

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMO LACROSSE CLUB BY GEOFF TRELOAR – NOVEMBER 2022

The Early November 2022 Newsletter had an article about the Como Lacrosse Club. It surprised me and aroused my interest to find out more about the Club since I was born at Como in 1945 but left there aged six when my family returned to Melbourne.

Como Lacrosse Club began in 1930 and was renamed as South Perth in 1947; a change that was made to bring the club into line with other sporting bodies in the district.

In the 1930's Como was a tightly knit community with a country life style environment. It had a wide range of social, welfare and sporting organisations. Located next to the Swan river, it boasted a popular swimming beach and was a tourist destination well-served by ferries arriving at the Como Jetty and the nearby Mends St Jetty to visit the South Perth Zoo.

The foundation members of the Como Club were Mr. A. R. Page and his nephew R.A. (Russ) Page. Both men held positions as either President or Secretary of their Club and were also active workers for the W.A.L.A.

A.R. Page was an acting-president and acting-secretary of the W.A.L.A. They both played for their Club and also represented the Western Australian team at various interstate carnivals.

The foundation members were dedicated to the success of the Como Club. Starting with only 11 members in 1930, they were able two years later to celebrate at their October Dinner Dance, the incredible achievement of being 'A' Grade Champions and Runners-Up in 'B' Grade. By 1932 they had 48 members and they were all locals.

What made the Como Clubs so successful? Apart from the hard training, excellent players and coaching, the Club was known for hosting highly popular social functions. In addition to Annual Dinner Dances, they ran dance evenings at the local Como Hall attended by 200 people, and regularly hosted evenings for the club members at the homes of the presidents.

In their foundation year, they presented their first comedy review to a packed house of adults and children. The performers included professional musicians and club members.

The Club reached out both to the local community but also invited members of other lacrosse clubs in W.A as well as referees.

An important strategy to build club unity and participation was the creation of a Council of Seven (summer committee); their motto being "A good time for everybody." Social activities were arranged around cricket, tennis, picnics and ferry trips.

The Como Club held a high profile in the local community and in 1940 was represented on the controlling committee of the Como Cheerie Patriotic Club "to look after the welfare of all Como residents on active service and their dependants."

During the 1930's and the immediate period after WW 2 the Como Club had great success on the field winning a number of championships, generally in 'A' Grade. Due to the Depression years and the loss of players throughout WW 2, they sometimes dropped down to 'B' Grade or were unable to field a team due to player shortage. However, they survived and were strong competitors; their closest rivals being the East Fremantle and University Clubs

The other clubs that they played against included Bayswater, Mt.Lawley, Perth, Nedlands, Fremantle, Midland Junction and Wembley.

In 1938 Como had two members of the W.A. State team that played against South Australia at the Subiaco Oval; they were W. Carlton, Defence, who was the captain of the Como Club; and A.R. Page, described as a reliable back and making his first interstate appearance.

Lacrosse was well covered in the 1930's by a number of newspapers, such as the Swan and Canning Leader; the Mirror; the Western Mail; the West Australian; W.A. Amateur Sports Gazette, New Call; Bailey's Weekly; The Daily News; The Swan Express; the Fremantle Advocate; and the Weekly Guardian. These newspapers also covered lacrosse stories in the other states, especially Victoria.

Weekly reports about all matches were reported in detail commenting on tactics and individual players. A typical example is a report by "Oh Henry" in the July 13 1939 edition of the **Fremantle Advocate**:

"Como definitely meant business on Saturday and in no uncertain manner defeated the Fremantle boys to the tune of 20-4. The crab-catchers stickwork was much superior to ours in all departments, bad passing and lack of pep in goal shots costing us quite a few valuable goals..... Como went into attack right from the start and scored within a few minutes of the commencement of play."

Remember when we had to do this!

LACROSSE PLAYERS' BOOTS INSPECTED.



"The umpire inspecting the boots of players before the start of the lacrosse match between Como and North Perth at Wellington Square on Saturday afternoon to see that they conform to the safety requirements of the game."

Western Mail (Perth, WA: 1885 -1954), Thursday 24 May 1934, page 15

After WW 2 Como began to struggle as a club due to the loss of players and the delay in the importation of lacrosse sticks from Canada. They dropped down to field a team in 'B' grade and were competitive and active at a W.A.L.A. level.

In 1947, Como (Then known as South Perth) travelled by train to South Australia as a B Grade team to play two matches – one against a comparable B grade team on the SA premiership table, and another against a combined B grade South Australian team.

The 1950's were very difficult years for many of the lacrosse clubs in Perth and a number ceased to exist. Lacrosse sticks were scarce, the Canadian supply was closed and replacement supplies were sought in Pakistan whilst the experimental stick, known as the Brady and produced in South Australia, was being trialled. South Perth ceased to be at the end of the 1979 season ended, with the remaining members becoming part of the newly formed Canning Lacrosse Club in 1980.

Although the research into the Como Lacrosse Club describes a rather bygone era it has been a valuable experience to consider a time when lacrosse was highly popular and well reported in the local press. It is useful to reflect about the many ways that a particular club, Como, played such an important sporting and social role in the local community.