

### LEGEND

S&RV has introduced the Legend status to recognise those Hall of Fame members who, following Hall of Fame induction, have continued to distinguish themselves at the highest level for a period of at least five years and in doing so have offered inspiration and example to others in the Victorian squash and racquetball community.

#### **Gordon Watson**

Gordon was a champion player but does not appear on our Australian or Victorian Championship Honour Boards, although he was Australia's top male squash player from 1939-1949, losing one game in the process. He was a pioneer of our sport, an outstanding squash coach, managed two of the most successful squash centres/clubs in this country, plus was considered by many as a doyen of squash in Australia for 48 years, from 1931 to 1979.

There is no doubt that the excellent abilities displayed by Watson in the formative years of squash in Australia, to not only play the sport but to also organise it, laid the base for the solid foundation on which many generations thrived.

Gordon started his squash career at the age of sixteen when working as a gymnasium instructor at the Pearce, Bjelke Peterson Physical Culture Institute, this building housed the first commercial squash court in Melbourne, being built in 1926, then became the club's squash professional in 1931.

In those days, anyone teaching physical fitness was classed as a professional and unable to play any sport as an amateur except golf, which meant that Gordon could only play in the Australian Professional Squash Championships, which commenced in 1931, the same year as the Australian Men's Amateur Championship was first held, although Watson did not become serious about the game until after his first trip overseas in 1936 to England and Germany.

From 1931-38 the Australian Professional Championship was won by Jim Watson (no relation), with Gordon being runner up on three occasions (1935/36 and 1938), but in the 1939 final Gordon defeated Jim and went on to remain champion until 1949.

In 1939 the Broadhurst Cup was established and played for by the Australian Amateur and Professional Champions of that year, where Gordon Watson defeated the Australian Amateur Champion Merv Weston, 9/7, 9/5, 9/0, to become the first Australian Open Champion, and remaining the Open Champion until 1949.

In 1949, Egyptian Mahmoud Abdel Karim, the British Open Champion and undefeated for fifteen years, came to Australia for the Australian Professional Championship where he met Watson in the final. Gordon led 8-3 in the fifth game before Karim staged a remarkable comeback to take the game 10-8.

There was no doubt Watson suffered from the lack of all year round competition, and his close loss to Karim inspired him to sail to England for the 1950 British Open, becoming the first Australian male player to tour overseas. Watson lost in the semi-finals to the then world number two, Indian Abdul Bari 9-7 in the fifth.

The world rankings around this time were, Karim No. 1, Bari No. 2, and Watson No. 3.

An article in the Squash Player International in 1974 by Jack Giles, an English squash professional/writer, commented that, "The first player to really make an impact on the international scene was G.J. (Gordon) Watson. A very popular and respected figure, Gordon was a player of undoubted world class. He was afflicted by that bane of so many potentially great players – lack of real all-year round competition. He could get that competition in those days only by coming to the U.K., then only for a month at a time. An expensive and not very satisfactory arrangement."

Watson owned the Watson's Squash Academy in Flinders Lane for six years, prior to establishing the Gordon Watson Squash Centre in Hawthorn Road, Caulfield, where he remained until his retirement from the sport in 1979. The Gordon Watson Squash Club was the envy of all and during this period won 132 interclub pennant premierships. Watson was also an excellent coach, with no fewer than 21 Australian title holders, and winners of zillions of state titles, including the early champions of the Women's game, Betty Meagher, Val Watts and Joan Watson, who annexed 7 Australian Amateur and 9 Victorian Amateur championships between them from 1946 to 1955, plus National male champions, Frank Harris, Merv Weston and Ian Carson, who claimed 7 Australian Amateur titles. Gordon Watson was our very first Victorian Squash Hall of Fame inductee; there is no doubt that the excellent abilities displayed by Watson in the formative years of squash in Australia, to not only play the sport but to also organise it, laid the base for the solid foundation on which many generations thrived.

### **Brian Boys**

One day in 1951, whilst waiting for medical attention on his knees at the South Yarra club, renowned tennis player Brian Boys was trying his hand at hitting a squash ball, and fortunately for our sport, he was spotted by the then Australian Men's Amateur Squash Champion, Eric Metcalfe.

Just two years later, Brian in his first tournament won the 1953 Australian Men's Amateur Championship, and followed it up with the 1953 Australian Men's Open Championship. In 1939 the Broadhurst Cup was established, played for by the winners of the Australian Amateur and Australian Professional Championships, and titled the Australian Men's Open Championship.

Brian then went on to win the 1954 & 1955 Australian Men's Amateur & Australian Men's Open Championships, and the 1956 Australian Men's Open Championship. In 1956 Brian was unable to compete in the Australian Men's Amateur Championship as he could not obtain leave from his then employer, Woolworths.

During this period Brian also won the 1954, 1956 & 1957 Victorian Amateur Championships. He did not compete in this event in 1953, and surprisingly lost in the early rounds of the 1955 Championship.

In 1955 Brian became the first Australian amateur male player to tour overseas and participate in the British Open (recognised as the world championship at that time), where he was defeated by the legendary Egyptian, Mahmoud Karim. In 1958 Boys became a professional coach which meant he could no longer play in amateur events, so his distinguished whirlwind championship career came to an abrupt end.

By 1959, Brian was both owner and coach of the Balwyn Squash Centre, where he remained for 22 years; positions he also held at the Croydon Squash Centre from 1970-74. He also ran the Southern Squash Centre in Prahran during the 1960's for four years before a fire destroyed the building.

Brian's coaching methods were unique and he proved to be well ahead of his time. Brian focused on footwork, balance, weight transference & racquet skills, and plus developed a special skill's routine program that became the catalyst for the Eagle Awards launched in 1976 by the Australian Squash Court Owners Association and the award winning Heart Health Skills Program produced in 1990 by the Victorian Squash Federation.

Brian became a legend within the coaching ranks & his pupils included Geoff Hunt, Tyson Burgess, Doug Stephenson, Margaret Zachariah, Jenny Irving, Robyn Kennedy, Bev Meagher, and a myriad of other players, who won state, national & world titles. Many of his players also became highly sought after coaches, plus he was the mentor of junior squash guru Eddie French. Not only was Brian arguably the best junior coach in this country, he also implemented the Tarax Victorian Junior Championships at his Balwyn centre in 1962; transferring ownership

of them to the Victorian Squash Rackets Association four years later. Brian was also President and a Committee member of the Victorian Squash Court Owners Association during the 1970's.

In 1980 Brian was appointed Squash Australia's National Coaching Director and produced numerous coaching manuals, as well as coaching and training national teams and squads. In 1982 Brian retired from the sport moving into a sports store.

There is no doubt that Brian Boys has been one of the major influences on squash in this country.