



Patrick Joseph Nilan OAM

Born 30th of June 1941

Elected Life Member of the Glebe District Hockey Club in 1971

Patrick Nilan is undoubtedly the best forward ever to put on a Glebe shirt. Fast and with great anticipation, he always gave it everything he had. Patrick achieved hero status with the Glebe supporters on the sideline, whom he frequently thrilled with his amazing feats on the Hockey field.

Patrick Joseph Nilan, was born on the 30th of June 1941, the eighth of ten children to John and Annie Nilan. John and Annie had arrived in Sydney in 1937 from County Cork in Ireland. Patrick's family consisted of 8 sisters and 1 brother and are listed in order; Mary, Cecelia, Agnes, Trudy (Nee Diviney), Patricia (Deceased 2009), Theresa, John, Patrick, Ann and Pauline. The family lived in Rose Street Darlington, behind Sydney University. The Nilan family home was later demolished to make way for University of Sydney's Noel Martin Sports and Aquatic Centre.

Patrick attend St Kieran's - Golden Grove Primary School which was situated on the boarder of Newtown from 1947 – 1951. He continued his secondary Schooling at Saint Benedict's Marist Brother's School, Broadway from 1952 - 1956. On leaving school Pat became an apprentice carpenter, working at Hudson's timber yard on Blackwattle Bay, Glebe and continued in the carpentry trade all his working life until retiring aged 65 years. Glebe High School (now Sydney Secondary College, Blackwattle Bay Campus) was built on the Hudson's Timber Yard site in the 1980s.



Above: Patrick Nilan in his 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, Mexico playing uniform.

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He started playing hockey in 1956 for the Saint Benedict's Under Sixteen team in a Saturday morning junior competition conducted at Saint Paul's Oval in the grounds of Sydney University. Saint Paul's Oval was a stone's throw from Pat's Darlington home. In those days the Glebe junior teams were organised by Mr. Vernon Turner.

In 1958 Pat progressed to the Glebe senior ranks and it soon became clear he had exceptional talent with a good work ethic and excellent motivation.

In 1959 he was selected in the Glebe first grade team, where he played until 1978, playing a total of 361 first grade games. This is a Glebe Club record (Ken Wark snr played 342 first grade games). Pat captained Glebe first grade in close to 300 of those games, and won seven Sydney Hockey Association first grade premierships with the Club. In total Pat played 454 senior games for Glebe.

Pat trained hard and practiced five days a week during the hockey season either at Jubilee Oval or Wentworth Park, Glebe. Wentworth Park was directly across Pymont Bridge Road from Pat's workplace at the timber yard. Pat had self-discipline in spades. Throughout his career Pat kept himself extremely fit, and this was one of the reasons he was selected in the Australian team for 12 years. When some of Pat's friends and contemporaries were hitting the high life, he would not compromise his training schedule to join them. He finished his training first and partied second.

He was an athletic player, fast, nimble and agile, with exceptional balance and poise. Pat played at inside left and read the game like a book. At club level Pat was often swamped by opposition defenders, who realised the dangerous threat he posed and they gave him extra-special attention. This made it difficult for Pat to "star" at club level. It is testament to Pat's resilience, toughness and durability that he was able to back up week after week, year after year, considering the special treatment he was dished-up by opposing teams, who sort to stop him by fair means or foul.

The Glebe forwards who played with Pat were extremely grateful for his presence on the field, as they were given more space and freedom than they should have got, all things being equal, because their markers were busy helping to contain Glebe's play maker. Pat was a selfless player. Everything he did was for the benefit of the team. He was an inspirational



Above: Patrick Nilan pictured outside the Glebe DHC Clubhouse Railway Arch 4 Jubilee Oval on a Saturday afternoon.

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player, and an inspirational captain, who was admired for always being fair, honest and reasonable. His sportsmanship was recognised by all who saw him play.

Pat made the NSW Under 21 team in 1960 and the NSW Senior team in 1961. At the 1961 Australian Championships he was selected in the Australian senior team. He was a member of the NSW hockey team at Australian Championships from 1961 to 1972. He was Vice Captain from 1962 to 1965 and Captain from 1968 to 1972. Pat was the NSW Team coach in 1979 and 1980. Pat is the best inside left ever to have played for NSW and perhaps even Australia.

Pat represented Australia from 1961 to 1972. During this period, he played in 3 Olympic Games, 1964 at Tokyo (bronze medal), 1968 at Mexico (silver medal) and 1972 in Munich. In total Pat played 86 internationals for Australia, in an era when international matches were infrequent.

Pat was inducted into the NSW Hall of Champions in 1979. He is one of only five men to have been afforded this honor, the others being Brian Booth, Ron Riley, Paul Dearing and Ken Wark (Jnr). In 1982 he received an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) from the Australian Government in recognition of his services to hockey at Local, State and National level. In 2007 he was inducted into NSW Hockey's "Hall of Fame". Pat is one of less than twenty hockey greats who rated a notation in the Oxford Companion to Australian Sport. This is a testament to his achievements over an international career spanning 10 years.

He has also served his Club well. Pat was Glebe Club Captain from 1962-66 and again in 1971 and was Glebe Club President from 1972-77. He coached Glebe junior teams for decades and coached the Club's first grade team for many years. Pat's elder brother John who is also a life member is the current Glebe first grade manager, a position he has held for many seasons.

Pat married librarian Bev Reddie in December 1969 at Saint James' Catholic Church, Glebe. Before she married Bev lived with her family at 30 Hereford Street Glebe, just around the corner from the Church. She went to primary school at Saint James' School Woolley Street Forest Lodge (Glebe) and for secondary school she attended Saint Scholastica's College in Avenue Road, Glebe.

Together Pat and Bev had four children, three boys and a girl. Shane their eldest child (born 1971) has played for the Glebe Hockey Club for Decades (376 senior games) and Aaron born 1974 (268 senior games) before they prematurely retired because of persistent niggling



Above: Patrick Nilan after his stint as an Olympic Torch bearer before the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

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injuries. Both of them represented NSW in junior and senior teams. Pat and Bev's third son Matthew Nilan (born 1978) 'defected/ escaped' to rugby union. Matthew Nilan was an accomplished rugby union player and played many games in the Eastwood First Grade team. He is now coaching the Eastwood 2nd Grade side. Pat and Bev's daughter Emma Nilan (born 1973) was a netballer during her school days and enjoyed the sport.

Bev has fully supported Pat in all his life endeavors, and her encouragement and enthusiasm has made for a happy and productive marriage. In the early days of their marriage Pat and Bev rented a house in Victoria Road Glebe, which runs along the top of Jubilee Oval on the uphill side. In 1972 as the Nilan family grew they bought a house in West Ryde, where they have lived for over 30 years.

In 1984 Pat donated a Perpetual Trophy to the Club, which was named by the Management Committee as the Pat Nilan Trophy. It is presented to the most outstanding Club member for the year, as adjudged by the Management committee. The first winner of the Pat Nilan Trophy was Pat's close friend Graeme Gilmour.

In 2001 the Sydney Hockey Association honored Pat by naming an SHA perpetual award in his honor. It is called the Pat Nilan Rising Star Award.

Pat states that he was originally attracted to the club for its family type framework, its friendly atmosphere, its winning culture and also for being firm but fair on the field.

Pat has been a great contributor to Club affairs for over 55 years. A modest chap, he operates in a low key, unobtrusive way. On the field he achieved outstanding success for Glebe, NSW and Australia. Off the field he labored tirelessly, without fuss or bluster to help keep the Club a going concern. Pat's contribution to Club affairs and Club life for over 55 years has been immense.

His advice for the current committee is to keep the wheels turning!!!

Thank you Pat, your efforts are much appreciated.



Above: Patrick Nilan with his eldest son Shane Nilan in 1971. Picture taken in the backyard with a miniature hockey ball and stick.

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Appendix

Details of the Nilan Children

| Name | Date of Birth |
|----------|-------------------|
| Mary | 10th January 1928 |
| Cecilia | 10th June 1930 |
| Agnes | 25th March 1932 |
| Trudi | 12th April 1934 |
| Patricia | 2nd March 1936 |
| Therese | 17th October 1938 |
| John | 9th January 1940 |
| Patrick | 30th June 1942 |
| Anne | 6th June 1944 |
| Pauline | 28th August 1946 |

Cont.



The Nilan Family

| Name | Glebe District Hockey Club |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Patrick Nilan | Life-Member 1950-2022 454 senior games for Glebe. |
| Bev Nilan | Loyal Supporter from 1970 |
| Shane Nilan | Played 1985 – 2019 376 games |
| Emma Nilan | Netball Player |
| Aaron Nilan | Played 1987 - 2020, 411 games |
| Matthew Nilan | Rugby Union Eastwood Rugby Club Player and Coach |
| Total Games Played 1, 241 | |

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