

# A Century of Public School Sport in NSW & the Riverstone District

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On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1889 a general meeting held at Castlereagh Street Public School, Sydney, saw the formation of the Public Schools' Amateur Athletics Association (PSAAA). This had little effect on Riverstone district schools as the PSAAA was confined to the metropolitan area, which then extended south to Hurstville, north to Hornsby and west to Granville. For the first 25 years the single PSAAA event was the Annual Sports' Carnival. In 1895 Windsor and West Maitland, were included in the carnival.

Crowds of 40,000 to 50,000 people would gather with up to 12,000 children participating before the Governor General, State Governor and Premier and the Minister for Public Instruction. Between 1889 and 1894 the carnival was a one-day affair, held on a Saturday. It then became a two-day event, held on a Friday and Saturday. Events included sprinting, walking, sack races, drop and kick a football, throwing a cricket ball, a 400-yard obstacle run, drill events, tennis, bicycle races and numerous displays. Most events were exclusively for boys in 14, 12 and 9 year age divisions, with tennis provided for girls. As well as individual events, competitors from various sports, ie. teams of cyclists, footballers and runners, competed against each other in tug-o-war.

Sport for Riverstone district children at this time was mostly confined to games such as marbles, jacks, cricket, rounders and skipping played before school and at lunchtime. Some classes stayed outside after morning flag raising to do exercises or drill. A piece of sports' equipment issued to schools was described as *a stuffed bag about 12 inches long and 4 inches round attached to a piece of rope. A child stood in the centre of a circle of children and swung the bag around. The other children had to jump the bag.*

In 1892 an afternoon cricket match between boys from Riverstone and Marsden Park schools saw respective principals Bernard Carroll and William Broadfoot arguing publicly in the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*. Bernard Carroll's superiors censured him for going into print over the issue. In November 1889 Bernard Carroll's students enjoyed a sports' day when they met at the school and were led to ground behind Mr E. McDonnell's residence by the Windsor Band. Here *sets of cricket tools, rounder balls and bats, swinging ropes etc. were already provided for them.* The children ran for prizes and every child received one. About 300 adults and children attended.

By 1895 there were 59 schools competing in the PSAAA's Annual Sports' Carnival when the first relay race, 4x400 yards using no batons, was contested. In 1898 the Parramatta District Schools held a Sports' Carnival at Parramatta Cricket Ground. Also in 1898 events for Infants were included with a 50 yards handicap race for boys 8 years and under and a boys' tricycle race. William Arnott, the biscuit manufacturer donated tins of biscuits as prizes for children competing at both the Sydney and Parramatta carnivals. This 1898 tradition was to last till 1970, when every competitor at the State Athletics' Carnival received a packet of Arnott's biscuits.

The *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* of 15th October 1898 reported "Fairfield" grounds were the scene of animation on Wednesday last, when fully 1000 persons must have been present at the third annual gathering held under the auspices of the Hawkesbury District Teachers' Athletics Association. It was a red- letter day for the children, nearly every school being represented...A band discoursed

selections of music on the ground during the day. Schools involved included Bullridge, Comelero Road, Currency Creek, Freemans Reach, Kurrajong, Pitt Town, Richmond Superior, Riverstone, Tennyson, Wilberforce and Windsor Superior. Events included Bicycle Race (four times around the park), Apple and Three-legged Races, Throwing at Wicket, 100 yards Sack and Skipping Races and 400 yards Obstacle Race. Riverstone winners were Evelyn Myers in the 50 yards for 9 years and under and J. Myers who dead-heated with A. Conroy in the 75 yards handicap for 14 years and over.

In 1899 the PSSSA Annual Sports' Carnival, now a one-day Friday event held at the Agricultural Ground, included a massed non-competitive physical education display. Events were organised separately for boys from metropolitan schools and country branches and new events such as clubs, dumb-bells, obstacle races, 3-legged races, hurdle races and a running high jump were included. For girls there were skipping races, fancy skipping and hoop races. A testing event was a novelty race in which competitors had to skip 50 yards, hop 25 yards, race backwards 25 yards, eat a bun, crawl on hands and feet 25 yards and run home 50 yards (hopefully not choking on the bun!).

City business continued their PSSAA support. In 1901 William Arnott donated medals for prizes; in 1903 Mr Mark Foy donated three gold medals for swimming; in 1906 Griffith Bros. Teas donated 500 boxes of chocolates as prizes; from 1908 Jeweller Percy Marks regularly donated medals. Children received free milk from the NSW Food & Ice Co and CSR supplied free bags of sugar.

Individual sports began to be introduced – 1897 saw the formation of a swimming sub-committee with the All Schools' Championship being held in 1898. A 100 yards Schoolgirls' Championship was contested in 1907; inter-district rugby began in 1903; Australian Rules' Football in 1904; soccer in 1907. By 1911, 14 schools were playing in competition baseball and lacrosse was becoming prominent. By 1914, competition had begun for girls and boys in tennis and for boys in cricket. It was 1920 before rugby league was officially sanctioned as there was concern that schoolboys' amateur status would be affected by playing the 'professional game'.

At the Annual Carnival in 1904 dancing was included as an event for girls and the next year dancing was extended to three separate competitions – Highland Fling, Hornpipe and Irish Jig. The Minister for Education, in 1907, agreed to the closure of all metropolitan schools to enable children to attend the Sports' Carnival. Affiliated schools in country districts were also allowed to close for their sports' carnivals. A 1909 baseball competition involved individuals running around the bases, fielding a ball at short stop and throwing it to first base.

In 1913 a sub-committee organised high schools' competition in various sports, a forerunner of the CHS. Competition for girls was limited to athletics, swimming and tennis. In 1917 a girls' winter games Field Day was held at the SCG with exhibition games being played in hockey, lacrosse and basketball. The following year saw the formation of the Girls' Secondary Schools' Sports' Association (GSSSA) and competitions began in hockey, rounders, vigoro and basketball. The GSSSA remained autonomous till its affiliation with the PSAAA in 1961. A sprint championship, baseball and primary girls' tunnel ball, were included in 1919 with 84 events, 46 for boys, 38 for girls. By 1939 there were no longer primary girls' competitions. They were given PSAAA representation in 1952, competing in basketball (which became netball in 1968) and softball.

The Parramatta PSAAA branch was one of a number formed in the 1920s, holding its inaugural carnival in 1924. In 1927 a public address system was used. Previously a large gong would ring up the races. By 1933 the metropolitan PSAAA was conducting 41 annual district competitions. Until 1931 compulsory junior cadet training had been part of the school curriculum. Early carnivals

included military style events such as drill, manual exercise and volley firing in two ranks, physical drill with arms, cadet and band races in full uniform and sham fighting, with associated ambulance work, between companies. In primary schools this same course of instruction was carried out under the title of Physical Training. WWII caused a shortage of rubber for football bladders, English willow for cricket bats and the supply of cricket balls. Post war, schools purchased equipment from Army amenities.

In the 1930s, 40s and 50s the land in Garfield Road, opposite the school, was used for games of cricket, softball and vigoro. There was a basketball (netball) court in the school grounds near the Piccadilly Street entrance. Jim Russell, First Assistant 1944-48, a Cumberland First Eleven cricketer, coached the boys after school. He recalled the cricket and football teams did very well in PSA competitions in those days. Two of his students, Kevin Lewis and Matt Johnston, remember Jim Russell taking a football side, by train, to play against Wentworthville Public School. Riverstone won the game. The Wenty boys didn't take kindly to being beaten and chased the Rivo lads along the stormwater channel back to the railway station. In 1948, when the senior boys went by bus to play against Quakers Hill School, teams of girls also went to play basketball and softball. The girls' games were not part of any organised competition.

When Wal Aldridge came to Riverstone Public School as principal in 1960, he was impressed by the students' sporting ability. He set about building a school pride and self esteem using this as his catalyst. Since then Riverstone's students have excelled in district competitions, a number of students taking this competition to State level and some being selected in State teams. A Riverstone Primary student to shine in 1962 was Graham Barlow who broke the state record in winning the Shot Put event at the NSW State Athletics' Carnival. In 1969 the PSAAA became 4 autonomous bodies – CHSA, GSSSA, the NSW Girls' Primary School Sports' Association and the NSW Boys' PSSA.

In 1971 the Boys' and Girls' Associations amalgamated to become the NSW PSSA. Many of Wal Aldridge's pupils went on to excel in sport at Riverstone High School, opened in 1962. In the 1969 University Shield Rugby League competition Riverstone was coached by Maths' teacher, Lewis Jones, a former Welsh and English international rugby player. On the Wednesday afternoon, when the game between Riverstone High and Griffith High was played in Riverstone Park, Riverstone almost came to a standstill. The meatworkers were 'on strike' that afternoon, most shops closed and both primary and high school students were also spectators. The crowd was estimated at 10,000. The match was reported on in the Sydney evening papers. One spectator with mixed loyalties was Wal Aldridge, then Principal at Griffith Primary School. Griffith Radio broadcast the game back to Griffith, whose side was beaten by the close score of 9-7.

Riverstone's University Shield team was again victorious when a convoy of buses and private cars made a weekend trek to Orange for a Sunday game against the local high school. The semi final, in which Riverstone was defeated by Tamworth, was played in front of a capacity crowd of 62,000 at the SCG in a lead-up to the Third Test between England and Australia. The noise of the crowd was so deafening that Vice-Captain David Andrews stated "We didn't hear the hooter go so we weren't aware the game had started". The Riverstone team for that game comprised: Fullback - John Hannon, Wingers- Lyn Kingma & Scott Andrews, Centres- Darryl France & George Petrow, 5/8 & Captain- Zac Olejarnik, Half- Bruce Rutledge, Lock & Vice-Captain- David Andrews, 2nd Row- Phil Vaughan & Les Blake, Props- Graham Barlow & Vener Poniewerka, Hooker- Brian Strachan. Later, Zac and Darryl went on to represent their state in the NSW CHS Rugby League side.

In 1971 Riverstone High's girls' tennis team were joint winners, with Caringbah High School, of the Florence Conway Cup, a State wide competition in its inaugural year. Twenty teams contested the competition. The Riverstone High team was comprised of Wendy Drayton, Kaye Crawford, Christine Burke, Robyn Bludhorn & Christine Schofield. To reach the final, Riverstone defeated Cumberland 8-0, Ryde 8-0, Tamworth 6-2 & Mackellar 5-3. Riverstone produced its own official programme for the final, which was noteworthy for its sense of history and for a strongly feminist point of view. Kaye and Wendy were then chosen in the state team that defeated Queensland in the Pizzey Cup. The 16 strong team of boys and girls from NSW won by 24 rubbers, 89 sets to 12 rubbers, 35 sets.

**STATE KNOCKOUT UPSETS**

**GRIFFITH and Riverstone High have provided shocks in State-wide Rugby League and tennis knockout competitions.**

In Rugby League Griffith eliminated last year's winners Yanco Agricultural High from the University Challenge Shield with a resounding 29-8 win in a second round game played at Griffith last Wednesday.

Riverstone qualified to meet Caringbah in the Girls Secondary Schools tennis final at White City next Thursday by beating the strong Mackellar Girls High, Manly Vale.

Even the tenacity of seeded NSW Juniors Jenny Walker and Diane Fromholts was not sufficient to lift Mackellar into the final.

The Riverstone team, Kaye Crawford, Parramatta-Granville under 19 singles champion, Wendy Drayton, Western Suburbs district, under 19 and 17 singles titleholder, Christine Burke and Robyn Bludhorn won 5-3.

Caringbah qualified to oppose Riverstone by beating Ingleburn 7-1 in a semi final.

Jennifer Diamond, NSW under 15 grasscourt champion, Rhonda Murdoch, a State seed, Kathy Melico and Denise Hancock with Cherie Murdoch, the reserve, form the Caringbah team.

**SCHOOL'S IN**

**with JOHN BLANCH**

Griffith has uncovered several players with out- could be serious challengers again judging on their early form.

In the South Western zone, Griffith trounced Leeton 43-nil before flattening Yanco, who have only two of last year's successful team.

Griffith has uncovered several players with out- standing ability.

Front rower and captain, Joe Miltherpe, 18, represents Griffith Waratah firsts in the Group 20 competition.

Full-back Paul Muir is showing out with his exciting play and lock Tony Saxvik's cover defence has been a treat.

In 1978 school captain Garry Allison, a member of the CHS State Water Polo team, was the only Riverstone High student, to date, to be awarded a CHS Blue.

In 1982 Michael Petersen swam for NSW in the Pan-Pacific Games in Brisbane. He came 2nd in his Individual Medley, 3rd in the Butterfly and 2nd as a member of the NSW Medley Relay team.

Brian Allen, whilst a Year 6 student at Riverstone Primary in 1987, was selected to play in and captain the State's PSSA Cricket team. A Riverstone High student to excel in a non-school sport in the same year was Rouse Hill's archer, Mark Locock, who was 1st in the Junior Australian Bowhunters and in the Junior Australian and South Pacific IFAA and 2nd in the World Junior Bowhunters' Championship held in the USA. In 1988 Marsden Park's Daniel Gallagher gained a 3rd place in the 12 Years Boys' Shot Put at the CHS carnival. In 1989 & 1990 he won Gold and also won his event at the Australian Schoolboys' Championship and at the 1990 Pulsar Games.

Volleyball saw Susan Sancbergs represent in the NSW Under 17 team in 1989. Both the girls' and boys' teams from Riverstone High were runners-up in the 1992 Open Schools' Cup, with Suzanne Engelhard receiving the prestigious honour of being named "Most Valuable Player of the Tournament", which included a cash scholarship and a top of the range "Shark Watch".

Later that year the Girls' Volleyball Team was to come 2nd in the State Knockout, being beaten by Westport High Port Macquarie in the final. The Team was Suzanne Englehard, Daniella Kucic, Renee Gauchi, Belinda Kidd, Marina Mauritski, Susan Sancbergs, Leanne Austin & Michelle Wicking. The Boys' Volleyball Team defeated Westfield High 3-2 to take the State Title. The Boys' Team was Daniel White, Justin Wicking, Chris Callanan, Mark Van Uden, Michael Shields, Brock Turner, Kobie Turner, Kent Powell, Neil Callanan & David Loveday. In the same year, Michael Shields was to prove his versatility as an all-round sportsman by being selected in the under 19s State Outdoor/Indoor cricket team. Volleyball was strong at Riverstone High for a number of years. In 1994 Kobie Turner captained the NSW Under 17's Men's Volleyball Team and in 1995 he was one of only 180 high school students from across the State to be awarded a Pierre de Coubertin Award from the Australian Olympic Committee.

In 1995 Renee Bevan, a Year 10 student, was to represent NSW and Australia in soccer and Darren Campbell was to earn a bronze medal at the State Swimming Championships. Lauren Stacey was one of a number of Riverstone High students who visited the USA with the Australian Rope Team where the senior team was placed 6th overall in the World Invitational Rope Skipping Championship. Aaron Gregory, a Year 6 student at Riverstone Primary School, was a member of the 1997 NSW Primary Schools' Rugby League side. Playing at either centre or on the wing, he was the team's leading try scorer with 12 tries.

At the 2000 Paralympic Games all Riverstone cheered loudly when Riverstone High swimmer Alicia Aberley, contesting 7 events, won 2 silver and 2 bronze medals in the S14 category.

A former Riverstone High student who went on to represent Australia in Commonwealth and Olympic Games was John Maxwell. Until injured, John played fullback for the 1969 University Shield Rugby League side. During his high school years he took up Trap Shooting. John was selected in Olympic Games' teams for Seoul (1988) and Atlanta (1996), where he came 4th in the Trap. John won Gold and Bronze medals at the 1990 Auckland Commonwealth Games; Australian Champion of Champions Olympic Trench Shooter in 1988, 1992, 1993; National Trap Champion 1988, 2001 and 2003; a Bronze Medal in 1993's World Champion Universal Trench; coached the Australian Olympic Squad in 2001-2002 and was Commonwealth Games Clay Target Coach in 2002. He is now, in 2004, Coach of the Ireland Olympic Shooting Team.

In October 2003 two former Riverstone pupils, Joel Clinton and Shane Rodney, played in the Penrith Panthers Rugby League team which, as Minor Premiers, defeated Eastern Suburbs 18-6 to win the NRL Grand Final, in what has been described as the best ever Grand Final match. Joel was chosen in the Australian Kangaroo team to play against the New Zealand Kiwis and to tour England.

The first hundred years plus of sport in public schools in the Riverstone district would have been echoed in districts across the state.

Reference: COLLINS, Bill, AITKEN, Max & CORK, Bob, *One hundred years of public school sport in New South Wales 1889-1989*, NSW Sports Association, New South Wales Department of School Education, New South Wales Combined High Schools Sports Association, 1990.