



UMPIRE PROFILE

Merv Hindson



Merv Hindson 300th 1st XI Game is this coming Saturday the 27th of February 2021!
Merv was born in Ballarat in 1949 and began playing competitive cricket at the age of 11 (1960) in the local "Sunday Schools" U/16 competition on Saturday mornings. Games were played on "Malthoid Pitches" which would melt on extremely hot days. His first season with Ballarat North Parish saw them into the final & batting at No.11 with an older brother, Merv held his end up for 7 not out, whilst his brother scored 66 to win the game.

A few years later Merv joined the Neil Street Methodists U/16 Cricket Team where at age 14 played in a Grand Final in his first season. That particular competition allowed its coach or an over-age player to participate in batting to 25 and "Retiring". No player wanted to open the batting, so Merv volunteered to open with his coach who duly always made his 25 "retired". Advance to the grand final, the team needed to bat time to win and Merv was finally, adjudged LBW for 49 with 3 overs remaining, and the team won the flag. The following season Merv won the Bowling Award for the club.

Merv commenced playing Senior Cricket in the 3rds with Wendouree Central with whom the Junior coach played in its 1st XI. He made the 1st XI with Ballarat East High School at Intermediate (Yr10) in the Ballarat Public Schools Association where games were played on turf wickets. Matches would commence on Friday afternoons from 3.30 pm until 6.00 pm & resume on Saturday morning from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm with a 40-minute lunch and a 20 min tea break.

Merv was made Vice-Captain in Yr 12. He classed himself an "All-Rounder" opening the bowling, and batting 5 or 6. A memorable moment was playing against St Patricks College on a sticky wicket where his team was dismissed for 15! Thanks to some vicious & intimidating bowling by "Bomber Hartley" a very strong and quick bowler, "there were no helmets or covers in those days".

Merv also enjoyed football in the winter months playing with North Ballarat in the U/14's becoming undefeated Champion Premiers in 1963, however arthroscopic surgery to his left knee saw him hospitalized for 7 days. (Today it is overnight keyhole surgery). This led him to take up football umpiring wherein in 1965 was awarded the Best First Year Umpire Award.

In 1969 Merv moved to Melbourne for employment & joined the VFL Umpires. Cricket had been put on hold following the move, and in 1972 Merv became a playing secretary of the VFL Umpires Social Cricket Club who played approximately 7 games per summer against teams from Commercial Travellers, Masonic Club, GMH Holden, VCA Umpires & several others. He also played 2 seasons on the "Mats" with Vermont via a VFL Umpire colleague. In 1976 Merv resumed his turf career with East Malvern playing 3rd XI for 2 seasons. Having married in 1978, cricket was put on hold in favour of Oakleigh Swimming Club, Football Umpiring & later on Junior Basketball.

In 1991 Merv's son Greg, (named after Chappell) wanted to play cricket, so off we went to Mount Waverley Cricket Club. Merv stood still & other parents stepped back and Merv was appointed Coach/Team Manager of the U/12's. Merv coached 2 of his 4 sons at Mount Waverley through the Juniors attaining an U/16 Flag with Greg and an U/14 Flag with John, whose team defeated Burwood, coached by his good friend, and former VSDCA umpiring colleague, Gary Male.

At one stage, Merv captained Mt Waverley's 5th XI in A Grade synthetic ECA, and had to utilize many of his junior players to fill the gaps. He remembers one particular game, they were short of players and he played with his 3 sons, together with another father and his 2 sons, and they pulled in Barrie Taylor a legend from Malvern to complete the team.

It was common to not have any umpires at games, the older players all took turns. Consequently, Merv decided to take up umpiring in the ECA. Whilst enjoying the ECA the Subbies (VSDCA) introduced 3rd & 4th XI's to its ranks which included several ECA Clubs. Merv was coaching a Mount Waverley U/16 Friday Night Team which included Michael Beer & Matthew Sheehan (son of Jack Sheehan). Jack suggested to Merv to "come over to Subbies you will umpire turf cricket every week".

Merv's first game was 3rd XI, Ormond v Brighton (Ian Shields was playing for Ormond). Not long after Merv was elevated to the 2nds in Round 12 of that season & was a late-minute call for a 3rd XI Semi-Final, and had to decline due to coaching the U/14 Mount Waverley Grand Final team, (noted above).

In the 1998/99 season, Merv was appointed to his first, 1st XI match between Croydon v Noble Park partnered with Benny Goodman. Ironically, they were both appointed to the "Championship Final" that year, which was washed out, as were all finals that season!

Merv's memorable moments were that Championship Final Appointment, the Interstate game v Adelaide TCA at Oakleigh 99/2000.

The funniest moment was at Malvern involving Brett Chard. Merv was at square leg when Chardy took a blinding catch and hurled it in the air. The ball duly came down hitting Merv on the head, with a bit of role-playing, Merv goes down for the count, and a player runs out with a bottle of water. Nobby McLeish yells out "that's the wrong coloured bottle for Merv!" Chardy shouted the beers that night. Another at Malvern was a Sat/Sun fixture where Adrian Jones was Captaining Kingston Saints who were dismissed for 103. Malvern in reply should have passed the score but slowed down and was 0/101 overnight, the heavens opened up and with ducks swimming in the bowler's run-up, the day's play was cancelled. Chardy brings out a rubber surfboard & struts his surfing talents on the waterlogged covers.

Another funny moment was Tony "Grubby" Sheehan at Caulfield yelling out "Hey Merv! Put your finger up! The ice has melted in the Esky and the beer is getting warm!" As he says, there are too many memories over the journey, he will have to write a book!

Merv has officiated in a total of 44 Finals overall, in all grades of the VSDCA. He has been made a Life Member of the AFL Umpires Association, the Oakleigh Swimming Club, the VSDCUA, & a Life Member & inaugural Legend of Waverley Blues Football Club.

In Merv we have one of a kind, he has a great sense of humour, he loves a beer, loves a chat, is dedicated to the core, and still gets it (mostly) right every Saturday with a minimum of fuss, Merv, truly deserves all the accolades of a 300 1st Eleven Game umpiring legend.

Oh yes, and we can't wait to read the book!