

THE SOUTH SYDNEY WOMENS ATHLETIC CLUB **and how it became SOUTH SYDNEY ATHLETICS**

Some 35 years ago I can recall a Women's Athletic Club called South Sydney.

At that time it had 16 girls and one boyfriend –

I can't recall a South's men's club, as the local senior club was Randwick Botany Harriers, the No 1 club in NSW.

There were 2 Athletic clubs in our area back then, the Harriers the leading men's club with a few women, and South's Women's club with a few men.

As little Athletics only went to U.12, I went looking for a senior club to direct our kids.

I was having a few disagreements with the Harriers, and was surprised to be approached by South's Women's Club to join them.

A good idea, and after a few years I became South's Secretary.

I immediately convinced the powerful South's Women's committee to Open registrations for men, women and children and wasn't it an immediate success.

Our numbers grew to over 120, 50 -60 LA 's - 16 women and 1 male athlete..

We entered teams in the lower D, E and F grades run by NSW athletics, and competed at Hensley Field, after the Little A's finished their morning activity.

South's didn't proceed without many problems – but that is another story.

But it did proceed, and for years, we won all the lower grades with our 50-60 little A's,

Many complaints, not from South's, that I wouldn't let the better kids compete at the senior competition at Marks field and I was holding them back, negating their improvement – well they were wrong – as Star juniors like AARON HUNT, COLIN WARD, MICHAEL AMANTE, RACHAEL DUNHAM, CASSANDRA CHAPMAN, ROBYN MCCARTHY, WENDY NIXON. PAUALA MURRAY to name but a few,

All went from Randwick Botany LA champions to South Sydney – NSW Junior champions.

Fair to say - we South Sydney athletics , were highly regarded as the leading Junior club in the State at that time.

As the years went along the numbers in our senior group improved and so did the results.

Who can forget State and National High jump champion Donna Robertson,

Clay Cross the 1st school boy to win a State Open Shot Put,

Alani Dilo – State and National placegetter at discus, both Clay and Alani represented Australia at World Juniors – Clay 3rd and Alani made the top 8.

Vika Lolo won the discus and placed 2nd in the shot representing Australia overseas.

How about impressive Juniors like Ivor Metcalf, Audrey Kyricou – Jessica Thornton, Natasha Fountas – Jessica went on to compete at the Olympics as did Lisa Paolini in the Race Walk, all proud South Sydney members.

Of course, there were many other prominent South's men and women members – but I know, it was the involvement of the Randwick Botany Centre and their parents, way back 30 years ago, who gave them the opportunity to supplement their athletic involvement by becoming South Sydney club members.

Don't we all know, that as you improve in all sports, you become noticed and recognised by others, who would like to be associated with you.

Our South Sydney Juniors experienced that and unfortunately, many accepted the invitation to continue with the sport at other clubs to the detriment of South Sydney Athletic club.

Tony Vecellio OAM - President RBLAC

Past secretary South Sydney Athletic Club for over 30 years

Now President South Sydney.