



HILLS DISTRICT BULLS

— 50 YEARS —

DEDICATED TO THE MOTHERS

This book is dedicated to all the wonderful women who have toiled tirelessly behind the scenes washing jerseys, running canteens, transporting kids and so much more, all so we could do what we loved... play footy.

THANKYOU

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WRITTEN BY GREG PRICHARD

A MESSAGE FROM GRAHAM ANNESLEY

NSW MINISTER FOR SPORT AND RECREATION



Junior clubs are the lifeblood of Rugby League. Without them, and without the countless volunteers who unselfishly give of their time to enable clubs to function, there wouldn't be a clear pathway for young footballers as they either try to emulate the NRL stars they idolise, or simply have fun playing alongside their mates as they grow up.

I would like to congratulate the Hills Bulls as the club celebrates 50 wonderful years of giving children and young men the opportunity to play Rugby League in a safe and happy environment. It is a credit to the people who have managed the club over the years that it's among the biggest junior clubs around, despite not having the backing of a licensed premises.

Back in the 1970s, I started my Rugby League career as a referee in the Parramatta District Junior League and controlled many Hills Bulls games at Crestwood Reserve. I can honestly say I was always treated with respect by everyone involved with the club and I was genuinely made to feel welcome.

I wish everyone at the club the very best and I hope you all have a great time at the celebration dinner to mark the 50th anniversary of the Hills Bulls. It is a tremendous achievement and I sincerely hope the next 50 years is even better.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Graham Annesley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Graham Annesley

A MESSAGE FROM RAY WARREN

THE VOICE OF RUGBY LEAGUE



I am one of those people who has been involved in junior rugby league either as a player, a father, coach, manager, or as an office bearer of a club.

In my case I was associated with Parramatta Marist Brothers, so even though both my lads played at one time for the Bulls I have watched the club as an outsider, with much envy, for a number of years.

In later years as a commentator I have seen your youngsters blossom and play in the National Rugby League, and that reminds me, as a resident of the Hills, of the impact, the success and the pride you bring to the area.

Your professionalism in every way is the benchmark for other clubs. Obviously some great minds who put the club together are to be thanked for their tireless efforts during some tough times. They laid the foundation that sees the club now, in its 50th year, even stronger than ever.

What makes the Hills Bulls so remarkable is the way they have competed both on and off the field with tremendous success and without significant leagues club backing. That in itself is incredibly difficult!

What this club has had is wonderful financial support from several organisations and then as always there are those who did, and those who still do, the hard yards, being on the committee, operating the canteen, marking the grounds, picking up the rubbish, selling the raffle tickets, encouraging kids to join the club and so on. You know the people I'm referring to - without them there is no club.

You will notice I haven't mentioned individuals, to do that would mean someone being forgotten and that would be unfair. Plus, there is no 'I' in team. Those of you who, over the past 50 years, have made the Hills Bulls the club that it is should feel enormous pride.

Proof of your success is easily recognisable in the type of people you have had go through your ranks, many of whom have gone all the way to the top level, but that assessment is not just meant for the players, it covers all those who have made this club the envy of all in junior and senior rugby league. You are a credit to the greatest game of all and I am honoured to have been asked to pen these thoughts about you. Congratulations.

Ray Warren



INTRODUCTION

As we celebrate the occasion of the Hills District JRLFC 50th anniversary, it is timely to pause and reflect on the creation, evolution and growth of our club – the Mighty Mighty Bulls.

The initial goal of our pioneers was to form a ‘C’ grade team to compete in the Parramatta district rugby league competition. The first of the numerous hurdles and challenges encountered was the requirement to affiliate the team within an existing Parramatta district club.

However, in 1963, there was no rugby league club within the Hills district, and with the rugby union code having a strong foothold with clubs at Northmead, Baulkham Hills and Pennant Hills, a number of major issues had to be addressed.

To discuss possible ways forward, an old-style community meeting was arranged at the old School of Arts building on Windsor Road, Baulkham Hills. It is understood that the meeting was extremely well attended, with a large number of players, supporters and local identities.

Arising from this meeting the decision was made to elect the inaugural management committee and apply to the Parramatta district club to approve the establishment of the Hills JRLFC. This committee then began a journey in which, for 50 years, hundreds of dedicated volunteers and sponsors have delivered the Hills Bulls mission statement:

We will provide the opportunity for any child or young man, irrespective of ability or background, to learn the game, play the game and love the game.

The club has continued to expand and develop and now enjoys a well-earned reputation as one of the largest, most progressive and innovative junior rugby league clubs in the world.

It really is a Great Story.



BIRTH OF THE BULLS 1963 - 1964

"MY DAD DIED ON MY THIRD BIRTHDAY, SO I DIDN'T HAVE THAT FATHER FIGURE IN MY LIFE, BUT THIS CLUB TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE A MAN. MY MOTHER BROUGHT ME UP, AND THE CLUB GAVE ME A WORK ETHIC AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SORT OF PERSON YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE."

ANDY REID

It is the morning of Sunday, February 17, 2013, and a group of men are going back in time. Fifty years. They are gathered at the Bull and Bush Hotel, one of the Hills District's best-known landmarks, to remember how it all began. The Hills Bulls, a junior rugby league club of which we can all be proud.

The Hills District was a vastly different place to what it is now, in the last few months of 1963. Baulkham Hills Shire Council records show that the district population in 1961 was just 23,643, but noted that "urban development accelerated from this time".

By 1966 it was 33,499, and it just kept growing at an ever-increasing rate.

Robert Menzies won another election as Prime Minister in 1963, The Beatles had the two biggest-selling singles on the Australian charts for the year, with I Want To Hold Your Hand and She Loves You, Gatum Gatum won the Melbourne Cup and St George beat Western Suburbs in the NSWRL grand final.

Elle MacPherson was born, Margaret Court won her first Wimbledon ladies' singles title and Holden released its EH model, which became very popular. You could buy a new one for 1051 pounds. But what was increasingly on the minds of these men was that the Hills District didn't have a rugby league club.

That was about to change.

The football season had finished, and a group of players from the Baulkham Hills rugby union club weren't happy. They felt their achievement in making the grand final of the Judd Cup competition, which they lost narrowly, had not been met with due recognition by the club.

Many of the players had been in the team that won the club its first under-18s premiership in 1962, and were justifiably proud of that achievement and their combination with older players to get to the grand final of the open cup competition.



But they felt they were not a priority in the club's future planning, and began to look for alternatives for the 1964 season. One of those was breaking away from the club to form their own union team. Another was to make the big switch to play league.

People began gathering to talk about it. The players who were old enough to enter a hotel discussed the situation at the Bull and Bush. The ones who weren't quite 18 yet gathered at the corner milk bar, and the local School of Arts. The fathers of many of the players joined in at the pub.

"I played for the Hills Tigers in that Judd Cup grand final," Col Wilkinson said. "Unfortunately, we lost, 6-3, and we decided we wanted to form a rugby league club and play together there. I had an opportunity to trial with the Parramatta rugby union club, but my mates talked me out of it. The urge to play with my mates was stronger than the urge to play for Parramatta.

"Myself and the other younger blokes were drinking milkshakes at the milk bar, talking about playing league, and the older players, along with the parents, were

talking about it at the Bull and Bush. That was how the plan was hatched."

Mick Gremmo, one of the driving forces behind the club's formation, remembers things progressing swiftly once it was clear there were enough people interested in making it happen.

"It was a case of disgruntled union players wanting to play league," he said. "And once the fathers knew about it, it quickly generated more interest."

The idea became a genuine push, and a decision was made to enter a C-grade (under 19's) side in the Parramatta District Rugby League competition, with the young union players who had been successful in that code forming the bulk of the squad.

The next step was to reach out for community support and put together a formal proposal, to be forwarded to the league, so a meeting was called at the School of Arts building, on Windsor Rd at Baulkham Hills.

Among the key figures at the meeting were Mick Gremmo, Ray Buckley, Ron Drought, Keith Woellner snr, Keith Woellner jnr, Col Wilkinson, Roy Wilkinson, Andy Reid, Peter Norman, George Johnston, Merv Sherwood, Bill Heath, Phil Evenden, Ken Evenden, Billy Walters, Kevin Franks, Len Reeves, David Paul, Les Hourigan, John Tangy and Ken Dixon.

These were exciting times. The people at the meeting probably didn't know it back then, but what they were doing would help dramatically change the face of the Hills District by establishing a sporting organisation that has stood the test of time and just kept growing.

Motions were moved and carried, establishing the Hills District JRLFC, its inaugural management committee, and a working party to approach the Parramatta District



RLFC and find out exactly what the Hills Bulls would have to do to be admitted to the competition.

The working party of Mick Gremmo, Col Wilkinson and Peter Norman met with Colonel Jack Argent, a legendary figure who was a World War II veteran and founder of the Parramatta District club. Argent showed them the way forward, saying the club would back their application as long as they met certain criteria.

The Hills Bulls had to field four teams, in the A, A reserve, C and D-grade competitions, have a suitable home ground and use colours and an emblem that were approved.

The number of teams required was cut to three upon request, eliminating D grade, but there was still a big problem - there were plenty of players to form a strong C-grade side, but the A and A reserve teams were a different story.

There weren't nearly enough players immediately available to fill those sides, which sparked a good, old-fashioned recruitment campaign beginning at the bars of the Bull and Bush and continuing into the wider community. If you were reasonably fit - or at least thought you were - and particularly if you had a background in either of the rugby codes, you were a better than even-money chance of being asked to play.

"We didn't think we were going to get enough players," Col Wilkinson said. "We put together an A-grade side out of drinkers from the pub."

It was known from the start that if the club was admitted to the competition there would be weeks when a shortage of players meant the Bulls would struggle to field all three teams, but that was something to worry about down the track. Getting into the competition was all that mattered now.

Debate over what colours should be used for the jersey was robust, but in the end the

club settled on black. According to the recollections of those who were there at the time, there are several theories as to how that decision was reached, including the fact it was regarded as a strong colour, it matched one of the top teams of the day in Western Suburbs, and it was the only colour available that wasn't the major colour on any of the jumpers worn by the other clubs in the competition. Whatever the reason, it was a popular choice.

The choice of an emblem - a big, white bull's head - was easy. The Bull and Bush was the traditional meeting place of local teams and identities, and the white bull's head was the pub's emblem. It went perfectly with the black jumper.

Once the criteria was met, the club was admitted to the competition. The Hills Bulls - the Mighty, Mighty Bulls - were born. Now, it was time to start bringing up the baby.

Yattenden Oval was secured as a training ground, and coaches and club officials were appointed. John Doherty was the inaugural president, Bill Heath the vice-president, Kevin Farmer treasurer and Peter Norman secretary, although during the first year





Ray Buckley replaced Doherty and Mick Gremmo replaced Farmer.

Norman would also coach the C-Grade side. Max Caldwell was given the A-Grade coaching job and Gus the A Reserve team.

Everyone knew it wasn't going to be easy to get the club up and running and operating effectively, and competitive in games, but that was accepted. Training was hard, and not just because of the physical aspect of it. Sometimes, the players could hardly see what they were doing in the harsh cold of a winter's night.

"We had one light at Yattendon Oval, and to make it work we had to run an extension cord through the bedroom window of David and Faye Whitehurst's family home, which backed on to the ground," Phill Evenden recalled. "Sometimes, the Whitehursts would forget we were coming and go out without turning the switch on, or the light would just fail, and we would have to park our cars up on the bank and put our lights on."

The licensee of the Bull and Bush, "Mother" Munroe, as she was known to one and all, kindly gave her support to the fledgling club.

"Mother Munroe was one of our sponsors," said Mick Gremmo. "She financed the purchasing of our first jumpers, and sold us beer at cost price so we could make a few dollars selling it. She was a good woman."

Baulkham Hills Shire Council was approached about a ground, and with the support of Shire President Bernie Mullane resulted in the Bulls being allocated Castle Hill Showground as the venue for their home games. Now that was an experience. Beggars couldn't be choosers, so the Bulls had no choice but to play there and put up with the poor surface and even poorer facilities. The Showground was mainly the domain of show-jumping horses, so when the time came for football games there was more fresh manure on the field than grass.

No-one likes having their face rubbed in the dirt when they're playing football. Even worse is having it rubbed in horse shit. Hills Bulls players weren't big fans of playing there, but opposition players absolutely hated it.

"The Showground was as rough as guts," Evenden recalled. "The change-rooms were shocking. We had to do an emu parade before the games, to clean up all of the horse shit off the ground. If you missed a bit and ended up getting tackled in it, you knew it.

Col Wilkinson added: "Yeah, it wasn't good there. When we spread across the ground to pick stuff up it wouldn't be just the horse shit - there were bits of glass, nails, all sorts of stuff, especially after the Castle Hill Show.

"You had to get changed in the chook shed. There were no showers - I don't think there were even any taps in there. You had to come off the field, grab your gear, wipe the sweat off yourself and then go back out and sit and watch the next game. It was pretty rough."

The first-year results weren't great, but they weren't expected to be. There were never even remotely enough players to fill all three teams independently of each other, so most players had to back up in another game - and sometimes play in all three. But they still won a few.

Some of the C-graders who had learned their football by playing union took a bit of time to get used to the different rules in league. Similar to the incident when young Billy Walters fielded a bomb, or up-and-under, and there was a call of 'take the mark, Bill', to which he immediately responded. Unfortunately for Bill, the opposition knew their trade better and pulverised Bill into the manure-tainted turf.

At the time, the Hills District was nothing like the heavily-populated residential and commercial area it is now. Social nights and functions were a low-key affair. Through the courtesy of Mrs Munroe, who gave discounts on a keg of beer, the boys would grab some snags, a guitar, set up a campfire on the outskirts of Baulkham Hills, sing and drink the keg dry until the early hours of the morning. If you did that now, you would probably be arrested! Incidentally, Billy Bugg's rendition of My Boomerang Won't Come Back at those bonfire get-togethers was regarded as a "classic".

The C-grade side was, as anticipated, clearly the most successful, but having to back



Above: The 1966 Hills Bulls Committee.



up in games hurt their cause. They won five games and lost seven, experiencing heavy defeats against Blacktown Workers and Liverpool Colts, but their overall performance was good enough to put them in a playoff for fourth place with Riverstone. The Bulls lost, 12-2. A grade won one game and lost 13, and A reserve lost all 12 of their games, but the club founders believed that success at that stage was to be measured not so much on the scoreboard but in terms of the quality of the organisation that had been created. The club values that were established at the start set the foundations for the ethics, mateship, pride and community spirit on which the club has grown.

Andy Reid, one of the club's original players, credited the Hills Bulls with putting him on the road to becoming a man.

"I had a fantastic coach when I played union, and then I came to this club and we had a bloke named Peter Norman coach us in C grade," he said. "He was good for me. He



drove me hard, and made me understand the meaning of mateship, and looking after your teammates.

“I loved it, that first year. We did it tough, we had to clean the ground up and that sort of thing, and we had no mod cons at all, but we went out there and just played for each other. We played together, we went out together - we stayed together all the time.”

Many people in the community contributed to help the club in its first year. Wives and girlfriends of players and officials made pom-poms and acted as cheer girls, which lifted the spirits of the players. Keith Woellner Jnr remembered: “It was quite special to see the girls cheering you as you ran out onto the field, because apart from that it was a pretty desolate place for a game, the Castle Hill Showground. But those were the early days, and it was great to be a part of the club when it was just starting off.”

The season ended, but no-one was resting. The club immediately began making plans for the following year, to build on year one and make the Hills Bulls bigger and better. As the no-nonsense Mick Gremmo recalled: “It wasn’t a very successful year, our first year, but we learned from our mistakes.”

Did they ever. Fifty fabulous years of the Hills Bulls is proof of that.





BREAKING THROUGH 1965 - 1970

"IT'S THE CAMARADERIE THAT YOU GET OUT OF IT. WE GET TOGETHER FOR REUNIONS AND IF YOU HEAR SOMEONE IS DOING IT TOUGH YOU RALLY AROUND AND TRY DO SOMETHING TO HELP THEM GET BACK ON TRACK. IT'S LIKE WHEN I WAS IN THE ARMY - YOU DEVELOP MATES FOR LIFE."

PHIL EVENDEN

One thing was clear from the start of the Hills Bulls - they meant business. They may have only been a young club, but they weren't going to be satisfied with just being in the competition. The Bulls weren't prepared to wait for things to happen - they were going to make things happen. And make things happen they did, by breaking through to win not just one, but two premierships - A reserve and 'D' grade - in only their second year of existence.

Fittingly, some of the young men who had been instrumental in the push for the Bulls to be formed as a club and accepted into the Parramatta district competition in late 1963 were members of the A Reserve side that won the club its first premiership, in 1965. They included Mick Gremmo, Col Wilkinson, Phill Evenden and Keith Woellner junior. All of them had a fierce passion for the club that still burns in them today.

The Bulls only fielded five teams that year, but a week after the A reserve side created its unique place in history for the club the Bulls won their second premiership, in the D grade (under 17) competition. That outfit provided the nucleus of the C grade (under 19) team that would go on to win the premiership in 1966, and several players from those two sides of terrific teenagers graduated to the A-grade side that gave the Bulls their first premiership at the highest level, in 1971. They included Steve Foster, Bruce Hilditch, Graham Spurway and Col McAndrew.

The mid-to-late 1960s, those crucially important formative years of the club, saw the emergence of a core group of figures who were devoted to doing all they could - way above and beyond what would have been the accepted call of duty - to ensure the club not only survived, but grew. Three people who loomed large among those were Mick Gremmo, Keith Hoyle and Keith Woellner senior, who would subsequently be among the earliest recipients of life membership at the club.

And there were, of course, great characters. A football club can't establish its identity without those larger-than-life figures weaving themselves into its fabric via their



Above: Reserve Grade Premiers 1965. The 1st for the club. Fullback Billy Harris, Wingers David Paull & Billy Brien (Dec), Centres Jimmy Bright & Mick Gremmo, Five-Eight Keith Wilkinson, Half Back Keith Woellner, Front Row John Gates & Jimmy Furguson, Hooker Garry Savage, Second Row Jimmy Marshall & John Riordon, Lock Phil Everden, Reserves Billy Walters (Dec), Mick Nicholas, Brian Bates (Dec), Coach Bruce Tyler (Dec), Manager Andy Reid,

enormous personalities. And with the great characters come the great stories, such as the one that surrounds Bruce "Bruno" Tyler, the coach of the 1965 A reserve side. Tyler, who dabbled in professional wrestling as "The Great Bruno", and was also a nightclub bouncer, had been a very good player and was establishing himself as an even better coach.

Bruno is no longer with us, but he remains a revered figure at the club. He is described by those who played alongside him during his short time on the field at the Bulls as incredibly tough, and a ferocious competitor, and those who played under his coaching say he educated them in the ways of the world as well as football.

Right: Jasper Road Dressing Sheds.





A Guildford player (squatting) pulls down Hills player Colin McAndrew during the junior A grade Rugby League match at McCredie Park.

“Bruno was the earliest ‘personality’ in the club,” Evenden said. “He’d played grade for Parramatta, but a failed knee operation meant that he couldn’t stay in grade football. We were lucky to inherit him. He was as wide as he was high and played mainly in the front row. He ruled his own players with an iron fist and wasn’t afraid to sort out the opposition if they got too physical with ‘his boys’. In one game against Wenty he was having a blinder and was hurting them with every tackle. In the end none of the Wenty forwards were keen to carry the ball up to us.”

Andy Reid was one of Tyler’s closest mates at the Bulls, and remembers he and the rest of the players revelling in the opportunity to go out on the town with their streetwise coach.

“Bruno was older than the rest of us,” Reid said. “He taught us a lot about life. He took us up to Kings Cross and educated us a bit in that scene, so we saw two ways of how to live life - the good and the bad. Bruno tried to point us in the right direction. If we were going out with him, we’d ask him what gear he’d want us to wear - our good gear or our gear for a rough night. Sometimes he’d say: ‘It’s rough gear tonight, we’re going to the Rock and Roll’. There was a pretty wild pub down on the wharves, one of the roughest pubs you could imagine. Bruno was a wrestler, and a bouncer. I met some of his wrestling mates on those trips into the city. Killer Karl Cox, Killer Kowalski, he knew them all. I never saw him wrestle. I was a chef, so I was working on Saturdays when he wrestled, but I saw him in a few ‘blues’, and he was unbelievable. He was a very strong man - it would take five or six blokes to hold him down. I saw him crash-tackle a bloke through the doors of a pub once. It was amazing, the strength and power he had. Bruno was a terrific footballer. He had skill, but he was also the hardest tackler I’ve ever seen. He had a bit of a run with us in 1965, but he didn’t play in the grand final. I think he played the following season. His knee was pretty bad when he came to the Bulls, but I did see him play second grade for Parramatta before that and he was a great to watch before he got hurt. Bruno knew the game, and he was a very good coach. But, even more important, he looked after us.”



Bruno left nothing to chance, and if that meant keeping a 24-hour watch on a key player before the grand final, then so be it. But the story gets better. Hooker Gary “Stumpy” Savage was known to enjoy a few cleansing ales after a hard week of work. Nothing wrong with that, but this was a big game - easily the biggest in the short history of the Bulls - and Bruno didn’t want to take the risk that Stumpy might not be at his best after having had a few too many. Andy Reid, who was a member of that A-reserve side before a bad leg injury sustained in a motorcycle accident forced him to retire, takes up the story.

“There were a few drinkers in the team,” Reid said. “They would get on the drink from Friday night, so the night before the grand final Bruno said: ‘That’s it, you’re all coming back to my house’. So all the players had to go back to his place to stay. But Bruno went and got Stumpy out of the pub himself, and then had him sleep in the same bed as Bruno and his wife, so he could keep an eye on him. Bruno was on one side and his missus on the other, with Stumpy in the middle. That’s a true story.”

Hell, with commitment like that you don’t deserve to do anything but win, and the Bulls did just that, beating Fairfield 11-2 at Hillier Oval, Liverpool. A local newspaper report read: “A try by Mick Gremmo early in the second half paved the way for the Hills’ victory after a tight first half. The Hills had been held to 2-all at half time, although it narrowly missed two tries in this period. In the second half, Gremmo’s try and three more goals by Jimmy Marshall gave the side an unassailable lead. Teammates carried skipper Keith Woellner from the field after the match in tribute to his sterling play throughout the season. Woellner had won the team’s best and fairest player competition.”

But, unfortunately, there is usually a hard-luck story that accompanies a grand final, and this time it came from the winning side, which had a key player forced to look on for the biggest game of the year after playing all season before getting injured the week before. That same newspaper report detailed it this way: “Most disappointed member last Sunday was Colin Wilkinson, five-eighth, who was forced to miss the match because of a broken leg.”

Woellner junior described captaining that side and also being a member of the C-grade team that was the first to take the field in Hills Bulls colours in 1964 as being among his “fondest memories” at the club, along with the sight of the flying winger from that A reserve side, David Paull, winning the \$250 Richmond Gift sprint race over 100 yards for local footballers at the Londonderry greyhound track. But, above all, he paid tribute to a quartet of men he saw as having been enormously responsible for the Bulls taking off as a club.



“Without the diligence and hard work of men like Bruno Tyler, Mick Gremmo, Keith Hoyle and Keith Woellner (senior), the club would never have enjoyed the success it did,” Woellner said.

Although the A reserve grade were premiers in 1965, the A grade continued to struggle with a lack of experienced players. But the Bulls were getting their act together and when that first win came it was received as a huge occasion in the club's short history. A newspaper report, with the headline “A WIN AT LAST”, saw it this way: “The ‘Cinderella’ team of the Parramatta Junior rugby League A-grade competition, the Hills, recorded its first win last Sunday. It opened its account with a resounding, 35-2 victory over Liverpool. The Hills forwards dominated play around the ruck with strong running and solid defence. The forwards co-ordinated well with the backs, who were far too fast for their opponents. Hills produced the star of the game, second-row forward Jim Marshall. Marshall kicked six goals as well as crashing over for a well-deserved try, making his total number of points for the game 15.”

The Bulls fielded their first junior team in 1965, with Instant success. The D grade (under 17) team, coached by George Johnston, maintained strong form all season, and went on to win the grand final 13-6 over Wentworthville at McCredie Park, Guildford. A newspaper report painted this picture of the big day: “The Hills rugby league club on Saturday won its second competition premiership for the season. The club's D-grade side joined the A reserve in bringing home a premiership title for the district. Young star of the side, Stephen Foster, missed scoring 100 points for the season when he dropped the ball over the line in a scoring position. Up to that stage he had notched 97 points from goals and tries during the season.

“I don't remember a lot about the game,” Bruce Hilditch said. “It was 48 years ago now. But I know we had a good, tough pack of forwards. A couple of the boys - Greg Leadbetter and Neil Orr - ended up working as bricklayers for the coach. Wenty were a pretty good side, and it was a very defensive game, the grand final. I was only 16 and still learning my football at that stage. I probably remember more about the



C-grade grand final the following year. We beat Villawood 18-12, and there was a massive punch-up in the game. Big Greg Leadbetter was involved. I think someone got hit without the ball, and that sparked it.”

The day after the D-grade side won their premiership, the A-reserve team stepped out to play again, this time in what was known as the Grand Slam championship. In the 1960s, Parramatta junior league encompassed both the present Parramatta and Penrith districts, the premiers of each division played a Grand Slam event a fortnight after the grand finals. The Hills A-reserve team was pipped in this event by arch-rivals Wentworthville, 7-6, Hills scoring two tries to one. An early indication of the level of passion Keith Hoyle would have for the club, and how much he was prepared to do to support it. A presentation night for the D-grade team was scheduled to celebrate the 1965 grand final win. Arrangements were made through Parramatta district club secretary, Jack Argent, to have two first-graders attend. They were Ron ‘Thirsty’ Lynch and Ivor Lingard, who later coached the Bulls’ A-grade team. On the night, the juniors watched the old 16mm reels of Test footage and waited for the arrival of their heroes. However, Jack Argent forgot to tell the players. It was at this time a gentleman donated 20 pounds to look after the kids, a

lot of money at that time. That gentleman was Keith Hoyle. Keith's generosity and passion for our club in providing unsolicited financial support that has been replicated many times over thanks to the magnificent support and contributions our sponsors and members throughout our club's history.

Keith Hoyle was a highly successful businessman who put the club administration in a new direction and revised its function to run in a business-like manner. In recognition of this and countless hours of devoted service, he was awarded life membership. His sons, Rick and Greg, played for the club, and Greg was our first A-grade ball-boy.

The Bulls began to pay senior players to train and play in 1965. We're not talking about a fortune here, but it was nevertheless a worthwhile encouragement. Players received 10 shillings per training session, and 10 shillings per match. Apart from the obligatory chook raffles that were an important means of raising money for any football club - Mrs Munroe, the licensee of The Bull and Bush Hotel, was a kindly club supporter who allowed the raffles to be conducted on her premises - the club also printed and sold match-day programs for two shillings at home games. Despite those fine endeavours, other funding sources were essential and it is understood Keith Hoyle was a regular silent contributor to the club.

The culture and ethics that the club's founding members envisaged for the Hills Bulls was beginning to materialise. It was a place where teenagers and young men could join forces and enjoy the camaraderie of a team sport, while learning structure and gaining discipline at the same time. Mick Gremmo said: "League makes better men out of you, makes better fathers out of you. If you play footy as part of a team, you're up and down all the time and you learn how to become a better man as a result of the experience. As you go through life, you stick together with those mates." Gremmo remembered that winning those premierships in 1965 really put the club on the road to huge success. "Bruno Tyler was a great coach," he said. "We were lucky enough to win that comp, and the D-grade side won as well. So we had two premierships in only our second year. By 1966 the club fielded a number of junior sides, and we just



kept building from there. Other local pubs and small businesses starting backing us, and we had movie nights and gambling nights to raise money, on top of the chook raffles. The club was growing all the time."

The Bulls struck again in 1967, the D-grade side winning the club its fourth premiership. The C-grade side looked like winning as well, but after being undefeated all season they sadly lost the grand final. The D-grade team included a 16-year-old halfback by the name of John Kolc. The brilliant youngster went on to star in the famous, premiership-winning A-grade side of 1971, before graduating to Parramatta, NSW and Australia. The Bulls beat Parramatta Marist 7-5 in the grand final after edging Merrylands 8-7 in the final. Barry Rudd, who would go on to become an important figure in Bulls club history, played halfback for Merrylands that day, and he and Kolc each scored a try. The game was decided by a classy field goal from Bulls hooker Mick Shanahan, kicked from the 25-yard line and about halfway between the touchline and centre-field. Shanahan, who went on to become a prominent manager over many years and life member of the Bulls, remembers that

year as one of his favourites at the club.

"It was the only premiership I won at the club, so it was pretty special," Shanahan said. "We were 7-0 down in that final against Merrylands, but we clawed our way back and I kicked the field goal with five or ten minutes to go. I wasn't the goal kicker - I wasn't much good at that - but I was good at kicking for touch and field goals. It was another tight one in the grand final. We had a good bunch of young blokes. We all knew each other from growing up in the area, so we really enjoyed playing with each other and winning that comp. I thought I was going to be lucky enough to win two in one year when I got called up into C-grade the following week, but after winning the semi-final we lost the grand final. I was playing prop or hooker in D grade, but they played me at fullback in the C-grade grand final." The Bulls would not win another premiership for four years, but in the meantime the club was continuing to grow and set itself for the massive success it would enjoy in the 1970s, '80s and beyond. But the club suffered a major disruption, losing three junior teams when a foundation member left the Bulls and founded the Winston Hills JRLFC in 1970.



To counter this loss, the club accelerated its junior player recruitment and retention program under the direction of Barry Clapham and Phil O'Brien.

The appointment of the very astute Frank Lamb to coach the A-grade side in 1968 was a huge step in the right direction. Lamb had been coaching at Wentworthville, and before that he had coached third grade at Parramatta. He was a renowned tactician and excellent judge who brought tremendous experience to the club. One of these players was Bob Collings, who arrived at the Bulls in 1969 and would make a marvellous contribution on and off the field, this resulted in him eventually being awarded life membership of our club. Problems at the Parramatta City club saw even more good players shift to the Bulls, and in 1968 Lamb took the A-grade side to the semi-finals for the first time in the club's history.

But, to keep going forward, the Bulls needed the help of as many people as possible who were connected to the club in any way. Club secretary Keith Hoyle's business acumen, and his association with Baulkham Hills Shire Council's president Bernie Mullane, who had considerable influence, enabled the acquisition of Jasper Oval at Baulkham Hills as the new home ground of the Bulls, allowing them to move on from the antiquated facilities at Castle Hill Showground. But first the facilities at the replacement venue had to be improved. The club built the canteen and financed the lighting, while the Council prepared the surface and built the change-rooms. Various working parties made up of players, their family members, club officials and supporters worked tirelessly to get Jasper Oval in a functional condition for the 1969 season. The end result was a tremendous example of how it takes everyone to unite for a club to succeed, consistent with our original vision.

The move to Jasper Oval saw the birth of the famous, "Pub Run", which consisted of a road run from Jasper Oval to Seven Hills Road, turning left at the Bull and Bush Hotel, then along Windsor Road, left into Coronation Road and back to Jasper Oval.

While the run was hard and demanding, particularly in the pre-season, many stories have been told of players deviating via the Bull and Bush public bar to top up their fluid levels. Rumours of some players then returning to Jasper Oval via taxis have never been substantiated.

The Bulls were establishing themselves as a family-oriented club, with solid backing in the community. Bernie Mullane was to become a long-standing patron of the club, and the Bernie Mullane trophy for Club Champion was established, awarded to the senior player of the year. It is an award steeped in tradition. A fine example of our community spirit was evidenced by the contribution made by Keith Woellner Snr. Woellner, a life member, originally became interested in the club due to the fact his son, Keith, was playing there. Keith Snr was president of the Bulls from the mid-1960s to early '70s, and he and his wife, Norma, always made their home an open house to the players. Keith Jnr remembered how his parents, even if they weren't home, trusted the players to stay at their house, and how the players repaid that trust in kind: "If mum and dad went away for the weekend, Bobby Collings and some of the boys would come down and use the swimming pool at our home at Northmead. It was always spotless when mum and dad came home. The boys were in their early 20s or teenagers, but they were very well behaved. Bruno Tyler got a mechanical digger and a generator from the council and he and the boys came down on weekends to dig the hole for the pool in the first place. That's how it came to be the boys' place to gather. It was open house all the time." The late Keith Snr is described as a great man and a friend that will be missed by many.

Our club worked hard at raising money via the traditional means for junior clubs, which involved the chook raffle as a key element. Phil Evenden remembered that "my player payments for the year 1968 were \$21.32". The fundraising must have gone well, because Evenden recalled the club was soon finishing seasons in the 'black'. "A financial statement for the year ended 1970 indicated that the club earned revenue



STANDING: K. Woellner (Snr. Vice President), A. Tomlinson (A. Grade Manager), K. Laidlaw, B. Wilson (A. Res. G'de Capt. Coach), S. Foster, F. Lamb (A. Grade Coach), N. Orr, J. Bright, J. McNamara, L. Reeves (A. Res. Gde Manager) Masseur.

KNEELING: G. Wright, J. Heath, W. Harris, B. Hilditch, J. Beesley, R. Costello, A. Strong, G. Smith

FRONT: G. Smith, C. Wilkinson, D. Winnin, M. Lockwood (Ball Boy), M. Nicholas, C. McAndrew T. Knight.

of \$4957.87 and expended \$4219.26,” Evenden said. “A profitable year! Our assets totalled \$2290.33. Figures for 1969 were similar. The good old days! In 1970, the sum of \$450 was outlaid for coaching fees. I earned \$200 of that for a successful year coaching the A-reserve team to the grand final.” That wasn’t bad money in those days.

The club performed solidly again in 1969, without winning any premierships. Lamb left the club at the end of that season. There was a story that he had received another offer too good to refuse, but Lamb said it wasn’t like that. “I just felt like I needed a change,” he said. “They asked me to come back and coach the under-18s at Wenty, so I did that for something different.”

In 1970, John Beesley coached the A-grade side as well as playing for it. Again, the Bulls performed strongly as a club, and almost won the A-reserve premiership. After winning the minor premiership, the Bulls lost the grand final against a Fairfield side that had been “stacked” with players dropped from the A-grade side in the last few rounds.

But the great Lamb wasn’t gone for good, he returned to the Bulls in 1971. “I wanted to coach A grade again,” he said. “I put in for the A-grade job at Wenty, but they wanted a player-coach. Keith Hoyle brought me back to the Hills, and a couple of the Wenty players came with me. It turned out to be one of the better moves I made as a coach.”

Lamb’s return signalled the start of what would be a huge year for the Bulls, finishing, as it did, with the club bathed in the ultimate glory.



JOHN KOLC



John Kolc is acclaimed as one of the greatest players in the history of the Hills Bulls, but his association with the club doesn't end there. Kolc, 62, is proud to say there are now three generations of his family who have worn the jumper.

“My sons, Nathan and Luke, played for the club, and when Luke's son, Mitchell, was registered for the under-6s last year I went down to the ground and we had photos taken of the three of us with the 'John Kolc Oval' sign in the background,” Kolc said.

“We wanted it as a keepsake for us, as a family. I obviously want the club to do well, and I love the fact my boys, and now their boys, have an association with the Bulls. Luke's youngest son, Shaun, has started playing for the club this year. Three generations, stretching over nearly 50 years at the club - I think that's great.”

Kolc, who went on to become a star Parramatta halfback and represent Australia, learned his football primarily at the Bulls. He emerged as a force at the same time as the club did, playing in premierships-winning teams in D grade (1967) and A grade (1971).

It was that '71 grand final win - the first for the Hills in the top grade - that stamped Kolc as a top-shelf match winner. He starred in the 13-9 win over Guildford in what was to be his last game for the Bulls before going full time in grade with the Eels.

“It was a fantastic day for the Bulls,” Kolc said. “A huge milestone for the club. I remember drinking champagne in the dressing-room afterwards. I didn't drink beer, but I didn't hesitate to drink the champagne.”

Kolc was in his early teens when his family moved from Balmain to North Parramatta in 1964. He started playing rugby union at Northmead and later doubled up - union on Saturdays and league for the Bulls on Sundays - before choosing league over union for good.

“I enjoyed playing union, but I enjoyed playing league more,” he said. “The club was still finding its feet, but it was good being part of a new club. I was playing with guys I enjoyed playing with, and we were competitive.”

Kolc was actually graded at Parramatta in 1971, but sat on the bench for third grade that year. After his games with the Eels finished early in the afternoon, he would race out of whatever ground he was at and head for wherever the Bulls were due to play that day.

“I'd jump in the car and be gone,” Kolc said. “Sometimes, I didn't get there in time to play a full game, and if Parramatta were playing at Cronulla and the Bulls were at Mt Pritchard or somewhere like that it would be more like half a game. But I'd still try to make it.

“In 1972 I was graded in reserve grade at Parramatta and ended up playing first grade that year, so I didn't play for the Bulls again.”

Kolc played 99 first-grade games over a 10-year period for the Eels, including grand finals against Manly in 1976 and St George in '77. He was one of the smallest halfbacks around, and was very elusive, with a terrific dummy.

He played for Australia in the 1977 World Series and scored a try in the 13-12 win over Great Britain in the final, at the SCG.

After his retirement from playing, Kolc coached junior representative teams at Parramatta and North Sydney, and also briefly coached son Nathan's team at the Bulls in the mid-1980s. But it was in club administration at Parramatta Leagues that his post-playing career really took off.

“I reached the stage where I had to make a decision whether to coach full time or go deeper into the leagues club,” he said. “I worked at the leagues club for 33 years and progressed all the way up to being chief operating officer.”

Kolc finished up at the leagues club in 2010 and moved to Ballina with his wife, Susan, last year. He is now retired, but still looks as fit as ever thanks to a daily training program of isometric and calisthenic exercises.

John Kolc one of our Club Patrons said “The club was very important to him and that he was extremely proud of how it had flourished despite not having any leagues club backing. The club managed to become successful by developing other revenue streams,” he said. “It's a credit to the administration - they've done a great job.”





THE GREATEST 1971

"I'M TREMENDOUSLY PROUD TO BE A PART OF IT. I WOULDN'T HAVE MADE IT WITHOUT THE HELP I GOT FROM THIS CLUB. IT PUT ME ON THE ROAD TO BEING THE PLAYER I WAS AT PARRAMATTA. I PLAYED WITH SOME TERRIFIC PLAYERS HERE, AND THAT HELPED ME BUILD CONFIDENCE IN MY OWN GAME."

RON HILDITCH



There will never be another day like this in the history of the Hills Bulls. Even when this great club is celebrating its centenary, it will still rank as its finest moment. Not because the club hasn't flourished - it has - but the rugby league world has changed dramatically. What happened on grand final day, 1971, simply cannot happen again, and that's what makes the memory so special.

Apart from the occasional player who might temporarily slip through the cracks or be a late bloomer, the best young players now are identified by NRL clubs and drafted into the junior representative system in their early-to-mid teens. They don't remain at their junior clubs anywhere near long enough to end up playing open-age football.

But, back in the early 1970s, things were different. The best young players still mostly matured at their junior clubs before making their way into grade at premierships clubs, and that created some fantastic sides in the A-grade competition. In '71, Hills Bulls produced one of the best of them, a team that included future internationals John Kolc and Ron Hilditch plus a host of other terrific players, including Garry Thomas, Ray Millers, Steve Foster, Bruce Hilditch - Ron's older brother - and captain Bob "The Assassin" Collings.

Ron Hilditch, then just turned 19, wasn't even promoted to the side until the grand final, such was the depth of talent at the club. He had been playing in the C-grade (under 19) competition, and was an inspired choice by A-grade coach Frank Lamb, who believed he had to make a dramatic change at hooker if the Bulls were going to win the decider.

Ron Hilditch recalled that Lamb didn't waste words when he told him he was in for what was easily the biggest game of his career up until then.

"C grade got beat in the first week of the finals, so the season was over for me," Hilditch said. "But Frank Lamb came up to me and said: 'You're playing A grade.' He also told me to stay away from my mates leading up to the grand final. He reckoned

they were leading me in the wrong direction.

"I had two weeks to train with the team, which was a big help. Frank was a very good coach, very direct and clear with his instructions. My first training session, he announced to everyone that I was in the team and we just got on with it. Mick Shanahan has been the hooker for most of the season. I don't know if he was told about the decision before it was announced, but he took it pretty well. I don't know if I would've handled it as well as he did.

"No-one ever really explained to me why I was in, but I think it was because they weren't getting a decent share of scrum wins. I was just told I was in, which was a big deal for me. They congratulated me and then we just knuckled down and trained for the game."

Shanahan had injured his ankle towards the end of the regular season, and Spurway had taken his place. Shanahan was available for selection again by the time the major semi-final was played, but Lamb stuck with Spurway. Shanahan was still hoping to get his spot back for the grand final, but in the end both he and Spurway missed out to Hilditch. It wasn't really that big a shock, Shanahan recalled.

"I was mates with Ronnie, so I knew how good a footballer he was," Shanahan said. "I could see the writing on the wall. Frank told me Ronnie was going to be called up. I wasn't upset - my only regret was missing out on the team photo on grand final day. Frank lived not far from the ground at Wentworthville, and he took the team to his place before the game to dress up for the photo. I think 15 players went back, but there were another four of us on the reserves' bench who didn't. But we had a great season, and it was a great win on the day. A grade was a very strong competition then. Anyone who played at that level was a good footballer. It was a very tough competition. They took no prisoners - there was no place for the soft-hearted."

Bob Collings knew how good Hilditch was. He coached the C-grade side that year, as well as captaining A grade and serving on the club committee.

“We already had a couple of hookers to pick from, but Frank wanted Ronnie,” Collings said. “I had him in C grade, and that was a really tough, hard competition. He played in a hard pack there, and he went to another hard pack in A grade. Once he got to A grade, Ronnie killed them.”

Collings had enormous respect for Lamb, who prepared his team hard and expected them to play that way.

“I turned up at training the first time and Frank was standing there and the players were playing tackle - at training,” he said. “It was a tough comp, but we were well prepared for it. They were all just good players, who never took a backward step, and Frank was a great coach. He never roasted anyone. He would just tell you that you’re doing this wrong, and we need to make this adjustment. There was no swearing, or going off his head at half time. He just treated us like men, you know, he was good. You wanted to play for him, and he was very well respected in the community.

“In those days, we used to have a lot of moves. You don’t see those moves now - a lot of run-arounds and dummies. When they came off it was great, and that was how the game was played. Frank was very well liked - there was never a bad word said about him as a person or a coach.”

Bruce Hilditch recalled Lamb asking him whether he thought his little brother would be able to handle an A-grade grand final.

“I told him I thought Ron would go well,” Hilditch said. “Ron was a very good low tackler. He was like a lock playing hooker. He went on to have a terrific game in the grand final. I thought he was just about player of the match - probably only behind Johnny Kolc.

“Frank was a very good judge of a player, so the fact he’d identified Ron as being worthy of selection said a lot anyway. He was a great coach. He didn’t take any shit from anyone, but he was also very good tactically. We had a terrific team that year, with blokes like Kolc, and Garry Thomas in the centres. It was a very tight-knit group, too. The McAndrew brothers and Dennis Winnin and Ray Millers all lived near us at Northmead. We’d all hung around each other and played football together over the years, so we were all good mates.”

Frank Lamb is 82 now, but his memory is still pretty good. He recalled making the change at hooker for the good of the team.

“It was pretty hard on Mick,” Lamb said. “He’d played nearly all year. But it had to be done. You have to make decisions that give the team the best chance to win.”

The footballing brilliance of the young Kolc was showing up on rugby league radar all over town, so it was no surprise that other clubs were trying to snare him away from the Bulls as preparations for the season began to take shape. Had he gone, the Hills would still have been left with a very good A-grade side, but whether they would have remained good enough to win the competition is another question. Kolc gave the team that X factor - the ability to make something out of nothing.

The whisper was out that Kolc was switching clubs, and when Hoyle heard the word he immediately swung into action. Blokes like Hoyle don’t wait around for someone else to give the signal - that’s not how they get things done. He found Kolc and, not bothering with small talk, immediately got to the crux of the matter. It was 42 years ago now, but Kolc was struck by Hoyle’s determination to do whatever it took to get him to stay, and he has a clear recollection of their meeting.

“In ‘71 I was going to play for Hills again, but then I was approached by Villawood and they asked me to play A-grade there,” Kolc said. “They offered me money to play. I can’t remember how much, but it wasn’t bad money for those days. I was set to play

for Villawood, but then Keith Hoyle tracked me down at my girlfriend’s place one day. He must have gone to my place first and been told where I was. He’d gotten wind that I was going to switch clubs.

“He said: ‘I heard a rumour you’re going to play for Villawood’. I said: ‘That’s correct’. I told him they’d offered me so much money and I’d decided to go. He said: ‘Is it only about the money?’ I said: ‘Yeah, it’s only the money’. Then, he said: ‘If I offered you the same money, would you play for Hills?’ I told him I would, and he was true to his word. I didn’t know at the time where the money came from, but it probably came out of Keith’s own pocket.

“Villawood were a strong club and had recruited well. I thought they were a chance of winning the premiership. But I was happy to stay at the Bulls, and keep playing with the guys I knew. We had a pretty strong team too.” The retention of Kolc and emergence of Hilditch was about to bear fruit.

Hills was a team that competed strongly all season, and then won the major semi-final against Guildford to be the first team into the grand final. Guildford joined them for what would be their fourth clash of the year by beating Cabramatta in the final.

Guildford had lost all three of their games against the Bulls, but it didn’t affect their confidence. A newspaper report in the week leading up to the grand final carried the headline “‘We’ll fly in’, claim the Owls”, and the opening paragraph read: “‘Hoot, hoot’ was the cry in Guildford Leagues Club after last week’s final, when officials confidently predicted a win for the Owls over Hills District in the grand final at Ringrose Park on Sunday.”

Guildford’s publicity officer, Ray Campbell, was quoted in the article saying: “If we can produce last week’s form we will win the premiership. Hills may have beaten us three times, but the law of averages is on our side now.”



None of this bothered Bulls coach Lamb and his players. The club had hatched its own grand final plan and begun working on perfecting it before even finding out who the opposition would be. It involved promoting Ron Hilditch for his A-grade debut in a grand final, ahead of experienced hooking alternatives Graham Spurway and Mick Shanahan. Now, the decision looks like a no-brainer. After all, Hilditch went on to play more than 150 first-grade games for Parramatta as well as represent NSW and Australia. But, back then, he was untried in a very tough A-grade competition and was being brought in for the biggest game of the year.

To the outside, it had to be seen as a risk, and a newspaper headline which read “Hills gamble on rookie in grand final” was typical of the reaction. But the astute Lamb, who had coached at President’s Cup level at Parramatta, knew exactly what he was doing. He wasn’t happy that the Bulls hadn’t been winning a decent share of ball from the scrums, and believed Hilditch could not only remedy that but also add even more starch to an already-strong defence. And if the young bloke was going to be hit by nerves, he would have brother Bruce to help ease them, packing down alongside him in the front row.

Everyone in that Hills Bulls team for the grand final brought something important to the table. The newspapers previewing the game had something positive to say about all of them.

Fullback Peter Gloag was described as “cool and calculating, with the safest hands in the business”. Goalkicking winger Steve Foster was “the top individual scorer in the competition, with more than 200 points”. Centres Ron Horne “big player with a deceptive turn of speed” and Garry Thomas “predicted to have a big future”. The other winger, Peter McAndrew, was noted as “the leading try scorer for the season”, and so it went on. Five-eighth Dennis Winnin, “classy ball distributor who continually worries the opposition”. Halfback Kolc, “brilliant in the open and around the scrum-base”.

And don’t forget the forwards. Lock Ray Millers, “tireless in defence and with a string of hard-earned tries”. Second-rowers John “top ball distributor” Beesley and Bob “immense football brain” Collings. Props Bruce Hilditch, with his “devastating attacking play”, and Col McAndrew, “tough as they come”. And, of course, new boy Ron Hilditch, who was “bound to make his presence felt”.

The other members of the squad included Phil Evenden, Wayne Bartley, Graham Spurway, Mick Shanahan, Mick Mahlberg, Peter Ryan and Col Wilkinson, each of them ready to contribute if he got the call.

The grand final promised to be a thrilling, hard-fought encounter, and that was how it turned out. The result was in doubt until the very end. Newspaper reports described it as a cracking game, in which “the first 20 minutes produced a series of crash tackles in the traditional ‘softening up’ period”. Guildford winger Billy Conwell and second-rower Gary Smith scored the tries that gave the Owls a 6-2 half time lead,



but the problems their goalkicker, Gary Ross, was having on the day would prove critical in the end. The second half saw Guildford stretch their lead to 9-2 through a try from half John Murray, but again they couldn’t convert. Then, the comeback that would bring glory to the Bulls began. Kolc scored a brilliant individual try and Foster converted, cutting the deficit to 9-7. Guildford were trying to unsettle Ron Hilditch, but it didn’t work. “They were throwing punches at Ron from the second-row in the scrums,” Bruce Hilditch said. “One of the scrums broke up and one of their blokes grabbed me as another one shaped to throw a punch. But Col McAndrew stepped in and collected him. He was seeing stars after that. That was a turning point in the game for us.” A Foster penalty made it 9-9, and soon after Foster was again in the play when he came in from the wing to position himself for a successful field goal attempt.

The Bulls were now in front for the first time in the match, 10-9, and after pushing down field from the ensuing kickoff they went further ahead through a try to Winnin. But the conversion attempt from Foster was unsuccessful, leaving a window of opportunity open for Guildford. The defence from the Hills was suitably desperate, though, and they stood firm on their line to win. The Owls had scored three tries to two, but had missed all four shots at goal. Foster’s three goals from six attempts, and the field goal, proved vital.

The Bulls had won the coveted A-grade title for the first time, in only the club’s eighth year. It was a remarkable achievement, and to this day the men involved look back on it as one of their fondest memories.

“It was a great year, and a great team,” Collings said. “Ronnie Hilditch and Johnny Kolc went on to play for Australia, and there were many other terrific players in the side as well. The A-grade competition had a big following back then. It was one of the best years I ever had in football, and I love getting together with the boys to reminisce about it.”



Ron Hilditch said he had treated the game as a great opportunity to prove he was up to that level of football.

“I’d played rugby league for 12 or 13 years by then,” he said. “I was still relatively young, but when I got a chance like that I jumped at it. I wasn’t nervous - you can’t afford to be. I’m not a pushy person off the field, but that changed when I went out on to the field because I had confidence in my ability to play. I just concentrated on my defence that day, and trying not to lose any scrums against the head. Frank Lamb was terrific. He didn’t load me up with too many instructions, just enough to let me know exactly what I had to do and for me to be confident about doing it. One of the best memories I’ve got of the game was Johnny Kolc throwing a terrific dummy and scoring a great individual try. He was brilliant like that, and he would have been man of the match that day.”

It was the last game in Bulls colours for Kolc, who had doubled up from playing third grade for Parramatta earlier on the same day as A-grade games that season and was going to the Eels full time in 1972. He regards it as the highlight of his time at the club.

“I hadn’t seen Ronnie play before he came into the team for the grand final, so at first I thought it was a risk,” Kolc said. “But I was told he was a good ball-winner, and I respected Frank’s judgement as far as players were concerned, so I didn’t worry about it after that. Bruce was there to help him if needed it, so I knew he’d do the job. Guildford led us at halftime, but Frank spoke very clearly about the areas in which we needed to improve. They got a bit further ahead early in the second half, but once we scored our first try it gave us the belief we needed, and the impetus to go on with it. The team we had was strong in all areas. We had a good goal kicker, good go-forward and plenty of strike power. It was a terrific win in the end.”

The celebrations that began in the dressing-room continued at the Wentworthville Leagues Club next door and ended up back at Keith Hoyle’s house. That was fitting, since it was Hoyle who had gone out of his way to ensure Kolc stayed at the club. There may not have been any reason to celebrate had he not gone looking for him that afternoon.

It was also Hoyle who convinced Lamb to come to the Bulls, from Wentworthville, and it is best left to Lamb to paint the picture of what that season meant to so many people, just by saying what it meant to him.

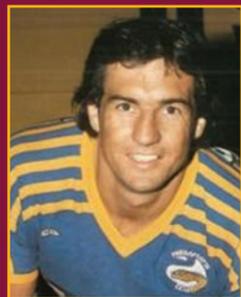
“We had a great bunch of blokes, and it was one of the highlights of my coaching career,” Lamb said. “Bobby Collings was a great skipper. Johnny Kolc was probably the only brilliant player in the side, but the rest were all very good players. Col McAndrew, John Beesley, Ray Millers, Bruce Hilditch and everyone else. They were all good, solid players, and all good people. I think we ended up beating Guildford in that grand final because our condition was better. I was a fitness fanatic myself, so I

had the boys pretty fit. They were determined to hold the other side out at the end.

“There wasn’t one bad apple in that side. They were a good bunch of fellows, and they hold a special place in my heart. Every one of them.”



RON HILDITCH



You would not find a more humble man in rugby league than Ron Hilditch. Known as “Hitman” for the ferocity of his defence on the field with Parramatta, he has always been nature’s gentleman off it. He is proud to be able to say that he learned his football with Hills Bulls and was a member of the team that played in the most famous grand final win in the club’s history. It was 1971, and both hooker Hilditch and halfback John Kolc emerged from that side to not only go on and play first-grade for the Eels, but also represent Australia. “I wouldn’t have reached the level that I did without the experience and knowledge I gained from playing with and being coached by the quality of people I was associated with at the Bulls,” Hilditch said.

It was the very astute coach, Frank Lamb, who promoted a young Hilditch to the A-grade side for that ’71 grand final against Guildford Owls. Hilditch had been learning his craft in the C-grade side, but Lamb saw the future greatness in him and thought he was ready for the biggest game of the year. He was right. Hilditch, with his elder brother, Bruce, playing alongside him at prop, had a terrific game in the 13-9 win, but as is typical with Hilditch he preferred to deflect the praise on to others. “We had blokes like Johnny Beesley, who played great, and Steve Foster, who was great as well, and my brother, who had a terrific game,” Hilditch said. “And Johnny Kolc had a blinder. He pretty much won it for us in the end.”

Hilditch recalled ending up at the Bulls after his first junior club, Parramatta City, folded. “I was nine or 10 when that happened,” he said. “I played a year of rugby union after that, and I was going to keep going with union, but my brother was playing at the Hills and they were starting some younger grades at the club. It was suggested that I should have a go there, so I did. We were the worst team to start with, but we stuck together and started to improve. We finally made the semis when we were playing C grade in 1971, and after we lost the minor semi Frank Lamb came up to me and said I was going to play A grade. My first game of A grade was in the grand final – and we won. You can’t get a better start to an A-grade career than that.”

Bob Collings was the captain of that A-grade side, and was also coach of the C-grade side. Hilditch reserved special mention for him. “It was a brutal game in those days, and Bobby was one of the toughest players,” Hilditch said. “His commitment to the club was tremendous. That year, he was playing, coaching, and working in an official role for the club as well. Plus, he had a fulltime job. But that’s what people did – and you still get people doing that today. If you don’t have those sort of people, you don’t have a club. It’s amazing, really, that there are enough of those sort of people who are willing to do so much to help.” Hilditch also has plenty of time for coach Lamb. “I think Frank could have done anything as a coach in grade football,” Hilditch said. “He had the tunnel vision you’ve got to have as a coach. He had his way of doing it and if you didn’t go along with that, then you weren’t going to be there, and that’s how it had to be. Jack Gibson was the same at Parramatta. It was his way or the highway, and I don’t think a successful coach can be any other way.”

Hilditch played two more years of A grade, doubling up as a President’s Cup player for Parramatta in 1973, before joining the Eels fulltime. He started as a hooker but ended making his reputation as a prop. Hilditch played 157 first-grade games from 1975-82, and after being a member of the losing grand final team against Manly in 1976 he experienced the joy of sharing in Parramatta’s first grand final win – against Newtown, in 1981. He played three Tests, all against France – one in 1978 and the other two in ’81. His two games for NSW were also in ’81, including an appearance

in the only State of Origin match played that year. Injuries forced Hilditch to miss Parramatta’s grand final win in 1982 and finally forced him to give playing away for good during the 1983 season. Hilditch came out of retirement several years later to captain-coach Mudgee, and then graduated to the big-time by coaching Illawarra. He was appointed Parramatta coach in 1994, and remained in the job until the end of the 1996 season. Unfortunately, his results with the Eels weren’t good. “I don’t like talking about that one,” Hilditch said with a smile. But the Hitman doesn’t make any excuses. He doesn’t have to, because he has always done his best – and usually with tremendous results. That’s why he is so well respected in the game.





THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT 1972 - 1979

"I MADE A LOT OF GOOD FRIENDS THERE, AND I'M PROUD TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE CLUB. IT'S A FIRST-CLASS ORGANISATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG MEN TO PLAY FOOTBALL AT. I'VE GOT A LOT OF TIME FOR A LOT OF GOOD PEOPLE I MET THERE."

BARRY CLAPHAM



The 1970s was a period of enormous growth for the Hills District - and the Hills Bulls club. Young families identified the area as the perfect place to settle, and descended on it in droves. Previously, the Bulls had struggled to find children to fill their junior teams, but in the early 1970s everything changed.

“There was a population explosion,” said club stalwart Mick Gremmo. “And the juniors really kicked on. Kids just wanted to play football. Before that, I was knocking on doors looking for kids to play, but in the ‘70s we were inundated with players. The baby boomers and their kids were moving in, and everything changed. It was incredible, the effect it had on the area. You wouldn’t believe the number of houses that were built in the Hills District during that period.”

But, while the juniors were flourishing, the A grade, after making the grand final again in 1972, went into a period of decline, largely because of the loss over a short period of time of a host of star players. Some of those - John Kolc, Ron Hilditch and Garry Thomas - were graded by Parramatta and went on to become stars there. The Bulls were naturally delighted to see players the club had developed hit the big-time, but at the same time the club felt it wasn’t right that the Eels were picking off players the Bulls had developed without any recompense to the junior club. Gremmo tried to address the issue with the legendary figure from the Parramatta club, Jack Argent.

“After Johnny Kolc and the other boys had been graded, I went and saw Jack Argent,” Gremmo recalled. “I was club treasurer at the time. Basically, my idea was that if they wanted to sign more of our players in the future we didn’t mind, but that they should be giving our club something in return. Jack asked what I meant, and I said: ‘Well, if they play five first-grade games you’ve got to give us some money. And if they play 10 games, we want some money for that. If they play a full season, we want some money for that. If they play rep football, we want some money for that.’ He said: ‘Oh yeah, what brings this on.’ So I said: ‘We spend all this money on getting the footballers to where they are, and you’re taking our best players and we’re unable to replace them.’ He said: ‘Have you got another idea that doesn’t involve money?’ I said: ‘Yep, but it



still involves a bit of money. When your players are finished, too old to play grade, send them back to us, and you can pay them to play one last year at the Bulls. You’ll still be able to call on them if you’re short, and we’ll make them captain-coach or something like that and they can teach our guys the right way to go about things.’

“I told Jack that if he didn’t assist junior clubs, it would be difficult to build up an A-grade side and the junior league would suffer. If you take the best players from the junior clubs and give nothing in return, then it’s a waste of time trying to put an A-grade side on the field. They rang the police and threw me out of the club. True story.

They didn’t like my idea. The way things were going, with all of the money that was coming into the game, we weren’t just losing players to Parra. Clubs like Wenty were buying players off us as well. It was just a conversation, but it got a bit heated.

After the historic win by the A-grade side in the 1971 grand final, the club again made the grand final at that level in ‘72. Kolc and Thomas had gone to the Eels by then, but Ron Hilditch was still at the Bulls. “We got beaten by Cabramatta, so that was disappointing,” Hilditch said. “I played another year at the Bulls in ‘73, and I was playing President’s Cup for Parramatta at the same time. President’s Cup was on

Saturday and A grade on Sunday, so I didn't have to rush from one game to the other. I was at Parra fulltime from '73." Frank Lamb, the great coach who steered that 1971 side to success, left the Bulls at the end of the 1972 season. "I really enjoyed my time at the Bulls, but four years is enough for any coach at the one club," he said.

In 1973, in the absence of any financial backing from the Parramatta District club, the Bulls accelerated a development program to ensure successful coaching for all the players from under 7s to seniors. The youngest team in the club, the under 6s, played in the Green Valley competition that year and enjoyed immediate success. That team of boys, in the main born in 1967, was coached by John Wood. Their performances that year, and their attitude and performances in subsequent years, gave a clear indication of their great potential for achieving success in both sport and life at the highest level.

From 1974 until 1981, players came and went in this age group, with the core remaining. During this period, the team played in eight successive grand finals in the



Parramatta District, winning six. They were undefeated for five of those premierships and won the State Coca-Cola knockout three times and runners-up twice. In 1981, seven players from that team were selected in the Parramatta Harold Matthews Cup team which won the competition.

Phil O'Brien and Barry Clapham got involved with the club in the early 1970s, and would go on to become life members. In 1971, the year that saw the club win the A-grade premiership for the first time, Barry Clapham approached club secretary Keith Hoyle about the number of boys in the area that were gravitating towards soccer. The opportunity was knocking to attract these juniors to rugby league, and the appointment of Clapham to the position of Junior Secretary was made to ensure a concentrated effort on implementing a structure for junior recruitment. Phil O'Brien had a son, Patrick, who wanted to play as well.

At the beginning of 1972, prominent photos of Billy Smith and John Sattler emblazoned with the Hills Rugby League Registration Day details adorned every shop from



Castle Hill to Northmead. Registration tables manned by Clapham, O'Brien, Bob Rose and others at Jasper Oval initially failed to meet expectations, but late in the afternoon, boys started arriving from all directions. The registration day had gone from being tranquil to a mad rush because of the numbers that suddenly arrived. The registration was put off until the following week and organised to cope better with the huge interest. While many mothers were not convinced that their sons should be playing league, and instead should stick to soccer, league won out.

As Junior Secretary and Assistant Junior Secretary, Clapham and O'Brien worked cohesively in dramatically increasing the number of the club's junior teams to eight. To maintain recruitment strategies Hills had to provide for the five and six-year-olds before they formed an affinity with soccer. As Parramatta District only catered for under 7s, the young Bulls participated in the Green Valley Sports Association competition. The association was considered to be a rebel competition but had 13 affiliated clubs which competed on Sunday mornings. Although openly welcomed by the Green Valley club secretary, some of the fellow competitions objected to the presence of the "silvertails" from the Hills Shire. A culture of some parents from opposition teams cheering on their kids from the sidelines whilst drinking long necks of beer at 9am on Sundays was a shock to the Bulls.

Barry Clapham embraced the idea of promoting the club, and he and his wife, Lorraine, along with Phil O'Brien and Bob Rose, used the "Gestetner" printer at Jasper Road Primary School to produce our first Hills Bulletin newsletter on May 15, 1972. The first edition created a template for the detailing of club activities and team reports, as well as community events, and included an editorial which read, in part: "When we consider the growth of not only the players, but also the big and increasing number of followers, and the enthusiastic coaches managers, committee and helpers, it is for sure this club will continue to grow, achieve many distinctions and provide a first-class sporting environment for the young boys and young men of the Hills District." The Bulls sure kept their promise.



Apart from rundowns on some of the previous week's games, a detailed warning about the value of mouthguards for kids playing footy, and advertisements for a fireworks display at Jasper Oval on cracker night and the club ball at the Harvey Lowe Pavilion, Castle Hill Showground, the first Hills Bulletin also provided a free tip on child psychology. Under the heading of THE IMPORTANCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT, it read: "Many parents unfortunately seem to think that as their children grow older, they do not need support and encouragement as when they were younger. Quite the contrary, children nearing adolescence face many more problems, both physical and emotional, than in earlier years. It is then they look towards parental support more than ever, though they may not outwardly display their feelings. Even in sport, as applied in this instance, a child, particularly a boy, needs all the support and encouragement from his parents and friends to enable him to obtain the greatest satisfaction of his efforts whilst on the playing field. Come on the mums and dads that are not supporting their children, come along to the game, get a thrill from your boys' efforts and give him a pat on the back. Let's see a lot of new faces at the game."

Sage advice that is just as good now as it was then, and which would probably cost you hundreds of dollars to get in a consultation from a qualified psychologist. Yet there it was in the Hills Bulletin for free!

The chook raffle, that tried and true method of fundraising that junior clubs traditionally favoured, had been a staple of the Bulls' financial diet from the start, but the club needed to find ways of raising greater amounts of money. Committeeman Bob Rose, whose two sons played at the club, was a go-getter who secured a contract to deliver telephone books for Telecom throughout the Hills Community, The deal, for 20,000 phone books to be delivered at 20c apiece, earned the club \$4000 in much-needed funds. That was a big harvest in those days, and there were no overheads for the club because people connected to it delivered the phone books in their own cars and didn't ask for petrol money.

The kids began to make their mark at the Hills in the early '70s. There had been a breakaway from the club in 1970, when some members left to form the Winston Hills junior club, but that was a sign of how big and busy the Hills district was getting as much as anything else. It wasn't going to stop the Bulls from powering into the future. Before 1973, the youngest age group in which the club had won a premiership was the under 17s, but that year they took the titles in the under 9s third division and under 11s fourth division. In 1974, the Bulls won the under 14s third division. Surprisingly, there were no premierships at all for the Bulls in 1975, but the club nailed another three in the younger age divisions in '76. The club was on a roll, and it wasn't about to stop. The Bulls kept winning titles in the younger age groups throughout the '70s. It was in the older age groups and the open divisions that the Bulls weren't having any premiership success to go with the 1971 win of the A-grade side, and to make matters worse the senior and junior sections of the club began to drift apart. The juniors started playing home games at the new Crestwood Reserve in 1976, while the seniors kept playing at Jasper Oval. Barry Rudd, who joined the Bulls as a player in 1974 and would go on to become one of the most respected and



influential figures at the club, remembered the growing divide this way: “After the club won the A-grade premiership in ‘71 and made the grand final again the following year, a lot of those players either retired, or dropped back to reserve grade, or moved on to bigger things or other interests. We just had a core of people left who were playing reserve grade. At the same time, the juniors were strong. They had been developed by Barry Clapham and Phil O’Brien, who were juniors oriented. The club was split in half. It was like two clubs under one banner. The A-grade and reserve sides were a separate entity. There was no C-grade, no under 17s, because we didn’t have the players. They weren’t progressing to those age groups, and they weren’t being recruited from outside. There was a huge void between the juniors and the seniors. After reserve grade, the next team down was the under 15s. I got involved as secretary then, and we started hunting around for players. But it was a struggle - not just to find players, but good coaches as well. I took over the coaching of the D-grade side, and we got some more good players in there.”



Typical of these young players was Jeff Morrison, who was a diminutive halfback in the formative years, playing from under 6s to A grade. Morrison looked back fondly at a 20-year involvement as a player, trainer and committee member, recalling the camaraderie, the opportunities, the role models, the aspirations and the local heroes. “I’m confident I share the same thoughts of my teammates throughout all those years,” Morrison said. “As time has passed, my appreciation has heightened in adulthood. Growing up without a father figure, the club provided me and lots of boys and young men with positive role models and deep friendships. My Bulls pride is fuelled by the opportunity to repay mentoring that I received at the club. To be a role model is an amazing privilege.”

The passion of the maturing footballers was great to see. It was about Jasper Oval, laced up guernseys, the club identities, the Orange Blossom parade, presentation days, a first drink at a hotel, an end of season trip away, a 21st, a wedding, a birth. Your memories, your mates, your club.



Stan Cobcroft, who, like Rudd, was to become a life member of the Bulls, was another who worked hard to prevent the split in the club. The booklet printed to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the club, in 1988, said the late Cobcroft, who had served as president in the mid-70s, “remained steadfast that unity prevail and the members strive to represent a body and as one direction”. It went on to describe Cobcroft as “truly a respected ambassador for the club and the game of rugby league, a man that had a genuine love of the game and for those who participated in it. A gentle man that had a kind word for everybody and a keen interest in all the club’s efforts. It was Stan’s effort that got the unity of the club together as we know it today. As head of the Hills club Stan had a mutual respect for the ‘littlies’ and seniors, and in honour of the contribution he made to the club and rugby league in his life the under 7s knockout was named after him”.

The respect for the outstanding contributions made by Stan Cobcroft were acknowledged with the establishment of the Stan Cobcroft Shield which kicked off in 1980. The Bulls won it in that first year.

Some of the great players from those early Bulls premierships-winning teams of the 1960s, and the ‘71 A-grade side, played well into the 1970s. Bob “The Assassin” Collings was one, and Bruce Hilditch was another. Hilditch, the elder brother of Ron, played from 1964 to ‘78. Hilditch remembers his 15-year playing career with great fondness. He even hitch-hiked from the Puckapunyal army base in central Victoria back to Sydney a few times in 1969-70 to see friends and play the odd game. “I probably hitch-hiked once a month,” Hilditch said. “I did love it at the Bulls. I grew up with the blokes I was playing with, so the club was like a family to me. I did actually leave the club for a year in 1976. Wentworthville entered the Illawarra comp, and I tried that for something different, but I came back in ‘77. I coached the reserve-grade side that year, and played mainly A grade and a few reserve games. I had one more year in ‘78, and then I gave it away. I was still only 30 when I retired, but it had taken a toll on me physically. I had a bung ankle, knee and shoulder at the end. I stayed involved with

the club for a few years after that, doing the raffles and stuff, but after that we moved out of the area. It was a great time of my life, playing for the Bulls.”

Life members Collings, who put into the club twofold of what he got out of it, coached both junior and senior teams, played, and was also club secretary for a time. Life Member Collings held the club together in times of crisis and as a player sometimes enjoyed a swig of sherry to settle pre-match nerves or as a substitute for his halftime orange. Collings co-ordinated the annual, pre-season cricket game between senior Bulls players and the Parramatta first-grade team that was a tradition in the 1970s. The Bulls didn’t have a very good record in those clashes. Unfortunately for the Hills club, in its 10-year existence we only won the trophy once and that was the day Bruce Hilditch did the scoring. Players of the calibre of Geoff Gerard and Ed Sulkowicz used to belt us all over the paddock, and the wicket-keeping of John McMartin was very astute, although some of their fielding at times was a little unorthodox. Bob “The Bear O’Reilly stopped a full-blooded six at silly mid-on-with his cheekbone.”

Mick Shanahan has the distinction of being one of our longest-serving members. He served the club tirelessly, contributing as a player, committee member and manager. Mick represented at President’s Cup level and was respected as a no-nonsense, tough hooker-forward who played over 200 games for the club and managed teams for at least that many again. Life member Shanahan, who played his last game for the Bulls in the mid-1970s, says he is delighted to have been so closely involved with such a fine club.

“After I stopped playing I continued as a team manager and on committees,” Shanahan said. “Most of the time it was good fun. It was just the camaraderie, the enjoyment you have when you’re with your mates. It got tough in the ‘70s, because we were losing players to clubs like Wenty and Cabramatta, who had leagues clubs behind them. But I kept whacking away on the field, and even in the years after I retired I was called out to play a game or two when they were short. They would just

throw you some gear and you’d be on. I’m really glad the club has grown into such a big thing now, and I think it’s great when I see players who come from the Bulls playing in the NRL.”

During the early 1970s, visiting teams feared playing the Bulls at the Hills home ground, Jasper Oval, which was an amphitheatre. The kids on Saturdays enjoyed their sport, but come Sunday the senior fixtures were tribal. The three games, starting with C grade at noon, would climax in intensity as the afternoon grew old.

Life member Allan Cook recalls his first ever visit to Jasper Oval. “We had just moved into our new home adjacent to Jasper Oval in 1973 and were enjoying a family barbecue one Sunday afternoon when I heard the roars and cheering coming from the ground,” he said. “I wandered up to see what all the noise was about and witnessed my first A-grade match. A friendly spectator advised me that the match was between the team in all black, the Hills Bulls, and Wenty Magpies. The intensity and controlled aggression plus the high standard of play absolutely amazed me. Players from both sides hammered each other and it was obvious there was some history between the two rivals. I don’t remember who won the game, but the spirit, commitment and courage of the Bulls deeply impressed me. From that day I became a lifelong fan.”

The Bulls were always looking for an opportunity, and they saw a great one before the 1974 season kicked off. Bob Moses, who played in two premierships-winning sides at South Sydney before joining Manly and finishing up there at the end of 1973, was living just off Seven Hills Rd at Baulkham Hills. Moses already had two sons - James and Matt - playing for the Bulls - so Mick Gremmo went to work on Bob to captain-coach the A-grade side. “I was lucky enough to get him to do the job, after many beers and meals at my home and various clubs,” Gremmo recalled. “He invited me down to two-up at Kevin Longbottom’s place at Redfern once. We walked in - there was a bouncer on the door and someone else watching for the police - and I was amazed at the way Bobby was so respected by all the people playing two-up. I stood



there in awe at the adulation he received from 70-odd men who stopped playing and came up to say g'day to him. He hadn't played for Souths for several years by then. At one of our home games in 1975, I noticed two men in suits watching the game, and Bobby came up to me later and said he wanted to have a beer with me in private. At the local club that night he told me he was embarrassed, because he had promised me he would coach a third year but had been offered a job at Penrith. One of the suits was (Penrith secretary) Merv Cartwright. I said 'don't be silly, it's the chance of a lifetime, go for it'. He said 'but I shook your hand'. Bobby was a great bloke to have at the club." Moses coached the Penrith reserve-grade side into the semi-finals in 1976.

The arrival of Moses to coach in 1974 was one of the main reasons Barry Rudd joined our club. "One of the guys at Wenty said Bobby Moses was going to coach at the Bulls," Rudd recalled. "I'd moved into the Hills area with my parents, and one of my good friends at Wenty didn't think I was getting a fair go there anyway, so I joined the Bulls. It was a great move. I was playing second-row with Bobby Collings. I was playing alongside all of these good players, and you become a good player as a result. It was a great experience. I played A grade and A reserve in 1974, and I finished the season in reserve grade. Reserve grade didn't make the finals, but we got as far as the final in A grade. There was a changing of the guard after that. The last of the really good players were finishing up, or moving on. There was a change in personnel, but the new personnel hadn't earned their stripes, so we had to go through a rebuilding phase."

Right: 1972 A grade Grand Final. Hills players, Les Grant, Peter McAndrew, Bob Collings and referee Ernie Bull watch on as Cabra's Garry Doyle crashes over next to posts to level scores 9-all late in the game. Cabra went on to win the Grand Final 22-9 in extra time.



Gremmo convinced another former first-grader, ex-Parramatta star Ivor Lingard, to coach the A-grade side in 1976. The juniors kept developing at a rapid rate, and 1977 was a stellar season for the club. It won premierships in the under 7s first division, the under 8s first and second division, the under 10s first division and the under 14s third division, which provided the backbone of the first club championship pennant for the Bulls. The under 14s side was coached by John Smale, the sales manager of the club's sponsor, Family Boats Pty Ltd. That year also saw the Bulls win the first Incentive Shield Trophy, which the club won again in '78 and '79. The Bulls won four more premierships in 1978, and another three in 1979.

The Hills youngsters continued to raise the club's profile. We had a very high representation in the community event, the annual Orange Blossom festival parade, which was held through the streets of Baulkham Hills and Castle Hill in September. The boys would march behind a larger than life bull borrowed from the car yard on Parramatta Road at Lidcombe. On other occasions one would be crafted by our members. It was always an attention-grabber.

Barry Clapham had become aware of new sporting fields to be constructed in the housing development area of Crestwood. With Jasper Oval not expected to be able to accommodate the increasing volume of teams, a submission was made to Baulkham Hills Shire Council.

Shire President Bernie Mullane summoned all sporting club representatives that had made application for the playing fields and advised that the Bulls were successful in acquiring the hallowed turf of Crestwood Oval. It was 1974, two years before the juniors would transfer there.

Off the field the club was surviving on the traditional formula of canteen sales, chook raffles and the support of local small businesses. One of the small business owners was Col Sutton, was the proprietor of the fruit shop at Baulkham Hills and would provide oranges and other produce when needed, along with funds and

assistance. Col was a councillor with Baulkham Hills Shire Council and became the Club Patron. The Col Sutton Clubman of the Year award was initiated in 1974 and bestowed on a player who displayed the virtues of dedication, willingness to assist, good behaviour and respect to both rugby league and the Club.

The son of then President Len Quinn - Michael Quinn - was one of the first juniors from 1965 to progress to the senior playing ranks, and was the first recipient of the award. In his teenage years, Michael was a true ambassador for the club.

The club was always looking for alternative revenue streams and other ways of promoting the growth of the Bulls. During the early 1970s, the Lavalla Bowling Club on Windsor Rd at Northmead was being used for the Bulls committee's annual general meetings, and because the bowling club was having trouble attracting members there was an informal proposition made that the bowling club and the Bulls should merge. There is no record of how seriously this suggestion was explored, but a merger never happened and the bowling club was eventually closed down and the site sold. What would eventually become the greatest money spinner for the Bulls - the Hills Touch Football Association - began in the summer of 1978/79. It was co-ordinated by Rudd. "A few of us used to go down to the park and play touch," he said. "And we'd warm up before training by playing touch. The amount of people who were keen to play just kept growing, so I co-ordinated it into a competition." What began with 16 teams playing across two divisions on Sunday mornings at Jasper Oval would grow into a giant in the 1980s, but more on that later.

The Bulls won 19 premierships in the 1970s, building handsomely on the four they won as a fledgling club in the 1960s. There would be hurdles ahead in the 1980s and beyond, but there would also be great times - and even greater success.



CLAPHAM & O'BRIEN

Barry Clapham was one of the driving forces behind the massive growth in junior football at the Hills Bulls in the 1970s. He was assisted in that push by Phil O'Brien, and both men were eventually rewarded for their efforts with life membership of the club.

Clapham said his involvement began when his son, John, wanted to play rugby league. "I took him down to the Hills," Clapham said. "It was 1971, and they had a very good A-grade side which went on to win the competition that year. They also had good reserve grade and C-grade sides. But the only sides they had apart from that were an under eights, half of an under nines, and Mick Gremmo had an under 13s side he'd been coaching for a couple of years. What used to happen was that the under eights would play, and then half of them would fill in for the under nines.

"I approached Keith Hoyle, who was a prominent figure at the club, and asked how they could only have a couple of junior teams when the local soccer clubs were overflowing with players. Keith said to me: 'How about you become the junior secretary and look after the Juniors?' So I did. After the '71 season was over, we put together a big promotional program for the '72 season. We devised a poster that included a picture of Billy Smith tackling John Sattler. We printed them up, 18-inch square, and put them in shop windows all the way from Castle Hill to Northmead. We had the rego details on them, and the heading was: 'PLAY RUGBY LEAGUE WITH THE HILLS.'"

It was around that time that O'Brien became involved. "He had a son who wanted to play rugby league as well," Clapham said. "He came up to see me about that, and we discussed the situation and he said: 'I'll get involved with you.' We had the registration day on a Wednesday, and three or four people had gotten involved with me by then. It was at the Jasper Road ground, but it got to about five o'clock and hardly anyone had turned up. Then, all of a sudden, they started arriving in droves, and we weren't ready for such an avalanche. We had to put the registration off for a week and come back and do it properly. We ended up fielding eight teams, with coaches and managers, in 1972. In those days, the senior club sponsored the juniors, and Keith Hoyle made a financial contribution. Phil O'Brien was assistant junior secretary, working closely with me."

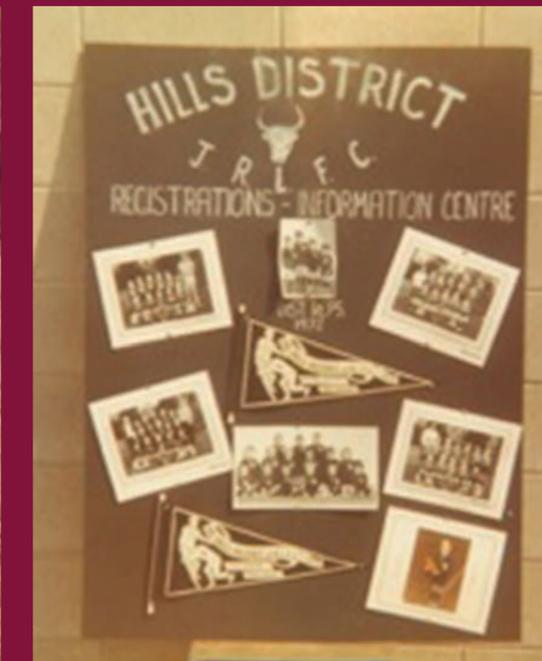
The kids won their first premierships in 1973, in the under nines third division and under 11s fourth division. And the titles kept coming regularly through the '70s. "At the end of my time at the club, in 1979, we had 23 junior teams on the field," Clapham said.

Clapham was big on promotion during his time at the club. He was instrumental in getting the club involved in the annual Orange Blossom Festival parade at Castle Hill, and was also behind the introduction of the club's weekly Hills Bulletin. "I'm a great believer in promotion, even if you're already doing well," he said. "You've got to keep promoting if you want to stay on top. I knew of a car yard that had a massive black bull, and we borrowed that to use as a feature when the kids paraded in the festival. I started the Bulletin. People used to ask: 'Why don't we put out a newsletter?' It was going to be a fair bit of work, but we did it, and Bob Rose helped by organising the use of a printer at Jasper Road Primary School. My wife, Lorraine, also became heavily involved in the club. She worked in the canteen, and was part of a strong junior ladies committee that helped with the involvement in the Orange Blossom parade."



Above: U'12 Grand Finalists 1976. Coach Barry Clapham , Manager Harry Prowse.

During the early stages of his involvement with the Bulls, Clapham arranged for the club to field an under sixes team in the Green Valley competition, as the Parramatta junior league didn't have a competition for players so young at the time. "We were worried that too many of the under sixes were starting off playing soccer, because that was the only way they could go," he said. "Green Valley had a comp with 13 suburbs involved, and which included under sixes, so we got a team in there for a while." Clapham also successfully lobbied the then Baulkham Hills Shire president, Bernie Mullane, for use of the new Crestwood Reserve, for its two fields, and the juniors began playing there in 1976.



Above: Registration Day 1973.

Clapham and O'Brien are proud of the Bulls, and their involvement there. "It's a first-class club for the young people of the district to grow up with playing rugby league," Clapham said. "I get a lot of satisfaction out of having seen it grow, and from my own achievement in helping that happen."



Above: Castle Hill Showground in the 1960's.





Above: 1979 Hills District Representative Players.





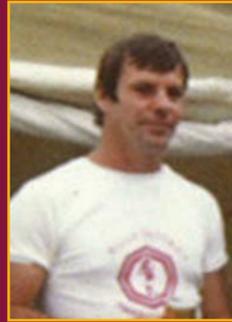
Four Hills Junior League Players Make Representative Teams



The Hills District Junior Rugby League Club has made giant steps forward this season and one accomplishment is having four players selected in representative teams.
John Clapham (Five-Eighth) and Peter Easton (Front Row Forward) have so far played three games for Parramatta District "M" Grade (Under 8) for two wins and a draw.
Michael Hindmarsh (Half-Back) and Wayne Swan (Five-Eighth) are selected in the strong Green Valley District "O" Grade (Under 6) side and have their games on Sunday.
The boys pictured above are from left to right: John Clapham, Peter Easton, Michael Hindmarsh and Wayne Swan.



BOB MOSES



Bob Moses, the former South Sydney and Manly star who was talked into a last hurrah with the Hills Bulls after his first-grade career ended, has cherished memories of his two years at the club in 1974-75.

“It was a very, very friendly club, a real family club,” Moses said. “They were all great people there, and we had a bit of fun together.”

Moses, a centre turned back-rower who played in the premierships-winning Rabbitohs sides of 1967 and '68 alongside greats of the game like John Sattler, Bob McCarthy, Elwyn Walters, John O'Neill and Eric Simms, is 72.

After his first-grade career ended, Moses lived at Baulkham Hills for more than a decade, and then St Marys, where he worked as a cellarman in a hotel. Last year he moved to the quiet, northern NSW country town of Bonalbo, inland from the Gold Coast, where he lives in retirement.

It has been almost 40 years since Bulls stalwart Mick Gremmo talked him into joining the Bulls as player-coach of the A-grade side, but Moses remembers it well.

“Mick became a good mate of mine,” Moses recalled. “I had a lot of good mates at the

Bulls. I knew a couple of the players before I went there - Bruce Hilditch was one - but most of the people were new to me.

“Mick was new to me, and he was a very persuasive fellow. He kept working on me to take over the A-grade side there, taking me out for a few beers and the odd meal. We used to enjoy a good beer at the Bull and Bush Hotel - it was just up from where I lived.

“Mick talked me into joining the club in the end - he was a bit too clever for me.”

Moses was 34 at the time. He said he concentrated on coaching the Bulls, and only played a few games while he was there. It wasn't unusual for big-name players to be targeted with cheap shots by the opposition in such circumstances, but Moses said that didn't happen to him.

“It was hard, but fair,” he said. “If there was any targeting of me, it was all in fun. They didn't take any liberties with me. I played several games in '74, and I think I played a couple in '75 as well.

“I'd bought a house at Baulkham Hills in 1972, and I had two boys - James and Matt - playing for the Bulls, so I already had a link with the club. I really liked the area, and I was glad I got involved more closely with the club.”

Moses took the A-grade side to the preliminary final in 1974. During his second year at the Bulls he was headhunted by the Penrith club, and he left the Bulls at the end of 1975 to join the Panthers, where he coached the reserve-grade team to the semi-finals in '76.

“Merv Cartwright got me to go to Penrith,” Moses said. “It was a good club - all the clubs I was at were good clubs. I only coached for a few more years. I concentrated on

work after that. I kept working for a long time and now I'm enjoying a bit of quiet time up here at Bonalbo.

“It's a small town, about a two-and-a-half-hour drive from the Gold Coast. There are only about five or six hundred people here. It's nice and quiet.”

Moses says he remains friends with his old Souths teammates, and makes the trip back to Sydney for reunions.

“All of them are my best mates,” he said. “They keep me informed when there's a get-together coming up. We won two premierships together at Souths, and I've got great memories of those times.”



BOB COLLINGS

Bob Collings was a hard man in what is widely regarded as the toughest era in rugby league. But he was also a hell of a good footballer.

Someone had to be the enforcer in those days or you weren't going to win, no matter how good the rest of your side was, and Collings accepted that role. He played 10 seasons for the Bulls, from 1969-78, and was captain of the famous, premiership-winning A-grade side of 1971.

They called him "The Assassin", something Collings seems a little sheepish about these days.

"They reckoned it was like that," he said. "But I thought I was just hard, that was the way I played. I didn't go backwards - none of us did. I was involved in a fair few one-on-one stinks, a lot of heat-of-the-moment stuff, but we would all come off at the end and have a drink together.

"It was a tough game, but once the referee blew fulltime, that was it. We'd all done our job, and when we came off it was all forgotten, and we'd often have a barbecue with the other team. That's how it was back then, in footy."

Collings sometimes had his work cut out not only keeping the opposition players in line, but his own players as well.

"Yeah," he laughed. "I used to have a go at Bruce Hilditch a bit. He used to snap when you didn't want him to snap, and our coach, Frank Lamb, would tell me: 'If he doesn't shut up, send him off the field'. Bruce was good, he was hard. He was just fired up to win - we all were.

"If I copped one from an opposition player, I would give it back. I wasn't waiting for the next time. I remember getting sent off once against Wenty, in about 1976. I was angry about something, and I walked straight into their pack and coat-hangered someone.

"The game had pulled up. I don't know why I did it - I just snapped. I got two weeks for that."

Sometimes, players are just meant to come to the Bulls. Collings was living at Northmead and playing for Parramatta City when that club folded in 1968. The next year, he was at the Bulls, and was pretty soon coaching and serving on the committee, as well as playing. That's a real club man.

"In 1970 I was captain of A grade, coaching C grade, and I was coaching the under 7s as well, but I didn't get to see the kids play because I had a brick truck and I had to work Saturdays," Collings said.

Like everyone who played in the club's first A-grade side to win a grand final, in '71, Collings has fond memories of the season, and the day.

"It was a great year," he said. "We had Johnny Kolc, and then Ronnie Hilditch came in for the grand final - two players who went on to represent Australia. And there were many other great players in the side.

"The A grade had a big following in those days. There were about 6000 people at the grand final. It was at Wenty, against Guildford, and during the week the local papers

were saying Guildford were going to beat us. It was going to be 'hoot with the Owls'.

"But we had a very good team, and a great coach in Frank Lamb, and we went out and won. It was one of the best and most enjoyable years I ever had in football, and it's always a special feeling when I meet up with the boys from that team. The conversation always goes back to the Hills Bulls."

*Right: In the background, Bob "The Assassin" Collings in action against the Guilford Owls.
Below: Bob Collings (left hand side) coaching the 1971 Hills Bulls C grade.*









AGONY AND ECSTASY 1980 - 1987

"IT'S THAT SENSE OF COMMUNITY. IF YOU DON'T HAVE INTEGRITY, YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUB, IF YOU DON'T HAVE VALUES, YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUB, AND IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUB. HILLS BULLS HAVE GOT ALL THREE OF THOSE."

BARRY RUDD

Rugby league reflects life. There are ups and downs, good times and bad times, incredible highs and devastating lows. What happened at the Hills Bulls in the 1980s covered the entire spectrum of emotions. There were many more premierships won as the club built on the overall success of the 1970s, but a struggle to find enough quality A-grade players meant the club was unable to field teams at that particular level in 1982. The following year, A grade got back up and running, but the team did not win a game. The lowest point came when they lost 82-0 to arch-rivals Wentworthville at Jasper Oval. Meanwhile, the touch football competition that had kicked off in the late 1970s flourished. The increasing funds earned from that helped make up for the fact the Bulls weren't backed by a licensed club, unlike Wenty and the other top clubs in the Parramatta district competition. The Bulls lost Jasper Road as one of their home grounds to the Winston Hills club in the early 1980s. Fortunately, they still had the twin fields at Crestwood Reserve, and the senior teams began playing there alongside the juniors in 1984. After the club won a record five premierships in '84, there was only one title in '85 and none in '86. The club regained its dominance in 1987, equalling that record of five premierships, but that marvellous success was preceded by a tragic accident that stunned the club.

In 1987, the club was rocked to the core when, after a Sportsman's Night at the Baulkham Hills Bowling Club, a tragic car accident resulted in Kent Strongman receiving a badly broken thigh and brother Jade being transported to Royal North Shore Hospital with spinal injuries. Jade was so highly regarded that his courage and determination to cope with his disabilities inspired his C-grade teammates to great heights in winning the grand final.

The grand final victory in 1987 was the club's initial C-grade, first division premiership. The manner in which it was won is etched in history. Playing against a highly rated Guildford, Hills had a tough rival. The game itself was typical of many grand final clashes, but with a dramatic twist. Playing without the enforcement of Jade Strongman, Hills lost Andrew McCaffery with a broken wrist. Halves David Hall Hills captain and John Abbott were targeted for "treatment", and physically the game was taking a toll on the Bulls. Midway through the second half, Hills were reduced to 11 players, with one sent off and another sin-binned. But the team's enormous resolve kept them in the game, repelling all that was thrown at them. After the 18-12 victory, the

celebrations were deferred until all of the players were reunited at Royal North Shore Hospital.

The support for Jade was enormous throughout the club, with members, supporters and players' families – led by Barbara Abbott, Michelle and Noelene Crawley, Debbie Lennox and Irene Tyquin - responsible for raising \$11,000 for the Strongman family.

Abbott said it took Jade a long time to come to terms with what had happened to him. "He was in hospital for about nine months, and I reckon it was about five years before he really accepted what had happened and decided he was going to move on and live his life," Abbott said. "He studied at TAFE college and got a few degrees, and now he counsels disadvantaged kids. Jade's had the same carer for a number of years, and he's gone on to have a great life. He doesn't complain or spend his time talking about what his life would have been like if the accident hadn't happened. He's moved on in a very positive way and he's probably a role model to me because knowing him has made me realise life's not tough for me and my family. He says to me now: 'I'm lucky. I've had a great life'. We're still great mates, and we'll always be mates."



Above: 1980 Presentation by John Kolc.

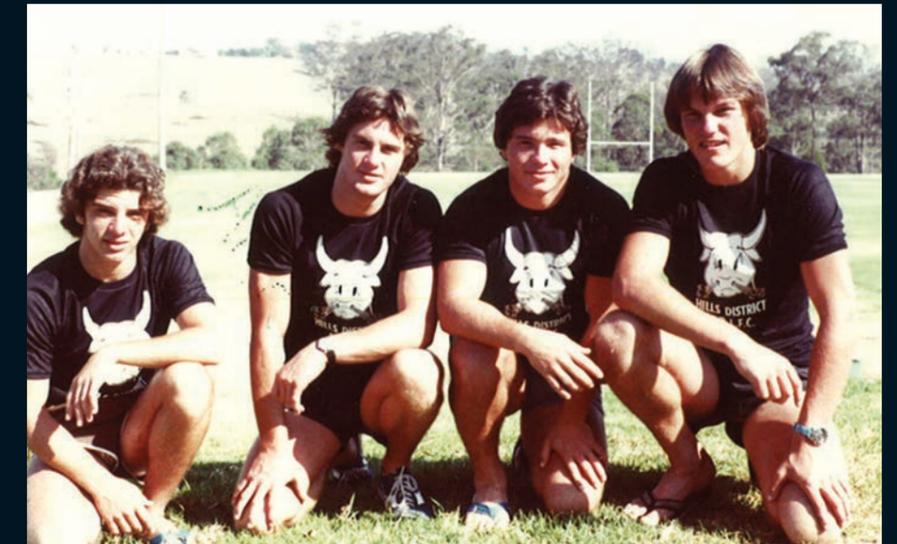
Kent Strongman also did it very tough after the accident. He never played again, because of the severity of the damage to his leg. "One of his legs is three or four inches shorter than the other," Abbott said. "And he suffered a lot of mental scarring from what happened as well. Kent eventually got married and had a few kids, and he's living up the coast now and working as a chef. He and Jade are still mates, and they'll always be brothers, of course."

The C-grade title was a highlight of an all-round fabulous year on the field for the Bulls in 1987. The club won five premierships, and the under 12s division one side had the honour of being the first Bulls team to play in - and win - a grand final at Parramatta Stadium. The Bulls club stormed through what was left of the 1980s. In 1988 they fielded 26 teams, and 16 of those made the finals. Six qualified for grand finals, and four of them won the big one. The Stan Cobcroft Shield, a knockout competition for under 7s players, was accepted as an Australian Bicentennial event. The Bulls won the Parramatta district club championship for the fourth time, as well as claiming the Junior Incentive Shield and producing 14 representative players.

Incredibly, in 1989 the club virtually duplicated that success - 26 sides, 16 finalists, six grand finalists, four premierships, club champions and Junior Incentive Shield winners. The only difference was that the Bulls had eight rep players that year. Plus, after a horror period for the seniors early in the decade, the A-grade team made the grand final for the first time since 1972.

Throughout the 1980s, the club's junior age teams and C-grade sides consistently performed very well. The kids were responsible for bringing a heap of premierships to the Bulls in the early 1980s. They won titles in the first division of both the under 7s and under 9s in 1980, and division one of the under 8s, 10s, 14s and 16s in '81. In 1982 there were titles in the first division of both the under 9s and 11s, and in '83 they took out the under 15s division two title. The Bulls won a total of 10 more premierships in age groups from under 7s to under 18s in the years from 1984-87.

In 1980, Barry Rudd initiated the concept of an under 7s knockout competition as a fundraising and promotion extravaganza and named it after former Bulls club president Stan Cobcroft, recognising Cobcroft's services to rugby league. Treasurer Bob Rose worked tirelessly to acquire refreshment booths and adequate food stalls.



Above: David Said, David Serg, Wayne Morrow and Paul Mares.

Brian Witt, a junior coach at the time, embraced the new venture with gusto. Brian enjoyed a great rapport with the mighty mites and nurtured the competition as his own. His passion for the players and the club was acknowledged when he was awarded life membership. Brian's son, Graham, also reflected his dad's passion for the Club. Graham is a dual winner of the Col Sutton Clubman of the Year award. The initial under 7s knockout competition was well supported by clubs from all points of the metropolitan area and as far away as Albion Park, Cambridge Park and Campbelltown. The inaugural knockout was won by the Ray Devine-coached Bulls side, which (PHOTO) also won Coca-Cola under sevens knockout. The competition continued to rise in stature as a prestigious event on the rugby league calendar.

It was in 1982 that former club treasurer and secretary Warren Heath sadly passed away at an early age. Warren was a straight-shooter. His direct approach at times ruffled feathers, but the respect he earned never waned. The Heath family are committed to the club, still to this day. Warren's wife, Elizabeth, was a member of the Ladies' Auxiliary, and their sons - David, Paul and Peter - have given the club valuable service and support. Warren, as a coach, set his charges high standards to attain and goals to achieve. To perpetuate his memory and the ideals he represented, the Warren Heath Shield, for outstanding achievement by a junior player, is awarded annually.

But when the 1980s began, barely a decade after the 1971 A-grade side that included future internationals John Kolc and Ron Hilditch had won the most famous premiership in the club's history, the club was on its knees at the senior level. The divide that existed between the senior and junior levels at the club in the late 1970s had been a contributor to that problem, but so was the growth of the Central Coast rugby league. It was able to attract many older players from the club in 1980, through a combination of financially lucrative offers and the temptation of a beach lifestyle. The club had begun to struggle to achieve what should have been the natural progression of players through to C-grade level, and so the progression beyond that to the open levels suffered as well. In 1982, a total of only 13 players registered for the A and A-reserve teams, and the club's nominations for those competitions were withdrawn. The Bulls returned to the A and A-reserve competitions in '83, but it was a battle. Players were recruited from the growing touch football ranks to help boost numbers, and there was a lot of doubling up in games. C-grade players helped out by

backing up from their matches as well. The results weren't good. In fact, they were awful. Neither the A nor A-reserve sides won a single match. But it was critical that the Bulls get back in the game at the most senior of levels first, and then concentrate on developing a strategy to find a way forward. The lowest point was reached with that 82-0 loss to Wentworthville. Barry Rudd, who was awarded life membership in 1984 for his marvellous contribution to the club, was the A-grade coach in '83. The game against Wenty obviously isn't his favourite football memory, but he is a person who takes the view that if you can learn from those disappointing days in life then something good has come out of them after all. The Bulls learned.

"I played reserve grade the day I coached the A-grade side in that game against Wenty, and I got sin-binned for fighting," Rudd recalled. "So the day didn't start well. That A-grade side, we had kids in the team who were eligible for C grade. We had players out of their depth. I think it was 42-0 at halftime, but our boys kept competing. They still gave Wenty a game of footy - they didn't throw in the towel. It's a part of the history of the club, but we couldn't let it go on like that. We made a decision to spend money on recruiting players for the senior sides. We were able to do that because of



Above: U7 Coca Cola Knockout winners.





the touch football. It was becoming a big money-maker for the club, and it turned out to be the financial saviour of the club. We recruited very well and engaged a new coach in Tony Saunders. We got quality players from a number of places, and we made the finals in A grade. We played in the minor semi-final and lost to Ryde-Eastwood and got knocked out.”

Nine local juniors featured in that A-grade team of 1984, and with the club’s achievements in winning the Club Championship Pennant plus five premierships, the future seemed assured. The club’s junior production line was beginning to pay dividends, and the Bulls under 18s side that won the Parramatta District first division premiership in ’84 was a tremendous side. The manner in which they won the premiership was outstanding, not conceding a try. In the semi-final, preliminary final and grand final and winning those games 11-2, 7-0 and 10-0. This team comprised a number of players who were later to progress to A grade, Metropolitan Cup, Junior Reps and NRL teams, and who returned to make significant contributions to the club in later years.

After our success in 1984 a situation started to develop where a lot of the other teams didn’t want to play against us and the teams that were backed by leagues clubs, like Wenty, Mt Pritchard and Cabramatta. We stayed competitive in the A-grade competition for the next few years, but the competition began to get smaller, which is what led to the Metropolitan Cup starting towards the end of the decade.

Following our semi-final appearance in A grade in 1984, we signed the former NRL player Ken Hey as A-grade coach. Ken continued the progress made in ’84 and we again qualified for the A-grade semis in 1985.

In 1986, Tim O’Brien was appointed as A-grade coach, on which Rudd commented: “The appointment of the astute Tim O’Brien was great for the club. He didn’t have a lot of quality players to work with that season, but he built the team up again for 1987 with some excellent recruitment.” The Seven Hills club folded in 1986 and the Bulls picked up some of their players, among a variety of others. It had only been two years earlier that the Bulls committee had considered amalgamating with the Seven Hills

club. A decision was taken not to go ahead with that idea, because the Bulls were concerned their club might lose its identity.

O’Brien remembered how he came to link up with the Bulls in 1986. “The Hills A-grade team had enjoyed a successful season in 1985 under Ken Hay as coach, and I thought I would be inheriting a strong squad to build on in 1986,” he said. “Unfortunately, this proved not to be the case as many players from the previous season retired or went with Ken to Pennant Hills. The season proved to be a difficult one and we won only a couple of games. I even put the boots on for the second part of the season! Among the highlights were the signing of Pancho Ryan, who was a legend in Parramatta A-Grade and the Hills, and the emergence of local talent in Paul Mulherin, who went on to play grade at Parramatta, as well as overseas and in Metro Cup, Ian Roberts and Mark Townsend. I was reappointed for the following season, and in reviewing the 1986 season we identified the need to look for key players from outside the club. A plan was drawn up and acted upon.”

The Bulls became a force again in 1987, making it all the way to the final before losing narrowly to a strong Wentworthville team. “A busy off-season had seen the retention of players from 1986 and new key signings of Mark Donkin, Russell Mooney and Mark Boland from the Parramatta Marist club,” O’Brien said. “These three players were identified by me as the best young players at the time. Barry Rudd and I also went and watched all of the grade trials and signed Peter Edwards, a hard-hitting and skilful hooker and back-rower, from North Sydney. We were also most fortunate in gaining the services of two key props in Mark ‘Pa’ Clinton and Bruce Martin, who simply turned up to training on different nights. Mark came from Balmain Flegg via Wenty and went on to become a regular first-grade player for Parramatta. Bruce was an experienced player with country first-grade experience and played many seasons for the Bulls. Wayne Morrow came out of retirement and returned to the club as well. At the end of the Jersey Flegg season, Greg Harris, a talented and tough back-rower, joined the club.”

O’Brien said he tried to help the club push towards gaining licensed premises as a base. “Not having a licensed club always provided a limitation to holding after-game functions and denied a sustainable funding base for the club,” he said. “Barry Rudd

Right: Anthony Toro accepts Man of the Match Award.





and I investigated the possibility of joining with the Postal Institute club at Kellyville. This initiative did not gain the full support of the club and failed to eventuate.”

O’Brien has fond memories of coaching Pancho Ryan. “He is a legend in the Parramatta A-grade,” O’Brien said. “He was highly regarded by all coaches and highly respected by all players over all his playing years. He was a natural footballer, a rare talent. He played second-row, but had the abilities of a five-eighth. He possessed all the skills and knew when to use them - his running and passing game, on the edges with an offload, tough metres in the middle, the long, cut-out pass, his kicking game, the chip and chase - mostly regathering himself - plus penalty kicks for touch and goal-kicking. And he had a defensive game that ensured players looked before running to his side of the ruck. These abilities were supplemented by his great personality. He’s a man whose company was enjoyed by all who played with him. There are too many stories to write about Pancho, but let it be said that if you are fortunate enough to meet him you should find time to enjoy his company.”

O’Brien was replaced as A-grade coach by the successful 1987 C-grade, coach, Bob Lennox. O’Brien was appointed coach of the Parramatta Jersey Flegg team in 1988 and held that position until the end of 1989. Although the club completed strongly

in A grade throughout the 1988 season, injuries again played havoc and they were defeated in the minor semi-final. The emergence of more good players from C grade was a feature of the season.

In 1989, Mother Nature was not the only one unkind. The Junior League in their wisdom had regraded the A and A-reserve competition mid-season. Five teams made up the first division, and with wet weather and rescheduling of deferred matches teams were often playing the same opposition in successive matches. For all the effort there was reward, with the Bulls completing back-to-back Club Championship and Junior Incentive Shield successes. Plus, 16 of the club’s 26 teams made the playoffs.

Despite these difficulties and setbacks the club reached the A-grade grand final in first division for the first time since the legendary teams of 1971 and ‘72. The team was coached by Allan Cook, who returned to the Club that year after having coached the Parramatta Jersey Flegg team in 1986 and ‘87. The team comprised a balanced mix of experienced players and local juniors who had progressed through the club’s ranks virtually from the under 7s to a grade. During 1989 in an A-grade match at Wentworthville, Hills created history when four members of the one family played together. Trevor McCaffery at five-eighth and brothers Rodney, at prop, Andrew at lock and Chris second-row all played strongly in the Bulls’ victory over arch-rivals Wenty.

The Grand Final, which was played at Guildford, attracted a large crowd of Hills supporters who were escorted around the ground prior to the game by a real, live, fair dinkum BULL. Well, actually, it was a COW that a number of Hills supporters had “borrowed” from a local dairy the night before. Despite this outstanding and unique support, the A-grade side lost the grand final to Wentworthville by a score of 14-8.

The end of the decade saw the introduction of the Metropolitan Cup, conducted under the control of the NSW Rugby League and first played in 1990. And, so, another chapter in the history of the Bulls began.



WE'RE HALFWAY THERE 1988

"YOU CAN'T BUY LOYALTY AND TRADITION."

RUSSELL MOONEY

Pride. That was the overwhelming emotion those who were integral to the birth and development of the Hills Bulls felt when they celebrated the club's 25th anniversary. And they had every reason to be proud. The club that was born largely as a result of some young men being unhappy playing rugby union had become a powerhouse in the Parramatta district competition. Halfway to the 50th anniversary the club is celebrating now, the Bulls had already achieved a lot and were going to achieve a whole lot more. It was time to reflect on a job well done, and look with excitement to the future. And it was time to party. The 25th anniversary dinner was held at Parramatta Leagues Club, and a great time was had by all. Mick Gremmo and Barry Rudd remember the evening well.

"There were almost 250 there," Gremmo said. "And it was a top night - one of the best nights. People came from all over - Queensland, Victoria, the Central Coast, out in the bush - and it wasn't like now, when you've got mobile phones and emails to contact people easily. It was a case of ringing up from the phone at home or work and putting the word out to come. Some of the people who came hadn't seen each other for almost the 25 years the club had been alive. It was one of the best functions we've ever had, mainly because of the camaraderie and the companionship. At that stage, a lot of the people who had been instrumental in making the club competitive were busy with family and other commitments, but the function had the effect of drawing people back together. We decided we were going to stick together, and someone would have a barbecue and get all of the boys together every year after that. We made a pact that if any of us ever got into a bit of strife and needed help, we would ring around and see what we could do to help. It brought us closer together, and now, 50 years after the club was born, we have our anniversaries and if anyone gets sick we see what we can do to assist."

Gremmo's fellow life member, Rudd, added: "The function was quite formal. We got away from the chicken in a basket thing - it was very well done. We had a booklet printed to celebrate the 25 years and that was very well received. The patronage on

26 TEAMS

16 FINALISTS

6 GRAND FINALISTS

4 PREMIERSHIPS

CLUB CHAMPIONS

Most points in all divisions within the Parramatta District

JUNIOR INCENTIVE
SHIELD WINNERS

Most points for a club, in first division, within the Parramatta district

the night was full of former players and officials, and it was a mark of respect for the club that so many people made the effort to come. We had dignitaries there from outside the club as well, and it was all very well presented. We had proved we could not only play football games, we could administrate a club properly, and there were a lot of people who wanted to celebrate that. We had become one of the most respected clubs across the board, from juniors to seniors, and one of the strongest clubs in the district. That was reflected in the fact we had a successful touch football comp, a successful under 7s knockout comp, and our teams were regularly making the semi-finals, winning competitions and contributing a healthy contingent of junior representative players. We had achieved our goals up to that point and put the club in a healthy position. Basically, it was self-sustaining, all without a leagues club. We had good coaches, good players and good administration, so we were in a very good position."

Brian Witt was the club president in 1988, and in the 25th anniversary booklet he praised the countless people who had given so unselfishly of their time to help the club prosper "To every committee person, coach, manager, player and trainer since 1964 to date, YOU have been responsible for the success of our club," Witt's statement read. "As we look to the next 25 years, to keep succeeding we need more people like those I have mentioned. We do not receive any financial backing from licensed clubs, nor do our committee receive any gratuities, unlike at richer clubs. We rely on just hard work, but when you see the success of our club it makes it all worthwhile."

Club secretary Brian Horder pointed to the character of the people involved in the Bulls as the club's greatest strength. "The measure of success is generally regarded by winning performances, however the ideals and standards are not restricted to winners," he wrote. "The true measure of success is the quality of the people involved in our club, people we can call teammates and friends. In that respect, we are ALL winners."

The club had been supported by three major sponsors over the course of its 25-year existence. Rodd Silverware was the first, and that company was assisted for a short time by Hart and Haley Real Estate before Family Boats Pty Ltd took over. The contributions from those companies were gratefully accepted, but a junior club still cannot survive without the help of volunteers. And one of the best-known and most appreciated volunteers during that first 25 years was Marj Radford. Her husband, Len, coached at the club, and her sons, Len junior and Gary, both played. Gary said his mother was tireless in support of the club. "While my father was coaching, my mum was helping out in the canteen, without being in any official capacity at the club," he said. "But after my dad died in 1975, my mum became a lot more involved. She joined the committee, and for the next 16 or 17 years the club became her life. It was her family, and it was a good thing for her. She made a lot of friends down there. My mum was a committee member, assistant treasurer, treasurer . . . Anything that came along, she would put her hand up and give it a go. She kept working in the canteen as well.



Above: Marj Radford.



Mum was working in a job, too, to bring us up. She was basically working seven days a week, at her job and then at the ground on the weekends. Looking back, it was a great way for us two kids to grow up. We'd play on Saturday, and on Sunday we'd go back to watch the big boys play. I'm probably a bit biased, but she was pretty amazing. The contribution she made to the club was enormous. She was a larger-than-life character there. Everyone respected her opinion - if she had something to say, everyone listened to her. Mum would help with any little thing. She made a habit of checking the dressing-rooms at the end of the day, to make sure none of the teams had left them in a bad state. She was authoritative in her tone. She would say to the kids before their games: 'Make sure you clean the sheds out, do the sheds before you leave'. Nine out of 10 times they would do that, but she would always go back and check. Once she had done that, we could go home at the end of the day.' Marj Radford was awarded life membership of the club.

Some great players had won the Bernie Mullane Club Champion, senior player of the year trophy at the Hills. First presented in 1968, it was won by Bob Collings in 1969 and John Kolc in '70 and '71. In 1987 it was won by Mark "Pa" Clinton, who joined Parramatta that year and became a first-grader. Included among Hills Bulls



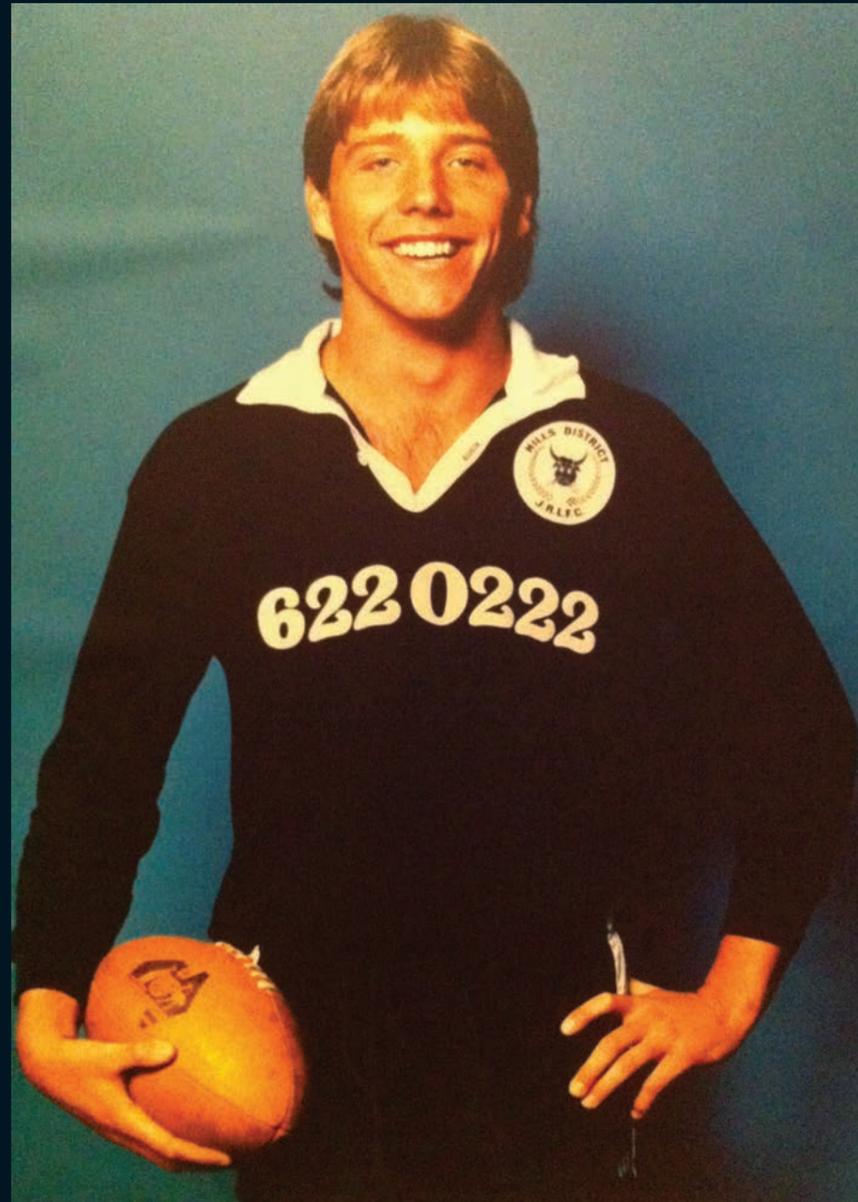
Left: Hills 1988 C Grade Premiers.
Above: Hills 1988 C Grade Premiers reunion at Crestwood Oval.

juniors who were playing 1st grade football in the NSWRL competition in 1988 were Paul Mares and Scott Mahon at Parramatta, Paul Martin at Canberra, Greg Gibson at Manly and David Hall who was graded with North Sydney after captaining the 1987 premiership winning C Grade side.

The club was rocked in 1988 by the death in a work accident of Michael Green, who had played 267 games for the club. There was a huge attendance at Green's funeral, one of the largest in Windsor's history. The Bulls described him this way: "Michael was an astute sportsman in every field who was respected not only by his teammates but also his rivals."

A newspaper article at the time carried the headline "Teenage League Star Dies At Work", with a story that read: "A teenage NSW league star described as having "unbelievable potential" has died after receiving a high voltage shock at work. Parramatta junior Michael Green was on course for a top flight career in first grade. NSW under-16s coach Wal Watsford said: "Michael's death was a tragic loss to rugby league." Watsford said the front-row player had "unbelievable potential -physically and mentally he was a player of the future and he was a great kid". Watsford added: "Some players you get a gut feeling about and I think there is no doubt that NSW has lost one of their rising stars." Parramatta junior coach Brad Levy said the tall front-row forward was respected by teammates and opposition players. "He was infectious. He had a tremendous personality which spread throughout the team. He loved to laugh and he loved life." Michael's trainer for four years at Parramatta, Kevin Wise, said: "We believed he was one of our stars of the future. He was even possibly good enough to go to the under-21 squad at 17 years old this year. Michael had just started the second year of his scholarship with Parramatta."

In recognition of Michael Green's outstanding career with the Mighty Bulls which was so tragically cut short, the club established a perpetual Michael Green trophy, and former long-time Bulls player Heath "Churchy" Churchland recalled: "I can vividly remember being extremely excited when I won the award, but it wasn't until I



was older that I realised what a huge honour it was to be the inaugural winner of the Michael Green award. I consider myself very lucky to have grown up playing football for the Hills. It provided me with purpose and led to many life-long friendships with people who would always be there in support. I now look forward to my son being old enough to play for the Bulls.”

So many great figures had given so much of themselves to the Bulls in the club’s first 25 years, and one of those whom Gremmo considered among the most important was Keith Woellner Snr. “Keith was president of the club in the second half of the 1960s through to the early ‘70s,” Gremmo said. “He and his wife, Norma, always opened their house up to players and friends after games. Norma worked in the canteen and Keith marked the grounds. They were a great couple who were loved by everybody. You could rely on both of them for anything. I started building my house in 1967, and one day Keith turned up unannounced on a Saturday to help me work. He was back on the Sunday at 5.30am, and he turned up again the following weekend. I was 24, and he was 50. Norma turned up with drinks and meals. You can never repay kindness like that. They were wonderful to me.”

In the early years of the Bulls, Gremmo had a vision of what he hoped the club would become, and that vision had been realised. After an involvement spanning the full 25 years of the club, he was entitled to be content about that. “We wanted to get kids playing footy. It was going to make men out of them and keep them off the streets,” Gremmo said.

The Bulls were halfway to the 50th anniversary they are celebrating now. The first 25 years had been a great ride, but there was much more to come.

*Left: Michael Green.
Right: Six in from the left, Michael Green Hills presentation day.*



ABBOTT FAMILY

Barbara and Stuart Abbott wouldn't have had their three sons – John, Darrell and Aaron – grow up any other way. The Abbotts are convinced the experience of playing for the Hills Bulls was very important in helping their boys get ready for life. “It taught them how to win and it taught them how to lose – both with good grace,” Barbara said. “It taught them to accept that things aren't always going to work out the way you want them to, but that if you work hard you're a much better chance of getting the result you would like.”

Barbara and Stuart are retired and have been living at Rainbow Flat, near Forster-Tuncurry, for 16 years, but their hearts are never far away from the Bulls. The memories of the joy they got from helping out at the club and watching their boys play football at the same time remain bright. They didn't think twice about giving up their time. Barbara, who was awarded life membership of the Bulls, said their social life revolved around the club. “We enjoyed it, and we don't regret any of it,” she said. “It was never a chore to do something for the club. Stuart and I both worked for a living – we ran a business together – but we still found time to help the club, because we wanted to. We didn't get paid for it, and we didn't expect to get paid. You just did it for the club, and you loved doing it. We didn't care about not having the weekends off – we got our weekends off in the summer. We made a lot of close friends who have stayed close friends, and we had a great time at the club. It was a big part of our lives.”

When parents register their children to play sport, they do so in the knowledge they have committed to transporting and supporting them, and many become engrossed in that. Some parents then become entrenched in much more active roles on behalf of the club. Barbara and Stuart each spent time on the club's committee, and Barbara ran the club's Touch Football Association for a long time. Stuart, who also managed teams, remembered how, after the family had moved from Rooty Hill to Baulkham Hills in the summer of 1978-79, the boys became Bulls players one by one. “John was the first to play, then Darrell, and finally Aaron, once he was old enough,” Stuart said. “They loved it. The Bulls was a real family club. It was still pretty competitive on the field, but it was mainly about making everyone feel welcome.” John and Darrell began their Bulls careers when they were registered in the under 11s and 7s respectively in 1979, and Aaron made it three in 1982. In 1983, Stuart, known as “Bluey”, became a manager for the first of what would become many times, with the under 15s, second-division side. He enjoyed instant success when the 15s won the premiership. John was in that side, and by season's end he had won the first of his two Col Sutton clubman of the year awards. In 1984, the team was promoted to first division, losing the grand final to a very classy Newman High side. John passed the 100-game mark for the club that year. His playing career spanned 17 years, during which time he played in many grand finals, but he rates the C-grade premiership in 1987 as the best victory with which he has ever been associated. He still has close friends from that team. John has coached, managed and trained numerous teams, and remains involved in the club today. His sons, Daniel and Nicholas, have each played over 100 games for the Bulls.

Darrell “Scratchy” Abbott's record with the Bulls may never be surpassed. He played for 26 seasons and over 300 games. Darrell was young enough to play in the under 7s for two years, and in 1980 he was a member of the mighty team that swept all before it, winning the under 7s grand final, Stan Cobcroft Knockout, Tommy Bishop Shield and State Coca-Cola knockout. Darrell's coach, Ray Devine, had a penchant for assigning nicknames, and because Darrell was a hooker with an appetite for work Ray called him Scratchy, a moniker that has lasted for three decades. Scratchy had a

great work ethic. He won plenty of premierships, but his most memorable achievement was captaining the A-grade side to the title in 2001.

Aaron began playing as a four-year-old, and by his second year he had played in his first grand final. By the under 10s he had won his first premiership. “Duck”, as Aaron was known, went on to play 13 seasons and more than 200 games for the club. His greatest memory is of winning the under 12s, first division premiership at Parramatta Stadium.

Barbara and Stuart were already busy, ferrying three boys to training and games on top of working for a living, but they had a selfless attitude, and Barbara took on the role of caretaker treasurer after the club was rocked to the foundations by some very poor administration. A substantial amount of money had disappeared, and Barbara took the running of the accounts into her own hands. When there was a void in the administration of the touch footy, she stepped in there as well. It was no surprise to anyone when she was awarded life membership. Put simply, the Abbott family loves the Bulls, and is proud to be a part of such an iconic club. Barbara and Stuart have seen countless Bulls kids – including their sons - grow into adults who possess good values and a respect for tradition. And they are adamant that every minute they spent working on behalf of the club was at least as rewarding to them as it was to the club. John, Darrell and Aaron ended up with that same love of the Bulls.

“A great club like the Bulls keeps the kids off the streets. Instead, they do something that is good for them,” Stuart said. Barbara added: “We just asked our kids to go out there and do their best when they played. We knew that if they did that, they could be happy with themselves.”

Right: far right Darrell “Scratchy” Abbott.



WHAT THE CLUB MEANS TO ME

“I got to play week in, week out with my best mates. I loved turning up early on a Saturday and Sunday and seeing all the volunteers setting Crestwood up for a big day of footy. The Bulls are a big part of my life. Hopefully, I’ll be able to share the Bulls experience with my kids.”

HEATH L’ESTRANGE

“I consider myself very lucky to have grown up playing football for Hills. It provided me with purpose and led to many life-long friendships with people who would always be there in support. I now look forward to my son being old enough to play for the Bulls.”

HEATH CHURCHLAND

“It provided a pathway for me to expand my friendships beyond the core I possessed. It gave me a belief in my ability to lead others and convince others that they were better than they thought. Each time I return to the ground, I feel like I helped build it and that I belong.”

MARK DONKIN

“The discipline I learned at the Bulls gave me a work ethic, and the club also put the community spirit in me. I’m proud that three generations of my family have played for the club, with my son, Nathan, playing his first season in the club’s 50th year. Most of my best mates I met at the Bulls.”

MICHAEL GREMMO



WHAT THE CLUB MEANS TO ME

“It means a lot to me. Whenever I get together with the rest of the guys, we always talk about it. It’s been a big part of my life, an emotional part of my life, and the memories are important to me. It’s always a special feeling when I’m with the boys.”

BOB COLLINGS

“It was a way of keeping all of the blokes together. It didn’t matter who you were, or where you came from, the club was happy to have you. It brought a bit more out of you on the field, because you pushed yourself to keep up with your mates.”

STEPHEN NAPPER

“It means a hell of a lot, because the friends I made here are friends for life. I couldn’t replace the friendships I’ve made out of this club. The way people treated you at the club, the way they looked after you, it taught me the right way to deal with people.”

GARY RADFORD

“If I hadn’t become a part of this club I wouldn’t have the friendships I’ve enjoyed for 50 years - that’s what this club means to me. It teaches you how to be a man. Life is about ups and downs, and being part of a team helps you learn how to handle both.”

MICK GREMMO SNR

”I was very happy at the Bulls. I really enjoyed the camaraderie among the players. We were great mates, and there was a great atmosphere at the club. I played with some terrific players at the Bulls, and that experience contributed a lot to my development as a player.”

JOHN KOLC

“I loved coaching, and I loved my time at the Hills Bulls. It’s a great family club, and I made a lot of friends while I was there. It was a highlight of my time in football.”

FRANK LAMB

“I loved it at the Bulls. I started playing there and I finished playing there, and I had a great time over a 15-year period. I grew up with the blokes I played with, and a lot of them are still my mates today. It was my family club.”

BRUCE HILDITCH

“It means a lot to me. All my best mates, we met each other through the club, and I still see them today. What I remember most was the camaraderie, the fun you had with your mates. That was the best thing about it.”

MICK SHANAHAN

“I really enjoy the company of people here. It’s a really well-run, family club, and hopefully the people who run it will keep it like that.”

GAVIN STRINGFELLOW

“I honour and respect everyone at the club, but I particularly respect the volunteers, who put so much time and effort in and don’t get paid. The club encourages kids to play sport, and I think that’s important.”

TONY COSATTO

“I can sum it up in one word - mateship. Everyone wants to play for each other here.”

RYAN SMITH

“I’ve been involved with the club now for over 12 years. In that time I have been associated with some great teams and great people. Whilst I never had the honour of pulling on a Hills jersey, I can honestly say the club has always been like a second family to me.”

LUKE “TOOKEY” SAMMUT

“It’s really important to me. All my best mates play here. I’ve played here all the way through from the under 6s to Sydney Shield now, and I can see myself being involved here forever.”

BEN MOONEY

“I’m a one-eyed Hills man now. My kids play here and I’ve got no intention of taking them anywhere else, because it’s a great club.”

MICHAEL WITHERS

“I feel like I’m a part of a family here. I’ve been involved with the Bulls for so long now, it seems like second nature to me. I’m always going to be coaching someone or doing something here.”

PAUL GRIFFIN’

“It gave me an opportunity, from my early days, to participate with my mates, and now - 50 years later - we’re still very close mates. It’s important, if you play for a club, that you’re mates, and not just someone who turns up on game-day.”

COL WILKINSON



REACHING FOR THE STARS 1989 - 1995

"EACH TIME I RETURN TO THE GROUND, I FEEL LIKE I HELPED BUILD IT AND THAT I BELONG."

MARK DONKIN

The critics said the Hills Bulls wouldn't be competitive in the Metro Cup. The club didn't have the financial resources to build a strong enough side. The big clubs with the backing of licensed premises would blow them away. The limited amount of money the Bulls were able to spend on fielding a team would be wasted. They were just making up the numbers. WRONG. If there is one lesson learned by all of the Bulls' opponents over the club's rich, 50-year history, it is that they should never be underestimated. Sure, it was going to be a strain on the club's finances, and not everyone at the Bulls agreed they should take part in the new competition, but the Bulls weren't also-rans. They made the grand final in the first year of the competition, 1990, and again in '94. The Bulls exited from the Metro Cup after the 1995 season. It had been an expensive foray, but a worthwhile one nevertheless, because it provided the club's best players with another opportunity to play at a high level, and that should never be dismissed lightly.

The Metro Cup developed as a concept because of problems with the A-grade competition related to the introduction of a second-division A-grade comp in 1986. By 1988, most clubs fielding A-grade teams in the Parramatta competition had sought to switch to second division because they couldn't compete with the clubs that had leagues club backing. Only five teams - the leagues club-backed trio of Wentworthville, Mt Pritchard and Guildford, plus Parramatta Marist and Hills Bulls - competed in the A-grade competition in 1988. That obviously wasn't good for the game, so four of the club secretaries involved - Warren Westlake (Wenty), John Lansberry (Guildford), Kerry Wilsmore (Mounties) and Barry Rudd (Hills) formed a steering committee with the aim of establishing whether a new competition, between the levels of A grade and the then Winfield Cup, could be viable. Channel Nine commentator and Hills District identity Ray Warren, who had strong ties to the Parramatta Marist club, saw value in the concept and gave high-profile support to the push.

Numerous, strong clubs from across the Sydney metropolitan area were invited to

attend initial meetings, but the move hit a hurdle because of concerns from some of these clubs that they would be propping up the Parramatta District JRFL competition. The Parramatta DJRFL amended the constitution at the end of 1988 to prevent clubs from paying players through either club resources or outside parties, and a decision was taken to play five rounds of A grade in 1989 and then re-grade the competition. After the re-grading, Hills, Wenty, Guildford and Mounties were left in A grade. The competition went ahead in a season marred by wet weather, but the four clubs involved were dissatisfied with the situation and began seeking acceptance in other competitions. Finally, there was a breakthrough in September, 1989, when Warren's persistence, combined with support from Parramatta coaching and development officer Brad Levy and NSWRL coaching and development officer Paul Broughton, resulted in the board of the NSWRL endorsing the formation of the Metropolitan Cup.

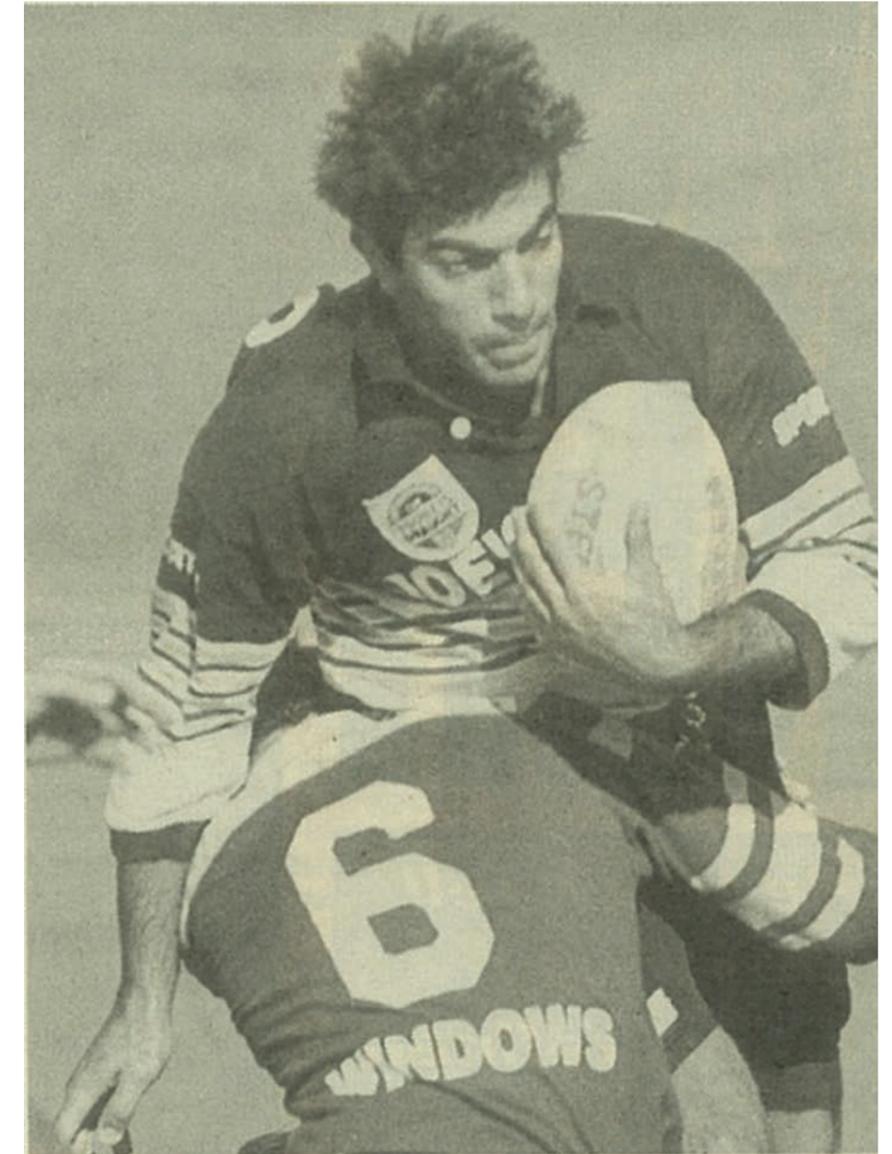
But concerns within the Hills club that too many sacrifices would have to be made to enable the Bulls to meet the NSWRL criteria and field teams in a semi-professional competition threatened their involvement. In late November, 1989, the Bulls decided to withdraw, but because the competition would not have gone ahead without the club due to not enough other teams being involved, and following pleas from the other Parramatta District Clubs involved, the management of the Bulls reversed the decision and agreed to enter teams.

Wentworthville had earlier rejected a request by the Bulls to allow them to use Ringrose Park as a home ground, to fit in with the suitable venue aspect of the criteria, but overturned that decision to help ensure the Bulls' involvement. Brad Levy used his contacts to source a sponsorship with COMALCO for the Bulls, and that, combined with finance from the Hills Touch Association, put the Bulls in a position to form a team for the 1990 season. Other clubs had budgets the Bulls were never going to match, but the Bulls were able to rely on the integrity and commitment of their coach, Allan Cook, and administration to obtain a sponsorship with Geoff

Reynolds (SPORTM Sportswear), while longtime Bulls sponsor and supporter John Smale (Family Boats Pty Ltd) also made a generous contribution to the cause. The Bulls retained all available players from the squad that made the 1989 A-grade grand final, but signing "name" players from outside the club was financially impossible. The retention committee, coordinating with the coaching staff, signed only players who wanted to play for the Hills.

People within the club who were against the entry into the Metro Cup eventually accepted the value of the concept, because it fostered rugby league in the Hills District and provided an opportunity for talented local juniors to play in a prestigious NSWRL competition. And when the team played well above general expectations and made the finals, and then the grand final, community support was huge. Everyone at the club supported the attempt to lift the Holy Grail of trophies. The major semi-final was broadcast nationally on Sky Channel and the Bulls responded by playing an outstanding and committed game to defeat Ryde-Eastwood 14-8. The grand final at Parramatta Stadium was a gala occasion and tremendously important in terms of the history of the club. The Bulls didn't win in what was a rematch with Ryde-Eastwood, but they showed all of the younger players at the club that they could come through to this level and enjoy such an opportunity themselves. As Barry Rudd put it: "You don't have to be wealthy, you don't have to have stars - you just have to be your own man and give it your best shot."

Mark Donkin was the captain of that first Metro Cup team for the Bulls, and he looks back on the season with great fondness. "I was recruited to the club from one of its competitors, and I recognised that the Hills club was on the cusp of a complete facelift," Donkin said. "New players, new coach, strong recruitment and retention, a more professional approach to fundraising, a higher profile within the community and a responsibility to provide a pathway in one of Sydney's growth corridors. The A-grade team to which I was originally recruited had close to a dozen new players recruited to the club and the fortunate gelling of the team both professionally and



Bill Danawe . . . hoping for good news

personally led to success both on and off the field. This was a new era and one that had, in my view, set the course and direction for the club to where it is now.

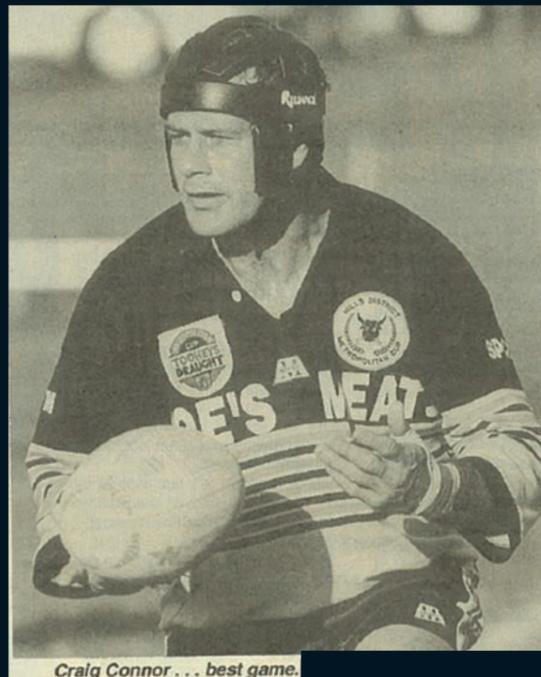
“Some of my greatest memories of being at the Bulls include the first game of Metro Cup at Ringrose, the competitive edge the club had over its more opulent rivals backed by some of the super powers of the licensed club industry, and playing in a Metro Cup grand final in year one of the competition. We all knew we had a part to play as new recruits in lifting the profile of the club and ensuring acceptance by displaying the characteristics of a team of no egos. Everybody wanted to contribute to the club in their own way and not depend on a minority. My time at the Hills was like belonging to a very close community.”

Allan Cook coached the Metro Cup team in its first two seasons, and remembers it as being “a period of unbelievable highs in 1990 as opposed to disappointing lows in 1991”. In the first year, the Bulls had the bye in the first round and then faced the strong Mt Pritchard side. The Bulls thrashed Mounties 38-12 to give a thumping indication of their potential despite having been largely dismissed as easybeats. Another big win the following week against Western Suburbs provided further foundation for the campaign. Following a mid-season mini-slump, with losses to Ryde-Eastwood and Bankstown, Hills bounced back to defeat arch-rivals Wentworthville and Guildford and set the scene for a run to the finals. The Hills beat Ryde-Eastwood 16-10 at Ringrose to guarantee second place. After their 14-8 semi-final win over Ryde-Eastwood, it was a confident side that qualified for the grand final. However, on the day, the Ryde-Eastwood big guns all fired and despite a courageous effort by the Bulls, Ryde-Eastwood were 19-6 victors. Many players had terrific seasons, including skipper Donkin, backs Russell Mooney, Shane Ferguson and Mark Hawley, and forwards Tony Dennis, Bill Guard, Paul Mulherin, Cameron Mcinnes and Andrew McCaffery.

The Bulls were optimistic about another good season in Metro Cup in 1991. “Although a number of outstanding players, including captain Mark Donkin,

had either retired or were unavailable, a number of new players who were recruited were expected to prove worthy replacements,” Cook noted. But a litany of injuries decimated the team. It started in round one, when Chris McCaffery suffered a season-ending injury. In the ensuing weeks, experienced and quality players including Greg Harris, David Black, Andrew McCaffery, Chris Shanahan, Matt Smith, Mick Larkins and Mark Harrington were injured and forced to miss either the whole or substantial periods of the 1991 season. Hills registered a whopping 78 players along the way, and relied heavily on the support and commitment from A-grade and C-grade players who were picked to replace the injured Metro Cup players. The Bulls won only four games that season, but still registered the major achievement of having Paul Mulherin selected as captain of the inaugural Metropolitan Cup representative team. Others, including Paul James, Paul Griffin, Mark Steinwede, Andrew Mitchell, Brian Harrington, Martin Barnes, Paul Company, Simon Howse, Tim Gardner, Gary Owens and Chris Pierce, all tried hard. Cook took a break from coaching in 1992, declaring on the way out that “the good times had far outweighed the bad”.

Ken Hey returned to the club as first-grade coach in 1992, after previously having coached the A-grade team in 1985. Club stalwart Rob Nalder coached reserve grade, and a number of new players joined the club. After having played the 1991 home games at Venn Oval, Lalor Park, the Bulls arranged for 1992 home games to be played at Ted Horwood Oval, across the road from the Baulkham Hills Sporting Club. At Ted Horwood the soccer was played on Saturdays, and the goal-posts were dismantled and replaced by rugby league goal-posts - kindly donated by life member Brian Horder - every Sunday morning. Then they were dismantled after the league had finished for the day. Their first-round game was against 1991 premiers Guildford at McCredie Park, and the Bulls played a blinder to win, 18-6. But injuries again severely hampered the team that season, and after a series of narrow losses in the second half of the season the Bulls missed the finals. Hey had, however, groomed a number of local juniors who would go on to become outstanding players for the club. Matt Harris was runner-up in both the Rookie of the Year and Buckley Medal (Best and Fairest) awards for the Metropolitan Cup competition.



Tim O’Brien returned to the Bulls to coach the Metro Cup team in 1993, and bolstered the squad by signing Arthur Pappas, Todd Smythe, Mark Rudd, Jamie Tighe, Simon House and Scott Hodson. “The competition was of a high standard, and we enjoyed a good start to the season,” O’Brien said. “But a lot of injuries and bad luck saw the team miss out on the finals. I re-signed to coach in 1994, and, with the support of Allan Cook, Rob Nalder and Greg Harris, I looked to further improve the squad. Bill Danawe, who was the best running back-rower in Metro Cup, Bill Greentree and Darren Tuite were signed. But during the pre-season I was offered, and accepted, the reserve-grade coaching position at South Sydney. Craig O’Connor was appointed captain-coach of the Metro Cup side. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the Bulls and learned from my experiences with many great players and people. My son, Adam, also played his junior football with the club. It was a family environment, run by committed volunteers, and it nurtured the development of many future great

players and provided an avenue for children, male and female, and young men - and old - to play and enjoy the great game of rugby league.”

The Bulls completed their most successful Metro Cup season in 1994. The first-grade side made the grand final and second grade reached the preliminary final before being eliminated. Brett Hyde won the competition’s rookie of the year award and Bill Danawe gained high representative honours. Many very accomplished and experienced players were recruited by the Bulls that year, which also saw a return to Crestwood Oval for Metro Cup home games with the assistance of Rob Nalder providing demountable buildings, for officials required for the Metropolitan Cup Competition. Hills won 11 games and entered the finals in fourth place. They beat Ryde-Eastwood 24-12 in the minor semi-final and minor premiers Newtown 15-8 in the preliminary final. In the grand final, against powerful St Marys, the Bulls began the match like world-beaters and had many opportunities to establish a handsome lead during the first half. But they didn’t execute well enough, and went to halftime with the scores locked at 8-all. St Marys powered away in the second half to win, 32-14. In reserve grade, the club had easily its most successful year to date, winning 15 competition games and drawing one to qualify for the major semi-final against the Ryde Eastwood Club. But they lost both that game and the preliminary final against St Marys. After one more season in Metro Cup, the Bulls pulled out of the competition at the end of 1995 because the level of financial support required to be competitive could no longer be sustained by the club.

Former Bulls player, Greg Harris, coached the Metropolitan Cup team in 1995, and whilst they performed strongly, injuries and increasing difficulties in recruiting and retaining quality players placed huge pressure on the club, culminating in the decision to not enter the competition in 1996.

Hills were never supported or propped up financially by the Parramatta District club, which surprisingly provided funding to enable the formation of the Kellyville Bushrangers, which then competed in the Metropolitan Cup competition between



1996 and 2001. A number of Bulls players transferred to the Bushrangers during this period.

Players who were at the Bulls in the A-grade team of 1989 and subsequent Metro Cup teams say it was a tremendous time to be a part of the club. “I loved playing with Hills,” said Shane Ferguson. “Mainly due to the great coaching staff and great bunch of blokes. We trained hard, but also had a laugh and combined socially. My greatest memories are the first year of Metro Cup and exceeding our wildest dreams and making the grand final. The hype around the club and local area was amazing. I’m proud to have been involved because the Bulls produce not only good football talent, but, more importantly, good individuals. They have good values and traditions. It was a great place to be around. Staff and footballers alike were friendly, likeable blokes, and the social side of things was fun, but when it came to hard work and serious football the people involved realised this and got stuck in. I think the Bulls have a good place in the local community. They are the number one club in the Hills District and have a great name. They have produced many first-graders and also get involved with local community projects. I believe thousands of local families should thank the Bulls for helping their boys from childhood to adulthood. The club founders worked hard and were passionate about achieving a successful club. People put in a lot of time and money to make it that way. Over the years the club has grown, with good committee people and parents. Kids want to play at a good family club. That is why, in 50 years, it has become one of the biggest junior clubs in Australia.”

Mark Boland added: “I went to the Bulls from Parramatta Marist because Mark Donkin, Russell Mooney and myself really wanted to win an A-grade premiership but didn’t want to play at one of the big, leagues club-backed teams. I loved it at the Bulls. We stayed there because we felt wanted and we felt comfortable. It was a huge decision for us as we grew up with the Parra Marist club and were best mates with the players there. However, Tim O’Brien approached us to come, and out of the utmost respect we had for him, we made the move. It was a proud and memorable

Left: 1990 Metropolitan Cup squad.



*Hooker
Darren
Tuite . . .
top
game
for Hills*



Jamie Tighe . . . season ended with Hills, but top pointscorer.

time, because Tim as a coach introduced us all to a level we'd never been before. He had obviously done an enormous amount of background work, as our squad contained a number of guys that hadn't played for Hills before. Yet, we all clicked. Tim had brought us to a club that offered massive support and professionalism. I doubt many of us had experienced a more learned coach, or a club that yearned for success like the Bulls did. I think the club just resonated for players looking for a club that was family and friends-oriented, but which still offered a high level of professionalism and competitive spirit. I personally had older friends that had played with clubs like Mounties, Wenty, Cabra and Guildford who, during my time at the club, chose to spend their Sunday afternoons watching the mighty Bulls. With the injuries I had, I probably should have stopped playing earlier than I did, but I just enjoyed the boys, the club spirit and the atmosphere. I'm sure a few of the other boys will talk about the 1989 grand final and the mascot bull, and the resounding success of the first Metro Cup year, but, personally, that 1987 year was the one that grabbed me. It was the best football team I'd ever played in, and the success we had against the 'name' players and money clubs will live with me forever."

Russell Mooney said he was initially hesitant to leave Parramatta Marist for the Bulls, but was made to feel right at home from day one at his new club. "My greatest memories of being at the Bulls are playing in the 1989 grand final and 1990 Metro Cup grand final, and being Metro Cup captain in 1991," he said. "It's a great family club that gives everyone an opportunity, and has great mateship. After I finished playing I came back to the club and coached the C grade to two consecutive grand finals, and then spent two years coaching the A grade with Gary Freeman. My boys, Jesse and Flynn, have played for the club for the last five years and I've either coached or trained them each year. I'm proud to say I'm an old Bull. The club gives everyone a chance to play footy, and a place to be on the weekend."

Andrew Mitchell joined the Bulls in 1991, playing Metro Cup, and says he quickly came to understand why his friends among players there had told him that "once

you become a Bull, you're a Bull for life". "The most enjoyable thing about being at the Bulls, for me, was that it gave me so much more than just football," Mitchell said. "It gave me mateship, respect, and most of all a family that you trained with, played with, and which you gave your all for. My greatest memories of playing for the Bulls are, first and foremost, putting on the black jersey. It made you feel 10 feet tall. And you knew every other bloke in the team would stand by you. The Hills Bulls jersey was respected, not just by the blokes who wore it, but by the teams you played against. No matter how good the other teams were, or where they were on the ladder, they knew when they played the Bulls they were going to get hurt. We trained hard, and every session was a competition between all the players. In 1994, my favourite memory of the year was after we beat Ryde-Eastwood in the major semi, when everyone had written us off. We smashed them at their home ground, and walking off after the game towards the grandstand I saw big Mick Shanahan had his arms out and tears rolling down his cheeks because he was so proud of us. We had a small forward pack that year, much like every year, but we all put in and got over every pack that year."

In the early 1990s, our club made the major strategic decision to incorporate our Rugby League Club and our Touch Football organisation into one corporate entity - Hills District Junior Rugby League Club & Touch Association Incorporated. The Corporation facilitated and enhanced corporate governance structure and consolidated financial management and budgetary policies and procedures.

The Bulls competed in huge numbers throughout the grades of the Parramatta competition from the early to mid-1990s. In 1990 the club fielded 25 sides, produced 15 finalists and seven grand finalists, and won three premierships, including our first under 13s premiership. There were about 400 players at the club that year. The Bulls won the club championship and Junior Incentive Shield, both for the third year in a row. The A-grade side was among the club's six grand finalists in 1991, when the Bulls were club champions again. Life member Marj Radford and committee member Hazel Morrow passed away that year. The Bulls changed their playing strip to include

gold and maroon with the famous black in 1992, marking an affiliation with the Baulkham Hills Sporting Club. The Bulls produced no less than 24 representative players that year. The club's association with the Baulkham Hills Sporting Club saw the Bulls gain three positions on the Sporting Club board. Kevin Smith, a former vice-president who had worked very hard for the Bulls, passed away that year. Both the A-reserve and C-grade sides folded during the year, however our under 10s won the knockout at Parramatta Stadium one week after losing the grand final to Mount Pritchard, gaining some sweet revenge. Half of the 22 teams the Bulls fielded in 1993 made the finals, and two won premierships. The club didn't field under-17 or A-grade sides, but the under 7s won the Statewide Tommy Bishop knockout. Ryan L'Estrange was awarded the Baulkham Hills Sporting Club Junior Sportsman of the year. The Bulls had a rare year in which the club fielded seven grand finalists but didn't win a premiership in 1994. The club also fielded an A-grade side among their 24 teams. The lighting at Crestwood Oval was upgraded, field No.1 resurfaced and new coaching and training equipment purchased in 1995, a year in which the Bulls fielded 24 teams including two Metro Cup and two A-grade teams, and produced eight finalists, for two premierships.

In the mid-1990s our club was rocked when a major fire occurred, causing significant damage to our canteen and dressing-sheds and destroying some memorabilia and equipment. As always, our club met the challenge of recovering from the setback, with committee members, supporters, sponsors and players all working together to continue business as usual.

But the period will largely be remembered for the club's exciting association with the Metro Cup. It was a risky decision to become involved, but a good and courageous one nevertheless. As John Abbott, who has spent a lifetime at the club as a player and official, observed: "It was a gamble because we didn't have a licensed club, but it was worth doing because we had a good concentration of quality juniors at the time and it was important to provide a path for our players to go to the next level. I wouldn't swap that time in the club's history for anything."

L'ESTRANGE FAMILY

Barry and Sharyn L'Estrange entrusted the Hills Bulls with the football education of their four sons - Ryan, Wade, Sean and Heath - and they weren't disappointed.

The club taught the young fellows a bit about life as well, which is what a good junior football club should do.

All four boys loved their time at the Bulls, and two of them - Wade and Heath - kicked on to play first grade, Wade with Parramatta and Heath with Sydney Roosters and Manly. Heath won a grand final with the Sea Eagles in 2008 and is now playing with Bradford in England.

Each of the quartet was selected in Parramatta junior representative teams, with Wade, Sean and Heath progressing to the NSW junior teams and Sean and Heath gaining selection in the prestigious Australian Schoolboy squads.

It was a real family affair for the L'Estranges at the Bulls. Barry became heavily involved in the club's administration in the 1990s, while Sharyn regularly assisted in the canteen and wherever else a helping hand was needed.

Barry says they wouldn't have missed the experience for the world, because of the many friends they made and the valuable learning experience it was for their boys.

"The club was great for my sons," Barry said. "They loved the friendship, the real mateship, that you got at the Bulls, and as far as their aspirations in league were concerned they couldn't have had a better learning process than the one they got there. The quality of coaching was excellent.

"But it's not just about the football when your boys join a club like that. It's about teaching them some values in life as well, and the Bulls was a terrific experience for them in terms of helping to shape their character."

Wade said he could speak on behalf of all of the brothers when he said he "absolutely loved it" at the Bulls.

"I started playing junior reps for Parramatta when I was 14," Wade said. "I loved playing for Parra, but I was still hanging out to get back to the Bulls after the junior rep season finished.

"I played for a lot of years at the Bulls. I can still remember all the great days down there when I was a kid. It was a real family-oriented club, and all the parents would pitch in and help out with the line-marking and mow the fields and all of that.

"I was always down at the ground. I'd play my game, and then I'd be in the canteen with mum or helping somewhere, or just mucking around with the other kids."

Wade said some of his fondest memories were of playing in his early teens in teams coached by Chris Shanahan.

"Chris coached us in the 11's, 12s' and 13's," he said. "I think we went to the grand final every year, and we won a few of them. He was a terrific coach. I had a few good coaches. John Billings was another one, when I was playing C grade."

Wade, Heath and Sean all played hooker, while Ryan was a prop.

Unfortunately for Wade, his first-grade career with the Eels was cut short by a bulging disc in his neck that required surgery and kept him out of football for a couple of years. He eventually returned to play for Wentworthville, and then Newtown, before going back to the Bulls.

"I captain-coached the A grade in 2007-08," Wade said. "I'd sent an email to Steve Sullivan, who was the club president, saying I was looking to get back into footy and doing some playing and coaching. He suggested the A-grade job.

"I did it for two years and I really enjoyed it. It was just good to be back at the Hills. We got some good crowds back there for the games. My last playing years, I wanted to come back and play for the Bulls again.

"I'm hoping that when Heath comes back from England, we can play together at the Bulls for a year. I've always said I'd like to do that before we both give it away for good."

Barry said Heath was contracted to Bradford until the end of next season. Ryan is also living in England, where he runs a flooring business. Sean runs a personal training business, New Image, based in the Hills District, and Wade runs a pizza restaurant at Glossodia, near Hawkesbury.

During the early 1990s, Barry was president of the Bulls. He is proud to say that when he moved on from the administration, the club was in good shape. The L'Estrange family lived in Castle Hill for 26 years, and Barry and Sharyn are now living on the Central Coast.

"We maintained the growth in terms of the playing strength at the club, and stabilised and then grew the financial position," he said. "When we walked away, we handed over a couple of hundred thousand dollars worth of assets. It was one of the strongest clubs in the district.

"The touch football had been started by Barry Rudd and later assisted by Barbara Abbott, and they had turned that into an extremely strong part of the club. It was a great financial provider for the club.

"I met a lot of good people at the Bulls, and some of them have stayed friends for life. Tony Toro had three sons playing at the club, and Mick Nati's family was involved as well. Tony and Mick are still among my good mates now.

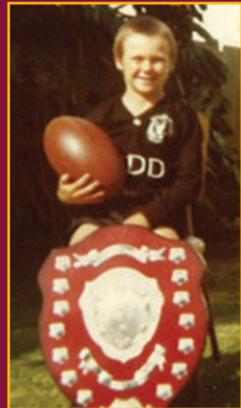
"Allan Cook always had a great input while I was there, and Brian Horder as well. I formed great friendships with these people. I'd become involved in the committee because I had four sons at the club and so I was interested in the club's welfare.

"Stuart and Barbara Abbott were always fantastic, and Kevin Smith and Ross Crawley, who are both now deceased, were tremendous to work with as well. It was a great time in my life, and I'm proud to have been involved along with my sons at the Bulls."



Above: Heath L'Estrange playing for Bradford Bulls in the English Super League.

PETER HEATH



The Bulls are well served by players who have given the organisation loyal service of over 300 games. As a coach and trainer it is approaching four decades of active involvement for Peter Heath.

Warren and Elizabeth Heath had three sons - David, Paul and Peter. Warren loved rugby league, especially the Western Suburbs Magpies, and his love for the game led to him registering a four-year-old Peter and six-year-old Paul with the Bulls in 1975. Both the boys had an immediate passion for the game. Paul played in the under

7s and Peter in the under 6s, a team captained by prop Cameron McInnes in the Green Valley Competition. Warren coached a young Peter, starting him on the wing in his tender years. Warren was a hard task-master, as Peter would attest.

“I played in every game except the grand final,” Peter said. “My dad just said ‘you’re five years old, this is not your time, your time will come.’” Peter’s tenacious attitude coupled with his copy-book low tackling style was his hallmark. Soon he had moved to the middle of the paddock. Peter was revered, his time had come. Warren, the coach and Junior Committee member, was a strong supporter of senior football, and each Sunday the Heath family would be on the sidelines cheering the boys on. When asked what his most vivid memory of those days was, Peter responded: “As a kid, I

use to be ballboy at Jasper, which was pretty cool. I loved watching Wayne Morrow play. He was the C-grade hooker and he was awesome. Tough, a great defender, and skilful around the rucks. Years later at Crestwood it was a bloke called Pancho Ryan. I loved watching him - he had it all.”

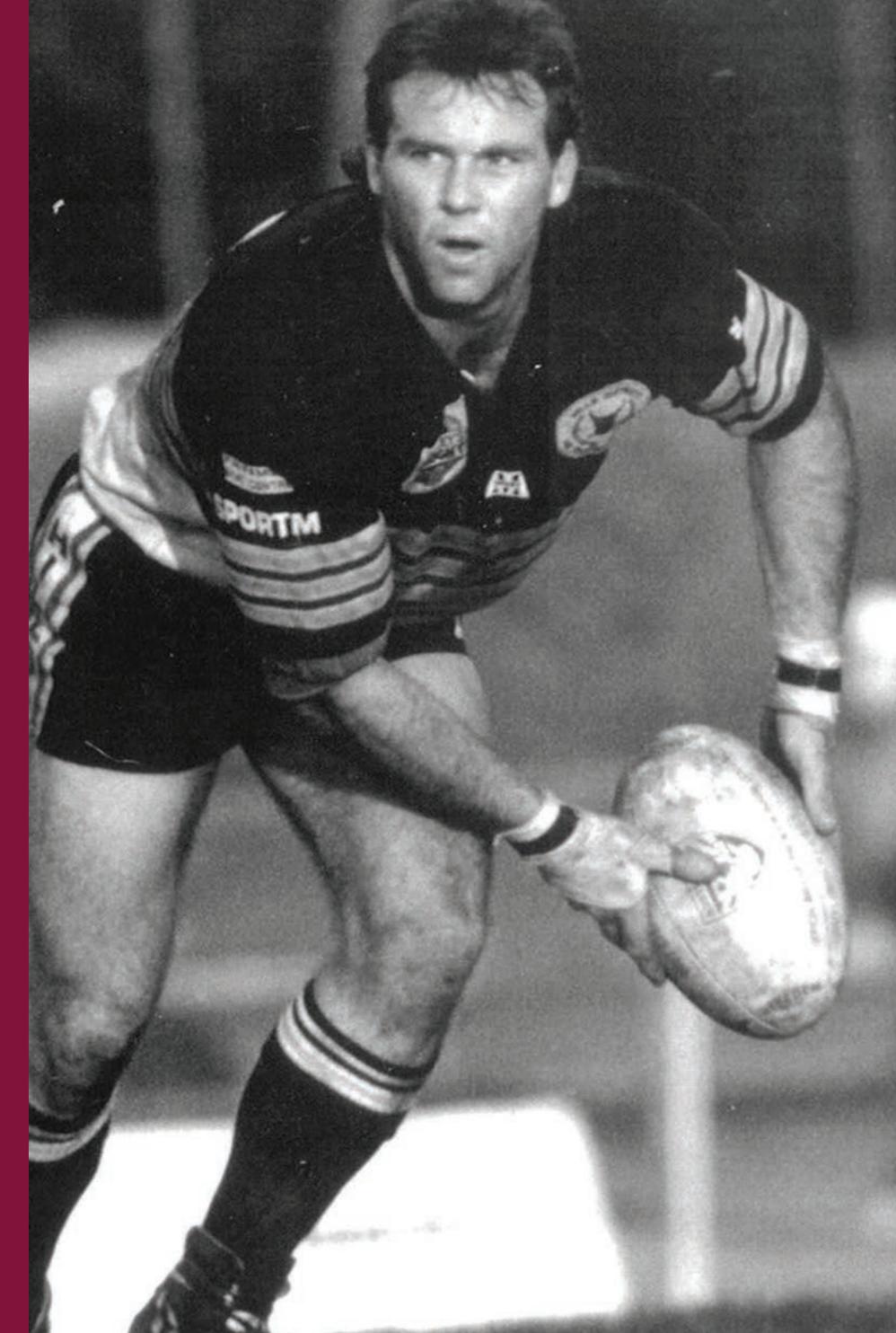
Warren served on the club executive for a number of years before his untimely passing at an early age in 1981, this was compounded by the loss of Peter’s brother Paul. As a 12-year-old, it was hard for Peter to comprehend values or characteristics, but the adulation that Warren had gained in his death sits comfortably with him. “I understand dad told it like it was, he was honest and he was respected for his honesty, and his word was his bond,” Peter said. “I hope that I am that person as well.”

Peter started working with junior teams in 1990, and by 1994 was coach of the U/15s at the Bulls. It was around this time his mentoring and development of players reaped rewards. His coaching skills were to be further enhanced with an eight-year association with the Parramatta Eels Development squad. His alliance with the



junior reps began in 1995 and escalated to the stage where he was head coach from 1997-2003. “Looking back, I am very privileged to have played with some great players in some great teams,” Peter said. “I’ve also been able to learn from great coaches, and coached some very talented young men. The club has been like a family to me. When things got tough there was always someone to help out. Families like the McCafferys, the Tyquins and the Horders are very special to me. Brian is like a father and one of my best mates. I think of the friendships and that’s why I love this club so much.”

Testament to Peter’s loyalty and dedication to the club is that he proudly wears a Bull’s head tattoo on his right calf.







THE NEW PROFESSIONALISM 1996 - 2000

"IT WAS A MASSIVE PART OF MY LIFE FOR SO MANY YEARS, AND I STILL FEEL A PART OF THE CLUB NOW. IT TAUGHT ME AS A FOOTBALLER AND AS A PERSON. THEY ARE A FANTASTIC GROUP OF PEOPLE AT THE CLUB. THE BULLS MEAN THE WORLD TO ME."

WADE L'ESTRANGE

If you stay still, you get left behind, and the Hills Bulls is a club that has always worked hard to avoid that happening. The Bulls may not have had the huge advantage of the financial backing of a licensed club, but many of the people in charge of the club over the years could not have been matched for commitment, desire, and foresight.

The Bulls moved into a new era of professionalism in the second half of the 1990s with the adoption of a strategic plan, in a move that set the club up to enter the new millennium in style. Following the election of a new executive committee in mid-1995, an extraordinary general meeting was convened to resolve a number of significant issues which were confronting the club. Arising from this meeting it was agreed the club needed to undertake a complete review of its Governance and Management Policies and Procedures in order for the club to continue to function effectively and efficiently. A formal meeting which was convened at the Baulkham Hills Sporting Club was coordinated by the executive committee with a large attendance of members, players and supporters. Following lengthy, comprehensive and spirited discussion and debate, the attendees reached a consensus that the club should develop a formal, five-year Strategic Plan based on contemporary commercial and business practices.



The initial broad parameters and objectives for the plan were agreed and the executive were tasked with the responsibility of completing and implementing the Strategic Plan. The final plan detailed strategic goals and objectives which the executive believed were essential for the club to meet. The key areas addressed were:

Existing and Potential Funding Sources.

Enhanced Revenue/Cash Flow Management.

Enhanced alliances with current and new Sponsors.

Possible Partnerships with Local Clubs and/or Hotels.

Coaching and Development Programs for Coaches and Players.

Introduction of Scholarships for Gifted Junior Players.

Development of a Long-term Capital Works Program for Buildings and Playing Fields.

The Club's Future Participation in Senior Football Grades.

The plan was approved by the executive and endorsed by members. It became effective in 1996, when one of the key objectives of the plan - the construction of the new canteen/offices and change facilities - commenced at Crestwood Oval. As is the case in many Strategic Plans, whilst many of the goals and objectives were fully achieved, others were only partly achieved, or in some cases deferred. In this regard, the most unfortunate but unavoidable decision contained in the plan related to the club's future participation in the Metropolitan Cup.

The management committee elected at the close of the 1995 season made the decision to withdraw from the Metropolitan Cup in 1996. Whilst this decision was originally made for the 1996 season only, the club suffered a significant financial shortfall and in the mid 90's a new management committee was elected to resolve the financial crisis.

Disappointingly, but necessarily, after much debate and with sincere regret, the new committee made the decision that the club would be unable to seek admission in future Metropolitan Cups. That was an unfortunate negative, but sometimes in life you have to take a backward step before you can go forward again and the Bulls inevitably recovered.

Allan Cook was the club president at the time, and he recalled that the implementation and commencement of the Strategic Plan "heralded the start of a stabilising period in the club's history". "Capital works identified in the plan would be successfully undertaken, existing and new funding sources would be identified and enhanced, and a Junior Scholarship Scheme would commence," Cook said. "The major Capital Works Program at Crestwood involving a new canteen, board-room, and amenities facilities, was completed and opened in 1997. Significant upgrades of lighting on Crestwood's main fields, one and two, together with training lights on the soccer field three were also completed, providing substantial improvements for training and competition matches. The keenly anticipated Junior Scholarship Scheme commenced in 1998, with our promising players being sponsored to attend training camps conducted by the New South Wales Rugby League at Armidale and Narrabeen."

On the playing field, the junior teams continued on their winning way with premierships in the following grades:

Under 10 (1) 1996.

Under 11 (4) 1996, under 11(1) 1997.

Under 12 (3) 1997, under 12 (1) 1998.

Under 13 (1) 1998, under 13 (1) 1999.

Under 17 (1) 1998.

C Grade (1) 1997, C Grade (1) 2000.





Cook said the Bulls continued to produce outstanding junior representative players in the second half of the 1990s, with Sean L'Estrange, David Martinez, Ross Giardina, Nathan McMillan, Nathan Lindner, Heath L'Estrange, Patrick Inskip and John Williams winning selection in Harold Matthews competition teams. "From this group of outstanding young players, Heath L'Estrange and John Williams progressed through the ranks to play first grade in the NRL," Cook said. "The Bulls also supplied players to the Jersey Flegg representative sides, with Wade L'Estrange, Daniel Roddy, Ryan Steele, Sean L'Estrange and Luke Taggart winning selection. Wade L'Estrange went on to play first grade for Parramatta before a serious injury ended his young career at that level. The Bulls continued to perform strongly overall in the Parramatta District competition and were highly placed in both the Junior Incentive and Club Championship awards. The club was justifiably rewarded for its efforts by winning the Club Championship in 2000. In the A grade and A reserve grade, the Bulls went through another difficult period, culminating in the club being unable to field senior teams in 1999. But, as a result of the outstanding efforts of club officials, the Bulls reformed their A-grade sides in 2000 and had a great year, with the top side qualifying for the grand final. Their fantastic efforts in rebuilding the senior sides that year went on to pay huge dividends in 2001, when the Bulls made history by winning the A, A reserve and C grade grand finals on the same day."

Some great men had been heavily responsible for the Bulls developing from nothing into the tremendous club it was in the early-to-mid 1990s, and some more huge contributors to the cause emerged as that decade rolled on. One of those was John Young, who would eventually become a long-serving treasurer at the club. Like it does with so many people who end up becoming tied to the Bulls for good, Young's association began when he wanted to register his eldest son, the then six-year-old Robert, to play football in 1992. "Barry L'Estrange was a family friend and was also president of the football club, so the Bulls was the obvious choice," Young recalled. "John McLennan, a then board member, found out I was in business so the following year I ended up becoming a team jumper sponsor. I also got involved in general

committee duties as required. This was to be the beginning of an involvement with the club that has gone for more than 20 years. I remember the Sunday afternoons at Ted Horwood, helping sell beer in the tent at Metro Cup games followed by a Chinese feed and a few beers at the sports club while the kids played in the rooms downstairs. When Metro Cup came back to Crestwood so too did the beer tent. Many Sunday afternoons were spent watching senior footy on the hill. The friends our children and family have made over the years are a testament to a great Junior Rugby League Football Club."

Young believes the greatest strength of the Bulls is "its ability to welcome players, parents and friends into the Hills Bulls family". "There has always been an emphasis on giving any boy who comes over the hill a game of footy in a side suitable to his ability," Young said. "Hills have, in my time, never been focused on winning only first division premierships. We fostered a belief in developing footy skills to the best of a boy's ability regardless of the division in which he played. Don't get me wrong, Hills likes winning, but not at the expense of the boys not enjoying the sport."



Playing hard and doing your best is its own reward. Footy has always been the winner at Hills.” Young’s three sons all played for the Bulls. Robert is in his 20th season at the club, having missed 2010 and ’12. He has played more than 300 games for the Bulls and won seven premierships. “Robert was captain of the last senior side to win a premiership - C grade, in 2005 - when he also won the Parramatta District Best & Fairest Player award,” Young said proudly. “He captained A grade for several years, most recently in 2011 when the team narrowly lost the grand final. Robert also won the Michael Green ‘mini’ award in 1993, the Marj Radford award in 2002 and the Senior Clubman of the Year award two times - 2005 and 2011. Robert has played the most games for the club of any current player. Greg played for 13 seasons between 1994 and 2008, right up to A grade, and was captain in nine of those years. Greg won the Best and Fairest Player awards in five seasons, but the only premiership team he played in was at All Saints in 2000. Greg played close to 200 games for Hills. And Thomas is in his 13th season for the club this year. He played every year from 1998 to 2009, and in 2010 and ’11 he played for Parramatta’s under-20s Toyota Cup Team. Unfortunately, some serious injuries kept Thomas sidelined in 2012. Thomas was part of a champion team in an age division of other champion teams. His team managed to win premierships in 2003 and ’05. Thomas won the Michael Green ‘Mod’ award in 2001 and has played close to 200 games for Hills.”

Young’s wife, Allyson, was also involved at the Bulls for many years in the canteen and on social and fundraising committees, providing valuable support to the operations of the football club. The junior touch football competition, which had run for more than decade, had been allowed by the club’s administration to lapse, but in the summer of 1996-97 Barbara Abbott, Helen Jurd and Dianne Cleal, along with Allyson, re-established the competition at Memorial Ave, Kellyville. This gave boys and girls the opportunity to play summer touch as well as raising more valuable dollars to run the club. John Young became a touch football delegate for the Bulls in 1998, and joined the club’s board in 2000. “I served as treasurer until 2008,” Young said. “During that time, and going back into the 1990s, I worked alongside many

committed, unselfish people. All worked many hours every week to ensure the smooth operation of the football club. Without the tireless efforts of the various club presidents the club’s 50th year would never have been reached. The club made me a life member in 2007, which is a great honour. The club has played a big part in my family over the past 20 years.”

Young estimated that during his 20-plus years at the club there would have been well over 1500 coaches, trainers, managers, committee members and general helpers involved. “Over the 50 years of the club I guess this would add up to well over 3000 people who have worked hard to ensure their boys can get a game of footy,” he said. “Everyone involved should be very proud indeed.” Young said there had been 13 ex-first grade players involved in coaching at the Bulls since the early 1990s. They were Tas Baitieri, David Brooks, John Davidson, Gary Freeman, Geoff Gerard, Steve Hanson, Ken Hey, Stan Jurd, Michael Moseley, Andrew Ryan, Dallas Weston, Ken Wolffe and Peter Wynn. “I was asked to nominate who I thought were the best coaches in my time at the club,” Young said. “As a junior coach, up to under 17s, I



Above: Captains Corner: C Grade captain Ryan Byrne and A Grade captain Darrell “Scratchy” Abbott enjoy a victory in 2000.

would say Steve Sullivan. He had a gift in understanding and developing his boys. He is closely followed by John Abbott, who I believe has probably been involved with more teams than anyone else at Hills. As a senior coach, without doubt Peter Heath. His ability to get the best from his troops is undeniable. Peter has Hills blood in him. Over many, many years ‘Heathy’ has been one of the most passionate Hills identities. There have been many champion teams at Hills over the last 50 years, but my pick as the best is the team that first started as under 7/1s in 1993. They stayed together through the years and either won the premiership or finished runners-up many times. During the latter part of their time together they went undefeated for four years. I’m proud to say my son Robert was a part of this team and is currently playing Sydney Shield for Hills. The side boasted many magnificent players over the years. David Williams and Blake Green went on to play first grade, and Jarrod Farlow, Patrick Inskip and Nathan Armit played NSW Cup. In my opinion, the best player was Mark Murphy, who got a bad leg injury that shortened his career.”

Young said that among the biggest contributors to the Bulls were several families, whose involvement in some cases went way back to the early days in the 1960s. “The Abbott family, the Gremmo family, the Heath family, the Shanahan family – these families have provided players, officials, contributors and supporters for most of the 50 years,” he said. “I’d also like to thank Mark Mahoney and Paul Griffin for their participation in all club activities and their generous sponsorship over many, many years. And Steve and Bev Sullivan for their thousands of hours of work for the club. In my time with the club there have been many exceptional contributors. I list those who I believe deserve special mention, but everyone’s efforts over the years are to be congratulated. The success of the club has been created by those thousands of volunteers, in all areas, whose time and effort has been greatly appreciated by all the boys who have had the opportunity to play footy at Hills.”

The 1990s closed, and the Bulls were entering the new millennium. It was the involvement of the type of people Young is talking about that would lead to the continued growth of the club over the next decade.

Right: Luke Taggart, Johnno Page, Warren Frome showing off their Hills Bulls Tattoos.



PAUL GRIFFIN

Paul Griffin is the epitome of what the Hills Bulls club is all about. He played here, he has coached here for the best part of two decades - and he even sponsors the club. Now, that's commitment.

Griffin, who backs the Bulls through his company - Griffin Air Conditioning - played for the Bulls in 1988 and again from 1991-94. He began coaching immediately not long after that, and is in charge of the Sydney Shield side in the club's 50th year.

He must love the club, right? Of course he does.

"I loved playing, the mateship, I loved all of it," Griffin said. "With coaching, I enjoy being part of the team, teaching kids and hopefully men (even though they know all) about the game and what it really means to be part of a team and the commitment it takes to be successful.

"I'm proud to be part of what I believe is the best junior league club in the world, and its successes in matches, premierships, and the development of kids that go on to bigger and better things on and off the field.

"All this is done with no backing from a leagues club and all through hard work from volunteers. We all should be proud of the part we play or have played."

But it could have been so tragically different for Griffin. He was hit by a car on Showground Road, Castle Hill, on Melbourne Cup day, 1994, and was left fighting for his life.

"I had head injuries and a busted leg," Griffin said. "It was pretty serious. I basically died on the road, and I've been told they revived me three times while I was there. I was in Westmead Hospital for four weeks, and in a coma for two of those.

"It changed my life to a big degree. It made me concentrate on my work and that sort of stuff, and I got into coaching, which I love. A year or two after the accident I started coaching kids at the Bulls. My nephews had come down to play.

"I've basically coached ever since, and some of those kids I coached are now in the Sydney Shield side that I'm coaching. I've mostly coached kids over the years, and this year is my first real crack at senior footy."

Griffin says one of the biggest joys he has received out of coaching is to see kids grow up into solid citizens.

"My greatest memories at the club are of winning a premiership, the time I've spent with my mates, and seeing kids you've coached go on to play grade and become good men," he said.

"It has always been a big family where you don't always agree with everything that goes on, or the way things are done, but I hope we're all here for the same thing and that's to give our kids a home to play footy at for their whole sporting life.

"I'm still involved by coaching and sponsoring, and my son has played here since he was four. He's in the 14s and already has 10 years' service up."

Griffin says he is proud of what the Bulls club means in the Hills District community.

"All of the people who are local to the Hills area know of the Bulls, whether they've been involved in the club or not," he said. "They know someone who is or has been involved.

"I'm sure it's a club that is respected within the community for its success in accommodating so many kids and families, and for its longevity. It's probably respected and despised at the same time by other smaller clubs because of its successes on the field as well as off."

Griffin says the Bulls club is still here and thriving today because of the tremendous commitment made to it by so many unselfish people over its 50-year history.

"There are a lot of smart, committed people who have kept this place not only running, but growing," he said. "It all started a long time ago with the people who built the foundations of the club.

"We've had people come in who have done the wrong thing by the club, stealing and taking advantage of their position, but the commitment of the majority have overcome these setbacks and they all should be proud of their efforts."



Above: Paul Griffin (middle back) with the Under 11's 2010 Premiers.
Right: Paul's son Jayden.





HISTORIC TREBLE 2001

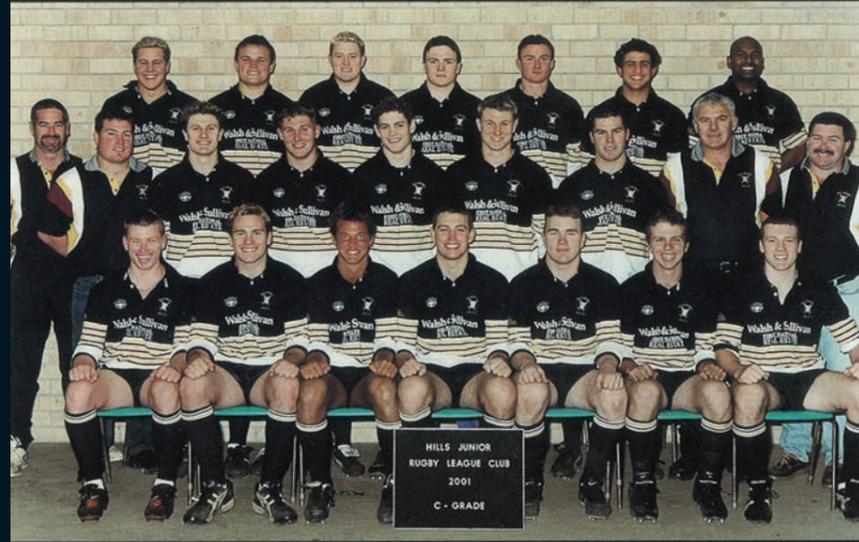
"THE CLUB HAS BEEN A BIG PART OF MY LIFE. I HAVE MADE MANY FRIENDS AND WILL ALWAYS CONSIDER MYSELF PART OF THE HILLS FAMILY. ONCE A BULL, ALWAYS A BULL!"

DARRELL ABBOTT

It doesn't get any bigger than 2001 for the Hills Bulls. There have been many other great years, but this was the greatest. All of those present will remember forever the last day of the season, when the Bulls won the C grade, A reserve and A grade grand finals at Ringrose Park. It was the first time the Bulls had achieved the feat, and only the second time it had happened in the history of the Parramatta District competition, which began in 1947. Trust the Mighty, Mighty Bulls to achieve something so rare. It was just one of those special days that got better and better as the sense of anticipation grew with each win. First it was the C-grade team, blasting unbeaten Cabramatta off the park 32-10 in a stunning upset. Next, it was the turn of the A-reserve side, which was too good for Merrylands, 42-18. Two out of two. The A-reserve team had lost just one game all season, and that was to a team which was subsequently elevated to A grade in a re-grading and made the semi-finals at that level. Could the A-graders etch their names in history by making it three out of three? They were going into the game unbeaten that season, but so had Cabramatta in the C-grade grand final and it didn't do them any good. Would another hot favourite bite the dust, or would the Bulls handle the pressure that had increased with the two earlier wins and come out on top? The answer was emphatic. The Bulls beat Lalor Park 52-10. History had been made.

The reports from the three successful coaches – Barry Rudd (C grade), Peter Heath (A reserve) and David Brooks (A grade) – in the 2001 yearbook capture the essence of what this season was all about for their teams. The C-grade side had to deal with a massive injury toll, and then displayed an attitude that Rudd firmly believed wasn't right if they hoped to go all the way. He resigned as coach at one stage, as a last report to try to shock the team into action.

“At times we played with 10 forwards, played with 11 fit players and other making up numbers,” Rudd said in his report. “We struggled for space at training. We had one home game all year [a Thursday night game in front of two men and a dog]. Each week we bought time in the hope that those players would recover from injury, each week brought about another setback, yet the players continued to meet and



overcome adversity. The diversity of the competition meant we could win by playing within our ability. Each week we would score well over 44 points (average 8.7 tries a week). In round 10, a 34-28 loss to Cabra taught us a lesson about mental preparation. It was just that we did not want to learn. Rain, work and injuries continued to mar our season. Unfortunately, some players were happy with their lot. A culture of ‘she’ll be right’ was rampant from a core of players. Disappointingly, it was the best players. The matter, although recognised since the beginning of the year, was ‘white-anting’ the full potential of the squad. Desperate times required desperate measures. As coach and players we had different objectives. I knew what was required to win, the players had the ability. Together we didn’t share the work/mental ethic. At the end of the day the players were and remain the most important aspect of sport. It is their sport, their recreation. I could not deny them the chance of success, so for the betterment of the squad it was necessary to tender my resignation and hopefully a fresh broom would instil the motivation that they ONLY get one shot at a premiership. Two weeks elapsed before a benchmark and a workable arrangement could be

attained. In a time to look forward and not back, an air of confidence began to evolve. We became mentally tougher, we worked harder and we executed our skills more proficiently. We became unified to be the best we could be. Unfortunately, leading up to the major semi, the preparation was disjointed by the antics and apathy by a few. The major semi saw Hills play with plenty of resolve. Fifteen minutes into the second half and locked at 14-all, the crippling 9-1 penalty count resulted in a drubbing. Losses of our form forward Dave Tierney (broken jaw) and five-eighth Jarryd Gordon (ribs) meant the call-up of Heath L'Estrange from the under 16s. Desperate to make the grand final, Hills did what they do best when the question is put to them, scoring 10 tries to eliminate Fairfield United 52- 14 in the final. A fitting finale for the two best teams in the competition would now come down to 70 minutes. It was the business end of the season and still some players failed to have urgency or the mental toughness to apply themselves. Individually, some players were struggling with illness, fitness and injury. John Williams (under 16s) was called into the squad. Nearly to a man, each had to play under adversity. As a team, game-plans and strategies were not our focal point but putting the question to the players regarding desire, determination and discipline; for as a team, we always had the ability. History shows Hills won the grand final 32-10 against an undefeated Cabra team. However, it will not be tabled the absolute commitment, on one day in September, to achieve that result. In the space of 70 minutes the Hills C grade had turned from the ugly duckling into a swan. For all those involved on the day, I trust the memories are etched in your mind forever. To lose players with serious injuries, for players to return to the fray ‘busted’ and players to continue to perform when they were physically ‘hurting’ was certainly inspirational. In one event there are a hundred stories, you have certainly captured the adulation and respect for your endeavours, well done! You, along with the successful A/2s (coached by club favourite Peter Heath) and the undefeated A/1s (coached by Dave Brooks), have made history at the Hills District RLFC, and although your efforts may be emulated, you were the first. Congratulations.”



This was Peter Heath's report of the A-reserve team's success, as it appeared in the yearbook: “After a long hot summer campaign the Reggies’ quest for the Ron Bridle Memorial Trophy got off to a shaky start with three pretty ordinary efforts. A 36-point drubbing by A Grade Semi Finalist Fairfield United, a scratchy 14-10 victory over a 12 man Lalor Park outfit and a hard fought 14-18 loss to local nemesis Wenty saw the Bulls at one from three. The coach knew that there had to be better days ahead. Adam Firth in his first year of football, very raw but with a lot of potential, struck up a good combination with big bad Coops, who was to be a lynchpin in the Bulls’ pack for the year. Bad news for the Reggies was the good form and great skill of little Hawke, Don the King and fatty Taggart that would see them elevated to A Grade in the coming weeks (Thanks Brooksy you bastard). The Bull machine clicked into high gear racking up a couple of 80-point scorelines against very ordinary opposition but also came crashing back to earth with a 24-all draw against a highly unpredictable and committed Seven Hills outfit. If not for the efforts of Stuart Argent with some brilliant try saving defence this could have been another loss for the boys. The return from overseas by Gazza Cleal bolstered an already very strong forward



pack with Bathurst boy Toole, Warren (the wog boy) Frome and Big Ray causing damage over the next few weeks of the competition. The second round clash against Lalor Park was the highlight for many of the old boys. Skipper Fin, Hard Man Shane and young gun Ryan Tramonte turned on a display that would make any coach proud. Finishing off out wide that day were try scoring machines Dean (Eric Grothe) Donovan and Nigel (Gary Belcher) Kennedy. Finney's rendition of the song can still be heard echoing through the Venn Oval dressing sheds. Big Ritchie (the Porn) all the way from Cass in England struck up a great combination with Mark (I've joined the 300 club) Harvey, who along with Big Kam proved a handful all season in attack often leaving the opposition looking like nine-pins on their way to the tryline. The depth of the club was shown towards the end of the year when classy backs Marty Byrnes and Scott (Best Eye) Clark were unlucky not to gain selection in the semi-final teams but their efforts at training and commitment to the team was outstanding. The loss of five-eighth and playmaker Brent (Keegs) Keegan in the last game before the semis left some big shoes to fill, but big man Paul Casey had feet just big enough to fill them. His efforts in the major semi-final against Wentworthville earning him 3 points and Man of the Match restored a lot of faith in his ability after being hooked the week before against a low rated Brumbies outfit. He posted a try and set up one of the best ever tries to be scored at McCredie. The ball to tough tackling Aaron (Tooves) O'Malley will be one that stays with the coach forever. The game was a hard fought, typical Hills/Wenty clash with everyone playing their part with Toole, Coops, Frame doing the hard yards and playing to the coach's instructions Wenty were never in the game. Although they did hold the ball for 20 minutes in the second half they could only score one try against a very committed and determined Bulls outfit. Ringrose Park was the scene for the Grand Final and with plenty of Bulls supporters in the crowd Ruddy's C Grade got the day off to a great start and what will go down as history in the Parramatta District. The Bulls captained by Finney were far too strong for the Merrylands outfit racing away to a 24-6 lead at halftime. With Dane Gilmour at his brilliant best and Nathan (Spud) Larter working his little backside off the Reggies were doing it easy. Big Justin Elliott's effort not only to get back on the

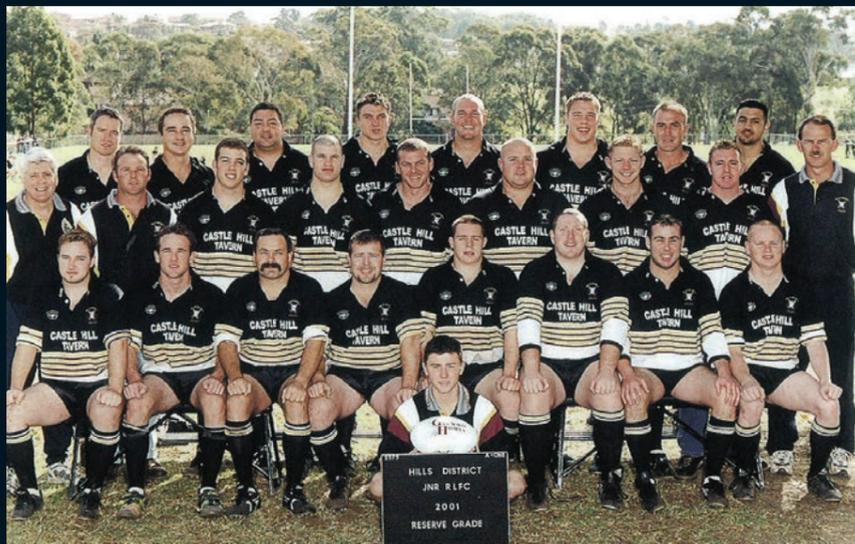
field this year but to play the way he did in the major semi and the grand final along with Halves, Firth and Cleal could have seen all four in the starting lineup. The depth in this team definitely the strongest I've ever coached with all four playing A Grade during the year. The passion, commitment and dedication in this team proved to be their winning recipe with the experience of the old and the enthusiasm of the new it has been an honour and a privilege to be associated with all of you. Many thanks also to the training staff Peter Byrne, Michael Williams, Big Stinger, Greg May and First Aid Man Steve Wilson. Hilton Byrne's work each week was absolutely priceless and to my old mate Brian (BJ) Jewell thank you very much, without you all we couldn't have done it. Love yus all Heathy."

David Brooks, the former Balmain Tigers forward and coach of the A-Grade side, said in the yearbook that his team's stunning, unbeaten season was the result of a combination of great play and – beyond that – great planning and nurturing of the club's juniors by the Bulls management. "What a year! Undefeated premiers is something we spoke about at season's start and as the year drew on, it was to become reality," Brooks said. "A truly great effort by all A grade players to achieve something that will be recorded and talked about for a long time to come. On Grand Final day we kicked it off with a C Grade victory against the odds; A Grade to defeat Lalor Park in the way we did, really stamped us as the best team, not only on the day, but all season long. On reflection, the year seemed to drag on with byes, washouts and inept finals scheduling which saw us finish the year with three games in six weeks. Not exactly the ideal preparation to win the big one, but to all the players' credit they stuck to it and in the end we just needed to get stuck in and play footy. A great set of forwards is something Hills have not had for a few years, but the troops this year stepped up never to be dominated by the opposition, a fact that made our quicksilver backline bristle with anticipation every time the ball came their way. Everybody did themselves very proud to play, and conduct themselves, in a manner befitting the image of Hills District. I don't want to single any one individual out in what was a terrific team effort from a champion bunch of boys. Some of the 2000 C-graders made the

progression to A Grade with ease and they will not be the last as our production line continues with this year's success. A lot of hard work has gone into the Hills these past two years behind the scenes. Our success on the field comes from strong management and development of our juniors, something that is now in place to secure our future. Thank you to my two lower grade coaches, who without their support A Grade would not have been so successful. No matter who played A Grade on the day, they put in, and sometimes the next week would play reggies without a word of discontent. We are a happy club and that's the way to succeed. A few thank yous to finish - Buggs, it has all come together, and Silver, my right hand man. It's been great to work with you all, and many thanks. Go you Bulls....A very happy coach, David Brooks."

Speaking this year, Brooks said he remembered that after it had just missed out on the title in 2000, the A-grade side was "bigger, better, faster, stronger and smarter" in 2001. "Plus, we had a few pick-ups in the off-season," he said. "We had some tough games, but we had a happy club. We all trained together in the senior sides, and everyone contributed – from A grade to C grade. All three teams knew each other, and the young boys could fill in for A and A reserve, which they did from time to time. The coaching staff and support staff did a great job. No stone was unturned to get the desired result. The attention to detail at the club was really outstanding. That was something that I think went a long way to achieving the success of 2001. To see the Hills ground full on a Sunday, or playing Mounties under lights on a Friday night, it doesn't get any better. The fire still burns – Bulls, Bulls, Bulls."

Darrell "Scratchy" Abbott was a proud member and captain of that A-grade side, and remembers the season with extreme fondness. "I played with four players that I coached as under sevens, eights and nines," he said. "Thirteen of the 17 grand final players grew up playing for Hills. This is very special for a club to have so many players playing at the highest level who have been at the club since the juniors. This highlights the loyalty and passion our players have for the club. We went through



the year undefeated. It was good to share our victory with the A reserve and C grade teams and was even sweeter winning at Wenty's home ground."

Also speaking now, Barry Rudd recalled how difficult it had been to gather a strong C-grade squad because many of the players from the premierships-winning 2000 team were no longer eligible due to their age. "Only four players were eligible, and two of the Hills juniors had representative commitments with no finite date of availability," he said. "The recruitment of players was prolonged and frustrating; initially starting with five, then 11, and then gradually 45 players sought to play. Natural attrition accounted for the dropout of half that number. The squad could be best described as diverse. Six players had never played first division, another two were returning from extended "breaks" from the game. Jason Commisso, Steve Smith, Matt Rankin and captain Daniel Hearn added their experience to the squad.

"The preseason trials saw the Hills C grade sweep all before them, scoring a host of tries yet conceding only five in five matches. The squad's credentials indicated that the Hills C-grade side would be again competitive and hence our first objective was overcome. Our trials took a heavy toll with three of our more skilled players suffering long term injuries. One of the new recruits, Matt Rankin, suffered a neck/spinal injury and was required to be airlifted to Westmead Hospital. An Easter break, a forfeit, ground closures plus the loss of players for varying reasons meant the early rounds would not have the impact on the season as we would have scripted. There were a number of quality players unavailable for lengthy periods - from a squad of 22 the C grade was struggling to field a team. Still, the diversity of the competition meant the team could win whilst playing within their ability. Complacency became rampant from the core of players. Unfortunately, it was the better players."

After Rudd resigned, Wade L'Estrange stepped in as caretaker coach, but, after two weeks, what was described as a "workable arrangement" was attained and Rudd returned. "We were all looking forward, an air of confidence began to evolve," Rudd said." The players worked harder, executed skills more proficiently, and had become mentally tougher. The C grade had become unified to fulfil their potential. History shows they won the grand final 32-10 against an undefeated Cabra team. It typified absolute commitment to overcome the emotional and physical hurdles to capture the adulation and respect for their endeavours. The first match of Sunday on that one day in September was to be a milestone in the club's history."

The Bulls won five premierships in 2001, and that included the under 15s, first division side that had grown up together and which had now won six out of seven grand finals. Many other junior teams advanced to the finals as well. There were also major developments off the field, with the touch football competition being separated from the junior league. Each division had its own board and cost centre. The introduction of the club's website in 2001 was a major step forward in the area of information technology, and received instant approval from club members. Rob



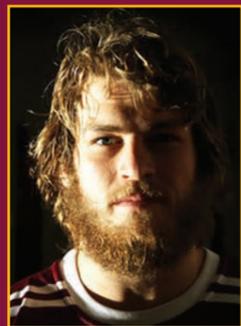
Mooney spent countless hours setting up and maintaining the website, and for that the club was extremely grateful. Once again, the club's sponsorship and social committee came to the fore and exceeded expectations with the sourcing of sponsorships and the structuring of fundraising programs.

You can't have success on the field without hard work off it, and it was clear in 2001 that the Bulls had the right formula in place. The historic day when our undefeated A-grade side, as well as the A-reserve and C-grade sides, completed the premiership treble was the ultimate proof of that.

Right: Brad O'Reilly takes on A Grade coach Dave Brooks in League Olympics.



DAVID WILLIAMS



David “Wolfman” Williams says the first thing that struck him when he switched clubs to start playing for the Bulls as a boy was that he felt “out of my depth”. That can be a good thing or a bad thing, depending on your attitude. For Williams, it was a good thing.

“It was good for my footy because I knew I was going to get the chance to improve, playing with these guys,” Williams said. “I was only 10 when I started playing for the Bulls.

My folks are from Winston Hills, so I started playing for the Winston Hills Hawks in a catholic comp, but then one year there weren’t enough players in my age group. My older brother, John, was already switching clubs anyway, so I went with him. I started playing in good teams and getting good coaching straight away. I was in a team that had a purple patch of form for five years. I think we won the comp every year except one during that time. I was playing with good players, like Blake Green, Pat Inskip and Mark Murphy, and ‘Leafy’ (Grant Leafy) was a great coach.”

Williams went on to establish himself as an NRL premiership winner at Manly, and a NSW and Australian representative, playing on the wing. But at the Bulls he spent most of his time either as a centre or in the second-row. “I actually came across from the Hawks as a halfback, but I think they saw my lack of a passing game,” Williams laughed. “I played centre, second-row and a bit of fullback. It was a really good

grounding for me at the Bulls. We had a great bunch of blokes in the team and I’m still mates with them now. The coaching staff, the whole club, it was great. The players’ families all mixed in well, everyone got along.”

As Williams began to mature as a footballer, it became clear he had something special. “I played in the same team up until the under 15s, and then I played some C-grade and A-grade,” Williams said. “When I was 16 I jumped up to the under 17s, and played some more C and A grade. I played with my brother, who is 19 months older than me, for a bit.” Asked what it was like to play with grown men in A grade when he was only 15, Williams replied: “I learned a lot quicker. It put me in good stead for later on, when I started playing Harold Matthew and SG Ball and Premier League at Parramatta.” Williams was eventually signed by Manly, where coach Des Hasler turned him into a winger. “When Dessie comes up to you and says ‘do you want to play first grade?’ it doesn’t matter what position it is, even if you might prefer another one. John and I always enjoyed playing for the Bulls. Once we got there, we never thought about going anywhere else. Looking back, I’ve got great memories of playing at Crestwood Oval, where you can smell the barbie while you’re out on the field. It’s a real family club. You knew everyone who was there. It was a really tight-knit group of people.”

Williams’ father, Michael, has had an involvement with the Bulls as a coach and trainer as well. That’s the way it is with the club – so many families become involved. Williams said John, who also went on to establish himself as a winger in the NRL, played mostly second-row at the Bulls. John, 28, played for Parramatta, Sydney Roosters, North Queensland and Cronulla before retiring at the end of last season. David, 26, exploded on the first-grade scene in 2008, when he won the competition with Manly and also made his Test debut. He made his State of Origin debut for NSW in 2009, and has played two Tests and two Origins. One of Williams’ teammates in that 2008 Sea Eagles side was Heath L’Estrange, another Bulls junior. It is a unique achievement for two Bulls juniors to be in the one NRL premiership-winning team.

“Heath and I came back to the club a few years ago and did a training session with one of the young teams,” Williams said. “I think it might have been an under-10s side. It was great fun. It reminded me of how much I enjoyed it when I was a kid, playing for the club. The Bulls have never had the backing of a licensed club, so to keep the club running it needed people who wanted to be there. The volunteers who kept turning up to do all of the jobs at the club were the beating heart of the place, and still are today. The Bulls is a club that can only function if people want it to function, and there are so many people who have generously given their time over the years because they wanted to see the club do well.”





PEOPLE AND PROGRESS 2002 - 2012

"THE BULLS IS ABOUT GIVING KIDS AT ALL LEVELS OF ABILITY A CHANCE TO PLAY FOOTY. CONGRATULATIONS TO THE THOUSANDS OF VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE MADE IT ALL POSSIBLE."

JOHN YOUNG



The Hills Bulls recognises what it must do to keep pace with other clubs in the future, but at the same time honours its past. Fittingly, those who built the Bulls remain an important part of the club's existence in this, its 50th year. The key, in the first decade of the new millennium, was to find a balance between progress and tradition. The Bulls did this by establishing modern management practices that strengthened the club's financial position, whilst not forgetting the contribution made by its fathers. Without those elder statesmen, the club wouldn't exist. Steve Sullivan, who became involved with the Bulls when his daughter, Danielle, played for the club in the 1990s, went on to establish a great career for himself at the Bulls. First, he became a successful and highly-respected coach, and then, in 2003, he took over as club secretary. In 2007, he became president. Sullivan said the club management saw it as their responsibility to tie the club's present – and, so, its future – to the past, after the relationship had shown signs of strain.

At the end of 2001, the club's finances had deteriorated significantly, forcing a reduction in funding. Sullivan recalled: "There was this 2001 thing where there was a bit of a board coup and six people were nominated to run for the board," Sullivan recalled. "There were seven required, so on the night I joined the group as the seventh person. Those seven got elected and there was some controversy about the proxy votes, whether they were legitimate, so we actually declared it all void and held another meeting to give everyone the opportunity. Six of the same group got elected the following week and from that point in time it was a new group. None had previously been involved in the management of the club at any level, they had been coaches and managers, and I guess that was the turning point for a lot of change. It was about re-branding the club again."

The club was still playing in jerseys that were a result of an old sponsorship from Baulkham Hills Sporting Club. They kept wearing them even though the sponsorship was over. The club held an extraordinary AGM and showed jerseys that Classic had mocked up in three modern playing strips – North Queensland, Wests Tigers and

Canterbury – but in Bulls colours. The members voted on a potential change to a new jersey, which was to be implemented in two years' time to ensure a comfortable transition. There was recognition of those older people who had been instrumental in setting up the touch and developing the club. They were life members, but they weren't being properly recognised. The club wanted to bring them back into the fold and make sure people knew them. The club had special jackets made for them and began a process of introducing them back into the fold through official functions. The club started staging a lot of really big fundraising events, utilising people who were involved with the club and had good league contacts. Gary Freeman helped a lot with that. The club auctioned off jerseys and memorabilia and raised cash that got us back on a good financial footing. The club would try something different every year. We were able to start banking some of the money we were raising out of touch as well, and started a nest egg. The fields at Crestwood were always council fields that had been wrecked in the first six weeks of the season, and we joined with the council in rebuilding the fields and relaying the surfaces. Our club enclosed them



with fences, erected scoreboards, extended the clubhouse and improved the lights for the touch, which kept the income stream going. The lights at Crestwood were also improved, so that we could have night games there. I'd coached a lot of good teams who played at night, but who never got to play at Crestwood because they didn't have lights. They went on to play reps and NRL, but the juniors had never seen them play. They had to play at Cabramatta or Wentworthville, because they had the lights. So it was basically improving the club facilities to further enhance the status of the Bulls as a first-division club.

"We had a treasurer, John Young, who was spot on, very diligent," Sullivan said. "He knew where every cent in the club went. He was as straight as a gun-barrel. The wrong thing can happen sometimes at junior clubs, because there's a temptation there. You've got to be able to find people willing to do a lot of work and give a lot of time. You don't do a character check on them, you do a 'can you work?' check on them."



Before moving into the club's administration, Sullivan had proven himself a tremendous coach of players in their mid-teens. "I was always working at the Hills with the age groups going into the development groups at Parramatta," he said. "Daniel Anderson had a summer coaching school and I spent a year with that based on the fact I was coaching around that age group. I had a team that went from the 13s through to the 17s and won the comp every year. A lot of grade players came from that, including a few first-grade players like David Williams and Blake Green. That was probably one of the best teams Hills have had over the years. Later, I went to North Sydney as a junior rep coach, in the mid-2000s. I was still coaching at Hills at

the same time. I'd coach the Harold Matthews team during the day on Saturdays and a Bulls team in the Parramatta comp on Saturday nights.

The number of teams fielded by the Bulls increased dramatically during the 2000s. After 23 sides had represented the club in 2001, when for the first time the Bulls won all three senior titles – A grade, A reserve and C grade – among its five premierships, there were 25 sides in 2002 (five premierships), 26 in 2003 (two premierships), 32 in 2004 (four premierships), 32 in 2005 (four premierships) and 37 in 2006 (one premiership). The total number of teams dropped slightly to 34 in 2007, before rising to an all time high for the Bulls of 39 in 2008. Sullivan said that during his last year as president, in 2008, it had become clear the club didn't have the physical resources to manage that many teams, and the number dropped by just over 20 per cent to 31 (four premierships) in 2009. "It got to a point where we were mentioned as perhaps being the biggest junior club in the world, because we had so many teams," he said. But the figure began to rise again in 2010, when the Bulls fielded 33 teams (three premierships). In 2011 there were 38 sides (two premierships), and 36 in 2012 (two premierships), so the club must have become more adept at meeting the demand.

The club showed its initiative by raising \$22,500 from a sportsman's dinner in 2002, and \$18,000 from a function at Fox Hills Golf Club in 2003. Also in 2003, an electronic scoreboard was introduced at Crestwood Oval, and there were 2700 players spread through the club's 170 senior and 47 junior touch football competitions. The Bulls won both the club championship and junior incentive Shield in 2003 and again in '04. The club produced 36 representative players in 2005 and another 30 in '06, by which time the touch footy component had grown to include more than 3000 players. Another 28 rep players came from the Bulls in 2007, and 33 in 2008, a year in which Bulls juniors David Williams and Heath L'Estrange shared in an NRL premiership win with Manly. For the first time in seven years, Crestwood Reserve was used as a finals venue in 2009. The facilities at Crestwood were significantly upgraded in 2010, and in 2011 there were already 800 children playing on Friday nights at





Current vice-president Matt Reardon has had a 12-year association with the Bulls, and he is concerned by the challenge in terms of size disadvantage the club faces due to the growing dominance of the Parramatta competition by bigger players of islander heritage at other clubs. The worry is that smaller players at the Bulls may turn off league because they can't physically handle the bigger kids. "Over the last decade we have seen strong, competitive and skilful Hills mod and mini teams unable to translate that success into the under 13 through to under 17 age groups simply because they are dominated by the sheer physical mass of opposition players," Reardon said. "On average, the Hills player is up to 25 per cent lighter than many of his opposition. During this time an AFL club has grown across the road, we have seen a relaunch and expansion of soccer through the A-League, and there is also basketball. So there are numerous winter sporting alternatives to the typical Bulls player. The club is very proud of the determination and grit shown by our players, but continues to be dismayed at the inability of NSWRL/ARL administrators to develop strategies to deal with this important grassroots issue."



Reardon describes the Masters concept as a great addition to the Bulls football program. "The club has run Masters rugby league teams since 2006," he said. "This competition provides a genuine cradle to (early) grade rugby league opportunity for our club. Importantly, Masters provided the catalyst for the backbone of a very harmonious and productive board over the past five years. Many of our coaches and trainers play Masters football once a month, and this has proven to be a major driver of club spirit and harmony." Reardon said more than \$200,000 had been invested in improvements at Crestwood reserve in recent years, and he thanked the club's financial backers for their kind support. "The club is very fortunate to be supported financially by some very generous businesses and individuals," Reardon said. "Of particular importance in our anniversary year is the support of major club sponsor Castle Hill Holden. Other major and/or long-term sponsors to thank include G&J Starr Plumbing, Griffin Air Conditioning, The Brightprint Group, The Mean Fiddler Hotel, The Ettamogah Hotel, QMC Group Construction, Beaumont Concrete, Gremmo Homes and Integrix IT Support." Reardon said the Bulls should be proud



of the number of players who have gone from the club to first grade in the NRL. "In the last 10 years we have seen the emergence of the 'Wolfman' (David Williams) and his brother John Williams in the NRL," he said. "More recently, Jamie Buhner has cemented a first-grade spot with Manly. Pauli Pauli looks like being one of our first Hills players in many years to make an impact on NRL forward packs in the very near future. In recent years we have emerged as a major contributor to Harold Matthews (under 16s) rep squads, with five of our boys - Frankie Arcella, Will Ryan, Scott Hogan, Sean Walpole and Zac O'Keefe - being members of the 2012 winning Harold Matthews squad. Keep an eye out for these names in the next few years. Some other names to watch as possible 'Bulls-bred' NRL stars include Kelly Benson, Will Reardon, Jake Brennan, Michael Tupou, Shannon Gardiner, Nick Lenaz, Nick Zakhia and Sam Loizou." Reardon said the huge growth in the club's involvement in Oztag was largely due to the efforts of organiser Leon Don, and added that the Bulls "can reasonably claim to be one of the largest, if not the largest, by actual registered player/official numbers, rugby league-based clubs in the world". "With 1200 Oztag



Crestwood in what was only the second season of Oztag. In 2012, plans were formulated for the redevelopment of the amenities block at Crestwood, which will be a fabulous addition to the ground when completed.

Further testimony to our club's commitment to and support for its members came in 2010, with the Heath Churchland Testimonial Golf Day. Life members, members, sponsors and supporters all rallied together as one in a time of need. Over 200 people played at Fox Hills Golf Course and enjoyed a great luncheon. A fantastic time was had by all.

Understandably, with progress having been made at such an impressive rate during the 2000s, Sullivan felt the club was in good shape when he stepped down as president. "The new people in charge had different ideas, but I always thought new ideas was good because change should be constant," he said.

kids, 1500 adult touch footy players, 650 registered rugby league players and 150 registered officials, we provide an active rugby league experience to around 3500 men, women and children,” Reardon said. “We are truly the mighty, mighty Bulls.”

The Bulls is a club that, once you get involved with it, you don’t want to leave. Brothers John and Darrell Abbott are a great example of that feeling. “I’ve been involved with the club since 1978, as a player, coach, manager and committee member,” John Abbott said. “I played for about 17 years and I love the memories, the friendships and watching kids improve. I coached under 7s up into men’s level, and now I see them coaching their own boys. This club is about putting in to the community. I’m proud of the fact I love the Bulls and the people involved. It gives kids of all abilities the chance to play rugby league. I’m still involved with the club because now my sons play in the under 14s and 16s and I’m the groundsman and gear steward. A lot of people have put in their own time, money and effort to continue to grow this great club. Over the years there have been many great people helping out, which has resulted in us making it to the 50th anniversary. It’s a terrific place to be and inspiring to not only me but many people who are involved in the club. I love the place, the people, the friendships and the mighty Bulls.” Darrell “Scratchy” Abbott added: “The emphasis of the club has always been on family. No child is turned away. It’s always been about having fun, not just winning. Hills has always been one of the bigger and stronger clubs, and has grown in size from my junior to senior years in part due to the massive development that occurred in the area. I remember playing footy when there were still farms at the back of Crestwood Oval.”

Jared “Gur” Anderson, the brother of former Parramatta coach and now NRL referees’ boss Daniel Anderson, is another who has had an enormous involvement with the club, as a player and now a coach. “Rugby league is my passion away from family,” Anderson said. “My two older brothers and two younger brothers all played for the Bulls. Nothing beats being at Crestwood on a Tuesday or Thursday night for



training. Cold, misty, freezing nights and I’m still contented to continually be there among a team. The club is no different now from the first time I played in ‘N’ grade” in 1976 - great people giving their time to keep the club running. I’m currently on the coaching staff for the under 15s, division one side. It feels reassuring that the former players from Hills always speak glowingly about their time at the Bulls. The club is an icon of the area. Once the club started, combined with the popularity of the sport, it was always going to be around. It’s a club that has stood the test of time. It has no licensed club backing, but the spirit of the players and parents has made it work.”

Sullivan lives at Snapper Rocks on the Gold Coast now, but he’ll always be a Bull. “I’m a life member and that’s a great honour,” Sullivan said. “All the opportunities I’ve had in footy away from the Bulls emanated from the club having the confidence in me to put me in charge of good kids. I got an Australian sports award from the government for contribution to sport, for coaching, and the Bulls put me on the way to that. It’s very important to me, the club. It became a family thing, and my family

isn’t the only one like that. It has a great social atmosphere, and is a place where you make great friendships. My wife, Bev, put in a lot of hard work helping at the club as well, and we ended up going on holidays with people from the club who are among our closest friends now. A lot of the boys I coached still ring me up for advice about their footy and their lives, and they’re in their 20s now. Other kids I coached came back to be trainers on teams I coached. Chris Armit was one of my trainers for a while. For kids who are 14 and 15, having a first-grade player from Canterbury come down as trainer, they grow an extra leg. I like to think I’ve gained a lot from the club and given back a lot as well. The club doesn’t owe me anything, not at all. It helped me assimilate into the Hills community when I moved there from Liverpool, and now my best friends and associates are still from the Hills.”

That’s what the Bulls does as a club. It gets under your skin, and into your heart, and for so many people who have been involved for some or all of its 50 years, that is where it has stayed.



GREMMO FAMILY

The Gremmo family's history at the Hills Bulls is as old as the club itself, and that says everything about the family and the club. The Gremmos are a giving family who, when they become closely involved with something or someone, are steadfastly loyal. And the Bulls is a club which, by its very nature, draws people to it and holds them there. The Bulls have never had the backing of licensed premises that power other clubs. It is powered by the people, for the people, and that is what makes it so special. The Gremmos, starting with Mick, have been involved from day one, when the idea to form a club was first hatched, and 50 years later that involvement has stretched through three generations of the family. Mick and his wife, Elaine, helped kick-start the club, and Mick was a player, coach and administrator. Elaine helped out however she could – in the canteen, as a cheerleader, whatever needed to be done. Their children followed them into the club and now their children's children have done the same.

The building of the canteen at the old home ground, Jasper Road, and the changing rooms at Crestwood Oval had Gremmo involvement, as will the future development of the club rooms and gymnasium. But the family doesn't seek recognition, so there are no plaques, no acknowledgements. The Gremmos are big on community, and they have shown that through their direct financial and fundraising support of education, numerous charities, and individuals going through difficult times. The Gremmos are a big part of the Bulls family, and the bond between them and the club is built on an ethos of hard work, respect, integrity and community.

Many people may speculate on what their lives would be like without the Bulls, but for the Gremmo family there literally wouldn't be life without The Bulls. "Ha ha, it's true," said son Michael. "Our parents met through the club, so without that catalyst we wouldn't be here. My uncle, Keith Hoyle, had brought his children down to the club to play football in 1967 and our dad happened to coach his boys. Keith introduced his sister to our dad and here we are today, 45 years later, and now my son, Nathan, is playing for the club."

Mick and Elaine Gremmo married and had four boys and a girl. Michael, Andrew, Richard and David all played for the Bulls. Younger sister Melissa's arrival created an awkward moment among the boys. Michael laughed as he recalled: "We couldn't think of which position she should play for the Bulls."

Andrew described Crestwood Oval as "the cornerstone of growing up for the boys in our family". "Every weekend would be spent kicking goals or watching football at Crestwood," he said. "Some of my first aspirations as a child involved becoming a ball boy for the Bulls. If you were running the sand on for A Grade and Pancho Ryan or Johnny Abbott acknowledged you, it would be the highlight of your week. Those memories and the life lessons learned through some hefty defeats and satisfying victories are what resonates with me today."

One of the essential social fabrics of the club has always been the Touch Football Association. David has been playing touch football at Kellyville for 20 years. "Touch football has always been a fantastic way to keep in touch with the people that we have met through the club over the years," he said. "It also provides many of us that are well past our glory days the opportunity to recreate some of the magic of our youth and our days at Crestwood. We may be slower and less skilful, but our after-game stories are funnier and more embellished".

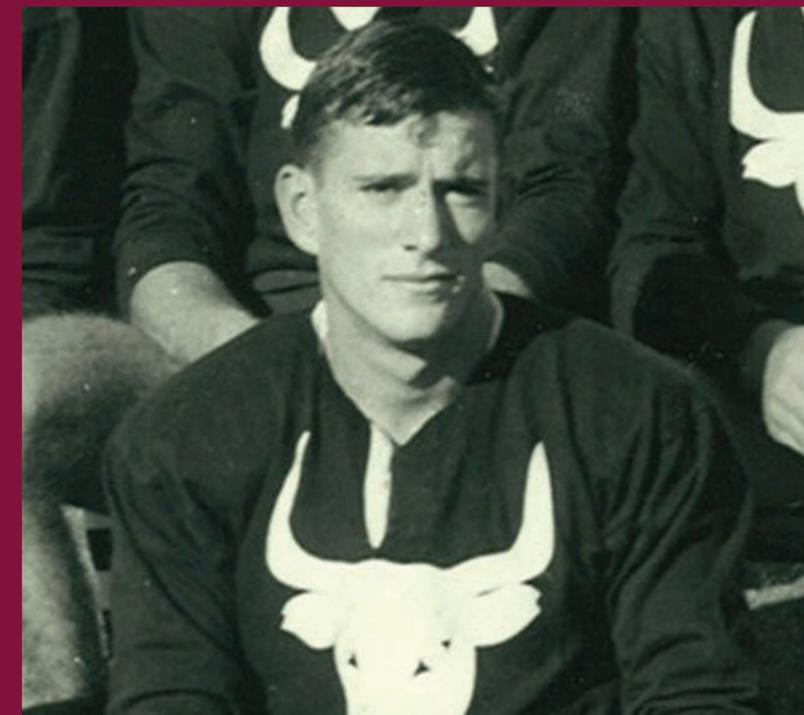
Richard remembers the club as being less about rugby league and more about the characters and the community. "There isn't a day goes by that something doesn't remind

you of our younger years and involvement with the club," he said. "To this day, if I smell Goanna liniment or hear the tapping of studs on concrete it reminds me of Crestwood. If I see a dusty oval or smell a barbecue cooking, I think of Crestwood. If I see a kid kicking a football, anywhere, it reminds me of Crestwood. It's moments like these when you realise a club like The Hills isn't really about rugby league at all – it's more about the community spirit and mateship that a club provides. All of the trials and tribulations, the politics and the passion and the struggles and the successes which have been created tell a story which is greater than any 50-year anniversary. People may debate who the best player was or reminisce about past glories on the field, but it's the characters and their stories which have made the club. Great players come and go with every generation, but the community spirit which has made the club great has remained the same."

Michael Gremmo recalls the community spirit that the club aroused. "Some of our fondest memories of being involved with the club relate to combining our efforts off the field," he said. "I can still recall sitting on the back of a ute and delivering telephone books throughout Baulkham Hills, and admiring the endless hours mothers would contribute at the canteen to support their sons. Our mum wasn't a rugby league fan at all, but she loved supporting her kids and being involved with what we loved to do."

The final word should go to dad Mick, a life member of the club. "The people I knew at the club 50 years ago are still my mates now, and I think we get closer as we get older," he said. "I'm proud to have been closely involved with the club, and for my family to all be involved. The Bulls gives kids a chance to have fun playing footy, learn a bit about life and make good friends, which is great."

*Right Top: Three generations of Gremmo boys that have played for the Bulls.
Right Bottom: Mick Gremmo in the 1960's.*





NOW AND BEYOND 2013

"IT'S A CLUB THAT HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME. IT HAS NO LICENSED CLUB BACKING, BUT THE SPIRIT AND DETERMINATION OF THE PLAYERS AND PARENTS HAS ALWAYS MADE IT WORK."

JARED ANDERSON

It is a beautiful, mid-autumn Saturday at Crestwood Oval in April, 2013, and the boys from the Hills Bulls under 13s, fourth-division side are in their element. Playing footy drenched in the morning sun and loving every minute of it. The club is proud to be able to provide an outlet for children to get involved in a team sport that offers them an opportunity to make friends, learn discipline and skill, and have fun. Many of these kids have been playing for the Bulls for years, and hopefully some of them will still be playing for the club as young men and adults. The Bulls are celebrating their 50th year of existence, and it has been a great ride for countless people involved as the club has grown from an idea to an institution in the Hills District and beyond. When you speak to the boys and find out how much they love playing for the club, it is easy to imagine the next 50 years being even bigger and better.

“I’ve been here for four years, since the under 10s,” said second-rower James Portelli. “I played soccer before, but I wanted to move to footy because I wasn’t meant for soccer. I was a lot bigger than the other boys and not so co-ordinated. I’m a lot better at footy. My job is just getting the ball and running straight through. Everyone at the club is nice. There’s no-one here that I don’t like. It’s always friendly and I always have a good time here. I didn’t know any of the other boys in the team before I came here, but now I’m good mates with a lot of them.”

The beauty of the kids is that they spell it out simply. “I’ve been here for five years, since the under 9s,” said Yuvesh Raman. “I was playing soccer before that, but I wanted to play footy. My brother was already playing footy, and I liked footy better than soccer. These guys in the team are some of my best mates now. I play on the wing, sometimes halfback. I’m fast. I score a few tries. I like it because it’s a faster game than soccer. Soccer, you just kick the ball around. I like passing and tackling. The Bulls are a good club. It’s good fun playing for them.” Jackson Brown switched from soccer to league when he was 10, because “I just wanted to tackle people”. “It’s a good club,” he said. “I’ve got good mates in the team now, but I didn’t know any of them before I came here. They’re just good to play footy with. They give me the ball a lot. I’m

halfback, so I have to run things. I like that. It’s good, being halfback and stuff. We’re hoping to win the comp this year, very much. Last year we made the semi-finals against Seven Hills and we lost that, and the year before that we made the finals as well.”

You have to admire the unbridled enthusiasm of the young Bulls. “I’ve been playing footy for four years, but this is my first year with the Bulls,” said Luke Azzopardi. “I was at another club before that. I changed because the club just wasn’t offering enough. I was put with a bunch of kids who hadn’t played football before, and we didn’t have a coach for a couple of games last year. I wanted to become a better player. I played Oztag at the Bulls, and my dad knew someone here who suggested I should play for the Bulls. I’ve got some good mates in the team. I’m five-eighth. It’s a very welcoming club. I don’t see myself changing clubs again.” Connor Jenkins, whose father, Steve, coaches the team, is another of the 13/4s who switched from soccer to league. “I’ve been here five or six years, a long time,” Connor said. “I played a year



of soccer before that. I played baseball as well. I played baseball because my mum played it, but baseball didn’t have enough running in it for me. I played soccer, but soccer didn’t have enough aggression, and enough contact, and my brother was playing footy and I liked it, so I started playing. It’s a good team I’m in, and I’ve made too many friends to leave this club. I like playing in this team. The club makes you feel welcome.”

Steve Jenkins played for the Bulls as a child as well, so he knows from experience why representing the club is such a big attraction to his son and the other boys in the team. “I started in the under 6s at Jasper Road, for a year,” he said. “I came back later, as a teenager, and then got caught up in all the other things that are happening when you’re that age. I’ve also got another son who plays here - Jack. He’s 15. We live at Riverstone, but out there they had a combined 6s and 7s side when we got Jack into football and he was a small six. He knew I’d played here, because he’d seen pictures at my mum’s house, so he wanted to play where I played. I rang Brian Horder at the



Bulls and he said 'bring him along', and we've been here ever since. I was the trainer with Connor's team, and this year I was bumped up to coaching. I was trainer for about five years, and I loved being on the field with the boys. Now I'm on the sideline. I'm enjoying it. It's good. I didn't see myself as a coach before, but I'm happy to do it. The kids are great. They know me now, they know my face. They know what I'm like and what I'll put up with and what I won't put up with, and they're good kids." Steve said the biggest buzz he gets from coaching is when set moves the team practice at training come off on the field. "The kids see it happen in a game, and they look around at each other like 'that was good,'" he said. Then he added, with a laugh: "It proves to them that training is worthwhile, and the coach is not just full of hot air."

Asked how he felt about the club, and the opportunity it provides for his sons and the team he coaches, Steve said: "The club's great. I can't fault it. There are so many people here putting in the time and the effort. If people are out of line with their behaviour at matches, they'll pull you back into line, which doesn't happen at some other clubs. That's what makes it such a good club to be at. And the help I get is fantastic. My first year as coach, I've had a lot of help from the club. People outside of the team have asked me if I need a hand, or a bit of advice, and I've taken some of that. I've asked a couple of people at the club for advice as well, and they're happy to help. The club is tremendous for the kids. It's the discipline and respect they learn, and the camaraderie and friendship they experience. Those friendships can last forever. It's a good grounding for kids. If their schoolwork and their home-life and their recreation is all good, they will grow up into pretty good people."

The senior players at the Bulls, in the club's Sydney Shield side, are good examples of what Jenkins is talking about. "I've been involved since the under 6s," said. Ben Mooney. "I'm 21 now. I've played every year for the Bulls except one. That's 15 or 16 years. I'm not sure how many games I've played, but it's a lot. I love it here. I've been here since I was so young, and all my cousins play here as well. The club is really important to me. All my mates that I go out with every weekend, they all play here."

The team I'm in is a very tight-knit group of players. It's great that we're in Sydney Shield, because that gives us the chance to play at a good level. I'm thinking I'll probably play for another 10 years, and after that I reckon I'll stay involved with coaching. I see myself being involved here forever." Teammate Luke Hanson hasn't always been at the Bulls, but he's glad he is now. "It's a good, family-oriented club," Hanson said. "And I think it will continue to be a strong club. There are a lot of numbers in the juniors, and most of those kids will keep playing for the Bulls because the club has got such a good reputation. There is a lot of loyalty here. I'm only 22, so I hope to be playing here for a long time yet."

Ryan Smith, 25, started playing for the Bulls when he was 18, in C-grade. Now he's in the Shield side. Smith says it is the passion people like Shield coach Paul Griffin bring to the club that makes it so strong. "People want to play for blokes like 'Griffo'," Smith said. "It means a lot to him that you enjoy it, and do well. There are some great blokes looking after this team. They send texts out to the players in the team, and the



messages are really positive and full of passion. It makes me want to play for them, and play for the club. I'm 25, and I can see myself continuing to play here for a few years yet. It doesn't surprise me that people play here and then become involved as administrators and coaches. A lot of people stay here for a long time because it's such a good club."

As well as giving generously of his time to coach the Shield team, Griffin is putting his hand in his pocket for the club as well, with a \$20,000 sponsorship for this season through his company, Griffin Air Conditioning. "After I finished playing for the Bulls, I started off coaching kids here," Griffin said. "This is my first real crack at senior footy. Some of the kids I coached way back then are now in the Shield side I'm coaching. I just got tied up in the club and I stayed that way, because it's a great club. This club stands for families, and I feel like I'm a part of a family here."

The Hills Bulls is a club in great shape, and president Glenn Starr is best placed to say why. According to Starr, there are multiple reasons. "The platform provided by our junior members and volunteers over the past 50 years has been outstanding," he said. "The efforts provided by individuals and groups to get the club to where we are today is commendable. To go through a list of names would be impractical, but from my perspective I can't thank everyone involved enough for all of their efforts. The club has experienced its largest enrolment in the Parramatta Junior League competition, with 48 teams playing for the Bulls in 2013. This comes off the back of good coaches, success on the field and the club's professional outlook within the league. The financial support through our generous sponsors is at an all-time high. The business community that supports our club is generous and second to none. From a club perspective, these companies are to be commended for their generous support."

The club, through the brains trust of Leon Don, introduced league tag a few years ago. This machine has been unbelievable. The initial introduction was designed to give our members somewhere to go and enjoy footy in the summer, introduce new players to football and the club, and generate an income for the club. No-one could



have expected the success this idea has generated, with over 1300 players last season. In turn we have converted many new members into our football competition in the winter. The club has a real positive vibe around it, which in turn has encouraged so many volunteers that do outstanding work to benefit the club. These guys and girls are the real heroes of the club, and without their efforts we couldn't function. The introduction of Sydney Shield to the 'Bull pit' has been great. Our senior team is leading by example on and off the field. Paul Griffin and his team are to be congratulated for their efforts. Team numbers in touch football are constant and stable. The touch competition is under great management with Steven Marks, and will continue to grow.

The growth of the club will soon be seen in the building of a dramatically-improved amenities block at Crestwood Oval. A Development Application has been approved for a full renovation of the existing building, with an addition to the building to be added as a first-floor extension. This includes a sizeable veranda wrapping across and

around the western side of the building. The first floor will contain a multi-purpose room, kitchen facilities, storage area, a gym and toilet facilities. This will help the club moving forward with internal training facilities, gym facilities for the teams' use, viewing areas, catering facilities and potentially another source of income if managed correctly. The club will have usage through the day and night and the building can be utilised for many purposes. The ground floor will include new storage areas, a new board-room, a new first-aid room, and generously improved canteen facilities. This application has been generously supported by Gremmo Homes. The Gremmo family have been significant members of our club and once again have generously supported the club in getting the Development Application through The Hills Shire Council.

Bulls vice-president Matt Reardon said that while Starr would be embarrassed to be singled out, it was important to acknowledge the tremendous contribution the president had made to the club over the past decade. "Glenn has done an awful lot for the club," Reardon said. "Starry' has coached teams each year for the last decade, he remains one of the driving forces behind Masters Rugby League, he personally paid for and renovated bathrooms and he project-managed and contributed hundreds of hours of labour to the construction of the 'grandstand'. Glenn remains steadfast in his support of the club's zero tolerance policy. The club's rock-solid foundations are testimony to his passion, energy, sweat and commitment."

Reardon made no apologies for the club being tough in its desire to ensure a positive and safe environment for everyone who attends games, with a strict behavioural policy enforced. Players and, more importantly, families come to our club because of the values it preaches and actually practices. The logistics of managing a club with some 3500 active participants using volunteers are very demanding on those involved. The future of the club will rely heavily on new people committing to help for the five-to-10 years that their kids are involved with the Bulls. The rewards are the personal satisfaction of being part of a great community organisation and the forming of lifelong friendships.

Right: In 2013 the life members names were added to the back of the jersey in celebration of the 50 year anniversary.





Above: The 2013 special edition Pink Ribbon Jerseys.

The massive number of players now representing the Bulls has forced the club to source a number of extra fields in the district for training purposes. Included among those now being used is Castle Hill Showground, which represents a nostalgic return to the club's original training and playing venue in 1964.

After 50 wonderful years of serving the Hills District and providing an opportunity for the youth of the community to learn a great sport, make friends for life, develop values and understand and respect tradition, what is the vision of the Hills Bulls for beyond 2013? A proud club president believes it is as bright as you could imagine. "I will be very biased in what I say," Starr said. "The club is growing everywhere. The business structures set will ensure the club's financial success. The efforts in training and maintaining quality coaches is ensuring the players are learning, which consistently improves our competitive levels. The tag competition looks like it is going to open up

Left: In 2013 the Hills Bulls Under 12s are so strong we have 5 teams with 2 of them in 1st division and 2 in 2nd division. This photo is the 2 teams in 2nd division, after playing each other at Crestwood oval.

to all ages, which will ensure good participation numbers. But the most important part of this club's success is the love its members have for the club. This love grows day by day and it is a great club in which to involve your families and yourselves. We are one big family that will continue to grow and succeed on and off the field. The club has maintained, and will continue to maintain, its true goal, which is to generate quality young men on and off the field."

The Hills Bulls has every reason to proudly celebrate 50 magnificent years as a club. May the next 50 years be even bigger, better and more prosperous.







WHAT THE CLUB MEANS TO ME

Hills to me is about what we as a club can do for its members, no matter what the individuals involvement might be.

The Hills Club has always been a success on so many levels. On or off the field, the mighty Hills Bulls is a “Family First” club and that is what has always attracted my family and I to the club. My sons have both played over 200 games for the club and have formed lifelong friendships as a result. I still remember my sons and their mates, who had stayed over our place on many Saturday nights after playing for the Bulls earlier that day. They drove me crazy as to when we were going to Crestwood on Sundays to watch their heroes play Senior footy. It was a great time of our lives.

Then from a personal point of view, I had the very great honour of being the President of our club after some very influential Life Members asked me to get involved. This was a great learning period for me, both as a family man and from a professional perspective. I learnt more than I ever thought I would learn when it comes to people handling skills. These skills I still use in everyday life now as a result.

I have formed friendships that I know I will take to my grave as a result of being a part of our great club. I feel as though the club has helped me grow as a person, while at the same time I hope my time and contributions to Hills Bulls have been able to assist the club in a small way. My boys and I just love the place and everyone that has had the honour of putting on the proud colours of our great club. Once a Bull, always a Bull in my book. Happy 50th Year to everyone that has played a part in the club's past and congratulations on your achievements.

At this time, I would like to wish everyone who is going to play a future role in our club's direction moving forward all the very best. You will love it and please keep our club's destiny in tact, as I know you will.

MARK MAHONEY



WHAT THE CLUB MEANS TO ME

“I’m very proud of my time at the Bulls. We had some successful years and I made some great friendships. Any time the Bulls are mentioned, I have great memories.”

SHANE FERGUSON

“I love the club and all the mates I ever played with. I could never give back as much as I got out of playing for the Bulls.”

ANDREW MITCHELL

“Hills Bulls is a club where all of our family has been involved, from mum working in the canteen, dad being president and us boys playing in the juniors. The friendships our family has made at the club are for life and I will always be proud to call myself a Bull!”

RYAN L’ESTRANGE

“The Hills Bulls was my lifeline when going through personal hardship. Making life-long friends, it taught me to manage time, to become an organiser, to promote myself and to overcome what seemed to be impossible odds at the time.”

BARRY NEWSOME

“The Bulls is a terrific place to be and inspiring to not only me but many people that are involved in the club. I love the place, the people, the friendships and the mighty Bulls.”

JOHN ABBOTT

“It means a lot to me. It had a great atmosphere and was a very happy place. There wasn’t much grass on the fields at Crestwood then, but I loved coming off with a few grazes anyway. It was like a badge of honour.”

SEAN L’ESTRANGE

“It provided a great grounding for me. It was a great place to play at, because anyone who got out of line at the ground was quickly brought back into line. The club was always the main thing – no individual was bigger than the Bulls.”

DAVID WILLIAMS

“It’s a nice scene, down here at Crestwood. You don’t get many players coming to the Bulls from outside the area, so it’s a very close-knit club. There’s a lot of loyalty here.”

LUKE HANSON

“It feels like home to me. The Bulls was where I developed as a footballer. I had great people around me as coaches and managers and I played in some really good teams. We were a pretty tight bunch of guys. I’m back at the club now, helping to coach the 16/1s. I’m really enjoying that.”

JOHN WILLIAMS

“My family became entrenched in the club, and that has happened with a lot of families at the Bulls. It’s a great family club, and the Bulls is very important to me. Being associated with the club helped me gain opportunities on the outside.”

STEVE SULLIVAN

“I don’t call it work when you do things for the Bulls. It was part of my life, and a very enjoyable part at that. We made a lot of friends there, and I always knew where my kids were because they loved being there.”

BARBARA ABBOTT

“Any sport is good for kids, but team sport in particular. Our winters revolved around football at the Hills Bulls. It gave our sons a good grounding as they grew up and helped them learn how to be good people.”

STUART ABBOTT

“It means friendship. My wife and I made great friends with people at the Bulls, and they are friends for life. It’s the same for our boys - they made friends they’ll keep forever as well.”

BARRY L’ESTRANGE

“Just like a strong friendship that survives its ups and downs, Hills Bulls has thrived because it offers the community so many valued opportunities. The community and the salt of the earth football people at the club won’t let it fail.”

MARK BOLAND



HILLS DISTRICT TOUCH

"IT'S ALWAYS BEEN AN IMPORTANT PART OF MY LIFE. MY DAD GOT INTO IT BECAUSE I WAS PLAYING FOOTBALL, AND IT'S BEEN A BIG PART OF MY CHILDRENS' LIVES. I DIDN'T LIVE HERE ALL THE TIME, BUT I ALWAYS CAME BACK. THAT'S JUST SOMETHING WE DID - STICK TOGETHER AS MATES."

KEITH WOELLNER JNR

In the mid-1970s the local Hills senior players began gathering at Jasper Oval to play four or six-a-side touch in November. As the new rugby league season approached, by mid-January 40-to-60 players were regularly breaking into teams to play. It was during this time that a group of about seven players began participating in Wenty Leagues social touch played at the vacant land in Emert St, Wentworthville. The number of players there also ballooned, with numbers getting up near those at the Hills. Barry Rudd saw the opportunity to formalise the social players and proposed the formation of a summer touch competition.

Rudd approached Terry Rooney from Parramatta Touch Association for referees, and Parramatta Junior Rugby League referees John Yard and John Dennis were most accommodating. They refereed for no payment. Tony Packard Holden sponsored the referees with T-shirts. An entry fee of \$5 was charged (a fee of \$2 was imposed on casual player registration) and in the summer of 1978-79 the HILLS DISTRICT TOUCH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION was established.

Initially, teams comprised of eight-a-side, with 16 registered teams playing two divisions every Sunday morning at Jasper Oval. Interestingly, the majority of participants chose to play in bare feet. The first two winning teams were “Durak” and “Swiss Screens”. The premiers of each division also played in the Champion of Champions match.

In the early years, teams were awarded premiership jackets and runners-up trophies. The inaugural presentation night was held at Baulkham Hills Sporting Club. Tim O’Brien, a member of the Durak team, arranged for his mate – 17-year-old Peter Sterling - to make the presentations.

The competition was conducted and administered by Barry Rudd in the initial years, and Marj Radford assisted in the canteen. All profits were donated to the Hills District JRLFC. Some members of the Swiss Screens team eventually took up refereeing. They included John Clifford, Barry Rudd, Bob Collings, Allan Cook and

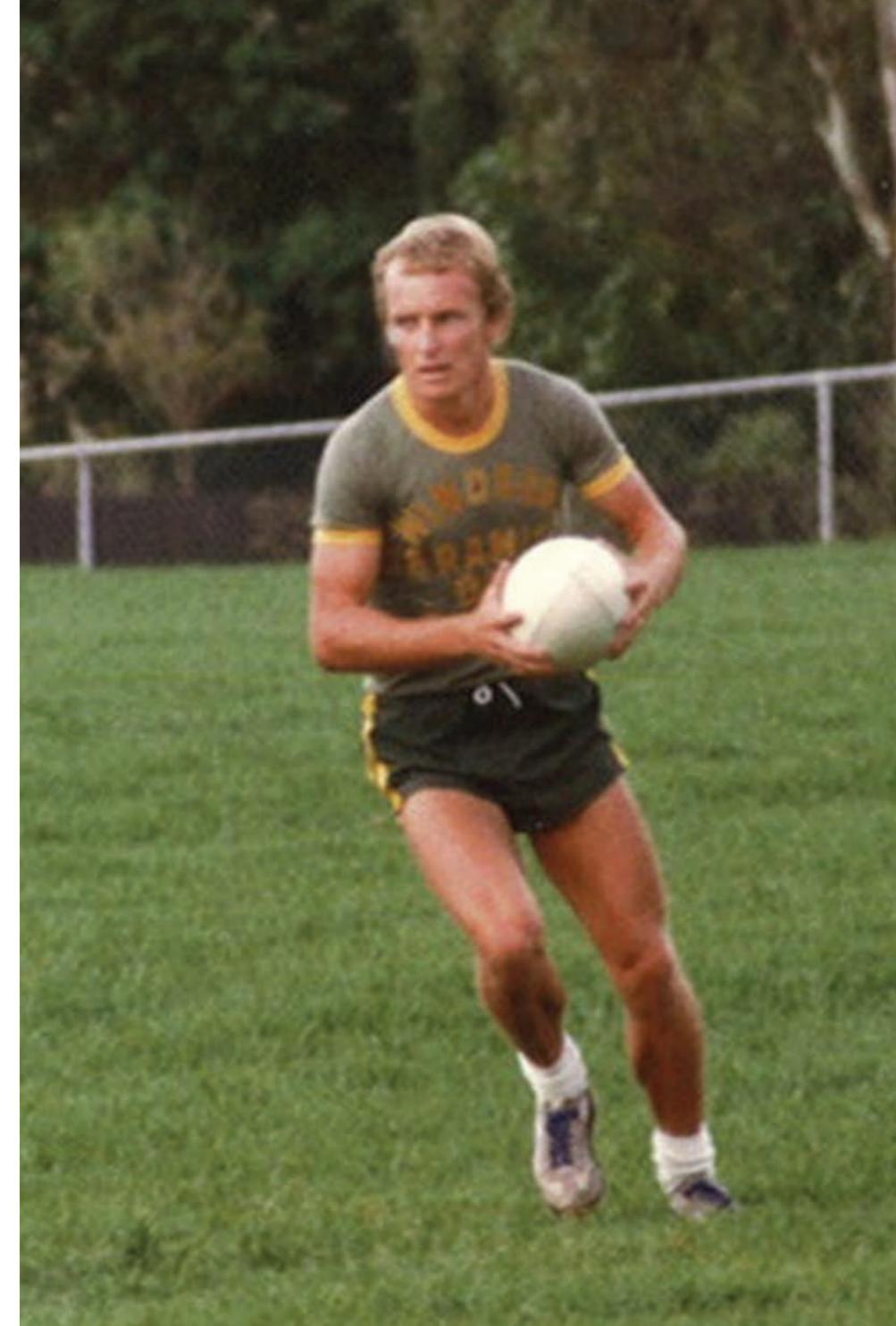


Junior League referee Bob Farnham. Other touch competitions began to emerge from splinter groups of the Hills District, notably Westmead Touch (a privately run business venture). The referees initially were all volunteers, and they were provided with whistles and touch uniforms, including shoes. Because the whistles and shoes lasted more than a season there was a delegation from the referees requesting a more flexible reimbursement, and as a result the referees were given gift vouchers at the sponsor’s sports store – John Peard Sports.

The Hills District JRLFC and Hills Touch remained separate identities bounded by a common office bearer, and the football club had no jurisdiction over matters to do with the touch competition. It took an incident when a touch player assaulted a referee during a touch match at Jasper Oval to change that. Dennis Foulstone decreed the matter be tabled at the club’s executive. Meanwhile, other issues emerged, including ground allocation, financial transactions and administration, to name a few.

During the 1970s and ‘80s, the flexibility first-grade rugby league players still had in that era resulted in many of them, including Jim Leis, Ross Conlon, Tommy Raudonikis, Brett Kenny, Peter Sterling, Peter Wynn, Mark Carroll, John Muggleton, John Kolc, Phil Mann, Ron Cowie, Paul Mares, Denis Fitzgerald and Tony Melrose participating in touch. Touch football had grown, with fixtures scheduled five days a week, and its growth had resulted in the need to use the two ovals at Crestwood as well as Jasper Oval. The monies raised from touch registration allowed for the upgrading of lighting at Jasper Oval. The competition continued to expand, eventually using Jasper Oval, Crestwood and Seven Hills International Oval to cater for the growing competition. Unfortunately, the playing surface at Crestwood Oval deteriorated due to the heavy traffic of training, playing, school sport and touch. During the summer of 1984-85, with the touch competition underway, the Shire Council in their wisdom - and unannounced - made the decision that the playing surface required fertilisation to promote growth. Due to either practical or economic logic the Shire Council skimmed the enclosures of the local poultry farms and thickly spread what they had gathered over both playing fields at Crestwood. The stench for the locals was intolerable. But, as touch competition matches could not be transferred or deferred, it was game on. To the players’ credit they got on with it despite the inconvenience and accepted the incident. The dead chicken carcasses and rain would not taper their enthusiasm, for which they deserved congratulations. Touch had expanded, utilising three grounds to accommodate the growth within the sport, and that prompted a move to Memorial Ave, Kellyville, which is still the base of the thriving competition.

The growth of the competition could not be catered for by the use of both Jasper and Crestwood Ovals playing four nights a week with a group of 45 referees. A competition commenced on Sunday mornings in 1981 and ran for numerous years, whilst additional night fixtures utilised playing fields at Seven Hills International Oval and Ted Horwood Reserve at Baulkham Hills. The Sunday morning competition fell over due to the lack of administrators, co-ordinators and referees, but there



remains the weekly group playing every Sunday at Crestwood Field number three which includes two original players in Phil Taylor and Barry Rudd.

The competition continued to grow, and within 10 years the Hills District Touch Association had grown to be the biggest competition in Australia with 217 teams in 27 divisions. Due to the growth, in the early 1980s the NSW State Touch Association made numerous attempts for Hills to become affiliated, albeit at an extra cost to the individual but with the opportunity to participate in regional and State competitions. Hills Touch rejected the request, and as a result the NSW State Touch came up with a plan to ban registered players from playing in the Hills competition or face expulsion from all NSW affiliated competitions or matches. Many players reacted by choosing to play under false names.

In the 1982-83 season, after Paris McDougall struggled with the enormity of the task in his first year as a coordinator, John Clifford (Little) on Monday nights, John Clifford (Big) on Tuesday nights, Brian Goldwater on Wednesday nights and Bobby O'Malley on Thursday nights became referee coordinators. Both John Clifford and Brian Goldwater have given in excess of 30 years continuous service and it would be remiss not to acknowledge that neither were former players, parents or officer bearers of the football club. In 1984, the referees began officiating in the Winter (Wednesdays) Night Competition for no fees after the club was struggling financially.

It was around the 1984-85 season that both the Baulkham Hills Shire Council and the Hills District JFLFC recognised that the growth of the junior rugby league teams, plus senior teams, the local schools, baseball and touch using the ground never allowed the playing surface sufficient time to recover. The ovals at Castle Hill Excelsior Reserve were considered before the acquisition of Kellyville Ovals at Memorial Ave.

Stan Pritchard, the grounds and facilities caretaker, was always helpful. Residing on site, Stan made every effort to ensure everything ran smoothly. A liaison between

council and the Hills Touch was maintained to ensure litter was cleared and behavioural issues were addressed in-house.

Kellyville Kolts Soccer Club had the ground allocation and canteen amenities during the winter months, and the soccer and touch co-existed cohesively and amicably for a season. But the following year Kellyville was adamant they were not going to grant access to their amenities, which would be detrimental to the competition needs in terms of the officiating and providing of food and refreshments. Rob Nalder acquired a demountable within days and placed it adjacent to the amenities block. Ross Crawley strung catenaries and provided electrical supply from the main switchboard (all gratis). The demountable was formerly "Harry's Café de Wheels". It was an icon and suited all our needs, including storage of the referees' apparel and footwear. Within a couple of weeks a burglary resulted in a lot of the footwear and clothing being stolen - but not all of it. Not long after, Council decreed the Café de Wheels an "eyesore" and ordered its removal and instructed Kellyville Kolts to provide access to the amenities block.



Above: Jasper Oval Canteen built by the Club well patronised at touch.



In the early 1990s, Barbara Abbott coordinated the touch. The task was difficult for so few hands, but persistence was a great attribute. It survived many challenges, like Council dumping 50 tonnes on the playing surface two days from the semi-finals on a Sunday, plus lighting problems, ground allocation, Australian Rules football, the growth of Kellyville Bushrangers and a housing sub division. Coupled with a change of administration, the touch for the school or junior age groups waned and then ceased. In the summer of 1996-1997, motivated by the fact the nearest junior touch competition was at Blacktown, Allyson Young and Janet Farlow approached Denise Page and Di Cleal about the possibility of resurrecting the local junior touch competition. Flyers were put up at shops and in primary schools, and registration days were held at Crestwood Oval. Parents entered full teams (mixed or single sex), and T-shirts were purchased and numbers ironed on. The four ladies graded the competition by age categories, distinguished by colour groups. John Billings co-ordinated the referees from the playing ranks of under 15 and 16 players, plus some willing senior referees.

There are great memories of a huge Christmas party with a barbecue and presentation by Santa (Noel Cleal). The competition was so successful that two nights a week were required for the numerous teams. It was another example that the challenges and adversity which we are sometimes confronted with can always be overcome. The Hills District Touch has remained a major source of funding for our club which assists with the development and upgrading of facilities such as the floodlighting at Jasper Oval, Memorial Ave and Crestwood Reserve.

In 2010 the Bulls Summer League started with the simple goal of putting a football into as many boys' and girls' hands as possible. To make this happen the club set up a hybrid form of rugby league, using tags, that was aimed at being family friendly - both financially and socially. It was hoped that this would translate into more kids wanting to play rugby league in winter. Leon Don was not without reservations about starting a new concept and competition, but things quickly fell into place with a number of



people from within the club putting their hands up to help with implementing the venture. In the first season, the summer league managed to field 52 teams from the ages of five to 14. The competition ran very smoothly even after we had to move to Kellyville because Crestwood had been closed due to the grass dying as a result of bug infestation.

In 2011, the competition affiliated with Oztag Australia. The competition once again grew to 80 teams registered from the ages of five to 15. In 2011, the first girls' only division was established. In 2012 the competition continued to grow, with 109 teams registered from the ages of five to 16. The season saw the number of girls registering increase significantly, and resulted in the expansion to a second girls' only division along with a senior mixed competition to accommodate the community's participation. The most pleasing aspect of the season was the positive feedback from girls playing the game. The 2012 season also saw our club attend the Oztag State Cup, in which Hills fielded eight teams including a senior girls' team. This was a high-quality

competition played over a weekend in Wollongong, with Hills Oztag under 12s being extremely unlucky not to come back as State Champions.

The growth of the competition has seen us continually reassess the future goals. No-one could have envisaged the competition growing from 560 to 1200 players within three years, so it is difficult to say how much further the competition can grow. The setting up and running of the competition has only been possible due to the hard work of people from within the Hills Bulls club, and it would be remiss not to acknowledge some of the people who have made this such a great competition. Coordinator and founder, Leon Don, said: "Firstly, Angela Scott, who looks after the canteen and does so much more. Secondly, the referees' co-ordinator, Leon Carroll. Leon has ensured that our referees are of the highest standard and the envy of most competitions. Belinda Wright, Stuart Dawkins, Tracey Smyth, Greig Newbery, Rob Sommerville, Mike Featherstone, Tony Cosatto, Russell Mooney, Dallas Weston, Matt Rennie, John Abbott, 'Blocka' O'Brien, our junior refs and canteen girls. The success of the Summer League can be attributed to their input and contribution." Leon added: "Lastly, I would like to thank our sponsors, Paul Griffin and Scott Turner. Their support of this competition has been great and much appreciated by everyone."

Everyone is looking forward to seeing how this competition evolves over the next decade.



WHAT THEY THOUGHT

My memories of Hills goes back to the early 60's when I was playing junior footy for Parramatta City against Hills at venues like the Castle Hill Showground and Jasper Road against blokes like Mick Shanahan. I remember one game in particular when they had to beat us to make the semis. Mick asked us to go easy so they could win as we couldn't make the playoffs.

Alas for Hills we flogged them, thus the beginning of a fierce rivalry was born involving teams that I would later coach and games that my two boys Scott and Matt would later play in against sons of former great Hills players like the Kolcs and the Gerards.

When I became A Grade coach of Wenty in the mid eighties, I couldn't believe the fierce competitiveness of games that we had against Hills and the dislike from the Wenty players towards the Hills players. I think that it came from the reason that the Wenty players had the backing of the Leagues club and the fact that Hills relied on the touch run by Ruddy and Billo, and the canteen at Crestwood and the fact that Hills would always put together a very competitive team on the field.

My fondest memories were the tough games played at Crestwood and Ringrose. You had Tim O'Brien as coach and top players like Donks and Pancho. Tough forwards and speedy backs. A lot of the names I can't remember. I apologise for that but my memory cannot forget how well Hills played. Those games had the same amount of meaning as the games I played for the Dragons against the Sharks and Parra against

Manly, and Penrith. Even still today they are local derbies.

Every time we had to play Hills I prepared our team as if we were going to War, and most times we did. I have nothing but admiration for all the past players that played in that era. You have done your club and district proud. You wore those famous black colours with distinction.

Congratulations and have a great night.

Gary Pethybridge

My first memories of the Hills Club was in 1983 as Coach of the Fairfield City U/13s and playing Hills at Crestwood. I remember driving to Crestwood from Fairfield and going along Seven Hills Road to Chapel Lane to the field. On the left hand side, as I drove down Chapel Road there were rolling hills with cows in the paddocks.

On arriving at the ground and having the players sign-on, the Hills manager came to me and said I think one of your players is over age. On investigating I found this to be true and we agreed that he should not play. The spirit and co-operation of the Hills Official on this day was outstanding and is a credit to the club. The follow up is that the young player played U/14s for the remainder of the season.

As I moved on and became involved with the Fairfield Patrician Bothers U/16s and U/17s we played the Hills Club on many occasions at Crestwood or at our home at Carramar Park. Coach, Les Lees would always say to me that he loved playing Hills and it was always great to go to Crestwood because the players and officials at Hills who were involved in the game.

In my role as trainer of and coach of Parramatta Representative teams I met some outstanding young players. I particularly remember players of the Hills U/14' team of 1984 and Mathews and Ball teams of the period 1985 to 1992 as being great players and a pleasure to have in your team.

Over my time at the Parramatta Club I have been fortunate to be involved and connected with the Hills Club in fund raisers and progress of the Club. It has always been a pleasure knowing and being involved with these people in the development of Rugby League at the Hills Club.

I must have had a liking for the Hills area after my first visit because I now live in Peel Road which runs past Crestwood.

Congratulations on your 50 year Celebrations and I hope many more great years.

Kevin Wise



PREMIERSHIPS

UNDER 7'S	1976(1ST DIVISION), 1977 (1), 1978(1), 1980(1), 1987 (1)	5
UNDER 8'S	1977 (1&2), 1978 (1), 1979 (1), 1981 (1), 1988 (1), 2007 (3), 2008 (1 & 3), 2009 (1)	10
UNDER 9'S	1973 (3), 1976 (1&3), 1978(1), 1979 (2), 1980 (1), 1982 (1), 1995(2), 2002 (1), 2004 (1), 2010 (1)	13
UNDER 10'S	1977 (1) , 1981 (1) , 1987 (1&3) , 1988 (2) , 1996 (1) , 2001(2), 2007 (1 & 4), 2009 (2), 2011 (4)	11
UNDER 11'S	1973(1), 1978(1), 1982(1), 1984(1), 1989(1), 1996(4),1997(1), 2002 (2), 2004 (1), 2005 (2), 2007 (4), 2008 (2), 2009 (2), 2010 (1), 2012 (4)	15
UNDER 12'S	1979(1), 1984(1), 1987(1), 1989(1), 1992(1), 1993(1),1997(3), 1998(1), 2003 (1), 2004 (2 & 3), 2011 (2)	12
UNDER 13'S	1990(1), 1991(1), 1993(1), 1998(1), 1999(1), 2006 (2)	6
UNDER 14'S	1974(3), 1977(3), 1981(1), 1985(1), 1989(1), 1990 (1), 2002 (2), 2005 (1 & 3), 2012 (2)	10
UNDER 15'S	1983 (2), 1984 (1 & 2), 1989 (1), 2000 (1), 2002 (1)	6
UNDER 16'S	1981 (1), 1989 (1), 2002 (1), 2003 (2), 2008 (1)	5
UNDER 17'S	1965 (1), 1967 (2), 1988 (1), 1998 (1), 2003 (2), 2009 (2)	6
UNDER 18'S	1984 (1)	1
C GRADE	1966(2), 1987 (1), 1988(1), 1995 (1), 1997 (1),2000 (1), 2001 (1), 2005 (1), 2007 (1), 2010 (2)	10
A RESERVE	1965, 2001	2
A GRADE	1971, 2001	2

TOTAL PREMIERSHIPS 114

(1), (2), (3), (4) refers to division.

Left: Hills U12/1 2003 Premiers

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

YEAR	PRESIDENT	VICE PRESIDENT	TREASURER	SECRETARY
1963	Jack Dorahy	Bill Heath	Michael Gremmo Kevin Franks	Peter Norman
1964	Ray Buckley	J. Doherty	Michael Gremmo	Peter Norman
1965	Keith Woellner		Michael Gremmo	
1966	Keith Woellner		Michael Gremmo	
1967	Keith Woellner		Michael Gremmo	Keith Hoyle
1968	Allen Quinn		Allan Weeks	Keith Hoyle
1969	Keith Woellner		Allan Weeks	Keith Hoyle
1970	Keith Woellner		Michael Gremmo	Keith Hoyle
1971	Keith Woellner	Phill Wilson	Michael Gremmo	Keith Hoyle
1972	Phill Wilson	John Beasley	Rod Barnett	Keith Hoyle
1973	Phill Wilson		Michael Gremmo	Keith Hoyle
1974	Stan Cobcroft		Michael Gremmo	Bob Collings
1975	Stan Cobcroft		Michael Gremmo	Barry Rudd

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

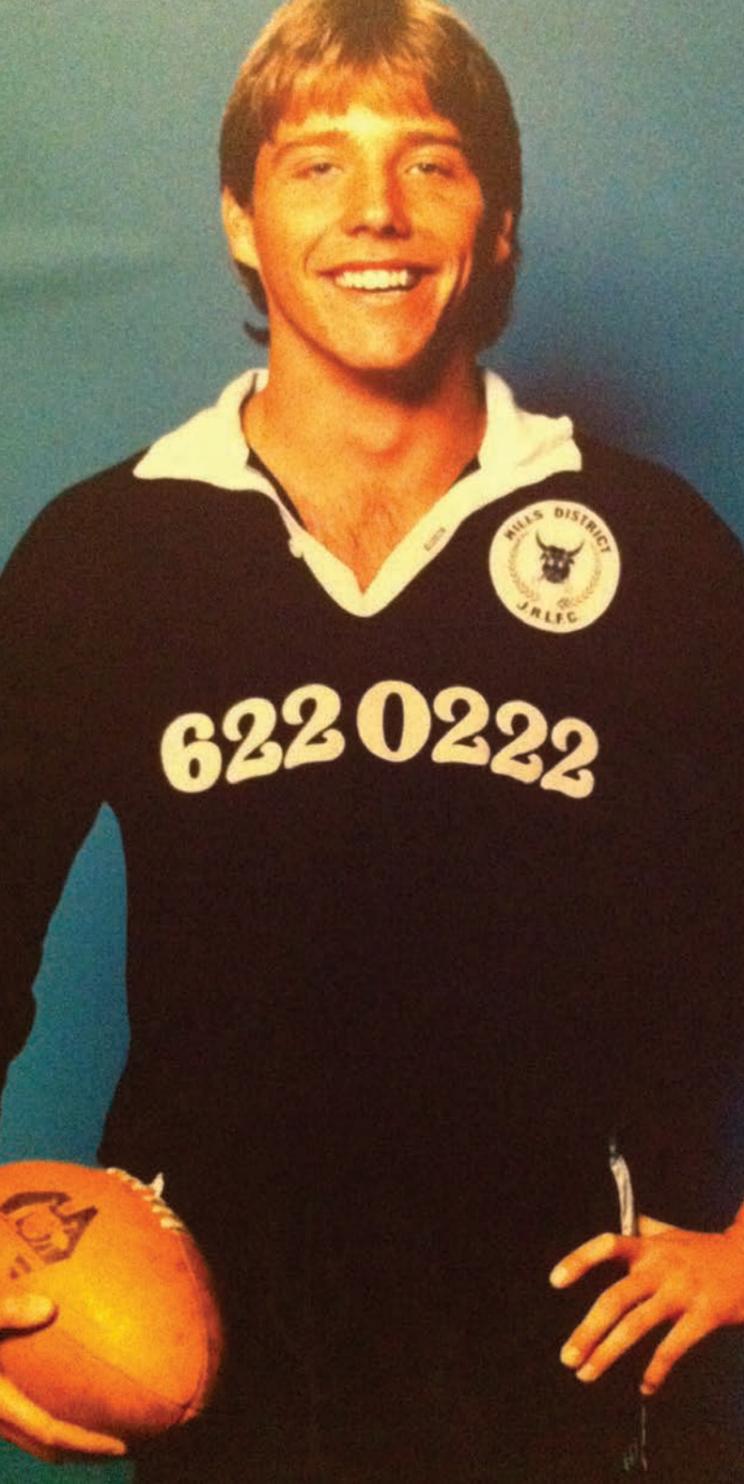
YEAR	PRESIDENT	VICE PRESIDENT	TREASURER	SECRETARY
1976	Stan Cobcroft		Michael Gremmo	Barry Rudd
1977	Stan Cobcroft		Bob Rose	Barry Rudd
1978	Stan Cobcroft		Bob Rose	Barry Rudd
1979	Brian McGuiness	Howard Painter (d) Junior Teams	Hazel Morrow (d) Senior Teams	Barry Rudd
1980	Brian McGuiness	Howard Painter (d) Junior Teams	Hazel Morrow (d) Senior Teams	Barry Rudd
1981	Warren Heath (d)			Barry Rudd
1982	Brian Miles			Barry Rudd
1983	Dennis Foulstone			Brian Miles
1984	Barry Rudd		Bob Palmer	Brian Witt (d)
1985	Barry Rudd		Bob Palmer	Brian Witt (d)
1986	Geoff Sommerville		Bob Palmer	Brian Horder
1987	Brian Witt (d)	Kevin Smith (d)	Bob Palmer	Brian Horder
1988	Brian Witt (d)	Kevin Smith (d)	Bob Palmer	Brian Horder

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

YEAR	PRESIDENT	VICE PRESIDENT	TREASURER	SECRETARY
1989	Brian Horder		Bob Palmer	Barry Rudd
1990	Brian Horder		Bob Palmer	Barry Rudd
1991	Brian Horder		Kevin Smith (d)	Ian Auld
1992	Barry L'Estrange			Ian Auld
1993	Dennis Foulstone			Barry Newsome
1994	Dennis Foulstone			
1995	Allan Cook			
1996	Peter Hogan Allan Cook	John Castle Barbara Abbott	Narelle Hogan Dennis Foulstone	Craig Town Carolyn Smale
1997	Allan Cook		Dennis Foulstone	Dennis Foulstone
1998	Allan Cook			
1999	David Witchelo		Dennis Foulstone	Phil Chapman
2000	David Witchelo		John Young	Phil Chapman
2001	David Witchelo		John Young	Phil Chapman

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

YEAR	PRESIDENT	VICE PRESIDENT	TREASURER	SECRETARY
2002	Mark Mahoney	Larry Jenkins	John Young	Mark Stockdale
2003	Mark Stockdale	Bev Sullivan	John Young	Steve Sullivan
2004	Mark Stockdale	Bev Sullivan	John Young	Steve Sullivan
2005	Mark Stockdale	Wayne Walpole	John Young	Steve Sullivan
2006	Mark Stockdale	Wayne Walpole	John Young	Steve Sullivan
2007	Steve Sullivan	John Young	John Young	Boris Mitchell
2008	Steve Sullivan	John Young	John Young	Boris Mitchell
2009	Leon Don Glenn Starr	Steve Marks	Rob Zecchin	Sue Locke
2010	Glenn Starr	Matt Reardon	Rick Palin	Matt Reardon
2011	Glenn Starr	Matt Reardon	Rick Palin	Matt Reardon
2012	Glenn Starr	Matt Reardon	Matt Reardon	Lance Denison
2013	Glenn Starr	Matt Reardon	Rick Palin	Lance Denison



MICHAEL GREEN

Michael was unlike many other players who were physically big for their age. Instead of merely using his size, he played with skill. He had the ability to know when to put the head down and run which created momentum. He also knew when the team was on the front foot and to take the ball to the line and offload pre contact. This gave him his third attacking option which was to get a one on one with a defender, get head and shoulders through the contact and offload. The balance of these three attacking options was amazing, and only as I grew older did I realise that he had a special “feel” for the game.

He mirrored this in defence. He would tackle high on players who tried to physically impose themselves on the game. He would chop players with lateral movement with low, driving tackles. He was agile enough to do this.

There have been some talented footballers with these attributes that did not make it. I have always maintained that he would have made it in Rugby League as he was tough. Not just a physically gifted player, but reliable and durable when situations were mentally stressful. This is where he excelled.

In the years since his passing I have seen plenty of young, talented footballers come through the ranks. I always compare them to Michael Green in physical presence, skill, mental toughness / the desire to win at all costs, and above all, their contribution to a team as a “good bloke”. Lots of NRL players have some of these characteristics but the champions have them all. Greenie was a champion.

For years I mourned his loss. As I grew I realised I was blessed. R.I.P Michael Green and go the mighty Bulls.

Scott Wisemantel

CLUB TROPHIES

MICHAEL GREEN AWARD

BEST MINI LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
(U6 - U8)

1992	Chase Watson
1993	Robert Young
1994	Matthew Desira
1995	Jarred Farlow
1996	Tim Jenkins
1997	Danielle Sullivan
1998	Heath Watson
1999	Daniel Mahoney
2000	Michael Wynn
2001	Jake Walpole
2002	Jackson Bricknell
2003	Brent Whicker
2004	Damon Meaney
2005	Will Reardon
2006	Jordan Marks
2007	Brock Pillegra
2008	Coby Thomas
2009	Nicholas Zakhia
2010	Sam Loizou
2011	Nicholas Lenaz
2012	Ethan Sauders

MICHAEL GREEN AWARD

BEST MOD LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE YEAR
(U9 - U12)

1988	Heath Churchland
1989	Adam Toro
1990	Daniel Zubrycki
1991	Wade L'Estrange
1992	Joel Bond
1993	Christian Toro
1994	Daniel Irvine
1995	Rhian Gerard
1996	Reece Waston
1997	Heath L'Estrange
1998	Blake Green
1999	Matt Davidson
2000	Paul Cividon
2001	Thomas Young
2002	Daniel Mahoney
2003	Ryan Grearing
	Krys Freeman
2004	Jake Walpole
	Matt Lyons
2005	Aaron Apilotoa
2006	Zac O'Keefe
2007	Lachlyn Mulford

2008	Troy Black
2009	Amaziah Slavin
2010	Michael Tupou
2011	Shannon Gardiner
2012	Callum Rennie

COL SUTTON AWARD

JUNIOR CLUBMAN OF THE YEAR
(U12 - U17)

1974	Michael Quinn
1975	James Roberts
1976	John Clapham
1977	Mark Gearin
1978	Michael Wood
1979	Matt Prowse
1980	Bradley Webster
1981	James Moses
1982	Craig Freeman

1983	John Abbott
1984	John Abbott
1985	Graham Witt
1986	Graham Witt
1987	David Palmer
1989	Scott Crawley
1990	Paul Harvey
1992	Heath Churchland
1993	Chris Shanahan
1996	Josh Foulstone
2004	Jason Baitieri
2005	Alex Turner
2006	Mitchell Mahoney
2007	Sam Gorman
2008	Ryan Ferguson
2009	Michael Inskip
2010	Kelly Benson
2011	Zac O'Keefe
2012	Nick Holliday

CLUB TROPHIES

WARREN HEATH SHIELD

INTERNATIONAL PLAYER OF THE YEAR
(U16 – C GRADE)

1982	David Said
1983	Wayne Schwicle
1984	Scott Wood
1985	Cameron McInnes
1986	Scott Wisemantle
1987	Scott Mahon
1988	Anthony Toro
1989	Matt Tyquin
1990	Martin Seal
1991	Kurt Chapman
1992	Matt O'Rielly
1993	Peter Foulstone
1994	Martin Shanahan & Ryan L'Estrange
1995	Ryan L'Estrange
1996	Nathan Clarke
1997	Wade L'Estrange
1998	Daniel Irvine
1999	Sean L'Estrange
2000	Ryan Steel
2001	John Williams
2002	Heath L'Estrange

2003	David Williams
2004	Jack Jurd
2005	Matt Saunders
2006	Brad Horder
2007	Matt Davidson
2008	Mitchell Davidson
2009	Sam Kleinhams
2010	David Ricketts
2011	Aaron Weston
2012	Kelly Benson

COACH OF THE YEAR

2009	Stuart Ruggari U17/2
2010	Steve Wilde U9/2
2011	Paul Griffin U12/1
2012	Gavin Field U14/2

MACDONALD SHIELD

TEAM OF THE YEAR

1965	A Grade
1971	A Grade
1982	U11/1
1983	U15/1
1984	U18
1985	U14/1
1986	U15/1
1987	C Grade
1988	U17
1989	U14/1
1990	A Grade
1991	U13/1
1993	U12/1
1994	U15
1995	U15
1996	U10/1
1997	C Grade
1998	U13/1
1999	U17
2000	C Grade
2001	A Grade
2002	U16/1
2003	U12/1

2004	U11/1
2005	U14/1
2006	U13/2
2007	C Grade
2008	U16/1
2009	U17/2
2010	U9/1
2011	U12/2
2012	U11/4

MARJ RADFORD AWARD

INTERNATIONAL PLAYER OF THE YEAR
(U13 – U15)

1993	Wade L'Estrange
2004	Jamie Buhner
2005	Michael Inskip
2006	Gaven Bright
2007	Pauli Pauli
2008	Dominic Field
2009	Kelly Benson
2010	Will Reardon
2011	Scott Hogan
2012	Jake Brennan

CLUB TROPHIES

BA MULLANE TROPHY

CLUB CHAMPIONS

1968	Ricky Rundel
1969	Bob Collins
1970	John Kolc
1971	John Kolc
1972	Ray Millers
1973	Les Grant
1974	Jim Stewart
1975	Les Ivers
1976	Dave Brown
1977	Don Hallidays
1978	Rob George
1979	Dave Wallace
1980	Peter Cook
1981	Allan Barker
1982	Steve Perks
1983	Michael Wood
1984	Martin Barnes
1985	D Burgmann
1986	Pancho Ryan
1987	Mark Clinton
1988	Greg Harris
1989	Mark Donkin
1990	Paul Mulherin

1991	Simon Howse
1992	Matt Harris
1993	Arthur Pappas
1994	Andrew Mitchell
1995	Greg Leyshon
1996	Chris Pierce
1997	Chris Pierce
1998	Jason Young
1999	Ryan Steel
2000	Mark Trugget
2001	Selwyn Brown
2002	Darrell Abbott
2003	Martin Shanahan
2004	Martin Shanahan
2005	Robert Young
2006	Brad Price
2007	Ace Puleitu
2008	Tim Curley
2009	Robert Young
2010	John Batalibasi
2011	Paul Horan
2012	Ellis James



NSW & AUSTRALIA JUNIOR REPS

1986

Scott Wisemantel	NSW CCC Under 15's
Michael Green	NSW CCC Under 15's

1987

Scott Wisemantel	NSW Under 16's
Michael Green	NSW Under 16's
Matthew Conroy	NSW Under 16's
Scott Bradstock	NSW Combined High School

1988

Scott Wisemantel	NSW Under 15's
Grant Lonergan	NSW Under 15's
Scott Wisemantel	NSW CCC Under 17's
Grant Lonergan	NSW Combined High School Under 15's

1990

Kevin Savvas	NSW Combined High School Under 15's
Peter Curran	NSW CCC Under 15's
Chris Shanahan	Australian Tertiary Education team

1991

Kevin Savvas	NSW Combined High School Under 15's
Peter Curran	NSW CCC Under 15's

Chris Shanahan	Australian Tertiary Education team
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1997

Sean L'Estrange	NSW Combined Independent School
Ryan Hey	NSW Combined Independent School
Daniel Irvine	NSW CCC
Wade L'Estrange	NSW CCC

1998

Blake Green	NSW Under 12's PSSA
Jarrold Farlow	NSW Under 12's PSSA
Daniel Irvine	NSW CCC
Anthony Boyd	NSW CCC
Daniel Irvine	NSW Under 17's Reps
Anthony Boyd	NSW Under 17's Reps

1999

Matt Davidson	NSW CCC
Mathew Day	NSW CCC
Warren Frome	NSW Combined Ind Schools Under 18's

2001

Scott Heap	NSW Under 16's
Blake Green	NSW Combined High Schools
Nathan Armit	NSW Combined High Schools
Robert Young	NSW Combined Independent Schools
Nathan Armit	Australian School Boys Under 15's
Robert Young	Australian Emerging School boys

2002

Mitchelle Davidson	NSW PSSA Under 11's
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Daniel Mahoney	NSW PSSA Under 11's
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2004

Jason Baitieri	Australian Under 15's Schoolboys NSW CCC
Dominic Nasso	Australian Under 15's Schoolboys NSW CCC
Tareq Hajjaj	NSW CIS
Michael Inskip	NSW PSSA

2005

Daniel Mahoney	NSW CCC Under 15's
Mitchelle Watson	NSW CCC Under 18's
Harrison Croghan	Aust Affiliated states Under 16's

2006

Daniel Mahoney	NSW CCC U15's
Mitchelle Watson	NSW CIS U18's
Harrison Croghan	Australian Affiliated states Under 16's
Daniel Mahoney	Australian Merit Team Under 16's
Jason Baitieri	NSW CCC Under 18's
Krys Freeman	NSW CCC Under 15's
Daniel Anissde	NSW CCC Under 15's

2007

Dominic Nasso	NSW CCC Open
Jason Baitieri	NSW CCC Open
Harrison Croghan	NSW CCC Open
Jamie Buhrer	NSW CIS Open
Jason Baitieri	Australian Schoolboys

2008

Daniel Mahoney	NSW CCC Open
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2010

Matthew Morgan	NSW Under 11's Catholic School
Cooper Edwards	NSW Under 11's Catholic School
Matt Collins	NSW Under 15's CIS
Jack Lord	NSW Under 15's CIS
Adam Spicer	NSW Under 15's CIS
Jessie Hinton	NSW Under 15's CIS
Frank Arcella	NSW Under 15's CIS
Will Ryan	NSW Under 15's CIS

2011

Frank Arcella	NSW Under 15's CIS
Will Ryan	NSW Under 15's CIS

HAROLD MATTHEWS

1985

John Glanville	Parramatta
Jason Lamming	Parramatta
Michael Green	Parramatta
Scott Wisemantel	Parramatta
Anthony Buda	Parramatta

Grant Lonergan

Parramatta

Justin Price

Parramatta

Glen Scott

Parramatta

1989

Mark Tyquin

Parramatta

Adam Toro

Parramatta

Mark Kuseley

Parramatta

Christian Taunton

Parramatta

Nathan Kolc

North Sydney

1993

Ben Starling

Parramatta

Ryan L'Estrange

Parramatta

1996

Etuate Qiokacikaci

Parramatta

Daniel Irvine

Parramatta

Michael Egan Hurst

Parramatta

Luke Taggart

Parramatta

1997

Michael Egan Hurst

Parramatta

Daniel Irvine

Parramatta

Luke Taggart

Parramatta

Marcus Orley

Parramatta

1998

Sean L'Estrange

Parramatta

Awarded player of the year

David Martinez

Awarded player of the year

Ross Giardina

1999

Nathan McMillan

Parramatta

Nathan Lindner

Parramatta

2000

Heath L'Estrange

Parramatta

2001

Heath L'Estrange

Parramatta

John Williams

Parramatta

Patrick Inskip

Parramatta

2002

Oliver Saunders

Sydney City

Nathan Armit

Parramatta

Simon Micallef

Parramatta

Blake Green

Parramatta

Patrick Inskip

Parramatta

Mark Murphy

Parramatta

Wayne Boorer

Parramatta

Phillip Wolffe

Parramatta

David Williams

Parramatta

2003

Rowan Hastings

2004

Rowan Hastings

Parramatta

Alan Saba

North Sydney

Matthew Saunders

Sydney City

2005

Dom Nasso

Parramatta

Jason Baitieri

Parramatta

Jamie Buhner

Parramatta

Ben James

Parramatta

Brendan McHugh

Parramatta

Daniel Zisti

St George

Ben Darcy

Sydney City

Rhys Jack

Balmain

Brad Horder

North Sydney

Harrison Croghan

North Sydney

Ray Chiha

North Sydney

Eddie Ziade

North Sydney

2006

Daniel Mahoney

Parramatta

Ellis James

Parramatta

2007

Daniel Mahoney

Parramatta

Keys Freeman

Parramatta

Daniel Annisse

Parramatta

Mitchell Davidson

Parramatta

Shannon King

Parramatta

Tom Kornak

Parramatta

Blake Williams

Parramatta

Gavan Bright

Western Academy

Simon Chiha

Manly Warringah

2008

Luke Fishburn

Parramatta

Trent Jennings

Parramatta

Michael Inskip

Parramatta

Jeff Riley

Parramatta

Ben Saunders

Parramatta

Jason Seage

Parramatta

Pita Wright

Manly Warringah

Jim Bastan

Manly Warringah

Bevan DeVries

North Sydney

Aiden Carney

North Sydney

Shane Brown

North Sydney

Like Keary

North Sydney

Alex Thompson

North Sydney

Mark Murphy

North Sydney

Todd James

North Sydney

Mitchell Mahoney

Western Academy

Jye Gadson

Western Academy

Joseph Eneliko

Western

2009

Pauli Pauli

Western Academy

SG BALL

1979

John Clapham
Michael Milson

1985

Dean Lonergan Parramatta
Andrew McCaffery Parramatta
Cameron McInnes Parramatta
(awarded best and fairest Parramatta junior player)
Scott Marsh
Jim Hartog

1987

Michael Green Parramatta
Scott Wisemantel Parramatta
Scott Mahon Parramatta
Matthew Conroy Parramatta

1988 (WON COMPETITION)

Scott Wisemantel Parramatta
(Awarded the inaugural Michael Green Memorial trophy for the best and fairest player in the SG Ball Competition)
John Glanville Parramatta

1989

Paul Coinakis Parramatta
Martin Seal Parramatta
Tim Johnston Parramatta

Michael Steele Parramatta

1990

Kevin Savvas
Anthony Toro' Parramatta
Ian Burge
Peter Curran
Adam Potuzanski Parramatta
Paul Harvey Parramatta
Guy Newton

1992

Kurt Chapman Parramatta
Justin Russell Parramatta
Ian Burg Parramatta
Peter Curran Parramatta
Richard Butterworth Parramatta
Wade Horder North Sydney
Peter Kuseley North Sydney
David Heath Penrith
Paul Harvey Penrith
Scott Isacs Wests
Chris Langlands Wests

1993

Matthew O'Rielly

Wayne Blazey

Jason Russell

1996

Scott Sullivan Parramatta
Wade L'Estrange Parramatta

1997

Scott Sullivan Parramatta
Wade L'Estrange Parramatta
Daniel Roddy

1998

Daniel Irvine Parramatta
Luke Taggart Parramatta
Michael Egan-hurst
Dane Gilmour
Anthony Boyd

1999

Sean L'Estrange Parramatta
David Martinez
Daniel Irvine Parramatta
Ryan Tramonte
Ross Giardina

2000

Sean L'Estrange Parramatta
Nathan McMillan

2001

Nathan Lindner
Nathan McMillan

2002

Heath L'Estrange Parramatta
John Williams Parramatta
Brett Laws Parramatta

2003

Mitch Krahe North Sydney
Michael Mansour North Sydney
Mitch Erickson North Sydney
Anthony Harris North Sydney
Mark Murphy Parramatta
Simon Micallef Parramatta
Ryan Constable Parramatta
David Williams Parramatta
Oliver Saunders Sydney City

2004

David Williams Parramatta
Patrick Inskip Parramatta
Ryan Constable Parramatta
Mark Murphy Parramatta
Simon Micallef Parramatta
Nathan Armit Parramatta
Mitchell Krahe North Sydney
Mitchell Erickson North Sydney
Jesse Lloyd North Sydney
Robert Suple North Sydney
Josh Bowock North Sydney
Xavier Jordan North Sydney
Reece Watson North Sydney
Paul Horan North Sydney
Michael Mansour North Sydney
Anthony Harris North Sydney
Robert Williams North Sydney
Oliver Saunders Sydney Roosters

2005

Stephen Moses Parramatta
Alan Saba North Sydney
Steve Subakti North Sydney
Matt Tierney North Sydney
Matthew Saunders Sydney Roosters

2006

Dom Nasso Parramatta
Jason Baitieri Parramatta
Louis Yenz Parramatta
Nathan Tannous Parramatta
Matthew Saunders Sydney Roosters
Shane Arundel Manly

2007

Dom Nasso Parramatta
Jason Baitieri Parramatta
Jamie Buhrer Parramatta
Sandor Earl Sydney Roosters
Ben James Western Academy
Chad Chllita Western Academy
Brad Horder North Sydney

2008

Krys Freeman Parramatta
Daniel Mahoney Western Academy
Blake Williams Western Academy
TJ Taotua Western Academy

2009

Trent Jennings Western Academy
Michael Inskip Western Academy

Luke Fishburn Western Academy
Jeff Riley Western Academy
Thomas Young Western Academy
Daniel Anise Balmain
Daniel Mahoney Balmain
Troy Vanderlight Balmain
Blake Williams Balmain
Joseph Eneliko Manly
Luke Keary Manly
Shane Brown North Sydney
Aiden Carney North Sydney
Bevan DeVries North Sydney
Michael Esber Newtown

JERSEY FLEGG

1979

Tony Gavan	Parramatta
Bill Karydis	Parramatta
Wayne Morrow	Parramatta
Steve Young	Parramatta

1985

Mark Townsend	Parramatta
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1986

Simon Bradstock	Parramatta
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1987

Simon Bradstock	Parramatta
Paul James	Parramatta
Andrew McCaffery	Parramatta
Bill Dowers	Parramatta
Allan Cook	Parramatta

Jersey Flegg Coach

1988

Matthew Tyquin	Parramatta
Andrew McCaffery	Parramatta
Matthew Smith	Parramatta
Dean Lonergan	Parramatta
Scott Hodson	Parramatta
Peter Heath	Parramatta

Andrew Tymmons	Parramatta
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Tim O'Brien	Parramatta
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Jersey Flegg Coach

1989

Matt Tyquin	Parramatta
Peter Heath	Parramatta
Andrew Tymmons	Parramatta

1990

Tim Johnston	Parramatta
Shaun Bradwell	Parramatta
Martin Seal	Parramatta

1992

Mark Tyquin	Parramatta
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1993

Mark Tyquin	Parramatta
Ian Burge	Parramatta

1996

Ryan L'Estrange	Parramatta
Adam Toro	Parramatta
Trent Tavoletti	Parramatta

1997

Simon Gwynne	Parramatta
Adam Toro	Parramatta
Trent Tavoletti	Parramatta

1998

Wade L'Estrange	Parramatta
Daniel Roddy	Parramatta

1999

Wade L'Estrange	Parramatta
Daniel Roddy	Parramatta

2000

Ryan Steele	Parramatta
Sean L'Estrange	Parramatta
Wade L'Estrange	Parramatta
Luke Taggert	Balmain

2001

Nathan McMillan	Parramatta
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2003

John Williams	Parramatta
Brett Ryan	Parramatta
David Wah	Parramatta

Heath L'Estrange	Parramatta
Scott Heap	North Sydney
Grant Toscan	North Sydney
Cheyne Tickle	North Sydney

2004

John Williams	Parramatta
Scott Heap	North Sydney
Heath L'Estrange	Sydney City
Michael Johnson	North Sydney
Cheyne Tickle	North Sydney

2005

Wayne Boorer	Parramatta
Danny Chiha	North Sydney
Mitchell Erickson	North Sydney
Paul Horan	North Sydney
Zac Jourdan	North Sydney
Michael Mansour	North Sydney
Brad Price	North Sydney
Oliver Saunders	North Sydney
Reece Watson	North Sydney
Jarred Farlow	Balmain

2006

Wayne Boorer	Parramatta
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Danny Chiha	North Sydney
Mitchell Erickson	North Sydney
Paul Horan	North Sydney
Zac Jourdan	North Sydney
Michael Mansour	North Sydney
Brad Price	North Sydney
Oliver Saunders	North Sydney
Reece Watson	North Sydney
Jarred Farlow	Balmain

2007

Jason Baitieri	Parramatta
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PRESIDENTS CUP

1979

Allan Woods	Parramatta
Steve Durrant	Parramatta
Dave Kitchener	Parramatta

1986

Ian Roberts	Parramatta
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1987

Greg Harris	Parramatta
Stephen Day	Parramatta

1990

Martin Seal	Parramatta
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1991

Martin Seal	Parramatta
Matthew Tyquin	North Sydney
Paul Griffin	North Sydney
Selwyn Brown	Manly

1989

Adam Toro	Parramatta
Trent Tavoletti	Parramatta
Simon Gwynne	Parramatta

PREMIER LEAGUE

Wade Horder	Western Suburbs
-------------	-----------------

2006

Simon Micallef	Parramatta
David Williams	Parramatta
Blake Green	Parramatta
Rhian Gerard	North Sydney
Nathan Armit	Bulldogs

2007

Simon Micallef	Parramatta
David Williams	Parramatta
Tim Wynn	Parramatta
Nathan Armit	Canterbury

TOYOTA CUP

2008

Dom Nasso	Parramatta
Jason Baitieri	Parramatta
Jamie Buhner	Manly Warringah
Ben James	Canterbury
Rhys Jack	Canterbury

2010

John Batalibasi	Parramatta
Zac Douglas	Parramatta

2011

Tom Young	Parramatta
Cameron Picker	Parramatta
Daniel Mahoney	Parramatta
Jason Strickleton	Parramatta
Luke Fishburn	Parramatta
Kyrs Feeman	Melbourne

AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLBOY REPS

	Greg Gibson
	Wayne Morrow
1986	Scott Wisemantel
1987	Scott Mahon
2000	Budd Frome
2000	Heath L'Estrange
2001	Nathan Armit
2004/2007	Jason Baitieri

STATE OF ORIGIN

Garry Thomas	Jamie Buhner
David Hall	Mark Carroll
David Williams	

AUSTRALIAN REPRESENTATIVES

John Kolc

Ron Hilditch

David Williams

Mark Carroll



Mark Carroll

NRL PLAYERS

JOHN KOLC

Parramatta, Australia

RON HILDITCH

Parramatta, NSW, Australia

PAUL MARES

Parramatta, Eastern Suburbs

WADE L'ESTRANGE

Parramatta

DANIEL IRVINE

Parramatta, South Sydney

BLAKE GREEN

Parramatta, Canterbury, Cronulla

JOHN WILLIAMS

Parramatta, Sydney Roosters, North Queensland, Cronulla

HEATH L'ESTRANGE

Sydney Roosters, Manly-Warringah, Bradford (Eng)

CHRIS ARMIT

Canterbury

KANE CLEAL

Manly, South Sydney, Canterbury

DAVID WILLIAMS

Manly-Warringah, City Origin, NSW, Australia

JAMIE BUHRER

Manly-Warringah, City Origin, NSW

WADE ROACH

North Sydney

TONY GAVAN

Penrith

GLEN MANSFIELD

Parramatta

WADE HORDER

North Sydney

MARTIN SEAL

Parramatta, Western Reds

MARK CLINTON

Parramatta

SCOTT MAHON

Parramatta, North Queensland

GREG GIBSON

Penrith, Manly

WAYNE MORROW

Parramatta

GARRY THOMAS

Parramatta

DAVID HALL

North Sydney, South Sydney, NSW

ARTIE PAPAS

Cronulla

PETER JOHNSTON

Parramatta, South Sydney, Illawarra

MARK BLACKBURN

St. George

MARK CARROLL

Penrith, South Sydney, Manly, NSW, Australia

PAUL JAMES

Easts

DAVID BLACK

Parramatta

CHRIS WARREN

Western Suburbs, Western Reds

SANDOR EARL

Sydney City, Penrith, Canberra

JASON CAYLESS

Parramatta, Sydney City, West Tigers

ALAN WOODS

Penrith, Western Suburbs

MARK MCDONNELL

Eastern Suburbs

NATHAN MCMILLAN

Parramatta

PAUL MARTIN

Canberra, Gold Coast

STEVE WILLIAMS

Parramatta

SCOTT HODSON

Parramatta

PENI TEREPO

Parramatta

AVA SEUMANUFAGAI

West Tigers

DARREN TUITE

Penrith



Blake Green



LIFE MEMEBERS

ALLAN COOK
ALLAN WEEKS
BARBARA ABBOTT
BARRIE JONES
BARRY L'ESTRANGE
BARRY CLAPHAM
BARRY RUDD
BOB COLLINGS
BOB ROSE

BRIAN HORDER
DENNIS FOULSTONE
JENNY BYRNE
JOHN BILLINGS
JOHN NOBLE
JOHN YOUNG
KEITH CHURCHLAND
KEVIN SHANAHAN
MICHAEL GREMMO

MICK SHANAHAN
PHIL O'BRIEN
STEVE SULLIVAN
BRIAN WITT (D)
KEITH HOYLE (D)
KEITH WOELLNER (D)
MARJ RADFORD (D)
STAN COBCROFT (D)
WARREN HEATH (D)

VALE

JAKE ASTILL
BILL BRIEN
RAY BUCKLEY
IAN BURNS
JACK CAMERON
MAX CARDWELL
BURT CHICK
STAN COBCROFT
ALAN COOK
ROSS CRAWLEY
RON DROUGHT
GREG FREW
MICHAEL GREEN
ELAINE GREMMO
FRED HARRISON
MICHAEL HARRISON
STUART HAYWARD
WARREN HEATH

PAUL HEATH
JEFF HOLLAND
KEITH HOYLE
MARK JACKSON
PETER KUSELEY
CHRIS LANGLANDS
MICHAEL LACHMUND
PETER MCANDREW
ANDREW MCCAFFERY
HAZEL MORROW
HOWARD PAINTER
JASON PIERCE
LEN QUINN
LEN RADFORD
MARJ RADFORD
DAVID ROACH
LEN REEVES
DON ROGERS

ALAN SANDSTROM
PETER SAYERS
KEVIN SMITH
HARRY STONE
CHRISTAN TAUNTON
BERT TOMLINSON
BRUCE TYLER
BILL WALTERS
ALLAN WEEKES
ROY WILKINSON
BRIAN WITT
KEITH WOELLNER SNR
JOHN WOOD
STEVE YOUNG



Gone but not forgotten

TEAM OF THE HALF CENTURY

The celebration of the Hills Bulls has created an opportunity to reflect on the milestones in our club's 50 year history. It also creates the opportunity to recognise the players that have enriched our club with their talents.

In fairness and without prejudice, a criteria was established. Foremost the recognition of a player's ability had to be judge on their efforts whilst a playing member of the mighty Bulls, secondly the players had to have played either for 3 seasons and/or 50 games to be nominated.

The strict adherence to this criteria was to ensure that those players ultimately selected could be truly recognised and acknowledged as worthy members of the HILLS Team of the Half Century.

Success is not always measured on the scoreboard. In our club, there are qualities that remain enduring.....loyalty and respect. Our club has been well served by the players that may not have been the prominent star however there longevity in the association with the Bulls should be acknowledged.

Darrell "Scratchy" Abbott, as a 6 year old played in the inaugural Stan Cobcroft Shield winning team and 26 years on was still applying himself in A grade. Scratchy played in numerous teams, from both extremes of the rugby league spectrum from

premierships to wooden spoons and some in between. Of those hundreds of matches, Scratchy gave no less than 100% application.

Another, Peter Heath, who started as a four year old. Peter in those tender years, his talents we apparent. A hooker gifted with speed and a tenacious tackling ability coupled with commitment and passion made Peter a fierce competitor. Ankle injuries hampered Peter's speed in the latter part of his playing career but not his resolve, commitment, dedication and passion. Long after his playing career these virtues are embedded both as a coach and trainer. As a coach Peter has and continues to gain success because of these qualities he instils in his charges.

Chris Pierce, a long serving player, one could describe as a "handyman" play any nominated position for the betterment of the team. His versatility dampened his profile but he would perform in any position as a tradesman. A mark of his contribution was he was always prominent in both pre game and post game discussions.

It would be remiss not to respect the achievements of players that may not have fulfilled their potential as a player in their formative years but the pursuit to excel in the game. Players like Wade "Wiz" Horder, a bespectacled youngster with a slight build had a love of little athletics played on the wing with moderate success. A move to North Sydney junior representative teams and insatiable and dedicated application

to training, Wade established himself as a regular first grader with North Sydney Bears in 1996 however back and leg injuries shortened his career. Wade has never lost his affiliation with the Club returning in 2004 to assist our A grade team however his injuries became chronic and the curtain came down from where it began, Crestwood Oval.

Paul Mares, playing his early years with Parramatta Marist before joining Hills D grade under Brian Nicholson. Paul had the ideal football physical attributes and speed. Star quality and potential would best describe Paul as he progressed through the Club's C grade. Paul's team mates in the forwards Tony Gavan, Glenn Mansfield, Wayne Morrow, Wayne MacDonald to name a few went onto grade. In 1982, Paul trialled for grade and if unsuccessful was going to play for Singleton and pursue his work as a bricklayer. Paul was graded in 1982, spent the 1982/83 off season in France honing his footballing skills, and went onto be a vital member of the 1983 Parramatta Eels premiership team. Jack Gibson remarked that Paul Mares career was dogged by injury. Paul maintained his star quality but the potential of playing for Australia was never fulfilled.

David Hall played in junior football as a tenacious halfback. His dad, Mick was a rampaging second rower with Hills A grade in the seventies. Gifted with speed and astute handling skills, David would be targeted by opposition forwards such the

respect he commanded. The 1987 C grade grand final would be testament of that. In 1988, David was graded with North Sydney. In 1990, David debuted in first grade with the Bears as a winger. Of all his talents, David Hall's greatest asset is his will. These footballing ingredients were to take him to the pinnacle of our sport - State of Origin. David finished his career at South Sydney; but continues to ply his skills, playing touch at Kellyville in the Hills Touch Competition

The finalising of a "Team of the Half Century" would never be easy or without debate. The decision to nominated five teams, each representing a decade resulting in 147 nominations, this figure was culled to the best 85 players. On June 22, 2013 the "Team of the Half Century" would be announced. This is a significant achievement for one's virtues of skills, toughness, preparation and dedication in a sport that is very demanding.

The nominations for the Team of the Half Century are:-

1964 - 1973	1974 - 1983	1984 - 1993	1994 - 2003	2004 - 2013
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FULLBACK	Billy Harris	Alan Barker	Scott Wood	Selwyn Brown	Brad Horder
WING	Peter McAndrew	David Serge	Mark Boland	Don Crawford	Dom Nasso
CENTRE	Mick Gremmo	Les Ivers	Russell Mooney	Ryan Byrne	Reece Watson
CENTRE	Jimmy Bright	Rob George	Greg Gibson	John Williams	Blake Williams
WING	Steve Foster	Alan Woods	Shane Ferguson	David Williams	Phil Wolffe
FIVE-EIGHT	Dennis Winnin	Les Howard	Scott Wisemantel	Martin Seal	Luke Keary
HALF	John Kolc	Michael Moore	Mark Donkin	Ryan Steele	Daniel Mahoney
LOCK	Ray Millers	David Brown	Andrew McCaffery	Ryan Tramonte	Wayne Boorer
SECOND ROW	Col McAndrew	Tony Gavan	Paul Mulherin	Wade L'Estrange	Jason Bateri
SECOND ROW	John Beesley	Bill Butler	Pancho Ryan	Matt O'Reilly	Krys Freeman
PROP	Bruce Hilditch	Glenn Mansfield	Tony Dennis	Nathan McMillan	Pauli Pauli
PROP	Bob Collings	Steve Williams	Michael Green	Ryan L'Estrange	Robert Young
HOOKER	Ron Hilditch	Wayne Morrow	Peter Heath	Heath L'Estrange	Jamie Buhrer
RES.	Phil Everden	Don Halliday	Cameron McInnes	Daniel Irvine	Ellis James
RES.	Col Wilkinson	Gordon Marshall	Greg Harris	Warren Frome	Brett Ryan
RES.	Ron Horne	Bill Karydis	Trevor McCaffery	Pat Inskip	Bevan De Vries
RES.	Ray Bourne	Robbie Hannon	James Moses	Nathan Armit	Ben Saunders



HILLS DISTRICT BULLS

TEAM OF THE HALF CENTURY

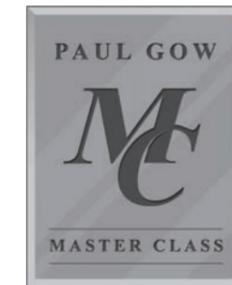
WING Peter McAndrew	CENTRE Russell Mooney	FULLBACK Scott Wood	CENTRE Greg Gibson	WING David Williams
HALFBACK John Kolc	SECOND ROW Paul Mulherin	LOCK Ray Millers	SECOND ROW Pancho Ryan	FIVE-EIGHT Scott Wisemantel
	PROP Bruce Hilditch	HOOKER Ron Hilditch	PROP Bob Collings	
RESERVE Andrew McCaffery	RESERVE Wade L'Estrange	RESERVE Heath L'Estrange	RESERVE Michael Green	

The Birth of the Bulls began with a dream some 50 years ago and through the generations there is a dream that exists in all of us. Our Club continues in the pursuit of fulfilling that dream for the individual, the family, the team, the community.

This publication is peppered with facts linked with memories. Individually, the family, the team, the community they all change; the memories are enduring.

The Hills District Bulls has tradition and values. The traditions and values will last beyond adversity. The children are our future and they are entrusted with the responsibility of keeping the dream alive.

For all the thousands that have contributed over the past 50 years, you have fulfilled dreams countless times over, for which we have all benefited.



THANKYOU

WE WOULD LIKE TO GIVE OUR SPONSORS A HUGE "BULLS THANKYOU" FOR ALL YOUR GENEROSITY & SUPPORT.

WITHOUT YOUR INVOLVEMENT THIS BOOK & NIGHT OF MEMORIES WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN REALISED.

A SPECIAL MENTION TO ALLAN COOK, BARRY RUDD, DEAN MCCARRY, JOHN ABBOTT & MICHAEL GREMMO FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN RESEARCHING THE HILLS BULLS HISTORY.

ANOTHER SPECIAL MENTION TO MARK MAHONEY AND NATHAN BEHRENS FOR THE DESIGN AND PRINT.

FINALLY A VERY SPECIAL MENTION TO GREG PRICHARD FOR HIS OUTSTANDING JOB WRITING THE HISTORY OF THE HILLS BULLS.

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