



***A History of the
Australian Touch
Association
1967-2000***

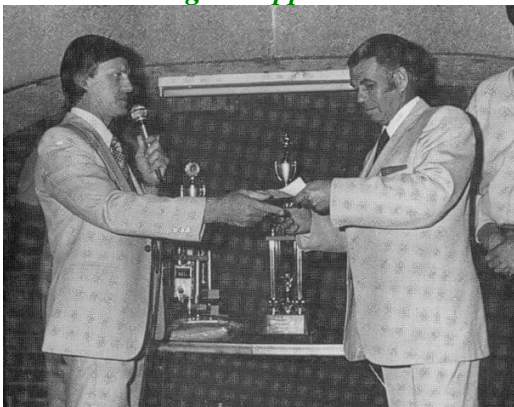


***Dr. Grant Rodwell,
Cary Thompson
Dr. Paul Webb***



1968-79 Towards a Codified National Sport

The development of Touch Football from a sport played in parks and other public places during the late 1960s through to a regulated and codified interstate sport during the 1970s, then to an international sport during the 1980s now known throughout Australia and New Zealand Touch was nothing short of a remarkable sporting success. In retrospect, the establishment of the national body, the Australian Touch Football Association in 1976, was a miracle waiting to happen.

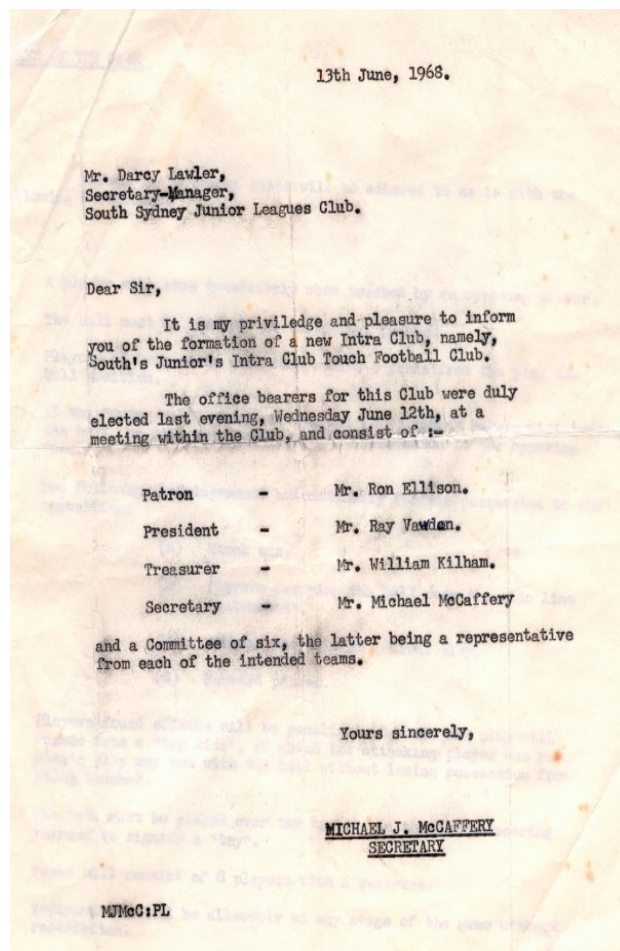


Ray Vawdon, one of the men that started it all! He is photographed here in 1981, on the left, presenting the winner's cheque (Vawdon Cup) to Ross Scott, President of South Sydney Touch Association.

The Formative Years

Anybody who played Rugby League or Rugby Union in Australia during the 1960s will remember playing a form of touch football as a form of practice and fitness at training nights. Often this would involve as many as thirty players, with the playing field usually being the normal Rugby League field. Usually the constituted rules embodied a touch, rather than a tackle.

No doubt, hybrids of this form of game are still being played today all over the world. It was from these beginnings that the game of Touch evolved. Today the numbers of women's teams, mixed teams, age teams, junior teams, Aboriginal teams, service teams, surf club teams, teams involving prisoners from institutions in the State Department of Corrective Services are a feature of the game.



The letter that started it all! Ray Vawdon remembers the legendary Darcy Lawler, on handing the letter to him, quipping, 'This bloody game will never get off the ground!'

In 1968 the first official game of Touch, or Touch Football as it was then known, was held in the traditionally strong Rugby League area of South Sydney. The South Sydney Touch Football Association was founded in 1968. Here, through the organisational structure of the intra-club sporting bodies at South Sydney Junior Rugby League Club Bob Dyke and Ray Vawdon started a formal competition between a small number of teams at Snape Park, Kingsford, in

Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, a venue that is only less than a kilometer from the venue of the 1999 Touch World Cup. Initially, the sport was intended simply to appeal to retired Rugby League players who wanted to stay fit through a football-type sport.

Australian society was changing rapidly during the early 1970s. In respect to sport and leisure, increasingly people were looking away from highly competitive, single-gender sports and recreational activities to sports that were less demanding on individual budgets and time, and that were more family based and gender inclusive. During the late 1960s and early 1970s Touch Football clubs and associations grew rapidly in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Queensland.

Affiliated with the Manly-Warringah Touch Football Association in 1975, the formation of the Avalon Touch Football Club was typical during this early period. The 1979 Manly-Warringah Year Book records that: 'the Avalon club originated from a group of guys playing Touch opposite the Surf Club at Avalon Beach on Saturday mornings about six or seven years ago. They were made up of locals mostly, and included surf club members, leaguies and rah rahs and some who just wanted a run after a hard Friday night.'

Later, evening summer competitions were introduced and proved to be a boost to the number of players joining the sport, particularly from those playing winter sports, playing to stay fit in the off-season.

The New South Wales Touch Association is Constituted

During 1973 the New South Wales Touch Football Association was constituted, with six affiliated associations, and with 1500 registered players. Not surprisingly, the first association to be affiliated was the South Sydney Touch Football Association. By 1978, in his annual report for the NSWTFRA Ray Vawdon, President of the association estimated that there were 40,000 Touch footballers in either affiliated or non-affiliated clubs in country and metropolitan New South Wales.

Australia's First Interstate Touch Football Carnival

The first interstate clashes in Touch Football occurred during the late 1970s between representatives of the Brisbane Touch Football Association and the New South Wales Touch Football Association, comprised mostly of players from the South Sydney Touch Football Association. This was played on a standard Rugby League field, with teams comprising ten players and four reserves per side. These clashes became occasional events during the late 1970s, and did much to sustain the vitality and enhance the profile of the sport. If there were still any doubters, other highlights for the sport during the 1970s were sure to quell any doubts about the future of the sport.

The Rugby League Grand Final Spectacular

An index to the future growth of the sport came with the British Rugby League tour to Australia in 1978. A one-off match was played at the Port Hacking ground between a representative Metropolitan team and the touring Great Britain Rugby League team. The Metropolitan team won by a disputed try. This was an excellent spectacle, played on a full-size Rugby League field. The Pommies received a thousand dollar donation to their players' fund from a sponsor.

It was, however, the opportunities provided by the drawn Rugby League grand final at the Sydney Cricket Ground that year between St George and Parramatta that provided the most spectacular publicity for Touch Football. With the rematch required for the first grade Rugby League premiership, and with the consequent need for a curtain-raiser match, with the reserve grade premiership having been already decided, Rugby League officials looked to Touch Football to provide the curtain raiser for the grand final replay.

Of course, with ex-Rugby League greats such as Ken Irvine taking the Touch Football field the 40,000 spectators were not disappointed in the two representative matches provided for them. For Touch Football, the resulting media publicity was nothing short of spectacular.

New South Wales Regional Affiliations

During 1973 the Wagga Wagga Touch Football Association affiliated with the NSWTFRA, marking it as the first country association to affiliate with the state body. With that city's

proud history of sporting accomplishment it is not surprising that it should have been the regional association to affiliate with the NSWTFa.

Thus, by 1974 the future of Touch Football in New South Wales was looking very bright. Outside Sydney the sport was growing rapidly, first in the Riverina area, then on the South Coast, centered at Wollongong, and it was also taking root in the Tamworth area.

The Seeding Role of Qantas

During the early years of the development of Touch Ray Vawdon was Director of Properties for Qantas, a position that took him to all Australian major regional centres and cities, along with trips to any international city where Qantas had property. And during these years wherever Ray went so did the banner of Touch Football.

In those days Touch Football was unashamedly tied to the Country Rugby League and Australian Rugby League organisational structures. It was not surprising that Ray Vawdon tied the infant

sport to these structures. He was a grade Rugby League player with South Sydney, who, in the shadow of the vast array of internationals at South Sydney during the 1950s had departed his beloved Rabbitohs to Young in south western New South Wales to play in the prestigious Maher Cup. Consequently, through his sporting career and his position in Qantas, he had many contacts in regional New South Wales, and not surprisingly the great regional sporting centres of Wagga Wagga and Tamworth were early growth centres for the sport.

The Inaugural Touch Football International Tour

With successful interstate matches behind them, it was time for Ray Vawdon, Bob Dyke, and their hard-working team of volunteers, officials and organisers to begin thinking about an international tour for Touch Football under the auspices of the ATFA. Ray Vawdon's connections with Qantas and his access to assisted tickets were vital in financing the tour. So, with a representative New South Wales team selected, they set their sights on Auckland.



Australian Touch Football Association New Zealand Tour: 1976

Back: T. McMahon, J. Adams, R. Vawdon, T. Garlick, R. Dyke, W. Glanville
Middle: D. Carson, B. Reynolds, C. Judge, A Brannighan, C. Coward, P. Paterson, M. Mackay
Seated: R May, M. Pinfold (Vice Capt.), C. Matthews, R. Hanson (Capt.), C. Azzopardi, R. Robinson

Again, Rugby League was at the centre of the organisational structure.

First came some matches against the Eastern Suburbs, St George and Cronulla-Sutherland first grade Rugby League teams. The Touchies defeated St George, 2-1, Cronulla-Sutherland, 2-1, and Eastern Suburbs 7-1.

In 1976 just prior to the New Zealand tour the Australian Touch Football Association was formed. Thus, the team was now able to tour as a national team, even though the players were all New South Wales players. This move provided an official justification for the logo on the players' blazers.

On the eve of the departure of the New South Wales (Australian) team Rod Humphries wrote a telling article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The 30 March 1976 article underpins the Rugby League origins of the sport, and the state of the sport at the time:

Inside Sport Extract

A lot of good football is talked by men breasting the bar at leagues clubs around Sydney.

But a small group stopped talking and did something about it at South Sydney Junior Rugby Leagues Club back in late 1967.

They saw the years ticking by ... the waist inching outwards ... and their only exercise lifting beer glasses from counter to mouth. So they decided to organise a touch football competition within the club.

Now, eight years later and thousands of touch footballers later Australia's first touch football team leaves for Auckland on Saturday for international matches against New Zealand. And two of those original bar-breasters, Bob Dyke and Ray Vawdon, will manage the team to New Zealand.

It is quite a success story. Vawdon was president and Dyke secretary of the South Sydney Junior Rugby Leagues Club touch football committee when they started a six-team competition in 1968.

Today they hold the same positions in the NSW Touch Football Association which controls close to 10,000 footballers in NSW.

Touch football, played with eight-a-side across half a football field, is proving a great attraction for ex-footballers who no longer want the bodily contact and those who just want to keep fit.

But the game which started as a fitness outlet now has a wider horizon. Bob Dyke is talking of sponsorship and the rules being varied to give it more spectator appeal.

Representative games such as those to be played in New Zealand are lifting touch football to more than a pastime. The NSW Touch Football Association formed in 1973 is probably the fastest growing sporting organisation in the country. The South Sydney District now has 26 teams, Cronulla-Sutherland and Manly-Warringah 24 each, Parramatta 16, and western Suburbs 12.

St George, Eastern Suburbs and Glebe-Balmain will almost certainly join the NSW association this winter. Secretary, Bob Dyke estimates there are more than 5,000 players affiliated in country areas. The game also is entrenched in Queensland

In Auckland the Australian Touch Football team's confidence was soaring as the New Zealand Herald on 6 April weighed in with spectacular support.

Its report on the international Touch Football matches reveals the view that in many people's minds the games was still a variant of Rugby League:

No Hold-ups In This League Game

Competitive touch football and the first appearance of the former All Black Joe Karam, at Carlaw Park will be a double attraction at rugby league headquarters tonight.

Karam will take his place in the Glenora premier side after only one game for the reserve grade side, when he was given a watching brief rather than a being expected to be fully involved. ...

As a curtain-raiser, touch football played on a more serious level than that played during training sessions will be introduced to league followers. However, about 700 spectators were given a preview of the game when the visiting Australian side beat Glenora 30 tries to 6, at Glen Eden on Sunday.



Bob Dyke: on the eve of the historic 1976 New Zealand tour. Pairing with Ray Vawdon, he did much to shape Touch Football into what it is today.

Entertaining

The impression gained was that football which does not allow for scrums or kicking or even tackling can be an extremely entertaining spectacle. ...

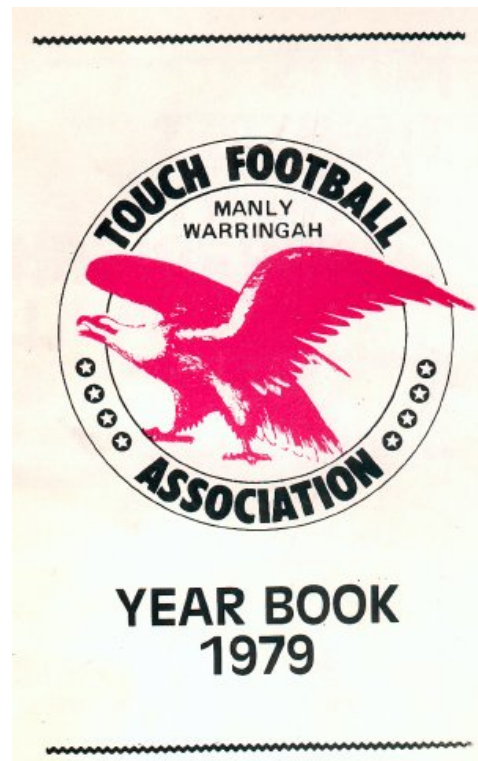
Tonight, the Australians, who mainly come from New South Wales, will meet an Auckland side at 6.45 pm. Each team consists of ten players and scoring is through one point for each try. There is no goal-kicking so that the emphasis is on speed and ball-handling. Australia won, 12 tries to 1.

The Expansion of the Australian Touch Football Association: the Sport of Touch Football is here to Stay!

In his 1978 Annual Report for the NSWTF A Ray Vawdon could confidently hold that Touch Football was now truly consolidated into the Australian sporting scene. Major developments for the year were:

1. the consolidation of the Westmont State Cup a total of 56 entries representing just on 1,000 Touch Footballers.
2. the introduction of the Coca-Cola 'Knockout' for district club sides played in five divisions throughout the metropolitan area.

3. the success once again of the Vawdon Cup, contested by district representative sides.
4. the formulation of the country divisions to control and administer Touch Football within their individual areas throughout the state.
5. the initial Touch Football 'City and Country' clashes introduced to run annually.
6. the formation of the NSWTF Referees' Association encompassing both city and country areas.
7. the formation of an Australian National Touch Football Association, with Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Australian capital Territory now affiliated.
8. the additional affiliation of Newtown, Hawkesbury, Nepean, St George and Cabramatta districts.
9. newly acquired sponsorships.



The first ever Touch Football Year Book
By the end of the 1970s in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Queensland in particular there was a proliferation of regional Touch Football associations. The formation of a national body

With their amazing foresight, organisational skills and dedication to the emerging sport it was not surprising that Ray Vawdon and Bob Dyke would be elected foundation President and Honorary Secretary, respectively to the national

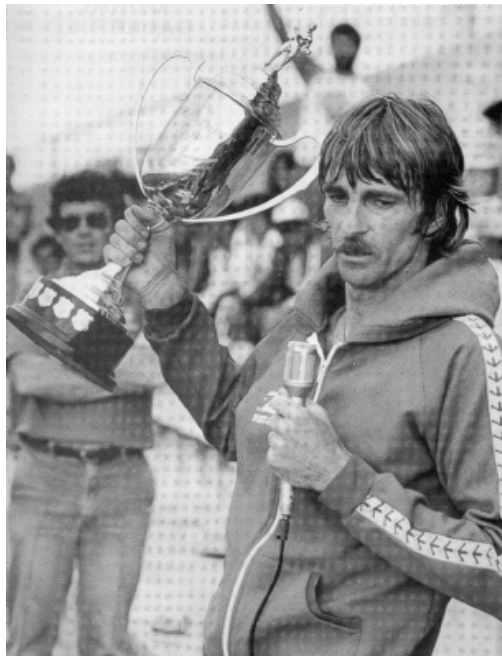
body, along with Paul Eggers from QTFA as Director of Promotions.

Legends of the Early Years

Owen Lane

Known to all as Mr. Touch, the mercurial Owen was a key player in all New South Wales Open teams from the beginning through until the mid-1980s in his mid-30s.

With all his fantastic speed and energy, through until his retirement from the sport was a benchmark by which other players set their standards.



Owen Lane, South's mercurial captain, pictured here following the 1981 Westmont Cup Final, holds the cup after South's great win in the Men's Open Final.

Owen was one of the first 'true Touchies, dedicated to his sport, and who saw it as distinctly different from Rugby League, in no way connected. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he never aspired to League, and never perceived of Touch as an add-on to League. He always said that he was too light and easily injured.

After the Sydney Metropolitan Touch Football team defeated the Eastern Suburbs Rugby League first grade side seven tries to one in a

trial game at the Sydney Sports Ground, East's coach, Jack Gibson, requested the Touch Football officials that they do not tell the media of their defeat, as it was only seven days to the grand final, which they were to go on win 38-0 over St George.

Gibson always commented that he wished he had a player with Owens's ability in his team. Coming from a man of few words, and with such a renowned eye for talent, that was a terrific compliment.

Ron Hanson

Ron Hanson is the complete athlete who made the emerging sport of Touch his own. As an administrator in the sport he did much to assist in the growth of Touch as a national sport.

During his school days Ron won the Sydney All-Schools Athletics in 100 yards, 200 yards 400yards, relay, long jump, broad jump. He was also Open Hand Ball champion and Open Tennis champion. He was Captain of the School Rugby League team and the School Cricket team. Whilst at school he also captained the local CYO Rugby League team

He played first grade cricket for Waverly at 17 years of age. At that time he was also playing Rugby Union for the Bronte RSL Club.

Ron trialed for Eastern Suburbs Rugby League when he was eighteen and was graded in Reserve Grade. He played in both Reserve and First grade teams for many years.

After finishing a close third in the prestigious Keith Holman Testimonial Sprint, behind Ken Irvine (North Sydney) and John Mowbray (Western Suburbs) Ron was invited to run in the Stawell Gift.

His achievements on the Rugby League paddock were impressive. He was recorded as being the first fullback in first grade Rugby League to score three tries in a game.

He retired from Rugby League in 1964 due to injuries to his knees. His achievements in surfing were equally impressive. He joined Bronte Surf Club in 1958, where he excelled in beach sprints and was a member of the Bronte B boat crew for many years.



Ron Hanson in his prime: a key member of the Bronte Touch Football team during the late 1960s. Photographed here in 1968. Bronte was undefeated in four premierships during this early period.

Not surprisingly, when Ray Vawdon and Bob Dyke kicked off Touch Football at South Sydney Juniors, Ron was one of the first to take up the sport. In 1968 he played

in the first Touch Competition at Snape Park. His team, Bronte Surf Club, won the first four competitions, marching through undefeated. Not surprisingly, he was chosen to captain the first Australian Touch Football side to tour New Zealand in 1976. Ron captained the first Queensland-New South Wales Touch Football match in 1971, through until 1975, winning every series; In fact, his side was undefeated in all inter-state and international matches. Quite an achievement!

He continued to play with Bronte for many years and then played for the Cauliflower Hotel, before moving to Forster on the New South Wales Mid-North Coast in 1975.

He quickly established Touch in his new district. In 1975 he founded the Men's Forster-Tuncurry Touch Competition. He played continuously over the following years, and was President, Secretary and Treasurer of the club.

However, he continued with his much-loved Rugby League. He coached the Hawks Reserve

grade Rugby League side, and went on to found the Combined Lakes Rugby League Club, where he was President for eight years

He continued to both play and coach Forster Touch teams until becoming involved in Region 4 (Mid North Coast Touch), first as a coach, then as Regional Director for a number of years during the 1990s. He played his last game of Touch in Forster, playing with his daughter in the Mixed Competition in 1999.

Ron stepped into the role of Northern NSW Eagles Regional Director, as caretaker in 2000, and then continued his role through to March 2003.

As a coach, Ron's achievements were many. He was coach of the Under 20 Boy's Region 4 team that was undefeated the Regionals in Wagga Wagga in 2000. Moreover, he has been Manager of New South Wales U/20 Boy's side. He was also the state coach of the 50s Men's side in 2002. He has coached the Under 18 Boy's Eagles, and also the Eagles Women's Open.

He is the New South Wales State Team leader for the Women's 35s. In 2004, he became an accredited Level 2 Selector, and his career as a selector continues. Ron is also an accredited Level 1 Referee and a Level 1 Coach.

Fittingly, Ron was awarded the Spirit of the Eagles Trophy in 2001, and the NSWTA Blues Award in 1993. But his great surprise came in 2004 when he was awarded Life membership to the NSWTA, only one of an elite band of 15 people. Ron Hanson and his wife, Fran, remain tireless workers for Touch in all levels in the district.

The Beginning of Women's Touch Football: Jenny Park, a pioneer in the sport.

An important starting point for women's Touch Football was in the Port Hacking District TFA. That association played on the grounds of the Port Hacking District Rugby Club at Sylvania Waters. The licensed club needs patronage to survive, and consequently the club was responsive to the suggestion that Touch Football become a part of its activities. Dress rules were

relaxed and games were played, mainly on summer's evenings.

The then President of the licensed club, Bob Davey, who previously had never played or even seen Touch Football, came up with the idea that if a women's competition were to be introduced this would attract more guys to the club.

That it certainly did. The Friday evening Women's Touch Football competition soon became a huge success, and for many years the licensed club enjoyed badly needed increased trading.



'Buddha' Jenny Park shows her style at the 1983 Nationals in Hobart.

Jenny Park, better known as 'Buddha', was a star in women's Touch Football during these early years. Her nickname was apt. She was stocky in build and a great personality.

Jenny played with Ramsgate United in the Port Hacking Competition, a team that won many competitions. She was a natural, with a passing game that matched many top Rugby League players.

The St George Rugby League international, Billy Smith, whose daughter, Kerry Smith, also a star in the same team, heaped an enormous amount of praise on her ball-handling skills.

She could also read a game, with a wonderful vision, like few others. Billy often said that this

was also another area that many aspiring Rugby League players could do well to study her game. Jenny went on to play representative Touch Football at a District and State level. Today she is retired from Touch, and married.

Jenny Woodley (nee Park) lives in Salamanda Bay. Touch left an indelible mark on her life. Her friendship continues with her old teammates and opponents, Karen Smith, Lisa Neale and others.

The Early Years of the Queensland Touch Association

Planning for the Queensland Touch Association

At a Meeting of the South East Queensland Touch Association held in Ipswich on 4 December 1978 it was resolved to circulate Notice of Meeting to form the QTFA. For a number of years the sport had been flourishing.

In any sport the history of the game and its participants are important. In the origins of Touch Football in Queensland this certainly can be said of Redcliffe and District Touch Association.

In 1973, two years prior to the association being formed, Redcliffe Dolphins won the first organised Touch Football premiership in Brisbane.

After making the grand final in 1974, the members decided that a local competition at Redcliffe was required. In 1975, with six teams, the first local competition commenced.

Even by 2001, five members who played in 1975 were still participating. Those original players from 1973 were part of the push to form Queensland Touch Football Association, and this makes the association a foundation affiliate in 1979.

The switch to night fixtures in the 1980s saw an immediate increase in team numbers. The association has consolidated what was originally a multitude of venues into a single venue at Bradley Park.



Paul Eggers, the pioneer Touch Football administrator from the QTFA who did so much to secure the future of the sport in that state.

The Council has submitted a grant for a clubhouse at a new venue. If this is successful, together with a government grant for lights, this will see the association move to a better and bigger venue capable of hosting carnivals utilising up to 20 fields.

The Queensland Touch Football Association is Born

In 1979 at a meeting held at the Melbourne Hotel, Brisbane, the Queensland Touch Football association was formed, with the initial districts of North Queensland, Central Queensland South East Queensland.

The Meeting was chaired by Noel Gardner of Redcliffe and was attended by the following:

R. Heathwood, S. McAllister, N. Gardner (Redcliffe), D. Bateson, J. Bardsley, L. Mowles, P. Hoiberg, J. Leahy, R. Mowles, D. Purvis (Metropolitan), G. Balkin, W. Daley, R. Rausenbach, P. Bliss (Brisbane), I. Young, S. Cox (Nambour), J. Wyatt, B. Roker, P. Eggers (Gold Coast), W. Pierce, J. McAllister (North Queensland), M. Hooper, R. Eustace (Ipswich), J. French, J. Pobar (Toowoomba), C. Gittins, V. Reynolds (Central Queensland), R. Vawdon, P. Smith, J. Pemberton (NSW).

The following Officers were elected:

- President: Paul C. Eggers.
- Secretary/Treasurer: Russell Mowles.
- Public Relations Officer: John Bardsley.
- Vice Presidents:
 - Nth Queensland: John McAllister.
 - Central Queensland: Vince Reynolds
 - Sth East Queensland: Wayne Daley

At the meeting it was resolved to affiliate with the Australian Touch Football Association.

The Aims of the QTFA were recorded as:

1. standardisation of rule.
2. qualification of referees
3. statewide promotion and development (including coaching)
4. liaison with the ATA.

The establishment of the QTFA Referees Association

On 17 March 1979 further important developmental steps were taken by the QTFA in respect to refereeing. A referees' seminar was held at the Melbourne Hotel, and was attended by the NSW Director of Referees, Peter Rooney, from Sydney.

Here it was resolved that necessary steps to be taken to form the QTFA Referees Association.

The establishment of a standard set of playing rules

Later in the year a co-ordination meeting was held at Melbourne Hotel, and was attended by New South Wales, Queensland and South East Queensland Touch executives.

Here it was resolved to draw up a standard set of playing rules for Australia.

The establishment of the National Interstate Touch Championships

At the same 1979 Brisbane Hotel meeting it was further resolved that steps be taken to coordinate the inaugural National Interstate Touch Championships.

The first official match in Brisbane by a New South Wales representative team since the QTFA formation was staged at Mitchelton, Brisbane, when the visitors were defeated by South East Queensland, 4-2.

The official Queensland Touch Football Association logo

During March 1979 the official QTA logo was accepted. It was designed by Bill Pommer of the Gold Coast, after many creative sketches by himself and Chris Cooper of Brisbane.

The Inaugural Meeting of the Queensland Touch Football Association

On 16 June 1979 the QTFA executive was held at Innisfail to coincide with the North Queensland Championships.

Here, the Wide Bay/Burnett Division affiliation was accepted following formation of the division on during May of the year.

The meeting was attended by the ATFA President, Ray Vawdon, and it was resolved to stage the inaugural State Championships in Brisbane in 1980.

Standard set of Rules for Australia

On 23 September 1979 a standard set of rules for Australia was approved at a meeting of ATA in Sydney attended by Paul Eggers, Hugh Grant (Central Queensland), John McAllister and Bill Pierce (North Queensland).

Cary Thompson remembers; “*Denis Coffey went on to refine these rules which are the basis of when is currently played today. As time progressed he was instrumental in setting many policy documents which have been refined into what the Association now calls their Policy and Procedures Booklet. Much work was done in the early days which has made the Association the strong and stable institution it is today*”



Dennis Coffey, playing for Eden Monaro in 1979, before the ACT Touch was born. He is being chased by Chris O'Sullivan, later an ACT, State and Canberra Raiders Rugby League player.

1980

Inaugural 'Johnson Wax' National Championships

Staged at the Owen Park Sporting Complex, Southport, Gold Coast, the inaugural National Championships was truly set the scene for one of Australia's great sporting competitions. Seven years later, Peter Rooney, Executive Director of the ATFA, reported on the event and its evolution.

On the eve of the 1987 Perth Nationals, Peter Rooney, reflected on the development of the sport in its national guise. It is a wonderfully erudite account and one which deserves reprinting verbatim. We will take relevant extracts from it through until the 1987 Perth Nationals.

It has been said that the success of Touch has been as much due to the ambition of its early players as their energy and enthusiasm.

Never was this more evident than during the National Championship inaugural annual meeting at Newtown Leagues Club when it was decided that planning start on a national championship competition to be played no later than 1980.

The meeting itself was attended by delegates from New South Wales, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Victoria.

A second meeting, on 21 September, which included representatives from Tasmania fixed

the date and venue as the weekend of 6 and 7 December at the Gold Coast.

The competition was to be at State level, therefore, only State teams could play in select divisions. These were:

- Men's Open: ACT, NSW, Qld, SA, Tas, Vic.
- Women's Open: ACT, NSW, Qld, SA.
- Over-35s: ACT, NSW, Qld, Vic.

Queensland and New South Wales also fielded junior players for an Under-16 National title, which proved the forerunner of what is now a highly successful division in mixed competition.

Its purpose was not to demonstrate the reaction of youth to the sport but illustrate how mixed competition would look in future competitions.

Adding luster to the scene was the inclusion of children of Rugby League greats, Billy Smith and Johnny Raper. Raper's son, Aaron Raper and Smith's daughter, Karen Smith followed the tradition of their parents by playing in the same team.



NSW Men's Open side: Back: Tony Coward (Manager), Owen Lane, Barry Reynolds (Coach), Mick McCall, Boris Sticherbina. Middle: Ron May, Frank Curry (Captain), Paul Duckett, Jon Turner, Paul Blaylock. Front: Steve Saunders, Warren Speechly, Greg Hunt, Russell Fairfax.

The Championships were an interesting and exciting time from start to finish although getting started presented a problem or two. The first was bringing the selected site of the Championships — the Gold Coast Trotting Club— up to match condition. This required almost completely rebuilding the centre of the arena then constructing bridges over both the trotting and dog tracks. As it was also a drought year a fair amount of watering was needed to bring the grounds to a presentable color and condition.

The total cost of more than \$10,000 was only met thanks to a generous donation from Johnson's Wax.

The teams duly arrived on 5 December to accommodation booked at the Golden Gate Hotel and promptly taught organisers a lesson they would never forget — it is perhaps not such a good idea to have competing teams from different states all under the one roof.

Nevertheless, things somehow worked out well, there was a great feeling among the players and only a few 'instances'.

The Championships themselves were something else again for despite the sunny claims of the tourist brochures, it absolutely poured with rain.



NSW Women's Open side: Left to right, back: Michael Hayes (Coach), Karyne May, Debbie Dibley, Maria Arthur, Karen Smith, Jan Potter, Debbie Dowd (Manager). Middle: Chris Forsythe, Fern Elliott, Lisa Neal, Denise Nash, Jenny Parker. Front: Debbie Ginman, Cheryl McCormack, Liz Paul.

I had been on the Gold Coast for two weeks before the Championships holidaying and getting things ready for the big event. Watching the downpour was shattering.

A group of us stayed up until 2am on the Sunday morning debating the options. Fortunately, someone had friends in the right places because when we had had a short sleep the sun was shining and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. And by about lunchtime when it was time to get into the main games and final series the ground was

almost dry. It was unbelievable that it could have happened so fast.

It was a competition of highlights including the moment when Touch President, Phil Smith, Paul Eggers Vice-President and myself as Director of Referees and others were watching the march past.



NSW Men's 35s captain/coach, Ken Irvine, gets a ball away, whilst his team mates, Eddie Whiley and John Newton move into support.

Also watching but relatively unknown to many of the players was Gold Coast MP, Doug Jennings. Just how little known came to light during a brief shower when he was politely but firmly given an umbrella to hold over the official dignitaries to stop them getting wet.

**1980 'Johnson Wax'
National Championships
Final Results**

Men's Open

NSW 3 ACT 1

Women's Open

NSW 8 Qld 0

Men's 35s

NSW 4 ACT 1

But thanks to sponsors, Johnsons, Dunlop, and Ansett and the skill and enthusiasm of the players, coaches and referees the Championships were a huge success, not the least for New South Wales, which took the laurels in every event.

The Championship also marked the selection of the first National team, a tradition that has been maintained to this day.



1980 National Men's Open Presentation: NSW Captain, Frank Curry, accepts the trophy from ATFA Sponsor representative, Helen Flannigan from Johnsons Wax.

What cannot be overlooked was the magnificent contribution of the small army of volunteers at a time when Touch had no full-time paid administrators.

1980 All-Stars of Touch

Ken Irvine (NSW), Ray Beatie (NSW), Chris O'Sullivan (ACT), Steve Saunders (NSW), Terry Jack (Qld), Owen Lane (NSW), Cheryl McCormack (NSW), Karen Smith (NSW), Bob Brett (Qld), Arthur Tsakissiris (Qld), Gordon Abercrombie (Vic)

Coach of the Year: Barry Reynolds (ACT)

Manager of the Year: Debbie Dowd (NSW)

Referee of the Year: Michael Horne (NSW)

Official of the Year: Phil Smith (ATA President)



An indication of the enthusiasm and dedication of the volunteer administrators in Touch Football during the early years was the publications produced for administrators, players and friends of the sport. The ACTTFA produced a wonderful publication, which did much to further the sport.

Touch Football Gains its First Full-time Paid Administrator

However, the volunteer nature of Touch Football changed during the year when Bob Dykes, the Honorary Secretary for the NSWTFFA was appointed as a full-time, salaried administrator. With the NSWTFFA carrying the administrative load for the remainder of the nation's Touch Football fraternity, he was the logical choice of a Commonwealth Government grant. Things quickly happened. Now the sport gained a major sponsorship for its first Nationals at Southport from Dunlop.



The First National is underway! Here Ray Kiley (ACT) shows typical determination in the Men's Open final against NSW. Watching are (L to R) Warren Speachley (NSW), Kevin Thompson (ACT), Russell Fairfax (NSW) and Paul Ryan (ACT).

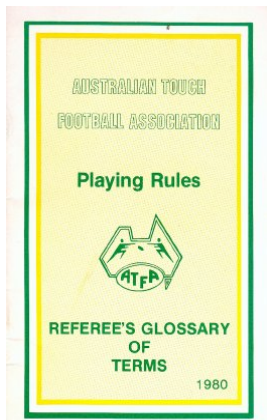
Phil Smith takes over as President and Executive Officer of the ATFA

By the beginning of the 1980s Touch Football was developing at a rapid rate. The inaugural Nationals were a resounding success, and heralded enormous promise for the years to come. The New South Wales administrative task was massive for the looming 1981 season:

- Life Be In It. Business Houses Competition at Sydney's Domain from January to March.
- Sydney Metropolitan Inter-District Championship -- Winter Series, from June to September.
- Sydney Metropolitan Inter-District Championship -- Summer Series, from October to March.

- Life Be In It. Business Houses Competition at Sydney's Domain from November to March 1982.
- New South Wales Schools Championships in Sydney from September to November.
- State Cup at Endeavour Field, Woollooware in late November.
- New South Wales Country Divisional Championships in Sydney in mid-December.
- City-Country Challenge in Sydney in mid-January 1982.
- National Championships in Canberra on 23 and 24 January 1982.

This was not the sort of stuff that could be organised out of somebody's kitchen!



Professional in appearance, the new, glossy rule book. Inside was a full-page advertisement for Qantas, which indicated the connection between that Australian icon and the now-established sport of Touch Football.

The Opening of the first Australian Touch Association office in a small building in Kingsgrove.

In the past Ray Vawdon and Bob Dykes had carried the administrative load for both New South Wales and the national scene. In late 1980 Phil Smith took the new position of ATFA President and Executive Director; Bob Dyke assumed responsibilities as Honorary Secretary-Treasurer; Peter Rooney became Director of Referees; and Paul Eggers became Director of Promotions.



The NSWTF A new logo, introduced for the first time at the opening of Touch Football.

With the opening of the Touch Football headquarters at Touch Football House at 328 Kingsgrove Road, Kingsgrove, and sharing the space with the NSWTF A volunteers, the ATFA finally had its own headquarters, albeit, shared, and a full-time executive officer in Phil Smith.



President of the ATFA, Phil Smith who had just taken over office from Ray Vawdon, with Helen Flannigan from Johnsons Wax, the ATFA major sponsor at the time.



Foundation President of the NSWTF A and ATFA, Ray Vawdon, with the current President, Ron Carroll of the NSWTF A.

1981

A Big Start to the Season: tough battle for Nationals predicted for next year.

Although there was no inter-state matches during 1981, the ever-increasing attention being paid to Touch Football in the national press highlighted the development of the sport. Typical of the media attention was Jim Tucker's regular column in Sydney's Daily Mirror. On 26 June of the year he wrote:

The touch football representative scene kicks off on Monday night bigger and more ambitious than ever to confirm the game as a national sport. The Vawdon Cup is one of the codes most sought after trophies and begins a hectic program for the top players.

The Westmont State Cup and Inter-district Summer Championships follow later in the year before the annual City v. Country clash.

For the first time, leading club sides from around Australia will have a chance to match skills in the national teams championship at the Gold Coast in early December.

NSW teams will be backing up to defend their three titles, men's open, women's and men's 35 and over, when the National Championships are held for the second time early next year. President of the NSW Touch Football Association, Mr. Peter Rooney, said the constant

build-up over the next seven months would culminate in the selection of the state sides for the nationals in Canberra.

'The Vawdon Cup has been expanded to include women's and senior's teams for the first time because of the great interest,' Mr. Rooney said.



Ray Beatie (NSW Vice President) sitting in the rain with fellow Manly and NSW team mate, Adrian Astorquin

Australian National Teams Championships: Barry's boys prove too classy.

With their work all done, jubilant Canterbury-Bankstown Touch footballers heaped champagne and beer over their captain, Barry Reynolds, after their grand final win in the Australian club titles at Southport on Sunday 7 October.

The *Gold Coast Bulletin* reported on the tournament:

The Sydneysiders had too much celebrating to do to worry about cold showers, and they launched straight into the alcohol showers to escape the suffocating heat.

Canterbury showed all the tenacity of their Rugby-League namesakes, the Canterbury Bulldogs, to win the title with a 7-2 blitzing of crack Canberra side, Belconnen Eagles, in the grand final. Barry Reynolds and his brother, Terry, who both wore the blue and white jersey of the Canterbury Rugby League team with

distinction, led the way in the demolition. The pair's experience and quick thinking were too much for the high-flying Eagles.

Canterbury-Bankstown atoned for a loss a week before in the New South Wales titles by winning at Southport's Owen Park.

However, the slick Sydneysider's sweetest victory came earlier in the tournament when they knocked arch rivals, South Sydney, out of the championship race in the quarter finals earlier in the morning.

The week before the titles, South Sydney piped Canterbury-Bankstown 2-1, after scoring in the last few seconds of play and again in extra time to win the New South Wales club championships.

This time around, the scores were again deadlocked at one-all at full time, however, Canterbury Bankstown were awarded the game on try averages over the entire competition.

The southerners, spearheaded by the former Canterbury Rugby League stars, Terry and Barry Reynolds, paced themselves well against the Belconnen Eagles, and the game was virtually over at halftime when they led 5-0.



Barry Reynolds and his team mates celebrate with champagne galore after their close win in the Men's Open.

Cary Thompson recalls that also starring for the Canterbury-Bankstown side was another set of brothers, Mark and Dennis Carter, who unlike the Reynolds boys from the Bulldogs League team did not attract the same high-profile attention which was to the opposition's peril.

History of Australian Touch Football Association

Women's Finals

Boasting no less than six Australian representatives, Port Hacking won the Women's title with a 3-1 win over Canterbury-Bankstown, who had fought their way into the grand final with a lucky 2-1 defeat of Gold Coast.

The Coast girls really hit their straps in the tournament with State representatives, Kathy O'Brien, Kerrie Norman and Debbie Ballantyne in fine form, along with Patty Lee and Kay Sercombe.

Men's Over 35s

Brisbane side, McGregor Roos, had to overcome a tenacious Gold Coast lineup to earn a crack at Port Hacking in the Men's Over 35s grand final. The local combination included such old hands as former Rugby League stars, Australian halfback Bob Bugden and Queensland five-eight Bobby Cook.

From 'Touch Football' to 'Touch'

While some may still lament the loss of Touch Football as the nomenclature for our sport, the title, Touch, for many was better than the proposed, Touchball, and the change certainly did much to break the nexus with Rugby League.

Even twenty or so years later many people in the wider community continue to refer to the sport as Touch Football, the change in nomenclature taken by the ATFA in 1981 was a definite step to break the perceived nexus that we have noted previously between Rugby League and Touch. Wisely, the ATFA executive took the decision that we have seen had been mooted for several years.

Touch was mushrooming in schools, and anybody that has been close to school sport during the period realised that discouraged their young children from playing Rugby League until they were old enough to take the rigors of the sport. Touch needed to be perceived as being distinctly different from Rugby League, and not simply another 'code' or form of the game.

Touch, moreover, had greatly changed direction during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was now becoming an inclusive sport, where both genders made an equal contribution, and for many the nomenclature, Touch Football, did not truly reflect these changes. For many, it was a family sport. It was clearly not a game of football, and commonsense dictated that its name should reflect its true nature.

There have been many who have opposed the change in nomenclature. Cary Thompson was later to pen a memorable article in “*In Touch*” during the mid-1990s, where, perhaps with tongue-in-cheek he poured scorn on the name, Touch. He argued that it better reflected a sport that was played in kindergartens, a sort of ‘touchy’, ‘feely’ type of thing. For Cary, the nomenclature, Touch, did not reflect the true spirit of the sport. It is a rigorous, fast-moving game, which after all, is played with a football!

But, by the year 2003 there is now a generation of adults, who have never known it as being anything other than Touch.

The Growth of School Touch Football

During the early 1980s Australian school sport was undergoing rapid changes. This was partly a reflection of what was happening in the wider society, but also was a result of the looming problems of litigation in schools, and the consequent move by school administrators to move away from contact sports.

Ray Vawdon confesses that Touch Football in schools was something that had not entered the future planning of any of the pioneer Touchies during the early period of the sport. Indeed, Touch Football in schools seems to have been generated by the dynamics of the sport itself. It grew out of the very strengths of the sport, and reflected these inherent strengths.

We have seen how people flocked to Touch Football in huge numbers from every corner of

the Australian sporting scene during the 1970s. Of course, many of these were school teachers. Now armed with a codified set of rules, and with the sport spotlighted at every level from park games to the national scene, involving men and women, teachers saw in the sport wonderful opportunities for school children. While the codified set of rules was important for the development of the sport in Australian schools, equally important were the changes that were taking place in Australian school sport.

The 1980s ushered in the beginning of the notion of due care and responsibility. Now faced with rapidly increasing litigation schools needed to move away from contact sports, and a wonderful window of opportunity was opened for Touch. The sport had everything: it was cheap and non-contact. Moreover, it was a game for girls and boys. No longer was cricket and softball for boys and girls as summer sports, and football and netball for winter sports the prevailing opportunity.

By the early 1980s across Australia in Australian primary and secondary schools children were taking up Touch. Many of these children were beginning to follow their parents, and the sport was quickly becoming a family sport. It was only going to be a matter of time before children would be able to represent their state or territory at a national level.

The Sydney Business House ‘Life Be In It’ Competition, Sydney’s Domain, January-March: precursor to Touch at Lunch

The Life Be In It campaign of the late 1970s and early 1980s was a Commonwealth- and State-funded program that sought to enhance Australian society with a more healthy lifestyle.

Governments saw in it a means to alleviate medical costs through

preventative programs of sport and leisure.



Across Australia, various levels of governments funded Touch for what it could offer a healthier Australia.

The Sydney Business Houses Touch competitions played on Sydney's Domain during the summer months offered a marvelous advertisement for the sport.



The then New South Wales Minister for Sport and Recreation, Ken Booth, opens the 'Life Be In It' Sydney Business House Touch Football Competition.

First, the sport now was seen to be government sponsored, and this gave it a new credence. Many sports would have paid huge amounts for this level of endorsement.

Of course, in return governments, and particularly their treasuries, benefitted from office workers throwing away their meat pies and the like, and substituting a rigorous half-hour or so of Touch out in the open air. All this meant a healthier lifestyle. But it was also very public. Hundreds of thousands of Sydneysiders now witnessed, if they had not done so already, the new sporting sensation of the 1970s and 1980s.

On public display, for the benefit of the thousands of motorists and pedestrians who walked or drove past the Domain at lunchtime there were now on display hundreds and hundreds of Touchies. Of course, all of this activity and publicity had a snowballing affect for the sport. If they had not been encouraged before, businesses now saw in Touch an opportunity to be associated with a government-endorsed sport that emulated a health lifestyle.

Anecdotal evidence from people who played Touch on the Domain during these years generally tell of how their employers were greatly encouraged by this activity at lunchtime.

Employers were not too greatly put out if their employees were late back to work after lunch, because they returned to their offices refreshed and energised. This was at the very essence of the goals of the Life Be In It Campaign.



Daryl Chapman, former Rugby League international, and at the time Assistant Director of the Department of Sport and Recreation, in action on the Domain.

1982 Second Australian National Championships

The venue for the 1982 National Championships was in Canberra. We continue with Peter Rooney's account of the event, written from the perspective of the 1987 Perth Nationals.

The second National Championships were planned and staged for Canberra in the summer of 1981-82. The dates were Friday January 29 to Monday February 1.

There were timed to coincide with the Australia Day Sports Festival being held in and around the Bruce Stadium.

As with the first Nationals, planning was a long and tedious process. At the time of initial planning Dennis Coffey, then president of ACT Touch, had done some good groundwork in getting things together. But it still came as a shock to find on arriving back from a business trip to Japan that the hotel where accommodation had been booked for players, officials and so on,, had yet to be built. It remains that way in 1987.

However, the Bruce Stadium itself was a magnificent venue and justified the huge amounts of money poured into it to do justice to the National Capital.

King Gee clothing manufacturers did similar justice with a sponsorship package that enabled organisers to do the job without the need to cut too many corners. Also to stage a competition that caught the eye of other potential sponsors.

One drawback to the choice of weekends was the number of other competing activities taking

place as well as the habit of locals to vacate the capital for the coast when they got the chance during the warmer months.



Preparing for the 1982 National Championships march past at Canberra's Bruce stadium.

The Championships, however, were a magnificent spectacle and they again provided some excellent games including the shock to the New South Wales Men's side when the Australian Capital Territory tied for the Men's Open title.

The Women's Open and Men's Over-35 were both taken by New South Wales. In the Junior final New South Wales once again proved too strong, this time beating the Australian Capital Territory.

The march-past was an impressive ceremony, while the electronic scoreboard had all states wishing they had one.

Politicians, as befitting the location of the venue and the growing popularity of Touch were out in force. Michael Hodgman, known in some quarters as 'The Mouth of the South' was one of many who showed a keen interest in the sport.

The competition also boasted some top-name Rugby League players thereby providing some excellent promotional spin-off for the lower-profile Touch.

Another player who added his own unique status to Touch was John Bonetti, a well-credentialed player and referee who had played in two Nationals, and refereed three. After arriving in Canberra on the Friday for a session with his team he had to turn around and fly back to Griffith to receive a Sportsman of the Year trophy.

Such an award was a rare honor at any time, and made more so through its association on this occasion with Touch.

The Championships provided a knockout tournament, probably the last to be run in conjunction with such an event. But like the administration of the early years there have been considerable changes with each year helping better the next



Victorian, John McCrae, makes a desperate lunge in an effort to touch the ACT's Doug Crampton during a match in the King Gee National Touch Championships. The ACT won the game 6-3. Image courtesy of Canberra Times.

One of the highlights of Canberra was the presentation night which featured audio visuals of the most exciting moments of the Championships. The \$7,000 package stemmed from a concept picked up in Hawaii by Phil Smith and Dennis Coffey. Its cost made it prohibitive before, and since, but it was an unique experience and one few would forget.

The highlight of that tournament was the joint first placing in the Men's Open when New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory tied for the winner's trophy, with the scores being deadlocked at 3-3.

New South Wales defeated Queensland in the Women's final, 9-1. The Mixed and Men's over 35s was an all New South Wales versus Queensland affair, with New South Wales winning 3-0 in both games.

Excellent Press Coverage

With the sub-heading in the *Canberra Times* announcing 'stars gather for titles' in its article announcing the forthcoming Touch nationals, the *Times* continued to give good support to the event at Bruce Stadium, albeit it strongly endorsed the perceived nexus between the semi-finals on Monday morning followed by the final at 5 pm. The women's and the men's senior

teams from each state will play five preliminary rounds for the top two final spots.

The three Mortimer brothers, Steve, Chris and Peter, from Sydney join Graham Murray (South Sydney) and former Australian sprint champion, Dave Irvine, in 'Buck Rogers' 25th Centurions side for Monday's celebrity match at 2 pm.

Their opposition will be 'Furner's Raiders', a team made up from some of the imports for the 1982 Canberra Raiders rugby league side. Jay Hoffman from Brisbane, Lloyd Martin from Balmain, and Alan Smith from North Sydney will run alongside their future coach, Don Furner in Rugby League.

In fact, it was the gathering of the league stars that the local press devoted most space to during the championships.

We have seen how Peter Rooney had already mentioned that the invitation matches played by the rugby league stars provided publicity for the championships, but it may have been an index to the developing maturity of Touch that the reports of this match dominated the coverage of the championships.



The 1982 National Men's Open joint winners. NSW captain, Barry Reynolds, and the ACT captain, Ray Kiley

Peter Rooney refereed the match, and he summarises the value of the invitation all stars match: *With so many big-name players, the match provided outstanding publicity, but it's a pity that as far as the public is concerned we still need to link the sport with Rugby League.*

However, we certainly achieved what we set out to do. We can only hope that one day the sport can achieve this same publicity in its own right, without having to appeal to Rugby League as a hook for the media. We still have to do a great deal of work with the media.

1982 National Championships Final Results

Men's Open:

NSW 3 ACT 3

Women's Open:

NSW 9 Queensland 1

Men's 35s:

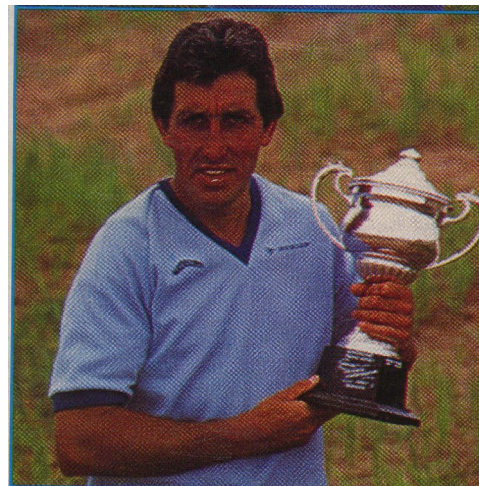
NSW 3 Queensland 0

Invitation Mixed U/16:

NSW 5 ACT 0



All Star player Karen Smith



All Stars player Graham Hill

1982 All-Stars of Touch

Ray Kiley (ACT), Paul Blacklock (Tas),
Ron Wall (NSW), Lisa Neal (NSW), Karen
Smith (NSW), Barry Doyle (Qld), John
Newton (NSW), Maria Arthur (NSW),
Graham Hill (NSW), Mark Carter (NSW),
Sue La Fontaine (ACT)

Coch of the Year: Graham Rogers (ACT)

Manager of the Year: Cary Thompson
(NSW)

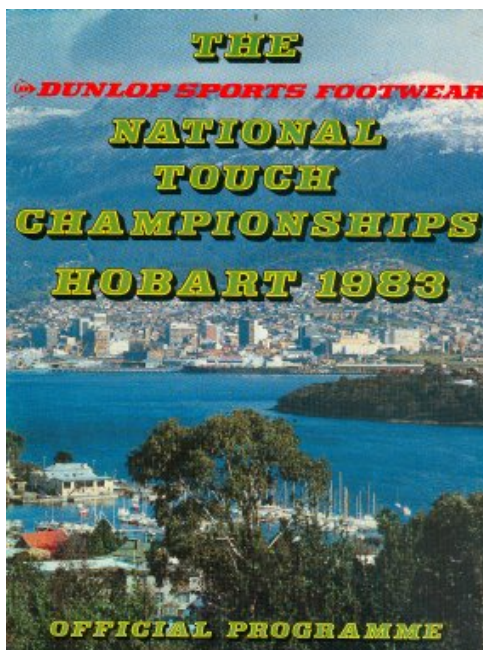
Referee of the Year: Brian Burns (NSW)

Official of the Year: Ron Carroll (NSW)
(President and Executive Director)



Manager of the Year Cary Thompson

1983



National Championships

The Third National Championships were held at Hobart Showground's. Here the highlight was the joint first placing between New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory in the newly formed Mixed Juniors divisions. We take up the story with Peter Rooney's history of the first seven Nationals.

The showground at Hobart in the Apple Isle was chosen as the venue for the fourth National Championships in 1983 from Friday 10 March to Monday 13 March.

It followed by two months the death of Tony Sheahan, president of the SA Touch Association, who had been involved in the National body

since its inception. Fittingly, Tony's wife, Leslie, was flown across to Tasmania to allow us to personally recognise her husband's achievements, not the least of which was putting South Australian Touch firmly on the map.

Again the games were extremely successful, although behind the scenes had its moments. If anything it was an exercise in overcoming problems a long way from headquarters while providing a good classroom for local organisers.

On the field New South Wales showed its customary dominance in beating Queensland in the Men's and Women's Open. However, it went down to the Sunshine State in the Men's Over 35s and jointly shared the Junior trophy with the Australian Capital Territory.

Despite other shortcomings, the march past was the most spectacular of any to that point, with the large number of people who had come to see the trotting events that night considerably padding the crowd.

One of the few hiccups came when a representative of sponsor Dunlop accidentally selected the only player not wearing Dunlop brand shoes from the more than 250 competitors present.



Paul Eggers, the President of the QTA, hands out the championship prizes to Maria Arthur, captain of the NSW Women's Open.

It was a condition of the sponsorship that those taking part stick with the company's label, a condition with which we were naturally happy to comply.

The unfortunate player, however, had managed to become separated from his Dunlop shoes somewhere en-route and a pair of Pumas crept in to fill the gap. That they also crept into the limelight at that particular moment was pure bad luck.

As far as Hobart was concerned the championships provided excellent exposure for the Touch Association as well as experience in what is required behind the scenes for an event of its size. Organisers, in turn, added to the growing pool of knowledge gleaned from other championships.

By this time the Northern Territory had joined the ranks thus making Hobart the first venue in which all states and territories were represented.

Some of the other highlights of the tournament were the fourth placing in the Men's Open by the hosts Tasmania, with South Australia being fourth in the Women's, and Northern Territory third in the over 35s.

Whilst the history of the Third Nationals has recorded the placing for all the teams who participated, it is sad that the actual scores for all the games played, including the semi-finals and finals are not recorded.



The Queensland Women's Open team warms up on a chilly Hobart autumn morning.

1983 All-stars of Touch

Donna Baker (Qld), Kerry Norman (Qld), Owen Lane (NSW), Dennis Dwyer (NSW), Graham Oates (NT), Karen Smith (NSW), Terry Jack (Qld), Ray Kiley (ACT), Tim O'Brien (NSW), Debbie Ginman (NSW), Mike Campbell (Qld)

Coach of the Year: Arthur Brannigan (NSW)

Manager of the Year: Gwynne Ker (Qld)

Referee of the Year: Barrie Keenahan (NSW)

Official of the Year: Peter Rooney (ATA President)

1983 National Championships Final Results

Men's Open

NSW d Queensland

Women's Open

NSW d Queensland

Men's 35s

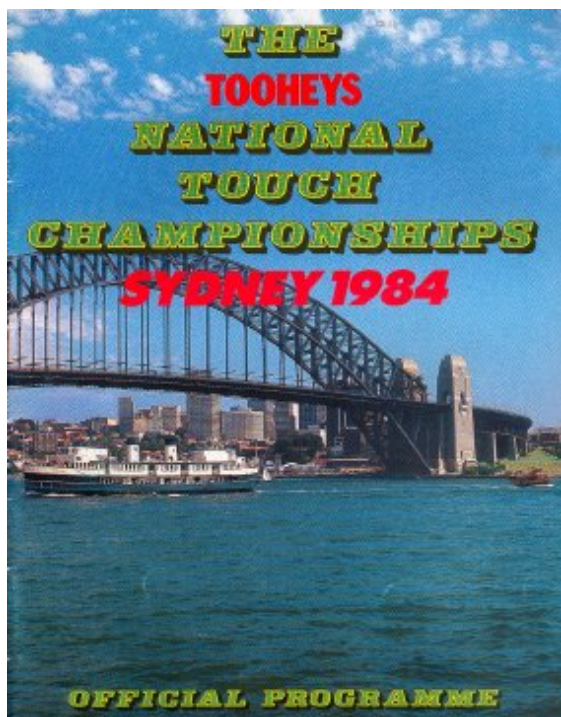
Queensland d NSW

Scores not available



Referee of the year Barry Keenahan flanked on the left by Michael Horne and on the right by George Shuttleworth

1984



Australian National Championships

The venue for the Fourth National Championships was Sydney. One of the highlights of these championships was the playing of some of the events at the Sydney Domain in the heart of the city so lunchtime crowds could watch. We can return to Peter Rooney's insightful history of the early Nationals.

These Championships, at the Tempe Velodrome, Sydney, were a milestone in the history of the competition by being held over a full seven days.

By comparison with the Hobart and Canberra grounds Tempe came in a poor third, particularly after some poor weather and the fact that it was the metropolitan-based headquarters of Australian Touch. Its image in many ways was hard to live up to.

In hindsight the decision to take the games into the city on the Thursday and play some games in the Domain was bad decision overall.

Had we stuck with our original plan to run three games: New South Wales-Queensland Men's and Womens Open, over 35s on the Domain at lunchtime, they would have been an enormous success. But trying to take the whole tournament in there for a day and playing on sloppy fields with manholes for the underneath car park met with disdain from players from the other states .

The Rugby League grand final coincided with the beginning of the week-long Touch Nationals, and notwithstanding that the Touch championships were an enormous success.

New South Wales were again to the fore winning the four divisions with wins against Queensland in the Men's and Women's Open, the Over-35s.

One of the problems with holding the Championships in a metropolitan venue was the difficulty contestants faced firstly in travelling time within the state as well as interstate then in fighting the city traffic to get to matches.

One of the most significant steps taken during the week was the decision during the annual general meeting to employ a full-time executive director.

The presentation night at Bankstown Town Hall was once again even better than the last and players, with the help of a live band, made the most of it.

Hundreds of spectators were on hand to see the prize games of New South Wales and the Queensland Men's and Women's teams play on the New South Wales Parliament House side of Sydney's Domain.

A downside of the New South Wales victory in the Men's was the broken shoulder sustained by Steve Saunders after he dived over for a touchdown that kept his team in front.

Other highlights of that tournament were the fourth placing in both the Men's and Women's Open by the Northern Territory teams. Even more exciting for the Territory was their second placing in the Junior Mixed division, their third placing in the Mens 35s and surprisingly beating Queensland by one point for second place in the Championship Trophy.

Like the history of the Third National Championships many scores of the later round games have been lost.

Running the event the same weekend as the Windfield Cup grand final was a lesson well learnt. The Nationals did not score a mention in the Sydney press. It was obliterated by the publicity surrounding Parramatta's win over Canterbury.

1984 National Championships Final Results

Men's Open

NSW d Queensland

Women's Open

NSW d Queensland

Men's 35s

NSW d Queensland

Mixed Juniors

NSW d Northern Territory

Scores unavailable



Some of the action between the Northern Territory and Western Australia in the Men's Open in the 1984 Toohey's National Touch Championships.

1984 All-stars of Touch

Paul Barton (NSW), Warren Speechley (NSW), Owen Lane (NSW), Terry Jack (Qld), Ray Kiley (ACT), Maria Arthur (Qld), Karen Smith (NSW), Donna Baker (Qld), Lisa Neal (NSW), Simon Annesley (NT), Katrina Maher (NSW)

Coach of the Year: the late and great, Ken Irvine (NSW)

Manager of the Year: Fred Henderson (WA)

Referee of the Year: Neville Hockey (NSW)

Official of the Year: Ken Wells (ATA President)

A Decade of the Parramatta District Touch Referees' Association

As everybody in the Touch fraternity knows, the referees perform a pivotal and often thankless role in the sport. The early history of the various Touch associations were integrally linked with the development of the regional referees association, and now here is this more pertinent than with the proud and illustrious Parramatta District Touch Association. After a decade of the Parramatta District Referees Association Brian 'Hoges' Hogan gave an insightful account of his association.

The game of Touch Football, as it was called in the early days, first started with a phone call at 7.15 a.m. on a Sunday morning in 1974 by a

well-known identity, the late Moe Newham. We all met at Parramatta Park (the whole 16) and at the time Graham 'Pappy' Blyth had a set of rules drawn up by Peter Rooney.

No sooner we had established the rules of the game, i.e. each team would supply a referee and if a team was short you could borrow from another team. The foundation of the game of Touch had started, but we had forgotten about one little matter —the dreaded park ranger, who promptly told us to go somewhere else to play our silly game, a major setback, but undeterred, we set about going all around the parks in the Parramatta District and, yes, got kicked off each and every one of them.

One of our first referees, Bob 'Carrots' Carroll made an approach to the Holroyd Council and we were allowed to prosper at Ollie Webb Oval in Pitt Street, Parramatta. The game took off.

Personalities like Greg Hartley, Ray Warren from Channel 10, Brian Burns, Peter Rooney, Graham Blyth, Brian 'Hoges' Hogan and many more found that a permanent group of referees would be needed.

In 1978 Parramatta Touch Referees Association was born. Brian 'Hoges' Hogan as the Director of Referees, ruled the roost at Ollie Webb, not only over the referees but also the players. He once sent a player off as he was not showing any interest in the game.

The player objected and appealed to the judiciary. The Chairman, Tommy Cohan, let him have his say, but the Chairman, without batting an eyelid told the player if he did not like what 'Hoges' did the judiciary would give him life.

Since the start of the Parramatta Touch Referees Association we have had good success in the fact that since 1979 nine Parramatta Referees have achieved State Grading.

Brian Burns went on to become a National Grade One Referee and Past President of both the NSWTRA. and PDTRA and is currently the President of the Parramatta Bowling and Recreation Club, Graham Blyth, a State Two Referee and current Director of Finance, NSTRA, a position he has held for the past four years and Life Member of the Parramatta Referees Association, Gary Gunton now in

Queensland, Barry L'Estrange current President of the Parramatta District Association and together with Terry Rooney, Life Member of the Referees Association, Parramatta and more recently Allan Bolt and Paul Keane.

The efforts of the above referees have seen not only a good standard of referees come from the Parramatta district but have assisted the district to become one of the strongest touch districts throughout Australia with some 113 teams playing every week, with 34 permanent referees and getting stronger every year.



Brian 'Hoges' Hogan from the Parramatta District Referees Association,, one of the great pioneering Touch referees.

The Parramatta District Touch Association is currently celebrating a decade of Touch. The referees are proud of their association and growth with one of the biggest and most competitive districts.

Not a bad effort for a district that got kicked off the park we now call home.

The New South Wales Touch Referees' Associations: Barrie Keenahan Reminisces

The NSW Touch Referees' Association was formed in 1977, with Peter Rooney as President and Director of Referees. Richard Hamilton became the next Director of Referees, then I followed.

The NSW Referees' Association has three Life Members: Peter Rooney, Judy Beggell and Barrie Keenahan.

The Association ceased to exist as an Association in 1985 when the structure of referees in the ATA was changed. The President at that time was Steve Silva.

Bruce Beggell was a driving force in the old association. He put a great deal of time into the association. He was secretary for a long time.

The Association put a lot of pride in their blazer. It really set the trend across Australia, with some referees crossing borders just to get graded in New South Wales. We received the blazer when graded to Level 4. Of course, that is still the case.

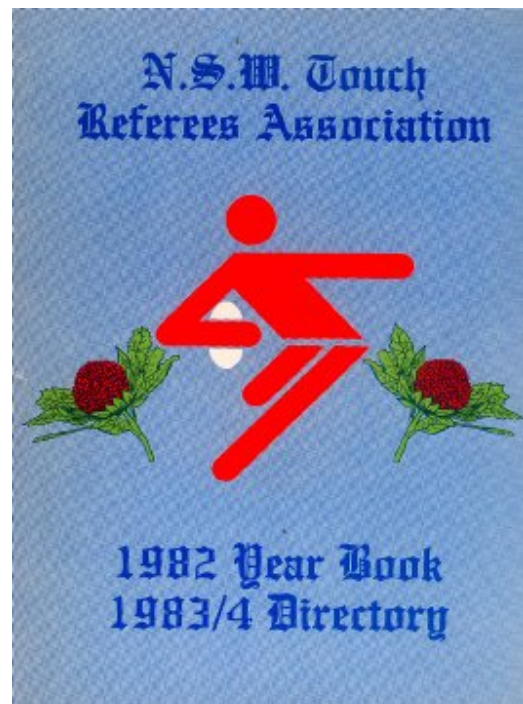
Grading was a fairly formal occasion. Held at night, once a year, its formality really added to the occasion. We used venues such Sydney's Hilton. We had three sets of gear, all different colours with no other association being so fortunate.

The idea of the gear brings back many memories. We once were refereeing near Cronulla one night when a ruckus happened on the sideline. In the early 1980s we had touch judges, and it appeared as though a player had run into one of the two touch judges. The referee immediately stopped the game and went back to where the noise was coming from. He took the report and then went back to award the touchdown.

After the game the player that was run into turned up with a pick handle and threatened the touch judge. He took a swing at the fence with his pick handle and knocked part of it out. He then looked up and asked where the bloody referee was, but in more colourful language



Michael Horne, New South Wales' leading Touch referee from 1979 through to 1984. He controlled all State and national tournaments. Since his retirement in 1984 he has passed his knowledge on as an appointed Board member, both State and nationally.



The various State and Territory Touch referees associations' Year Books and Directory formed an important ingredient in the overall development of Touch.

I looked at the referee, Neville Hockey, and realised we were both in our yellow gear. I turned and ran, with Neville very close on my heels. Anyhow, there was a meeting, and the player was banned for life. He actually struck the touch judge.

We were refereeing at the same ground the following week, with Neville and I on at the same time at about 8-30 pm. Suddenly, the lights went off on one of the three fields.

I thought about the player from the previous week so headed for an embankment to the vicinity of a river. I lay on the ground, part way down. After about five minutes the light came on. And guess what! Three referees and six touch judges were laying half way down the embankment. It looked a real spectacle when the nine of us walked to the top and back onto the fields. You bet, we felt real dopey, and all agreed not tell too many people.

The Queensland Touch Referees' Associations: Ray Eustace Reminiscences

Readers will remember the 1979 meeting of Touch officials that we referred to in chapter one. Ray Eustace attended that meeting, and takes up the story of the QTRA from there:

I was then President of Ipswich Touch Association and also a full-time Touch referee, being the first full-time referee in Ipswich. I started refereeing in 1975.

I talked with the inaugural committee at the 1979 formation meeting, in particular the President, Paul Eggers the need to have a referees' seminar for standardisation and to look at a meeting to form a QTA Referees Association.

A referees seminar was held at the Melbourne Hotel in South Brisbane on 17 March 1979. The then New South Wales Director of Referees, Peter Rooney from Sydney, attended. We discussed rule interpretations, positioning and qualities of being a referee. From that meeting it was resolved that necessary steps were to be taken to form a QTA Referees' Association.

On 9 August 1980 the Queensland Touch Referees' Association was formed at a meeting held at the Melbourne Hotel. The meeting was chaired by Paul Eggers. In attendance were Lyle Lohman from Innisfail representing North Queensland. Col Clark, Russell Mowles and John Bardsley from Brisbane Metropolitan. Lou Crane and Vince Reynolds from Rockhampton representing Central Queensland. Also there were Bruce Holland and Don Holland from Bundaberg representing Wide Bay and me representing Ipswich.

*The election of office bearers were:
President and State Director: Col Clark (Brisbane Metropolitan)
Secretary/Treasurer: Ray Eustace (Ipswich)
Vice Presidents: Lyle Lohman (North Queensland)
Lou Crane (Central Queensland)
Bruce Holland (Wide Bay/Burnett)
Ray Eustace (South East Queensland)*

An affiliation fee was set for each region.

It was resolved to hold a State Referees' Seminar in Ipswich on 20 September 1980. This was to be held prior to the inaugural QTA State Championship being held at Davies Park, West End, and Brisbane. Col Clark made the referee appointments for the three finals.

Col Clarke was accredited as State Referee delegate to QTA on 17 January 1981. At the QTA meeting of 9-10 January 1982 it was resolved that the referee's uniform of predominant white be adopted.

At that same meeting we adopted a referee grading system of:

- Local Association Referee/District Referee*
- Senior District Referee (qualified to do inter city games, etc)*
- State Grade II (awarded to referees capable to referee state division games, i.e. North Qld v Central Qld)*
 - State Grade I (our highest grading badge awarded to referees capable of refereeing a state final). Only a limited number of referees held a State badge.*

In the early days we tried to form panels which assessed and awarded these badges. Basically, anybody who refereed got the Local Association badge/District referee. A panel of two assessed

the Senior District badge. Col Clarke did the State badges.

We had an annual referees' seminar and started to conduct a number of these in local association areas. The emphasis and discussions were mainly Rules and Interpretation, some basic positioning, qualities of being a good referee. Even how to blow a whistle and do a basic signal. The majority of referees were player/referees. Rule debates were ongoing.

At the State Referees' Seminar held on 6 and 7 March 1982 the first changes in direction and standards occurred. Paul Eggers had arranged for the leading Gold Coast and South East Queensland Rugby League referee, Joe Ticehurst to attend. Dennis Coffey, the National Director of Promotions/(Coaching and Rule guru) also attended. Both Joe and Dennis conducted presentations on positioning and qualities of referees, while Denis concentrated on Rules, and Communication.

It was after this seminar that I believe Paul Eggers approached Joe to be the new State Director of Referees.

I did the Level I Coaching Course Q1/O1 as a Touch coach on 27 February 1983 at Southport. At the time Dennis Coffey was National Director of Coaching and Joe was the Queensland Director of Referees.

Joe asked me to be his Deputy, a duty which I was pleased to accept. We travelled the state conducting referee workshops and training sessions. Here we used a number of the National Fitness Camps: Currimundi on the Sunshine Coast, Seaforth near Mackay and Magnetic Island off Townsville.

Joe asked me to stand down from state and national refereeing in 1984 and concentrate on referee coaching and assessment at state level. Working with Joe, we set about to raise Touch referee standards. Joe introduced a number of positioning drills, a signals drill/grid and whistle blowing techniques. Now we saw a major enhancement in refereeing standards year by year.

A number of polished referees came through: Lou Crane, Des Charman, Denis Baker, Greg Summers, Tim Freebody, Lyn Wilkinson, David Cowles Jim Ward to recall a few.



Ray Eustace with the whistle refereeing the 1984 Men's O35s Queensland State Final in Townsville: North Queensland versus South East Queensland.

The Queensland Touch Referees' Association built up to be a very strong and polished body of referees I had David Cowles as Secretary for a number of years. He held the QTRA stock of referee shirts, socks, caps, track suits, etc. He took the orders and payment and issued these to referees state wide. He also did the state minutes and badge registrations.

But, looking back on it now I realise that it all had to come to an end. By the end of the 1980s the QTRA was reaching its use-by date, despite the great work that it was doing. At a national level Touch was developing rapidly. Sometime during the late 1980s Paul Eggers discussed with me the need to disband the Queensland Touch Referees' Association.

Paul put it to me that we were a part of the state body (QTA) and needed to come back under full QTA control. Whether we were seen as a powerful body getting stronger year-by-year was a sometimes stated point.

I can recall that we made appointments with no input from the QTA. Further with our own bank balance growing from selling gear I was told this should be handled by the QTA office and profits be passed on to QTA. And I guess that there was much sense in this.

There was certainly no personality conflict in all of this. I had a very good working relationship with Paul Eggers, Bill Ker and other QTA executive members. The QTRA was folded in the late 1980s.

Joe Ticehurst had taken over as National Director of Referees in 1984. I then took over his position and was elected as Director of Referees. I was reappointed by the QTA in this position for 12 years (1984 – 1996).

These were great years for me in the sport. And for me the culmination was when I was given inaugural Life Membership to the Queensland Touch Referees Association on 6 February 1987. I was also awarded Life Member of the Ipswich Touch Association in 1978, and later Life Member Queensland Touch Association.

I was also the inaugural Federation of International Touch Director of Referees for the World Cup Hawaii in 1995 to the Sydney World Cup in 1999.

Following this World Cup I retired from the sport mainly to concentrate fully on my Career as Area Director (and now Assistant Commissioner), Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, North Coast Region.

Ray's most memorable moment with the whistle in the sport came at the Kingsford Smith Carnival back in 1981.

One of my most unforgettable moments in Touch refereeing was in the early days and was at Ballina in NSW. Paul Eggers invited me to referee in the Kingsford Smith (Money Carnival) at Ballina. The round matches were very vocal and physical – heaps of elbows, touches, and players wanting to referee.

Paul gave me the Men's Open grand final, which was to be played between two teams renown for their physical contact. The game was a very close, physical tussle throughout, lots of cautions and penalties and I think the occasional sin bin for heavy physical touches or abuse on decisions.

With a minute to go for the final siren, I think it was one all and an intercept was taken by a player. He raced the full length of the field in open space to the line.

Suddenly, off the sideline jumped a spectator supporting the opposing team, who made the greatest crash tackle any Rugby League player can be proud of. The attacking player ended up spread-eagled on the ground.

I picked up the ball and placed it over the score line and awarded a penalty touch down for the white team. (It clearly would have been scored to win the match). I can recall a big roar from a section of the crowd.

Walking back to the sideline I noted a small crowd of people, alcohol fuelled, starting to swarm towards me and saying unkindly words.

I thought, let's get out of here fast! This is no bloody place for a Touch referee!

I started to move swiftly to my old VW with the crowd chasing me. I got into my car with the crowd banging their fists on the bonnet, and hurling abuse at me.

I started the motor and drove out of the grounds as fast as I could. I departed Ballina for Ipswich still in my referee gear and shaking like a leaf. I knew that there was a presentation function to follow the match but I could not leave the grounds fast enough fearing a threat to my life and the old VW.

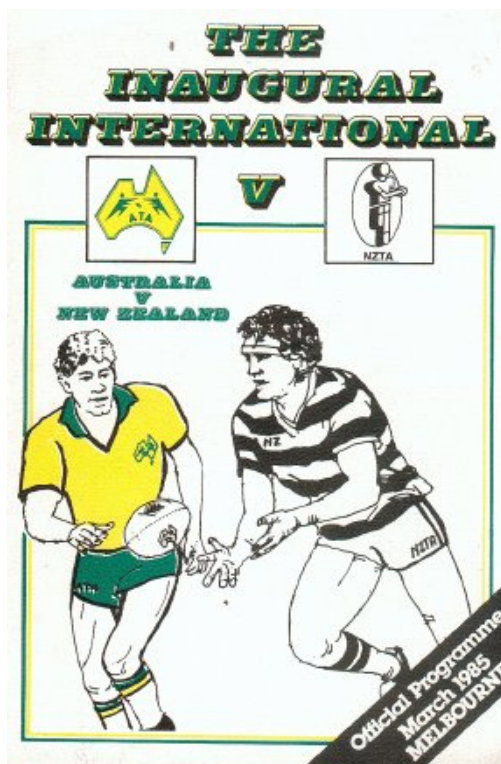
Paul Eggers rang me on the Monday to apologise. I received the big trophy and the \$50 referee cheque in the mail. The trophy is now a centerpiece on my bar as a talking point when having drinks with friends.

Technical Director for FIT, Paul Webb, recalls that without the influence that Ray asserted on the refereeing arm of the sport we would not be so well positioned as we are today in our sport.



Joe Ticehurst National Director of Referees

1985



Inaugural Trans-Tasman Championships

During the fifth Australian National Championships held in Melbourne the inaugural Trans-Tasman series was played out when the Kiwis flew into Melbourne. Peter Rooney continues his enthralling history of the Nationals and the birth of the Trans-Tasman Series.

The first-ever International between Australia and New Zealand, saw the Kiwis take advantage of the wet conditions to only go down to Australia 1, 4. Under dry conditions they would have been completely outclassed. On the Sunday they lost to a vastly superior Over-30s side 3, nil.

History of Australian Touch Football Association

The superiority of Melbourne over the other venues was in no small part helped by the closeness of accommodation to the grounds and the superb setting of the location at that time of the year.

Inaugural Trans-Tasman Test Australian Men's Team

Paul Barton, Greg Baron, John Christopher, Mark Hornery, Terry Hutchinson, Terry Jacks, Anthony Job, Gary Lawless, Tim O'Brien, Chris Messingham and Greg Young

Coach: Alan Satchell
Manager: Peter McNeven

1985 Trans-Tasman Test Results

Men
Australia 4 New Zealand 1

Masters
Australia 3 New Zealand 0

Inaugural Trans-Tasman Test New Zealand Men's Team

Charlie Williams, Lindsay Hooker, Steve Hanson, Tony Matthews, Joe Stanley, Warren McLean, Roger Rota, Allen Lindsey, Billy Kern, Barry Radich, Richard Leggett, Dan Brown, Graeme Smith



Terry Jacks mesmerises his opposition with his brilliant lateral passes, speed and evasive skills.

International Touch is Born

On an international level a milestone in the history of Touch was the formation of the Federation of International Touch. Conceived from an idea by the late Phil Smith and in the opinion of Cary Thompson, Phil had an infinite vision for the sport.

The inaugural meeting was held on Wednesday 20 March at the Melbourne's President Hotel. In attendance was Ken Wells from Australia, who was appointed as acting chairman for the ensuing 12 months, Peter Rooney from Australia, appointed as acting secretary, Phil Smith (Australia), Dick Fairbairn (Australia), Jeff Denehy (Papua New Guinea), Kirk Jenings (Fiji), Don Benson (New Zealand) and Dan Brown (New Zealand).

Each person gave a brief talk on the development of Touch in their area and what contacts they had made in other countries that were not present, such as Canada and the United States. The meeting made rules regarding teams wishing to tour to other countries.

The Fifth National Championships

The venue for the Fifth National Championship was the South Melbourne Cricket Club in St Kilda. Ansett Airlines sponsored this event. We continue with Peter Rooney's history of the nationals.

From Sydney in 1984 the Championships moved to Melbourne for 1985. Divisions were extended to include the Over 30s and an interstate challenge introduced between New South Wales and Queensland in the Over-40s. The Championships ran from March 18 to 24, 1985, at the Melbourne South Cricket Club complex, a

venue generating a superb atmosphere for the players.

A large arena with other games being played on the lakeside drive grounds it saw the first International visit from another country when New Zealand came over to play at the end of the week in the Men's Open and Men's Over-30s international game.



Karen Coombs from the Queensland Open team, playing Tasmania, demonstrates erudite evasive skills.

The difficulties of running a championship in conjunction with hosting an international team proved tough and at times created a few problems.

The Championships themselves saw New South Wales once again come under pressure from Queensland and go down in the Men's Open. The state bounced back, however, to take the Women's Open, the Mixed, the Over 30s, Over 35s, the Juniors and defeat Queensland in the Over 40s interstate challenge.

Sprints were introduced to the championships and provided a few unnerving moments for runners not conditioned to lining up 16 abreast in centre field for the start of a 70 metre sprint. But the event proved a big hit and clearly showed the speedsters in each division.

The Friday presentation night marked the first occasion a Federal Minister of sport had been in attendance. Of the almost two hours MP John Brown was with us, almost an hour was given to awarding trophies. Regardless of political persuasion, players appreciated the significance.

The major surprise at the event was the Queensland Men's Open team snatching the championship from New South Wales for the first time in history.

The Queensland Men's Open team was coached by Alan Satchell, one time member of the Board of the QTA. The Queenslanders defeated New South Wales. The Australian Capital Territory came third, with Victoria fourth.

In the Women's Open New South Wales defeated Queensland in the final. The Australian Capital Territory came third, with Western Australia fourth.

The introduction of Mixed Touch

History was to show that the ATA was on a winner when it decided to introduce Mixed Touch at a national level.

New South Wales won the first Mixed National Champions 3-1 in the final, and at the time of the writing of this book that team had never lost the title. Queensland came second, the Australian Capital Territory was third, and Northern Territory fourth.

In the inaugural Men's 30s division the first place was shared by New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory who drew the final. In the 35s New South Wales defeated Queensland in the final, and the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia came third and fourth, respectively.



Don Jago from the Queensland Men's Over 35s puts on a step against his Northern Territory opponent.

1985 All-Stars of Touch

John Christopher (NSW), Mark Hornery (NSW), Terry Jack (Qld), Karen Smith (NSW), Paul Wilson (Qld), Kerry Norman (Qld), Terry Starr (NSW), Donna Jacks (Qld), Ron Wall (NSW), John Bonetti (NSW), Dennis Dwyer (NSW), Geoff Vigors (NSW), Steven Stokes (NT).

Coach of the Year: Alan Satchell (Qld)

Manager of the Year: Peter McNeven (Qld)

Referee of the Year: Innes McDougal (ACT)

Official of the Year: Bobette Wilkinson (Vic) Manageress

In the Junior Mixed division New South Wales retained its title, however, the Australian Capital Territory edged the Northern Territory into second place and relegated the Territory to third. Queensland was fourth.

1985 National Championship Final Results

Men's Open

Queensland 2 NSW 1

Women's Open

NSW 2 Queensland 2

Extra time was played and still a drawn game. NSW won, being higher on the ladder.

Mixed Open

NSW 3 Queensland 1

Men's 30s

NSW drew with ACT

Men's 35s

NSW defeated QLD

Scores not available

Mixed Juniors

NSW 4 ACT 2

1986 Second Trans- Tasman Series Staged in Sunny Auckland

Four teams from Australia travelled to New Zealand to contest the second Trans-Tasman Trophy.

The teams flew into Christchurch and played games against Canterbury. This was only after long and sustained debates about which version of the rules were to be used. Then games were played against the Bay of Plenty in Rotorua, then onto the test matches.

In sunny Auckland on the 14th December 1986, Australia played New Zealand in a one-off test series in Men, Women, Mixed and Masters' divisions against the mighty New Zealanders.

Only six members of the 1985 winning team backed up in the Men's team, with three moving into the Masters. Of the notable first timers in this squad was the legend New South Wales player, Mark 'Bus' Boland who was to go on to terrorise New Zealand teams for the next 15 years.

The Women's team left their mark on the home side, with the New Zealand Women's team using video to study the play of the Australians, and none more than the soon-to-become legend player, Katrina Maher, who made her debut on the tour.

Other legends who also left lasting impression on their opponents were the great Kerry Norman, Karen Smith, Lisa Neal and Gai Taylor.

Only three of the 1985 New Zealand Men's teams were selected for the 1986 series, although Tony Matthews and Charlie Williams played in the Masters' division. The New Zealand Men's Open was a very new team indeed.

Most notable of the debutants was Peter Walters, who was to become a legend of not only New Zealand but International Touch. He was joined by two All Black Rugby greats, in Graham and Steven Bachop. The fourth hero of the team was Mac Herewini.



Australian Men's Open New Zealand Tour: Back Row: Mark Boland, Neil Henry, Michael Burke, Peter Spargo, Mark Giebel. Middle Row: Bill Ker (Assist Tour Manager), Peter McNeven (Manager), Greg Devitt, Warren Reynolds, John Christopher, Terry Hutchinson, Graham Rogers (Coach), Peter Rooney (Tour Manager). Front Row: Greg Young, Garry Lawless (Vice-Capt.), John Delaney (Dunlop Rep.), Terry Jacks (Capt.), Otto Karki.

In the Women's team, only Donna Morgan was destined to go on to play in two more tests, while Karen Colville, Adrienne Grey and Gillian Mills played in the 1988 series. Carol Howard was recalled for the 1991 team.

The strength of New Zealand women's Touch did not come to the fore until the late 'nineties.

1986 Second Trans Tasman Test Results

Men's Open

Australia 6 New Zealand 0

Women's Open

Australia 11 New Zealand 0

Mixed Open

Australia 7 New Zealand 2

Masters

Australia 8 New Zealand 0



1986 Australian Touring party in New Zealand

The Sixth National Championships

The Sixth Australian Nationals were held in March in Glenelg. We take up the story with Peter Rooney's fascinating and humorous account.

The 1986 Championship were played, from 9 to 16 March in Adelaide, and were smack in the middle of the South Australian centenary celebrations. The opening ceremony was timed to coincide with the arrival of the Queen and Prince Phillip at Glenelg.

But it was not to be. History records that a fierce southerly forced the Royal barge to skip the Glenelg landing and detour instead to Port Adelaide. This meant the opening march — an impressive affair — was minus many of its intended spectators.

The games themselves were played at University of Adelaide's magnificent grounds at West Beach and ran for the full week without a hitch. Our accumulated experience in ground markings and other essential facets of preparation also proved invaluable. The grounds

were so good in fact those players complained about the grass being too slippery. There has to be a message in that somewhere!



Queensland Women's Open Team: 1986. Back: Paul Sherriff (Physio.), Jill Bonner, Sharron Mitchell-Cowen, Fiona Mahoney, Sue Paxton, Sue McWhirter. Middle: Bill Ker (Tour Manager), David Coe (Assistant Tour Manager), Lily-Jane Collins, Karyn Coombes, Kym Truscott, Morey Creed (Coach), Gwynne Ker (Manager). Front: Glenys Coe (Vice-Captain), Diane Lowry, Pat Schipp.

The finals were played at the Sturt Football Club grounds with New South Wales beating Queensland in all seven divisions including the Over-40 challenge. The club's home colours, sky-blue and royal blue, led to Queensland accusations that their presence was a New South Wales ploy to put them off their game.

Queensland Women's Open side proved unlucky, losing the shootout decider to New South Wales after beating the same team during the week, for the first time in the history of the game.

The Queen's motorcade is late, but Kerry Norman entertains the Crowd.

As Peter Rooney has stated, Her Majesty did not appear! The players soon became fidgety and restless, so relays and sprints were the order of the day. It was interesting to note that the great Kerry Norman won the women's sprint and at the end of the nationals remained in Adelaide to compete in the National Surf Life Saving titles.

She completed the double by winning the Australian Life Saving Beach sprint title the following weekend. All in all, this was a great feat due to the fact that she ran with a cut foot, which had not healed.



Kerry Norman and Gai Taylor getting down to the line

The Queen had to wait.

Two junior players from the winning Queensland team who went on to make their mark in senior ranks were Craig Pierce and Allison McWhirter. While for the New South Wales team one of the junior players went on to captain her State and Country in Women's Open was none other than Katrina Maher.

In the Men's over 30s division New South Wales took a battering in the rounds, being defeated by the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland.

However, they showed their strength in the semi-finals, beating the Australian Capital Territory 5-0, and then in the final disposing of Queensland by 3-0. Victoria came fourth and Army fifth.

The Mens 35s saw the only clean sweep by New South Wales, going through undefeated and winning the final from Queensland, 3-2. South Australia came third and the Australian Capital Territory was fourth.

The Queensland Women did not lose a game, defeating New South Wales 1-0 during the round. At the conclusion of full-time in the final the score was level at 2-2, so the dreaded shootout was employed. Unfortunately for Queensland, they were defeated, and New South Wales won the championships with a 3-2 scoreline.

Kerry Norman was named player of the series, even though many felt Karen Smith played an awesome series. The Australian Capital Territory came third, and the Northern Territory fourth.

1986 National Championship Final Results

Men's Open

NSW 2 Queensland 1

Women's Open

NSW 3 Queensland 2

Extra time

Mixed Open

Queensland 3 NSW 1

Men's 30s

NSW 3 Queensland 0

Men's 35s

NSW 3 Queensland 2

Mixed Juniors

Queensland 8 NSW 5

All-stars of Touch

This year saw the emergence of a new breed of All-stars. The Championships were now used as the selection vehicle for the Trans-Tasman series.

1986 All-stars of Touch

Mark Boland (NSW), Garry Lawless (ACT), Michael Burke (Qld), Eddie Basile (NSW), John Christopher (NSW), Kendra Hall (ACT), Steven Clements (NSW), Greg Devitt (NSW), Michael Jonson (NSW), Arthur Tsakissiris (Qld), Karyn Coombes (Qld), Joanne Henwood (NSW), Craig Pierce (Qld)

Coach of the Year: Graham Rogers (ACT)

Manager of the Year: Ian Curtis (NSW)

Referee of the Year: Lance Harrigan (NSW)

Official of the Year: Phil Smith (ATA) (Life Membership)

Celebrating 10 Years of the NSW Public Service Touch Association

Sometime during 1975 a distinguished gentleman named Peter Keep rang Cary Thompson at his office and said that he played in the NSW Public Service Touch competition at Moore Park, which Cary ran, and asked whether he was interested in putting a representative team in the Vawdon Cup.

It took some time for Peter to explain to Cary that the Vawdon Cup was a representative competition for Touch Football played between districts in Sydney on a Wednesday evening at Port Hacking Oval, Sylvania.

After discussing the proposition with several teams participating in the Public Service competition, a representative team led by Cary Thompson entered the NSW Public Service Men's team in its first representative competition in the 1975 Vawdon Cup.

Having a distinct disadvantage of being geographically located between a boundary extending from the Central Coast to Wollongong and inland to Campbelltown the hardy stalwarts banded together to form the nucleus of the Public Service Representative Team that for the ensuing years caused concern amongst the most favoured representative teams in the Sydney district.

This was evidenced by the fact that between 1982 and 1986 The NSW PS team were ranked the fifth best team in the State when gradings were announced for the draw for the new State Cup.

In the Beginning

The Public service held its first competition over the summer of 1976-77 with only one division of eleven teams. The teams were: Town Hall, Motor Transport Department., Telecom, Taxation, Dept of Statistics, State Super Board, Customs, OTC, Army, Department of Railways and Ryde Horticulture College.

Town Hall, with famous brothers Barry and Terry Reynolds and Graham 'Nigsy' Hill went on to represent New South Wales and be named in Australian merit sides of the early 80s. Motor Transport boasted players of the ilk of Ron May, Alan Jackson and Lindsay Kemp.

Taxation held its own in the personality stakes with Cary Thompson going on to become the President of the Federation of International Touch. Rick Waitzer defected to New Zealand and represents Auckland in provincial competitions and Auckland based teams at the World Masters Games. Martin Fletcher went on to represent NSW on several occasions and Australia.

Telecom players, Paul Wines and Paul Robinson, have represented at District level at State Cup events, and Lee Thompson coached Australia's Mens 35s and Mixed open sides between 1991 and 1999.

Railways boasted players such as the Eastern Suburbs Rugby League stalwart, Kevin Hastings, and Manly Colts Rugby Union player, Glen Donaldson.

Army had players like Gordon Abercrombie, who in 1980 represented Victoria at the first ATA National Championships and was named in the 1980 All-stars Series.

Now a regular player with Manly Mixed team, on the Australian and International Masters Games circuit, Colin Thomas led the State Super Board in grand style for many years. He went on to be selected for Australia in Masters teams.

During the following year, 1997-98, the competition expanded into two divisions, with twelve teams contesting the second division. The competition just continued to expand in the ensuing years.

An Association of Many Firsts

The attraction of the NSW Public Service Competition was that it was played after work on a Wednesday evening during daylight saving hours. District Touch competitions were traditionally played at weekends mainly Sundays and the innovation of an evening competition was accepted as a great concept. This was a first for Touch competitions.



NSW Public Service Touch Association 1982 Representative Team: Back: Greg Peters, Neil Paton, Paul Wines, Mike Sullivan, Tony Ashworth, Doug Vale, Greg Lennon (dec.), Cary Thompson (Coach). Front: Andrew Humporson, Colin Donaldson, Martin Fletcher, Andy Valdez, Steve Berryman, Dennis McCarthy.

In 1978 Mike Osborne from the Association published the first ever Touch Year Book for any Touch club. From then on, twice a year, the Public Service published in bound format a Year Book and Annual report.

The Following Years

The association grew into four Mens divisions and one mixed division. Players of the calibre of Greg Lennon (deceased) represented the Water Board along with Tony Ashworth and the Peachy Boys from the Central Coast.

Greg Lennon represented the Public Service teams throughout the 80s, playing for Victoria at the 1988 National Championships.

He made his mark in Randwick Rugby Union Club first grade side, and won a premiership in his initial year before switching to North Sydney Rugby League Club.

The introduction of roadside breath testing saw the slow demise of the Public Service Competition. Drunken evenings at the Captain Cook Hotel, Moore Park, slowed down as players went straight home after a game.

The introduction of mid-week night competition in local districts made it easy for players to go home after work and walk to the local park for a game.

