

## EDDIE TOOMEY – CHAMPION AUSTRALIAN ATTACK PLAYER

Eddie Toomey was introduced to lacrosse in 1957 at the age of 13 by his friend Peter Hogg who encouraged him to attend training at Williamstown (Interestingly both of them were selected in the first Australian lacrosse team to leave our shores in 1962). He was further mentored by the legendary Mal Taylor, and part of that mentoring was learning to string wooden lacrosse sticks.



Eddie in his very early days at Willy

His mate, Peter Hogg, wrote the following story many years ago:-

### MY NAME IS PETER HOGG & THIS IS THE STORY OF A GOALSCORER

“His name is Eddie Toomey, he was a newspaper boy who delivered papers in the rain, hail or shine, and I was the main newspaper supplier to train passengers. We were just on waving terms and as autumn kicked in it was time for lacrosse practice to start. On the way to the first training run of the season I met Eddie at the subway, and he asked where I was going. He was none the wiser when I tried to explain to him, so I asked him did he want to come along. He said yes then raced home to get permission from his grandmother.

When we got to the ground I introduced him to Mal Taylor, the instigator of a recruitment drive which I had been involved in for many years. He stood and looked around at everyone running, catching & throwing, wondering if he would want to play this game of lacrosse.

When practice was over and we were on our walk back home he was none the wiser as to what lacrosse was all about. I told him that he would pick it up very quickly when scratch matches got under way. I added that I had spoken to Mal on how he went, and Mal said he was a natural and a left hander as well, just what we wanted. It wasn't long after that our friendship developed and at every chance with lacrosse sticks in hand we were throwing the ball to each other until we had an uncanny sense of how each moved.

Eddie's first year in U14's was outstanding, he scored 71 goals, and 97 in his second year. He immediately came under the notice of the Victorian selectors. In just his second year, after a bit of encouragement he tried out for the 1958 U16 Victorian state team and was selected to play South Australia in Adelaide, and I believe he scored 10 goals. Without any question, he was again selected in the 1959 U16 state team. He scored approx. 12 out of 37 goals in the state games. Then in 1960 he was practicing with Kevin Hope, John Harris & Barry Wilkinson who were trying out for the U19 Victorian team & was selected to play in that team as well. It was a national tournament to be played in Perth, playing against players who were 3 years older than him, where he held his own and was supported by his fellow club members.

By 1961 he was 17 and selected in the Williamstown A grade team, scoring 35 goals in his first season, and 41 in his second year. It had been 2 years of reconstruction for the A grade team under Alf Evans and in 1963 the fruits came to bear for "Tich" Hogarth, our new coach. Eddie had become a must be in a team that was just about to set the standard for future teams. For the first time Williamstown won the A grade Premiership, with Eddie leading the way, he scored 8 goals and I got 4. He went on to score 120 goals for the season, the first of 6 times he would score over 100 goals in a season.

In his 12 years with the Club, his best year was 1967 with 147 goals, and prior to that had thrown 100 plus 4 years in a row. His record breaking season in 1967 of 147 goals was a record that may never be bettered."

Eddie played with Williamstown for 16 years (350 senior games and 80 junior games). He was selected in the junior state teams in 1958 – 59, which were followed by 9 senior Victorian team selections from 1962-1978. He was also selected as an 18 year old in the first Australian touring team in 1962 that played in the U.S. against many of the top college and club teams and in England against some English representative teams.



Above is Eddie in the 1963 grand final team

Eddie threw 8 goals in Williamstown's first A grade premierships in 1963 and was awarded one vote (His mate Peter Hogg threw 4 goals and was awarded 3 votes, Alan Chiron awarded 2 votes).

He played in many premierships for the Williamstown Fearons from 1963 until 1972, when Williamstown was at its very best. Eddie and Glenys were living in Nunawading with a young family and in 1973 they decided that it would be far more convenient to play with a local club, and so he transferred to Chadstone where he played for half a season. Unfortunately the local governing sports body at Chadstone was not encouraging family and children into the facilities after matches, which was understandingly unacceptable to

Eddie, and so he resigned and did not play for the rest of the season. In 1974 Eddie moved to Surrey Park where he played a further 174 senior games.

At Surrey Park, Eddie played in the state league team from 1974 until 1979 and then played in the Division 2 premiership team in 1981. He then coached Division 1 teams, including the 1984 premiership team, as well as many junior teams.

Along with Les Goding, John Gunn and others, he established the Mitcham club, but then played a prominent role in Surrey Park's pee wee competition at Eastmont Primary School. This was vital to Surrey's junior program.

He was also one of the guiding lights in establishing the box lacrosse facility at Marlborough Street, Bentleigh in the late 60's, and would be seen there every Sunday with a small but willing crew, including his builder brother-in-law Don, erecting the box court.

A prolific left-handed forward, he finished top or runner up in the association goal throwers on many occasions and still holds the Victorian state league/A grade goal throwing record of 147 in a season (1967). That same year he won the Vince Healy for best and fairest player in Victoria.

Eddie is the highest goal scorer in Victoria with 1724 goals in the most senior grade, throwing 1181 for Williamstown from 1960-1972, 40 for Chadstone in half a season in 1973, and 469 for Surrey Park from 1974-1979.

Nationally Eddie is the third highest goalscorer at the state league level, third to Michael Raggatt (1764) and Ray Duthy (1753). What also needs to be recognized is that during the peak of his career at Williamstown Eddie was competing for goals against another legendary forward, Alan Rolley, who threw 1677 goals at state league level. As an example in 1963, Eddie and Alan threw 120 and 104 goals respectively - the next highest scorer was Graham Lines from Malvern with 91.

Eddie established Lancer Sports in the 1970's, a sporting goods outlet, and was the first Brine Lacrosse distributor in Australia, which he held for many years, and briefly produced the Lancer lacrosse stick in Melbourne. After coaching, he moved into the area of videoing games and covered many finals series from the middle 1980's through to the late 1990's.

Not content with an already full involvement in lacrosse, he took on various roles with the VALA (now Lacrosse Victoria) including Senior Records Secretary (1967-74), Match Committee (1976-78) and Property Officer (1977-79). He was awarded life membership of Surrey Park in 1995.



Eddie Toomey with a manual scoreboard

One interesting fact is how many of the Toomey family have played for Surrey – his 4 children, 2 sons in law, and 12 grandchildren – and then there's the Gibson boys involvement through Eddie's sister.



Above is Eddie on the 1961 End of Season trip to Perth getting a bit of attention from Nedlands-Subiaco's Ted Loxley, who is "Adjusting" his helmet for him!! Not sure the referee saw it though, that whistle doesn't seem to be moving to his lips!

### **BEST PLAYERS HE HAS PLAYED WITH AND AGAINST?**

Alan Rolley, Rod Cordell, Michael Orr, Graeme Fox, Ron Twomey & Brian Griffin

### **BEST DEFENDERS HE PLAYED AGAINST?**

Len Austin (Malvern), Jim Daw (Malvern), Graham Read (Coburg) & Doug Fox (Camberwell/Surrey Park).

### **CONCLUSION**

Eddie Toomey was a very talented and high scoring, left hand attack player in and for Victoria in particular, and was only 18 when he was selected in the 1962 Australian team, the first to leave our shores. He was a prolific goal scorer, the highest in Victoria. He also started playing in an era where the protective equipment was very limited, as was the number of referees running a game, and like many talented young players he took more than his fair share of punishment. This is evident from the photo above of an end of season trip!

He was always actively involved in developing lacrosse and administering at club and state level and it is surprising given his contribution to the game that he only has a life membership from Surrey Park. He lived lacrosse, he loves lacrosse, and was a great contributor to the game on and off the field.

Well played Eddie Toomey, champion on and off the lacrosse field.