



KENNETH WARK Jnr

On 16 July 2007 Glebe Club stalwart Kenneth Wark was inducted into the NSW Sport's Hall of Champions.

Glebe now has two Members, ex-junior players of the Club, who have been honoured with induction into the NSW Hall of Champions. Glebe legend Pat Nilan was inducted into the Hall of Champions over ten years ago and now Kenneth Wark.

Competitive men's hockey has been played since 1927 and in this time there has been only five men's hockey players who have been inducted into the NSW Sports Hall of Champions a great effort by Pat and Kenneth and for the traditions of the Glebe District Hockey Club.



Biography

Ken's father also called Ken joined the Glebe District Hockey Club in 1947 and played for Australia from 1952 to 1954. Ken Wark Snr played a total of 492 games for the Club. While "old" Ken battled it out for Glebe on the hockey field, "young" Ken would hit the ball up and down the sideline to amuse himself, supervised by his attentive mother Joyce.

"Young" Ken went to school in the Russell Lea, Haberfield, and Five Dock area, and began playing soccer with his schoolmates when he was around 8 or 9. He played for the Saint Alban's Anglican Church team; Saint Alban's being an Anglican Church situated in Great North Road Five Dock.

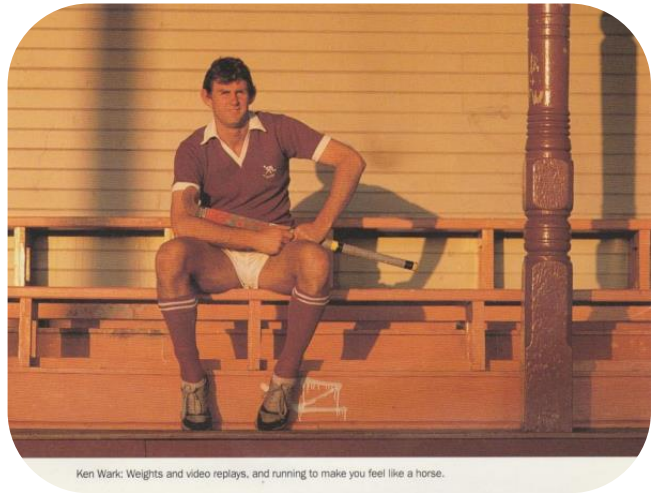
Glebe District Hockey Club Life Member – Kenneth Wark Jnr



When Ken was 14, the Minister moved away from Saint Alban's Church and his replacement did not have the same enthusiasm for sport as his predecessor. The soccer team that Ken had played in for over 6 years could not assemble a side in 1976 and it was this quirk of fate that launched Ken on his hockey career. At the age of 15 Ken decided to try his hand with the Glebe District Hockey Club Under 16 team coached by Colin Brown. This team did not make the semi-finals. In 1977 Ken's Under 16 team were beaten 2-1 in the grand-final by Moorebank. In the later part of the 1977 season Ken played in the afternoon for the Glebe sixth grade team that won the Premiership.

Ken quickly acquired the fundamentals of the game and in 1978 played left half alongside Buster Birmingham in the Premiership winning Glebe Third Grade team. In 1979 Ken made the Glebe first grade team at the age of 18. In 1981 he was selected in the NSW Under 21 team and in 1983 made the NSW senior team.

After the Australian Championships in 1984 he was selected to go to the Australian Institute of Sport, which for hockey was in Perth. Ken had just finished his apprenticeship as a marine fitter with Howard Smith, a stevedoring firm in Balmain and they had offered him a permanent position. It was not an easy decision for Ken or his family at the time, but after much debate he accepted the two-year AIS Scholarship.



Ken Wark pictured above in the Grandstand at Jubilee Oval, Glebe in 1991

He was first selected for Australia in 1985 and played his last game for Australia in 1996, having continuously represented his country for 12 years. His last game for Australia was in the Bronze Medal game at the Atlanta Olympics, which Australia won. In all Ken played 214 games for Australia, in over 20 countries around the world. In 1990, after the Tournament of Champions competition played in Melbourne, he was named in the FIH selected world best team. At the Australian Championships in 1987 and in 1991 he was named as the player of the series, the best player in Australia at that time. He is one of a rare breed of players to have ever won this honour twice.

Ken was in the Australian team that won the World Cup for Australia in 1986 and has been in Australian teams that have won Champion's Trophy Competitions. He played at three Olympic Games, in 1988 at Seoul, in 1992 at Barcelona where he won a Silver Medal and in 1996 at Atlanta where he won a Bronze Medal. The only honour that eluded Ken in his international career was an Olympic Gold Medal.

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Ken played in NSW senior teams from 1983 until 1997, a total of 15 seasons. He captained the NSW team in the nineties and led it to two Australian Championship victories.

Above all else, Ken was a Glebe man from the beginning of his career to its end. Every time he took the field for his beloved maroon and white, he played as if he was playing for his country. His First Grade career spanned an amazing 26 years from 1979, when he played his first, First Grade game to 2004, when he played his last First Grade game. In 2004 he only played one First Grade game, helping out to fill a gap left by regular first grade players who were away on representative duty.

In 1982, 1995 and in 1997 Ken played in First Grade Premiership winning teams for Glebe, in the Sydney Hockey Association Competition. He captained the 1995 and 1997 teams. In 1978 he played in the Glebe Premiership winning Third Grade team and in 2003 he captained the Premiership winning Glebe Second Grade team. He has played in Glebe teams that have won premierships in first, second and third grades. In all he has played 400 games for Glebe, with over 350 being in First Grade.

In every season he has played with the Glebe Club, Ken has paid his fees like every other Club Member. At various stages of his career Ken was offered money to play elsewhere, but his loyalty to Glebe prevented him from taking up any of these offers. He has held several administrative positions with the Club and has contributed to Club affairs “off” the field. In the last couple of years Ken has been unselfishly imparting his encyclopaedic knowledge of the game to the younger Members of the Club.

A tall chap, Ken had blistering speed, a long reach and outstanding athleticism. In the book written by Ric Charlesworth titled “The Coach”, (Macmillan 2001), pages 222 and 223, Ken is selected by Charlesworth in the best Australian team of the 1960-2000 era. In this book Charlesworth quotes a survey of 33 people conducted by Richard Aggiss to find the best twelve Australian male players of the century. Ken was ranked ninth in this survey. Without doubt Ken has left his mark on World, Australian, New South Wales and Sydney Hockey.



Pictured above is the GDHC 1990 State League team **Back Row L-R:** Ken Wark, Shane Nilan, Les Wark (Coach), Peter Busch, Craig Martin, Terry Reece, Tim Sutton, Adam Johnson, Michael Bougoukas, Warren Adams, Kevin Chivers. **Front Row L-R:** Julian Dell, David Rochester, Craig Stubbs, George Manou, Steven Cain

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He is one of Glebe Hockey Club's greatest sons and the Glebe Club is immensely proud of him and his achievements.

In 1995 Ken married schoolteacher and fellow hockey player Kerrie Banfield, who hails from Crookwell NSW and they live at Kogarah. They have three adopted children and it will not be long, no doubt, before they are introduced to the sport of hockey.

In 2003 he captained the Premiership winning Glebe Second Grade team of Stephan Madycki, Simon Bracht, Adrian Good, Brad Goodridge, Tim Harvey, Adam Howard, Marvin Lamond, David Longhurst, Ross Tapsell, Michael Wark, Matthew Wark, Andrew Cheong and Zac Farlow. 11 Ken has played in Glebe teams that have won premierships in First, Second, Third and Sixth Grades. In all he has played 444 games for Glebe, with over 300 being in First Grade. In 1989 he was the Club Room Manager and contributed to the smooth running of the Club where and when he could, commensurate with his Australian and family commitments. In 1995 Ken married schoolteacher and fellow hockey player Kerrie Banfield, who hails from Crookwell NSW. They have three children, Kiara, Kaiden and Kameeka. Kerrie was a NSW Senior Representative Hockey player, who played for the Glebe Women's First Grade team from 1996 to 2006.



Ken Wark with his family L-R: Kameeka, Kerrie, Ken and Kaiden pictured at the 2019 AGM

Ken has worked on and about Sydney Harbour all his working life, starting as an apprentice marine fitter on the Balmain waterfront in the ship repair industry. He currently works for the State Government's NSW Maritime Environmental Services and can often be seen helping to keep the harbour estuaries in pristine condition. Ken has been a great contributor to the community, both on and off the hockey field. Congratulation Ken

Ken is a modest, likeable chap who is well regarded in the hockey fraternity, and often helps coach younger players develop their skills. Ken has been a great contributor to the community, both on and off the hockey field. During the summer months Ken was a keen, enthusiastic and accomplished sailor, first at Dobroyd Sailing Club, Rodd Point, then Drummoyne Sixteen Foot Skiff events, the Manly sixteen footers and Double Bay Flying Squadron 18 foot skiffs.

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In the late 2008/9 Ken suffered from a bad back, and this together with his family duties and commitments eventually forced him into retirement. Bending over all those years practising and playing hockey for Glebe, NSW and Australia had taken its toll. For the last few years, starting in 2017 at Les Wark's invitation, Ken has given over his Tuesday nights to coach juniors, women and men wherever he has been needed at training at the Cintra Hockey Park, Concord. He has unselfishly imparted his encyclopedic knowledge of the game, to all members of the Club. For his distinguished service to the Club over many decades Ken was appointed as a Life Member at the 2019 AGM, which was held at the Clubhouse on Tuesday evening 10 December 2019. He is undoubtedly one of Glebe's great sons and the Club is immensely proud of him and his achievements.



Above: A change in sponsorship! For many years Ken Wark's game was synonymous with Grays hockey sticks but with the sponsorship offered to the Club by JHD in 2018 Ken Wark made the switch. Ken is pictured here with Club President and cousin, Les Wark, putting their JHD sticks to good use at training.

The Club's Annual Reports are littered with remarks of gratitude to Ken who 'stepped in while I was away', 'provided me with great support' or for his 'outstanding contribution to the team'. Despite being an outstanding player and competitor, Ken has never been one for pushing himself forward as the expert in all things hockey. His humility is another quality that has endeared him to members as a true Glebe man, treating everyone equally regardless of age or ability. Ken continued to play down the grades until injury prevented him, supporting the young men who came through the ranks to improve their skills and adjust to men's hockey from the juniors. In the 2007 Annual Report, a story is recounted about Ken playing centre half in 5th Grade and directing the young players around him. After a misdirected pass from one of these junior players and an opposition intercept that had the Glebe defence desperate, the Glebe captain looked up to find why the team was missing the rock-solid defence of Ken Wark at the back. There he was, back on the centre line, patiently explaining and demonstrating what that junior could have done instead.

Ken's contribution has often been listed as 'assistant'. He has served the Club as Assistant Club Coach, Assistant Club Trainer and Assistant Coach for a number of teams. Ken was assistant coach to Natalie White in 1998, the club's first season in MLI and in the 1998

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Annual Report, Nat made special mention of the support and excellent advice given by Ken during matches and at training. Ken was still assisting with coaching our women in 2007.

Since being invited by Les Wark in 2017 to take on a special role with our junior players at training, Ken has continued to mentor and assist with skills development. He also took on the same role with our senior teams and has continued again this season to share his tremendous knowledge across all the all groups and grades. While the Club has long been in awe of Ken's playing success and has been very proud to celebrate his many achievements, it is time for us to redress the lack of formal recognition that our club has afforded to him for his significant contribution over many years in giving back.



Above: Ken Wark imparting some of his encyclopaedic knowledge at 2019 men's training. Cintra Park Hockey Complex

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