



“Team of the Half Century”

Listed in alphabetical sequence

ANTHONY BROWN

- Matches Played: 323
- Premierships: 4 75 U/13s, 85 Seniors ‘B’ Grade, 92 Seniors ‘A’ Grade, 93 ‘A’ Reserves.
- EDFL B&F Winner: 1 1984 Seniors ‘B’ Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 2 1984 Seniors ‘B’ Grade, 1994 A Reserves.

Anthony had a distinguished career with Airport West, commencing as a junior in 1975. A superb tap ruckman and quality marking forward, “Brownny” was an excellent judge of where to run on the football field so as to find the ball, and then dispose to team advantage. He was also very accomplished near the goals, manoeuvring his frame to gain body position which more often than not resulted in marking the ball and then finishing off with accurate goal kicking.

RENNY DUCKETT

- Matches Played: 139 *as at end of 1975 season.*
- Premierships: 2 1965 U/15s, 1966 U/15s.
- APW B&F Winner: 2 1965 U/15s, 1972 Seniors ‘B’ Grade.

A strong and skilful footballer who played on both the ball & half back, Renny spent time at Carlton as one of Barassi’s brigade. Renny commenced with the club in 1964 and played in the inaugural under 15 premiers team in 1965, and following up in the “Killer Crew” under 15 premiers of ‘66. Also a member of the 1972 B grade runners up team, Renny had recorded 139 games with the club to the end of the 1975 season and was awarded life membership as a 10 year player in 1974. He was also the Vice-Captain of the Senior team in 71 & 72. No relation to teammate Trevor, the spelling of his first name caused constant confusion to club administrators over the years (e.g. Rennie, Renee, Renae as seen in various documents), possibly second only to the misspelling of the surname Garnar!

MARK DUNCAN

- Matches Played: 66

"Duncs" had a fine reputation throughout the EDFL as a hardened competitor and natural rover. When Airport West was promoted back to ‘A’ Grade in 1986, Duncs was immediately on-board to continue his stellar EDFL ‘A’

Grade career. During 1986 to 1988, he played some excellent football & showed great leadership skills. He finished in the Top 4 of the B&F in each of these 3 seasons. Duncs returned to the club in 1990 as Capt/Coach and gave his all, portraying the strong leadership skills that lead to his appointment.

ALAN DYKSTRA

- Matches Played: 250
- Premierships: 1 1976 A Reserves
- APW B&F Winner: 4 1969 U/15s, 1972 'B' Reserves, 1980 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1982 Seniors 'B' Grade.

Commencing in the Under 15's (1968), followed by a short stint with Essendon (1971); the 1976 first senior premiership, under Coach Tom Mackley; fighting alongside Murray Gercovic; bagging 14 goals in a reserves match; selection in EDFL teams (1979-81); Club Captain (1980) are just some of the playing highlights of 'tough but fair' key position defender, Alan Dykstra until an injury-forced retirement. His excellent service to the Club then continued in the roles of Reserves coach and Vice-President.

CAMERON EATON

- Matches Played: 211
- Premierships: 2 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 2 1995 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1999 Seniors 'A' Grade.

Cameron was an outstanding ruckmen & aerial specialist. With his long reach & tall frame, he was able to grab many a mark and was also a good user of the ball. He moved well around the ground where he was always a marking option, and Big Cam certainly enjoyed playing close to the goal square! He dominated the ruck in the '93 A Grade flag, winning the Best-on-Ground medal.

MATHEW GATT

- Matches Played: 304
- Premierships: 3 1989 U/18s 'B' Grade, 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 1 1988 U/18s 'B' Grade.

Gatty was a tough-as-nails rover, loving the contest and prepared to get the hard ball at all costs. He never shirked any battle on the field – physical or verbal. Matt was a pivotal member of the on-ball brigade that went back-to-back in '92 & '93, forming a potent combination with big Cam Eaton.

ANGELO GENTILE

- Matches Played: 405 *as at end of 2010 season*
- Premierships: 2 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade
- APW B&F Winner: 8 6 x Seniors (1991 96 97 2001 04 05), 2 x Juniors (85 U/14s, 87 U/16s)

Angelo's APW Seniors Grade debut was in 1988. Twenty four seasons later, he is still going strong in 2011. What a champion of the game & club. In his prime, Ange was a dynamic midfielder who was dangerous & electric whether

positioned in the middle, wing or half forward. His fitness, disposal & footy smarts were a potent combination that often left opposition players in his wake and APW in front on the scoreboard. A true Airport West legend!

DARREN HENNEKEN

- Matches Played: 215
- Premierships: 2 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.

"Chooka" was a tall marking forward who held down the Centre Half Forward position during the late '80s – early '90s. The big fella led well & played in front, always providing a marking option for team-mates upfield. Importantly, Chooka was a finals player – rising to the occasion on the big stage & getting the job done. His leadership qualities were recognised by Coach Des English and Chooka's appointment as Captain ultimately saw him having the honour & glory of holding the A Grade premiership cup aloft in the golden era that was seasons '92 & '93.

CRAIG JONES

- Matches Played: 316
- Premierships: 3 1989 U/18s 'B' Grade, 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- EDFL B&F Winner: 2 1981 U/9s, 1989 U/18s 'B' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 3 1981 U/9s, 1988 U/16s, 1989 U/18s 'B' Grade.

Craig came straight out of the typical Airport West backman's mould – tough & rugged with no compromise. But Fluffy's hardness was matched with quality skills & a fierce determination to win the ball at all costs, and ensure team success. He hated to lose! His outstanding junior career translated into an equally impressive senior career culminating in the '92 & '93 A Grade premierships.

RUSSELL JONES

- Matches Played: 287
- Premierships: 2 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- EDFL B&F Winner: 2 1988 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 7 3 x Seniors 'A' Grade (1992 – 1994), 4 x Juniors ('77, '79, '84, '85).

Russell was a star. He played in the ruck and ruck-rover positions. An old-fashioned follower in the sense that he played all over the ground and marked anything in his general vicinity with those vice-like-grip pair of hands of his. Russ was not the tallest of ruckmen, far from it, but with his fierce determination that drove him to succeed, along with his ability to control a game, it was no coincidence that when Russell was playing at the peak of his abilities, Airport West was also dominating Senior 'A' Grade. Arguably Airport West's finest?

GARY KIRK

- Matches Played: 269
- Premierships: 2 1985 Seniors 'B' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.

- APW B&F Winner: 3 U/11s 1976, U/18s 1982-1983.

Gary was a play-maker of the highest order. An elusive wingman, his dashing runs and long kicking were matched for excitement by his aerial attempts. Yet another great APW player to use his left side to maximum effect, Kirky had good goal sense, yet easily converted into a dashing backman. He wore the #7 jumper with pride and was a very popular team-mate with his laid-back approach to footy & life.

WAYNE KIRK

- Matches Played: 415
- Premierships: 3 1985 Seniors 'B' Grade, 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 3 1979 'A' Reserves, 1988 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1998 'A' Reserves.

"George" was a silky smooth half forward flanker, come on-baller, with strengths in the both the air and at ground level. His combination of speed & elusiveness, and an ever-trusted left foot, caused havoc to opposition backmen throughout the 80s & 90s. Kirky's longevity at the top level was testament to his desire to play quality football and love of the club. As George would often say, "you can't beat ability" (and Wayne, you had plenty)!

DARREN LAMBERT

- Matches Played: 386
- Premierships: 2 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- EDFL B&F Winner: 1 1990 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 4 1976 U/9s, 1978 U/11s, 1980 U/13s, 1989 Seniors 'A' Grade.

"Chops" was a dominant player of his era. A classic centreman who regularly extracted the pill from stoppages, he led by his actions showing a fearless desire to hunt, gather & dispose of the football. Darren loved the big stage & performed superbly in the famous '92 & '93 premierships final series.

STEWART LAXTON

- Matches Played: 119
- APW B&F Winner: 2 1974 & 1979 Seniors 'A' Grade.

Stewy arrived from North Melbourne U/19s to Airport West in 1973. He was a genuinely classy but workman like ruckman for his time. He had a lot of ability, strong mark, read the game well, good work ethic and generally busted his gut around the ground. He was also a great tap ruckman forming a formidable combination with small men Thomas, Mitchell & Quinton. The team overall played with more confidence when Stewy was in the 18. There weren't too many, if any, as good as him in the comp when he was playing well. And his 3rd in the EDFL 'A' Grade B&F (1974) is proof of that.

CRAIG MACKLEY

- Matches Played: 220

- Premierships: 2 1980 U/17A's, 1985 Seniors 'B' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 2 1983 Seniors 'B' Grade, 1985 Seniors 'B' Grade.

Craig (aka 'Knackers') was promoted along with many boys of that era from the junior ranks of the APW football club. Craig, in senior football, had the uncanny ability to be where the ball was. He played a vast majority of his career in the midfield and just kept on racking up the possessions. Craig was an integral reason why APW won the 1985 premiership and subsequent promotion into 'A' grade. Knackers deservedly won 2 senior best & fairests and will be long remembered for his 'colourful banter' directed towards opposition players. Craig finished his senior career with APW in 1986. Craig returned shortly afterwards to coach the A reserves and to assist in the 'sidelines' of playing coaches and has been an avid supporter since.

STEPHEN McEWEN

- Matches Played: 291
- Premierships: 4 1975 U/13s, 1985 Seniors 'B' Grade, 1992 & 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.

"Big Mac" was a great player. From humble beginnings as a skinny APW junior back in '72, he ultimately developed into an elite backman; his reliability to beat an opponent and do his job week in week out was legendary. A coaches' dream! In the twilight of his career, Steve was able to produce some of his finest footy to be a key member of the '92 & '93 back-to-back 'A' Grade flags.

RICKY McVEIGH

- Matches Played: 225 *as at end of 2010 season.*
- Premierships: 2 2002 U/16s, 2004 U/18s.
- APW B&F Winner: 4 1996 U/10s, 1998 U/12s, 2003 U/18s, 2008 Senior 'B' Grade.

Ricky started playing in our U/10s in season 1995 and has travelled through the junior ranks to now be a fine senior player. He was bestowed with the club's senior captaincy at the ripe old age of 20. This typifies the leadership and respect Ricky has earned from his peers. Ricky has overcome many serious injuries proving his courage and commitment. Rick's greatest attributes are his ability to run all day, strength at winning a contested ball and his overhead marking. Rick continues to this day to lead the club in his 5th year of captaincy.

MARCUS PAPPA

- Matches Played: 300 *as at June 2011*
- APW B&F Winner: 3 1990 U/14s, 1994 U/18s, 2003 Seniors 'A' Grade.

Pap, as he is more commonly known, began his APW career in 1990 and before the decade was out, was a regular player in the A Grade team. Marcus epitomizes that 'great things come in small packages. His lack of height is more than compensated by his explosive speed, power and leap. Marcus has a great pair of hands and an even more deadly shot at goal. Paps freakish skills have made him an opposition's nightmare to match up on.

JOE PEZZAMENTI

- Matches Played: 133

'Pezza' came to the APW football club from rival Tullamarine in 1995. Joe came with a reputation of a hard-nosed, straight-at-it style of player. This was evident immediately. Pezza had more than that though, Joe had superb foot skills and knew how to win his own ball. He quickly migrated from the backline to be a front line midfielder. Consistency was always what you expected and got from Pezza. Joe finished 4th in the 1995 B&F count, and 3rd in 1997.

RAY PHAIR

- Matches Played: 317
- EDFL B&F Winner: 1 1966 Seniors 'C' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 2 1966 Seniors 'C' Grade, 1967 Seniors 'B' Grade.

Following brother, John, and his mate Gordon Baker, Ray began his playing career in borrowed boots in 1964, and 300+ games later, during which time he was awarded a best and fairest in EDFL (1966), as well as numerous Club awards, completed a journey in which he provided an 'honest down-to-earth' guidance to many over 20 years. Always leading by example, Ray was seen as a son by some and as an older brother by others. He played mainly in the ruck or as a ruck rover before moving to defence in the latter stages of a fine APW career.

JOHN RAYNOR

- Matches Played: 89
- APW B&F Winner: 1 1990 Seniors 'A' Grade.

John oozed class! A very skilful player on both sides of the body, John commenced his career with Airport West in 1987, playing through to 1991. During this period, "JR" developed from a fine half forward flanker into a superb ruck rover, capable of navigating his way through heavy traffic and delivering pin-point passes. He certainly added quality & skill to the 'A' Grade team of the time.

GARY THOMAS

- Matches Played: 220 *estimate*
- Premierships: 1 1965 U/15s
- EDFL B&F Winner: 3 1970-71 Seniors 'B' Grade, 1978 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 5 1964 U/15s, 1967 U/17s, 3 x Seniors (1971, 1973, 1978).

Described by some as one of the all-time EDFL greats, "Thommy" was a hardened competitor with pace & skill to match. He had the ability to find his own ball & deliver it with accuracy. There is certainly no doubt that Gary is Airport West royalty with his superb career including Captaining & Coaching the club and instilling a winning culture and belief that A Grade football is where this club wants to play. Thanks Gary.

JOE TORNESE

- Matches Played: 215
- Premierships: 2 1992 Seniors 'A' Grade, 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.

Joe was a dynamic full forward; a spectacular mark, strong on the lead, and an accurate & long kick. He had the package that saw teammates constantly looking to feed him, and supporters loving watching him play. In the mid 80's – early 90's golden era, Joe was the focal point of the APW forward line and he did not disappoint. Season 1986 saw Joey boot 94 Senior 'A' Grade goals, though his century season (115 to be exact) in U/18s 1984 remains a sensational "PB". He was a goal kicking machine!

STEPHEN WILSON

- Matches Played: 233
- Premierships: 4 1980 U/17A, 1985 Seniors 'B' Grade, 1992 & 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.
- APW B&F Winner: 1 1987 Seniors 'A' Grade.

The Wilson name was probably the most feared named in the EDFL during the '80s. Steve formed this fearsome combination with brother Andy by playing straight-line, no nonsense football that sent a message to all opposition that if you get in my way, you will be hurt. And he did hurt quite a few! But make no mistake, Willo's toughness was not his only weapon; he developed his game & added strings to his bow, becoming a fine playmaker for the Eagles, as proven by his club B&F win in '87. Oh, and 8 goals in the winning 1980 U/17 Grand Final was a pretty handy effort as well!

DES ENGLISH (COACH)

- Coach: 1991 - 1993
- Premierships: 2 1992 & 1993 Seniors 'A' Grade.

Des was just what we needed. A team chock full of talent when he arrived in 1991, Des got us fit & playing as a unit. He demanded hard work on the track & he got it. He turned potential into reality, delivering the ultimate prize in his 2nd season in charge. And when all seemed lost in 1993 (pumped by 20 goals by East Keilor a few weeks prior to finals), he got us back into winning form and we peaked at the right time. Des English; a legend at Carlton, and a legend at Airport West.