

MICHAEL RAGGATT – AUSTRALIAN LACROSSE CHAMPION

Michael "Rags" Raggatt started playing lacrosse at the age of 13 for Brighton in 1962, as a result of watching a high school friend, Brenton Edwards, playing in the Under 14 "E" grade competition.

The team was short of players that day and he was asked to play as goalkeeper in his first ever game! What a baptism of fire that was! He then played a handful of games in that grade until the end of that year.

In the following two years (1963 and 1964) he played in the Under 16 "D" grade team and also played in the Brighton Blackfeet state league team (Their second team).

In 1964 and 1965 he was selected in the state junior Under 16 sides and in 1965 began his illustrious career in the Brighton Yellow state league team as a face-off player but soon to become an outstanding attack player.

Michael was also a playing assistant coach at East Torrens Payneham from 1980 to 1982, when they won premierships in those years, and returned as head coach in 1984, which was interrupted by his overseas playing commitments.

From 1965 to 1979 and then in 1983 and 1987, he threw a total of 1,533 goals in 304 senior games for Brighton, including a record 204 goals in 1971 and then 209 goals in 1972. Playing for East Torrens Payneham from 1980-82 and again in 1984 (He was a member of the Australian team that participated in the pre – Olympics tour that year) he threw a further 293 goals in 58 games. With a total of 1826 goals in 362 games (Average of 5 goals/ game) he is the all-time highest goal scorer in the highest club competition in Australia and probably the world, putting him ahead of Ray Duthy at 1753, followed by Eddie Toomey at 1724. While only a young boy in 1963/64 he didn't throw a goal in his first two seasons of senior lacrosse at Brighton.

Michael was first selected in the state senior team in 1966 at the age of 17 and went on to represent South Australia nearly every year thereafter until 1980 and again in 1984. In 1972 Michael toured the US, Canada, England and Hong Kong with the Australian touring team and was selected in the 1974 Australian team for the World Series in Melbourne. He was also selected in the Australian teams that played against Rutgers University in 1980 and the 1984 Australian Pre-Olympic team that played in Los Angeles.

In club, state and national arenas he won the Memorial trophy (Best & fairest award in SA) and the Isaachsen trophy (National best and fairest) in 1970, and 4 times selected in the All Star Australian team, and Brighton best & fairest 3 times.



Rags at the 1984 Pre-Olympics tournament

BEST PLAYERS HE HAS SEEN AND PLAYED WITH?

"I played with many greats including Roger Attenborough, Ray Duthy, Lee Vandeppeer, Paul Lynch, Allan Jennings, Keka, Grinner Fox, Bill Stubbs, Rod Scott, Ox Twomey and Bill "The trout" Stahmer. "Griff" of course was a top notch "Magician" with superior lacrosse skills, an absolute champion!

Watching Joffa Kennedy and Peter Cann combine was a treat and reminded of the days when "Reggie" Attenborough and I combined because we read each other's game so well. I also recall playing a scrimmage at Brighton one Sunday morning, in the attack-line with the legendary Allan Gandy, the incredible "Rubber man", what a treat that was. There were so many other greats in the 70s-80's, including Rod Cordell, Alan Rolley, Keith Daly and Eddie Toomey.

He added that the best goalkeepers during his time were Doug Fox, Evan Jones and Bruce Neill but the most fearless was Alan Chiron who played in interstate games in the cage without a helmet!

BEST OPPONENTS

In terms of whom he would rate as his toughest opponents worldwide over the journey from 1966-1984 he chose these Australians – Gus Garnsworthy, Mick Orr, Barry Thompson, Jack Russell, Ian Toy, Tom Hardy and at Brighton at each and every training session, Peter Collett by a country mile! Trevor Stevens, who was my main opponent over the years when we battled out premierships with East Torrens was a great competitor and a fine "close checker & blocker". When I was SA assistant coach, I assigned him to stop the opposition's major scorer.

TESTIMONIALS

RAY DUTHY (Former Australian co-captain)

Michael "Rags" Raggatt was one of the great attack players in the Australian team from when he first toured in 1972 and through the 1970's and early 1980's. I was fortunate to play with him in some of those teams and in many interstate teams and saw first-hand his innate ability to score when required.

His greatest attributes were being exceptionally quick off the mark, superb stick skills in close where he could take a pass under extreme pressure and an uncanny shot that had both power and placement.

Michael was also a remarkably consistent goal scorer at all levels as his records acknowledge and he was an attack player who could absorb an enormous amount of physical defensive attention. As an opposing player, the difficult task was always how to limit his impact on a game, which he could turn on in a matter of minutes.

I would certainly rank him as one of Australia's and South Australia's greatest ever attack players that I have seen, whose season scoring records will never be matched in my opinion.

BRIAN GRIFFIN

The late and great Brian Griffin included "Rags" in his all-star team along with 3 other great attack players – enough said.

JOHN CARTER (Former Australian captain and coach)

I am firmly of the opinion that a champion player of any period would be a champion player in any other period.

Michael's greatest attribute (Which he shares with all great attack men) was his speed, exceptional timing, acceleration off the mark, quick hands, allied with a very powerful physique. These attributes enabled him to absorb the considerable physical pressure that he encountered throughout his career and still allow him to maintain high scoring rates.

In my opinion Michael's best lacrosse was on show during his time at East Torrens during the early eighties where he exhibited greater team offence awareness while at the same time being equally, if not more effective, individually.

From a personal perspective it was Michael's attitude to the game that was also exceptional, in my experience he demonstrated sportsmanship beyond expectations, from one who was often the target of 'Considerable pressures' from defenders.

Michael must rank as one of South Australia's and Australia's best crease players.

GUS GARNSWORTHY (Former Australian co-captain)

Always found Rags to be a physically challenging opponent with excellent acceleration and stick skills. He possessed a hard accurate shot under pressure and could not be ignored on any occasion when his team was in attack. A shot I remember him using early on in his career was backhand before using the opposite side became popular. Rags had a great ability to read the play and had a good understanding with his teammates. He could take a pass under pressure and use his bulk and skill to get off an accurate shot.

CONCLUSION

Summed up well in the testimonials, he was strong, quick, accurate and a goal scoring machine, the greatest goal scorer in the highest senior club competition in Australia, well played Rags.