

Early History of Strathmore Cricket Club

1972-73: Irreconcilable Breakdown

We must have looked at the second season being a simple continuation of the successes of our first.

That success made us blind to the potential problems of a minimal level of real mixing amongst the parties to the merge at senior level, the depressing effect of a very trying football season, and the loss to the club of the coaches of three of our four junior teams. We added a second Under 14 team to cater for the excess of boys moving up from Under 12 and a second "D" Grade so that those coming up from Under 16 could be sure of a game at the right standard. Needing a 16 year old Rodney Reddish to take over as Treasurer, as well as playing in the firsts and coaching the Under 14 A team, indicated just how thin on the ground we were for officials.

However we did try something a bit more ambitious for a social program and booked the ground floor function room at the International Hotel for a Cup Eve turn to which we attracted around 50 people. However we had not known that we were going to have to compete with Johnny O'Keefe appearing live in the main public area, so that night will always be remembered for Shirley D'Elton dancing on the table tops, and, according to More News "receiving a peck on the cheek from the old rock star", as well as for Ron Middleton's luck in getting three horses from his four tickets out of the 700 plus sold in the obligatory sweep.

Reddish and Benny Rowe provided some of the fresh blood that the "B" Grade side needed while our top senior player from the previous season, Stephen Staples, took over as captain. However the team was not quite able to keep up its previous high standard and missed out on a place in the finals, Reddish being its best batsman and Robert Sawyer winning the second Alf Pearce memorial award as OASFCC's best open age player.

Tony Wheeler and Darrell Lynch were initially appointed to lead the "C" Grade team, but after the first game clashing with their a football end of season trip and us forfeiting our "D(1)" match we decided to try to put the footballers' team back together in "D(1)" under Wheeler and Lynch's leadership with a couple of other line up changes. However we had not anticipated the rub off effects from a dismal relegation year in "A" Grade football, even when Wheeler and Lynch were starting to look like a fairly formidable bowling combination.

Then in round 3 against St. Francis de Sales things turned sensational.

St. Francis were routed for 36 in the first innings and then Lynch took 9/50 while failing to prevent their veteran (later umpire) Frank McDonough batting them to a position to snatch back outright points. Unfortunately the independent umpire officiating gave seven Strathmore "D(1)" batsmen out lbw, and when it happened to Chris Wheeler for the second

time he spat the dummy and knocked his stumps out of the ground with his bat. Rather than go through an Association investigation, Chris retired and the football side broke up, Tony Wheeler and Lynch fortunately agreeing to return to their original positions with a "C" Grade side that was then made up largely of players straight out of Under 16.

Meanwhile the "D(2)" side started to look a bit more competitive. Graham Rowe scored 63 in his debut innings as we missed a win by 2 runs, then Tony Smith got an unconquered 58 trying to avoid an outright loss to Aberfeldie. Then in round 3 the kids broke through. An Under 14 tearaway John Dodd picked up four wickets, Peter Holley three and Trevor Stevenson made 60 as we passed Campbellfield with five wickets in hand.

The next week we had to try to turn that smell of success plus a few more juniors and late recruits into two sides to cover for the footballers. It really had no hope of working. With Under 16 captain Andrew Gilbert as our potential trump player, we came up against Pascoe Vale RSL captained by none other than Andrew's father Doug who treated us to a contemptuous innings of 77 before crushing us outright. Having admitted that we could not pull a credible fourth side out of thin air, the next game we had to shift the best eleven we could muster into the "D(1)" spot on the draw which as luck would have it was scheduled to play Pascoe Vale RSL. Doug Gilbert got 104 not out and the result was the same. But in the meantime we had added some interesting names—Gary Bull then in Under 16, Laurie Diss who eventually went back to Jacana after several valuable years at Strathmore, and his mate Ossie Musumeci who later became an umpire.

The next match against Glenroy YCW, a club in its first season which included the fathers of some of our then Under 12 players, an 11 years and 8 weeks old Wayne Rowe took 6 for 30. And the one after that Under 14 captain Ron Temminghoff combined with Paul "Occer" Kaufman making his long awaited debut with the Club to get the innings off to a good enough start for us to notch a 69 run win. After drawing level on the last ball chasing an outright against the unfortunate Campbellfield, we had one more attempt at turning one side into two when "D(1)" versus "D(2)" was scheduled in the second last round. All we achieved was to give a then still 10 year old Steven McCaffrey a chance to score an unbeaten 24 while helping Peter Holley to a score of 116, and the sense to only take our best team into the final round.

Meanwhile our second junior season saw us go from strength to strength, at least on the field.

While it may seem unlikely in this day and age, we simply could not find anybody to coach our Under 16 team. A couple of parents would take them to the matches and pick them up afterwards, but nobody was prepared to stay and help with even the umpiring or the scoring, let alone trying to teach the boys anything. Fortunately the aforementioned Andrew Gilbert was not your everyday 15 year old captain. Maybe he inherited something from his father.

So after picking up a few recruits such as Ray Gunston (who had retired hurt without scoring in the first game of the previous season and so counted as virtually new), Peter Slevison,

Gary Bull and Colin Seary (who became more widely known as a Coburg footballer and now as the North Melbourne runner), they lost the first game and then turned the tables on Doutta Stars in the second. After a couple of draws things settled down with Seary hitting consecutive scores of 101 n.o. and 133 n.o. while Gilbert and Holley presented a formidable opening attack.

They had another narrow win over Douttas in the final round before Seary got going again with 99 and 67 in the finals. In the grand final against a very strong Airport West line up, Peter Slevison, who had been amongst the runs during the season got a handy 42. Gary Bull and occasional bowler Dick Temminghoff picked up four wickets each in the semi while Gilbert got 5 for 44 off 17 overs and Temminghoff another 3 for 13 in the grand.

Our Under 14 A captain was also selected for unique leadership qualities rather than any pretensions at outstanding cricket skills. Ron Temminghoff was a year ahead of his age group at school and managed to combine outstanding intelligence with a very determined approach to anything he took on. His team also had their share of significant recruits, with the new second side providing a stepping stone for several of them. Craig Walker was the only other second year player in the line up and scored one century and took out the Association batting averages.

Amongst the recruits was the tearaway John Dodd, his mates Mick Trevean and Paul Fahey (another century maker), one of Strathmore's great junior footballers Philip Early (who had a few games in the VFL at both Essendon and Fitzroy), Darrell Lynch's brother Brett and the magical Kelvin Tweedley. Add those to the first year players Pearce, Fowler, Brown and Capdevila and it was easy to see how we could put together a premiership in this grade too.

The Grand Final was a tense affair, with our supposedly strong batting line up only producing 62 runs in its first innings, before Dodd produced his third seven wicket haul of the season to roll Glenroy for 48.

With an increasing lead and nine wickets in hand at the end of the second day of the three scheduled (and Under 16s in front and still batting), we had premiership medals pre-engraved in preparation for our presentation night to be held that same evening. However on that third day, a steady loss of wickets followed by some spirited batting nearly enabled Glenroy to turn the result around, something they might have achieved without a fine allround performance by Tweedley and some go slow tactics towards the end.

Two exceptional junior captains produced our first two premierships, three if you count Reddish who had been Under 16 captain the year before and was coaching the Under 14 As, knitting together extremely talented teams which had been drawn together from various connections through football and local schools.

The Association thoughtfully scheduled the two grand finals on adjacent ovals at J P Fawkner Reserve in Oak Park so the young club could fully enjoy the occasion while in the

same period having to make the hard decisions which were necessary to regroup after the effective failure of the merger in our senior ranks.

Benny Rowe again gave great support to Reddish by looking after the new Under 14 second side which, under his guidance, did what second sides are meant to do. It provided a flow of players into the first side and a chance for players on the borderline to have a greater share of the action in a lower ranked side. Even John Dodd had to start off in the lower team, and his 7 for 3 including hat-trick in the first game got the seconds their one win for the year while ensuring he would not get another chance to play with them, although Michael Cook did stay there for most of the season despite getting seven wickets in the same match.

Unfortunately the Association in those days had not got around to grading the strong sides separately from the weak in under age, instead separating them geographically so that our seconds had to put up with a competition of similar strength to the one our firsts were in. So by the end of the season with the first team settling down, the seconds had to take a couple of heavy beatings. However a couple more names that were to have some future prominence appeared as regulars in the seconds that season, Alan Tepper and Warren Atkinson in particular.

At the presentation night for the Under 16s and 14s on grand final night we had use of a local scout hall through the mutual involvement of Craig Walker's father and later SFC secretary Mal. Even with two premierships to celebrate, Under 16 and 14 players can be rather difficult to entertain, so we struck on the idea of a treasure hunt which allocated points for a number of nominated items. After some time running the streets of Strathmore, Colin Seary returned with a Mercedes (200) and black dog (100) while Michael Cook produced a girl within one year of his age (180) and a minibike (50). (Somehow we do not think the first three would get the same allocation in 1989.) Many boys were prepared to swallow a raw egg for 70 points but none would sacrifice an ounce of their own hair for 160, even when a look at team photos from that era proves it would have been hard to see any difference.

Under 12 cricket was quickly becoming fashionable. Airport West, Doutta Stars, Oak Park and Tullamarine joined the ranks and provided Strathmore's first encounter with opponents like Greg Ferguson, Craig Hicks, Craig Styles and Brian Allison. A lot of our first season's players had moved on to Under 14 and we had to make do with a mixture of a few talented players who were in their second last season and some average players who were in their final year.

One exception was recruit Neil Jones who performed consistently with the bat and who managed one innings of 134. However it was the youngsters who attracted most of the notice, Wayne Rowe as captain and leading wicket taker, Michael Thomson getting up some real pace and showing a lot more ability with the bat than he is remembered for in later years, and Steve McCaffrey settling in quickly in his first season.

The drop in our Under 12 talent levels showed up even more in what was still the only club second team in the age group, our second XI not even looking like winning a match in the single Under 12 section. Fortunately, Len Kelly had happily accepted a kick downstairs to look after this team and he was just the kind of person that such a team needed in the days before extensive gradings, one day games and batting and bowling limits made participation without success a lot less of a burden. In this season Len saw a lot of boys start their cricket careers at Strathmore, including the third Stevenson brother Graeme, Dale Hamilton, Michael Gale, Andrew Ainsworth and Wayne's then very young brother Paul "Piker" Rowe.

While nothing could impede his contribution in leadership and enthusiasm to the young club, president Brian D'Elton had his second playing season sadly curtailed by a kick from a horse which broke his leg soon after he tried a career switch from the meat industry back to his first love of harness racing. Despite advertised intentions to the contrary, our efforts to produce summer editions of SFC's very successful weekly newsletter More News failed dismally during those first two seasons. But neither Brian's cricket career nor cricket Mores were down for the count.

As the season drew to a close, Tony Smith and Rodney Reddish, who were carrying the brunt of club administration, were determined that some hard decisions had to be made for the future. Already, the vast majority of the Club had come out of Strathmore's own junior ranks and we knew that the only real prospect for the future was to build our own senior section directly from those junior ranks.

So at the senior presentation night at North Melbourne Football Club Social Club a letter was circulated proposing that the club's name be changed to simply Strathmore Cricket Club, that there would be no continuation of teams based on the original Ormond Amateurs members or of Strathmore senior footballers as a group, and that none of the original Ormond Amateurs would have a place in the future of the Club. It was further proposed that the performances of the under age teams during those two formative years would remain part of the records of SCC while those of the open age teams would not. Somehow, more than 16 years later, it would not seem right if we entirely forgot some of those performances by Greg Perkins, Darrell Lynch, Wayne Rowe or Peter Holley.

So in the winter of 1973, it came to pass that Strathmore Cricket Club held its first Annual General Meeting.