

‘FOOTBALL CLUB TACKLES THE BIG ISSUES’ A STORY ABOUT RIKKI JOHNSTON

Reference: 2021/12



INTRODUCTION

As the players at DFNC are aware, Rikki Johnston was a football coach who ‘made a difference’ to their lives. Rikki was not only diligent in fulfilling his coaching duties but his influence extended well beyond the playing field.

Very few people, from ‘outside’ the club, had any appreciation of the impact that Rikki made upon his playing group. He was, in many ways, the personification of the ‘power of one’ in local sport.



‘The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards set for themselves.’

Rikki’s involvement, on an individual basis with players, was impressive; and his interaction with other coaches was always candid. Most of all, his positive nature was instrumental in helping young footballers reach the ‘next level’ in their football career(s).

There was 'a lot' to Rikki Johnston's style of coaching but three things were fundamental in bringing success to DFNC:

- (i) His dedication to the task and the example he set to players. His adage 'What you walk past you accept' in regard to caring for the club's facilities was a powerful message in creating the correct mindset in players at the club.
- (ii) His value system; and the way he took time to say hello and chat with members and supporters. Rikki's notion of what a club 'could and should be' for young and old alike was unique.
- (iii) His concern for the welfare of players; and, in all his years at Dromana as a skipper and /or club coach, was he never known to belittle or denigrate a player, official or member. It was the essence of building strong bonds and trust.



Rikki Johnston - Leadership by example.

The following story entitled, '**Football Club Tackles the Big Issue**', was written by Kate Sears for the 'Mornington Peninsula Magazine' in October 2019. It is reprinted below for those members who have not read the article.

**'FOOTBALL CLUB TACKLES THE BIG ISSUES'
AS PUBLISHED IN
THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA MAGAZINE
WRITTEN BY KATE SEARS PUBLISHED ON 27th OCTOBER 2019**

" Rikki Johnston takes his coaching to another level at Dromana Football and Netball Club. Using his position to help young people means everything to him as he highlights such important issues as mental health, suicide prevention, respect for women, and education. Ultimately, he inspires young adults to become leaders in his community.

The senior team includes players aged 17-40 and Rikki, who has been involved in the club for more than 17 years, has coached them for the past four. After retiring as a player/coach this year, his attention turned towards using the club's position in the community to address matters that affect the community as a whole as well as his players.

"We've created forums for the guys to deal with different types of issues, including depression, bipolar, and various other health issues," Rikki said. "We've set it up in a way that they're comfortable to talk to the coaches or other players if they have any questions or issues. It especially gives the younger players confidence that they can speak up; they feel like they can talk to the coaches, players and mentors.

"When I started in football, no one spoke about it (men's health). It was taboo. It's done a full 180 since I was playing. The guys in the group know who is struggling and they'll put up their hands to support them. It's a sign of strength to the other members when everyone pitches in. We aren't just playing footy; we are setting up a community environment."

The coaches have also put mentors in place to structure their leadership group and look after the young players transitioning into the senior team. "Our mentors drive the standard of the footy club. They map out the rules and standards. They are solid guys and excellent mentors."

Rikki is about to embark on a new challenge — an indefinite trip around Australia with his wife, Elizabeth, their three young children and another on the way. "We've got a rough idea of where we want to go; we'll see how we go timeframe-wise. If it's too hard with the four kids, we'll just aim to travel for a few months; if we love it, we'll keep going. We've done a few big holidays before. Last Christmas we went to the North Pole. Our daughter tells people we went there and no one believes her. They just laugh!"



2017

Kevin Sheedy with Jason Davenport (Geelong Football Netball League) and Rikki Johnston photographed at the MCG. Jason and Rikki led their respective teams in the 2017 interleague series of games. Source: 'Herald Sun' Newspaper May 9th 2017.



2019

The Finale. Rikki Johnston's last game for Dromana. A memorable and historic victory in the 2019 MPNFL Grand Final. What a way to leave the stage after 246 senior games with DFNC.



2021

Rikki , seen above speaking at the tribute night, which was held in his honour, in March 2021. Rikki took another important step, in his coaching career, when he joined the coaching staff of the Frankston Dolphins (VFL) in 2021.

REFERENCE & RESEARCH INFORMATION

Sources: 'Mornington Peninsula Magazine' October 2019.

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