

## MAL TAYLOR LEGEND AND LACROSSE BUILDER



Malcolm Lorenzo Taylor started as a junior player in 1934 at Williamstown, just prior to WW2, and after the war umpired lacrosse from 1947-1950. In 1950 the club was in difficulty and Mal was asked along with several other former players to come back to the Club where they formulated a 10 year plan, with Mal's main focus being the recruitment and development of juniors.

Peter Hogg, who lived two doors from Mal in Perry Street, along with Leeton Titter, were given the job of recruiting school kids around 8 years of age, to start playing lacrosse.

1950-51 was the start of the junior program at Willy, which set the Club up as the one of the most successful lacrosse clubs in Australia.

As many former Williamstown players who started in the 1950s and 1960s would attest, Mal's home in Perry Street was the centre of the universe for many kids and Mal was very good at recruiting. As many will recall Mal would often suggest "Why don't you bring some of your mates down to the Fearon to play lacrosse". Life was less complicated in those days and to spend most of the day engaged in lacrosse, throwing a ball around, lacquering or oiling the stick, or just talking about the game is something that is no longer that prevalent, with a preference now for iPhones and Facebook.

Kevin Hope and Alan Chiron were introduced to Lacrosse at the Gloucester Reserve in 1951 by Mal Taylor, and joined players such as John Morrish, Peter Hogg, Leeton Titter and Norman Marr as 8 & 9 year olds playing in the VALA Under 14 competition.

As Alan Chiron would attest, "We were not that good, but Mal stood by his boys and coached every one of us two nights a week". To demonstrate how much faith he had in his recruits, the team played for two years without winning a game, but Mal would be running up & down the sidelines, week after week, with his pants tucked into his socks, telling players who to pass the ball to.

In 1954 the juniors were growing in numbers and size and had improved their Lacrosse skills and Mal told them that they would win the premiership in 1955. His continuing to coach made that difference and Willy were runners up in 1954, and the undefeated premiers and champions in 1955.

The Club was not all that strong in numbers or skills in the "Fifties" and the majority of Mal's boys played Under 14 in the morning, Under 16 at lunchtime and some played seniors in the afternoon.

The 1955 Under 14 premiership team was the basis of the team that won Williamstown's first senior or "A" Grade premiership in 1963, the start of a long period of success. Not all, but much of the success emanating from that time can be attributed to Mal Taylor, with his planning and decisive commitment, with Williamstown remaining a powerhouse in men's lacrosse to this day.

While Williamstown had not won an A Grade premiership until 1963 it certainly has made up for it over the next 56 years, thanks in the main to Mal Taylor's vision, tenacity and commitment.

Mal stuck with the kids and ran his own “Nipper” competition for both boys and girls at Williamstown, with many coming from nearby suburbs of Williamstown to play in his competitions. Mal would always say to kids “you might want to bring some of your mates down to the Fearon to play lacrosse?” This was recruiting 101 for Mal Taylor.



The photo above is of the 1955 Under 14 team. The names are from L to R, Back row: Peter Hogg, Ian McLean, Bill Forder, Mal Taylor (Coach), Leeton Titter, Graham Hill, Kevin Hope, Jim Stewart. Front row: Alan Clements, John Morrish, Michael Orr, Alan Chiron, Norman Marr, Rex Williams.

Peter Hogg showed Mal an article indicating that South Australia was to start women’s lacrosse in 1962, and Mal was once again seconded to arrange a women’s team in November 1961 to play a game on the Hatt Reserve, Williamstown, and women’s association lacrosse commenced in Victoria in 1962. Mal Taylor and Mrs Joy Parker were the key drivers to get women’s lacrosse started in Victoria in 1962, with Williamstown forming 2 teams along with a team from both Footscray and Malvern. Mal was also the first coach of a Victorian women’s team to visit South Australia.

Passionate and decisive, that is what he was! Danny Nolan recalls that during the mid 1960s the VALA was proposing that any players attending Melbourne or Monash University would have to play for that university while they attended that university. Mal Taylor, whilst a great supporter of the game was like most club people quite parochial and predicted this move can be detrimental to the club(s) he had helped rebuild or formed, and attended a Footscray Lacrosse Club meeting urging the club to come out in numbers to vote this proposal down and juniors were to be bused to the meeting to ensure he got the numbers. For whatever reason the club was fairly blasé in its response and attendance at the meeting and the University Rule as it was known was implemented. Mal Taylor was outraged at the apathy and having lent Footscray some goals immediately took his ute down to Footscray, loaded the goals and took them away. You didn’t betray Mal Taylor and get away with it!

Mal was instrumental in starting clubs at Newport (Which morphed into Altona in the mid 60s), Footscray, Essendon and Glenroy in the early 1960s and was usually on the committee or president of each of these clubs over a long period of time.

Mal also formed the mid-week technical schools competition in the West and also took teams on interstate trips by train.

Mal was instrumental in getting Lacrosse sticks imported from Canada and he was renowned for arriving at the Club's monthly meetings with 12 unstrung sticks which he proceeded to string as the meeting went on. A meeting never finished until Mal had strung all 12 sticks.

It was not unusual for the meetings to close at 1.00am and for the discussions to continue until 3.00am, as Mal was a stubborn man, but he had the right thoughts on how the Williamstown Lacrosse Club could become the powerhouse of lacrosse in Australia.

If you wanted a brand new stick or an existing one fibre glassed, you went down to Perry Street, and if Mal wasn't there he was probably down at the Fearon. He also assisted SAWLA with sticks when they started in 1962 and imported high quality hickory sticks until the demise of the hickory stick in late 1970s.

During the mid 70s Mal initiated the construction of the "Box" court at Williamstown, to provide training facilities for players when the Fearon was too wet to train on as well as provide a venue for box lacrosse during the off-season. This venue was very successful and continued for many years and is still in use today.

Mal was influenced by the other lacrosse legend on the other side of the river, Frank Lansbury from Malvern. Both were ferociously passionate about not only their club and their juniors, but also the development and wellbeing of the game as a whole, and it would not be out of character for either to launch a tirade at a VALA meeting, with Mal also known for stacking meetings with juniors, many of whom had no idea why they were there, to get the "right" decision made!

Mal Taylor's awards over the journey include life member of the Williamstown Lacrosse Club, ALC certificate of merit, life member of the Footscray Lacrosse Club, life member of the VALA and a Friend of Canadian Lacrosse Medallion. The Best Clubman award at the Williamstown Lacrosse Club is named in his honour.

Mal worked for most of his life at the Melbourne Harbour Trust in Melbourne and was a very keen sailor and member of the Hobson's Bay Sailing Club as well as being actively involved in the local church. Mal Taylor passed away in the early 2000s, still a dedicated and passionate lacrosse man until the end.

Mal Taylor, lacrosse builder and developer.