

Riverstone Netball Club – The First Ten Years

Heather Smith

This article would not have been possible without the assistance of Kim Petherick who was the historian of the Club and maintained immaculate records of the first ten years.

In 1971, I was President of the Riverstone Infants School Mothers' Club and many of the mothers, myself included, were keen to play netball. Something that we had all done at school and later with various business houses in Sydney competitions. Many of the wives of service men living in Riverstone had also played in inter-service competitions, both interstate and overseas.

So out went the inevitable notice, home with the Infants School children, requesting expressions of interest from any mothers who wished to play in the 1972 Hawkesbury District Night Competition. The response was overwhelming, so the Riverstone Mothers' Netball Club was born.

Three teams were entered into the night competition, complete with umpires, coaches, managers and scorers. The uniform was a white box pleat tunic with two yellow stripes around the hem, a maroon t-shirt, a yellow corded belt with tassel, long white socks and sand shoes. Nevis Worboys made most of the white tunics.

I was elected President, Bev Potter Secretary and Nevis Worboys Treasurer. We approached Blacktown Council and their sole contribution to start us off was a patch of grass beside the Footballer's Hall (now demolished), on the corner of Garfield Road and Creek Street, where they erected four goal posts. We were expected to mark out the courts ourselves with a lime marker. Unfortunately the land was below flood level and each time it rained we all trained in mud. However this changed when, in 1974 Nevis Worboys was the first women Alderman elected to Blacktown Council and we were able to obtain two asphalt courts with lights. Riverstone, I believe, is still the only Club in the Association with this luxury.

The first competition season saw some spectacular losses - we were long on enthusiasm but a bit short on skill.

1972 seasons saw great improvement. Three Senior teams were entered into the much stronger day competition where they proved worthy adversaries winning the Senior B Grade Division. Captained by Pat White the team was Bev Potter, Janet Greig, Elaine Brown, Maria Stoev, Marie Alfreds and Roma Everett, coached by myself. We went on to greater heights that year when Bev Potter was selected in the Hawkesbury Senior Representative team to compete in the New South Wales Championships and I gained my New South Wales 'C' badge in umpiring. Roma Everett was also awarded the most outstanding player in the Division.

1973 saw fierce competition between the Riverstone teams themselves. To avoid confusion as they were playing the same grade, they were called the Riverstone Ramblers, Rockets and Rangers. This was the forerunner of many years to come as gradually the Riverstone teams became so strong that many of the Grand Finals were contested between two strong Riverstone teams.

In 1974 it was decided to incorporate junior teams into the Club and with a strong background, plus support and knowledge which had been gained by the senior players, we then formed the Riverstone Netball Club. Mrs Coulter and Mrs Betty Croghan agreed to be our Patrons and Betty also donated a trophy for the Best Senior Player.

Riverstone has always been a working class town surrounded by more affluent neighbouring towns. However Riverstone has always been blessed with strong characters and we were all very protective of our players and conscious of our reputation. We wanted Riverstone Netball Club to create an impact when we made our first appearance as one of the newest and also the largest club in the Association. We changed the town colours of yellow and maroon to red and gold and resplendent in our new uniforms of gold tunics and red shirts, seven junior teams and five Senior teams from the Riverstone Netball Club won their first march past at the opening day of the season - a fore runner of many more to come.

I was the Club President, Secretary Bev Potter, Treasurer Nevis Worboys and Coaches were Rhonda Greenham, Meryl Cameron, Maureen McAlister, Nevis Worboys, Colleen Gatsby, Bev Potter and Marie Alfreds. The first junior team to play in the Riverstone colours were Sharon Clark, Karen Drummond, Amanda Chambers, Jeanette Cartwright, Amanda Smith, Colleen Dawson, Helen Minchin, and Wendy Greenham. In our first year in open competition we won one Premiership, were runners-up in two divisions and were awarded the most Improved Club trophy by the Association.

By 1975 Riverstone was gradually improving and providing strong competition in all grades. Our team of Cadets 15-17 year olds, were Joint Premiers in one of the most contentious games Riverstone ever played. When the full time siren went Riverstone were one goal ahead and as the girls jumped in joyous celebration the opposing team picked up the ball passed it into the goal circle and shot another goal to draw. They claimed that they were playing injury time, which the Riverstone players did not hear the Umpires call. Although Riverstone Executives protested vigorously afterwards, the game was classed as a draw.

However this Cadet team was the basis for the many successful Riverstone A Grade teams that followed. Captained by Margaret (Moogie) Johnson were Kim Simonds, Sharon Chambers, Joanne Tozer, Vicki Henry, Michele Smith and Maree Wolffe. They were coached by Bev Potter.

At the commencement of the 1976 season the club had grown even more and we entered sixteen teams in the HDNA Winter competition, twelve junior teams, one Cadet Team and three Senior teams. Our Cadet team this year showed their supremacy by winning the Division outright. No doubt about the score that year! There was also a change in the ranks of the club Executive. Bev Potter and I had been elected to the Executive of the Hawkesbury Association. We were both coaching Representative teams as well as Riverstone club teams and Bev Potter was also preparing the By-laws of the Association, as well as drafting a new Constitution. Vivien Parkes now took over as President and our 10 years' team were the first Riverstone team to win a Junior Carnival in Open competition at Penrith. Judged the Most Outstanding Player in the club that year was Margaret Johnson. We were also successful in winning the March Past again.

In 1977 we made the jump with our Cadet team to Open Competition, when they entered as the new Riverstone A Grade team. Comprising predominately players who had come through the junior ranks of the Club, they were Bronwyn Murphy, Margaret Johnson, Sue Croghan, Kim Simonds, Kay Maxwell, Michelle Concannon, Michele Smith and Coach Bev Potter.

In 1978 the 'A' Grade team reached the Finals in their first attempt but were defeated by a more experienced C.Y.S team. However three of our Club members experienced their first International competition when Margaret Johnson, Beverly Willet and Kim Simonds were selected in the

Hawkesbury District representative team to play the visiting Trinidad-Tobago National Team and Bev Potter was named as the Coach. The same year I was elected as Senior Vice-President of the Association together with Sue Orr who was elected Umpires' Convenor, a position she still holds today. Another notable citizen of Riverstone became a Coach in our club and that was Eric Maginnes, a Gold Medallist in basketball at the Paraplegic Olympics. The Most Outstanding Junior Player was Belinda Lloyd, Intermediate was Linda Woods and Outstanding Senior was Kerry Thornton. Our umpires' Award went to Wendy Fitzgerald.

By 1979 we were going from strength to strength, running our own coaching clinics for our club members, as well as for our umpires, and assisting other clubs in the District with their coaching clinics. We were financially independent and entered sixteen teams in the winter competition, eleven Junior teams and five senior teams. Never were our junior players more dominant than on Grand Final Day. Capping the season with eight teams contesting the Grand Finals and going on to win five Premierships as well as Runners-up in the other three Divisions. Also our 11 year (2) team which was coached by Susan Woods was awarded the 'Most Improved Team'. Kristine Aldridge was presented with the Debra Kay Memorial Trophy for the 'Most Outstanding 10 year old Player' of the District.

Our Junior teams were now reaping the rewards of being coached by Senior Players. Michele Smith, Kim Simonds, Vicki Burke, Susan Woods and Vicki Bates and Barbara Young were all passing on their knowledge to the ever increasing number of junior teams, assisted by Bev Potter, Sue Orr, Nevis Worboys and myself. In 1979 we gained one of our best Coaches, Barbara Nichols who over many years of dedicated service to the Club was responsible for the basic skills that were instilled into our junior players. By the time they reached the next level they were skilled in catching, throwing and court craft and Riverstone gained a reputation for outstanding junior teams.

This was the beginning of Riverstone's Golden years. We were now superior in every division but still we were unable to crack that elusive "A" Grade Premiership, a trophy that was to elude us for three more years. We were beaten by one goal in the 1979 Grand Final by our old nemesis "Poppets". Although Cathy Lynch was awarded the Hawkesbury Netballer of the Year Trophy we were still striving for the big one.

Although it was a much quieter year for the club we still managed to win the 11 years coached by Michele Smith and the 15 years coached by Kim Simonds. We were Runner-up in the 10 years coached by Barbara Nichols, 11 years coached by Vicki Burke, B2 Division coached by Sue Orr and A grade coached by Bev Potter. 1980 also saw Riverstone award Life Membership to myself and Bev Potter, as well as Honorary membership to Sue Orr, Barbara Young and Barbara Nicholls.

1981 saw the culmination of a coaching programme that had been rigorously followed by the Riverstone coaches. Riverstone Club scooped the pool at the Grand Finals of the Associations Winter Competition winning all Junior Divisions, one Intermediate and two Senior Divisions. I was selected as Manageress for the New South Wales U/16 State team and followed up the same role with the famous Australian Coach Joyce Brown with the Australian u/16 Squad.

Riverstone A Grade were the product of this experience and success was ours in August 1981. The team comprising Lynda Woods, Susan Woods, Kerry McGlone (Teuma), Michelle Miller, Cathy Harris (Lynch), Michele Smith, Pat Cartwright and Kerry Thornton, captained by Kim Simonds,

coached by myself, finally proved that Riverstone was superior in every department by winning Senior A Grade Division.

By this era Riverstone teams were proving so strong in the competition that they were meeting each other consistently to play off for the Premiership. Bev Potter and Nevis Worboys solved the problems by forming a second Riverstone based club, Huxley Homes Club, which proved just as successful. Dot Etheridge, who was based with the RAAF at Richmond, also used the experience she gained by playing with Riverstone Club to form Hobartville Netball Club, comprised mainly of wives and daughters of servicemen stationed at the RAAF base Richmond, whilst Bronwyn Murphy formed Tikis Club..

In 1982 Riverstone had mixed results. Our stand-out team that year was our 13 years team coached by one of our first male coaches Brian Kenny. They were successful going through undefeated at metropolitan carnivals at Blacktown and Auburn, then went on to win the Premiership at the end of the season. These promising players were Angela Kenny, Sharon Brown, Julie Brown, Julie Perrett, Lisa White, Justine Anderson, Elizabeth Lee, Beverley Armitt and Elaine Whelan.

We entered sixteen teams in the 1982 competition comprising ten juniors' teams and six seniors' teams and at the end of the season our 12 years, 13 years(1), 13 years(2) 14 years(1), 14 years(2), B grade and A Grade had all qualified for the Grand Finals. Our 12 years team of Justine Lawler, Rebecca Orr, Lisa Shields, Sarah Greal, Tammy Hayden, Karen Lehner and Sonya Sullivan went through the competition undefeated. We were Minor Premiers in the 9 years Division, no finals played, it was first past the post. But once again the old problem reared its head we were playing for Premiership honors against our own teams.

Something that we had not foreseen was the defeat of our A Grade by Londonderry 41-38, a bitter blow for all of us.

Riverstone Club was priding itself on bringing on junior players to aspire to A grade level and to this end we were always introducing new and smarter designs to our uniform. All senior players were now wearing the yellow pleated kilt and a red shirt probably the most notable change being the introduction to the A Grade of yellow socks with matching yellow suede shoes complete with three red stripes down the side, courtesy of Tommy Raudonikis who had a sports' store at Blacktown at the time.

The disturbance this caused at Hawkesbury!!! The game was stopped and the team was informed that one team could not wear accessories that had not been registered for the entire Club. The players had to then change to the regulation white socks on the side of the Court, but were allowed to wear the yellow suede shoes as they protested that these were the only shoes they had with them on the day. However the yellow socks were not permitted to make another appearance until the next season, when they were registered and worn by the entire club. The following year when we introduced the customised yellow track suits with a large red "R" dominating one side and matching red sports' bags we made certain this was approved by the Association.

In 1983 we again won the March on the opening day with all players now sporting the yellow socks and they were congratulated on their precision marching by the judges from the RAAF Base, Richmond. One of the highlights of the year was when the 14 years Representative team from HDNA, coached by Michele Smith, went on to win their Division at the New South Wales State Age

Championships. Riverstone players featured predominately in this team, they were Kristine Aldridge, Lisa White, Angela Kenny, Bridget Orr and Donna Castles.

Once again we dominated the competition winning 8s- 12s, 14s, Junior Bs, D Grade, A reserve and A Grade and were runners up in the 10s and 13s.

By 1984 Riverstone was fielding 17 teams in the competition and on top in every Division. With eight Senior teams and nine Junior teams, we finished the season with six Premierships including the three major Senior Divisions of A Grade, A Reserve and Junior B. The Most Outstanding Junior Player was Sharon Thornton, Intermediate Kristine Aldridge and Outstanding Senior was Kerry McGlone (Tuma). However the A Reserve win created a problem for the Riverstone club. Their Premiership win meant they automatically went to the A Grade Division as the Riverstone A2 team for 1985, so the team of Leanne Leach, Kim Brooks, Jeannie Gearos, Leah Tighe, Amanda Smith Bridgett Orr and Kelly Nichols, who had proved themselves so strong in the lower Divisions, were now to come up against their sister team of Michele Smith, Patricia Cartwright, Angela Kenny, Kim Caffyn, Kristine Aldridge, Kim Petherick (Simonds), Kerry McGlone (Tuma) and Rebecca Orr. To complicate matters more, Michele Smith was also the Coach of the team - it was a time of mixed emotions

All fifteen players had commenced with Riverstone as Juniors and came through the ranks to reach the A grade, something that we were all very proud of and we could not deny them the chance to play at top level. The A1s beat the A2s 55-32 in a match at which all the spectators seemed to come from Riverstone and realized that the atmosphere usually surrounding a Grand Final was missing. Unfortunately this scenario repeated itself the next year. Riverstone A1s had won three consecutive Premierships, however an even stronger A2 team got within 3 goals in the Grand Final, going down 34-31 in a tight game. This was to be the final year for many of our Senior players who were now married and concentrating on starting a family.

Although I continued to coach younger Club teams for a few years I gradually eased myself from the Netball scene. Riverstone Netball Club was in excellent hands and still is today, in 2007. Many hundreds of players have worn the gold and red uniform. The game has changed dramatically since 1971 when Court fees were \$1.00 per game and Umpires performed their duties for nothing. Although the rules banning earrings and long finger nails are still strictly enforced, the footwear and socks regulations have been relaxed. Many of the girls who played with us in those early days now have their daughters playing every Saturday, repeating the theme of mothers and daughters playing for the same Club.

Riverstone Netball Club has an illustrious history sprinkled liberally with personalities, success stories and, thankfully, only a few disappointments. It is a Club that has always had its own character, been protective of its identity and stimulated by loyal supporters.

Sadly we have lost some of our foundation members who were there at the beginning, Nevis Worboys, Pat White, Win Morris and Maree Wolffe and Mrs Coulter. I hope that one day another member from Riverstone Netball Club will take up the challenge and continue documenting the history, traditions and highlights of this wonderful Club.

EXECUTIVES OF RIVERSTONE NETBALL CLUB 1971-1984.

PRESIDENT.

1971: HEATHER SMITH
 1976: VIVIAN PARKES
 1977: VIVIAN PARKES
 1981: VIVIAN PARKES
 1983: MICHELE SMITH
 1984: MICHELE SMITH

SECRETARY

BEV POTTER
 BETTY LYNCH
 MICHELE SMITH
 MICHELE SMITH
 KERRY ROSS
 BARBARA NICHOLS

TREASURER

NEVIS WORBOYS.
 KIM SIMONDS
 KIM SIMONDS
 BARBARA NICHOLS
 BARBARA NICHOLS
 JENNY ALDRIDGE

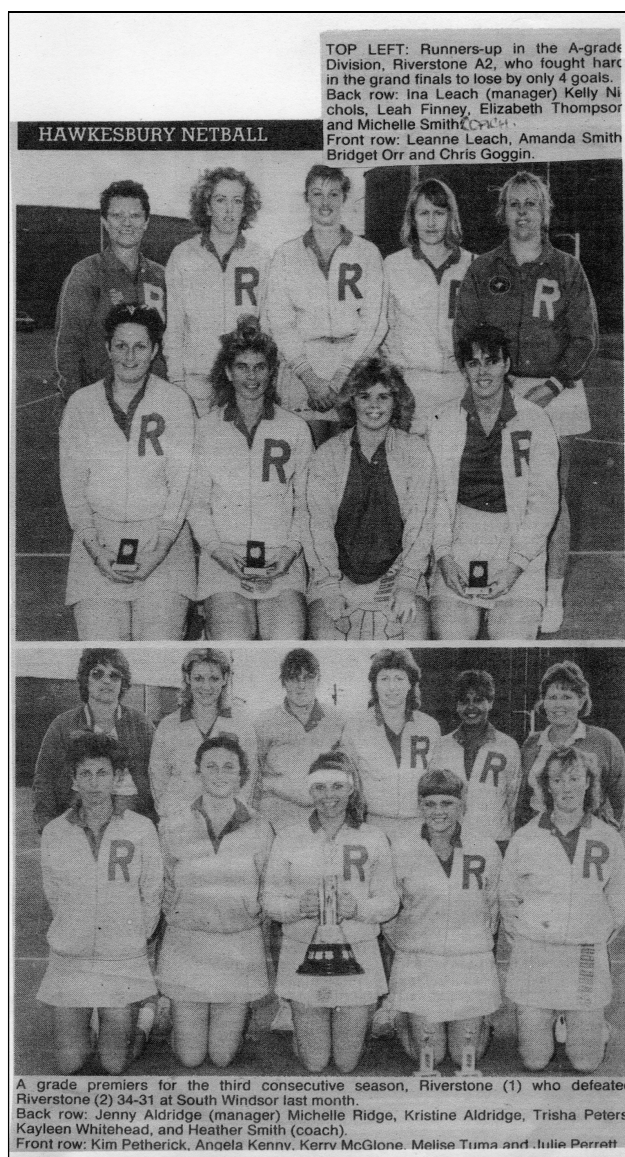
UMPIRES CONVENORS-SENIOR

1978-1981: SUE ORR
 1983: VIVIAN PARKES
 1984: MICHELE SMITH

UMPIRES CONVENORS-JUNIOR.

1978: SUSAN KILPATRICK
 1984: KERRY ROSS

HISTORIAN: KIM SIMONDS



1986 A1 and A2 Teams