

BRIARS RUGBY IN THE 60'S

Greg McPhee *"We originally sought an article from players who were part of the 1964 undefeated Kentwell Cup Premiers so named 'The 64 Invincibles'."*

"All players contacted advised that they were merely one part of what was a fabulous decade for Briars Rugby and they prefer to focus on the 60's decade. Here is their story."

Submitted by 5 old rugby players from the 60's, 2 of them ex-rugby Chairmen for 50% of the Decade and all having represented in combined sub-district teams on multiple occasions including as Captain and Vice-Captain.

As a preliminary to understanding our success in the 1960's decade one has to be cognizant of the 1949 and 1952 Kentwell Cup Premiership sides both coached by Bill McLaughlin who went on to become a Wallabies coach. Bill played both rugby and cricket with Briars before and after his Wallaby coaching years.

The 49 and 52 Briars Kentwell Premier sides provided critical coaches, advisors and mentors, who after retirement and even, in the case of Ray Young, provided playing leadership as Kentwell Cup Captain in 1957, 1958 and 1959 to young players who would later become key members of Kentwell sides in the 1960's decade as well as key administrators via Rugby Chairmanship and Committee participation. Brian Williams, Kentwell Cup coach 1961 – 64, Peter Hotten, assistant to Brian Williams as forwards coach 1961 – 62, Lex Yule, Burke Cup coach 1961 – 64, Spencer Hipwell, Rugby administrator, coach and selector 1959 – 60. All played in one or both of the aforementioned 49 & 52 Kentwell Premiership sides. Their influence on the culture and work ethic of the 60's decade cannot be underestimated.

1. The **on-field** success of the 60's which yielded 2 Kentwell Cup Premierships (1 undefeated) 3 minor Premierships and 3 Club Championships was only part of the contribution by 1960's players or officials over ensuing years. **Off field** contributions over the ensuing decades includes not from the 60's Briars but from **60's Briars Rugby players**: -
 - a. Seven Club Presidents: - Brian Williams, Bill Elder, John Edmonds, Col Dennis, Ian Richard, Craig Hickey, Ian Blair.
 - b. Fourteen Briars Club Directors: - 7 above plus Walker, Mathews, Rolleston, Wearne, Elder, Crookes, Staniforth.
 - c. Eleven Coaches: - Briars: Chris Walker, Steve Keir, Dave Lindsay, Mike Elder, Richard Crookes, John McNicol.
St.Ives: Chris Walker, Mike Mathews, David Walker, Richard Crookes, John Mortlock, John McNicol.

- d. Briars Foundation establishment including over 70% of the financial contributions or over \$500,000 of the total \$726,000 given to the Briars Foundation.
 - e. Lifelong commitment to Briars and its culture and traditions e.g. via 50 years of reunions, widows oversight, business sharing etc.
 - f. At last year's Rugby Lunch 4 table Captains were 60's rugby players. Of their 40 attendees approx. 30 were 60's Briar rugby players. Allowing that by 2018 approx. 50% are deceased, incapacitated or resident overseas or interstate the Briars Lunch would enjoy over 400 attendees if Rugby O.B. from the 70's, 80's 90's and 2000's, who are primarily still alive attended to the same degree. There is probably no better statistic to support the fabulous camaraderie of the 60's.
2. For the 60's decade Briars fielded 41 teams. In 1960 we had 3. By 1965 we had 6 and we finished the decade with 4. Many of us were and are disappointed with the number of Premierships we missed. The majority of teams made semis. Many made finals. Minor Premiers failed to deliver Premierships to the lasting disappointment of many. In 1966, going for our third Kentwell Cup Premiership in succession, we finished minor premiers but failed to deliver the 'Premiership'. In 1969 our Kentwell side only lost 2 regular season games but failed to deliver a Premiership. The 1964 Burke Cup side lost its Grand Final 5-6 at Drummoyne oval. 6 of that team attended their Rothwell reunion last year. There were two tours to New Zealand (1960 & 1965) with both playing groups gaining invaluable enhanced rugby skills. Again, these tours were organised by and led by older Briars from the 40's and 50's.
- We cannot devote time or space to all or numerous of the teams from the 60's but it would be unfortunate not to update readers on the two Kentwell Cup Premiership sides. Debate has raged for decades amongst more than just the players as to which was the better team. The statistics provide some reasons. The final answer instantly shuts down the debate. **"The '65 team did not go undefeated"**.

THE 1964 INVINCIBLES AND THE 1965 KENTWELL PREMIERS

THE PLAYERS

In order that present players or players from later decades can better understand the player quality which came together by the mid-sixties primarily via school recruitment or Shute Shield Club recruitment the School, Club and Combined Sub-district records are detailed in actual playing sequence.

THE 1964 INVINCIBLES



1964 INVINCIBLES (Original Photograph at Kurraba Pt.)

D = Deceased

Only Shute Shield 1st Grade participation is counted and in the 60's Drummoyne was a Shute Shield Club with Wallaby Captain Greg Davis as their leader.

Back Row Left to Right:

Mike Mathews: Cranbrook, Briars, Combined Sub-District.
John McNicol (D): East Hills H.S., Briars, Combined Sub-District, Eastwood, Briars.
John Edmonds (D): Newington, Briars
Gus Ahern: Trinity, Briars.
Lin Dytor: Drummoyne H.S., Briars.
Steve Keir (D): Shore, Briars.
Jack Burkhardt : Trinity, Briars, Combined Sub-District.
Mal Goldsmith: Kings, Briars.

Seated Left to Right:

Brian Williams (D): Coach, Homebush H.S., Briars, 49 & 52 Premier, Combined Sub-District.
John Mortlock: Kings, Briars, Combined Sub-District,
Peter Wakeford: All Souls Charters Towers, Sydney Uni, Waratah, Briars.
Chris Walker: Sydney Grammar, Briars, Combined Sub-District.

Jim Barrett: Fort St. H.S., Briars, Combined Sub-District.
John Metcalf: Trinity, Briars.
Bill Elder (D): Chairman of Selectors

Front:
Mike Elder (D): Sydney Grammar, Briars.
Warwick Harper: Newington, Briars, Combined Sub-District.

Absent:
Dave Lindsay (D): Seated far left in 1994 Re-union photograph.
Fort St. H.S., Sydney Uni, Briars, Combined Sub-District.

Bill Leckie: Seated far right in 1994 Re-union photograph
Newington, Briars, Combined Sub-District.

Summary: 1 Waratah
3 Shute Shield 1st Grade
9 Combined Sub-District

THE 1964 INVINCIBLES 1994 RE-UNION **(2004 and 2014 had some deceased players)**



THE 1965 KENTWELL PREMIERS



1965 KENTWELL PREMIERS (Original photograph at 30a George St.)

D = Deceased

Back Row Left to Right:

- Mike Elder (D): Sydney Grammar, Briars.
Dick Crookes: Newington, Briars, Drummoyne, Briars, Combined Sub-District.
Greg Williams: Strathfield South H.S., Briars, Combined Sub-District.
Bill Leckie: Newington, Briars, Combined Sub-District.
Ian Richard: T.A.S., Briars
Ian McGregor: Canterbury H.S., Briars.
John Metcalf: Trinity, Briars.

Middle Row:

- Gus Ahern: Trinity, Briars.
Jim Barrett: Fort St. H.S., Briars, Combined Sub-District.
Peter Darragh (D): Sydney Grammar, Briars, Eastwood, Briars, Combined Sub-District.

John McNicol (D): East Hills H.S., Briars, Combined Sub-District, Eastwood, Briars.
John Edmonds (D): Newington, Briars.
Col Dennis (D): Cleveland St. H.S., Briars.

Front Row:

Mike Mathews: Cranbrook, Briars, Combined Sub-District.
Dave Lindsay (D): Fort St. H.S., Sydney Uni, Briars, Combined Sub-District.
Chris Walker: Sydney Grammar, Briars, Combined Sub-District.
Brian Williams (D): Coach, Homebush H.S., Briars, 49 & 52 Premier, Combined Sub-District.
Bret Lockett: Trinity, Briars, Combined Sub-District, Parramatta, Briars.
Mal Goldsmith: Kings, Briars.

Summary: 5 Shute Shield 1st Grade
9 Combined Sub-District

1965 KENTWELL PREMIERS AT 1995 RE-UNION AT RSYS



Footnote:

The story of Briars 60's rugby, would not be complete if we did not to mention the author's role in this fabulous era.... .. **Briars Rugby Golden Era.**

Chris Walker was the glue that cemented Briars successes in the 1960's. Undoubtedly the leader, Chris's achievements and contributions need to be acknowledged.

As one team mate recounted, Chris was not just a good player, he was an administrator and innovator.

His Rugby achievements speak for themselves. He was Kentwell Captain for most of the 60's, (including the 64 and 65 Kentwell Premiership sides). He was also Captain and Half Back for Combined Subbies.

Chris was football chairman for 5 years. He visited schools promoting the Briars as an alternative to playing for District clubs. One of several his initiatives was the introduction of the no-train-no play rule.

As we know, Chris's contribution to Briars Rugby and the club in general has continued to the present. Chris still takes an active administrative role in rugby today. He was the force behind the establishment of the Briars Foundation and now has the honour of being Briars Sports Co-Patron.

Well done and thank you Chris Walker...a true Briar

Greg McPhee