



Above: The heavily bandaged Rick McCosker meets the Queen during a break in play at the Centenary Test in Melbourne. (Picture: Australian National Archives).

Newcastle

Courage Under Fire

THOSE cricket lovers lucky enough to have been at the Centenary Test at the MCG in 1977, will have one image etched forever in their memory – the tall figure of Rick McCosker, his head swathed in bandages and his broken jaw wired together, striding to the wicket to do battle for Australia.

Who could forget the scene? Rick had been smashed by a Bob Willis bouncer in the first innings and in the second innings came out with his jaw wired shut to bat number 10. He scored 25 and put on 54 with Rod Marsh, and Australia beat England by 45 runs.

There has been no-one more entitled to wear the baggy green, that symbol of Australian sportsmanship and courage, than the boy from Inverell. These days, as the new president of the Newcastle branch, he would be horrified to know how I have described that great moment in cricket history. He told me that he did what any other member of the Australian team would have done, and deserved no special praise. But as a spectator at that very memorable match I beg to differ.

Rick's stand was an act of great courage, the kind of courage that Australians have taken into battle in two world wars. Rick played 25 Tests, scored 1622 runs at an average of 39.56 with four centuries

and nine 50s. His highest score was 127. He also played 14 one-day internationals, scoring 320 runs at an average of 22.85. But it was that briefer innings at the MCG 34 years ago that stamped him as a great cricketer and a great Australian.

My other wonderful memory of the Centenary Test involved another Novocastrian, Kerry O'Keefe, who opened the batting in place of Rick in that memorable second innings. I was in Bay 13 and there was a barracker there cast in the same mould as the SCG's Yabba. This bloke was a natural comedian with a better patter than Bob Hope.

When Dennis Lillee was taking his bag of wickets, the leader of the gang would shout "Give us an L" and the crowd would respond with an "L". This would continue until the crowd had spelt out, in a deafening roar, each letter of Lillee's name. "What does it spell", the leader would shout, and the crowd would respond with an ear-splitting "LILLEE".

When Kerry O'Keefe walked to the crease in place of Rick, our leader of the pack yelled "Give us an O", and the crowd shouted "O". And then the entire Bay 13 broke into laughter when the leader yelled "Give us an apostrophe".

BY VIC LEVI



Luke leaps Disability Barrier

SUCCESS at sport is helping Luke Kennedy of Newcastle win a major battle in his life – severe autism.

Luke, 19, has excelled in a number of sports and has represented NSW in basketball and soccer for the disabled. He is a member of the Hunter Academy of Sport's disabled squad and later this year will represent the Hunter region at the national Special Olympics in Adelaide.

Diagnosed with autism at the age of three, Luke has used his love of sport to triumph over the disability and play an active role in the community. Throughout, he has been supported and encouraged by his parents, Eric and Beth, stepmother Donna, and mentor Leon Burwell.

Luke has a fulltime job in Newcastle, but still finds time for training and the Academy squad activities. He played soccer and basketball for this school (All Saints at Maitland) and also excelled at Ten Pin bowling.

His father, an engineering lecturer at the University of Newcastle, said sport had enabled Luke to engage with a wide cross section of the community. "Luke just loves being part of the team," he said.

Luke, who epitomises the spirit which Taverners seek to support, last year won the Newcastle Lord's Taverners award given each year to a member of the Academy squad.

Emma Collard, 14, a member of the Academy's cricket squad, also won a scholarship. A medium pace bowler and top order batter, Emma represented Newcastle in the under 15 NSW country championships.

The Newcastle Junior Taverners last year were Maisy Gibson, of Singleton, a 14-year-old off-spinner and middle order batter; and Jarrod Ninness, 17, of Lambton. Jarrod, a very promising fast bowler has already played first grade for the Toronto Workers Club, and represented Newcastle in under 17 and under 19 matches.

BY VIC LEVI

Honeysett trio's double

CRICKET is a family affair for the Newcastle Taverners' indigenous cricketer of the year, Adam Honeysett. Adam was a member of the victorious NSW men's Imparja Cup team at Alice Springs in February, and his sisters, Nikki and Abby-Lee, played in the winning NSW women's side at the same carnival.

All three grew up in the Gulgong and Mudgee areas, and their parents still live in Gulgong. Adam, a 26-year-old school teacher, lives in nearby Branxton and is playing his first year with Western Suburbs first grade team in the Newcastle District competition.

A top order batsman and leg spin bowler, he also represented NSW at the Imparja Cup last year. Because this year's tournament was affected by rain and had to be changed to a 20/20 format, he didn't get the chance to show his true potential. However, he did perform well in a match against Tasmania, taking 3/20 with his spinners and scoring 12 runs.

Nikki, 23, is the vice captain of the NSW women's team, and she scored a match-winning 40 in the final. In the same match, Abby-Lee, 21, took a magnificent diving catch.

Adam's Dream comes true

THE Newcastle Taverners are toasting 36-year-old cricketer Adam Vero who made the Australian Deaf team last season. The son of well known former Newcastle District player Gary Vero, Adam had a meteoric rise in representative cricket.

It began when he was selected to play for NSW in the national Deaf cricket carnival in Queensland at Easter last year. Adam opened the batting, scored an impressive 60 not out, and was then chosen in the Australian team which played England and South Africa at Geelong. He played in the one-day matches and was 12th man for the three-day "Ashes" match against England. The game was drawn so Australia retained the "Ashes."

The series was a dream come true for a cricketer who began playing in the under 11s at the Cardiff club. A highlight of national selection was being a guest of Cricket Australia during a one-day international between Australia and England at the MCG.

He also enjoyed staying at Geelong Grammar, venue for the Deaf cricket carnival. Adam was presented with a Taverners scholarship, and was a special guest at our annual dinner at the Newcastle Golf Club.

His father was an outstanding batsman who played much of his career with the Cardiff Boolaroo Club. Adam's younger brother, Jason, was also a star with the same club, and held the record for the most number of runs scored in a season.

Top left: Rick McCosker (left) and John McLaughlin (right) congratulate Adam Vero who was selected in the Australian Deaf Cricket team.

Top right: Adam Honeysett, a member of the victorious NSW Imparja Cup team, with John McLaughlin (left) and Rick McCosker.

Above: Beau McClintock, Baith Lewis, Tiegan Kavanagh and Rick McCosker.



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