

## History of BRIAN BOOTH SHA Best & Fairest Medal.

By Godfrey Phillips. OAM

*Thank you for that kind introduction Dave and looking around the room tonight there are only about 6 people who played alongside Brian Booth, or against him, or knew of him back in the 1960s and 1970s. [ Name them ] For the rest of you who have been attending this SHA Awards night over the years, you would have heard Brian speak and make the award himself, but you may not know too much about this wonderful person. Permit me to share some insights into this remarkable Australian.*

I was asked by Judy Booth to share the history of the Brian Booth Best and Fairest Medal at his wake, as the first Dual winner of this prestigious Sydney hockey award, and because of my knowledge of the award's history and more importantly being a good friend of Brians since the inception of this prestigious award. It was indeed a high honor to share this history at this celebration and thanksgiving service for the life of Brian Booth MBE.

In 1967 the Sydney Hockey Association President Karl Leddy and the board introduced the Brian Booth Best and Fairest Medal for the Sydney hockey association Premier league. The medal was named after Brian Booth MBE, and all hockey players agreed the SHA board chose the right person to name this prestigious award after. Brian was well liked and highly respected by all hockey players for his impeccable sportsmanship and fair play and his outstanding skill as an inside forward. He always greeted players courteously, talked about their game and encouraged them to keep working at their game and most importantly to enjoy this great game of hockey. To win the Brian Booth Best and Fairest Medal became the goal for all Sydney first grade hockey players.

Brian played hockey for St George hockey club in first grade, and represented Sydney, NSW and was part of the first team to represent Australia at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. They became known as the **originals**. He was a tall, elegant hockey player remarkably similar to his elegant style and class as a batsman Captaining the St George, NSW and Australian cricket teams. He was inducted into the cricket and hockey Hall of Fame, the only player to do so.

Brian was a target for all opposing full backs, but never once did he retaliate. One of many titanic struggles against my old club Moorebank our inside forward who was given the task of marking Brian overplayed his role and sticks went flying after there was a clash in the midfield. Brian picked up the Moorebank player's stick and handed it back sportingly saying "here you are mate you might need this!" Brian picked up his stick, dusted himself off and then proceeded to dominate the midfield setting up many scoring opportunities for his state left winger Dave Albertson and Olympic center forward Ron Riley. Such was his class as a person and player.

After the game Brian was the first to come over to us and thank us for the tough game, have a soft drink, and chat about the game. We found out later his finger was broken in the melee but continued to play amazing hockey. He was tough, resilient and a classy human being.

Brian requested the SHA Board **NOT to consider him** for the BB Best and Fairest medal in 1967 when it looked like he was going to win the inaugural award, his own award. He didn't believe this was right and it certainly would not have been a good look, such were his high principles and ethics. Now I did not know this till I visited Brian in hospital three weeks before he passed, and Judy shared this story with me. No one from St George or any other club would have known this either. This shows the humility of Brian, as it was never about him.

Kevin Rix, a NSW player, captain and center forward from Moorebank was the inaugural and fitting winner of the first Brian Booth Best and Fairest Medal. Kevin was a tough, hard running center forward who scored a lot of goals during his career and was also known for his fair and clean play. He was the best captain I had the opportunity of playing under.

For the record, there have been four St George hockey players who have won the Brian Booth Medal, Olympian Ron Riley, state player and captain Bob Bartlett, Australian player Peter Huk and current President of the St George/Randwick hockey club Andre Cabral who represents Australia in master's hockey.

Ron, Bob and Andre were at Brian's funeral to pay their respects to Brian, Judy and the family. Andre, and Colin Allerdice St George hockey historian was also asked to be part of the eulogy team at Brian's wake. We three were honored to speak on different aspects of Brian's amazing life.

There have been six dual winners, Godfrey Phillips OAM, Dave Gorman, Phil Baker, Rowan Dick, Darren Bannerman and Robert Green.

There have been two triple winners, Robbie Campbell and Tristian White.

There have been 15 Kookaburras who have won the award and four of them are still playing for Australia, Matt Dawson, Flynn Ogilvy, Dylan Martin and Ky Willott. Interestingly Ky Willott and his father Dave Willott are the only father and son to have won this award, which is unique.

Brian and Judy attended around 50 SHA Award Presentation Nights since 1967, which showed how special this night was to both of them, and each year Brian confirmed this. How Blessed were we to have them present so often as Brian would get multiple requests to attend sporting dinners for hockey, cricket and other community events. Brian always graciously spent time chatting to the medal winners and getting to know more about them personally.

Brian and his family have always been people of deep Faith, so permit me to *close by reading a few lines from **RICK WARREN'S** Best Selling book, **THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE. What on Earth are we here for?***

*The heading of the first chapter is **IT ALL STARTS WITH GOD.***

*The **first** line is: **It's not about you.***

*And that was the theme throughout the Celebration and Thanksgiving Service for Brian Booth. It was never ever about Brian and all the speakers that day at the funeral confirmed this. It was always about the other person and their Best Interests. Brian Lived a Principled Centered Life.*

*Permit me to read one final paragraph.*

***The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born BY his purpose and FOR his purpose.***

For those of us who knew him know this ***exemplifies Brian's humble life.***

Looking back to 1967, the inaugural year of the Brian Booth Best Fairest Medal, we can say unequivocally, the SHA Board made the best choice of choosing **Brian Booth MBE** to have their highest Premier Division hockey award named after.

Now you know why the Brian Booth Best and Fairest Medal is so highly respected and sought after by every Premier Division hockey player in Sydney.

Along with the other recipients I am deeply honored and proud to have won this prestigious SHA Premier Division Brian Booth Best and Fairest Medal.

Thank you!