

Early History of Strathmore Cricket Club

1974-75: The Kids Stand Up

After a season in which the “new” Strathmore Cricket Club had prospered largely on good will, we were again a little over confident that things would continue smoothly in following seasons. However, our 1974 Annual Meeting quickly showed that it would not be that easy as Joan Thomson agreed only to act as interim treasurer to be replaced before the start of the season. Ted Jones offered his services as secretary to try to give a more senior look to our administration and our auditor Jack Halse also accepted nomination while a couple of other parents from the same group stood down because of their increasing involvement with other senior clubs. Other gains to the committee were Peter Marie and Geoff de Campo fresh and enthusiastic from their first year in the club as players in the Under 16 B team.

Back in those days, a two year old reorganisation of the Football Club had put the treasurer's job at the centre of club administration, so before the season started the Cricket Club kicked Tony Smith sideways to treasurer with Len Kelly taking over as president and Graham Rowe becoming the new VP. But office bearers and Jack Halse aside, we were left with a committee which was entirely Under 19, those younger members also taking responsibility for organising four of our nine teams.

One saving grace was the Women's Auxiliary who again ran a film night as well as a dinner dance within the first month of the season. They also opened their membership to the opposite sex, so we did not quite know what to call them after that. But with the success of their efforts and a record \$200+ plus profit on a cup sweep, the club was finally getting getting itself onto a reasonable financial footing.

On the field, the club was even more dominated by our younger brigade, with only five players over the age of 21 appearing with any of our nine teams at any stage of the season. Those five were the then president, vice-president and treasurer, past-president Brian D'Elton and a mid-season recruit John Wise who had worked with Tony Smith during Tony's six months at Ford and who had met up again by chance at Essendon Football Club Social Club during the winter.

Turf players of today would be amazed that only part of one morning of matting (and bare concrete) cricket was possible in the first three weeks of the season, with our only results being a win and a loss in Under 12s both of which were over before the rain because of very low scores in one innings.

There were few changes in the open age ranks with Rod Reddish officially taking over from Benny Rowe as captain but the two continuing to work closely together. Our senior team

was again close to the finals with five wins and a tie from nine completed games and went within a whisker of getting another 13 points at various stages.

As well as providing the leadership, Reddish and Rowe again dominated the playing performances, but there were also a few indicators that the side was beginning to develop some real depth. Straight out of Under 16s, Gary Bull and Trevor Stevenson became regulars, while several of our earlier juniors such as Greg "Ugly" Cummins and Paul "Occer" Kaufman started to make regular contributions. And when Tony Farrall became the last of the old Strathy Meths line up to play with Strathmore mid way through the season, it looked as though we had put together the nucleus of a strong team for future years.

Our second team, back in "D" Grade, managed a creditable 3 and a half wins for the season, due mainly to the superb form of Graham Rowe who averaged 47.6 with the bat but who preferred to restrict his comeback to the lower grade because of his heavy commitments as Under 12 A coach and vice-president while leaving it to the younger brigade to build up our senior team. With only eight reasonably regular seconds players, including the coaches of five of our junior teams, the seconds used twenty others at different stages to make up a full list, but rarely needed to include juniors before the last couple of rounds, a sure indication that our senior ranks were set to explode in future seasons.

It also took until the final round for us to find room for such a proven open age performer as Wayne Rowe whose match winning 6 wickets certainly provided the ammunition to ensure that we would have room in the seniors for promising juniors in the years to come.

Looking back, the lack of success of a star studded Under 16 A team was about the biggest disappointment of 1974-75. Their line up included many of the stars of the two previous seasons' Under 14 premierships teams, including Craig Walker, John Dodd, Paul Fahey, Mick Trevean, Philip Early, Colin Brown, Craig Capdevila and Stephen Bury, under the captaincy of Ron Temminghoff, plus star recruit Steve Sullivan. However they only managed two wins for the season, the first of which had to go to the EBKCA executive to be confirmed. In the other Sullivan scored 86 and took 5 for 33, in a strong pointer for his future as one of Strathmore's greatest ever senior players.

Tony Smith was even mellowing a little with age and applying for promotions interstate as well as being willing to be treasurer and coach of a glamourless Under 16 B side. That team did its job of providing back up for the A team, but apart from an early win over Keilor in which Ron Temminghoff's cousin Peter Molenkamp took 6 for 8 including a hat-trick, they found it hard to be competitive in a competition with no other real second sides.

One of the biggest problems for Under 16 was the lack of parental support. Apart from Russell Brown who had generally been the scorer for his son Colin's teams since Under 12, all the rest of the boys seemed to prefer their parents to take no interest. This left both teams with only one driver each and the need to co-opt outsiders from week to week for transport to say nothing of umpiring and scoring.

Under 14 A was a much stronger line up than we had had in Under 12 two years previous due largely to continued recruiting of school mates by players already with the club, and also to the increased commitment of some of the boys who had been Under 12 the previous year. The team improved steadily during the season, taking all before them except for a narrow reversal in a January one day game against Westmeadows.

Young bowling stars Wayne Rowe and Michael Thomson made their biggest impact with the Coburg Hatch Shield team, consolidating a connection which has been important for the development of our junior players ever since. This was the start of many seasons of January cricket for the Rowe family, and in a pre-series trial game against Broadmeadows, Thommo broke a stump and nearly did the same to Craig Styles's knee cap.

Our only extra team for 1974-75 was a third Under 14 side which had been predicted the year before from the number of players already at the club. The young duo of Marie and De Campo took one side each and managed to split them up fairly evenly in the continuing absence of any separate grade for clubs' second teams. Both teams did their job of providing games for those who were already involved in the club as well as providing back up for the A team, and during the club a couple of new players in Stephen McCrystal and Craig O'Gorman slipped into their ranks without any fuss.

With more than a full team of the previous season's Under 12s gone up to Under 14, we had to build a new line up from players who had played mainly in the B team the previous year and some of their mates who had not played competitive cricket. Three new boys quickly settled in to the regular team: Ray Baxter who opened the bowling and was a handy bat, Darren Bell and Michael Gourlay. The fathers of the last two, Geoff and Geoff, were of course to play major roles in the development of the club in many areas.

The team went through the season undefeated thanks to solid performances by many of the boys and became into a close knit group under the leadership of coach Graham Rowe, manager George Dugard and captain Michael Gale.

Len Kelly returned to his role of two seasons previous as the person who introduced most of the new players to Strathmore Cricket Club and in 1974-75 season did an heroic job, finishing the season with a list that included: Brendan Trebilcock, Peter Youl, Glen Bouckley, Jason Hamilton, Mark Hough, Michael and Patrick Barnes, Peter, Michael and Andrew Walsh, younger brothers from the Bishop and Marie families, and junior football identities Michael Kreuger and Colin McIntyre.

With a few other less memorable names, Len often had close to 20 to choose from and certainly was the person who introduced the idea of participation into Under 12 cricket long before it became fashionable. And despite there being four second teams in the eight team section, the boys went through the season without a win, something that obviously did not at all deter their future involvement, to say nothing of the involvement of their parents, many of

whom were to play major roles in the development of the Cricket Club and some of whom were already heavily involved in the Football Club.

In the first week of February the club's buoyant mood was shattered by the resignation of secretary Ted Jones and his son and Under 14 captain Neil.

Some of the latent pressure which builds up between naturally aggressive young sportsmen and which can carry over to some over loyal parents was let loose when Neil chose to play Hatch Shield for Brunswick with which Ted had a long association, and thus to put himself on the other side to some of his Strathmore teammates playing for Coburg. Boys and parents being what they are, Ted gained the impression that he and Neil were on the outer with the Under 14 A team he was looking after and decided to pull right out.

Those remaining on the committee had little choice but to clear Neil to St. Christophers to play against us the next week and to leave the position of Secretary vacant through the end of the season to the next annual meeting.

Despite this, Under 14 A and Under 12 A went into their respective grand finals as competition leaders and clear favourites.

It was our fourth consecutive Under 14 grand final and the scene for yet another batting collapse, this time to our cost with only Craig Purcell's 36 helping get our total to 73, more than had been needed in the two previous seasons but not enough this time. Despite getting David Ashen early and our replacement captain Ricky Crump taking 2 for 3 off 8 overs, with Crump and Thommo bowled out we could do nothing to stop Craig Styles steering Oak Park to a comfortable win.

With such a disappointing end to the season, the few ties that had brought this side together quickly evaporated and most of the second year players were never to play for Strathmore again.

In the younger age group, the bat dominated the grand final and a temporary misunderstanding of the need for the top team to actually win under limited over conditions did nothing to help our effort. Glenroy batted first and set us 230 to win off 52 overs and despite 74 not out from Alistair Butcher and 51 from Michael Gale, we fell 16 short when the overs were up. Unfortunately for part of the innings we believed that as top team all we had to do was bat through the overs for a draw and a premiership, although all concerned certainly knew this was not the case well before the end, so it will remain a matter of conjecture as to what difference it might have made.

After the early season successes, it became harder and harder to make social functions pay their way. While the club stayed buoyant about its on field prospects, there was also a lot of concern late in the season at the thinness of the adult support it could muster and the

number of parents who supported their sons' involvement in football but who took a lot less interest in those same sons' involvement in cricket.

Despite any such worries, we looked forward to fielding an extra three teams the following season to meet the strong demand that existed in all age groups. And at least the on field season ended on one happy note as Rodney Reddish took out the competition batting and bowling trophies in addition to the Brian Last Award.