

Pioneer acknowledged for life



By BEN HARRIS

There are not enough superlatives to describe Cary Thompson. He has been involved in touch football at all levels and the list of his held positions is extensive. From president of the Federation of International Touch for 16 years to tournament creator, historian and rules innovator.

Cary's footprint is embedded in all facets of the game. He has been awarded with no less than ten Life memberships to touch football affiliates around the world but it is his latest one that brought a tear to his eye.

On the eve of the 2015 Touch World Cup, Cary was awarded life membership to the Federation of International Touch. It is the first time the sport's international governing body has bestowed this honour on one of their members. "Getting it means a lot but being the first means something very special. It can't happen again to anyone else and I feel very honoured," Cary said. "You just work along and do your own thing and you don't expect these sort of things to come along."

Cary became involved in touch football in the mid-1970s and rose through the ranks. During the 1980s he was the director of coaching for Touch Football Australia and remained so until 2001. He was instrumental in devising the rules for the inaugural Touch World Cup in 1988 and wrote the rules that are currently played around the world.

In 1991 he held the top job of the Federation of International Touch. "I became president unexpectedly and my time in the role was very much a highlight," he said. He was president until 2007 and became the body's secretary-general for two years. During his time with the Federation of International Touch, Cary administered several Touch World Cups and was the mastermind behind the European Championships and the now-defunct South Pacific Championships.

"Creating the European Championships was my best highlight," he said. "I created them in 1996 and we played at the Halifax Rugby League ground. After the tournament I was interviewed by Sky B and they said what I saw 'for the future of this tournament?'. We only had a dozen or so teams, and I said 'within 20 years, this will be the biggest regional touch tournament in the world', and it is. "I haven't even made it to 20 years yet, I've still got a year to go."

For a number of years, Cary has been the sport's historian and record-keeper. His almanacs are bibles for touch enthusiasts around the world, as it details every player, official, referee and match at the international level. "There has been some great fun times," Cary said. "There are too many people to thank. It didn't matter where I went, whatever country, there were people there to help me. "The TFA have been my biggest supporters since I started back with them in the mid-1970s.

“My wife has been terrific. She gives me time to do all these things.

“I’m pleased with what I have happened, what I have done, and so many people have contributed to my success. “It’s the people around you who support you and tell you to keep going and contribute to that achievement you make, they are the people I really need to thank.”