

MURRAY KEEN - AUSTRALIAN LACROSSE CHAMPION

"I can remember being around lacrosse from a young age watching my father and uncle playing for Nedlands-Subiaco. I started playing aged 6 in F Grade (Under 10's) in 1972. I remember the first game I played, it was hard to get on the field and no one wanted to go in goals so I saw that as an opportunity to get a game. I played for four years in F grade mainly as a centre-man. I was lucky enough to have Brian Griffin as a coach. At age 12 I played Under 14 and also some senior games (B grade) in goals.

My dad started his own business in 1979, I was 13 and he could not get time off to take me to training so I transferred to Bayswater as that was up the road from my school. I continued to play on the field in Under 14's and in goals in the Under 19's".



From little things big things grow!

At age 14 Murray was playing Under 19 but made his A grade debut for one game in goals as Terry Magee had been suspended. At age 15 he played in A grade on the field. At the end of that year Terry Magee left Bayswater to give him an opportunity to play in goals. At age 16 he played a full year in goals but sadly they lost the A grade grand final, but he did win the club A grade best and fairest.

In 1983 he played in attack for the W.A. Under 19 team and was then selected in the Australian Under 19 team to tour the USA. Playing in attack he led the team in goal scoring but on his return to Australia he continued playing in goals.

In 1984 Murray was selected in the Australian team for the pre-Olympics tournament in L.A. and was selected in the All-World team. He missed selection in the W.A. senior men's team that year and was told he was too young, so he played for Australia before he made his senior state team debut.

In 1986 he made the decision to pull out of the Australian senior men's team so that he could throw javelin for Australia at the Commonwealth Games (Both competitions were held in the same week). In 1990, the Commonwealth Games were held in January which

allowed him to play at the men's world championship in Perth in July where he was selected in the world team as goalkeeper.

In 1991 he decided to return to Subiaco to return the favour that Terry had paid him and allow Bayswater's young goalie the opportunity to play in the top grade. His name? - Warren Brown.

He played with Subiaco until his retirement in 1999 and they were fortunate enough to win 6 grand finals during his time.

He pulled out of the running for the 1994 Australian team to concentrate on the javelin for the 1994 Commonwealth Games but ended up injured and was unable to compete. He made the Australian lacrosse team in 1998 in Baltimore and was named co-captain.

After retirement he returned to Bayswater to coach and after winning the minor premiership, they were beaten in the grand final. It was Bayswater's first grand final appearance since 1982.

At the end of 2000 he moved to Melbourne. He had met Sue Gandy in 1998 at the world championship, Sue was manager of the team and did a fantastic job of managing him and the rest of the team, so he moved to Melbourne to see what would happen – he is still here to this day!

On arriving in Melbourne he put feelers out to see if he could get a coaching job and found Malvern to be a good fit. They finished third in his first season. At the end of the season Paul Cook talked him into going to the Paradise Tournament in Queensland where they joined a mixed group of players and he enjoyed playing on the field. Come the final they had to play Williamstown, fresh from their grand final win with most of their winning team there, so he decided to jump into the goals and they won by a goal. That refuelled his love of the game so he returned to goals as playing coach for Malvern in 2002 and they won the grand final.

At the end of that year he got a visit from a few Caulfield members and with Sue and her family being Caulfield through and through the pressure built, so in 2003 he decided to coach Caulfield and remained coach until 2006. Caulfield made the grand final and were beaten by Williamstown but it was Caulfield's first grand final appearance since 1966.

Following his coaching stint at Caulfield he coached MCC state league men's team in 2007 and Caulfield state league women's team from 2014 - 2017.

With respect to coaching at state level Murray was assistant coach (2001), coach (2007-08) and co-coach (2010-13) for the Victorian senior men's team.

He also coached the victorious 2004 Australian Under 23 ASPAC men's team, was assistant coach to Peter Brown with the 2006 Australian senior men's team (Bronze medal), assistant coach to Sue Sofarnos with the 2009 Australian senior women's team (Silver medal) and assistant coach to Glenn Meredith with the 2014 Australian senior men's team.

BEST DEFENDERS I HAVE STOOD BEHIND?

Terry Sparks, John Tokarua, Cam Shepherd, Tim Colquhoun

I also had the pleasure to coach Ben Fleming in 2006 and also rate him very highly.

HARDEST SHOT

Mico Redarrow – 1984 Iroquois team, which was the first Iroquois team at a world championship. He let a shot go from just inside the centre line and I didn't have time to get my stick from my left shoulder to in front of my face. The ball split on my face mask and embedded itself in my helmet. I still have the ball.

BEST ATTACK PLAYER

Gary Gait. Not a hard shot but very difficult to read. He waits for you to step and then shoots to where you have stepped from. He has the same action either going high or low – very hard to pick. Gary would sweep with the ball to shift you and then shoot as you would move with him. It does sound weird but he would always catch you with one foot in the air and you couldn't get back for it. Was lucky enough to sit down and catch up with him in Adelaide in 2009 and he explained to me what he would look for before he shot.

BEST AUSTRALIAN ATTACK PLAYERS

Peter Cann - Fair heat from outside and deadly from cut inside. Peter could make you tense because you knew if you didn't save it, it was a goal, as he never missed the cage on a shot. Team Peter with **Jeff Kennedy**, who was very crafty on the feed, and you had two of the best players to ever play the game. Jeff would make you turn your head to the back of the cage and feed Peter, who was deadly with a quick stick from the crease. Peter who never dodged or carried the ball, would still be Australia's highest goal scorer at world championship games.



AWARDS

1989 MVP - Australian championship

1997 MVP – Australian championship

1989, 92, 95 & 97 - Australian All-star team

2003 - Vince Healy trophy winner (Victorian state league best and fairest)

1984 - World All-star team – Pre-Olympic tournament

1990 - World All-star team – Perth World Championship

ATHLETICS

At the same time as Murray was playing lacrosse and representing his state and Australia he was also competing as an international javelin thrower, selected in the W.A. athletics teams from 1979-94, Australian record holder and champion on 4 occasions and represented Australia at the Commonwealth Games in 1986 (Edinburgh) and 1990 (Auckland). In terms of rankings Murray was top 10 in the Commonwealth and in the 30's in world rankings. Murray was also javelin coach at Perth College (1987-1999) and Curtin Athletics Club (1990-96).

TESTIMONIALS

ROD ANSELL (Former Australian defender)

Murray was an imposing player who excelled as a keeper representing Australia and WA on numerous occasions. I had the privilege to play in defence with Murray who had a real presence on the field, demanded a high standard from all those who played around him and his talk, clearing and saving were exceptional. I also had the unique experience of playing directly against him in the 1988 national championship where he played attack for WA!

Murray would have added the 1986 World Championships in Toronto to his extensive lacrosse resume except for his commitment to representing Australia as a javelin thrower at the Commonwealth Games.

Murray coached at club, state and international levels and possessed a great knowledge and understanding of the game and was continually keeping abreast of what was happening in the game locally and overseas to try and find ways to improve the game here in Australia.

BRIAN GRIFFIN (Former Australian legend and member of SAHOF)

Brian Griffin named Murray Keen in 2020 in his All-star team as the best goalkeeper he had ever seen in Australia. Enough said.

PETER CANN (Former Australian champion)

Murray was an exceptional player, I think his time away from lacrosse during his Australian representative time in Commonwealth Games (A good choice) prevented us in lacrosse from seeing him further develop at the highest level, nevertheless two all world team selection speaks for itself.

As a goalkeeper, his size and athleticism, combined with dedication and ability to read the play - add to this his clearance, running the ball out of defence at some speed, and once he crossed the centre line he became part of the offence and clearly knew where the cage was, very hard to defend against.

High level skills, hand eye coordination, precision passing in defence and an organiser of the defence, a never give up attitude, made him very hard to beat and score against. Saw him play a few games in attack - very handy indeed!

Have seen both sides of the coin with Murray, playing against him in club lacrosse was always difficult, however as a team mate in state and Australian representative teams I was glad to have him in the team, a good team man , dedicated and very consistent, with a strong will to win.

His awards in lacrosse matched with his achievements in other areas or sport speaks highly of him as a person, his commitment to club, state and international lacrosse, makes him one of the best goalkeepers in our history.

BILL STAHMER (Former Australian player and coach)

Murray was fearless in the cage, and like Doug Fox, was a great director of his defence, a taker of the shot, and was a great attacking rebounder. Murray was also a tremendous team player.

CONCLUSION

Unsurprisingly at 191 cms (6'3") and 106kg Murray is a large man, and obviously given his javelin throwing experience he was extremely strong and fast, so he didn't leave much space for the shooter to look at. But on top of his ability to cover the net he had a great eye, quick reflexes, good technique and amazing agility for his size.

Arguably one of Australia's best goalkeepers of all time he was athletic and had outstanding stick work, not the sort of goalkeeper you would want to shoot against and certainly one of the last you would want to run into!

Murray Keen has not only been one of our greatest goalkeepers of all time but he has been a servant of the game, both men's and women's, where he has given back as a coach at club, state and national level. Well saved Murray.