

## Transcript of Letters

### - Dave Stephenson to Tom Cornforth

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011

[personal information omitted]

I remember playing against him at Lambert Park (Leichardt). Hurlo and Leichardt Annandale a serious pre-season trial game curtain raiser to L/A 1<sup>st</sup> grade (included players like Joe Marston, Jock McMahon, "Rough as guts" Frankie Parsons – he used to eat goalkeeper for breakfast) and, as usual, close to the sideline was Perc (Ray Bird's Dad) "Go on Stevo, you big mug, my son could run around you 3 times with the ball before you realised what day it was". A good old stick but just a little one-eyed. Anyway I can't remember the score but I do know the Zambuks came on the field 8 or 9 times and one player was stretchered off (never a blue and white). Tom, do you remember Ernie King – he was built like Wayne Rooney but much quicker and he had perfected the slide tackle – you know the one – 50mph, only your bum and leg on the ground, right leg slightly raised with studs facing the poor mongrel he was tackling. **The Wogboys couldn't believe it & their style of play differed very much from ours – they taught us ball skills, finesse and unorthodox tactics – we relied more on fitness and physical consistency.**

Just back to our great patriarch for a moment – I knew so much and thought of Brack so highly that in some circumstances a man like that should have been knighted. He made a difference in the lives of many young people that improved their character forever. He was always there. Keep hold of this letter Tom as I will need to refer to it when we soon meet. I have a good memory of most aspects of Sunday comp at Blick Oval. Yes Brack and Cec did generate the event – no mean feat – 12 teams in all – 3 top games every Sunday for many migrants who probably could not have got a game in Sydney in the short term. One team you forgot was US Julia, funny name for a wog team whose home are in Italy was around the city of Milan. We did battle with them on a regular basis and got to know them quite well (particularly the one who marked you). My nemesis was their center half (built like Adonis) by name Aldo Lorenzutta. Every game we'd both come off worse for wear. They had Louis Rutiliano up front and a magic left winger called Bobby Carr. Cant/Marrickville snapped him up for a couple of seasons and sometimes their goalie was Carlo Marchini (Aust prof boxing middleweight champion of the day). They had a right fullback called Bruno Gerbich and I remember chasing him to the back line where he flicked the ball back over his head and my head, quickly, turned, left me flat-footed and wondering sprinted back past me and put his team on the attack. At that time we didn't know those skills let alone perfect them.

Canterbury Marrickville had a team in the Sunday comp most years – I remember it well as Johnny Warren played inside left and his brother Geoff played on the Wing, they also had a migrant, Les Scheinflug, a brilliant forward who played with Leo Baumgartner, Karl Jaros, Herb Ninnaus and Jules Forgacs when they first arrived from Austria. They came out as an organized tour here for about 6 weeks, and guess what none of them wanted to go back to the communist regime, somehow there wasn't much of an international political storm so everything quietened down and they formed the Sydney club 'Prague'. They were very talented but Leo was a cut above. He eventually went to

Cant/Marrickville as Capt coach and they were known as Baumgartner's Babes (mostly young team members) including Geoff Campbell, Whoopy Neil, Bruce Young (ex Marrickville junior, Steel Park home ground), Tommy North, Jimmy Moore, Johnny Watkiss, in goals Ron Corry (5 foot tall and as quick as a cat).

[personal information]

If I had any ability it must be linked directly to the quality players I have known as played with over the years, 'Foz' Maloney, Laurie Fitzhenry, Ron Lewis (I could write a chapter on 'the Manager'), Kevin Best, both Geoff and Mick Campbell, Harry Basterfield, Bob Armytage, Ray Bird, and then theres the goalies – yourself, Eric Amahana, good old Bluey Lawther, John Houghton, John Smith, and don't forget Rolly Polly Lindsay. I played many games for Hurlo/RSL including home and away with Cardiff workers, that was when soccer was sport – I had 2 blokes who marked me, Lance (a big bloody miner) and Kurt (a square head) there was always one of the three of us on the deck at any time. Come off the field aches and pains, cold shower, cold schooner and then they'd entertain us like lords at their great club.

If you want some history you might look up 'Robertson Cup' on your Google – this was a comp (about late 1950s) originated by Mr Robertson. A knockout for any all-aged team in NSW – We (HP) won it in its first year, we beat Canberra 2-1 at Macarthur Park (Lidcombe, near the boom gates). Kevie Woods set me up for the 2 goals, but he was stretched off in the second half to some mug Canberra copper who copped plenty from our blokes before match end.

Tom, I'm gunna run out of pens so remember to keep this letter for our next one-on-one conversation and I'll just mention some headlines so that I can fill in some gaps for you

Dave Stevo

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2011

Tom & Faye

Just having fun meandering back over the halcyon days of Hurlo, so I'll just throw some names and occasions at you and you might make some sense of my mess. Ron 'Foz' Maloney played up front with brother Pete's team. **You need to remember that there was almost nil competent skills coaching, mainly "kick as far as you can, then chase it" therefore our good & great players did it on natural sporting ability.** One Saturday arvo at Ewan I was promoted to the All-Age I, inside forward – I remember trailing 'Foz' as he beat some defenders + then took on the goalie, the goalie ran to the penalty spot to narrow the angle, Foz hit the ball hard to the goalie's left (with imparted spin) the goalie couldn't reach it but thought it would miss the upright, the ball (the old leather type) curved back in after it passed the goalie's outstretched hand and easily found the net – I was amazed but appreciated the lesson.

Laurie Fitzhenry only used his right foot to stand on, but when he drove the ball with his left instead it went straight, low and like a cannon shot (Lakemba had a left-footer, nearly as good, one 'Popeye' Bloor).

Then there was 'Bloody' Belmore, Rudd Park, black and white, tough as nails – I was usually marked by Keith Lottie (same build and style as Ernie King). You knew he was gonna chop you down, but there again the great Ray Price said "it's only pain" – I remember in one of our clashes I took him head on, I got my shoulder forward and hit him dead centre on the breast bone, I can still see him airborne, going backward and then hitting the wet Ewan Park turf and sliding about 10 meters on his arse, as I went past him I put my hand down, he grabbed on tight, I pulled him to his feet – the game went on. What's that great song Barbara Streisand song – "The Way we Were" – at least will Belmore you knew you'd get a competitive game + good reason to go to the pub – we'd usually go to the same pub and I never saw a fight, we were always too buggered. Belmore had a great right winger Col Raye. He was slightly built, great anticipation and almost delicate ball skills. More than a couple of times I made the C/B rep team with Col – Boy could he make us look good.

You'll love this one Tom, we were playing (Hurlo had 2 teams in the Sunday comp, the Ones and the Twos, we played 2s). This Sunday we had to play Undercliffe, **they had one mad bastard up front Brucey Parker, dead set mongrel lunatic**, apart from that they had a top grade keeper Warren Anderson, big heavy bloke, but could move! Before Kick off we're ready in the Blick changeroom, I'm that fit I'm jumping up and down on the spot and a lather of warm up sweat, I'm talking to myself "Well champ, you could win best and fairest this year, you've got a bag of goals and not once sent off, yeah I reckon this could be your year!"

Back walks in quietly for final instructions "Righto Stevo, you know this goalie could be the difference, dust him up early – put him off his game, nothing serious, Sloanie (the ref) will be understanding". Well, as the game progressed I wasn't really in the contest, he kept picking the ball out of the air when I thought I was a sure header chance, to the extent that in the second half he started with the verbal jibes (shouldna done that) half way thru the second half he beat me to a bouncing thru ball and as he passed me to run to the goal area perimeter for a clearance punt said "too quick for you stupid" – something clicked! I measured by run (don't foget Tom, challenge to goalkeeper in that area, shoulder to shoulder, was quite legal) so that I arrived as he kicked, obviously he had taken his eye off 'stupid' and was up on the ball of his left foot, with his right up about shoulder height as he contacted the ball. I arrived, at speed, in time to crease him from his left ear, his left jaw, his left collarbone, most of his left ribcage and drive my forearm into his flabby gutz. He hit the ground in a sitting position and mumbled something like "Ugh, ugh, ugh". I did not win the Best and Fairest.

Kev Woods was surely one of the best products from Hurlo, added to his football skills were courage, gentlemanliness and great character. However, no one could match Ron Lewis for courage, consistency and leadership.

One memorable occasion at Blick, Ron ran into a melee of us and some Hakoah players with Ron breaking free in possession of the ball. He took off in the direction of their goals (he had never scored in his career), only one defender, a little 5'2"er called Allen Levinson – he saw Ron approaching and he was in the road, he turned his back and huddled over like a hedgehog. Ron pushed the ball past him, put one palm in the middle of Allen's back and vaulted clear over, 3 more steps, the goalie went over and grabbed one upright, Ron (somewhat puzzled) side-footed the ball into the net and turned to run back for a Hakoah kick-off at the centre. The entire crowd, led by the

Hakoah supporters spontaneously stood and applauded Ron's sportsmanship and unorthodox talent. That's a day at Blick Oval I will never forget.

Tom, I'd better finish now but there are lots more stories I will recollect and write again = but just on our mate Gordie, I think the one word that describes him is "Powerful" – I remember one day we played as Ewan against the senior Belmore lads, my brother Pete feared that I and others would be killed by their bloody fierceness, the king brother (Jack + Kenny), Speechley, Harrison anyway after 2 or 3 of the bashers were hit head on by a rampaging sundstrom their whole attitude changed and they were glad to make the handshake at the end of proceedings. Gordie was built like Mal Meninga and was just as fast.

I don't know how well you remember Earlwood Oval, Sunday social matches. Pete & I play for C/H/Park RSL and other teams were Arncliffe RSL, Campsie RSL (Leo Baumgartner sometimes turned out for them), Hurlo all age (featuring Lucia brothers), Gary (mad dog) Wassel, Great Goalie Alex Maderasi, Peter 'Schooners' Bain, Also Cardiff workers (from up at Lake Macquarie). Sunday, I used to meet Bluey Lawther at Earlwood Oval at 10.30am after he'd picked up keg and equipment at RSL. We'd open up, set up the bar, sweep the mess from Saturdays crowd, set up the catering tables etc as there were always refreshments. Funny thing after all the prep was done, people would turn up in droves for a beer and a hot dog. Great days, good standard of competitive football. Quite a few 1<sup>st</sup> graders, johnnie Doyle an Irish lad played top grade with APIA. I remember one day I was on my knees pulling the goal nets out of the bag prior to putting them up when johnny doyle turned up "G'day there 'Big Man' (as he called me) could I be getting' a game today" – "Johnno, if you help me put these nets up, you can not only be in the team, but I'll shout you a schooner". Deal done.

Tom, you don't have to believe this next yarn but its as true as. We had a team in that comp who were senior Hurlo/Cant past players and they thought they should join us for a bit of footie and fun. They met at Campsie pub one Saturday night and the team comprised the best eleven drinkers with the last man standing as captain – well they used to paint stars on their boots and if replaced they'd have a schooner on the sideline – one year they made the semis, they played in boots, socks, shorts, dress shirt with bow tie, tuxedo jacket top hat (I kid you not) at half time they borrowed our tressle tables, produced cold meat salads beer and quality champagne for the ladies and ... played on. Australia can show the world what culture is!

Just a quick one, some years ago, probably 1992 our competitors were trialling for the Olympics, I went with some mates to Homebush to watch some trials, pretty impressive at close range. Down the front seats were VIP guests and I spotted Dick Thornett and Kenny Catchpole, I went to get drinks and had to go close to that section, I wasn't taking too much notice and as I nearly walked unto this bloke, he shoved his right hand out and said "Hi champ, yow ya doin'?" I responded with a firm handshake and went goosie all over – Murray Rose – he was just being friendly and well mannered – funny how little things stick in your mind.

All the best for now, look forward to meeting up,

Dave.

Thursday April 28, 2011

G'day Tom & Faye,

It's been a tonic to have this very relevant communicating. I was just thinking today we, and people like us, should give things every day for the wonderful life we've been given and the extraordinary characters we've mixed with – Tom you've really opened some treasure chests of real human beings – by the way. I've never uttered the words 'Errol Chapman', it was always 'Matches – someone explained to me that Errol was playing tennis at the Rockies (tennis courts in Hurlo owned by the Le Soeur family) and someone said "look at that skinny kid in shorts – his skinny legs are hanging down like a couple of matches". The nickname stuck! Bluey Chapman's first name was Richie – not a bad soccer player!

I do remember, as I walked from Second Street Ashbury to Ewan Park about good times, just after going under the overhead rail bridge was where 'Nancy' lived with his parents. Brack lived in Keiran which was quite near. Didn't Swinno have a head injury and had to give it away as he had repeated blank-outs? You might have you 'Pipers' wrong – Ron played with Elmo and was a tough as teak fullback – his young brother Keven (always known as 'Pip') played many times with me. Kev suffered a suffered a back injury in Natio's which brought on a severe bowel (?) cancer – he went sadly, in no time – I remember going to his funeral. He was a firey and I can still remember the ceremonial brass hat adorning my mate's coffin – he was in his 20s.

Back to CBHS – I know a lady here in Briz who was for a long time married to Russ Walkington, coincidence 'eh. I also have stories about 'Slim Jim' and our German teacher Herr Crauzartz. A science teacher Mr Gillogely walked every morning up Second Street to CBHS and I well remember if my mum was out the front they always raised hats and said "Good Morning Mrs Stephenson". **I think times and manners have changed very much for the worse.**

We had a sportsmaster who wasn't real tall and he was christened 'Shorty' Wepler. I had a science teacher Mr Casimir. As well as Kentley I did Latin under the guidance of a true lunatic "Gonner" Gibbs. I think he was a serial piss-head, his teeth were a beautiful shade of sepia (long time chain smoker). The French master was McCannon. The librarian before slim was a MR Duhig – headmaster was Cuthbert and vice head was Mr Potter. I remember the athletes just older than me – two great sprinters Charles "Chika" Campbell and Bob Nash fought out many encounters – One sports day (at Blick) they were both in the 220 yards (before metric) sprint final. Us kids were sitting/standing behind a low fence just before the winning post – as we yelled and cheered as they fought it out just before the finish the cheering went beserk, the field just got past us when the fence in front of us collapsed under the crush and there were strewn bodies everywhere (still cheering) all over the track – coulda been nasty. We had a great high jumper/hurdler (3 or 4 years older than me) Geoff Gee – hew was virtually unbeatable at that level. In the annual titles (at Blick), Geoff would high jump in his tracksuit till all the opposition failed. He'd then shed the tracksuit and progressively set new records. I do remember playing under 12 soccer reps with Bobby 'Pudden' Simpson and I think I met his mate Ray Bird due to that.

Last week I had a small surgical procedure to correct an umbilical hernia (that's when your navel pops out), I went in Thursday AM, departed on 2pm – home Friday arvo. Everyone at the Redland hospital was totally efficient, pleasant and helpful – is anaesthetic a great thing? One minute I'm talking to this bloke in a mask, next I wake up, no pain, no nuthin'. A good sort in nurses uniform says "How do you like your cup of tea?" We surely live in the "lucky country". Here we are 7-8 days

later, the stitches are dissolving, a big band-aid over the cut I can shower, go for walks, but no heavy exercise or lifting for 4-6 weeks. I'm a new man.

Hang on Cornforth I've got a story to top the lot. ???

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013

My dear unforgettable friends Tom and Faye,

Thanks for your lovely and timely letter. I'm still making moves to visit the Port – very soon I hope. Thanks for all the memory joggers I think Tom. We're all tarred with the blue and white brush! We are luckier than most as we grew up with fantastic seniors and role models. It was basic then to sort out bad from good. I played many a game (under 14/16) and then got a run with the under 21s. Behind me – Ronnie Lewis, in front, Fox Maloney – you couldn't help but improve. At Hurlo we always had good keepers (including Tom C). It must have been a great catalyst for you Tom to have John Hufton, Bluey Lawther, Eric Amahana, John Smith. Manchester United wouldn't have had such a continuance of talent. We had Les Pruce on the left wing – he'd run through a brick wall. We had a goalie at one stage, Andy Milne, you may not remember him – he retired as a player and became a ticketed referee. **He had our game at Blick Oval one Sunday arvo, Hurlo vs Wogs. The game got a bit unruly and very physical.** In the head of the moment a woggy boy abused [illegible] over a decision and called him an unsavoury name. Andy said, "Yeah, but I've got the whistle and you'll go by the rules". Woggy said "You Aussie bastard, you're just hiding behind your badge". Andy grabbed him with one hand, ripped his refs badge off his shift with the other and pulled him over the line saying "I'll let you have the first hit and then its every man for himself." Things got back to normal pretty quick! (Sorry Tom it was "Andy" Milne. He was a qualified chef at a leading city nightspot and doubled as bouncer! That's the way it was in the golden years).

You mentioned Errol Chapman, he was supported by his very skinny legs and due to his physique (noticeably when he wore shorts) he was gifted with the nickname "matches" for all his sporting life!

One memory leads quickly to another so we'll have to get together at Port and dust of the great Hurlo history. A lot of the history lends itself to conversation rather than the written word.

Some of the great players, Foz, 'Manager' Lewis, John Smith, Geoff Campbell, Tommy North, Jimmy Moore, I almost left out one of the best from Belmore – Col Raye and then there was 'Popeye' Bloor from Lakemba and Bruce Young from Marrickville.

[personal]

My very best regards,

Dave

Unspecified date

[personal]

I am saddened that so many of the “good guys” are slowing up. Of course, I haven’t seen a lot of them since our 20s and 30s. Sheff was always big and strong and Sunno, well that’s another story – we played one day at Ewen against Belmore, they had a team of tuff tuff tough guys – Ken and Jack King, Ray Harrison, Speechley, my brother Pete worried about me because I was his baby brother, he couldn’t understand that we could match it with these thugs. At once stage Sunno was running to a loose ball, Ken King saw an opportunity so he lined Sunno up and went for him like a tiger, he hit Sunno at top speed, a cloud of dust went up, Sunny came running out with the ball! When the dust settled, Kingy was on the deck, muttering and half-sobbing, somehow he got up and complete the game like a sick duck, he (and his brother) never tried Sunno on again.

[personal]

We are fortunate, Tom, that with our clear memories it’s a real joy at times, when its quiet, to sit back with a stubby and reminisce on all those good times.

I see myself walking down to the flats Saturday arvo, there’s Brack on a seat with a bag of match balls “G’day Stevo, see if you can kick straight today, and when you jump for a header hit it like you bloody mean it” “G’day Bill good to see you”

“G’day Foz (Ron Maloney) G’day Mangler (Ron Lewis) Hope I get a game with you blokes today.” If they were short we could sub. When we were 19-20yo after match drinks at the beloved Hurlo Pub (Owner: John Flitcroft) 3 schooners (one shilling and fourpence each) = four bob.

I remember 2 young blokes came looking for a game and we accepted them into Hurlo one was a running centre forward, the other a competent defender. Someone spotted them and the next year they played for Canturbury 1<sup>st</sup> div – names, Jimmy Moore and Tommy North. I’m pretty sure John Watkiss was about that time. I always had a lot of respect for players like Arther Austin, Terry Bennet, Rex and Mick Foster (from Earlwood), ‘Popeye’ Bloor and Les Simmington (from Lakemba), Col Raye and Keith Lottie (from Belmore) also Billy O’Hara (goalkeeper Belmore).