

## GORDON PURDIE- CHAMPION AUSTRALIAN MIDFIELDER

Gordon Purdie commenced playing lacrosse at the age of 10 with Surrey Park in 1976, following his older brother Tim to the game. According to Tim “It was a bit of a godsend for Doug Fox to show up at our primary school in 1973 with a bunch of wooden sticks and have us throw a ball around. He actually drove me home afterwards in his Renault to speak to my mum about me playing.”



Gordon was selected in the Victorian Under 19 team in 1984 and the senior state team in 1987 and 1989 but as a result of being awarded a prestigious scholarship to Adelphi University and coaching in the U.S. after college, he played most of his lacrosse career in the U.S., unless he was representing Australia or Victoria. In 1984 Gordon played in the Surrey Park division one team which won the grand final.

Gordon rose through the ranks quickly and played his first state league game for Surrey Park in 1985 but was having some issues at Surrey Park. “I played a few games with Surrey in 85 but sat the bench when I missed a ground ball at Williamstown - seems like yesterday but I remember sitting on the bench at Willy thinking “What am I doing?”

Gordon transferred to Chadstone after only a few games into the 1985 season, where he remained until 1989, playing in 2 grand finals, the first in 1985, where Chaddy went down to Williamstown, and again in 1987, going down by one goal to Malvern.

Gordon had quite a season in 1985, despite a disappointing start in state league at Surrey Park, winning the Chadstone, Victorian (Vince Healy Trophy) and Australian (The Isaachsen Trophy) best and fairest awards, notwithstanding the fact he was not selected in the Victorian team that year. He was probably the youngest player to win all three awards in the same year.



At this point you would wonder how, if you weren't selected in the Victorian team in 1985, how did you get into the Australian team in 1986? Well the answer is that Gordon's coach at Surrey Park in 1985 was Denis Trainor, who was the coach of the 1986 Australian team, and while there were some relationship issues at Surrey, Gordon's game came on leaps and bounds throughout the 1985 season to the extent that at the end of season presentations Denis approached Gordon and said to the effect "After receiving all those awards, there's no way I can leave you off the squad of 40!"

After making the squad, Gordon tried out for the Australian team and was selected, not as an alternate, but a full member of the team going to Toronto.

In terms of career Gordon started a course in physical education at the Philip Institute of Technology in Preston in 1985 and was intending to return to continue the course after the world championship in Toronto in August 1986.

According to Gordon "There were a lot of older players with much more experience than me on the 1986 team and while Denis selected me on the team I think he did that so I could get some experience. I did not play much. In fact, in the Canada game, I remember being so frustrated, and having so much energy, I started doing sprints up and down the sidelines. It was raining cats and dogs during the game. I remember being so frustrated... I was feeling sorry for myself and had tears running down my face on the sideline during those sprints. At that point of my life, I was possibly the fittest I have ever been - running the marathon and a half marathon in under 1 hour 30 minutes.

I just wanted to play and wasn't getting the opportunity - I believe that is what led me to not get on the plane with other members of the team to return to Australia, I had some unfinished business to take care of, I just wanted to play lacrosse! I felt I had travelled half way around the world and didn't play much in the world games - I was angry I didn't play as much as I thought I should so that's why I told the team management when we got to JFK New York I wasn't going home!"

According to Doug Fox in an email to Tim Purdie, "I was Executive Director of Australia's world challenge bid and Peter Hobbs was Team Manager. Between us we decided that at the conclusion of the World Championship in Toronto we would declare the Australian team identity closed and players would no longer be travelling under the auspices of the Australian Lacrosse Council. We did this as most players had arranged to make side trips to visit friends or go touring. A small number were

planning on going direct to home but it was made clear that they would not be under supervision of the ALC officials or any longer part of the active Australian team.

I had arranged to stay for a few days in New York with a lacrosse acquaintance and I knew that a few of the players would be on the same flight to New York.

Gordon was still at Uni at the time doing human movement studies and I presumed was travelling home to pick up his studies so I was surprised to find him on our flight – he explained that he was going to check out playing lacrosse with U.S. colleges and was hoping to get a lacrosse scholarship. As you may be aware, I knew your mum and dad outside of the lacrosse recruiting, so I questioned Gordon whether they knew that he was seeking to stay in the U.S., asked what they would think about that and questioned whether he had set up appointments to meet any colleges. Zero as you have indicated but he felt confident that he could just drop in and see them and explore the options.

He had no accommodation arrangements in New York so I suggested that I would ask my friend if he could stay on Long Island with me. This was agreed. I advised Gordon that it would be important, if he was lucky enough to be offered anything, that he should seek a full-scholarship as it would be highly expensive if he was offered a partial scholarship. I also advised him that, while it would be a good experience to play lacrosse at a top school, he should approach his time by making his main priority to work hard on any course he enrolled in and make sure that he came away with a degree.

I agonized whether I should communicate with your mum and dad as I felt some responsibility for this (seemingly naive) young man about to lob into NY on his own with little money and no set plans or accommodation. At least he had a return air ticket back to Australia.

From memory, Gordon spent one night with us, a bit of sightseeing, and then, the next day, we dropped him in the afternoon at the gates of Adelphi with a suitcase and a couple of lacrosse sticks. The rest is history.”

“I really had no plans and as we had a few days layover in NYC before we returned to Australia my mission to NYC was a desperate attempt to find a school where I could get a scholarship and play lacrosse. There was no internet in those days, I went to the NYC library to research where I could play and I had been given Tom Flatley’s phone number, and when I called him I reached his wife, who told me to call back later. Tom was the defensive coordinator at Adelphi in 1985, the assistant U.S.A. coach in 1984 and Adelphi assistant coach in 1986. He was the reason I got to Adelphi. Tom gave me Paul Doherty’s phone number and I set up a meeting with him. He said he saw me play up in the world games but I had a hard time believing that he saw me play much in Toronto. Fortunately he needed a middle/face-off player and I was offered a full scholarship, and then I needed a place to stay and my lacrosse coach found me a job and accommodation. Now I needed a place to stay and my lacrosse coach found me a job and accommodation.

Initially I lived with one of the soccer coaches and his family, it was there I learned how to paint - I painted a 3 storey house! That summer living with the soccer head coach’s family was lonely and I was second guessing my decision to stay every day! I stayed most of the summer until August 86 and then right before school started I moved into the lacrosse house in West Hempstead - that was when the crazy times started!

I started school at Adelphi in September 1986, I came in as a Sophomore and I had to get an I-20 (A student visa). Having completed a year or more of my course in Melbourne I got credits at Adelphi, which meant in the 3 years I was there I had to study for under 2 years. I commenced playing in February 1987 at Adelphi and in May at the conclusion of my first year I returned to Australia as my ticket was only valid for one year. We had a great year in 1987 at Adelphi beating Syracuse 19-9 and making the Division 1 playoffs. Many of my teammates didn't think I would return to Adelphi.

Once I got home I had to make money to pay for a flight back, which I couldn't afford at that time, so I played lacrosse in Melbourne and I went back to NYC to start school in January of 1988, where I completed my undergraduate degree and in 89 started my masters.

I rode a pedicab when I returned to Melbourne to make money. I heard that the Grand Prix was on in Adelaide and there was lots of money to be made so I went to Adelaide to ride pedicabs throughout the Grand Prix, and was fortunate to bump into a gentleman who kindly gave me a key to the store he recently bought in Adelaide and allowed me to sleep there while I was riding pedicabs. I was on that bike 16 hours a day to make money just so that I could return to the USA.

My brother Tim got me involved with one of his ventures, to import a Corvette back into Australia for him, and had to go to Baltimore. I got in trouble as I was a few days late arriving at Adelphi! As punishment I had to run sprints and Tim watched me get punished! I was happy to get the extra training, running was never a punishment to me!

I spent so much time in my coach's office I ended up taking an education class with his secretary in 1988. We started dating on the sly as nobody was allowed to date staff. We married in March 1990 and in March 2025 we celebrated our 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary."

During his time at Adelphi he won Athlete of the Year on three separate occasions whilst also helping take the team to the NCAA Division 1 play-offs on two occasions between 1987 - 89; this being Adelphi's first time as a play-off contender.

Gordon was selected into the NCAA Division 1 third team All - American in 1988 and then into the NCAA Division 1 second team All - American in 1989.

While the scholarship covered all of his tuition, board and food, he also needed money to live so he had several jobs, including working in a lumber yard and a deli.

Gordon played professional indoor lacrosse in the National Lacrosse League (NLL) competition for the New York Saints for 10 years (1990 – 99), then the New Jersey Storm (2002 – 03), and finally with the Anaheim Storm (2004), playing in 355 professional indoor lacrosse games. His statistics are breathtaking, including 476 goals, 587 assists, 1,063 points, 872 face-off wins and also 2,191 groundballs.

What is amazing is that during his pro career in the '90s he played in front of massive sell-out crowds, a major highlight being with the New York Saints when they made league history on the road against the Philadelphia Wings at the Spectrum and took an 8-5 win in front of 17,177 fans. That year they were drawing over 16,000 fans to Saints games at the Nassau Coliseum in New York.

At the age of 20 Gordon represented Australia in the world championship and went on to represent Australia at 5 world championships (1986, 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2002).

He also represented Australia at the men's senior indoor (Box) lacrosse world championships in 2003 and 2007. He made the indoor team in 2011 however he coached Adelphi lacrosse team in the national championship and had to pull out of the squad that played in Finland.



Above is Gordon in 1998 with Kevin Sheehan, Adelphi coach and assistant coach of the Australian team at the world championship (1998 & 2002).

## **AWARDS**

1985 Isaachsen Trophy as Australia's best & fairest senior player

1985 Vince Healy Memorial Trophy (Victorian best & fairest senior player)

1985 Equal best & fairest player at the Australian Under 19 Championship

1985 Selected in the Australian Under 19 All-Star team

1994 Best midfield player at the World Championship

1994 Member of the World Team at the World Championship

1995 Inducted into the Adelphi University Athletics Hall of Fame

1999 National Lacrosse League All-Star Participant (Rochester, NY)

2007 Inducted into the Long Island Lacrosse Hall of Fame

2008 East Coast Conference Coach of the Year

2017 Division II Coach of the Year - Eastern College Athletic Conference

2024 USILA coach of the year (After winning NCAA Division 2 championship final)

2024 Fellowship of Christian Athletes - Peter Kohn award

2025 Coached Adelphi to a back to back win in Division 2 championship final



Above is Gordon, Steve Mounsey and Chris Brown with their MVP awards 1994

## COACHING

Gordon coached at the Waldorf School in Garden City, N.Y. (Which backs on to Adelphi campus) from 1994 until 2007 where he coached numerous All-Americans and academic All-Americans, and in 1996 they became the NYMLA (New York Metropolitan Lacrosse Association) Division B Champions, and again in 1997 they became the NYMLA Regional Champions.

In 1997 Gordon was named the NYMLA High School Coach of the Year.

In 2007 while in Canada playing with the Australian indoor lacrosse team, the head coaching position opened at Adelphi, he applied and got the job.

Gordon was appointed Head Coach of Adelphi University in 2008 and thus far has taken the team to the NCAA play-offs or finals on six occasions (2011, 2014, 2015 2016, 2017, 2024 & 2025).

During his tenure he has coached the Adelphi University lacrosse team to seven Northeast 10 Conference Lacrosse Championships and in 2024 coached Adelphi to become NCAA Division II champions (Ahead of 76 college teams in that division), and went back to back in 2025.



At the White House at the 2024 NCAA Sports Day

Gordon has also been a successful and entrepreneurial businessman, setting up and running the Checkmate Summer Lacrosse Camps on Long Island, utilising the services of marquee lacrosse players as coaches in handling up to 1,000 young participants over summer.

Gordon has been and remains a keen sponsor and strong supporter of young Australian lacrosse players wishing to enhance their academic and lacrosse careers at USA colleges and as such, has been instrumental in the recruitment of a number of young Australians into the Adelphi lacrosse team. Gordon has also created an instructional lacrosse video "Lessons from Down Under".

Gordon was instrumental in Tim Murphy and Rowan Manning getting to Adelphi, both on full scholarship, and there were over 25 Australians following Gordon to Adelphi, including Stephen Mortimer, Wes Green, Matt Schomburg, Mark Mangan and Mike Makatron.

While Gordon was always pushing the Adelphi coaches to pursue Australian talent, the rising cost of college (Now over A\$100k) has made it increasingly difficult for Australians to get to Adelphi.

Adelphi has also hosted the Australian team numerous times as a home base and training venue in preparation for world championship games both indoor and field. Gordon also referred two Adelphi players to Footscray the year they won their first premiership in 2013, Danny Blau and Jeff Melsopp. Jeff stayed on at Footscray and represented Australia many times.

Gordon has won championships at every level in America including national championships with Long Island Lacrosse Club, numerous Vail and Lake Placid championships with assorted clubs, and many masters' level championships.

To learn and see more of Gordon Purdie's career click the following link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-PjUFZLDxs>

## **MOST INSPIRATIONAL PLAYERS I HAVE SEEN?**

Watching lacrosse as a young athlete at Surrey Park Lacrosse Club, I realized early on that you can always learn something valuable from your teammates. These five individuals left a lasting impact on my career:

- **Casey Powell:** Casey possessed an indomitable "never-quit" attitude. He approached the game with a level of passion and confidence that was infectious. Playing professionally alongside him on the **Anaheim Storm** instilled a new level of self-assurance in my own game. While I felt like I did not play with that confidence I learned that through coaching I could help players play with more confidence and I took that from Casey.
- **Mark Millon:** A prolific goal scorer who simply willed the ball into the back of the cage. Mark always wanted the ball in critical moments. We were teammates on the **New York Saints**, both wearing #9 when we represented our countries. We famously traded uniforms at the 1994 World Championships in Manchester; since Mark was voted MVP of that tournament, the National Lacrosse Museum requested the jersey for their collection—a piece of history I haven't seen since!

- **Pat McCabe:** Arguably the finest defender I ever played with or against and had the pleasure to be coached by. Pat played with an immense sense of pride and professionalism, traits he carried into his coaching career. As a coach in the pros, he was a demanding leader who expected excellence, and I deeply value the time I spent under his guidance.
- **Sal Locascio:** My goalie for over a decade and one of the fiercest competitors I've ever known. Sal's hatred of being scored on was so intense that it elevated my own defensive play; I gave every ounce of effort to meet his expectations because I never wanted to let him down. He had total confidence in me, which drove me to be better.
- **Dave Pietramala:** A "friend" on the field and a gentleman off it, Dave remains a close advisor whom I consult regularly. Having competed against him numerous times, I can attest that he is one of the toughest, most uncompromising players to ever pick up a stick. While he is on my list of inspirational players, he is the only player on the list I did not play with...

## MY TOP 10 LEGENDS LIST

### The Pure Goal Scorers

#### 1. Brooks Sweet (USA)

- My absolute idol. In 1982, I got my hands on a USA vs. Australia VHS and watched him score 9 goals against Australia. It was right then I decided he was the best player I had ever seen, and I changed my number to #9 to honour him. I went on to meet "Brooksie" when he played in Australia, and I was, and still am, blown away by how humble he is.

#### 1. Peter Cann (Australia)

- He was no slouch and a dominant force for Australia. I was on the Australian team when I witnessed him dropping 9-10 goals in a single game leading up to the 1990 World Championship. It showed me exactly what an elite, world-class finisher looks like.

### The International Game-Changers 3. Gary Gait (Canada) & 4. Paul Gait (Canada)

- Both of these players weren't just identical twins off the field; they had an identical scouting report every time I played against them all over the world. Every time they competed, they respected the game enough to play at 100 percent, and clearly did things I was not capable of doing. That said, in 1994, I was blessed to make the All-World team in England alongside them. I was selected as the best midfielder while standing next to them, so I certainly felt honoured and believed that was a true team win as we beat Canada to earn a silver medal.

#### 1. Pat McCabe (USA)

- The great thing about playing against Pat was that he made me a better player. He read the defense so well that I often heard "got it" before passing the ball through a passing lane, only to find it was picked off. He was a truly great player and a defensive genius.

## The Australian Foundations 6. Gary Tillotson & 7. Rick Tillotson

- Both preceded me at Surrey Park and represented Australia and absolutely gave me the tools on how to faceoff. Many of these are the exact same tools and techniques that I still apply to my players at Adelphi today.

### 1. Tim Murphy

- While Tim might not be on anyone's top 10 list, he is on mine. I modelled my game on everything he did that was better than me. We had dreams of coming to the USA, and he joined me after my first semester and pushed me past my own dreams. Without Tim's coaching and support, I wouldn't be the player I am today. It feels like only yesterday he'd have his helmet on while I was firing a cricket ball at the stumps as he dialled in his batting. I must have thrown hundreds of bouncers and yorkers at him, but while he was practicing his cricket batting, I was secretly mastering my shot. Those endless hours of 'Bowling practice' were really the foundation of my shooting.

### 1. Jeff Kennedy (Australia)

- The definition of an Australian lacrosse legend. His accolades on the world stage speak for themselves: he was named the Most Valuable Player of the 1982 World Championship, earning the prestigious Ray Kinderman Trophy. A four-time world championship representative for Australia and a two-time All-World Team selection. As a captain of the national team his unmatched aerobic capacity, ambidextrous skills, and the rare ability to completely take over a game made him an absolute icon. His rightful place in the Australian Lacrosse Hall of Fame cements him as one of the greatest playmakers our country has ever produced.

## 10. Greg Puskuldjian (USA) - The Modern Pro

- Arguably the best faceoff player I have ever coached. He won a PLL championship and is a 3-time All-American. He proves that the techniques I was taught and passed down still translate perfectly to the highest levels of the modern game.

## The Foundation: Tim Purdie

My brother Tim remains the greatest influence of my life for a simple reason: **unwavering consistency and unconditional love and support**. In a sport and a career that can be challenging, Tim has been the steady hand. He has always been there for me, he is brutally honest and supportive. He didn't tell me what I wanted to hear; he told me what I needed to hear to grow, and that foundation of trust is what allowed me to take the risks I did when I left Surrey.

## The Turning Point: Ian "Ollie" Whitbourn

If Tim provided the foundation, Ian was the catalyst for my entire international career. Taking his advice to leave Surrey Park was the hardest but best decision I ever made. At Surrey, I was stuck behind two elite face-off specialists and wasn't getting the "burn" or the playing time I needed to evolve.

Ian saw that staying would stifle my growth. By moving to Chadstone, I went from a bench player to winning the Isaachsen as the best state league player in Australia, eventually beating Surrey Park that same year. That move directly led to:

- My selection for the 1986 Australian national team.
- The visibility that eventually brought me to the United States.
- The life I have built here as a coach and a father.



I am forever indebted to Ollie and his family. Being able to give him my 2024 National Championship watch wasn't just a gift; it was a full-circle moment to show him that his mentorship 40 years ago resulted in the trophies I hold today.

## MENTORS & COACHING INFLUENCES

- **The Legends of the "Saints":** Playing for the New Jersey Saints in the early days of professional indoor lacrosse taught me the grit and professional standard I now demand from my players at Adelphi.
- **The Adelphi Legacy:** My coaches during my playing days in the 80's instilled the "Championship DNA" that I've worked to preserve. Paul Doherty, Kevin Sheehan, Ed Hughes and Peter Schaffer taught me that being a national champion isn't just about the X's and O's, but about the culture and the bond of the team.



Gordon with his son Gordon Jr, proudly wearing their Australian blazers in 2022

Click below for more detail on Gordon's background and career.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-PjUFZLDxs>

## TESTIMONIALS

### **KEVIN SHEEHAN (Former Adelphi coach and Asst coach for Australia)**

The list chronicling the accomplishments of Gordon Purdie in Australia and America provides an accurate recounting that details a lacrosse career on both continents that is rich in breadth and depth. As Gordon's coach during his collegiate career at Adelphi and for two of his tours with the Australian lacrosse team in 1998 and 2002, I believe that I can provide some evidence in between the lines of the powerful impact that Gordon has had on lacrosse in the world of lacrosse in America and Australia.

When Gordon arrived at Adelphi University in 1987, I am not sure anyone realized the impact that this Australian would have on lacrosse at Adelphi and in America. Gordon never lost a sprint in conditioning in America in any practice at Adelphi, not because of blinding speed, but because of his desire. The practices began in January at Adelphi, often took place on snow ploughed fields. Despite the cold and the rigor of practices, one player stayed long after those practices in the freezing cold evenings, begging defensemen to cover him for extra one on ones. That player was Gordon Purdie, who transformed his own game by taking advantage of the coaching, and in doing so, transformed the lacrosse world at Adelphi.

In two of Gordon's years, Adelphi went to its highest finish ever, the quarterfinals of the NCAA Division I tournament. In 1989, Adelphi was ranked fifth in the nation, the highest ranking in its ten years of Division I play. As a player, Gordon faced off, played midfield, played man down defense, played man up offense, came in to ride and clear the ball. Bill Tierney, winner of six national championships in America, remarked to me after our game with his Princeton team, "When Gordon graduates,

you are going to need to recruit three players to replace him.” In fact, in his first game against number one ranked Syracuse, Gordon led Adelphi to a 19-9 upset win over Syracuse. Roy Simmons, the illustrious Syracuse coach commented to me after the game, “We just saw the best three players in America, and none of them were born here.” Roy said to me that he thought that he was adventurous in travelling to British Columbia to recruit Gary and Paul Gait, but we had outdone him, getting our player, Gordon Purdie, all the way from Melbourne, Australia.

Just as the Gait brothers opened the doors in America to players from Canada, Gordon opened the doors at Adelphi and beyond to an influx of Australians. Gordon was followed to Adelphi by Tim Murphy, Rowan Manning, and first team Australian All Americans Mark Mangan, Wesley Green and Matt Schomberg, among others. Although Adelphi moved to Division II based on a university policy decision, the university became the winningest team at this level in the history of America. This success was built on the Australian connection that Gordon created between Australia and Adelphi.

It is my conviction that Gordon Purdie is without a doubt the greatest player in the seventy-year history of Adelphi lacrosse. As great a player as Gordon is, he is an even finer man. His twenty years of success with the Australian national team are unprecedented, not only in longevity, but in his leadership and impact he has had on those teams. There may be better players who played lacrosse in the world over the last thirty years, but there is no finer person.

### **DENIS TRAINOR (Former Australian player and coach)**

My earliest recollections of Gordon were at a club level where he showed great potential as a junior to become a top senior player. Since those early days Gordon has developed into one of the world's greatest players of all time.

Gordon's devotion to the game and his dedication to training and self-improvement has driven him to the elite level. His selection into the Australian senior men's lacrosse team for the world championships at the age of 19 years gave him international recognition, which led to a full scholarship at the Adelphi College (University) in New York. Through Gordon's playing ability, Adelphi gained its highest ranking (5) ever in NCAA Division 1 lacrosse championships.

Having coached at all levels of lacrosse for more than 48 years I would rate Gordon as the most outstanding all-round player that I have seen and coached. Gordon's professional coaching methods and style of play have been recognised, copied and utilised by the majority of the 70 countries playing lacrosse today, which is the highest form of praise one can receive.

Gordon Purdie's impact on the game of lacrosse internationally has been unprecedented, not only as a player and coach, but as a person.

## CONCLUSION

What you have to say about Gordon Purdie was that he had a dream, he was committed, and he was perhaps naive, but he was prepared to take a very big risk to achieve his dreams. He put it all on the line back in 1986 and took a massive risk, and when he was given an opportunity he took it with both hands and worked tirelessly to achieve his dream. While he was extremely fit, and had a lot of ability and potential at a young age, the most important aspect he had was commitment to do what it takes to succeed, and his self belief.

There are lots of lacrosse players who had Gordon's athleticism and skills and more, oozing potential, who never made it to the top, because they didn't have the all important commitment and self belief that Gordon had. He was prepared to back himself all the way, which could have resulted in absolute failure, but he was prepared to ride rickshaws for 16 hours a day at a Grand Prix in order to save money to get himself back to the U.S.A. to have a crack at the big league.

Gordon Purdie has also been an ambassador and supporter of Australian lacrosse and up and coming players looking to get an opportunity to play and succeed in college lacrosse in the U.S.A.

Well played Gordon Purdie, you had a vision, you took a shot, you gave your all, and it paid off, and as we say in Australia "You had a go"!

The Creator would be amused!