

1973 50 YEARS AGO 'DOWN BUT NOT OUT'

Reference: 2023/20



**'GREAT WORKS ARE NOT PERFORMED
BY STRENGTH BUT BY PERSERVERANCE'**

INTRODUCTION -50 YEARS AGO

This article tries to throw some light on the events of the 1973 season and to also acknowledge the vital role that Peter Oakes played in rebuilding a 'splintered' football club. Although Dromana had won the Nepean FL premiership in 1971, the following decade was problematic and a barren period for the club.

As is well known in DFC's history, Jack Booker stepped down as the coach at the end of 1972 after a most successful two-year stint. Jack will be remembered for his tireless resolve to lift the club to new heights...

"Jack was a 'man on a mission' in 1971. He was earnest, forthright, organized, knowledgeable and, above all, single-minded in taking his team to the 'top of the table.' Jack set new standards for all listed players; and the 1971 pennant again exemplified the 'power of one' in lifting the sights of others." Source: DFNC History files. Reference: 2021/17

AN EXODUS FROM PIER STREET

While it was the 'parting of the ways' for Jack Booker in 1973, there was also a departure of players from Dromana FC to other clubs. Theories abound but a plausible explanation, regarding the exodus of so many talented players, has never been given. However, it is not unfair to suggest that the events of 1973 had a deleterious impact on the club's success for some time in that era.

THE ARRIVAL OF PETER OAKES AT PIER STREET



Peter Oakes – Coached the club in 1973 and 1974.

The appointment Peter Oakes as coach in 1973 was an astute move by the DFC committee. However Peter, a former player with Collingwood Under: 19's and a prominent player with Warragul, must have been crestfallen when he examined the list of clearances/ departures of experienced players from Dromana FC that year.

Peter must have wondered what he had 'walked into' at Pier Street in 1973; and he had every right to be disconcerted by the situation which confronted him...

"It is recorded, in one reliable text, that sixteen members of the 1971 premiership team had decamped from Dromana leaving the playing stocks thin; or as Mrs. Hubbard had once discovered: ...the cupboard was bare." Source: DFNC Reference; 2018/16

Peter may have been disappointed but certainly not daunted; and he 'rolled up his sleeves' and set about to rebuild the club. He not only took on the role of Senior XVIII coach with gusto but also coached the Dromana Thirds that season. Peter Oakes' selfless struggle to reconstruct the club in 1973 did not go unnoticed by local supporters; and his name is still held in the highest regard at Pier Street.

As time would prove, Peter went on to become one of the best known players in Victorian country/ suburban football and, in all, played 459 games of football. As stated in the 'Pakenham Gazette' in December 2019...

"Peter Oakes forged a lifetime in sport throughout the south-east and into Gippsland..."

THE 1973 PLAYER LIST

The following list is of those players who played at least one Senior XVIII Grade game for DFNC in 1973. The number of games played that season is shown in brackets:

P.Oakes (18 games), G. Evans (18), R. Bailey (18), S.Jolley (12), R.Kerr (12) D. Williams (11), G. Fyson (11), R. Aitkens (11), R. Work (10), D. Ferguson (10), E.Tschappeller (9), I. Kirby (8), J. Hunter (7), R. Wall (7), E.Valena (7), G. Gourlay (7) R. Wilson (6), R. Fyson (6), G.Venning (5), R. Tonge (5), D. Cameron (4), A.

Thompson (4), J. Hogan (4), K. Lyons (3), P. Brewer (3), R. Taylor (2) and D. Gourlay played one senior game in 1973.

GARRY EVANS - A WANDERING STAR

While the departures from DFNC in 1973 were unfortunate, the arrival of Garry Evans would prove to be a masterstroke in recruiting. From his debut with the club, Garry proved to be an asset of immeasurable worth. Not only did he provide wonderful assistance to Peter Oakes but the shining example he set to the younger players of the club was praiseworthy. Garry played 90 games (in two stints) with Dromana FC and was appointed club coach in 1984. Gary was selected in the DFNC Team of the Decade 1946-2015...

“ Garry Evans was one of the real ‘journeymen’ of suburban and country football; and it is known that he played 536 games of senior grade football and also represented the QFL in interstate football. Garry gained prominence in metropolitan junior football; and was lured to Hawthorn Under: 19’s from Ferntree Gully FC in 1968. So began a long and meritorious journey of playing football in VFL Third XVIII’s, Gippsland, Central Victoria, Queensland and the Mornington Peninsula that lasted more than 20 seasons”



Garry Evans was one of the truly greats players in Victorian country football.

1. Garry Evans played 90 games with Dromana and also coached the club in 1984. As an indication of the impact he made at Pier Street, Garry was chosen as Captain of the Team of Decade (1976-1985); and was also a member of the DFNC Team of Era (1946-2015).
2. Those who saw Garry Evans, in action at Dromana, will never forget his uncompromising attack on the ball, strong overhead marking, powerful kicking and, most of all, his willingness to take on ‘all-comers.’
3. In all, Garry played 271 games of MPNFL football; and was one the best country footballers of his generation.
4. Garry Evans was one of the real ‘journeymen’ of suburban and country football; and it is known that he played 536 games of senior grade football and also represented the QFL in interstate football.

5. Garry gained prominence in metropolitan junior football; and was lured to Hawthorn Under: 19's from Ferntree Gully FC in 1968. So began a long and eventful journey of playing football in VFL Third XVIII's, Gippsland, Central Victoria, Queensland and the Mornington Peninsula that lasted more than twenty seasons.
6. Garry's name was well known in VCFL football circles; and with such status as a key defender or forward, there was never any shortage of clubs seeking his signature. In 1973, Dromana's coach Peter Oakes encouraged Garry to join the 'Hoppers'.
7. Garry was coaxed to Rosebud in 1975; and then he moved on to Rye FC before heading to North to play with Wycheproof FC for four seasons. During his stint with Wycheproof FC, he was runner-up in the North Central Football League's Best and Fairest voting (known as the Keith Chalmers award).
8. In 1982. Garry was a 'man on the move' and he packed his bags and left Wycheproof; and he arrived back in Dromana FC in 1983. John Aldridge (ex-VFA) was the coach in 1983; and Dromana performed creditably and played in the final series that season. John was a forceful and inspiring on-field leader but, for reasons best known to only a few, he coached DFC for just one season and returned to the city.
9. Consequently, Garry Evans was appointed coach in 1984; and although the club achieved success under his leadership 1983-84, it is generally agreed that a real chance to win a flag 'went begging' in those two seasons.
10. The following year, Garry Evans played 15 games with DFC in 1985; and attained his 50th game milestone with the club.
11. However, once again, driven by a strong wanderlust, he applied for a clearance to Rosebud FC at the end of the season. Garry sustained his individualistic brand of direct and 'no-nonsense' football at Olympic Oval.
12. In 1988, Gary, at the age of 41, steered Sorrento in the MPNFL Second Division First-Semi Final against Carrum; and, in a game where both sides went 'toe-to-toe' for four fierce quarters, the match ended in a thrilling tie. In the ensuing replay, Sorrento was victorious; only to be knocked out of the 'finals race' the following Saturday by YCW in the Preliminary Final by 31 points. Garry Evans kicked two of Sorrento's ten goals that day.
13. Garry was appointed Senior XVIII Coach of Sorrento again in 1989; and celebrated his 42nd birthday that year. Sorrento reached the 'final four' once more but stumbled at the 'first hurdle.'

Garry Evans died on July 1st 2021 at the Gympie Hospital in Queensland. He was aged 74 years

SOME OF THE PLAYERS OF 1973

STEPHEN JOLLEY was the best ruckman/ forward in local football during that era. Stephen, who played two senior AFL games with Hawthorn, made his AFL debut in Round: 13 against Melbourne at the Glenferrie Oval in 1970.

On the day that Stephen Jolley played his first AFL match, the Hawthorn team included such household names as: Peter Hudson, Leigh Matthews, David Parkin, Leon Rice and Alan Martello.

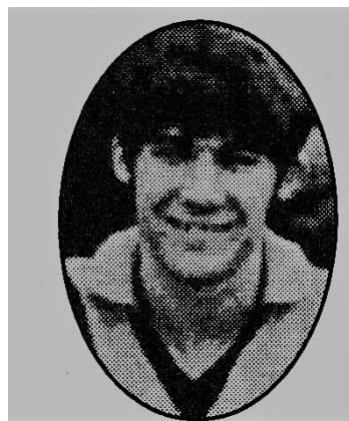
The coach of the HFC was John Kennedy. Hawthorn won by 39 points; and it is recorded that Stephen had 5 kicks and 2 marks that day.

On Stephen's return to DFC he became a lynch-pin in Peter Oakes' attempts to revive the club. Stephen Jolley played 93 games with DFC and won two Best and Fairest trophies (1968 & 69). He was also selected at centre-half forward in the Team of the Post War Era (1946-2015).



Stephen Jolley

RAY FYSON, one the finest rovers in club's history, won three club Best and Fairest awards (67-68-81). He played 208 senior games, was a member of the 1971 premiership team and was selected in the Team of the Post War era (1946 -2015). His brother, Glenn, won the club's Best and Fairest award in the premiership season.



Ray Fyson

One of the youngest players that season was **ROSS BAILEY**. Ross 'won his spurs' as a budding junior player and went on to become one of the finest midfielders in the club's history. Ross had exceptional skill, 'pace to burn' and did his best work in 'heavy traffic.' Ross amassed 108 senior games; and it came as no surprise that he was selected in the centre for the 'Team of the Decade 1976-1985.'

JOHN HOGAN, named in the forward pocket for Dromana that day, played only two seasons with Dromana (1973-74). He was highly regarded in local football; and in 1974 John won the club's Best & Fairest award. John was selected in the 'Team of the Decade' (1966-75).

DAVE WILLIAMS was a tenacious midfielder in Peninsula football. Dave was gifted with speed and always exerted a 'physical presence' on the field. He served DFC from 1962- 1979; and, in all, played 115 senior games with DFC and won the Club's Best & Fairest award in 1972. Dave was named on the interchange bench in the Team of the Post War Era (1946-2015). Dave's son Tony (105 senior games) and grandsons Jai, Kai, Tyle and Cade also played with Dromana.



Dave Williams



Doug Ferguson

It should also be noted that Rod Kerr (103 games), Robert Work (78 games), Doug Ferguson (17 games), and Phil Marriot (72 games) were other players from the 1971 list that returned to play for DFNC in 1973.

A MEMORABLE VICTORY IN 1973

In 1973, Dromana struggled valiantly to be competitive in the Nepean Football League and wins were 'few and far between.' In eighteen home and away fixtures, the club only enjoyed victory on three occasions.

However, one memorable win was against Somerville; and although the team list is unattainable and match details are very sketchy, a possible line-up for that game may have been:

B:	Phil Hogan	Robert Atkins	Robert Tonge
HB:	Doc Cameron	Rod Kerr	Pat Brewer
C:	Phil Marriot	Dave Williams	Robert Work
HF:	E. Tschappelir	Doug Ferguson	Ross Bailey
F:	Glenn Fyson	Ron Wilson	John Hogan
R:	Stephen Jolley	Peter Oakes	Ray Fyson.

As is often the case of teams faltering at the bottom of the ladder, newspapers match reviews were brief (and sometimes not submitted); and, sadly (for history's sake), many aspects of that important victory were overlooked. However, it is known that the final scores that day were:

Dromana: 15.17. (107) defeated Somerville: 12.14 (86).

Goal kickers for Dromana: Steve Jolley 3 Ron Work 2 Glen Fyson 2 Ross Bailey 2 E. Tschappelir 2 Doug Ferguson Peter Oakes Ron Wilson and Rob Kerr.

PETER OAKES WINS THE JOHN COLEMAN SHIELD

In 1973, Peter Oakes won the club's Best and Fairest award. It was an historic achievement as the trophy was named that season in honour of the Essendon's legendary forward John Coleman who had died on the 5th April in 1973.

The trophy (a shield as shown below) was entitled the 'John Coleman Memorial Trophy'; and it must have been a memorable moment for Peter Oakes when he was declared to be the first-ever recipient of the prestigious award.



Peter Oakes accepts the John Coleman Shield in 1973. In this photo, Peter is seen receiving the shield from former Essendon fullback Greg Brown. Greg played 83 games for Essendon.

NOTE: Peter is the nephew of the legendary DFNC figure Eric Oakes. In 1975, Peter was appointed the coach of Chelsea Heights FC. In 1980, following the stint at CHFC, he took on the coaching job at Bena FC (now known as Korumburra-Bena FNC Giants) until the end of the 1982 season. In all, Peter played some 459 games of senior football until his 'swan song' at the age of 39 years. It was an incredible career and an indication of Peter's resilience and dedication.

THE DEATH OF JOHN COLEMAN AT DROMANA IN 1973



John Coleman dead

John Douglas Coleman, one of the leading Australian rules players of the 1950s, died at his Dromana hotel on Thursday, aged 44.

Coleman was the leading Victorian Football League goalkicker in 1949, 1950, 1952 and 1953, and was the first league player to kick 100 goals in his first year of VFL football.

Coleman graduated to VFL after playing for Hastings, a fishing town

on Westernport Bay. He kicked 136 goals for the club in 1947 and 160 goals in 1948 — including 23 in one game — before moving to Melbourne.

In his first VFL match he kicked 12 goals to equal the VFL record for an opening round.

Coleman later became the coach of Essendon, taking it to the premiership in 1962 and 1965.

He leaves a widow and two daughters.

Above left: The iconic photo of John Coleman marking over North Melbourne's champion defender Vic Lawrence at Arden Street in 1953. Right hand side insert: The town of Dromana was in the national news in April 1973 when John Coleman died at the Dromana Hotel. John was just 44 years of age when he died. He was arguably the finest full forward of that era; and in 1996 was named in the AFL/ VFL team of the Century.



The funeral procession of John Coleman in 1973. A section of the massive crowd that gathered to farewell 'their hero.' Source: AFL files.

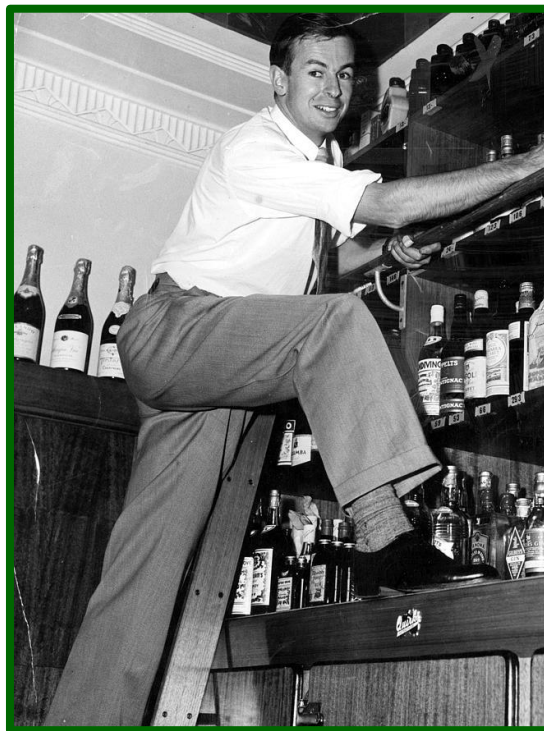
The DFNC's association with John Coleman was brought about when John was the Licensee of the Dromana Hotel following his retirement from VFL football. It is known that, during his years in the township, John Coleman was an enthusiastic supporter of the Dromana Football Club.

Hopefully, the following facts may assist our younger readers to gauge what a genuine superstar of the game John Coleman was until cruel injury brought his career to an abrupt end.

- John was recruited to Essendon from Hastings FC; and in his first AFL match against Hawthorn he booted 12 goals. In that season, the 'rookie from Hastings' booted 100 goals.
- John became the most celebrated footballer in Australia until cruel injury cut him down. John's spectacular career came to a painful end when he dislocated his right knee on June 5th in 1954 (against North Melbourne) his career in AFL football was over.
- John played 98 games and kicked 537 goals at a phenomenal average of 5.47 goals per game.
- The most goals John kicked in a game was 14 in the match against Fitzroy in May 1954 at Windy Hill. He also kicked 13 goals in a match on two occasions in 1952 (Geelong in Round: 8 and Hawthorn in Round: 18). That season, John booted 103 goals.
- Following his forced retirement from playing, John later coached Essendon from 1961-67.
- As EFC coach in 133 games, John achieved a win-loss ratio of 68.80%; and he guided Essendon to two premierships in 1962 and 1965.

- John Coleman died on April 5th 1973 at the age of 44 years. He was at the Dromana Hotel when tragedy struck; and it is documented that John died of coronary thrombosis (i.e. heart attack).

An excellent reference regarding the life of John Coleman entitled 'The Great John Coleman' was published by Nivar Press in 1997. Victor Jeremiah, the official historian of Hastings Football Club, is a co-author of the book.



'Top Shelf' champion – A photograph of John Coleman seen at work as a publican. Source: 'Time Gents' website.

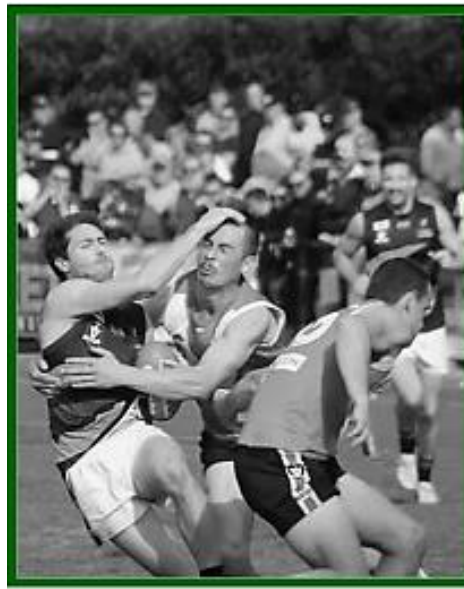
OTHER NOTES FROM 1973

- In 1973, Eric Oakes was the club President. Eric took on the presidency in 1961 and served in that capacity until 1985.
- Eric was awarded Life Membership in 1969 and Alice Oakes became a Life Member in 1984. Their daughter (Christine Hunter) was awarded DFNC Life Membership in 2004.
- Richard Fyson was the club's Secretary in 1973. The Fyson family played a most active part in the DFNC in that era. Ray's brother Glenn (as mentioned above) played 69 senior XVIII games at Pier Street.
- DFC Life Membership was awarded to Jack Cornish.
- Steve Jolley won the club's goal kicking award in 1973 with 42 goals. He also won the award in 1969 (44 goals) and again in 1974 with 25 goals.
- Youngster Ross Bailey made his Senior XVIII debut in 1973 (see above).
- Jim Hunter made his Senior XVIII debut in 1973. Jim is the son of Ron (Senior) and brother of Ron who are both Life Members of DFNC. Jim's eldest son, Adam, was granted Player Life Membership of DFNC in 2016. Jim's nephew, Michael, received DFNC Life Membership in 2017.
- David Gourlay (88 Senior XVIII games) played his last senior game in 1973. Graeme Gourlay (66 Senior XVIII game) also played his last senior game in 1973.

- In the Nepean FL Grand Final, Crib Point defeated the Navy by three points to win the 1973 NFL flag.



THE IMPENDING RETIREMENT OF TERRY WHEELER- A CHAMPION OF PIER STREET



Terry Wheeler, who arrived from Sale in 2011 and ‘stayed and played’ for 13 years, will bring his ‘on-field days’ to an end this season. In a magnificent career in the MPNFL, Terry will always be remembered for his skill, courage, humility and definitive leadership.

At the time of preparing this article (August 11th) it has been announced that DFNC champion Terry Wheeler has decided to retire from football at the end of the current season.

As has often been written on this website that Terry is one of the true champions of Pier Street; and his achievements in MPNFL football are nothing short of remarkable. In 2011, Ron Barassi wrote...*‘Consistency of performance is the factor that separates true champions from ‘merely’ elite players.’* There would be no argument from local supporters that Terry measures up to Ron’s definition of the word ‘champion.’

Terry was granted DFNC Life Membership in 2022; and as at Round: 16, 2023, Terry had played 189 Senior XVIII Games and booted 146 goals. Terry is a revered member of the club who has led by example and his lion-hearted style of play has been an inspiration to others.

With the club clearly focused on finals action (i.e. at this stage of the season) it seems best that a tribute to Terry’s stellar career should be held over until a later date; and, hopefully, his imposing resume may include another accomplishment for season 2023. So for the time being, congratulations are in order for Terry’s outstanding service and dedicated leadership of the club.

Furthermore, thanks to Terry for his assistance in compiling our club history; and, of course, no one will ever forget his pivotal role in building and strengthening DFNC. Thanks champ!

REFERENCE & RESEARCH INFORMATION:

Sources: DFNC Records -DFNC Handbook-Personal files- AFL photographs- AFL archives- NLA -'Canberra Times' -MPNFL files-Essendon FC website- 'Wisdom' by Ron Barassi (2011)

Article reference: '50 Years ago- Season 1973-Peter Oakes, John Coleman & Terry Wheeler.' Reference: 2023/20

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