

## PLAYER ANECDOTES

### INTRODUCTION

In the life of any sporting club, the statistics only tell half the story. They don't show the many trials and tribulations, the fun, the hard work, the ups, the downs and most of all provide no insight at all into the camaraderie and friendships that bind a club together through the good times and the not-so-good times.

We have broadly divided Sturt Softball Club's first 50 years into three separate eras and asked players from those periods to relate anecdotes about many of the behind-the-scenes goings-on as they were experienced at the time.

Collectively, they provide a light-hearted insight into the fabric that has made Sturt Softball Club the great club that it is today:

**1964 to 1981 by LORRAINE (SKINNY) PIETRAFESA and ROSSLYN TREMBATH**



"Trem and Skin - we were members of the original "B" grade Rebels team, coached by Joan Hosking prior to 1964, this team subsequently moving on to form the Salients Softball Club, which in turn became the Sturt Softball Club in 1969. We both agree that training sessions were the highlight of our week. Every session was fun-filled and usually very eventful.

"Training sessions in the early days were held at West Beach - there was no main diamond or grandstand there during this era in the club's history and we accessed the "little green sheds" to store bases etc. and to use as a change room.

"Ros tells of the time she waited on Tapleys Hill Road for a ride to training at West Beach - the ride didn't come, so she walked from Trimmer Parade to training - how many players these days would be so committed? - we did mention that training WAS the highlight of our week. Fond memories of our then first base - Meriel Robinson and her fingernails - always in fear of breaking one! Mind you they were the longest real nails in Adelaide! Then there was the time Joan produced the broom stick - no not for us to ride, but for us to use as a bat to hit tennis balls - what was that all about!!! Obviously we were in a batting slump at the time????? In those very early days, there were no lights (to

speak of) at Barratt Reserve - therefore there was many an ending to a training session fielding fly balls in the semi-darkness.

"We were very fortunate one Saturday, when Maria kindly brought sandwiches for us for lunch - they were snail sandwiches, made for us lovingly by her Mother. Needless to say, these were not eaten by all team members - a couple of us "sampled" them before graciously returning them to Maria.

"During the early years with the Sturt Softball club, our fundraising consisted of bottle drives. A group of us would hop in a very old truck, to collect very grubby and dirty beer bottles from all types of locations. Maria borrowed the old truck from Mr Markwick - our beloved Maria, not being tall of stature, required assistance in driving this truck - one of us worked the pedals, whilst the other "crunched" the gears with Maria very capably steering - all the while the mechanical arm/indicator being operated manually by another person. We attracted the attention of many road users, of this we are certain - this was an all-day exercise to raise funds for the club. Scrap metal was also included in these "excursions" - toothpaste tubes, old batteries etc. were all part of the collectables.

The bottles we had organised to collect were not in pristine condition - most were behind sheds and fences, some embedded in mud and full of slugs and beer dregs. We would always finish the day back in Skin's Mum's kitchen, being welcomed by a huge tray of her hot scones, jam and whipped cream.

"All in all, the one thing which is THE highlight of those early years was the camaraderie developed among team mates and the friendships which will last forever."

**1982 to 2000 by MANDY and SHELLEY NELLER, SUE O'BRIEN (WADE) and DIONNE BIDDELL**



"As young teenagers starting out at a new softball club, we were lucky enough to be in the presence of some softball legends including Lorry Brown and Janne Stevens towards the end of an extremely successful era for the A grade side. The club was known at the time as the Sturt Blues and it was an exciting adventure to be able to play the sport we loved for such a great club.

"Lorry was the club's leader and spent many hours recruiting young players from the local primary schools

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and passing on her expertise to aspiring young pitchers. She was always prepared to go above and beyond, including attending players' homes to provide individual training!

"Memories of the 1980's include the special uniforms we wore ... all in navy blue and made of material which didn't stretch! It was not uncommon to hear the sound of player's pants splitting as they bent down to field a ground ball or slide into a base! As junior players we didn't wear helmets or mouthguards, hats were available but almost never worn and there were no shade tents or heat policies to ensure we remained "sun smart". The green shed (now demolished) played host to the most amazing feast any child could wish for as each club took turns with catering. Treats included homemade hot dogs and freshly baked cakes, slices and biscuits as well as iced cold cans of soft drink to quench a hard-earned softball thirst.

"The Club's presentation dinners were small and informal and were often held in Lorry's backyard, with only one trophy being awarded on the night to the most dedicated junior. During this era opposition clubs included Kensington, Woodville, West Adelaide, South Adelaide and Ingle Farm who have all since folded or merged to form new clubs.

"The 1990's saw a time of progression and change for the club with the introduction of major sponsors, a club name change and the increase in fundraising activities. The A grade side went through a rebuilding phase with the promotion of several young junior players and the recruitment of new coaches to the Club. The introduction of 8pm matches for A grade meant that we would spend an entire day at softball ... starting with juniors at 12 and finishing up with the A grade game at 8pm ... and loving every minute of it! Mid-week matches were also introduced for A grade ... playing the early timeslot meant having to leave work early to get to the ground in time for warm-up ... and with the late timeslot being at 9pm, we were very tired at work the next day!

"The first major sponsor of the club was Budget Car Rentals and they were given naming rights to the club ... so to avoid becoming the "Budget Blues" the committee gathered together and came up with the new name of "Falcons". To support our other major sponsors we



washed our hair with Davroe shampoo and conditioner and Hogs Breath Café became the regular and favourite venue for post-match dinners and celebrations! At this time (and most likely after a few quiet drinks at Hoggies), the infamous cry of "Falcons Fly High together" was born!!

"Fundraising events were plentiful and included car washes, cookie and pizza sales, film nights and sausage sizzles ... not all of them were a financial success, but lots of fun was had in the process! On Saturdays every player had to take their turn on the roster to either umpire, help out in the canteen or clean/maintain the grounds.

"Training became an adventure at Urrbrae High School oval where the ability to avoid the sheep droppings when fielding a ground ball became an essential skill set. Several other training grounds were utilised including Kingswood Oval, Waite Oval, Goodwood Baseball Club and Daws Road (Pasadena) High School.

"Over the decade the club, with the A grade taking the lead, developed a variety of uniform changes ... some of them being quite spectacular ... in particular the shiny light blue jacket worn by the A grade! In the 1999/2000 season the A grade side presented an innovative new uniform style which included a button up top and tailored shorts based on the Victorian state team shorts. In the 1999/2000 season, the young group of A grade players had developed and strengthened, so with our new uniform on display, we defeated premierships favourites West Torrens 4-2 to win our first A grade premiership in 15 years! It was a marvellous way to end the 20<sup>th</sup> Century ...

"What we all treasure most about our lives at Sturt Softball Club are the friendships we have made along the way, in particular those that began when we were young kids and have strengthened over time. So many memories have been made over the years ... the bond that we share with each other will never be broken."

**2001 to 2014 by BELINDA (BINDY) STANSFIELD**



"The past 14 years have seen some significant changes in the landscape of softball. When other clubs were struggling for numbers and folding, our club became even stronger. Not just in numbers but also in our culture.

"Having relied on very significant contributions from life members such as Lorry, Mandy, Shelley, Tara, Dick and Anna it was now time to pass the baton to some of the younger Falcons. Although all of those people are still involved in the club, their mentoring was to be instrumental in the next chapter of the Sturt Softball Club.

"Off the back of the 2000 Premiership, at the age of 19 I felt it was the right time for me to start giving something back





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to the club because collectively those people had helped me to develop into the player and person I had become, so in the following season Michelle Ridge and I started coaching juniors. That step seemed to motivate a new wave of young and enthusiastic coaches and volunteers that would evolve into what became the foundation of the club for the next 14 years.

"Over the years I have coached a large number of juniors and have found that role to be just as rewarding as being out on the diamond myself - it seemed to be my 'calling', or what I was meant to do in sport i.e. coaching and mentoring developing young players through a very important part of their lives. I didn't encourage elitism, instead helping them to be the best person they could be both on and off the diamond, even if they only played softball for one season or continued on for their entire sporting lives.

"Our next premiership came in 2001/2002 against West Torrens in a nail biting 1-0 final with Shelley Neller retiring as Captain and it was great to see in the crowd so many of the enthusiastic juniors I had coached enjoying the winning feeling - no doubt hoping that one day they would be part of a Sturt Premiership. Their wait was to be only two years and in 2003/2004 I was privileged to be the Captain when we defeated West Torrens 4-1 - our form was at its best again and it was a great feeling to enjoy a very successful season. However, in spite of our good form, it was to be another ten years before we again tasted premiership success.

"Over the next 10 years following our 2003/2004 success we had a few players come and go through the team and we played finals every year but failed to claim the A Grade shield. Our young and well-groomed juniors were the strongest in the competition and with many junior premierships we were the envy of every other club. Coach Dick Coombe had a break from coaching A grade for a couple of years but came back in 2012/13 season when we lost the grand final against Seacombe.

"But in 2013/2014 our team again came of age. With the right mix of experience, youth and sheer determination we won our first premiership in over 10 years against Seacombe, winning 5-3.

Caroline Gardner, Trish Jones and I were the only three

players who had played in the previous premiership way back in 2003/2004. There was an enormous feeling of elation and relief by the players because we had come so close for so long. Belinda White in particular was one of the juniors who had watched us win our previous premiership and today she is the A grade captain and catches for Australia. In fact Belinda was named the best catcher in the world at her last international tournament in Canada.

"Nowadays every A Grade player and half the B Grade team coach our juniors - it is a silent expectation of our players that once they are out of juniors themselves that they give back to the club by coaching or umpiring. This culture is very rewarding and a wonderful thing to see our junior players developing and progressing to the point where one day they too will participate in an A Grade Premiership and enjoy the winning feeling and camaraderie of working so hard with their team mates to achieve the ultimate success."





## A FAMILY AFFAIR

One of the wonderful things about the Sturt Softball Club is the way in which daughters (and when we had Men's teams, sons) often follow their parents into becoming deeply ingrained with the Sturt culture and spirit. This section includes a comprehensive list of family linkages which covers not only players themselves but also a wide range of other activities performed by other family members such as Scorers and Committee members etc..

To provide the list with a little element of colour we have selected four fairly typical families and invited them to tell their story about what being a Sturt member means to them.

### THE KEECH FAMILY

Jessie Keech has been playing for Sturt juniors for two seasons. Her mum Wendy Keech (nee Keeves) played for Sturt in Under 15, Under 17 and seniors way back in 1975-82.

**Jessie's story** (40 games 2012/2013 to 2013/2014)



"The past 2 seasons have been great and I can't wait for many seasons to come. I love Sturt because they have great coaches that have played and are still playing. Some of the coaches have been very successful softball players. I have made lots of friends at Sturt that I will have for a long time. Sturt has helped me improve my

skills and I have learnt many new things."

**Wendy's story** (60 games 1975/1976 to 1981/1982)

"I have some really fun memories of those hot Saturday afternoons hanging out with our softball friends at West Beach. What great summers - new friends from lots of different schools, whacking that ball as far and as hard as possible, being coached by Joan and Maria and playing doubleheaders then watching the A grade. I still have some great friends from that time in my life particularly Kirstie Baker and Ruth Hopton (Whittle). "Now I really enjoy watching Jessie play for Sturt. She loves it. For me, each Saturday I am welcomed by friendly, smiling faces from the past and the present as I wander around at West Beach. What an amazing club. The many hard-working volunteer administrators, coaches, managers and general helpers. I love that the senior players, often with state and national commitments, make time to coach the young juniors. From my experience that does not happen in many of sports. It is fortunate that Jessie loves softball and that Sturt is such a high quality club especially investing in their junior program. Thanks for the opportunity for 2 generations of our family to be involved in such a rewarding and positive sporting experience."

**THE BEHN FAMILY** (Jill 311 games 1981/1982 to 2013/2014 and Melissa 180 games 1998/1999 to 2013/2014)



**Written by Melissa Wait (nee Behn)**

"Sturt is in the Behn blood for mother/daughter D Grade duo - Jill and Melissa Behn

"Playing together as mother and daughter has been a definite highlight of both our playing careers. For the 2013/2014 season we played D Grade side by side, Mum (Jill Behn) at second base, and me at centrefield. It was certainly a season I will never forget, and I know Mum feels the same. It was satisfying getting the 'good job' nod from Mum after taking catches in the outfield, and equally as reassuring having her safe hands at second base.

"We fought our way to the finals after a slow season start, and then even made the Grand Final. I think all were shocked we made it that far. We unfortunately couldn't seal the deal on the day as this would have been the icing on the cake for Mum's last season in which she played her 300<sup>th</sup> game, became a Player Life Member and took out the best and fairest trophy.

"The batting line up for D Grade generally read Mum lead off, then me. On a few occasions I hit a home run with Mum on second base as a runner, and I managed to catch up with her crossing home plate only a few steps in front, which was quite entertaining for the rest of the team.

"In the finals, Mum played one of her best games in the field that I, the rest of the team, and spectators have ever seen. There were double plays, catches, tag outs, amazing ground pick-ups - you name it she did it. Joan Hosking said it was a delight to watch. It was probably the same finesse in the field that originally caught Joan's eye prompting her to approach Mum, when she was in her early twenties playing for South Adelaide, to come play for Sturt. A decision Mum has not regret.

"Not too many people can say they have played sport with their Mum. We are both thankful to have had this opportunity to play for such a successful and rewarding club as Sturt. Here's to the next 50 years!!"



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### THE O'BRIEN FAMILY

Jessica O'Brien has played three seasons with Sturt and her mother Sue O'Brien (nee Wade) has played every grade from juniors through to A grade, starting with Sturt in the 80's.



#### Jessie's story (41 games 2011/2012 to 2013/2014)

"When I first started at Sturt the people I met were all really welcoming. Sturt is a great club because their coaches have helped me to improve my skills. I have made lots of friends and met lots of new people. I have played three seasons at Sturt, I'm sure I'll be at Sturt for a long time yet."

#### Sue's (nee Wade) story (603 games 1982/1983 to 2012/2013)

"I was recruited by Lorry Brown from Coromandel Valley Primary School to come out and give club softball a try and I've never left. I have great memories of spending the whole day at softball, playing a junior game, bench sitting for a senior game and then watching the A Grade. The thing I love about Sturt is that I have made lifelong friends that I have grown up with or who have watched me grow up. Friends that have been there for me through the good and bad times which I'm sure would make Joan and the founding members of Sturt very proud. I continue to enjoy playing softball but also enjoy coaching and watching Jess at the start of her journey and I can already see the making of great friendships for her at Sturt. Sturt has provided Jess with a great start to her softball career, with coaches like Lorry, Caitlin, Somer and Pam sharing their softball knowledge and love of the game. My husband says that Jess didn't have a choice she was always going to be a Falcon!!

"Thank you to all the past and current volunteers who have contributed their time and energy into making Sturt Softball Club the fantastic club it is today."

### THE BIDDELL FAMILY

#### Dionne's story (664 games 1982/1983 to 2013/2014)

"I'm very proud to have been playing for Sturt for the past 34 years and to have received my Player Life Membership. My Mum (Lyn) was one of 'the originals' from 1964 and it has been very special for me to have been coached by

her at times and also to play alongside her occasionally as well. Having had Mum supporting me every week has been wonderful and has contributed a lot to the special relationship I enjoy with her and her husband Paul.

"Aside from the support from my Mum and Paul, the other most important thing for me has been the terrific lifetime friendships I've formed during my long career with Sturt, right from the Junior's through to the Senior's - in fact many of us are still playing today.

"It's my firm intention to copy my Mum and play for Sturt for 50 years but because we play so many more games than she did each year in the early days, I'm determined to top 900 games if I can."



#### Lyn Klomp's (nee Biddell) Story (279 games 1964/1965 to 2000/2001)

"My softball career started with Glenelg Rebels in 1955 as a 14 year old, moving on to Salients/Sturt in 1964. I'm so proud that over the combined total of 81 years we've been playing with Sturt, Dionne and I have now totalled 943 games - which means that she only has to play another 57 games to reach the magic 1,000 for the family..."

"Softball is in Dionne's DNA, right from her very young days when she used to come out to my practice nights at West Beach and retrieve all of the passed balls and wild throws. It was a natural step for her to come out and play with Sturt, working her way through to the A Grade, playing for a total of 10 years at that level. I was playing and coaching C Grade and we had the pleasure of playing many games together. Later, I coached Dionne for my last three seasons and was a very proud Mother to watch her play her 600<sup>th</sup> game for the club, plus the pair of us collected a couple of premierships along the way. She's too shy to mention it herself, but playing with Simply Sturt in the Masters' Games, Dionne has also won Gold, Silver and Bronze medals over the years.

"In my Masters' Games career I've also won a Gold medal in 1994 in Brisbane and a Bronze medal in 1998 in Portland Oregon. My Sturt career has also included the Softball Association Mary Parslow medal in C Grade, a medal that Dionne also won a few years ago. What with being one of the "originals", club Patron and Life member, I can truthfully say that my cup runneth over from the enjoyment Sturt Softball Club has brought to my daughter and myself over so many years."



## A FAMILY AFFAIR





## A FAMILY AFFAIR

The extensive list below contains the names of players (both female and male) who have played for the club at some time during the past 50 years, together with the names of other family members – sisters, brothers, parents, uncles and aunts – who have also enjoyed being involved with the club in various roles. Those roles include actually taking the diamond as a player, coaching, scoring, administration and committee(s) work. We have attempted to accurately trace family members through name changes arising from marriage, but would like to apologise if our research has either incorrectly listed or omitted any family links. For ease of reference we have published all surnames in capital letters.

SURNAME	NAME	COMMENTS
ADKINS	Kimmie Pippa	
ALLNUTT	Sally Verity Julie	Mother (Secretary)
ANDREWS	Tara Chiquita	
ATHANASOPOLOUS	Nicole Kaye	
BAJEV	Emily Aimee	
BAKER	Hayley Georgie Olivia	
BECKER	Anna Rod	Father (Coach)
BEHN	Jill Melissa Graham	WAIT (Daughter) O'NEILL (Brother)
BELL	Cate Ellen	
BIDDELL	Lyn Dionne	Mother (KLOMP)
BOND	Laura Kevin	Father (Coach)
BONYTHON	Hayley Katie	
BRADLEY	Alice Georgina Janet David	Mother Father (Committee)
BRENNAN	Nikki Gemma	
BUCKLAND	Jason Tony	
BURSTON	Mary Jo	
CAMERO	Lily Ruby	
CAVANAGH	Kathy Kerrie	
CHARLTON	Chloe Molly	

CLEVELAND (SIMPSON)	Jane Rebecca	Daughter
COBIAC	Robyn Lyn Sue Rachel	LUMB (Sue's Daughter)
COLEIRO	Margaret Meg	Mother
COLLINS	Claire Michaela Geraldine	Mother (nee Healy)
CONNELL	Leah Amelia Audrey	Mother (Scorer)
COULLS	Penny Rebecca	
CRAIG	Chloe Bronte	
CUTHBERTSON	Dayle Shirley Jerry Hazel	Mother Father (Coach) Shirley sister (PRESNAIL)
DAWS	Kirsten Megan Stephanie Rachel	) ) Triplets )
D'CRUZ	Laura Nicki Anna	Mother
DILENA	Susan Kirsten	
DUNCAN	Laura Natalie	
EDWARDS	Kye Greta	Mother (VOM BERG)
EDWARDS	Brooke Troy Aaron David Tim	Brother Brother Father Uncle
EVANS	Alison Annika	
FABRIS	Julia Mary	
FAZZALARI	Miranda Rebecca	
FEIRCLOUGH	Kerrie Robyn John	Father (Scorer)
FELEPPA	Celina Alyssa Kiara	
FIDGE	Millie Ruby	
FLEMING	Lauren Nicole Karen Scott	Mother (Scorer) Father (Treasurer)

## A FAMILY AFFAIR

FOTHERINGHAM	Kelsey Stephanie	
GALBRAITH	Mikayla Brittney	
GENT	Christine Robyn	
GOODFELLOW	Elaine Helen Nicolle Mandy	BALDOCK BALDOCK
GOWER	Carol Kylie Bethany	Niece
GRAY	Jenny Marg Anita	THOMPSON/COE WRIGHT O'CALLAGHAN
GREY-GARDNER	Helen Robyn	
GRIFFITHS	Rebecca Ceinwen	
GRIMALDI	Benita Alanna	
GUNN	Helen Mandy	HARPAS HUGHES
HANCOCK	Luci Mollie	
HARMAN	Meg Jane	Mother
HARRIS	Jan Dale Julie	DOYLE
HATTERSLEY	Leanne Peta-Ann	
HENWOOD	Somer Brie-Anna Jade	
JARVIS	Megan Emma Flo	Mother
JONES	Alison Kathy	
KEECH	Jessie Wendy	Mother (KEEVES)
KLAOSEN	Marie Joanna	
KLUSS	Jackie Monica	
KNAPE	Nicole Michelle	
KONOPKA	Eleanor Holly	
KOWALENKO	Norrelle Rosemary	
KNUCKEY	Kelsey Sue	Mother (JONES)
LANG	Renee Mary-Anne	Mother
LAROSA	Millie Tahlia	

LAWRENCE	Phoebe Ainsley	
LEGGOE	Mary Prue	
LEWIS	Sarah Kathy	Mother (SMITH)
LOVEDAY	Chloe Renee	
MACKARETH	Kathie Mikayla	Mother
MAGILL-RANKIN	Sasha Zoe	
MALANDRIS	Eleni Sophie	
MARSCHALL	Laura Olivia	Twins )
MARSDEN	Angela Christina	
McCOLL	Georgie Sophie	
McGRATH	Celeste Maryanne	
MISIRLIS	Mary Soula Vicki	
MOLDOVAN	Tegan Denise	Mother
MOSCROP	Kate Kelly	
MURPHY	Angela Louise	
MUSSARED	Jane Barb Maud	Daughter (TAYLOR)
NELLER	Joanne Mandy Shelley John	Father
O'BRIEN (WADE)	Suzanne Jessica	Daughter
O'CONNOR	Kirsten Susan	Mother
PACKER	Zoe Maisie	Mother
PEARCE	Tara Sharna	
PETTMAN	Caitlin Emily	
PILOWSKY	Lynne Marion	
PORTER	Sarah Susan	
RAGGATT	Janelle Vicki	
RASHEED	Lily Harriet	
RAYNER	Rebecca Tegan	



## A FAMILY AFFAIR

REES	Annalise Kelly	
RIDGE	Michelle Stephanie Barbara	HUGHES  Mother
ROCCO	Julie Lyn	SPRY
ROE	Yvette Jai	
SAMPSON	Karen Jodie Keith	Father (Vice President)
SAVVAS	Victoria Elicia Ross	Father
SCHILLER	Georgia Samantha	
SCHMIDT	Alex Maddie	
SHEEHAN	Helen Kay	ROTHALL (President)
SKENE	Alison Jason	
SLATTER	Abbie Blake	
SLEE	Chloe Ella Tom	
SLOAN	Asher Vicki	Mother
SMALL	Rachel Louise Murray	
SMITH	Carol Robyn	
SMITH	Anne Jenny	WICKHAM
SNELGROVE	Carol Tracey	
SPARGO	Claire Nadia	

STANSFIELD	Belinda Kimberley	
STOKES	Lici Jenny	
STRAPPS	Natasha Bradley Mel	Mother
STUART	Hayley Emma Rebecca Sarah	
TAPE	Annabel Georgie	Mother
TAVASCI	Amelia Emma	
TONKIN	Sarah Rachel Carol	Mother (Secretary)
TSIRIKOS	Lucy Nicci	
VENNING	Courtney Natasha	
VOM BERG	Adrian Fiona	
WADHAM	Erica Olivia	
WARD	Pip Liz Catherine	
WEGENER	Sharni Stevi	
WESTOVER	Caitlin Maddie Sophi	
WHITTLE	Ruth Hilary Caroline	
WISHART	Heidi Shaeli Toni	
YATES	Danielle Katrina Natalie	



## MESSAGES IN A BOTTLE

*It's nice to know that Sturt Softball Club  
has an International following.*

### VONNY ARMSTRONG (LADD)

*(Paraphrased from emails received from Vonny from her home in China).*



“When I first wandered on to a softball diamond in Toowoomba at the age of 12, I was pointed towards centre-field. I was destined to stay out there for probably 85% of my 40 years in the game (30 years with Sturt), with the balance made up of occasional visits to 7 and 9 and very rare stints in the infield. I just loved it in the outfield.

“As a player and coach I've won premierships and I've lost them but my 516 game Sturt career is peppered with many fond memories. Memories of good plays and cringe at the not-so-fond memories of the occasional

clanger! But through it all I had the greatest respect and love for the uniform I wore and for the wonderful teammates with whom I was lucky enough to play or coach. Base-running was my absolute favourite part of softball and my uniform was usually covered in dirt from my sliding – earning me the nickname of “standup” from the type of sliding I preferred to use.

“Throughout my many years with Sturt I've always enjoyed helping with the extra things such as coaching, umpiring, scoring, committee work, working in the canteen and on the BBQ, editing the Newsletter and even sports trainer when needed. I've also managed State teams and driven the bus when required. I found that the more effort I put into the club, the greater was my personal enjoyment.

2011 was the most recent time I pulled on my (now old and tatty) uniform for the Australian Masters and it was a great pleasure to play with so many of my former teammates or opposition. I intend to play again for this great club so someone had better order me a new playing shirt with the number 13 on it – I will be back!

“I'm a very proud Life Member of Sturt Softball Club and share the respect we all have for such a great club. Although I've lived and worked in China since 2008 I still follow Sturt's progress closely and with very considerable pride. Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Falcons and let's work together for many more.”

### ANN TOMLINSON

*(Paraphrased from an email received from Ann from her home in the USA)*

“My sister Jan and I played for Sturt in the 1970's when we were both at Unley High School; I started in the Under 16's and played 107 games in total before moving to New Zealand in 1980 where I lived for 5 years before moving again to live in the USA, where I've been ever since.

“In those early days we practiced at Concordia College and had to change from our work clothes into sports clothes hiding behind our open car doors. Names I clearly remember are Joan Hosking, Lorry Brown, Helen Gunn, Lorraine Pietrafesa, Maria Tormena, Vonny Armstrong and Neil Brown.

“Although I played softball in New Zealand for 5 years, women's softball in the US is an amazingly popular sport, with College games being widely telecast. I've watched live UCLA softball games a few times and going to the College World Series in Oklahoma in May this year is on my bucket list. It's very interesting to see how much science has come into the game with strategies devised to manufacture runs in games which are dominated by pitchers, hence studying tapes of pitchers and batters has become such an important part of the game now.

“These days my sister Jan is an Orthopaedic Surgeon practising in the Adelaide Hills and I'm working in compliance and reimbursement for a healthcare Company. I can stay in touch through the Club's web site but would love to hear from any of the old timers who might remember either of us. We have many fond memories of Sturt Softball Club and wish you every success in your 50<sup>th</sup> year and the many years ahead.”





## DROUGHT BREAKERS *by Dick Coombe*

In the extremely successful 13 year period 1971/1972 to 1984/1985 Sturt won 10 A Grade Premierships but it was to be the 1999/2000 season before the Club again tasted success – a premiership drought of 15 years. A second drought of 10 years' duration was to occur between our victory in the 2003/2004 Grand Final and our success in the 2013/2014 season.

These pages present exciting descriptions which very clearly portray the tensions from a coaching perspective in each of the “drought-breaking” 1999/2000 and 2013/2014 victories and are brilliantly written by Dick Coombe who has coached the club through almost all of the two build/success/re-build/success cycles that have characterised the past 42 years of our history, a period which included both of the premierships described below:

### THE 1999/2000 GRAND FINAL AGAINST WEST TORRENS



In a sensational performance that capped off its wonderful season, the Sturt Falcons A grade defeated Premiership favourite West Torrens 4 runs to 2 in the Grand Final. West Torrens had been the dominant team all through the minor round and had been stunned a week earlier when Sturt played its best game for the season in defeating them 2-0 in the second semi-final.

It was always going to be hard for Sturt to reproduce its brilliant form from the semi-final when pitcher Laura Bond blitzed the West Torrens batters, conceding only 2 hits and 4 runners on base for the entire night. Meanwhile the smoking bats of the Sturt nine savaged the West Torrens pitchers, with Belinda Stansfield, Amanda Schulz and Shelley Neller particularly dangerous.

It was a long seven days as the Sturt team waited anxiously for West Torrens to dispose of Seacombe and present another challenge. With daylight saving over, we sought alternative training venues and trained indoors on Tuesday at Camden ICA. On the Thursday night Kensington Baseball Club offered us its facilities for training and so an enthusiastic and vigorous last practice was held under lights.

With the benefit of previous grand finals behind me, I offered advice to the players on how to approach the game, with the main thought being to keep things as normal as possible and to keep from being distracted by the pre-game fanfare.

Having lost the toss (again), Sturt was asked to bat first by the confident West Torrens outfit. The opposition made a player change after one pitch which we expected, but which incurred the wrath of our large supporter base. Lead-off batter Bindy, again proved her value with an infield hit as she had done in the semi-final. Caroline followed with a confident sacrifice bunt and Amanda drew a walk to have West Torrens in a shaky position. However when power hitter Shelley struck out to make 2 down, it appeared the early charge would amount to nothing. However, Laura belied her disappointing batting form by cracking a pitch into centrefield and Sturt were on the board. Emmie replaced Laura as the runner but was thrown out at second for side away. In a sensational turnaround, Emmie was awarded second base on an appeal for obstruction and Sturt were still alive. Alex showed why she had been eagerly sought after as a recruit by the coaching staff when she drilled the ball into deep centre field to score both Amanda and Emmie. This was a dream start for Sturt, although what lay ahead were seven innings of defence which would last for 90 minutes, but would seem like an eternity.

For innings after innings West Torrens continued to challenge but the gallant Sturt team refused to buckle. The constant pressure by the West Torrens batters forced the occasional error from the Sturt field and several times the game was in the balance. Great pitching from Laura saved us on several occasions and then she scored her second hit to score Amanda and open up a 4-0 lead, things looked a little more secure. An injury to an opposition outfielder nearly caused our downfall with the new player blasting two safe hits as West Torrens slowly reduced the deficit. Their attack was blunted by the Sturt outfield as Michelle and Mandy held great catches. A brilliant take by Shelley at first base on a shaky infield throw was a heart-breaker for the West Torrens supporters who lifted as they sensed a great comeback.

Leading 4-2 into the seventh innings, the Sturt girls gathered together to hear the last desperate exhortations from the coaching staff, 3 outs away from the premiership – could we hang on?

West Torrens were in the middle of their batting strength. The first out proved easy, as the opposition coach popped up a meek fly. A crunching drive into centrefield was brilliantly caught by Alex and we began to sense that the game could be ours. However, West Torrens refused to submit as the next two batters gained safe hits. In a sensational finish, the base runner overran second base and, in the ensuing trap play, was run down by Dionne and tagged out by an exuberant Bindy.

Victory was ours and we were the champions!

## DROUGHT BREAKERS *by Dick Coombe*

### Team members were:

Laura Bond	Amanda Schulz
Shelley Neller	Belinda Stansfield
Dionne Biddell	Caroline Gardner
Mandy Neller	Alex Henderson
Michelle Ridge	Tara Andrews
Kate Barry	Emmie Green
Emma Blight	Anna Hambour

### Officials:

Dick Coombe (Coach)	Kevin Bond (Assistant Coach)
Anita O'Callaghan (Scorer)	John Neller
Chris Gent	

### THE 2013/2014 GRAND FINAL AGAINST SEACOMBE



Since its previous premiership in 2003/2004 the Sturt Falcons A grade had remained highly competitive, having never missed the finals. However another premiership had eluded it, with only one grand final loss to show for its efforts.

A new coach in 2010/11 and 2011/2012 reinvigorated the players to some extent but despite dominating the minor rounds for two seasons, Sturt failed to win any finals. Season 2012/13 at least saw what was becoming a finals hoodoo broken when we won two finals, but we failed to cope with Seacombe, culminating in a 5-3 loss in the Grand Final.

Season 2013/14 began with several large defeats. However, despite the occasional poor performance, Sturt showed resilience in winning many close games. A combination of experienced players and skilful younger players enabled us to complete the minor round in second position. Seacombe was too strong in the first semi-final but an 8-0 thrashing of arch rival West Torrens in the preliminary final gave us renewed hope as we knew our best might bring success in the Grand Final. The message from the coaching staff was to keep the routine for the final as normal as possible, have confidence in their ability, take full advantage of any scoring opportunities and stay strong in any crucial defensive situations.

When Jasmine (Jaz) Lee hit the fourth pitch of the game safely into left field it gave the team confidence. A sacrifice

bunt from Sarah Tonkin advanced Jaz and Bel White then hit safely to centrefield. With 2 out the normally solid Seacombe infield cracked with fielding errors and Sturt was on the board with 2 runs. However that joy was short lived as Seacombe exploded with the bat and pulled back the 2 runs with only 1 out. Big outs from Sarah Tonkin and Hayley Norris enabled Sturt to scramble out of the innings with the score locked at 2 all.

The top of the second was the highlight of the game for Sturt. Hayley Norris and Sarah Tonkin hit safely and were driven in by Bel White with a double to centrefield. Trish Jones and Caroline Gardner both hit safely to score Bel and we had jumped out to a 5-2 lead. Two walks from a nervous Caitlin Tobin put us in trouble but a pop-up bunt and a left field catch to Bindy Stansfield saw us retrieve the situation.

In the third innings lead-off batter Katie Wiese was hit by a pitched ball and after a safe hit by Jaz, Katie scored on a passed ball to stretch our lead. Seacombe pulled a run back in the bottom of the third to make it 6-3 but the signs for Sturt were good with pitcher Caitlin Tobin showing more composure and increasing confidence.

Sturt had further opportunities to score in the 5th and 6th innings but left 5 runners on base and could not put Seacombe away. However, defensively Sturt were in control, sending 9 of the next 10 batters back to the dugout with 5 strikeouts from Caitlin and good outfield catches from Hayley and Maddi. Infielders Sarah and Caroline also made some steady plays.

Defending a lead of 3 runs in the 7th the Sturt players could taste victory. In scenes reminiscent of the 2004 victory, Sturt made 2 comfortable outs, but Seacombe refused to be denied when two safe hits brought the tying run to the plate. A hard drive up the middle was deflected by Caitlin and a swooping Trish Jones made the out.

Game over - a 6-3 victory to Sturt and the drought was over.

### Team members were:

Caitlin Tobin	Bel White
Jasmine Lee	Trish Jones
Sarah Tonkin	Bindy Stansfield
Caroline Gardner	Hayley Norris
Maddi Cameron	Katie Wiese
Rachel Tonkin	Hannah Thoo
Georgie Baker	

### Officials:

Dick Coombe (Coach)	Tara Andrews
Don Cameron	Tracy Opolski
Sue Norris	Ada Brincat-Tree





## MEN'S SOFTBALL *by David Edwards*

"It was much like a shooting star, suddenly on the scene, fast, brilliant, exciting but short lived. Such is the story of the Sturt Falcons Softball Club's Men's team.

"Men's Softball at West Beach in the late 1980's and 1990's



had always been rather chequered and somewhat tenuous with a number of non-aligned (to metropolitan female - based Clubs) clubs competing on a Friday night.

"Contrary to this the Central Districts and Hills Associations had well established Men's competitions playing together with the women. As well, both of these Associations supported boys' softball and history will show that representatives in underage and Open State teams came primarily from these competitions.

"From informal chatter after games and later more formally from the Men's Committee it was decided to lobby the Adelaide Association to address the issue of Men's softball being included in the regular competition structure. This was primarily to address the significant imbalance of State representatives coming from regional areas and not from the more populous metro area.

"After significant discussion at Association level, Clubs (some reluctantly) agreed to work at fielding Men's teams in an Adelaide Association competition.

"It was late 1992 and Lorry Brown and the Sturt Softball Club Committee were now faced with the challenge of finding a team to commence playing in the following 1993/1994 season so from then on no bloke associated with the club was safe from scrutiny as a potential player...

"The senior Women's teams willingly nominated boyfriends and husbands with the view to getting back for all those snide remarks and the 'I could do better' looks their partners were often guilty of expressing. Hence the first team would read like 'friend of, brother of, uncle of, husband of, and would like to get to know you better of' existing Women players.

"This was certainly true of the Edwards family with my wife Denise being official team scorer and strategic advisor. My daughter Brooke proved invaluable as key recruiting

agent, sourcing for the team a number of fill in players, but most importantly the key signing of gun pitcher Mark Meszaros.

"My son Troy, although quite young, cemented a spot at second base, showing deft fielding ability and textbook skill execution, going on to play in the State Under 16 Team in 1996 and 1997, winning Association Most Valuable Player (jointly with Brett McAuliffe) in 1997.

"My other son Aaron made a few appearances over the years and although very young did not retract from any challenge. Tim Edwards, my brother, at the time did not live far enough away and although initially was recruited to fill in soon became a regular in the outfield. He still reminds me to this day that somewhere on an outside diamond he lost his 'right arm' while retrieving one of many long balls hit on the fenceless outfield.

"Speaking personally, I have been involved in coaching Sturt junior teams as well as playing for Crystal Springs, Panthers and Cubs in the early Men's competition which automatically made me the (willing) default coach of the Sturt team. Practices were held on regular club training nights at Daws Road (Pasadena) High School and I played catcher mostly, with the odd attempt to pitch (may well have been when Tim 'lost his right arm').

"Neil Brown made a brief appearance early in our early games making up numbers and providing many lighthearted moments.



"Fiona Wakelin is a name synonymous with Sturt Softball Club and performed the valuable roles of Manager, Game Coach, Mentor and 'level head', a disposition well-honed from putting up with partner Danny, she provided very valuable support both on and off the field.

"Now to Danny, the pocket rocket or torpedo tube cleaner (he worked for the Submarine Corporation), was an avid supporter of Fiona's team, but always felt that he could have done better. When the Men's team formed he was first in line to sign up (or was that Fiona pushing), and eventually he found his greatest playing asset was his very tight strike zone.

"Colin Curnow our first base displayed impeccable

## MEN'S SOFTBALL



technique in all facets of the game, no doubt in part to the family connections to the Sampson family

"Jodie (Sampson) brought to the team partner Graeme Osborn. Graeme could only be described as dynamic, brilliant and game changing one minute and a wrecking ball the next. As a pitcher he had both speed and variation, however, his greatest asset was his

lack of control. Batters would enter the box and I would simply say things like '... hope you haven't made plans for tomorrow' or '... is your insurance up to date' etc., little did they know that I was just as uneasy about catching his unpredictable fireballs. In the batter's box his bat speed and power generation was unsurpassed and when contact was made the infield cringed and the outfield stargazed. Graeme deservedly won the Association Best Player award in the 1995/1996 season.

"The antithesis of Graeme was Adrian vomBerg. Partner of Greta and step-father to Skye, Adrian was the thinking man's player, having watched and analysed many games from the deck chair...

"We aren't sure how John Schuurmanns first came on the scene, or perhaps we should say we are not sure 'who' John was interested in at the time but he very quickly found his niche at Short Stop. His speed and agility are legendary and the number of successful put-outs were a result of his fearless disregard for conventional fielding.

"As all softball players will attest, having a good pitcher can be an advantage (a pitcher will tell you they are critical to success) and when Mark Meszaros came on the scene our competitiveness rose to another level. Mark had played junior softball in the Hills competition and attended school with my daughter Brooke.. He didn't take much persuading to come along to games and very quickly

settled in as number one pitcher. A very tall athletic lad, Mark had all the attributes that a catcher wants in a pitcher. This includes a controlled temperament, bothers to read signals and above all pitches to those signals. Mark had a good range of different pitches, all with control but his most devastating pitch was his rise which sat in the zone then suddenly would take off.

"A number of other players made appearances on the scorecard, these included Graham O'Neill and Craig Thomas who, with long histories of being associated with softball, love all things about softball and having the opportunity to play were personal highlights. Ross Savvas, Greg Easton and Con Papacmangul, good mates of Tim, very much enjoyed the game debrief long after the game was over.

"Kevin (Bondy) Bond even made it on the roster, slotting into first base where he eventually came to grips with the 'right angle' pick-off throw from home. He also discovered after many years of chastising his players, the 'slap bunt' is not as easy as it looks. Other players on the list who played a small number of games included Craig Passmore, Danny Hicks, Jason Skene, Jason Buckland, Adrian Wagnitz, Tim Knapstein and Jason Shaw.

"In its brief existence the Sturt Falcons Men's Softball team boasted back-to-back B Grade Premierships in 1995/1996 and 1996/1997 seasons. They were great times!!"

