

CHRIS BROWN – AUSTRALIAN LACROSSE CHAMPION

Chris Brown started playing lacrosse as an 8 year old in the midgets at Caulfield in 1975 Chris and brother Mark were introduced to the sport through Caulfield North Central School where Caulfield ran a clinic.



Chris circled in the 1976 Under 12 premierships team

“I have vivid memories of wearing an old Caulfield lacrosse T-shirt on frosty Saturday mornings and running around to keep warm. My father would drive the boys to the away games, and driving over the West Gate Bridge to play our main rivals Williamstown filled us with trepidation. The six-a-side Queen’s birthday Gymkhanas were full of fun and high emotions. Later my sister Jenny and oldest brother Stephen would play the game.”

Peter Weatherill and Bill Stewart were significant coaching figures in his younger days and he played most of his junior years in the midfield, and playing lacrosse was a highlight of his childhood.

Chris played senior lacrosse at Caulfield from 1975 to 1992, then moved to Surrey Park Lacrosse Club where he remained until he retired in 2007, and felt he was fortunate to play at two great clubs.

“I moved to the forward line when representing Victoria and loved playing behind goal. I figured I could stay on the ground longer and my defensive skills were not that good, and I loved being in the man-up team.”

Chris felt he was lucky to play in two premierships at Surrey Park (1993 & 1995), and not sure how they managed to beat Williamstown in 1993!

Chris represented Victoria as a junior 1981- 84 and senior (1987, 88, 92 & 94) levels, And was selected in the Australian All-star team in one year.

On the international stage Chris represented Australia in Manchester 1994 and thought John Denic was a great coach. Beating Canada in the semi-final 18-17 was unbelievable and while they wanted more the final clearly didn’t go our way.

Being selected in the World Lacrosse team and MVP Attack in 1994 capped off a great week of my life and was the highlight of my career.

Chris was also selected in the 1996 Australian team that toured the U.S.

The only lows of lacrosse for Chris were “Rod Ansell’s wooden pole, Terry Sparks failure to over-commit, Ken Nichols hugging me after my first goal representing Victoria, and being immersed in the minutiae of the rules book!

The highs of lacrosse have invariably been the many great people I have met and long lasting friendships across all spheres of life.”

Reflecting on the team’s success at reaching the final in 1994 against the U.S. Chris had this to say – “Robin Cornish was a very accomplished player on many levels. I think some of us were so thrilled to beat Canada that we considered that game as our grand final. But after beating Canada 18-17 Robin said we had to refocus on the game ahead, rather than basking on our glories in the semi-final! Sounds so simple, it was a testament to his mindset, never be happy with second place.”

We were well beaten by U.S.A.!



Chris proudly holding the Vince Healy in 1991

AWARDS

1991 O.C. Isaachsen Trophy (Best & fairest in Australia)
1991 Vince Healy Memorial Trophy (Best & fairest in Victoria)
1994 Member of the world team
1994 MVP (Attack player) World Championship
2008 Caulfield Team of the Century



Above is Chris with Steve Mounsey and Gordon Purdie – 3 Australian MVPs in 1994

GREATEST PLAYERS

Locally I greatly admired the skills of Graeme Fox (Surrey Park) and Bryan Smith (Willy), the power of Peter Stiglich (Caulfield), the silky moves of Paul Furtado (Surrey Park), the dynamism of Andy Stewart (Surrey Park) and the doggedness of Ken Nichols (MCC/Surrey Park). The Williamstown trilogy of John Butkiewicz, Peter Morley and Dennis Newman won't be seen again.

Across the way in W.A. I saw Jeff Kennedy as a general.

Chris also noted that lacrosse in Australia has been fortunate to have Glenn and Karen Meredith serve them so well.

REFEREEING

After time away from the game white line fever returned in a different way, Chris took up refereeing (Not umpiring as Mike Slattery pointed out to him!), starting club refereeing for Surrey park in 2008. He thought it was a good way of remaining involved in lacrosse, supporting the club and keeping fit. Again meeting new people and making new friendships was the highlight.

In 2009 Chris became an ALRA referee, rising through the ranks, refereeing state finals and interstate matches, culminating in refereeing at the Denver world Championship in 2014, retiring as a referee at the end of 2014.

In his laconic way Chris wrote of his refereeing experiences, "Mike Slattery was kind but expected high standards and high socks, Neville Balfour took me under his wing, Don Lovett and Jason Lawrence were influential and John Sedgeway was fun".

Chris was seconded from 2014-18 to the FIL Rules Committee and through refereeing travelled to Auckland (2011 ASPAC Games), Amsterdam (2012 European Championship), Japan and Beijing (2013 ASPAC Games) and the World Games in Denver.

TESTIMONIALS

GLENN MEREDITH (Former Australian player and coach)

Chris Brown had an aura and unique ability, he could be standing in huge trouble surrounded by defenders getting stuck into him then suddenly be 10 metres away in the clear or at the goals scoring, and no one could understand how the hell he did it nor could they understand why they couldn't lay a glove on him! I don't think he thought a lot about it as it just appeared and unfolded like the matrix in front of him, he was really beautiful to watch, had tremendous balance in traffic and hardly ever went to ground.

ROD ANSELL (Former Australian player and assistant coach)

Chris Brown was a very tough opponent either in front of or feeding from behind goal. Whilst he was light in build, to me Chris was a very similar player to Graeme Fox. His laconic style underlined a fierce competitive nature backed up by great skills, pace and vision. Chris made the game look so easy, he could "turn on a dime" and seemed to play the game in slow motion!

His lacrosse abilities and status are well supported by his Isaachsen and Vince Healy trophy wins along with his All World and Attack MVP selection at the 1994 world championship. A great person and player!

CONCLUSION

Based on my interactions with Chris over many years he is laconic and considered in what he says and does, and when he played lacrosse he didn't remonstrate or get upset, he just let his stick do the talking. What he lacked in size and weight he made up for with agility, determination and that wonderful ability to create or find space, where time stood still.

While he only played in one world championship how wonderful would it be, or could it be, to be not only named in the world team but also the MVP attack player. Chris is the second Australian player to play field lacrosse for Australia and go on to referee at a field world championship, a great string to his bow.

At the highest level, Chris played with a seemingly effortless grace, evading and scoring against the best defenders in the world with a calm confidence that easily set him apart. Well played Chris Brown, not only were you a star of the game but also as a gentleman. Sometimes nice guys do win ball games!