

DON MILLER – CHAMPION AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE/MIDFIELDER

Don started playing lacrosse at Caulfield Technical School in 1951 at the age of 12 and from there progressed to Caulfield Lacrosse Club the following year where he played in junior teams from 1952-55, the B grade team 1956-57 and the A grade team from 1958 until 1976, most often as team captain, In the late 1970's he played as playing coach in B Grade and, at age 39, led Caulfield to the B grade premiership against Malvern, before resuming as A Grade playing coach in 1980-81.



Interstate Representation

Represented Victoria in the Under 16 team 1953-55, Colts 1956-57 and the senior team from 1958-72 (Excluding 1962 due to Australian team selection and in 1959 where he was selected as vice-captain in the Victorian second team). His career spanned 25 years of State representation, and he was Victorian Captain from 1963-1971.

International Representation

Represented Australia in 1962 (Captain) in the first Australian team to travel overseas and compete in England and the USA.

This team pioneered a new era of international lacrosse for Australia and competed against a Who's Who of NCAA Division 1 Colleges and clubs, including Princeton, Duke, Maryland, Rutgers, Johns Hopkin, Army, Navy, Virginia, Washington & Lee and Baltimore before travelling to the UK to play against Cambridge, North of England and All England.

Don later represented Victoria in 1970 in Adelaide against the visiting Lancers Lacrosse Club from USA.

Player Awards

Don won multiple Best and Fairest player awards at Caulfield and was the winner of the 1961 Vince Healy Memorial Trophy (Victorian Best and Fairest) and 1961 Australian Championship Best Player Brady Trophy (Now Isaachsen Trophy).

Selected as Australian All-Star team captain at 1965 Australian Championship.

Other Awards

1970 - Life membership of Caulfield

1972 - ALC Certificate of Merit

1972 - Life membership of VALA

2009 - Member and captain of the Caulfield Team of the Century

The Man

Don was a 'Doer' rather than a 'Meetings man' and his name rarely appears in administration roles or on Committees apart from his roles at Caulfield. While he sat on the Caulfield committee from 1958-71, along with being the delegate to the VALA for several years, he was more actively involved and interested in coaching juniors (1968-71) and established the "Peewee" local competition for Under 14 players for the local Caulfield club competition in the early 1970's. He was also actively involved in publicity, ground marking, special fund raising and also led fitness development for Caulfield and the Victorian team.

Don was the first full-time employee of Lacrosse Victoria (VALA & VWLA), employed as the Victorian Lacrosse Development Officer from 1979 – 1984, working state-wide on school and junior development, and teacher-training programs. His work included the introduction and coordination of the Australian lacrosse 'Sof - Crosse' program within Victorian schools and the management and provision of lacrosse equipment and services through the lacrosse shop at Hughesdale.

Don and Elaine moved to Merimbula circa 1985 for business reasons and retired to Rosebud in the 1990's. Don passed away in June 2026 aged 88.

TESTIMONIALS

DOUG FOX (Former Victorian and Australian captain and Hall of Fame Inductee)

Don Miller was a brilliant player and iconic team leader who gave absolutely everything on the field of play. His career across 25 years in Interstate lacrosse and leadership for Australia in International lacrosse mark him as truly exceptional.

Having played against him in club lacrosse and with him in state teams, I witnessed a universally respected and inspirational leader. I regard Don Miller as one of the very best lacrosse players and Captains ever produced in Victoria. He was highly skilful, fair, tough and uncompromising on the field and had an aerobic running capacity that rivalled the amazing Ivan Bryning.

Don played his Interstate and International career as a 'hickory era' player when opportunities at Australian and World level were limited. Such was his longevity that he finished his time with a plastic stick.

It is hard to imagine how his 25 years of brilliant play and leadership at the top levels of state and international lacrosse could ever be topped.

As a Caulfield "through and through" man, the selfless decision that he made to leave Caulfield and coach our struggling A grade club at Camberwell in 1983-84, speaks for itself regarding the qualities of the man and his heightened priorities for the general good of the sport in Victoria. Oh, for more Don Millers!

ROY SLOGGETT (Former Australian vice-captain and Hall of Fame Inductee)

Don was a very good Caulfield player and in my opinion was the backbone of the teams that I played against, which beat Malvern in the 1960, 61 and 62 grand finals. Caulfield and Malvern were very good teams in those years, and included interstate champions of the likes of Allan Gandy, Brian Griffin, two of the greatest forwards of all time, and Jack Church, who was vice captain of Victoria in 1961. Malvern at that time was also full of state and national players, which attests to how good he was as a player.

I never saw Don at international level and was surprised he wasn't selected in the 1959 Australian team, but at state level he was a very effective player, who had outstanding fitness, stamina and stick work.

RON TWOMEY (Former Victorian and Australian team Captain)

Don Miller was an inspirational player and leader whom I had watched as a kid and played against from my mid-teens until his retirement.

He was also the captain of my first Victorian senior team in 1968, Don would have been 29, then and in the following years he was always the coach's first choice as team Captain.

Don led by example, on and off the field, and he welcomed and encouraged new players to whichever team he was leading.

GRAEME ROSS (Former Victorian and Australian player)

Don Miller was an outstanding player and was one of a number of players who inspired me when I first joined Caulfield Lacrosse Club as a 14-year-old in 1956.

I was fortunate to play both with and against him at club level and always admired his tough but fair play, complemented by his outstanding athletic ability. I was also fortunate to have him as a coach and captain at club level, and as the captain of my first Victorian senior team.

His leadership in all areas was encouraging and inspirational, with a passion to support and develop young players. There are many players, including those that later became champions, that have benefitted from his various roles.

One of my treasured possessions is a handwritten letter he gave me (and presumably other players as well) on the eve of a B grade grand-final in my retirement year at Caulfield in 1977.

GEOFF TRELOAR (Former Victorian and Australian player)

I played against Don from 1962 to 1972 in the A grade competition and in 1977 in the B grade grand final when he was aged 39.

In the 1960's he led a formidable Caulfield backline with John Flood and Phil Humphreys. They won the premierships in 1962 and 1966.

Don had a charismatic presence as a player. He was strong and muscular and just commanded respect on and off the field. Always a tough opponent but played the game fairly with great athleticism, stamina and fitness.

I remember that on one occasion he met a midfielder as he quickly ran along the boundary line, lowered his racquet and threw the ball over the young player's head, caught the ball and went on his way. I remember it well because I was the embarrassed young player!

He was a powerful communicator, and you could observe the impact he had upon his teammates when they gathered at breaks.

Don was passionate about growing the sport and very collegial in helping other clubs and their players. I attended an early meeting of interested people in discussing rule changes and sharing thoughts about promoting lacrosse. It was held at the Williamstown Rotunda in the 1960's and I was very impressed by the way he spoke and encouraged others of all ages to contribute.

Don was an outstanding captain and the following story indicates his leadership qualities.

In the 1970 national championship Don was injured and could not play in the last game against South Australia. Before we went onto the field, he gathered us into a circle and looked every player in the eye demanding that they gave their absolute best. It had a great impact, and he then ran along the boundary line encouraging and praising players for their efforts. We won the game and the championship. I think that says much about the measure of the man.

In the 1977 B grand final, aged 39, he played as a midfielder still very fit and strong.

A remarkable playing history!