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Fremantle Hockey Club Newsletter

April 21 2007

by Ian Sills

THE FACE OF FREMANTLE



KEVIN MARTIN 1949 – 2007

No one attending Freo's 2006 windup and who saw Kevin celebrating our great first division premiership after 54 years would have guessed that that would be the last time they would see him at any club event.

Three days later, taking the field for a depleted Tasmania in the National Veterans Championships, he took ill and was diagnosed later that day as having an aggressive form of brain tumour. So rapidly did the tumour spread that despite surgery, chemo and radiotherapy he finally succumbed on January 14. His funeral on Friday 19 expanded on the outpouring of grief and love shown in the countless notices in the paper. Very few would have attended a larger funeral with the funeral directors running out of attendance cards after handing out 700. Such a show of grief was not surprising as Kevin was a talented and popular sportsman, a charismatic and successful business man and a dedicated family man.

The Early Days

That he was Fremantle through and through was never in doubt. He was born at St Helen's hospital in Moss Street, East Fremantle, adjacent to East Fremantle Oval only a kilometre from his home in Forrest Street. He joined older brother Graham and when Phil was born two years later the family was complete. He was able to play with the boys in the Collins and Smith family just down the road and the King and Byrne families just one street over. All subsequently played hockey for Fremantle.

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Keith Smith recalled, “They were great days in the 1950's and early 1960's with all of us playing hundreds of games of cricket, football and eventually hockey on what was literally a playground in our own backyard - Gibson Park”.

Kevin was one of those rare people who could throw and bowl a cricket ball left handed, bat right handed, kick a football left footed and sign his name right handed. He was very competent in all sports he played, except golf which he played at Royal Perth Golf Club where he only managed to reduce his handicap from 27 to 26 in 11 years of membership. If you believe his stories, the local motorists and house owners in Labouchere Road would have sighed with relief when he wasn't teeing off on the First.

Progressing up the Ladder

Kevin attended John Curtin Senior High. After passing his Junior Certificate in year 10 he started year 11 but left school very early in 1965, commencing work as an office boy at WA Meat Exports at Robbs Jetty. After a couple of years, Kev commenced employment with the Fremantle Port Authority in a clerical role joining a number of mates from his school and junior sport days. At that time the Port Authority staff consisted of those who played hockey at Fremantle and those who used to play hockey at Fremantle but were now too old, and now played golf at Royal Fremantle. He was in good company but still not satisfied and he left the Port Authority and for a short period of time worked with the IAC Credit Union in High Street Fremantle.

During the 60's the James Bond series of movies became popular. Ian Elder claimed that Fremantle had its own James Bond or James Blond 'aka Kevin Martin' who lacked one of the attributes that the movie Bond had - Kevin lacked his driving skills. His brother, Phil, said that Kevin never had to polish his cars because they were in the panel shop so often.

Kevin's career took a marked change in direction in May 1970 when he attended a Life Insurance Agents course with The AMP Society. He ran his own agency for a number of years, then after a brief trial in the real estate industry returned to Life Insurance and Financial Planning Industry this time in a management role, progressing to State Manager with Associated National Life and Tyndall.

In 1989, Kevin felt a new challenge was needed and resigned from his management role with Tyndall and set up Westmar Financial Planning which graduated into Kevin Martin and Associates and then most recently Martin Consulting. This has been a successful venture for Kevin and over the years he has provided plenty of sound advice and recommendations to his clients. It was this latter period that enabled Kevin to take his wife Coralie on a number of exotic overseas trips.

Hockey Career

Kevin, Jim Banks and Keith Smith joined the Fremantle Hockey Club in 1957 when the club's home ground was located at Gibson Park. They played their first game of hockey on 27th April 1957 at Davis Field in Mosman Park against YMCA.

His last game for the club was on Saturday 16 September 2006 at Stevens Reserve filling in with one of the club's lower grade teams which was short. The game was a preliminary final and despite the fact that Kevin was twice the age of many of the other players his experience enabled him to control the game from centre half. Despite the great inexperience of some of the team it only succumbed to a much more experience team 1-0 after a late goal.

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Over those fifty seasons with the club Kevin played 812 games, including 239 games in the club's top division team over the period 1965-1984. Along the way Kevin represented WA in the School Boys sides of 1963 and 1964, the Under 21s in 1966, 1967, 1968 and 1970 and the Senior Side in 1969, 1971 and 1972. Throw in A Grade Fairest and Best awards in 1974 and 1975 and that's a fair playing record.

In 1973 he toured overseas with the Hotspurs side and became firm friends with a number of that touring side and continued to have social interaction over the years since.

Off the field Kevin also contributed greatly to the club's welfare, serving on the club committee for many years with a particular interest in raising sponsorship dollars for the club. With all of his input, Kevin won every award and trophy available in the club and he was made a life member in 1980.

In latter years Kevin has been very involved with Junior Coaching, particularly girls, as Courtney has made her way through the junior ranks. He has also been responsible for initiating a link between the club and those girls from Santa Maria College who wish to play club hockey.

Ian Elder recalled that prior to his illness Kevin was at the Perth Hockey Stadium where Fremantle played in the Grand Final against University in September 2006. Ian continued, "Kevin had gone out of his way to bring Hockey Club stalwart Bob Kernaghan to the game. Could this be the year? Having experienced so many disappointments over many years, would Fremantle win the premiership?" Yes it was, and after 54 years the dream was realised. At the end of the game Kevin, Jim Banks, Keith Smith and I shared the euphoria and someone (I believe Kevin) said 'I thought I would be dead before seeing this happen'.



Happy times: Kevin, Leon and Phil Martin with 2006 premiership trophy on grand final night

"What a prophetic statement! The team played with great determination and there was something reminiscent of Kevin in the way they approached the game. To win against a more highly rated side (in the eyes of the media), would require an exceptional performance by all". The goalkeeper, Kevin's nephew Leon Martin was inspirational in repelling the many determined attempts by Uni to get the ball past him. It was fitting that Leon was named 'Man of the Match'.

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Kevin the Cricketer

Kevin joined the Fremantle Cricket Club as a junior when they were located at Fremantle Oval and represented WA at State School Boys level in 1963 and was Vice Captain of the team.

He proceeded up the grades with Fremantle and played in their 1966/67 A Grade Premiership team as a batsman when he was only 17. This Premiership bore a remarkable similarity to the one this club achieved nearly 40 years later in that there was a drought of over 30 years and it was scored against a star-studded University side that was expected to win. Kevin was regarded by some of the players of the time as being an elegant and stylish batsman in the mould of Mark Waugh and who in a later era could have made quite a mark in the game. However, this was not to be as after a number of seasons in First grade and later with the Seconds, Kevin found he would rather spend the time chasing a lady called Coralie than in the hot sun.

Family Life

Kevin met Coralie at Henry Africa's in Subiaco in 1980 when he spilled a jug of beer over her. Somehow this led to a full-on romance and marriage on June 16 1984, followed by two wonderful daughters, Tahnee and Courtney.

Kevin and Coralie had a very full social life and later went on holidays to many exotic locations including white water rafting on the Zambezi River in Africa, hovering over active volcanoes in Hawaii, driving Formula 1 cars in Barcelona, four-wheel sand dune driving in Dubai, snow skiing at Whistler and touring the Napa Valley wineries.

The above is just a distillation of the eulogies spoken at the funeral service and later at an extremely well attended wake at the Club. Someone who has done all the things Kevin has done is bound to have many stories told about him; some myth, some truth. Many evoked laughter from the audience, some evoked tears but they would suffer in the telling here.

Most of those attending the wake would agree with Ian Elder's assertion that across the hockey community the one person recognisably as Fremantle would be Kevin and he challenged the Club to perpetuate the work and life of Kevin Martin in some form. He suggested that this may be in the form of a special fixture at the Association level, a new trophy named in his honour or his induction into the Fremantle Sporting Hall of Fame. The Fremantle Hockey Club Committee are currently working through ideas to put in place to ensure Kevin's time and efforts with us will never be forgotten.

I am grateful to Keith Smith and Ian Elder who supplied me with the text of their presentations from which I extracted this article - Ed

VALE BOB KERNAGHAN

1919 - 2007

The club lost another stalwart in Bob Kernaghan on March 30. An article celebrating his life will appear in a later Magpie.