

Vale: Bob DYKE

14th April 1934 – 24th December 2010

A Father of our Sport

Eulogy delivered by Dean Russell at Bob Dykes Funeral



As a upstart youngster starting out playing the sport of Touch Football, I heard the name Bob Dyke but like all youths it meant little to me, he was some bloke who had something to do with the sport. How much of a fool was I. Little did I know at the time I would owe my livelihood to the man that many years later I would come to know.

I met Bob officially in 1990, at the time I had been employed by the NSW Touch Football Association as a Development Officer and was MC of the Annual Blues Dinner to which Bob had been invited. It was on this night that I gained one of my most valuable lessons by having a conversation with Bob. That lesson was – *you have to know where you come from to know who you are*. As at this gala dinner I was blessed to spend time listening to Bob explain where we as a sport came from, how we developed and how we grew.

All from the man who was not only at the forefront of these heady days but was very much integral to our success, even in the early years and one of the two men that laid the foundation to where we find ourselves as a sport today.

Indeed, Bob Dyke was a pioneer, a man with vision and drive to take a pastime to a fully-fledged sport today, in some short 42 years has grown to have over 500,000 players in Australia, nearly a million in schools and played in forty-two countries across the world.

Bob's involvement in the game started in the sixties when he was one of the forefathers of the game that helped create the sport of Touch Football. During the Sixties anyone who played league or union would have participated at training in a form of the game, this was anything up to 30 players a side on a full league or union field.

However, it was the vision of Bob and his friend Ray Vawdon that they could see a structural sport to evolve from this training pastime. In 1968 under the South Sydney RLFC, they gained sanction from the district club and organised the initial Touch Football competition, a formal competition of six teams at Snape Park, Kingsford. Although they initially thought the sport would appeal to retired league players, they soon realised that society at the time was changing and Australians of all walks of life

were looking for leisure activities and Bob was smart enough to capitalise on this, especially the family based sporting link that Touch Football could offer.

On hearing of other Touch games being played around Sydney area Bob visited, discussed, and assisted in forming the new Touch Football Association to join with the then South Sydney Touch Association. In four short years his efforts had seen the growth of the sport and it was realised that a bigger need existed, a State Association.

So in 1972 after again discussions with his partner in crime, Ray Vawdon, a NSW Touch Association was formed, with South Sydney as the founding member. Bob then worked quickly to bring on Cronulla, Manly and Wagga Wagga as the sport grew. Indeed, he spread his knowledge extensively not only through NSW but interstate to enhance the growth of the sport. It was such communication, follow up and guidance that saw regional centers such as Tamworth, Wollongong and the Riverina take root in the sport. Bob played a big part in ensuring that early interstate matches were held between NSW and Queensland a fore runner of the fierce contest of today and he organised an international tour of New Zealand in 1976 for the first Australian Team.

Vision was certainly something Bob did not lack, with the growth of the sport now not only taking foot in NSW but in other states as well, he again with Ray Vawdon recognised the need for a National Body, and thus through vision, guidance and foresight the Australian Touch Association was borne in 1976. In that same year it was estimated in the annual report that in NSW alone some 400,000 people were playing the sport either in affiliated competition or non-affiliated clubs across the state.

Bob was a pioneer of the organised sport that Touch has become. He was heavily involved in the important transformation from a social past time into a sport right across Australia from 1968 through to 1982. Bob served as Senior Vice President with the NSW Touch Association from 1972 to 1978 and Finance Director from 1979 to 1981, following which he became the sports first fulltime paid administrator for the next two years.

At a national level he was Finance Director in 1978 and 1979 before taking on the role of Vice President from 1980 to 1982. By the time he left the sport he had led the way or been an integral part of:

- Structuring the sport from a past time to a properly constituted organised sport
- Assisted countless Association across Australia to form with constitutions
- Oversaw both the original rules in 1968 and also the adoption of a standard set of rules for the sport right across the nation
- Organised the first interstate game
- Organised the first International Tour

- Organised an exhibition match to promote the new game in 1976 against the British Rugby League team at Port Hacking Rigby Club.
- Organised the sport to be played in front of its biggest live audience ever when they staged two representative games in front of 4000 spectators at the Sydney Cricket Ground as a precursor to the 1976 Grand Final replay.
- Commenced the Vawdon Cup in 1976 for district representative teams
- Commenced and consolidated the Westmont State Cup
- Introduced the Coca Cola knock out for club teams in five divisions
- Formation of Country Associations to control and administer the sport within their individual area
- Initiated city v country clashes to which the NSW instigated in 2002 the Bob Dyke Shield to recognise the winning region.
- Formed the first referee association
- Aided in the formation of Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, and ACT Touch Associations and moved them to become affiliated with the national body.
- Become one of the first life members of NSW Touch Association

With Amazing foresight, organizational skills and dedication, this gentle man is truly one of the fathers of our sport. Had there not been men like Bob Dyke there is little doubt the sport would not be where we stand today/ Indeed we may not even be a properly structured and constituted sport, we still may have simply been a past time for training purposes.

I feel humbled and privileged to have had the opportunity to not only know Bob but also to discuss our origins with him. Very few people in history have had the opportunity to converse about the start of their sport with its founder and inventor. How many basketball fans and players had that opportunity with Dr Nay Smith and how many Rugby Union players discussed how Rugby was formed with William Webb Ellis.

While Touch may not share the same stage as Basketball and Rugby. Bob Dyke certainly through his actions and foresight can be named alongside such luminaries. His mark will forever be enshrined in our sport and more importantly those lucky enough to come into contact with Bob, no matter how brief have had our lives enriched by him.

Extracted from 'Keeping in Touch' 2011

Bob's involvement in the game started in the 1960's when with Ray Vawdon, he helped create the sport. They formed the South Sydney Touch Association in 1968 before founding the New South Wales Touch Association in 1972 and he was one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the Australian Touch Association in

1976. He was instrumental in the drawing up of the official rules of the sport and competition structures. He visited many 'informal' Touch Football gatherings sharing his and Ray's vision assisting them form associations and structured competitions. He served as Senior Vice President with the New South Wales Touch Association from 1972 to 1978 and Finance Director from 1979 to 1981, following which he became the sports first fulltime paid administrator. At a national level he was the Finance Director in 1978 and 1979 before taking on the role of Vice President from 1980 to 1982.

Bob's funeral will be held on Wednesday, 5 January 2011 at Allambie Gardens in the Somerville Chapel commencing at 10am.

On behalf of the whole Touch Football community, Touch Football Australia offers Bob's wife, Dawn, and his entire family our deepest condolences.

1. Dawn DYKE

Date of Funeral: 18/05/2021

DYKE, Dawn Passed away peacefully on the 10th May, 2021. Aged 86 years.

Beloved wife of Bob (dec) Loving mother of Sandra, Julie and Cheryl. A treasured Nana and Great Grand Nana. Family and friends are warmly invited to attend the celebration of Dawn's life to be held in the Somerville Chapel, 129 Nerang-Broadbeach Rd, Nerang on Tuesday 18th May, 2021 at 10am.