

By Dianne Musgrave

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Coming from a two-teacher school at Nattai I had never had any contact with basketball or team sports that was made up of students of my age. In 1959 my family moved to Camden and I attended the mainstream Camden Primary School. I was introduced to girls' basketball.

We played 'sides' at recess. This is where anyone interested spontaneously broke into two groups. A basketball was meant to be kept to one or other side by being thrown from any team member to any other. No goals, just the aim of stealing the ball from your opposition. I found the challenges exhilarating. The bell would ring for recess to end. Hot, sweaty, happy girls would join the line of 6A ready to go into class. All to be repeated the following days.

What I developed was a love of teamwork and I was honing my skills of anticipation.

Winter meant sports teams were chosen for inter-school sports competition. I wanted in!! I was a great fit for a defence position. I needed a sports uniform. We were living with my grandparents in a small two-bedroom house in Chellaston Street. Four little girls, one a new baby, living in a small caravan (totally constructed by my dad) in the backyard of my grandparents' modest home.

Although both my mum and nan were excellent seamstresses, under the current living circumstances, I cycled over Little Sandy bridge early one morning to an address in Elderslie that I'd been given to enlist the services of a dressmaker for the much anticipated sports uniform. It was a fruitless endeavour. Mum and nan finally pooled their time and energy, and I had my uniform. I was in heaven when I jumped onto that bus on a Friday to travel to Warragamba to face my first encounter as a representative of Camden Primary School senior basketball team. I'm sure we won!

1960 meant Camden High. My girlfriends and I worked hard to be selected in the winter inter-school teams. By 1963 we were the reigning senior A-team. Sadly, I don't remember the name of the teacher who announced at an assembly one day an invitation for girls to come to a meeting on the following Saturday to be held in the boys' weather shed in the high school's main quad, if you were interested in joining the newly created Camden's Women's Basketball Association.

This same teacher, a tall woman, arrived in an impressive green blazer decorated with several pockets. I can only now imagine this indicated she had been successfully playing herself at a high level. The association was formed, and competition began. The matches were to be played Saturday afternoons on the asphalt courts in Camden Primary School playground. Junior teams played morning games in the main quad of the high school. Teams came from Camden and all outlying communities.

The girls from Camden High banded together to form a team we called 'Blue Birds'. This name came from Donald Campbell's land-speed record holding vehicle called, the 'Blue Bird'. It just happened to be on show at the time at the AMPOL Garage at the southern end of Camden. It was also the colour of C.H.S. uniform. A simple knife pleated light blue skirt (home- made of course) with our white-short sleeve summer blouse was our uniform.



The teams consisted of Blue Birds, CWA (Country Women's Association), CYO (1), CYO (11) (Catholic Youth Organisation) and others I wish I could remember as they were all such worthy opponents. There was a junior competition as well and my two younger sisters, Marguerite and Debbie Musgrave played for Camden South Public School against other local schools. Marguerite went on to be heavily involved in the hugely popular and ever-growing organisation of the Camden Women's Netball Association.



The Blue Birds were made up essentially of high school students – Leonie Rushborne *top left*, (Goal Shooter), captain Pat Templeman *holding shield* (Goal Attack), Marion Stillwell *top 2nd from right* (Wing Attack), Denise Green *top 2nd from left* (Centre), Judy Gardner *top right* (Wing Defence), Kathy Tolfree *bottom right* (Goal Defence), Dianne Musgrave *bottom left* (Goal Keeper).

The Blue Birds were the winners of 'A Girls Senior' division for this first 1963 comp. We received a small gold medal. We were thrilled but I do not remember any presentation ceremony or celebration. We just went home knowing we were the best.



BLUEBIRDS v C.Y.O. (1)



A TENSE MOMENT in the finals played between Bluebirds and C.Y.O. (1), when Diane Farnham (C.Y.O.) is poised to throw basketball into goal circle. Defending her is Kath. Tolfree (B.B.) whilst Dianne Musgrave (back to camera) is tensed ready to intercept the pass.

Basketball Finals Decided

In a thrilling and hard fought match last Saturday afternoon at Camden Primary School court, the Bluebirds 27 defeated C.Y.O. (1) 16 to win the A grade senior basketball competition. The Bluebirds were undefeated throughout the season.

A large number of local spectators lined the court and barracking for both teams was loud and keen. At half-time the score stood at 12 each. The three-quarter time break showed the Bluebirds with a very slight lead of 19-16. In the last quarter, with the C.Y.O. team showing signs of tiring, Bluebirds proved their superiority by scoring a further 8 goals, C.Y.O. failing to score.

At the final bell the score was Bluebirds 27, C.Y.O. 16.

OTHER RESULTS

B grade senior C.Y.O. (2) 33 defeated Checkmates 25.

SCHOOLGIRLS' SECTION

A grade: Oakdale 25 defeated Camden (1) 7.

B grade: Oakdale (2) 24 defeated Camden Stn. 19.

Two official umpires from Sydney travelled to Camden for the semi-finals and finals played over the last two weeks.

At the conclusion of play, Miss V. Boniface, president of the Camden Women's Basketball Association, made a presentation of a cup, saucer and plate to

each of the umpires in appreciation.

GREAT INTEREST IN COMPETITION

The current basketball competition was a new innovation for this district and proved highly successful, over 80 seniors and 80 juniors taking part in the matches during the four months of play. Public interest has grown in recent weeks which augurs well for next season.

TROPHIES DONATED

The Lions Club of Camden has generously donated a shield to be presented to the winning teams in A and B grade senior competition with a pennant for each member of the team. They have also donated silver cups for the winning teams in the junior grades. These will be presented at a dance to be held later this month.

BLUEBIRDS' TEAM

Players in the victorious team were: Leonie Rusborne, Pat Templeman, Marion Stillwell, Denise Green, Judy Gardner, Katharine Tolfree and Dianne Musgrave.

1964 saw **Blue Birds** win the senior competition again after another exhilarating hard-fought season. Our uniform had changed this year to a royal blue sleeveless tunic with two inverted box pleats of white fabric and a white silk chord belt with tassels completed it. Oh, we were chic!!!



Dianne Musgrave holding Camden Women's Basketball shield displaying the Blue Birds win in the A division' 1964. It was the second year of this new competition and the Blue Birds had been the successful team both years.

1965 saw the disbanding of the Blue Birds as the team members moved on to training for their future. It was a special part of my past. Working together with those girls to win the first two years of the top division was a life-highlight.

The sport underwent a name change to Netball. With the growth in the Macarthur Area Netball has had a magnificent following. The courts have moved from Camden Primary School hard courts to the grass(??) courts at the showground, to the Elderslie courts on Hilder Street and more recently out to Narellan.

I wonder if those first women (the teacher I can't remember...I think she was in Home Economics) who had the love of the game and dedication to set up the CWBA, ever envisaged how far it would have come in the years between 1964 to 2021. Thank you to them from all of us who have taken part in those Saturday comps.