, drove us mad. He never stopped talking — it was good on the field because he let us know where all the players were.

Lionel Coggins was told that he was too small but he was a great player who made up for his size in ability. He was a brilliant midfielder. He loved lacrosse and he would come over after work and play lacrosse with my children nearly every night.

Lacrosse was my chosen sport and for me it has meant lasting friendships - lifelong friendships. I have met a lot of great blokes. Ken Forrest and I are always in touch with one another. We ring one another about the most stupid things and just have a yarn.

It has been an interesting life, my lacrosse life. I have loved every minute of it and I still love it because I have so many lacrosse friends. I always consider everyone out at the club to be a lacrosse friend even if I don't or can't remember their name. They always speak to me out there and they probably say that I am one of the old blokes well, I am.