



WESTERN BULLDOGS PAST PLAYERS

Newsletter April 2020

SEASON 2020

2020 is a year of unprecedented challenges. We hope you and your family stay fit and well.

We are hopeful of staging the 1985 Reunion and End of Year Functions when things return to normal.

There will be Newsletters in June, August and October to keep you informed.

TERRY WHEELER *157 games, 1974-83, Coached 91 games 1990-94*

Profile written by Ross Brundrett

IF you ask Terry Wheeler, he'll tell you there are worse things than getting knocked off your motorbike at speed, after hitting a feral goat in the outback.

He woke up two days later in Broken Hill Hospital with nine broken ribs, a punctured right lung, a cracked shoulder blade, a broken bone in his neck and no memory of the last 40km of that fateful ride in the bush near his mother's hometown of Tibooburra in central NSW.

But according to the man himself, it wasn't the hardest hit he has suffered in his lifetime.

"That would be when I was playing with the Bulldogs and I ran into (Geelong hard man) Ray Card. The ball had been kicked towards the John Gent Stand flank and I was charging at it and so was Ray and we both had our heads down and bang ... I think I got about 40 stitches," he said with a chuckle.

The fact that he can laugh at all shows just how well he has recovered since his close encounter with the goat last November.

That was the most recent of a long list of treks that have taken him and his adventure bike around most parts of Australia, sometimes with his old Bulldog teammates, Bruce Reid and Peter Welsh, and sometimes on his own. He's trekked from the Nullarbor to Cape York and plenty of places in between, seen a lot of "red dirt" country.

For Wheels, there's a "sense of freedom" in the open road that keeps calling, which also took him and his Bulldog posse all the way to base camp at Mt Everest and to the peaks of Mt Kilimanjaro.



Cape York: Terry Wheeler (middle) and Bruce Reid (right)



Nepal: Terry Wheeler (left) and Bruce Reid (middle)

None of which would surprise anyone who knows the man. One of the favourite sons of the Bulldogs is Wheeler, precisely because he was never afraid of a challenge, in fact he so often thrived on them.

He first came to the doggies in 1974, after being spotted in Warburton by the club's talent scout, Max Jenkins. Originally an on-baller, he managed a handful of games off the bench before being fashioned into a back pocket and stepping into that role in the seniors when Gordon Casey left the club at the end of 1975.

"Pretty early on I was pitted against Kevin Bartlett and kept him goalless, then soon after I did alright on Leigh Matthews, so that gave me a bit of confidence that I was up to the job," he said.

"We had a new coach in Billy Goggin and a pretty good team... Gary Dempsey was in his prime and there was Laurie Sandilands, Geoff Jennings, Kelvin Templeton..."

As a player though, Wheeler tasted finals footy just once, beaten by seven points in the elimination final in 1976. His career ended abruptly after the '83 season. "I was 27, but the writing was on the wall, I'd only played three senior games for the season and they had made me captain of the reserves, and there was this young kid doing all right in the back pocket called Mick Egan."

But Terry was keen to stay in the game and saw coaching as a means of doing just that. A keen student of the game and a teacher by occupation, he captain-coached Williamstown to a premiership in the VFA in 1986 before returning to the Bulldogs to coach the reserves.

Of course, history records that when the club almost lost its identity in the proposed merger with Fitzroy late in 1989, it was Wheeler who answered the call from Peter Gordon to take over as senior coach.

Only those on the inside know exactly how cash-strapped and desperate those early days were.

The first game of the season, played in front of a 28,000 strong home crowd, was a bit of a disaster, with the Saints winning by 10 goals.

"I had to play a 17-year-old skinny kid at full forward because Adrian Campbell had injured himself on the Thursday, and then next game in Sydney I played another skinny first gamer. Well, we smashed Sydney, and those two – Chris Grant and Leon Cameron – turned out to be alright."

Wheeler's belief in his team paid off. Players like Glenn Coleman were given a second chance, and he persevered with Tony Liberatore when others had written him off as too small, and he bought with him players from Williamstown such as Ian Rickman and Danny Delre.

"One of the hardest things I had to do was take the captaincy off Steve Wallis and give it to Doug Hawkins because I just thought it would give the side a lift – there was a lot of emotion riding with the team at the time. And Steve was such a good team man, he took it well," said Terry.

That first season, the club defied the odds to almost make the finals with 12 wins, and two years later finished the season in second spot, with only percentage keeping them from heading the home and away ladder (a feat no Bulldog team has ever achieved).

But just 24 matches later, Wheeler was sacked as coach despite a pretty handy winning record of almost 55%.

How long did it take to get over his sacking? "Who said I got over it?" was Terry's quick-fire reply.

"The truth is I would have found it harder to accept it if it wasn't for the fact that the man who rang me to offer the job also called me to say my time was over."

Afterwards, there was a successful time in the media – calling footy matches with Channel Seven for several years, but for the most part, he managed to combine his two loves – teaching and footy – through a series of roles with the AFL, TAFE, and later the Australian Institute of Sport and the Australian Sports Commission, where he helped the coaching development in several Olympic sports.

As to what happens next, Terry has an open mind. As of March 13, he reached the official retirement age of 65, but whether that means an end to his road trips, well that's still "open to discussion" with wife Lyn.

In the meantime, having had both his hips "resurfaced" he has declared himself match-fit to take part in kick-to-kicks with his seven grandchildren.



LEN CUMMING 18 games, 9 goals, 1967-69 *Recruits Dinner 2018: Terry Wheeler with Aaron Naughton*

The following article titled 'Cumming's one regret', by Graham Burke, appeared in the Herald Sun in 1989.

IT HAS taken many years for Lenny Cumming to admit that his decision to leave Footscray without a clearance was a mistake.

"Now that I'm older I have come to realise I should have stayed with the Bulldogs," the Mildura-born former wingman said. "But being only 20, I was young and impetuous and didn't really know what I was doing."

He and Freddy Cook walked out on the Bulldogs in 1968 to play for Yarraville in the VFA. "It was exciting at the time," Cumming said, "We Played for Footscray on the Saturday and Yarraville the very next day".

"I never thought much about it at the time, but I have since come to realise it was throwing a career down the drain. My advice to young footballers is to never settle for second best like I did. If you have the chance to play for an AFL club, go for it with, all you've got".

After winning the J. J. Liston Trophy as a centre half-half-back in his one season at Yarraville, Cook moved on to Port Melbourne where he became a famous goalkicker. Cumming stayed at Yarraville for two seasons and had a year at Prahran before "dropping down" to the Footscray District League.

It was there that his past with Footscray caught up with him. "I was classified as a disqualified player which meant I couldn't play outside the VFA," he said. "I had to stand out of football for the greater part of two years before the disqualification was lifted."

He later returned home to Mildura where he coached three Sunraysia teams South Mildura, Mildura and Irymple. A job promotion took him to Shepparton...and he became chairman of selectors for Mooroopna, the GVFL club “across the river.” ♦

Len left Footscray at a very young age. He remembers that time with great fondness, and credits mentors and role models including Ian Bryant, Charlie Sutton and John Schultz for helping him to transition “from a boy to a man.”

Len worked with Visy Industries for 36 years, retiring as Sales and Marketing Manager.

Sport continued to be a source of enjoyment and reward for Len, and he went on to coach *Newport* to 2 premierships in 3 years, *West Footscray* to the 1975 Grand Final draw, with players Ivan Marsh (WB# 515), Doug Prior (WB# 542) and Mark Cross (WB# 639), *Sunraysia FL* to Division 2 Country Championship in 1987 and Division 1 Runners Up in 1988, and *Lilydale FC* under 13s, 14s and 15s sides – featuring his grandson Bailey.

Len is now President of the Lilydale Bowls Club and is WBPP Bowls Coordinator – the next AFLCPP Bowls Day is scheduled for Sunday 15th November at Altona Bowls Club. It will feature the Dream Team – Ian Rickman, Ted Whitten, Ian Morrison and Terry Wheeler. If you would like to attend this event, you can register your interest with Len on 0418 374 079.



RIP Don “Snowy” Hazzard

Snowy passed away recently. He was a much-loved trainer who always had a smile on his face. He was great support to the players and was an integral part of the club spirit in the 60s and 70s. He was a Life Member of the club. Our condolences go to his family and friends.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

INTERVIEW WITH GARY IRVINE

Years Played: 1987 - 89

Number Worn: 47, 26

Recruited From: Collegians FC (VAFA)

Where did you go after the Bulldogs? Back to Collegians

Where do you live now? Glenelg, Adelaide.

What did you do football-wise, following your playing career with the Bulldogs?

I played in 2 premierships in 92/93 for Collegians in VAFA Division 1, represented Victorian Amateurs, then went into coaching in the TAC Cup under 18s at Oakleigh Chargers (U18 assistant coach/runner under David Ackerly, and Under 15 metro coach), played for East Burwood Veterans and won the 2002 premiership. I moved to Adelaide in 2003 – and became assistant coach/runner under Dave Noble at Glenelg FC (SANFL) then U17 coach, went over to West Adelaide under Andrew Collins and coached the U13, U15 and U16s. I also coached juniors at local club PHOS Camden with my four sons for 9 years. In 2011 I discovered, by chance, that I had an aneurism in my aorta that I had since birth. This required immediate surgery to repair. I had a Ross-Yacoub Procedure done and after 7 hours of surgery it took 3 months to fully recover. I have always kept fit, but I am unable to run now due to arthritis in my toes, so I have taken up surfboat racing. Our crew competes locally and nationally in the reserves and masters races. That's me up top during Aussies 2019 at Kurrawa QLD getting wiped out in a race–



What work did you do after your playing days? I have been a primary/kindergarten teacher for 31 years

Are you still working? Yes – I am currently teaching 4 year olds at St Peter's Woodlands Grammar School in Glenelg

What are your thoughts on the modern game?

I could watch football all day and night. The game is quicker, more skilful and well coached. I go to every Grand final and to watch the 2016 premiership team win in such an amazing display of modern-day football was amazing.

Do you have any anecdotes from your playing days to pass on to other past players?

There were a lot of funny things that went on in the changerooms after training – most are best left in the rooms. The Sunday morning Kangaroo Court sessions were very entertaining...

Who were your mates at the club? Do you keep in touch?

Being in Adelaide, it is hard to stay in touch, but through Facebook I keep in touch with quite a few of the players – Justin Charles, Adrian Campbell, Frank Lesiputty, Stuart Nicol, Mark Cullen, Cameron Wright – to name a few

Who were the players you most admired during your playing days?

For the Bulldogs, Doug Hawkins, Rick Kennedy, Brian Royal, Steve Wallis, Simon Beasley, Steve MacPherson, Darren Baxter, Tony Liberatore For other teams, Gary Ablett snr, Dipper, Michael Tuck, Tony Lockett, Darren Millane

Do you have any comments you would like to pass on about your time at the Bulldogs?

Yes – The club did an amazing job dragging itself out of a possible merger/closure during 1989, and the players, supporters, support staff and committee stuck together to keep the club going.

PODCAST

This Newsletter is accompanied by a podcast by Kevin Hillier who has interviewed two of our club's greats. We hope you enjoy it –



Podcast features Steven Power (left) and Gordon Casey (right) pictured here at the 2019 Mid-Season Lunch

2020 COMMITTEE

President	Ross Abbey	0412 073 092
Vice President	Phil O'Keeffe	0402 007 270
Secretary	Owen Madigan	0408 105 151
Treasurer	Andrew Howlett	0418 510 635
Committee	Les Bartlett	0416 485 652
	Adam Contessa	0416 081 259
	Graeme Joslin	0412 771 235
	Matthew Mansfield	0439 336 939
	Gary Mc Gorlick	0409 804 057
	Ilija Grgic	0413 677 736
ALFCPP Delegate	Jack Slattery	0425 746 148