

"The unfinished memoirs"

Spinifex Footy

Rough, Tough & Hard to Bluff

*"It was somewhere up the country in a land of rock and scrub,
That they formed an institution called the Newman Footy Club.
They were long and wiry miners of the rugged mountainside,
And a team was never worried that the pub would close - half time;*

*but their style of playing footy was irregular and rash -
They had mighty little science, but a mighty lot of dash"*

[The Geebung Polo Club - A.B "Banjo Patterson – with apologies]

"Pushin & Shovin"

*"Head out on the Highway, Looking for adventure,
and whatever comes our way*

[Born to be Wild - Steppenwolf '68 – "Easy Rider" theme song '69]

Fun & Games:

The original reason for arranging footy matches was to have some fun. Competition and "games" followed. In the incubator of testosterone in a "blokey" mining community and later the development of clans into tribalism, sometimes we did things we wished we hadn't:

Thankfully most of the *"Pushin & Shovin"* was left on the field, replaced by plenty of B&B after the match at the Walkabout.

"Just one little Goat":

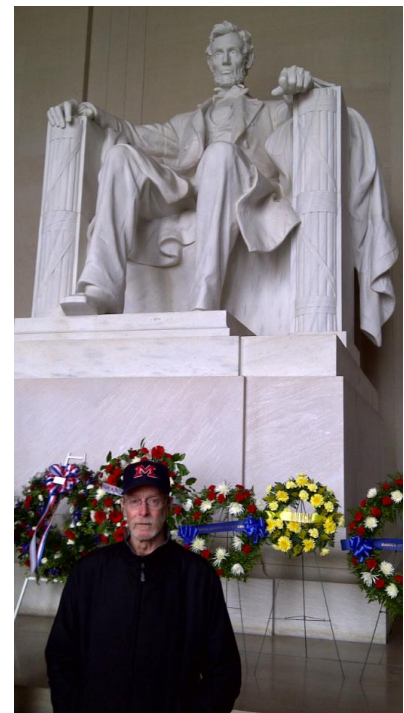
On reflection – Spinifex Footy was mostly about very good stories. However we can't delude ourselves that we were perfect. Should we *"let sleeping dogs lay?"* *hmm – no*. Hopefully we can redeem ourselves and that others may learn from *"Stirring the Possum"*! (I love mixed metaphors - but you know what I mean).

Remember that story about "just one little goat"? (sheep for Kiwis). It's so true that only one misdemeanour can overshadow a lifetime/career of achievements.

Pushin & Shovin - Original Sin:

In the “inaugural” game MNM vs. the contractors, my old school mate **Kerry Shanahan** was at his annoying best for the Bechtel team. A yankee surveyor **John DeRan** was amused to watch this form of bush footy and still remembers **Kerry’s** “coat hanger” tackle in a social game! (KS: “*but he ran into it!*”). I do remember **Kerry’s** party trick “push in the back” marks and his familiar call for a handpass – but it was all just a bit of fun – in the absence of any technical umpiring. [5 Dreamtime – in the beginning].

John DeRan “the Yank” at home in Washington 2011.



Patto on the “inaugural Game”: *Yes what an inaugural game! As my fading memory recollects I tried to take a mark from behind **Wally(Bell)** and because of my very limited height went up and clipped him behind the ears....of course **Wally** over reacted and faked for a free (like those soccer players) and I gave away a free....I reckon I gave away more free kicks than anything else!*

“Ding” - Round One!

Saturday afternoon 6th May ‘72 the “inaugural” game: Saints vs Tigers at the Boomerang. Duty team Centrals. **Terry Aram (C)** was the central umpire and it was an entertaining friendly affair until **Trevor DuToit (T)** gave **Mike Roszak (S)** a glancing blow in a ruck duel. The inaugural “blue” was on. It was the first and last time that the duty team supplied a central umpire. The “inaugural” disputes tribunal was hastily arranged next week with **Gill Hassell** from the newspaper shop.



Bob “Patto” Paterson: *first season...”I remember being on the “League committee” and endorsing the send off rule giving the umpire authority to send off a player for any reportable offense! Guess what **Billy Musham (T)** and I were sent off for punching each other in front of the ump (can’t remember who he was!!) in the first game when the rule applied”. BK: I can vaguely remember this ruling, brought on by the Dutoit/Roszak bout. But it certainly didn’t last long and wasn’t continued after ‘72. ‘*

76 “Mushy” (pink shirt) front: Norm Bergman, Merv Welsh

***Hibbo on Mushy:** Billy was a really good masseur and he sorted out my problem in time to play the following week. He was also a good footballer and an even better pugilist. I remember running toward the wing chasing a loose ball in a scratch match against Tigers, when I noticed **Billy** (a Tiger) doing the same thing. He was pretty close to me so I gave him the best and hardest hip and shoulder I could muster and then instantaneously - "whack" - what the!!! **Billy** didn't see my bump coming and took offence - so much so that he gave me a clip behind the ears. He and I had a bit of a push and shove, and then got on with the game.*

Brain snaps:

Brain snaps were nasty attacks with intent – mostly involving a deliberate knuckle punch to the head. There were only a few incidents in the 70's and I can't condone any of them. They were a stain on the competition and the send-off rule with a season ban should have been mandatory – no excuses!

Shameful: The attack on **Bruce Munroe** when he was only trying to help his team mate **John Ferraro** was hmm – less said the better! [4.7 - Dark side of the Moon].

Thuggery: Bob belted Tigers Captain **John Aram** behind play in the last quarter of the '73 GF. Tigers were favourites, and while it may have turned the game, the incident was a low act. **John** was the competition's star rover (part of the **John Hawkes** ruck combination) in the first two years and a much admired player. The incident wasn't forgotten when the two sides met again in the '75 Grand Final [7.3 Premierships].



Thuggery 2: Bob belted **Trevor Levien** (C) behind play in the shadows of the back pocket. Another low act went lower when he finished him off with a couple as he went down. **Trevor** was a loveable bush man and another wandering Kiwi who ended up in the Pilbara. He would have had some rugby DNA but little understanding of "Aussie Rules. **Trevor** was the oldest player of the 70's playing at 41 because numbers were short. **Trevor** and his son **Russell Levien** both played for Centrals in the early 70's and were the only father & son combination.

Russell Levien "grinning" after the '76 Grand Final

Madness: In another low act behind play, Steve sent **Murray Ford (C)** to hospital a broken nose. **Murray** had a recent life change from parish priest to “born-again” footballer at a mature age. Playing footy was supposed to be fun! Steve to his credit confronted his demons by visiting **Murray** in hospital.

Annoying: Greg dropped one of the “annoying” Fortescue stars with a right hand blow. The **FNFL player** saw stars - I was immediately behind the action, saw the “red-mist” glazing over and could sense it coming. I was more than annoyed because Greg broke his thumb as was out of action for a few weeks.

Red mist: John gave **Curtis Clark (T)** a broken nose following a crude tackle on **Bob Wales (C)** in the '80 prelim final. **Curtis** was a fair player and a star that season but didn't expect the preliminary final to slip away or have a “protector species” so close by.

Curtis Clark 1980



Confessions of a Boofhead (s):



Nowhere to Hide – Boomerang Oval '74

Probably the 94 GF: Tony Hibbard? (C.9), BK with ball, Peter Gates (C), Bob Piotrowski (S), Peter Hickey (S) (obscured), Norm Robinson (far background), Jim Kirkland (tumbling right). Background: ? (S), Wally Kowalczyk (C), ? (S), Rennie Zammit C.15).

Early in the 70's, umpire **John Pillage** was driving me crazy (he just wasn't listening to my interpretation of the rules!). I was fuming, and unfortunately **Merv Welsh (T)** was just an innocent bystander at the next ruck contest. Using the old trick when the umpire had his head down as he was bouncing the ball, I gave **Merv** a "love tap" around the ears and nobody came near the "raging bill" for the rest of the game.

***Hibbo on Dennis Barber:** "in one of the earliest matches Centrals played against Tigers. I had the ball and was running off the half back flank when **Dennis** loomed large off my starboard quarter. In those days you could bounce the ball and if tackled you could have the tackler pinged for holding the man. Anyway that was the plan, except I hadn't allowed for **Dennis's** bulk. I bounced the ball away from myself expecting a tackle but instead got a ripper hip and shoulder from **Dennis** - ouch. I couldn't recover the ball nor could I take a deep breath for about two weeks he'd cracked two ribs - mine this time!!"*

On the half forward flank; "**Grumpy**" was reminding **Bob Medling (C)** that he wasn't happy with his recent defection from Tigers to Centrals. However the pushin & shoving "**reminders**" were relentless and I happened to have this in full view as I was "**loafing**" at full forward. Heading off on a "diplomatic mission" I cautioned myself "**don't get reported for this**" as I lined "**Grumpy**" up for a "don't argue" shirt front. I knew "they" would be coming and turned around to see a posse close by and **Allan Williams (T)** thundering towards the defence of his brother. Using another old trick I grabbed **Bruce Munro (T)** by the jumper and using him as a shield, fended off the "haymakers", much to the dismay of the "galloping gas-o-meter". No harm done; **Grumpy** just fell over and "they" didn't land one on me. However even with my "Tennessee Lawyer" **John DeRan (NNFL)**, I did get "rough justice" - a week for "unduly rough play".



Bruce Munroe "the Galloping Gas-o-Meter"

The **Tom Price** games were very willing and included a couple of knuckle men. **Clem Thompson** was a perennial star for FNFL and very willing player. Our mutual respect was of no consequence as we collapsed in a mess of bodies with **Clem** taking the opportunity to land a short jab on my chin. Luckily for me **Lindsay Cotton (C)** was part of the body pile and I grabbed **Lindsay** to provide the human shield trick once again. **Clem** kept trying to belt me - **Lindsay** probably wore most of them.

Bluey Morey (S) was a keen student of the game and knew how to stifle the opposition. Although only “*pint sized*” he decided to block my run-up in the ruck

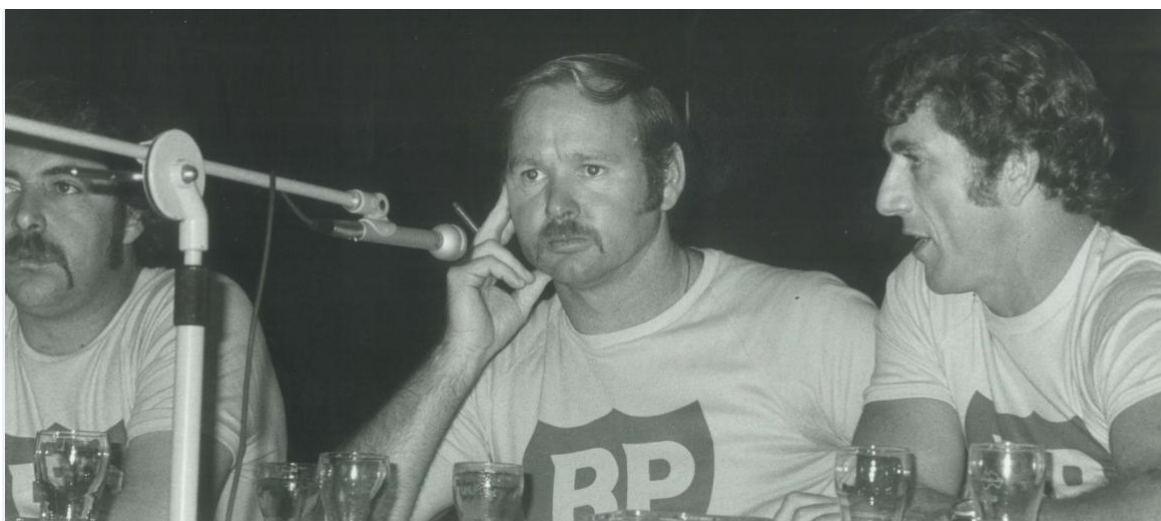


(just when the ump had his head down bouncing). After three of these “blueys” I changed stride and made a wide low “tap”. His ears were ringing when he picked himself up off the ground. “**Bluey**” charged towards me, hesitated and yelled “*I deserved that*”. Unfortunately it happened right in front of the grandstand and his wife, **Pat** came storming from the grandstand at the end of the game - again “*doubting my parentage*”.

Pat Morey in 2011 at the Capricorn “still lookin’ for me” [source: emma]

A bout of “*red mist*” came over me early in the B Grade game at Fremantle oval in ‘75. An elbow to my crown got the blood flowing from the first bounce. The umpire was very biased towards his local Southern district team, their centre half forward was carving us up and we were facing a flogging. It was obvious the ump was letting his boys belt us – so after the CHF slotted another one I decided he needed some attention. Bugger - he sidestepped took a glancing blow and I looked down after the collision to see **Mick Carroll (T)** looking up at me with a split eye and bewilderment. It was friendly fire – **Mick** hasn’t forgotten (or forgiven). [7.1 – Awards].

Les Nixon (T) and myself had an “arms length” relationship. In the Ruck duels we had regular dances around choking each other by the neck – just out of reach of his friendly fire. The wife of **Darryl Buckley** (our trainer) only came to the Centrals - Tigers matches for that entertainment itself.



BP Sports Show – “Bigger & Better next week”

Ray Stevens, Murray McKenzie, Bill Knox

Tigers were raging favourites for the prelim final in 1980. I was asked by “Grumpy” on the **Friday night BP sports show** *“how could Centrals have any chance?”* I did suggest that there were only two principal goal scorers; **Ian “tinker” Rennie & Neil Smith** and therefore we would have to stop them to have any chance. **Grumpy** was right on the case suggesting we would *“target”* them. I didn’t have an answer - until then - we didn’t even have a game strategy!

However very early in the first quarter **Smithy** slotted the first goal - a right foot snap. He was off balance and I laid a very late tackle. Tiger’s pre-match message obviously was *“one in all in”*. I could hear the stampede with **Merv Russell** arriving first with some wild *“playmakers”* – he wouldn’t hurt anyone.



L to R: Merv Russell, Allan Williams

After a bit of *“pushin and shoving”* the game resumed but Tigers had lost the plot. **Bill Wales** (C), Bob’s brother, was having a blinder at CHF in what was to be his last game. I enjoyed some attention for the remainder of the game; at least I didn’t have to chase anyone. However they got one back with a cheap shot; kneeling me in the chest at the last centre bounce. I couldn’t train the following week and went into the GF against Pioneers in a very tender state.



1980 Tigers vs. Centrals

Gavin Tuck (C), ? (T), Bill Knox tackling, ?(T), Curtis Clark (T), ?(T), Ray Williams umpire
(Note the Spinifex in the background)

Ron “Buster” Willison (S) was rarely shaded in competition but he had some very stiff opposition in the ‘74 **Country champs** game at Perth Oval. We had to win to get into the GF. I thought I would intervene with some “active” shepherding (Hawthorn Style) on his opponent, their star centre man. However I ended up second best with a severe cork and could hardly walk in the GF.

“**Buster**” also had his nemesis in the FNFL games, their centreman built very much like “**Buster**” and a powerful star. In a game at **Paraburdoo** I tried to slow that “*red haired beast*” down to give “**Buster**” the edge, but he just flinched and I ended up a bit stunned. I can’t remember “**Buster**” returning the favour for either of these sacrifices.

***Hibbo on “Buster”:** My neighbour and mate Willo and I had some good tussles, but the bugger was a bit quicker than me and when he ran he had the bad habit (from my perspective) of kicking his heels up. Anyway, I was chasing him toward goal on this particular occasion and was just about to tackle him when "whack, whack" his left heel collected my left shin and his right heel collected my right shin. "Hell that hurt" Two days later I was visiting **Billy Musham’s** place suffering an even worse pain while he tried to move the bruising from my shins. The bruising was caused by a couple of broken blood vessels. Thanks **Buster** you didn't deserve any more than the point you kicked anyway.*

Cheap Shots:

The competition was relatively even and any lack of fitness or skill was substituted by the verbal cheap shot or “stray gutzer”. Actually most of it came from those players who lacked the fitness to match their opponents with skill.

Some of it came from the grandstand but mostly from the “*peanut gallery*” (the team managers, trainers and water boys) on the sidelines (many of whom didn’t know the rules – but that’s not the point!).

The usual verbal snipes were “*watch out for footsteps*”, challenging the “*size of your ticker*” or “*doubting your parentage*”. It was a courageous call as it usually “*stirred the possum*”. Retribution came later.

I became conditioned to the “*belt Knoxy*” in Saints games and escaped mostly with being “winded” rather than injury. However in ’76 the “*runaway train*” **Ray Williams** - Saints full back, lined me up for a shirtfront but I couldn’t pull out of the contested ball. Thankfully I saw it coming, did one of my few left foot passes to **Ray’s** opponent **Barry Hibben** (having a “loaf” at full forward), then took the pain for the team! I can’t remember **Hibbo** repaying the complement. *The run-away train: Ray Williams*



Peter Hickey (S) landed a cheap gutzer on me when I was taking a mark right in front of the umpire. However the “*red mist*” only came over me when the umpire thought it was funny and didn’t pay the mark or the infringement. Employing my favourite old ruck trick, I gave **Hickey** a whack in the head at every ruck contest for the remainder of the game. While he knew it was coming, his wife followed me around the boundary line “*questioning my parentage*”.

I must have had another frustrating day chasing, chasing the opposition in a losing side when I challenged **Paul Loveland’s** intestinal fortitude (I couldn’t catch him!). A



few weeks later he was good enough to be in the combined side in Perth and I was encouraging him. I knew that I had overstepped the mark – a cheap shot – and completely unacceptable!

L to R: John Ferraro, Paul Loveland, Ian “Tinker” Rennie.