



BLOODS FOR LIFE

PREMIERS 1881 | 1885 | 1888 | 1889 | 1890 | 1909 | 1918 | 1933 | 2005 | 2012

RUNNERS UP 1880 | 1886 | 1896 | 1899 | 1907 | 1912 | 1914 | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 | 1945 | 1996 | 2006 | 2014 | 2016 | 2022 | 2024


FEATURE MARK BROWNING'S AMAZING WORK IN TALENT DEVELOPMENT



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

THE CONTRIBUTION OF
ANNIE & ROB SNOWDON

BLOODS FOR LIFE PROFILES:
FRANCIS JACKSON
JOHN SUDHOLZ



BLOODS FOR LIFE



*Family night at the footy: Leo and Sarah Barry (back)
John and Grace Stevens, Taylah Barry and Amelia Stevens*

BLOODS FOR LIFE: PAST AND CURRENT PLAYERS & OFFICIALS OF THE SYDNEY SWANS FOOTBALL CLUB

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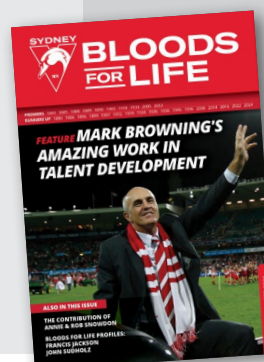
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FRONT COVER:
*Mark Browning
honoured at
the SCG*

Bloods For Life Magazine

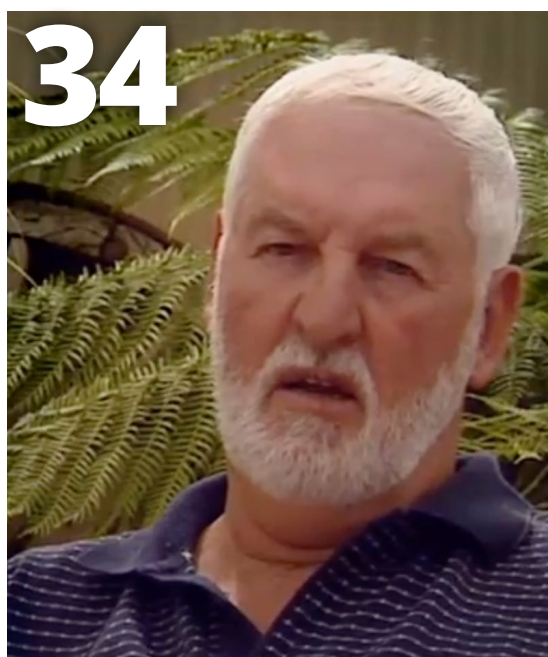
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**THE AMAZING CONTRIBUTION
OF ANNIE & ROB SNOWDON
BY JOE MOORE**



**BLOODS FOR LIFE
PROFILES ON
FRANCIS JACKSON
AND JOHN SUDHOLZ**



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**Rod Gillett on
the huge impact
of Bloods great
Mark Browning
on talent
development**

Intent on honouring the memory and legacy of his wife Annie, Rob Snowdon spoke to Joe Moore about a pivotal time at the Sydney Swans.

Vale Annie Snowdon
(see page 19)



Joe Moore is a Hobart-based writer. He has been writing for the Sydney Swans since 2015

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ANNIE & ROB SNOWDON

Sitting at beautiful Cullen Bay in Darwin when we spoke, Rob Snowdon looked out over the water the morning after a Port Adelaide community camp that had brought together hundreds of Indigenous kids.

There was a quiet satisfaction in the way he reflected on it — not as an event delivered, but as people connected, opportunities created, and something meaningful left behind.

It was a moment that perfectly captured the breadth of his

relationship with football: never confined to the field or the elite level, but stretching into communities, into lives, and into places where the game becomes a vehicle for something far more important.

Rob never set out to leave a mark on Australian football. In fact, his playing career at Hawthorn in the late 1960s was, by his own admission, unremarkable. But what followed tells a far more significant story. One shaped not by personal accolades, but by the lives he and his beloved wife Annie helped steady, the



Rob and Annie Snowdon with their daughter Amy and son Sam

environments they helped build, and the people their family quietly carried along the way.

Snowdon's journey through football took him well beyond traditional pathways. From community football in Melbourne to time spent in Darwin, Adelaide, Cairns and Newcastle, he developed a grounded understanding of the game. Not just how it's played, but how it's lived.

By the time he arrived in Sydney, he brought with him something more valuable than experience: perspective,

patience, and a genuine care for people.

At a time when the Sydney Swans were still establishing themselves in a non-traditional market, Snowdon became a constant behind the scenes. While working professionally in finance, with Westpac, he committed himself to the club's development, particularly at the under-19 level.

"We got to Sydney in 1984, and Mark Lockie made contact. We had an under-19s squad that involved kids from Melbourne and Sydney, and we'd try and

draw the local kids in with things like the Tony Morwood squad, which would be a bit of catch and kick on a Sunday morning at the Showgrounds," Rob says.

"We did that right up until 1990, with Greg Harris as coach. I really loved it. Then, when Peter Weinert, Mike Willesee and their group came in, they formalised what I'd been doing voluntarily, and I became the club's recruiting manager."

Recruitment, player welfare, and connection became his focus, not just as formal

responsibilities, but as personal ones. With Craig Holden, they started the Team Swans program, engaging young players to drive greater visibility and participation.

Eventually, he was appointed General Manager of Football Operations, but what emerged during this period went far beyond that.

Young players arriving in Sydney were often leaving home for the first time — stepping into an unfamiliar city, a new club, and the pressures of elite sport. For many, the transition could be overwhelming. But for those who crossed paths with the Snowdon family, that experience looked very different.

At the centre of it all was Annie.

Together, Rob and Annie opened their home to players, offering not just accommodation but stability, warmth, and care. Meals were shared, routines were built, and a sense of belonging was created in what could otherwise be a disorienting time.



Craig Holden

There were also a few laughs. “It was a hell of a lot of fun,” Rob recalls. “We played tricks on the players sometimes. It’d be 7 or 8 o’clock at night, and there’d be four of them in the back of my car heading to our place for the night.”

“Annie would have a feed ready on the table, and the boys would be ravenous. They’d eat and go to bed. Then, we’d wake them up at 10 pm, telling them it was 6 am and we’d better get going. They’d jump up, put their training gear on, and we’d be laughing our heads off!”

Annie, in particular, played a pivotal role, providing emotional support, guidance, and a level of nurturing that extended far beyond what any club structure could formally offer. For many parents, the

uncertainty of sending their sons across the country was eased by one simple reassurance. That Annie was there, caring for them as if they were her own.

As a family unit, they’d regularly pack the Ford Fairlane for a road trip to visit prospective players, developing players, and their families. One drive to Ben Mathews’ family farm near Corowa was particularly memorable.

“I remember going to the Mathews’ farm one day, with Annie and the kids, which we often did on a drive to Melbourne, and we called in there to have a cup of tea with Benny’s folks”.

“Benny’s brothers took my kids out, who were probably about six and eight, just have a



Michael O'Loughlin's journey in Sydney started in the Snowdon household



Ben Mathews

look around the farm, to see a couple of the sheep, maybe a chook or something, and we're inside hearing these shots going off, and they're shooting cans off the fence! Annie certainly took an interest in that, but the Mathews' were very relaxed about it all, and my kids loved it."

For many young players, the Snowdon household became their first sense of home in Sydney.

One of those, Bloods Champion, Michael O'Loughlin, moved in with the Snowdons when he first arrived in Sydney. O'Loughlin recently said, "Annie was instrumental for the young players who were drafted to Sydney, providing a home away from home for myself and many others."

"She did a lot of work behind the scenes and will be remembered as an incredibly kind-hearted person."

And that environment didn't just support individuals; it helped shape the club's broader culture. As the Swans began to stabilise and grow through the mid-1990s, much of the strength seen on the field was underpinned by what had been built off it: trust, care, and genuine connection. The Snowdons' influence quietly sat within that evolution, helping create an environment where people felt supported enough to perform, grow, and stay.

But this commitment wasn't without impact on their own family.

Rob and Annie's children, Amy and Sam, grew up in a

household where football was ever-present — not as a spectacle, but as a community. Their home was rarely just their own. It was shared with young men chasing careers, navigating challenges, and finding their footing.

In many ways, Amy and Sam were part of the same support system, learning early what it meant to include others, to adapt, and to give without expectation. That upbringing leaves a mark.

Rob gleefully recalls how certain players, of a particular upbringing themselves, taught a lightly-framed, young Sam how to devour a meal: "I remember when Justin Crawford and some of the boys from boarding school started to live with us, and with boarding school kids,



Annie and Rob with Swans new recruits Shannon Grant, Stuart Mangin and Justin Crawford

when the food's on, they fill the plate to the top, and then they take a breath, and go for it, because if you don't, it might go, that's the theory."

"My son Sam was this little skinny thing, he learned how to eat around the dinner table with all those guys, like Craig Nettelbeck and Justin, and Sammy put on about 10 kilos in about six months, I reckon."

It all shapes how you see people, how you value relationships, and how you understand the role of selflessness in building something bigger than yourself. The Snowdon family didn't just contribute to a football club; they lived its values, day in and day out.

Snowdon would later take his experience to Port Adelaide, where he continued his work in football management and recruitment. But his

connection to the Swans remained strong. The Swans' breakthrough premiership in 2005 brought a deep sense of pride. Not just in the success, but in knowing that the foundations laid years earlier had played a role in what the club had become. It's just a pity he was in Scotland with no reception when the final siren sounded!

And that's where the true measure of his and Annie's contributions sits.

Not in titles or recognition, but in the lives influenced, the environments shaped, and the culture quietly strengthened over time. Rob and Annie Snowdon's story is a reminder that football clubs are not just built by those in the spotlight.

They are built by people — and families — who choose to give more than what is asked, and in doing so, leave

something that lasts.

Club great Tony Morwood expressed this when Annie sadly passed away in March: "For young players, especially those who were moving to Sydney, she was a mother figure who was always there for them."

"Rob and Annie's house was just full of young Swans kids coming down and staying for as long as they needed to."

"They had their own children, Amy and Sam, but I think that they just loved having the boys around, and it was a role that was incredibly important to the fabric of our club."

The Snowdon family have always been connected. When Rob was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2024 for service to the community and to Australian rules football, he initially declined.



*Rob on duty for
Port Adelaide*

But, after consultation as a unit, the family decided it was fitting recognition and one they could all be proud of.

Selfless and understated, Rob looks back on his time at the Swans with great satisfaction. And, he's quick to deflect credit to others, to the team of people who helped build the culture that is so revered today.

"The Swans recognised Annie so nicely when she passed away. A few of them came over, and we had a drink, and it was lovely," Rob reflects.

"Annie and I just played our role, as they'd say now. We just enjoyed it so much. It gave us a massive thrill in life, and to this day, the friendships and acquaintances from our time at the club are really amazing."

"The goodwill has just been lovely. I guess that's life, isn't it? What goes around, comes around, and what's come back to us has been all of those great friendships and memories." ▼



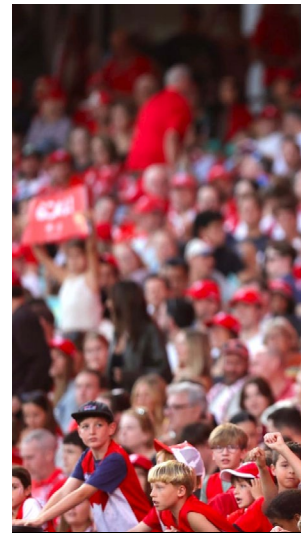
A young Craig Nettelbeck



Isaac Heeney – a key to our tremendous first half of the season



Forty years with QBE as our Principal Partner



CEO UPDATE

It has been a whirlwind eight months in the role of CEO of the Sydney Swans, with a huge first half of 2026. After eight months at the club, I am proud to say we are in great shape both on and off the field, with a few things evidently clear; we have great people working at our club, our brand is strong and growing, and we are well supported by both our members and corporate partners.

We have been the flag bearers of Australian Football in Sydney since 1982 and after a 10-2 start to the AFL season, and as we storm pass the 75,000 member mark, we remain unwavering in our belief that the Sydney Swans are the AFL's pathway to growth and sustained success in Australia's most lucrative, yet challenging market.

The tremendous start to the season on the field has helped fuel the growth we are experiencing this year, remaining on target for record attendance, consumer and commercial results. Given the double-digit growth the club has maintained over the past four seasons,

we are thrilled that we will record new heights off the field in 2026.

With momentum and sentiment on the commercial side of the business is very healthy, and we thank our loyal partners for their ongoing support. This year marks an extraordinary milestone for our club as we celebrate 40 years of partnership with QBE Insurance. As one of the longest-running sponsorships in Australian sport, QBE has been with us since 1986 and we thank everyone involved, both past and present and look forward to extending the partnership into a fifth decade.

The AFL's recent men's fixture release sees us rewarded with several prime-time matches including blockbusters against Brisbane (GABBA), Western Bulldogs (Friday, SCG), Fremantle (Optus Stadium), Adelaide (Friday, SCG), and GWS (Saturday, Engie Stadium) to close out the home-and-away season, which will give our members and fans plenty to cheer about.

We have also welcomed in a new leadership



The SCG home crowds have been amazing



The boys celebrate another goal



New recruit Malcolm Rosas Jnr with the SCG crowd

structure for the AFLW team, with Chloe Molloy deciding to ‘pass the baton’ to Lucy McEvoy who has taken over as sole captain of the team, while Cynthia Hamilton and Sofia Hurley step in as Co-Vice captains. I want to thank Chloe for her dedication and commitment while she was in charge of the playing group. Since arriving in Sydney, Chloe led the side admirably, and I can’t wait to see what she will do from a playing perspective.

While on the topic of AFLW, congratulations to coach Colin O’Riordan who has been named as the Ireland coach for the match against Australia at North Sydney Oval.

It’s never too late to jump on and join the red and white as a member for the remainder of 2026. We feel we are in for an exciting

back end of the AFL season and have high hopes for vast improvement with our women’s team. It’s a great time to be part of the Sydney Swans.

A thriving Swans is paramount to the growth of the game here, to compete in the most contested sporting landscape in Australia and our commitment is to work relentlessly in pursuing an ambitious growth agenda.

Cheer, cheer! ♥



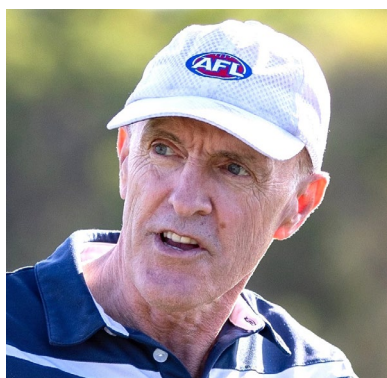
Matthew Pavlich | CEO, Sydney Swans

FIND THE TALL ONES!

Mark Browning's outstanding contribution to the development of the game of Australian Rules Football in the Northern states



By Rod Gillett



In 30 years as AFL Queensland Talent Manager, Mark Browning identified and developed 210 boys and girls for the AFL system.

This is a remarkable and imposing number and includes eight members of Brisbane's 2025 premiership team.

Yet perhaps the hallmark

of his tenure was the recruitment of boys from other sports.

Twenty boys who previously focussed on other sports were drafted into the AFL. They came from rugby, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and track and field. And they came from all over Queensland – Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba, Rockhampton.

And they were all tall and athletic – with one notable exception Kamichael Hunt. However, that was a special case.

The independent schools' football competition was

played in Term 4 – against only cricket and tennis – and with nearly all schools in Brisbane participating it became a fertile recruiting ground for AFL.

Former Collingwood and Giants forward-ruck Lachie Keefe, now playing for Sydney University in the AFL Sydney competition recently reflected on his career.

"I was boarding at Marist College Ashgrove and went along with a school mate to have a kick in the park with Mark Browning. It changed my life," said Keefe, who has an MBA and works in finance in



Mark Browning pumps the ball forward with that long raking left foot at the SCG in 1983

Sydney's CBD.

Mark remembers it well: "I couldn't believe it when a 204cm (6'8") kid who played soccer turned up to have a kick! We quickly put him in the school team, and he got picked up in the 2009 rookie draft by Collingwood."

Grounding and education as a development officer while playing for South Melbourne and work in school and junior clubs after moving to Sydney equipped Mark to take on the role of talent identification.

"I learnt a lot from Greg Miller when he was



Lachie Keefe in action for Collingwood

recruiting for South Melbourne," said Mark. "He used to arrange games between our country and metro zones out at VFL Park in September. This was a first and he got some gems out of the back

blocks of the Riverina".

"He taught me how to search for talent, and what to look for," recalled Mark.

"Other than the tall ones, I looked for the bouncy ones that can cover the

FEATURE ARTICLE A SWAN'S EYE VIEW

Find the Tall Ones!

ground like Isaac Smith, be an aggressive runner. And if they're a small player, be able take marks like Charlie Cameron and Bobby Hill. They must be clean, no fumblers, mate."

Mark rates Swans' 2025 draft choice (14) Harry Kyle, a rugby convert from Sydney's Scots College, an outstanding prospect. "He has the AFL traits and just needs time to get his possessions and team involvements up through a greater work rate". Kyle played with the Allies for which Mark was a selector.

Mark Browning was recruited under the father-son rule. His father Keith played 53 games for South Melbourne from 1951 to 1954 before going to coach Trafalgar in the Gippsland League. The qualifying number of games under the father-son rule at the time was 50.

After Keith worked for a period in Wangaratta the family moved back to Melbourne when Mark was 15 and he began playing with Doncaster Under 19s in the VAFA, winning the competition best and fairest award as a forward in 1973.

South Melbourne recruiting maestro Hughie McLaughlin went out to see him play and secured the young rising star for the Swans.



Swans youngster Harry Kyle

He played in the Reserves under Ken McCormack in 1974 and then did a pre-season in 1975 before making his debut in round four against Hawthorn under Graeme John.

Mark quickly established a regular berth in the senior team on the wing or in the centre and it was not until after a knee reconstruction that coach Ian Stewart moved him onto a half back flank in 1980. His long raking left foot kicking became an outstanding feature of his play together with an ability to close-down opponents.

His versatility earned him regular Victorian selection and he was a key member of the team that defeated Western Australia by 100 points in a State of Origin match at VFL Park in 1978.

Selected on a half back flank,



Close mate Barry Round

CHECK OUT THE TEAM IN T

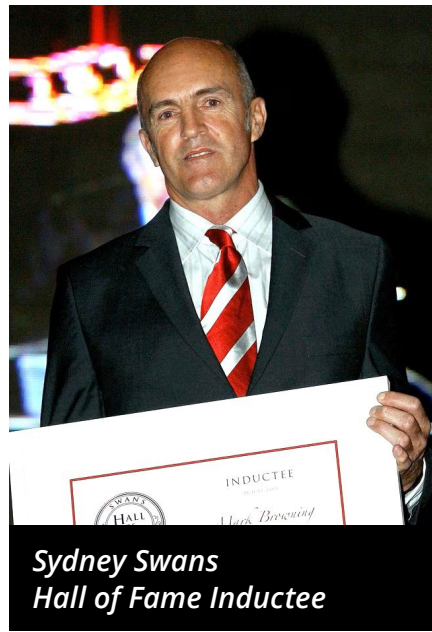
State of Origin

VICTORIA

B.: I. Nankervis, Southby, Dempsey.
H.B.: Knights, Perovic, Browning.
C.: Greig, Murphy, Flower.
H.F.: Barker, Van der Haar, McKay.
F.: Cloke, Templeton, Wilson.
Foll.: Teasdale, Tuck.
Rov.: Matthews.
Interchange from: Doull, Barham, Merrigan.

Mark edged AFL Team of the Century defender Bruce Doull (19th) onto the bench alongside Fitzroy Team of the Century defender Harvey Merrigan (20th).

Mark won the coveted Simpson medal against Western Australia in 1982 when Victoria prevailed by 23 points at Subiaco Oval. Previous winners included Lou Richards, Ted Whitten, Polly Farmer, and Kevin



*Sydney Swans
Hall of Fame Inductee*

and a memorable win over North Melbourne (13.12.90 to 8.10.58) at VFL Park. It was a major boost to morale for the club that had begun playing home matches in Sydney but remained based in Melbourne.

Mark had his finest season for the Swans in 1983 playing as an on-baller. He won the club best and fairest and was selected in the VFL Team of the Year. He took over the captaincy when Barry Round retired part way through 1984 and displayed tremendous leadership on and off the field during a difficult period of adjustment to Sydney.

After 251 games and booting 138 goals in a highly distinguished career for the Swans and eight games for Victoria Mark retired after the 1987 season.

He then embarked on a successful coaching career, winning a premiership at the Hobart Football Club in 1990, before moving to the Gold Coast as full-time coach of Southport in the QAFL. After this he began his talent development work with AFL Queensland.

Earlier this year Mark was conferred a life member of the Australian Football League. Mark was honoured for his playing, coaching and

THE BREAK-OUT BOX BELOW

origin teams

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- B.:** Curtis, Glendinning, Worthington.
- H.B.:** Miller, McKay, M. Richardson.
- C.:** Johnson, Featherby, Reid.
- H.F.:** Monteath Sidebottom, Young.
- F.:** Alexander, Beecroft, Wiley.
- Foll.:** Moss, Peake.
- Rov.:** Melrose.
- Interchange:** Magro, Day.

Murray. Until 1994 the medal was awarded to the best player in interstate matches involving WA and for WAFL grand finals. Now, now it is only awarded to West Australian representatives.

The proposal for South Melbourne to move to Sydney in 1981 proved to be very divisive for the club and its supporters. Mark was in the midst of it all as vice-captain and firmly believed the club

needed to relocate to Sydney to survive.

“Everyone was passionate about the club its just that the opposing groups had different views,” said Mark.

“I had grown up as a South Melbourne supporter, so it saddened me to leave Melbourne, but look what the Swans have become! That’s why we were so resolute about moving to Sydney”, he added.

Mark formed an impenetrable bond with skipper Barry Round. “I loved following him out onto the ground, he had a presence, you could feel the energy. ‘Jump on boys, here we go!’”

It was this renowned duo who led the “Swans” (as they were listed on the VFL ladder in 1982) to the Escort Cup national night series final

BROWNING'S CODE HOPPERS

NAME	CLUB/S	GAMES
Tom Williams	<i>Western Bulldogs</i>	85
Lachlan Keefe	<i>Collingwood / GWS Giants</i>	119
Kurt Tippett	<i>Adelaide / Sydney Swans</i>	178
Joel Tippett	<i>Gold Coast Suns / North Melbourne</i>	9
Shaun Hampson	<i>Carlton / Richmond</i>	98
Tom Hickey	<i>Gold Coast / St Kilda / West Coast / Sydney</i>	151
Jake Spencer	<i>Melbourne</i>	38
Brad Moran	<i>North Melbourne / Adelaide</i>	21
Aliir Aliir	<i>Sydney Swans / Port Adelaide</i>	188*
Brent Renouf	<i>Hawthorn / Port Adelaide</i>	68
Jesse White	<i>Sydney Swans / Collingwood</i>	127
Charlie Dixon	<i>Gold Coast Suns / Port Adelaide</i>	221
Zac Smith	<i>Gold Coast Suns / Geelong</i>	124
Mabior Chol	<i>Richmond / Gold Coast Suns / Hawthorn</i>	113*
James Mulligan	<i>Western Bulldogs</i>	3
Archie Smith	<i>Brisbane Lions</i>	16
Jake Orreal	<i>Sydney Swans</i>	0
Sampson Ryan	<i>Richmond</i>	28*
Braydon Preuss	<i>Melbourne / North Melbourne / GWS Giants</i>	28
Karmichael Hunt	<i>Gold Coast Suns</i>	44

*Still playing

FEATURE ARTICLE

A SWAN'S EYE VIEW

Find the Tall Ones!

talent identification work in Victoria, NSW, Tasmania, and Queensland.

His capacity to unearth talented is unparalleled in the game and has deepened the talent pool for all AFL clubs. That 16 of the AFL clubs have drafted players from Queensland in his time is his legacy.

Mark Browning was inducted into the inaugural Sydney Swans Hall of Fame in 2009. He is also a life member of the club. ▼



Mark Browning (centre) with AFL Life Member certificate with proud family members Ciara Jones, Charlie Dally-Watkins, Ann-Maree Dally-Watkins, Alex Browning, Kristel Warton, and Craig Warton at the Sydney Town Hall in March. Mark wearing Swans tie!



Aliir Aliir



Charlie Dixon



Tom Hickey



Jesse White

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rod Gillett is a noted Australian Football historian, with an emphasis on the game in NSW. He has written extensively about the game in NSW for more than forty years including various country mast heads as well as the Sun-Herald and Inside Football. He has been a Swans supporter since moving to Sydney in 1984 from Wagga. Rod euphemistically "helped-out" Greg Harris with Under 19s from 1989-1992 and later served on the Sydney chapter of the Past Players' and Officials Association.

VALE

The Sydney Swans Football Club and the football world in general have been greatly saddened by the passing of some great past players and officials in recent times and it is remiss not to pay tribute to all individually.

There are, however, several that at we would like to make special mention of in this edition.

BRIAN MCGOWAN

Bloods For Life extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of former player Brian McGowan, who passed away on 14 January 2026 at the age of 88.

Brian played 118 games for the Club from 1955 to 1963, kicking 171 goals.



CLICK HERE for a tribute to Brian by his Granddaughter **Mikaela Giles**





The Snowdon family: Sam, Annie, Amy and Rob

ANNIE SNOWDON

All associated with the Sydney Swans were deeply saddened by the passing of Annie Snowdon on 27 February 2026.

Annie and her husband, Rob, former General Manager of Football Operations at the Club, were outstanding, long term contributors to the Swans, particularly in the tough early days when the Club was struggling to establish itself in Sydney.

Their commitment to helping our young players settle into a new environment

was critical and greatly helped the Club to survive in that very difficult early phase of development in Sydney.

All the Bloods For Life family extend our deepest condolences to Rob, son Sam, daughter Amy and their family and friends.

CLICK HERE for tributes from
***Michael O'Loughlin and
Tony Morwood***



AROUND THE GROUNDS

Two great Bloods were presented with AFL Life Membership at the AFL's Season Launch on 4 March 2026.

MARK BROWNING



Mark Browning when he was admitted to the Sydney Swans Hall of Fame

- 251 games (138 goals) for South Melbourne and the Sydney Swans between 1975-87
- 8 games for Victoria
- 1983 Best and Fairest
- 1983 All Australian
- 1984-85 Captain
- Hobart Captain/Coach 1988-92 (1990 premiership)
- Southport Coach 1994-95
- AFL Queensland Coaching and Talent Manager 1996 (30 years)
- Sydney Swans Hall of Fame

MATTHEW NICKS



A young Matthew Nicks in his playing days at the Bloods with Michael O'Loughlin, and now as the Senior Coach of the Adelaide Crows

- 175 games (125 goals) for the Sydney Swans between 1996-2005
- AFL Life Membership: 300 official AFL games as player and coach: 305 premiership, 13 pre-season, 1 International Rules (319 in total)

MICHAEL DICKSON

FROM THE SWANS ACADEMY TO SUPER BOWL CHAMPIONS!



Michael Dickson – Super Bowl Champion and with Isaac Heaney at the SCG

On 8 February 2026, former Sydney Swans Reserve Grade player Michael Dickson became just the second Australian to play in a Super Bowl victory when his team the Seattle Seahawks beat the New England Patriots 29-13 in Super Bowl LX in Santa Clara, California. Michael is considered the National Football League's best punter, no doubt thanks to his kicking ability developed by an Aussie Rules background and time at the Sydney Swans Academy.

Hailing from the Miranda Bombers, Michael had his sights on a career in the AFL and played for the Sydney Swans Reserves in the 2014 NEAFL Grand Final. He missed out in the

national and rookie drafts and in 2015 moved to Melbourne to pursue American Football, and was soon on a flight to the USA to play college football. In 2018 he was drafted by the Seahawks and is now the NFL's highest paid punter.

Michael's performance in Super Bowl LX was widely acclaimed as he punted seven times with an average of 47.9 yards per kick. He became the third Australian player to win the Super Bowl, after Jordan Mailata (Philadelphia Eagles 2025) and Jesse Williams (rostered player for Seattle Seahawks in 2014 but did not play in their win due to injury).

COLIN O'RIORDAN TO LEAD IRELAND



Irish-born Sydney Swans AFLW senior coach Colin O'Riordan has been appointed to lead Ireland in the historic clash against Australia at North Sydney Oval on 1 August 2026.

Hailing from Tipperary, Colin played 34 AFL games for the Sydney Swans from 2016 to 2022 before moving into several coaching roles at the Club. At the conclusion of the 2025 season, O'Riordan was appointed the Sydney Swans' AFLW senior coach, becoming the first Irish-born senior coach in AFL/AFLW history.

AROUND THE GROUNDS

ROBBIE FOX TO CAPTAIN TASMANIA



Robbie Fox with former teammates Isaac Heeney and Errol Gulden, and now as Captain of the Tasmania Devils

Former Swan Robbie Fox will lead Tasmania into VFL history after being named the inaugural Captain of the Devils ahead of their debut season in 2026.

The 32-year-old will captain the side with a five-person leadership group that includes vice-captain Jye Menzie, Brad Cox-Goodyer, Hugh Dixon and another former Swan in Caleb Mitchell.

Robbie will bring a serious pedigree to the role after a nine-year AFL career with Sydney Swans, where he played 105 games (15 goals) and was in our best players in the 2022 and 2024 Grand Finals.

A proud product of Tasmania, the defender emerged as the obvious leader to steer the Devils through their foundation season.



Buddy was always in the best hands

MARTY MATTNER APPOINTED COACH OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Former Swans Premiership player Marty Mattner was appointed Coach of South Australia for the games against the VFL at Glenelg Oval during AFL Gather Round in April and the WAFL in Perth in May.

Marty played 124 games (26 goals) for the Swans from 2008 to 2013 and was a member of the 2012 Premiership team.



Marty Mattner in action for the Bloods in the 2012 AFL Grand Final. Who will ever forget that tackle in the dying stages!

600 FOR MATTY!

Former Swans Swans Head Physiotherapist Matt Cameron recently chalked up his 600th AFL game as a Physio. Matt was a key figure in the legendary medical and conditioning team behind the rise of the Bloods which included Dr Nathan Gibbs, Rob Spurrs and others. He served the Club for 26 years including the 2005 and 2012 Premiership seasons.

Matt joined the GWS Giants in 2021 and brought up the 600 game milestone in the Giants clash against St Kilda on 14 June 2026.

Congratulations Matt on a magnificent achievement.

PAST PLAYERS & OFFICIALS FUNCTION

Sydney Swans Past Players & Officials gathered at Swans HQ on 14 March 2026 prior to the game against the Brisbane Lions at the SCG. Club CEO Matthew Pavlich welcomed guests who enjoyed a few drinks and a tour of the facilities.

A great day culminated in a 44 point win by the Swans over the reigning Premiers 15.14.104 to 8.12.60



Dave Warner, Rod Gillett and Wayne Henwood



Simon Feast and Wennie van Lints



Steve Taubert and Dave Misson



Mel and Jack Daniels with Mitch Miller



Sam Reid and Troy Luff



Dave Pearlman, Matty Frost and Daniel Preiss

Dean Moore, Rick Quade and



Swans CEO Matthew Pavlich welcomes Past Players & Officials



Leigh Gazzard and Mark Lockie



Basil Sellers (centre) pictured with Andrew Pridham and Andrew Ireland upon his induction into the Sydney Swans Hall of Fame

BASIL SELLERS

Bloods For Life congratulate Basil Sellers on being named as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to the community through philanthropy and leadership, and to sports administration.

Basil has been a key supporter and benefactor of the Swans for many years, and without his support in the early days in Sydney the future of the Club would have been very clouded.

Please click on the Link below for the Sydney Swans acknowledgement of Basil's outstanding contribution to the Club and to sport, business and the community in Australia:

www.sydneyswans.com.au/news/1947046/basil-sellers-awarded-officer-of-the-order-of-australia



and Jeremy Quade



ASHES GET TOGETHER

Former Chairman Richard Colless with 2012 Premiership Bloods Heath Grundy, Lewis Roberts-Thomson and Nick Smith at the SCG for the 5th Ashes Test between Australia and England.

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLOODS CULTURE

By Ken Couchman

INTRODUCTION BY BARNABY HOWARTH:

Over a beer recently old mate and fellow diabetic Ken Couchman told me fascinating stories about the Swans in 1987. He spoke of training with Gerard Healy, Greg Williams and many other stars under Jack Giddy then told me it was a "bit of a non story." It made me think about what Roosy said after the 2005 premiership. In essence he said the premiership was made up of every "non story" from every person who has pulled on the red and white jumper. So I told Kenny he needed to write an article for Bloods for Life. And, as Roosy said on that day: "Here it is."

The red and white has always meant something in our family — even before it was Sydney.

My father, Ian Couchman, pulled on the South Melbourne jumper in 1956 and 1957, playing reserves football in an era when earning your place was as tough as it gets. He came agonisingly close to senior selection, named on the bench for one game, but

didn't make it onto the ground, and therefore never received official recognition for a senior appearance, so Dad and I have played the same number of games on the official record of the Sydney Swans – 0.

It was a small technicality in the record books, but not in our family history.

In 1956, the same year he was at South, Dad met my mum. After his time with the Swans

ended, Mum — a passionate Carlton supporter — made sure he followed the Blues instead. Household allegiance shifted...at least officially!

But football loyalties, like good stories, have a way of circling back.

During my later primary school years (1970–1973), Dad and I would travel from Benalla in northeast Victoria — and later from Sale in the Latrobe Valley — to



Swans Coach Tommy Hafey

watch Carlton take on South Melbourne at Princes Park whenever we could. Those trips weren't just about football. They were about time together, about stories of the Lakeside Oval days, about what might have been.

Years later, in 1986, after my first season in the Sydney Football League, I was invited to try out for the Sydney Swans for the 1987 season. Pre-season training began at the Showgrounds in early November.

I'll never forget walking into that first session. My immediate thought was: "Wow, I'm really here with all these champions of the game."

Gerard Healy. Greg Williams. Dennis Carroll. Rod Carter. Warwick Capper. Tony Morwood. Barry Mitchell.



Terry Thripp

Stevie Wright. The list went on. These were not just footballers — they were household names.

One night after training Tommy Hafey called me over for a chat. He asked where I lived.

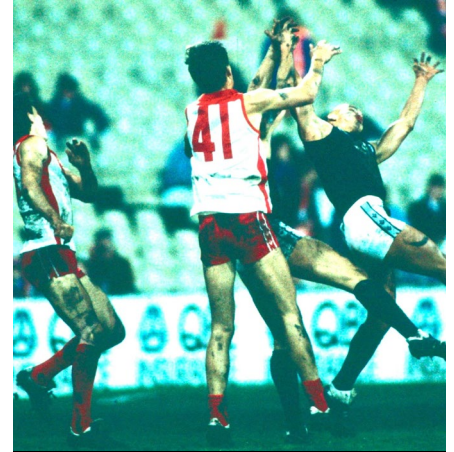
"Woy Woy," I replied.

I still remember the pause.

"My goodness, that is a long way from here," he said — or words very close to that effect.

He wasn't wrong. But there was nothing that was going to stop me giving it a crack. I arranged to leave work an hour early on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays just to make training on time. Opportunity doesn't knock twice.

Pre-season under Jack Giddy was like nothing I had ever



David Brown

experienced. The intensity, the physical demands — it was elite football in every sense. Managing my diabetes during that period added another layer of challenge, and there were a few bumpy moments along the way. But that only strengthened my resolve.

When I received notification that I had made the senior list, I was straight on the phone to Mum and Dad, who were still living in Sale. Dad and I had a quiet little bet between us — "one senior game." He never officially played one, and there was hope I might square the ledger for the Couchman name.

Unfortunately, my ability fell short of that dream. I played three reserve grade games — including one at the SCG and one at the MCG

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLOODS CULTURE



Ken Couchman and Barnaby Howarth

— experiences I will treasure forever. A hamstring injury just weeks before the opening game didn't help the cause either.

But here's the thing about being part of the Bloods: it's bigger than games played.

Training was hard — incredibly hard — but it was fair. We were told exactly what was required to play senior football. Standards were clear, expectations were uncompromising. That intensity helped drive some significant senior wins in 1987

and laid foundations for what the club would become.

Having fellow Pennant Hills players David Brown and Terry Thripp alongside me made the transition easier. And reconnecting with familiar faces like Graeme and Neil Cordy — who I'd played against in high school in Sale — reminded me just how connected the football world can be.

Most of all, I'll never forget what it felt like to train alongside those VFL champions. To wear the

jumper. To run out onto the SCG. To be part of the club my father once represented — when it was still South Melbourne.

Dad may not have recorded a senior game in 1956 or 1957. And I may not have managed one in 1987.

But across two generations, the red and white has run deep.

And that, in itself, is something special.

Bloods for Life! ♥

SYDNEY SWANS FOUNDATION REPORT



By Amanda Thompson

BUILDING FUTURES IN RED AND WHITE: THE SYDNEY SWANS FOUNDATION AND THE ARA FIRST NATIONS ACADEMY



Athletes from ARA First Nations Academy 2025 tour to the Red Centre, photo by Peach May

For more than two decades, the Sydney Swans Foundation has been the philanthropic heart of the club, helping the Swans “dream bigger, reach higher, and achieve more” by investing in the people, programs and places that underpin long-term success. The Foundation was established in 2005 with an ambitious purpose: to future-proof the Sydney Swans through values-driven, impact-focused philanthropy, supporting talent pathways, facilities and innovation that strengthen the club for generations to come.

Now, the Foundation is proud to champion a powerful new pillar of impact: supporting the ARA First Nations Academy - a program that is changing lives by blending high-performance football development with cultural connection, leadership growth, and genuine community belonging.

A PATHWAY BUILT ON CULTURE, CONNECTION AND OPPORTUNITY

The ARA First Nations Academy was established in 2022 to create opportunity and a safe place of connection for First Nations girls and boys aged 11–18. Its design is intentional and holistic: athletes develop their football craft through regular training while also strengthening identity through cultural education and wellbeing support. Importantly, the program includes mental health workshops delivered by the Black Dog Institute, reflecting a commitment to social and emotional wellbeing as a foundation for growth on and off the field.



QBE Sydney Swans Academy & ARA First Nations Academy athletes at Round 1 round robin on Tramway Oval

The Academy's reach is equally significant. It operates across six hubs in NSW including Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Central Coast, Sydney, Shellharbour and Tamworth, so young people can access elite development and cultural connection closer to home. Each hub hosts cultural experiences that help participants connect to Country and community, reinforcing that this is more than a sports program, it is a place where young people can feel seen, supported and proud of who they are.

MEASURABLE MOMENTUM AND DEEPER IMPACT

The Academy's outcomes are already compelling. Since its creation, participation and retention have been strong, and the pathway into the QBE Sydney Swans Academy has accelerated, 90 participants have progressed into the QBE Sydney Swans Academy (up from 7 in 2022), underscoring how quickly opportunity can grow when it

is intentionally designed. Beyond athlete progression, the program is also building future leaders: former participants have returned as coaches, strengthening community ownership and ensuring younger athletes can see role models who have walked the same path.

But the real impact goes further than numbers. As Sydney Swans First Nations Strategy & Player Development Manager Jarred Hodges has explained, the program is about "building strong young First Nations people; strong in their culture and strong in their identity," and that strengthening social and emotional wellbeing can help change the statistics that too often shape young lives. This is where the Academy is truly powerful: it creates a space where culture is centred, connection is prioritised, and young people are equipped with confidence, skills and support that can ripple through their families and communities.

Just as importantly, the program creates moments that shift what young athletes



as part of the First Nations Academy Cultural Camp

believe is possible like running out on the SCG and feeling part of the Swans community. As 17-year-old participant Bobbi Matthews shared: "It was amazing to play on the SCG... it made me think that I would want to make the AFLW." ▼

PLEASE MAKE A GIFT THAT CHANGES A YOUNG PLAYER'S LIFE.

Your tax-deductible donation to the Sydney Swans Foundation can help grow opportunities through the ARA First Nations Academy backing the club you love while making a tangible difference in a young person's life, and the family and community around them.

Donate and help build stronger futures in football, in identity, and in community.



Community getting involved with ARA First Nations Academy athletes

JUMBO, THE RED FOX AND THE BLACK DOG

THE JOHN SUDHOLZ STORY

By Chris Bracher



PLAYED
1966-1971

GAMES | 86

GOALS | 176

NUMBER
20

The VFL playing career of John Sudholz is well-documented within Sydney Swans records: 86 senior games and 176 goals, and South Melbourne's leading goalkicker for four consecutive seasons from 1967-70.

In 1970 John topped the Swans tally with 60 goals in what was a landmark year for VFL full-forwards, to finish fifth behind only the true greats of the "art of the goal": Hudson, McKenna, Jesaulenko and Wade. He contributed three goals at full-forward for the Bloods team that played in the 1970 1st semi-

final, marking the club's return to September action for the first time in 25 years.

This time we dive a little further into the mind of the "burly lad from Rupanyup", to explore his special relationship with the legendary Norm Smith, the ever-present pull of the country for a young fella with split footy and farming allegiances, his post-footy challenges and subsequent mental health advocacy response.

Whilst once unable to talk about his post-football experiences with his mental health, John long ago moved to a place where he is happy to share his inner thoughts, with a view to helping others.

We feel both privileged and grateful to our former No.20 for allowing Bloods For Life to go behind the scenes with him.

"Athletes don't remember techniques, drills or coaching philosophies. They remember coaches. They remember how those coaches made them feel as a person and the impact they had on their lives".

Allistair McCaw, U.S. leadership expert

Norm Smith is a football legend and his



Legendary Coach Norm Smith

contribution to our game is immortalised in the medal named in his honour and awarded to the best player in the AFL Grand Final.

After a sometimes tumultuous yet highly successful coaching career at Melbourne, he coached South Melbourne from 1969-72. John Sudholz deems himself fortunate to have received football and life tutelage from Smith. In fact, he lists the "Red Fox" as one of the two most influential people in his life ; the other being his dad, whose given name he also carries: Cyril Henry Sudholz, father of Cyril John Sudholz (John). Both bearers of the local nickname "Jumbo"; an innocently descriptive moniker, playfully Wimmera-anointed and embraced by both dad and son. The Jumbo nickname has long outlived John's VFL tag of "Suds" and/or "Sudsy". Once back from the Big Smoke, these derivatives of a mis-pronounced surname had little chance of rendering the original redundant.

Jumbo Snr was himself a country footballer of some note. Two B & F's at Murtoa and in future years, senior coach at arch-rival Rupanyup; the

club where John plied his football craft in two chapters, as bookends to a memorable career in the red and white of South Melbourne. John first played in the Rupanyup seniors as a sixteen year-old. He remembers being "ironed-out" by an older and stronger opponent on his 17th birthday. Lying winded and in pain, then metaphorically "propped up against the goal post" for the balance of the quarter before eventually being carted off to the town doctor. He also well remembers Jumbo Snr's post-match tough-love admonishment for conceding to his opponent that he had hurt him, by not getting up immediately! Football adulthood came quickly, once donning the Panthers guernsey at a senior level.

As a football coach, Norm Smith was considered ahead of his time and his record speaks for itself. He didn't tolerate ill-discipline, but for those young men who cared to listen and act upon his advice, he became a valued mentor. He spent most of his time at the club, so was ever-present in the lives of his young charges. A forerunner to the contemporary

JUMBO, THE RED FOX AND THE BLACK DOG

THE JOHN SUDHOLZ STORY



Catching-up with great mate Doug Priest, and Doug in his playing days

coaching model of working with the whole person, not just their athletic prowess. Elevating previously lowly South to finish 4th in 1970 was both a testament to his strategic footy nous and relationships formed. John describes his connection with Norm Smith as father/son-esque; teaching him life lessons and reinforcing values first bestowed upon him by his old man. Show up, do the work, give your all, listen and learn from those you trust.

Some prospered in such an environment and inevitably, some didn't. Mopsy Rantall was one who reputedly revelled under Smith's tutelage as did our C. John Sudholz.

As an aspiring politician with Melbourne meetings to attend, Jumbo Snr became an occasional visitor to South training and also struck a rapport with the coach. They would enjoy spending time together, deep in conversation. Men from vastly different backgrounds and political creed, but with a relationship anchored in shared human values and the welfare of a youngster from the bush. Perhaps it's no surprise that John revered them both.

The country lads had special requirements

that the club did its best to facilitate, via group accommodation. After an unsatisfactory period in a room at The Bleakhouse Hotel in Albert Park, once the club secured access to a property large enough to accommodate a tribe of country hopefuls at 96 Page St Middle Park, the maternal instincts of house mum Mrs. Evans made things more homely for our future full-forward. Twelve other young men lived under that roof with John, including Greg Lambert from Corowa, John Murphy from South Australia, Tony Haenan from Mildura and John's lifelong mate Doug Priest from Holbrook.

Despite club efforts to create a home away from home for single country recruits, new mates made and the excitement of a flourishing VFL career, eventually the gloss of living life with his head in two places wore off for John. 1970 became a transition year, leaving the group digs and committing to an 8-hour return train trip from home to Melbourne for Tuesday training and Saturday matches for South. One particular day he made the Tuesday trip only to arrive at Lake Oval to find that coaching had been cancelled for the night and he had somehow missed the memo! So

after a rub-down and a shower it was back on the Overland train, for his usual 1 am arrival at home.

This level of commitment was ultimately unsustainable and early in season 1971, with the afterglow of playing in front of 105 000 at the MCG still lingering, John decided it was time to go home for good. The simplicity of life as an unencumbered young man was now constrained by the responsibility of the next chapter: a wife, young kids and always, the farm.

The twice-weekly journey to Melbourne had become a chore, no longer an excursion filled with anticipatory excitement. Furthermore, the meagre match payments of \$40 per week fell far short of prompting a full-time move to the city. Smithy understood and perhaps expected it would end this way. So, two rounds into the season at 25 years of age, Jumbo became an ex-VFL player. Shortly thereafter, he re-donned the royal blue and red of Rupanyup, in a season when he would win the first of two B & F's and also claim the Toohey medal for best in the Wimmera football league. John ended his senior footy career after 1973, when the Panthers saluted on Grand Final Day.

In the years thereafter, Jumbo's life changed. His early-mid 30's denoted the start of some mental struggles, exacerbated by the absence of the physical and emotional outlet that footy represented. A growing realisation that the crash and bash of a football contest was actually cathartic, as nothing else matters whilst there is a hard ball to be won!

Furthermore, a farmer's lot can be a lonely one, with just himself and his thoughts whilst parked for hours on a header. Communing with a group of age peers in the footy sheds twice or three times a week represents an outlet for pent-up human emotion. Whether "talking shit" or tactics, the subliminal and overt mental release can be a fundamental foundation piece for a healthy mind.

Of course for many, there can be a sinister



John and his partner Donna

flip-side to a game of footy. The football and broader sports landscape is still littered by those who find the pressure to perform to their ability and the expectations of others, crippled through performance anxiety. Not so for Jumbo. Despite the extra pressure placed upon a key forward to convert shots at goal, John was generally unperturbed in such an environment. In contrast to a tennis player on a singles Grand Slam court for the first time or a pro-golfer sweating over a three-foot putt, the team nature of footy made for a relaxed mindset for John, where the performance challenge was shared and the stress thereby diluted.

So, whilst pre-match nerves are normal when contemplating playing in front of a full-house at the MCG, John was never debilitated by pre-game worry as others were. A reiteration that there is no "one-size fits all" when it comes to human emotional regulation.

Perfectionism on the farm (despite it being in decent physical and financial shape), was Jumbo's mental achilles heel. "Perfect is the enemy of good" was never better illustrated than on the Sudholz property. Sleepless nights worrying about the farm had a compounding

JUMBO, THE RED FOX AND THE BLACK DOG

THE JOHN SUDHOLZ STORY

effect upon his demeanour and the prism through which he viewed the world.

Perhaps inheriting his father's unsatisfied calling to represent others on the larger stage, John also assumed a role as a key spokesperson for the 1985 National Farmers Federation March on Parliament, in protest against rising interest rates and taxes. Assuming responsibility not just for the prosperity of his family farm but for the wider industry. A noble and admirable pursuit, but perhaps also with a dose of "if it is to be, it's up to me" and the associated pressure that this entails. The world needs protagonists, but it can come at a cost to the human at the centre.

The mental debilitation that flows from the effort required in search of perfection, can exhaust both those afflicted and those around them. Procrastination, incapacity to say "no", fear of failure and anger are often unwelcome bedfellows to perfectionism. For many caught in this unhealthy grip, it is always "someone else's fault". An insidious condition, whereby layers upon layers of stress are laid down, until the capacity to respond rationally is choked. A breakdown ensues.

Sinking to the bottom is frequently the sad but necessary progression, in order to learn to manage unhealthy behaviours and build a resilient future. John's bottom – but ultimately the start of a healthier future – came in the form of 13 weeks respite in a Melbourne psychiatric facility, on the recommendation of a locum doctor in Rupanyup. Remote from his family and friends in the unfamiliar territory of Dandenong, John deems this without question, the worst time in his life. Relationships which had been weakened over previous years became further strained and, in some cases indelibly damaged. The importance of community networks in the recovery equation



As a Beyond Blue Ambassador, John was a regular speaker in the community on mental health awareness

emerged in this time and his chance gravitation to a familiar faith community was prominent in John's recuperation (having been raised in the church habit at home). The importance of a sense of belonging, whether of the faith variety or a footy club was never more apparent.

An eventual return to Rupanyup came with nervousness and anticipatory fear of community rejection. Notwithstanding this, the holistic recommendation of the local doctor was re-engagement with the community, whilst being careful to contribute without feeling the need to assume a primary leadership role. Amongst many engagements, this found expression in a belated return to the footy field and a reserves premiership for the Panthers at the age of 42, junior sports coaching, a perpetual presence within his local church community and a lawn bowls passion, that continues now at the age of eighty.

John's courageous preparedness to tell his "warts and all" experience to assist others, found higher profile and broader expression for over a decade, as an ambassador for Beyond Blue in the Northern Victoria and Southern NSW regions (and occasionally



John with his sons Adrian, Rodney, Carl and Mark (all Swans supporters!)

further afield including parliament house Canberra and The Pilbara region.) His experience as an elite footballer and farmer resonated for many men around the country and no doubt paved the way for better management of the depression affliction for many.

We've come a long way in recognising depression in men, but whilst familiar the message is no less critical, particularly as persistent stigma continues in some sectors of society. Neither elite nor community football are immune.

Whilst public presentations are no longer, the

therapeutic value of human connections as a management tool for depression remains at the heart of the John Sudholz mantra. His is a great story of ambition, persistence, vulnerability, self-reflection and charity. He is a bloody good human being and a proud Blood for life.

Jumbo – we salute you. Long may memories persist, of those flat punts and torps down by the lake. ▼

CLICK HERE to read more about John in the late, great Jim Main's 2012 "Swan Songs" series



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Chris Bracher has written for The Footy Almanac since 2011. He has been a rusted-on Blood for almost six decades. Throughout the journey, he has learned the hard way that a red and white woollen jumper turns pink in a hot wash! Despite such childhood trauma, he knows that the pain of loving the Swans was worth it in the long run.



Jai Serong after kicking the winning goal against St Kilda



New big man in defence Will Edwards

SENIOR COACH'S REPORT

At virtually the halfway point of the 2026 season, we feel we have seen some pleasing improvement in our playing group. We are sitting in a nice position on the ladder and have a good platform for the remainder of the season.

Opening Round in Sydney was again a roaring success, and it really has given NSW footy the kick start it always needs. Since then, we have seen the SCG packed at home games, highlighted by a sell-out home crowd in our come-from-behind win against Collingwood in Round 10.

Individually, we have had the pleasure of debuting several players in the senior side which is extremely pleasing for the future. Billy Cootee, Will Edwards and Harry Kyle have played their first AFL games and

carried themselves wonderfully. Harry and Will, are both graduates of the QBE Sydney Swans Academy which again highlights the importance of the program in NSW in attracting and nurturing top end talent.

As for the more mature players, Isaac Heeney and Brodie Grundy continue to lead the way with outstanding consistency. Justin McInerney has gone to another level through the midfield, and the new additions of Jai Serong, Mal Rosas Jnr and Charlie Curnow have also complemented the playing list.

We are under no illusions how difficult the back end of the season will be. No AFL game is easy, and we will be challenged by the very best as we reach the pointy end. But that's the point, we want to be there when the whips are cracking, and we want to contend again.



Brodie Grundy in action against Max Gawn



Billy Cootee



Harry Kyle

To our 75,000 plus members, I want to send a personal thank you. What you bring to our footy club is fantastic and I can say with clarity that the players feed off your energy when you turn up on gameday.

I look forward to the back end of the season and, along with my coaching staff, giving the players every chance of success in September.

Thanks for all the ongoing support.
Go the Bloods. ▼



Dean Cox
Senior Coach, Sydney Swans



Superstar Isaac Heeney kicks for goal

BLOODS FOR LIFE PROFILE: FRANCIS JACKSON

By Joe Moore



PLAYED
1975-1983
(also 1973-1974
Richmond)

GAMES | 100
(106 TOTAL)

GOALS | 9

NUMBER
31

Francis Jackson's time at the Swans sits right at the intersection of grit and transition. He wasn't the headline act, but he played a critical role within the courageous, pioneering group that carried the club through a defining era.

He was the kind of player who reinforced standards, absorbed pressure, and helped shape the environment in which others went on to thrive. His impact was foundational.

A lifetime spent in footy began in the bayside area of Melbourne. In attending St Paul's School, Bentleigh, Jackson fostered a love for the game that never ceased.

Each junior match became a lesson in trusting his instincts, fueling the confidence that would define his style of play. Jackson spent his secondary schooling years at CBC in St Kilda, and by 16, he played senior football with suburban club, Powerhouse, which brought fiercer rivals and new challenges, pushing him to sharpen his skills and adapt.

Jackson's father was also important in his growth as a player. His dad had played for the Hawthorn Football Club under-19s, and together, they often spent weekends at Glenferrie Oval, watching Hawks games and soaking up the atmosphere. Watching top-flight footy taught him about strategy and athleticism, and these moments were crucial to his development.

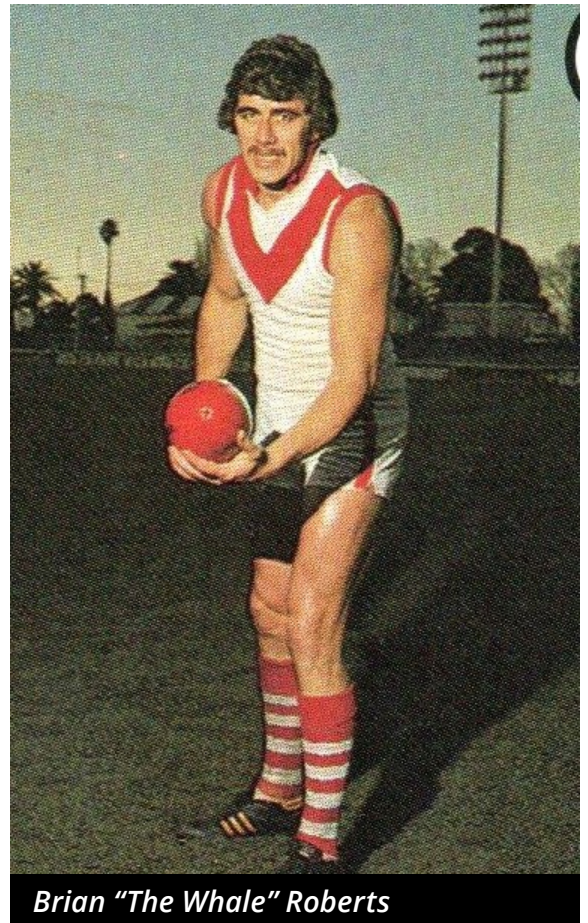
The former Swan is now into his 21st year as a Richmond recruiter. Before that, Jackson spent 19 years at North Melbourne in similar roles. All this came after a highly influential playing career in red and white.

In fact, Jackson's career has come full circle. During his final year of school, the Jackson family moved to Malvern. This brought the emerging talent into the recruiting zones of both Melbourne and Richmond.

"That was interesting. For a couple of months in 1972, I trained with both clubs. I'd train



Graham Teasdale after winning the 1977 Brownlow Medal



Brian "The Whale" Roberts

one night with Melbourne, and the next with Richmond," Jackson recalls.

"I ended up choosing Richmond. Alan Schwab and Graeme Richmond were very persuasive. They also played in that year's Grand Final, and at first, I was very much starstruck."

"I remember one of the first times walking in there, they had a mini cricket net in the footy rooms. And there was Francis Burke and Kevin Sheedy just kicking footies full pelt at each other from about 10 metres away and marking it to improve their ball handling skills."

"Tommy Hafey was the coach. So training was really physical and tough, and I enjoyed it. I think I thrived under those circumstances."

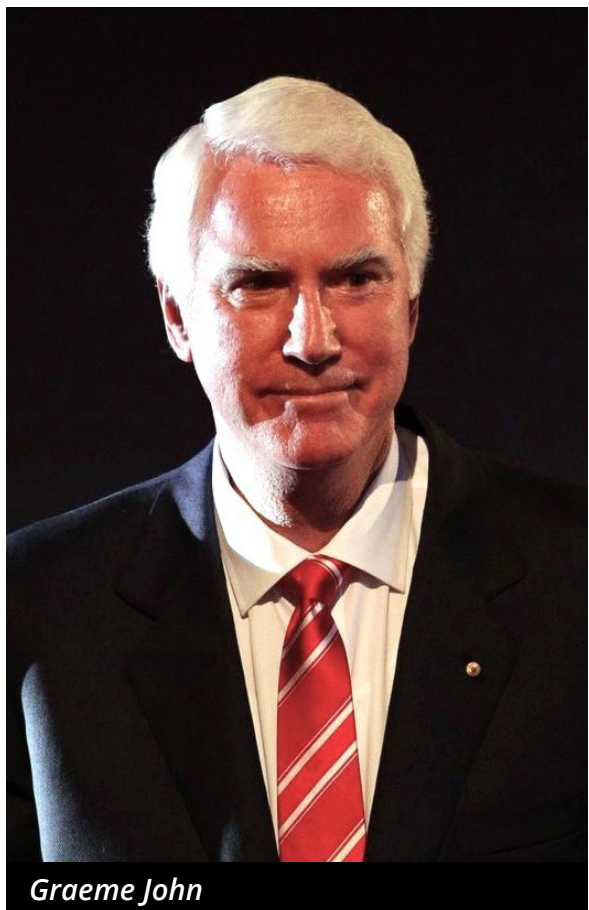
Jackson played five games during his first

season, and after earning two Brownlow votes in the penultimate game of the year, he felt he had a good chance of playing finals. Ultimately, though, he missed out on selection in the Tigers' successful 1973 finals campaign. He did play in the club's victorious reserves grand final, but describes that day as one of the most disappointing in his career.

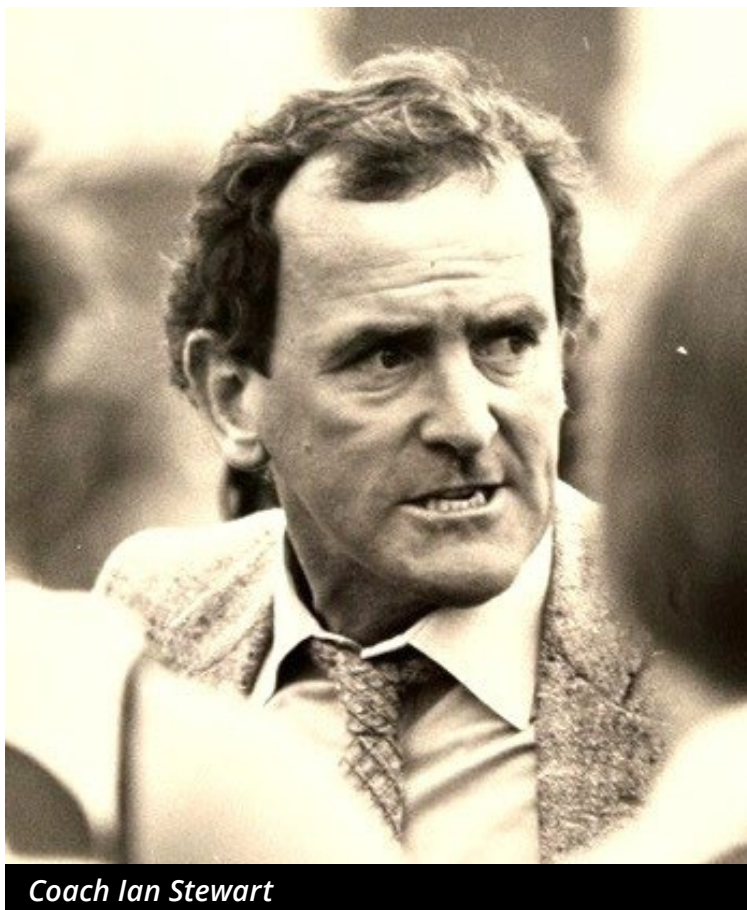
Also during the 1973 season, growing industrial tensions prompted several prominent footballers to meet at Melbourne University and form the VFL Players' Association. The player transfer system had proved increasingly restrictive, limiting players' ability to move clubs, and, in turn, be remunerated at what they perceived to be a fair rate.

The game was undoubtedly changing, and in

BLOODS FOR LIFE PROFILE: FRANCIS JACKSON



Graeme John



Coach Ian Stewart

1975, South Melbourne wingman, John Pitura, moved to Richmond under difficult circumstances. The Swans refused to wilt under rising pressure to release him, with legal action resulting. The VFL Complaints Committee finally resolved the matter, and Pitura eventually made his way to the Tigers.

However, the Swans acquired the services of Richmond trio Graham Teasdale, Brian 'Whale' Roberts, and, of course, Francis Jackson. This injection of talent led many to believe that the club's hardline stance had ensured a positive outcome. History proves this to be correct.

Roberts, who Jackson describes as the 'life and soul of Richmond', played like he had a point to prove, finishing sixth in that year's

Brownlow medal. Teasdale famously claimed the 1977 Brownlow, and Jackson proved an invaluable asset both on and off the field.

"We arrived at South in round six in 1975, which was pretty bizarre, and Graeme John was the coach. He was a great orator and a really fabulous coach," Jackson recalls.

"South had some terrific players and some experienced players who were very talented, so there wasn't a whole lot of difference between the two clubs, apart from perhaps the facilities at the MCG compared to the Lakeside Oval."

Jackson made an immediate impact as a reliable and dynamic defender, equally at home at centre half-back or on a half-back

flank. Later, noted historian and journalist, Jim Main described Jackson as 'one of the toughest players to wear the red and white'.

Ahead of his second season at South, Jackson's former Richmond teammate, Ian Stewart, was appointed coach of the Swans.

"Stewie came in 1976, which was amazing. He was an outstanding coach, ahead of his time. His football knowledge was brilliant. He had a great rapport with the players. He could be hard on you, but he was way ahead of his time in terms of how he coached, how he understood the game and how to motivate people. Everyone had the utmost respect for him."

And, the team developed quickly. An eighth-place finish in Stewart's first year in charge was followed, in 1977, by the club's second finals appearance in 32 years. Despite missing a stretch of games with a broken jaw, Jackson finished fifth in the Swans' best and fairest.

Stewart created an environment where his players thrived. During that landmark 1977 season, South beat Hawthorn at Waverley for the first time. Their ecstatic coach ordered everyone to meet at the nearby Notting Hill Hotel. And, although a beer strike meant the pub was closed, Stewart got some slabs together, and the team celebrated outside.

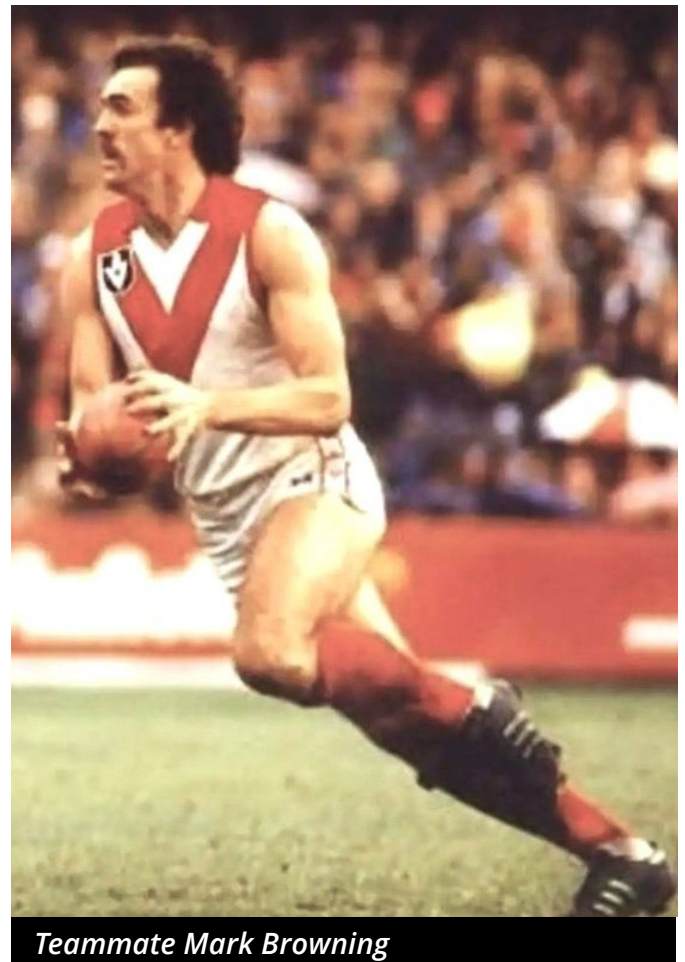
Despite the elimination final loss to Richmond, the Swans looked set for a period of sustained competitiveness. However, that off-season, Stewart's shock departure to Carlton rocked Jackson and his teammates.

But, following the disappointing 1978 season, Stewart returned. For Jackson, though, the excitement of his coach's return was swiftly

quelled by a season-ending knee injury in the opening game against Richmond, requiring a full reconstruction. From adversity, though, Stewart sensed an opportunity.

"When Stewie came back, one of his main frustrations was a lack of talent coming through. He came to visit me in the hospital; I remember it well. He said, 'I've got a job for you. I want you to go back and coach our Under 19s,'" Jackson says.

"He said, 'Unless we do something with our juniors and get some kids coming through. We're not going to thrive, and we're not going to improve. I want you to stir up a hornet's nest and put a structure in place so that

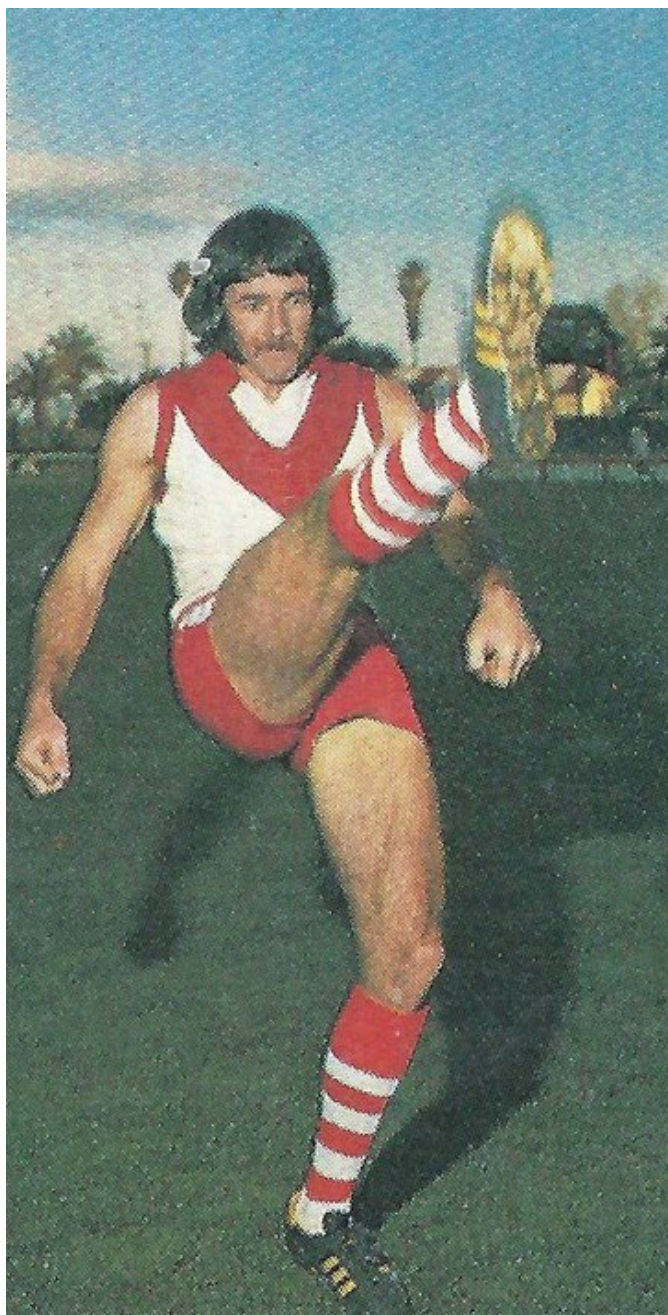


Teammate Mark Browning

BLOODS FOR LIFE PROFILE: FRANCIS JACKSON

we can attract the right kids and get them involved.”

Stewart had also recently convinced the South Melbourne board to appoint Greg Miller as a full-time club recruiter. Jackson’s involvement with the Under-19s proved to be the start of a legendary combination. Miller and Jackson



worked together in recruitment at North Melbourne and Richmond for decades.

Longtime teammate and friend, Mark Browning, describes that increased focus on development as a ‘massive turning point for the club’. “If you look at our team that won the 1982 Night Premiership, there are about 15 players who played 150 games or more,” Browning recalls.

“Some went to other clubs, but that was all through the work of Greg and Jacko with the Under 19s. They got really aggressive with our zone, and Jacko really challenged the club.”

Jackson enjoyed working in development, too. At the time, he was teaching at Albert Park High School, which galvanised his connection with the community. He speaks highly of Miller’s impact, and the pair delivered innovative programs that grew the club’s talent pool in both quantity and quality.

Whilst he did relish the new role, Jackson felt bitterly disappointed by missing the entire season. Stewart’s return gave everyone a boost, and watching from the sidelines drove Jackson to work diligently on his rehab, leading to a return to senior footy in Round 1, 1980.

That season, Jackson played all 22 games as a crucial defensive cog in an emerging side. The influence of his prowess, organisation and leadership spread across the playing group. His best and fairest finishes of fifth, fourth, third, and second highlight his skill and application.

Browning is unequivocal in his assessment of Jackson’s on-field impact in red and white. “I

played beside him a lot. He was just ruthless. A really courageous player, and we all loved playing footy with him."

"He was probably undersized for a centre half-back, but he was a great centre half-back. He had a hardness about him, and he was just such a competitive beast. He was always organising, always playing on really good players. Jacko was a really strong leader on the ground."

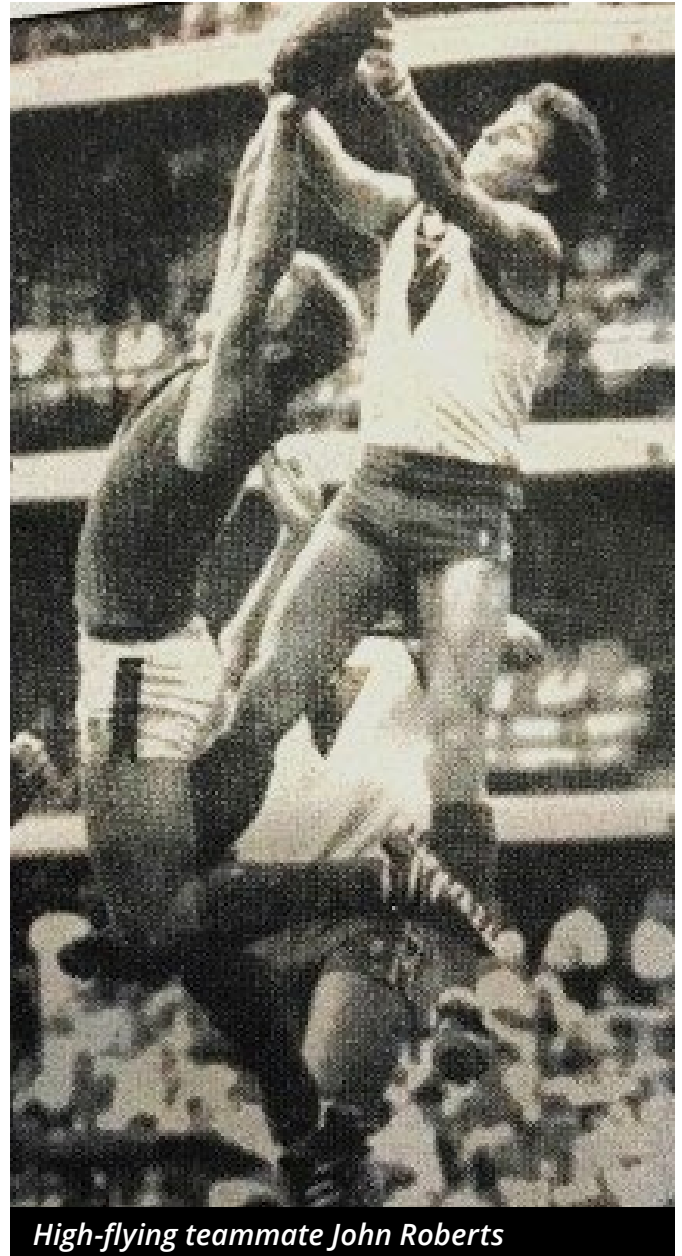
The 1981 VFL season is one of the most pivotal in the game's history. On the field, Jackson excelled, polling 11 Brownlow votes. But, it was perhaps his influence off the field that had the greatest impact.

On Wednesday, July 1, 1981, South Melbourne formally approached the VFL to fixture all home games for the 1982 season in Sydney.

The response from South Melbourne's loyal supporter base was understandably ferocious. For more than one hundred years, the club had proudly occupied a prominent place within Melbourne's sporting landscape.

But those inside the club knew the financial difficulties involved with remaining in Melbourne. For the players, the decision to relocate or stay at home took careful consideration. During that most trying of times, club leaders led the push for what they saw as the club's only means for survival - moving to Sydney.

Jackson was among the most influential. Browning recalls, "If ever things got a bit shaky, Jacko was the bloke who straightened everything back up. He always challenged people within the club if he felt something wasn't right."



High-flying teammate John Roberts

"And, he challenged the playing group. He never drove a certain stance or forced people in a certain direction, but he was very strong on everyone having a view."

"I was probably a bit more dogmatic and tried to convince people this was the way to go, whereas Jacko was more about challenging the individual. It didn't matter if they were 21,

BLOODS FOR LIFE PROFILE:

FRANCIS JACKSON

31 or whatever; they had to have a view, it was their future, their career, and that's the sort of leader he was."

Jackson remembers that period vividly, and, like so many of his teammates, reflects with sadness, but also with pride. Just before the news broke, Jackson had undergone another knee reconstruction, and Greg Miller came to the hospital to discuss their options.

So, a player's meeting was called. Miller and Jackson - covered ankle to thigh in plaster - addressed the players at the Alexandra Avenue home of teammate John Roberts. "It all escalated from there," Jackson remembers.

"We laid all the facts on the table. We spoke about the finances, the lack of sponsorship, the lack of membership, the declining numbers, and the facilities. It was a really, really difficult time. It shattered a lot of friendships and a lot of relationships."

"The Keep South at South group appointed John Rantall as coach. We all love John Rantall. He's a fabulous person and an outstanding player. But during our players' trip to Manila in October, we had a few meetings. When we got back, the players went on strike."

"It was really tough. No one wanted to go. But, it was pretty well accepted that relocation was our likely fate."

The club's first win in Sydney during the opening round of 1982 lives long in Jackson's memory. The celebrations after the game do too. Sadly, another knee injury curtailed his on-field contributions, but as the club relocated ahead of the 1983 season, Jackson joined his teammates in making the move north.

Severely under-resourced and under-

capitalised, the pioneers who moved to Sydney were left largely to fend for themselves. VFL assistance was virtually non-existent, and the Jacksons, with one child in tow and another soon to be born in Sydney, left the family network that young parents value and rely upon.

"A lot of people made a lot of sacrifices to move up to Sydney and try to establish the club. And it was terribly difficult. We still had a lot of people, hoping the move would fall over."

"We made the most of it, but it was very difficult. I mean, particularly for those of us with families. We didn't know anyone in Sydney. We had no relatives, no support system. I think that's where the culture of that group at the time became even stronger, because a lot of us had no other relatives or no friends other than each other, and we were a pretty close-knit group," Jackson reflects.

Highly respected and admired within that group, Jackson played his 100th match in red and white against his former club, Richmond, in Round 21, 1983. Sadly, that would be his final match. During the early stages of the challenging 1984 season, Jackson retired.

So, in 1985, after returning to Melbourne, Jackson commenced a career in footy recruiting that continues to this day. He began working alongside Greg Miller at North Melbourne, while also teaching and running the football program at Brighton Grammar School.

After 19 years with North, Jackson joined Richmond as National Recruiting Manager in 2006 in a full-time role. Still at Tigerland,



Greg Miller

he's now entered his 40th year in recruiting. Browning, whose post-footy career landed him in a similar area of the game, regards Jackson as the best identifier of pre-draft age talent in Australia. And, by a way.

A mighty contributor to the Swans and the game, Jackson looks back fondly on his time in red and white. "We had a wonderful time, both on the footy field and socially."

"It's been difficult for me to stay involved with the past players, because I've had commitments on weekends for so long, but the 2005 premiership is one of my proudest

footy moments. It was such a joyful day."

"I've been at Richmond when the culture changed dramatically, and culture is an often-used word, but it's so very difficult to foster and nurture and to establish. But, the culture of both South Melbourne and Sydney, and how it's progressed over the years, I'm sure, gives all the original blokes a great sense of pride and appreciation of that small part we played along the journey."

"As you get older, you look back and think, my goodness me, they were special times." ▼

AFLW UPDATE

The AFLW program is back in full swing, with pre-season now officially underway. The players are working hard to lay a strong foundation for what we believe will be an exciting season ahead.

Our new senior coach, Colin O’Riordan, has hit the ground running. As a well-respected member of the club, he has already built important connections with our playing group, and we look forward to seeing what he can achieve with our group in the coming months.

We also added an exciting new addition to the squad during the trade period, in Taylor Smith. Taylor is a proven performer at the

top level, having won two Premierships with the Lions (2021 and 2023). She will be a great addition to the team and has already settled into life as a Swan.

At draft time, we welcomed a host of new talent we are really excited about. We selected Alex Neyland, Madeleine Quinn and Molly Thomas. All three are QBE Sydney Swans Academy graduates which is testament to the players hard work and all those involved with QBE Sydney Swans Academy.

We have also made some changes to our leadership group ahead of the season. Chloe Molloy, who was named co-captain alongside Lucy McEvoy in 2023, has decided to step



Taylor Smith



Mollie Thomas



Alex Neyland

down. We thank Chloe for her unwavering dedication and commitment as co-captain, and as a club we are incredibly grateful for what she has done for our group. Her dedication as a leader, as a standard-setter and caring teammate has been fantastic, which will no doubt continue this season.

We were thrilled to appoint Lucy McEvoy as captain for the 2026 season, as she has the trust of the playing group and has shown how valuable she is to our team and club as a leader on and off field. We have appointed Cynthia Hamilton and Sofia Hamilton as co vice-captains and believe they will complement and support Lucy exceptionally well.

We will soon kick off some match simulations and practice games, which is a fantastic way to build connections, try new positions and give the players some reward for their training.

Thanks for your support of our AFLW program and I look forward to seeing you at the footy when we kick off our season on August 16. ▼



Kate Mahony
Executive General Manager - AFLW Football



Madeleine Quinn



New Skipper Lucy McEvoy

Quiz:

With the number of close games this season, we look back at the heart-stoppers over the footy seasons from and including 1982.

This edition of The Quiz asks:

CAN YOU REMEMBER THE CLOSE ONES?



A great rivalry: Micky O greeting the locals at Subiaco Oval

QUESTION 1.

In games decided by 1 point at the SCG since 1982, how many have the Swans won and how many have we lost?

QUESTION 2.

How many Finals have the Swans won or lost by 1 point since 1982?

QUESTION 3.

Who kicked 4 goals for the Swans in the 3 point win (17.4.106 v 15.13.103) over Collingwood in Round 4 of 1984 at Victoria Park?

Bonus Question: Who got the 3 Brownlow Medal votes from this match?

QUESTION 4.

In Round 1 of 1983 at the SCG, who kicked 4 goals for the Swans in the 1 point win (17.9.111 v 15.20.110) over Essendon at the SCG?

QUESTION 5.

In Round 6 of 1988, an undermanned Swans held on to defeat Geelong by 3 points (17.12.114 v 16.15.111) at Kardinia Park. Who kicked 3 goals for the winners after coming out of retirement earlier in the season?

QUESTION 6.

The Club has played 9 Draws since 1982. In the Round 12 draw against Footscray at the Western Oval in 1991, which Swan kicked the only goal in the dying stages of the 4th quarter to level the scores?

QUESTION 7.

Who top scored with 4 goals in the Round 2, 1992 win (14.14.98 v 14.11.95) over the West Coast Eagles at the SCG?



Adam Goodes against the West Coast Eagles

QUESTION 8.

In what proved to be a pivotal game for the Club in the 1996 season, the Swans beat Richmond in Round 4 at Waverley (10.11.71 v 9.16.70), with Tony Lockett kicking 6 goals in an awesome display. At the other end of the ground, who was the Richmond full-forward that gave away a contentious free kick to Andrew Dunkley in the dying stages?

QUESTION 9.

In the legendary Preliminary Final of the 1996 season at the SCG, who kicked the ball to Tony Lockett for the famous winning score after the final siren?

QUESTION 10.

In the 1998 Qualifying Final against St Kilda at the SCG, who made a game saving tackle in the Saints goal square late in the 4th quarter, after earlier kicking 4 goals for the Swans in the 12.17.89 v 13.9.87 win?

QUESTION 11.

In 2002, who kicked the winning goal for the Swans (15.13.103 v 14.16.100) after the final siren in the Round 4 game against the Kangaroos at the SCG?

QUESTION 12.

Who kicked his only goal as a Swan in the 2011 Round 10 win against North Melbourne (10.12.72 v 10.11.71) at Docklands?

QUESTION 13.

In Round 19 2008, the Club defeated Fremantle (17.10.112 v 15.18.108) at the SCG. Who kicked 8 goals for the Swans?

QUESTION 14.

Who kicked 4 goals for the Swans in the Elimination Final win over Carlton (14.15.99 v 13.16.94) at Stadium Australia in 2010?



Isaac Heeney soars against the Giants at the SCG



Barry Hall after the 4 point 2005 Grand Final win!

QUESTION 15.

In 6 consecutive games between the Swans and the West Coast Eagles from the 2005 finals series to Round 1 2007, what was the cumulative winning margin for those 6 games?

QUESTION 16.

In the thrilling comeback win in the Round 14 game against Essendon at the SCG in 2017, who kicked the winning goal for the last minute win (13.11.89 v 12.14.86)?

Bonus Question: who kicked 6 behinds for the Swans in that game?

QUESTION 17.

Who kicked the match winning goal against North Melbourne (14.9.93 v 14.6.90) in Round 10, 2023 at Docklands after a controversial interchange infringement free kick?

QUESTION 18.

In the 1 point win over Collingwood in the 2022 Preliminary Final at the SCG, who kicked a goal in the 3rd quarter after intercepting a Collingwood pass in our forward 50 (and also cleverly rushed the final behind for Collingwood in the final seconds to ensure we held on)?

QUESTION 19.

Who were the players that kicked the final 3 goals of the game in our win over Collingwood (13.11.89 v 12.14.86) in Round 23 of 2024?

QUESTION 20.

Who had 2 critical score involvements (handballs) in the final 2 goals for the Swans in the 2024 Qualifying Final win over the GWS Giants (13.10.88 v 12.10.82) at the SCG?

**Check your answers
by clicking on the icon**



AFL PLAYERS' ASSOCIATION ALUMNI INJURY AND HARDSHIP FUND

Established in 2017, the AFL Players injury & Hardship Fund provides ongoing support for the health and wellbeing of past players. The injury & Hardship Fund has various payments and benefits which may be applicable to past players.

LIFETIME HEALTH CARE PROGRAM

AFLPA Alumni members may be eligible for reimbursement of medical costs and expenses for any joint surgery. Medical costs and expenses for a dental injury incurred whilst training or playing with an AFL / VFL club may also be reimbursable under the program. Members with private health insurance are eligible for reimbursement of up to \$8,000, while those without private health insurance can access up to \$6,000. Hardship support may be available to members who do not have private health insurance due to financial hardship.

HARDSHIP FUND

As life doesn't always work out the way it was intended, support may be available to Alumni members in financial hardship. The Hardship Fund has assisted over 160 past players with more than \$2 million since the launch of the Alumni Program in 2007.

HOSPITAL EXCESS REIMBURSEMENT

AFLPA Alumni members can apply for reimbursement of any excess paid for a hospital stay or procedure conducted in a hospital up to \$500. Note, these procedures do not have to be football related.

VISIT AFLPLAYERS.COM.AU

For lifetime health care, past player hardship support,
hospital excess reimbursement and the AFLPA Alumni program in general,
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