

HISTORY OF BROTHERS RUGBY CLUB

Brothers Rugby Club has a long and rich tradition in rugby union in Queensland and Australia. Since its formation in 1905, the Club has produced 91 Australian representatives (including 77 Wallabies & 1 Kangaroo), 260 Queensland players and has won 28 Brisbane "A" Grade premierships (27 QRU, 1 BRL). Brothers is also the oldest continuously active "Premier" Football Club of any code in Queensland and throughout its illustrious 117-year history, has competed in every season that it has operated and has never gone into recess. Among the list of notables produced by Brothers are six Wallaby captains, Jimmy Flynn, Des Connor, Paul McLean, Tony Shaw, Rod McCall and John Eales as well as one Kangaroo captain in Tom Gorman.

The Christian Brothers College Football Club was formed at a meeting held at the Carlton Club Hotel on Queen Street in the Brisbane CBD on 2 March 1905. Mr. D Carter chaired this meeting which elected Rev Fr T Hayes as Patron, F McDonnell Esq. MLA as President, and J P Rorke as Hon Secretary and Treasurer. The management committee comprised T Gaffney, F Ahern, T J Lehane, P Dwyer, J Bolton, D J O'Connell, V Meaham and C O'Sullivan. It further decided at this meeting to "play in the school colours, blue and white hoops". These were the St Joseph's College Gregory Terrace colours of the time.

The new club was formed by the members of the Christian Brothers Old Boys Association, itself only founded in 1899, and were predominately old boys of St Joseph's College Gregory Terrace, St Joseph's Nudgee College and St James' College, which were Christian Brothers Schools based in Brisbane at that time. In 1905 the team played in plain hoops, but the Scottish supplier incorrectly sent navy and white irregular hoops ("butcher stripes") for the 1906 season and the club has stuck with these ever since, apart from the 1945 season where due to wartime rationing the Club wore a blue jersey with a white vee.

At the second meeting, held at the York Hotel on 29 March 1905, a full committee was elected. The first captain for the 1905 season was Tom Gaffney and the first honorary coach was Austin Gralton. After three trial games the club's first competition match was against North Brisbane (the previous seasons premiers) and resulted in an 8 - 0. Brothers failed to reach the finals in its first season. From 1906 until 1928 the Club would be known as Christian Brothers Football Club. In 1906 the legendary Phil Carmichael joined Brothers from South Brisbane and captained the team to its first Premiership victory in 1907 with a win over Valleys 18 - 8. In addition to Carmichael, many Brothers players from the early days were prominent on the representative scene including Voy Oxenham, Tom Colton, Jack Fihelly, Peter Flannagan and Albert Scanlan. Brothers played an "Australian Club Championship" match against Sydney premiers Glebe at the start of 1908 in Brisbane but lost 9 - 0.

Brothers' next major success came in the "first golden era" in the club's history with premierships in 1911, 12, 13, 15 and, following the break for WW1, 1919. Also in this time Brothers won the Hospital Cup (then a challenge trophy match generally held midseason) in 1910, 1911, 1913, 1914 and 1915 and again following the war in 1919. Prominent players in this time included Paddy Murphy (Brothers first wholly produced international) and Jimmy Flynn who debuted for Queensland as a 17-year-old, captained his state at 18 and remains Australia's youngest ever captain when given the role aged 20 years and 39 days in 1914.

In 1913, nine Brothers players represented Queensland in the interstate clash in Sydney and helped the team to a 22 - 21 victory. In addition to Paddy Murphy and Jimmy Flynn, these players were M J McMahon, R McManus, Hugh Flynn, Vin Carmichael, Tom Ryan, Bill Morrissey and Joe Russell. Another Brothers player to be selected for state and country during these years was Rowland "Clinker" Birt. Brothers was such a strong club in these years that they entered two teams "A" & "B" in the senior premiership in 1914 with the teams meeting each other in the Hospital Cup. Both sides were strong and contained internationals and interstate representative players. During these pre-war years, Brothers also won the inaugural "College" grade competition in 1911.

The Australian Team that played the New Zealand "All Blacks" in the Second Test at the 'Gabba on 1st August 1914 involved no less than eight Brothers players. Six players, Jimmy Flynn (Captain), Paddy Murphy, John "Bluey" Thompson, Rowland "Clinker" Birt, Sime Kreutzer and Bill Morrissey were in the starting side and the Swenson brothers Francis and William were the two uncapped replacements. New Zealand went on to win the Test by 17 points to nil and this match would be the last Test match to be played in Brisbane until the revival of the code in 1929.

The long tradition of clashes with the University of Queensland first began in senior competition on June 8 1912, with Brothers running out victors 24 - 0. The tradition of hard, close fought games between these two clubs remains a feature of the Brisbane club scene. There have also been many memorable tussles over the years, particularly in the 19 Grand Finals contested between the two fierce rivals, with Brothers being victorious on 10 occasions.

The QRU Management Committee had suspended Senior Grade football from 1916-18, so in an attempt to keep its members and supporter base together during these dark times the Brothers Club Committee decided to field a team in the QRL Competition. Brothers remained affiliated with the QRU throughout this period, so the Committee decided it would be confusing to use the name "Brothers" in the QRL competition. The Senior Committee fielded a team under the name of Merthyr Football Club; as most of the Brothers officials of the day resided in Merthyr and went on to appear in the 1917 and 1918 Grand Finals losing both to Valleys. With the success of the Senior Grade team, the Club's Junior Committee decided to field a side in the 1918 QRL Junior Grade Premiership. The Carlton Football Club as it would be known, was named after the Carlton Club Hotel in which Brothers was founded, achieved immediate success winning the Junior 1st Grade Premiership.

The end of the 1919 season saw the demise of Rugby Union in Queensland and the old QRU clubs; Brothers, University, Past Grammar and Valley then joined the QRL competition for the 1920 season. The 1920's was a lean period as far as premiership success went; Brothers were runners-up to Western Suburbs in the 1920 season and after winning the 1924 Grand Final against Valleys, subsequently lost the "right of challenge" match and the 1924 Premiership. Brothers' only Senior Premiership success was the 1926 "A" grade premiership by defeating Cooperaroo by 6 – 5. The Club won a record four consecutive Pike Cups in 1923, 24, 25, 26 and therefore was entitled to keep the cup.

Brothers produced some outstanding players during this decade such as Sime Kreutzer, Jimmy Flynn and John "Bluey" Thompson, who all played for Queensland and Australia in Rugby Union, J. Daly, Jerry Allman, Ernie Riipinen, J. O'Mara and Tommy Gorman represented the state. Gorman came to the Club from Toowoomba Brothers in 1926 for a sign on fee of 100 pounds per season; he was also the Club coach from 1926-28. Tommy Gorman also went on to win international honours and captain Australia against Great Britain in the 1928 Test Match series in Australia. Jimmy Flynn, who after his career as a player, went on to be a coach of the Club.

A watershed in Brothers history came in 1929 when the then Club President Mr Stan Ross and leading players Tommy Gorman and Jerry Allman resigned from the Christian Brothers Old Boys Football Club and founded the Past Brothers Rugby League Football Club, which then saw two "Brothers" Clubs playing in competing club competitions in Brisbane. The Christian Brothers Old Boys Football Club remained loyal to the BRL and the Past Brothers Rugby League Football Club entered the QRL club competition. The variation on the names of these like-minded Clubs was an attempt to differentiate between them and lasted until the Past Brothers Rugby League Football Club folded in 1998.

Two Brothers stalwarts in Jack Ross and J P Flynn were heavily involved in the activities that saw the return of club Rugby Union to the state in the late 1920's. Brothers returned to rugby union in 1930, but the 1930's and early 1940's were a lean period as far as premiership success went. Brothers did, however, produce some outstanding players. In the 1930's players such as Frank and Len Arnell, Pat Banks, Hughie and Jimmy Bowers, Terry Brown, Joe Costello, Vince Dore and Joe French all represented the state. Pat Banks and Jack Howard went on to win international honours. Other notable Brothers players from the late thirties and into the forties included Kevin Fegan and Vince McLoughlin.

Competition continued throughout the Second World War and as this conflict drew to a close Brothers, started to once again move into a "golden period" with the likes of dashing young centre "Kanga" Kennedy, Kev Hodda, "Wallaby" Bob McMaster, Kevin Bourke and Bryan O'Connell contributing,

Brothers secured its first trophy in the senior competition since the recommencement of competition with a 13 - 6 victory over University in the final of the mid-season Welsby Cup in 1945. Brothers went on that year to contest the premiership final but went down to University. It was the start of a bright period for the club, a "second golden era" that saw premiership wins in 1946, 1949, 1950, 1951 and 1953. The coach of the Brothers team throughout this period was Joe French, who had first played for Brothers while still at school in 1932. This era also saw the

emergence of players such as Tom and Kevin Maccheroni and Bill Maloney. In 1947 Bryan O'Connell is recorded as having completed 230 "A" grade games for Brothers.

Two other influential administrators associated with Brothers over these years, and to remain with the club for many years to come, were Jack Ross and Charles Dahl. Jack Ross was chairman of the QRU when meetings were held with representatives of NSW and other states to form the ARU at the end of the Second World War. Tom McCormack, a Brothers supporter, though never a player due to the effects of polio in childhood, was also involved in these discussions and later went on to become president of the QRU and chairman of the ARU.

Primarily due to the efforts of Greg Lalor and Joe French, Brothers become the first club in Brisbane to have its own ground at Crosby Park, Albion. The original arrangement began with the QRU as leaseholder in 1949 but Brothers took over the lease in its own right in 1951. Club Treasurer at the time, Kevin Hodda, who after his career as a player went on to be a coach and administrator, remembers prior to the move to Crosby Park training under street lights in New Farm Park. It is reported that Tom McCormack made a grant of funds to the club to allow work to commence on the "Green Shed", a building to serve as dressing rooms and bar for the club for many years to come.

The success of the late forties and early 1950's was not repeated for more than a decade, except for a premiership win in 1959. This was despite the appearance of such high quality players as Des Connor (later to captain Australia and the All Blacks and to follow his playing career with a stint as national coach), Len Forbes, Vince Hogan, John Patane, Harry Roberts and Kevin Ryan. Following the 1959 premiership win, things reached possibly the lowest ebb ever for the club. The year 1963 saw the club struggle to field a competitive team but things began to turn around in 1964. A standout for Brothers in these lean years was Dallas O'Neill who represented his state and country throughout the early 1960's and captained Queensland in 1964. Paddy Knapp was another prominent representative player from Brothers during this time. Jim Kenny came onto the scene as "A" grade coach in 1965 and took the side to the premiership in 1966.

The late sixties is remembered for such players as David L'Estrange, Barry Honan, Epi Bola, Paul and Greg Bone, Vince Heffernan, Alex Pope, Mick Barry, Mick Purcell, Peter Reilly, Rod Kelleher, Peter Moore and Shane Sullivan being a part of strong Brothers outfits that took the premiership again in 1968 and 1971. With the increasing numbers of players coming from the ranks of the Marist schools as well as the other Catholic colleges, the Club amended the Constitution and changed the name to Brothers Old Boys Rugby Club. Building on the fact that Brothers became one of the first truly "open" football clubs in Queensland since the late 1940's.

Brothers continued to produce international players with 16 players coming from the club to the Queensland side in 1972 and four touring France with the 1971 Wallabies. These players were Jeff McLean in the backs and forwards David L'Estrange, Mick Flynn and David Dunworth. The Brothers pack that year also contained Greg Bone, Chris Handy, Dick McGruther and Mick Freney, forming a formidable hurdle for any opposing teams. Queensland players of this period included Ron Price, Bill Andrews and Mick Flynn. In 1973 the club had one of their most successful years winning all but the Reserve Grade premiership in which they were runners up. This period was again the start of a "third golden era" for the club as "A" Grade premierships continued in 1974, 1975, 1978 and then an unbroken record of five in a row from 1980 to 1984. This gave the club 10 premierships in a 14-year period from 1971 to 1984.

The resurgence of Brothers in this period contributed greatly to the Queensland Rugby revival. In 1974 Brothers contributed 13 players to the Queensland team including David Logan, Geoff White, Dick Cocks, Brian Howell and Hud Rickett. Ron Price was the coach of Brothers for much of this period including the five consecutive grand finals. And the player depth continued with the emergence of Tony Shaw, Mark and Shane Nightingale, Danny Tighe, Peter Lavin, Paul Costello, Paul Mills, Brendan Moon, Ross Hanley, Tony D'Arcy and the mercurial Paul McLean. Of these, both Tony Shaw and Paul McLean would go on to captain Australia.

Brothers only other success in the 1980's came in 1987 and the Club would not taste premiership success until 2009. During this time, future Queensland and Australian coach John Connelly took over the coaching reigns and the club saw players such as Mark McBain, Peter Grigg and Damien Frawley contribute on the field. The late 1980's heralded the emergence on the representative scene of Dominic Maguire and Rod McCall, the latter going on to a long-term international career for Australia.

The "A" grade premiership successes had been missing from the club since 1987 though there have still been victories in other grades and in the colts. Particularly memorable was the 1989 Colts 1 victory that heralded the arrival of a young John Eales on the club rugby scene. Eales was to go on to become a long-serving Wallaby captain, including bringing home the 1999 World Cup. The early 1990's also saw Illie Tabua play a prominent role in Brothers and Queensland teams as well as national duty for his adopted Australia.

Brothers continued to produce quality players such as Queensland Reds players David Croft, Sean Hardman and Sam Cordingley, as well as several players who have or who are currently playing for other Australian Provinces, the NSW Waratahs, ACT Brumbies, WA Force and Melbourne Rebels. Former Premier Grade players Anthony Sauer, Damon Murphy and Dominic Shipperley have also represented Australia in 7's with Damon Murphy a member of the 2006 Australian Commonwealth Games team. Brothers also has a proud tradition of involvement with the Rugby World Cup by contributing players to the Wallabies at every one since its inception. The 2007 World Cup, which was held in France, saw players Sean Hardman and Sam Cordingley and Coach John Connelly involved with the Wallabies and Coach Illie Tabua with Fiji.

A truly great Brothers man, Tom McCormack was one of the influential members who wrote the Constitution of, and helped to found, the Australian Rugby Football Union in 1949 and continued to contribute greatly to the growth of both the Queensland and Australian Rugby Unions. While Brothers has produced many fine players, the Club's contribution to rugby also extends to administration of the code. The likes of Redmond Byrne from the 1910's, Jack Ross and Mick Lyons in the 1930's, 40's & 50's, Kevin Hodda in the 50's, Dick McGruther in the 70's, 80's & 90's and both Paul McLean & Tony Shaw as Presidents of the QRU & ARU have all contributed to the growth of Rugby Football in Queensland.

There have been many others who after a career as players have continued their role within the code. People like Tom Sweeney who was heavily involved in the establishment of the "Junior" (referring to Colts or U19 level) Rugby Union in the early 1960's. This system of developing players added considerably to the strength of Rugby Union in Queensland in the following years. The club has also produced many fine coaches at state and national level, extending from Joe French in the 1940's to Des Connor and Jim Kenny in the 1960's and 70's, to Ron Price in the 1980's and John Connelly and Mark McBain in the 1990's and 2000's.

After heart breaking one point defeats in the 2006 and 2008 Grand Finals to Wests and Easts respectively, 2009 saw the Hospital Cup return to Crosby Park with the Premier Grade side defeating Souths 26 points to 19 in the Grand Final decider at Ballymore. It was Brothers first "A" Grade title in 22 years. Not only did the Club secure the Hospital Cup, but also the Thomas Welsby Memorial Cup, Keith Horsley Memorial Trophy and the QRU State Cup making it the club's most successful season since the 1980's.

After nearly a year of discussions and negotiations it was decided that Brothers Old Boys would merge with the Brothers Juniors Club and commence operations as the Brothers Rugby Club on Sunday 1 November 2015. The goal of the merger is to ensure the long-term future and continued success of Australia's Greatest Rugby Club.

Australian Club Champion (4) – 1974, 1984, 1985, 2010

Queensland State Champion (5) – 1978, 1979, 1980, 1991, 2009

Brisbane "A" Grade Premiers (28) – 1907, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1915, 1919, 1926, 1946, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1953, 1959, 1966, 1968, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1987, 2009, 2016

Brisbane Club Champions (27) – 1932, 1936, 1943, 1944, 1947, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1991, 1993, 1996, 2018, 2019, 2020

Australian Representatives – 91 (including 13 Captains)

Queensland Representatives – 258 (including 27 Captains)

HISTORY OF BROTHERS JUNIOR RUGBY UNION CLUB

In 1963, the Sub-Junior section (U7-17) of the Queensland Junior Rugby Union was started by the Wests, Easts, Souths and Teachers Clubs and several age groups started in that first season. The Brothers Old Boys Sub-Junior section (Under 13-17) was set up in 1968 by Charlie Seymour and Life Member Merv Hazell with two teams playing in the Under 14 and Under 16 competitions.

The Brothers Old Boys Club also took the opportunity to help set up a satellite Sub-Junior Club called Brothers-Everton Park (Under 7-12) in 1969, when the founders Keith Blake and Brothers members Mike Gubbins and Life Member John Murphy, saw an opportunity to tap into the Clubs traditional feeder schools like Marcellin College, Enoggera (Grade 5-7). The Everton Park Club is still active at both the Senior & Junior level and play at "Horse" Blake Oval in Enoggera.

The other satellite Sub-Junior Club founded by our Club was Brothers-Mt Gravatt (Under 7-12) in 1970 by old boys Brian Felsman and Dinny Guilfoyle Jnr who also saw an opportunity to tap into the Club's traditional feeder schools like Clairvaux College, Mt Gravatt (Grade 5-10) and to help develop junior rugby in Greater South Brisbane region. In that first season the Club was able to field three teams in the Under 8, 9 & 10 competitions.

Ascot Clayfield Sub-Junior Club (Under 7-12) was started in 1969 by GPS Old Boys club members; Dick Roberts, Les Dodwell and former Wallabies Keith "Arch" Winning and Ian MacMillan to compete with the Mayne Tigers Junior Australian Football Club in the inner northern suburbs and to provide a rugby club to service the inner northern suburbs schools like; St Agatha's Catholic School, Eagle Junction State School and Ascot State School.

Ascot Clayfield Sub-Junior Club lost the use of the Hamilton Recreation Reserve at the end of the 1982 season and were unable to find a home for the 1983 season. Brothers Old Boys acquired the lease of the Vic Walsh Oval formerly held by Mayne Tigers Australian Football Club in 1982 and thanks to the intervention of a Brothers Old Boy and current Ascot Clayfield coach & parent, Brian Felsman, were invited by Brothers Club President & Life Member Bob Conn to use the expanded Crosby Park facility.

At the end of the 1990 season the Brothers Old Boys Junior Rugby Club President, Ron Virgen and his Ascot Clayfield counterpart David Wilke, started to discuss the possibility of merging to form an Under 7 to 17 Club to service the inner northern suburbs. So, the Brothers-Ascot Clayfield Club started playing as a Junior Rugby Club in the 1991 season and fielded an impressive 20 teams across the 11 age divisions.

At the end of the 1996 season with a change in the management committee of the Brothers-Ascot Clayfield Junior Rugby Club, the developing relationship with Brothers Old Boys continued to grow along with the numbers of players and teams. The 2001 Season saw the inclusion of the Under 6 into the BJRU competition and Brothers also fielded teams in this new division and the player numbers continued to grow.

At the end of the 2004 season, the Brothers-Ascot Clayfield Junior Rugby Club had 39 teams and approximately 540 players and with the Brothers Old Boys Rugby Club celebrating its Centenary in 2005, the Brothers-Ascot Clayfield Juniors saw an opportunity to capitalise on Brothers Old Boys Rugby Club's Centenary Season and rebranded itself as the Brothers Junior Rugby Union Club and finally transitioned all of its teams into the world-famous Navy & White "Butcher" Stripes to bring it in line with Brothers Old Boys Rugby Club.

The Brothers Junior Rugby Union Club also won back-to-back Brisbane Junior Rugby Union, "Club of the Year" titles in 2010 and 2011, again demonstrating the Club's strength in the Greater Brisbane Competition with 50 teams and 740 registered players on its books.

With the Junior Club just about outgrowing the Crosby Park facility the Committee when into a sublease arrangement with St Margaret's Anglican Girls School to use their Windsor Park facility in 2013 and moved the U6-U9 group to a new home ground.

The Brothers Touch Association, which catered to an All Girls competition commenced operations in 2014 and continued to grow to include U8 to U16 girl's teams. The addition of this section to the Brothers Junior Rugby Union Club meant the Club was becoming one of the biggest Junior Sports Clubs in Queensland.