

The glory of a soccer game

by Sunny Willoughby

Oh, the glory of a soccer game viewed from the grassy side of a pitch in the winter sun with a bunch of friends, a smattering of kids, some cheese and crackers and a bottle of champas or two (decanted of course into plastic)!

Watching soccer began for me in Nimbin in the early 80s when my brothers, Piccolo and Jake, played for Nimbin with my dad Peter as their part-time coach. Since then, I've watched millions of matches.

Firstly, I watched my brothers in their new teams in Newcastle, and then there was a gap, during my teens, before discovering in my 20s that my new English boyfriend could play.

His talent first came to my attention in Newcastle when a friend asked me if I knew anyone who wanted to join Cooks Hill United. I said I'd ask my boyfriend. Well, wasn't that club pleased! Turns out Philsie knew his way around a soccer ball!

We moved to Menindee in 2003, where Philsie joined the Broken Hill team, St Joes. They had an intense rivalry with the other local club, Wests, who were on a winning streak until Philsie helped turn that around. The war between the two sides spread from the pitch to the sidelines and then to the local paper. I diligently cut out and saved all the articles.

I also started to record what people said about Phil on the sidelines. Everyone had something to say about the big guy with the nimble feet, who they called 'Twinkle Toes'. On the long drive back to Menindee, I would feed Phil all the juicy tidbits.

When our son Brighton came along in 2008, despite the freezing cold and the fact that I'd had an

emergency caesarian, he was just three weeks old when he saw his first match. Two years later, after winning the Best and Fairest for the division three years in a row, we all moved to the North Coast. The St Joes' coach had Phil's shirt framed and fawelled him with it.

Phil joined the Bangalow soccer club first because my cousin's boyfriend was playing there. They finished bottom the year before without winning a game. When Phil left after a year, they had made the semi-finals.

One day at the servo in Nimbin, I was waiting for the pommie bloke behind the counter to get off his phone and serve me, when I heard he was talking about soccer. That Englishman was Headers' stalwart, Gary Whisker, and the next 16 years, as they say, is history!

Our neighbour Ruben Garcia joined The Headers too and suddenly I had Gerald and Marlaina to sit with on the sidelines. So many hours spent with babies and toddlers and picnic baskets watching soccer in the sun! Such good times.

Very soon our babies were playing too. Brighton joined aged 4. He refused to run on for his first game. At one point we had three Courtney

kids playing every weekend, on top of their dad's game. I like soccer, but that was hectic. Then, just as it seemed I might be able to sit and enjoy the men's games with the girls again; the bloody women started playing!

Philsie started refing five years ago and since there is a shortage of refs, he will often ref multiple games a week, on top of his own game, and to think I didn't even know he played for the first few years I knew him!

This year our 18-year-old is playing with his dad in the Champs, and there are once again games where I get to sit and watch and soak it all in. A Sunday game at the Headers fields is optimal. There's my school mate Maxxy in the canteen and those bloody god-damn heavenly pies!

There's Luce and Mark Wright, who are integral to the club and great friends. And there's the friendly familiarity of it all: the chants that only Headers fans know, the smells that only Headers fans have and the friendly folks, along with the stories that bind us, like the strong memory and love of our beloved Simone and her soccer family.



Above: Phil's wonderful collection
Below left: Phil Courtney, Gary Whisker and Ruben Garcia
Below: Phil as a Miniroo coach



Nimbin Crossword solution

From Page 33

Q	U	E	T	Z	A	L	C	O	A	T	L
U	C	O	X	I							
I	N	H	U	M	A	N	E	N			
T	O	B	A	N	N	O	Y	S			
P	O	W	E	R	I	N	G	S	E		
A	S	E	S	P	R	I	T	E			
C	O							R			
H	I	L	L	U	S	I	O	N	I	S	T
A	L	R						S	O		
M	A	R	B	L	E	K	P		W		
A	I	T	R	I	M	A	R	A	N		
M	G	A	S	H	L	N	Q				
A	R	N	R	I			U				
A	H	U	R	A	M	A	Z	D	A		



Go Robbie Ure!

by Laurie Axtens

Local walking footballer Robbie Ure starred last month in the International World Walking Football Federation Championship at Berry Park in Brisbane as the Australian Over-45s Walkeroos defeated Indonesia 2-1 in the final.

Robbie, a highly skilled play-making midfielder, scored one and provided the build-up play for the second goal as the Australian Over 45s and backed up to secure their second world championship and maintain their world number one ranking.

Walking Football has been taking off

in Australia as the ageing population and our immense footballing depth has combined to create world class squads. Local leagues have emerged in Ballina and on the Gold Coast, and speculation is rife around a Far North Coast competition setting up in the near future.

Robbie's latest starring role on the world stage follows on from a stellar career as a national footballer which began in his teens when he first ran on for Sydney Olympic in the National Soccer League, the precursor to the A league.

Robbie was also selected to play Futsal for NSW in his youth.



nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com

Volunteer extraordinaire, Max Pike

by Genevieve Payne

Max Pike is a former player and valued member of the Nimbin Headers Football Club. Known for proudly representing the club in his vibrant green attire, Max is a familiar face in the canteen and can often be heard leading the chorus of mighty Headers cheers.

When did you first get involved with the club, and why?

When I was a tacker back in the '80s, there were two clubs in Nimbin, The Straights and The Hippies (otherwise known as Nimbin United and Nimbin Headers).

I won't go into what initially brought about the fracture (I'll leave that for club icon Nigel Hayes to share). The Straights ran the juniors, and I loved football so I had no choice but to play for the Baker Bill Dough Boys (NU under 9s) but my heart was with the Hippies.

After living in Melbourne for a few years in my teens I returned to Nimbin, dabbled with the Demons

and then followed my heart to the Beautiful Game with Headers. I have many great memories playing 1st and 2nd Division, winning the Grand Final in 2nds with an unstoppable back line of myself and Lewis and Ruben King. The memories are huge.

Injury took me out of the game I love. I tried again after a few seasons off, but realised I could help the club more off the field than on.

At the time, our Canteen Manager retired and I stepped into the role thinking it was "just one season". I brought in new menus and increased profitability, which turned the canteen from a sideline to one of the club's better income streams. Thankfully first Colin and then Lisa have taken on the job and I can help out but also run out of the canteen to SCREAM "Come on you HEADERS"

What keeps you coming back to volunteer?

I bleed green.

What do your volunteer duties involve?

I'm known on the committee

as Mr Merch. I organise all the merchandise from hoodies, caps even down to the embroidered badges that are sewn onto our official field kit. I MC, do announcements and get the crowd ge'e'd up.

What's the strangest request you've ever had from a player, coach or supporter?

Not fit for print.

How does the canteen contribute to the atmosphere on match day?

The canteen is the hub... People turn up and the first thing they say is not their order but, "What's the score?"

What's a favourite Headers memory for you?

Hard to pick just one memory. The Champs beating Bangalow at Bangalow for the Grand Final is definitely up there.

What's the best part of being involved with the Headers?

The way it brings so many people together, from the Mini Roos right up to some of the senior citizens in the 6th division (cough) Nigel (cough).



Max Pike (centre) celebrating the 2024 Grand Final win with the team

Nimbin Demons make their mark



by Laurie Axtens

As the local Aussie Rules football season comes to a close, it is time to reflect on the 2026 highs and lows for the Nimbin Demons.

This year saw the Northern Rivers AFL competition expanded to eight weeks of games from last year's five games, with each week seeing all games played at the one ground over the day.

Nimbin was scheduled to host a game day, but unfortunately this had to be relocated to Lismore as the field was unable to be repaired in time following the heavy traffic it endured with the MardiGrass weekend camping, combined with excessive rainfall.

This was disappointing to all involved - Nimbin traditionally has seen big numbers of locals turning up to watch the home side play, and opponents always expressed their enjoyment as visitors to our ground and town. We look forward to dryer weather next year and work which will hopefully prevent the same extent of damage.

On the plus side, Nimbin not only fielded full teams for each game, but succeeded in being ultra-competitive over the course of the season. Taking to the field was an exciting mix of veteran footballers led by captain Will Alexander, including multi-decade local legend Frank Reid, as well as young fellas learning how to play the game.

Spectators have enjoyed the skills of some excellent athletes and experienced footballers in the red and blue, as well as the courageous efforts of those developing their skills. Nimbin has rarely ever seen its side being so consistently competitive, week-in week-out.

Former Demons full-forward Tony Grumley has coached the team to a high level of tenacity, beginning with solid pre-season training during the heat of summer. Off the field, former Demons captain Keiran Kevans secured a grant from the AFL to purchase professional standard goal and point posts, another first for Nimbin.

The club's iconic merchandise has become hot items with Nimbin Demons T-shirts, hoodies, caps, hats and much more being spotted around the nation, even in professional AFL circles.

The committee thanks all those who have supported the Demons during the re-build of both the local league and the club over the last two years. This includes major sponsors such as the Nimbin Hotel, The Mended Drum, the HEMP Embassy, Nimbin Haberdashery, Luke Branding Solutions, HotMatter T-shirts.

Weekly game-day awards were donated by Uki Automotive and Nix Nibbles, and thanks to CMC who are seeing to the field repairs.

A football team is essentially about community, bringing people together around an enjoyable activity. Strengthening the social fabric through joining together builds a community's resilience - connections help everyone in both good and bad times.

We look forward to continuing this new chapter of the Nimbin Demons well into the future and welcome newcomers at any time in this exciting journey.

Stay tuned for developments around AFL9s later in the year, and the exciting possibility of a Demons cricket team entering the local village summer competition.

World Cup fever hits Northern Rivers

by Marty de Weerd

The 2026 Men's Football World Cup in Canada, Mexico and the United States is without a doubt, the biggest sporting event we have ever seen.

As is the case across the globe, sports fans in the Northern Rivers have been joined by casual viewers getting up at unusual hours to watch the beautiful game.

Putting aside all of the controversies that inevitably come with the sport's peak organising body, FIFA (peace prize anyone?), the event has provided a lot of excitement on and off the pitch.

This edition has seen the expansion of the tournament to 48 teams, all competing to secure the most prized possession in world football, something that just eight nations have achieved since the Cup was first held in 1930.

This expanded version has resulted in a new format, more games, more underdogs and more stories to keep the cup interesting.

In the first phase of the Cup, twelve groups of four teams fought it out with the top two teams advancing to the knockout phase along with the eight best performing third place teams from each group, leading to a thrilling conclusion to the group stage as teams jostled for position.

Countries such as Cabo Verde and Curacao, competing in their first World Cups, have produced unexpected results, winning them a whole new legion of fans who may not have been able to point these minnows out on a map a mere month ago.

A youthful Socceroos squad has also exceeded most people's expectations, qualifying for the knockout rounds for the second successive World Cup by finishing second in their group which featured Türkiye, hosts the United States and Paraguay.

After surprisingly winning their first game against Türkiye 2-0 thanks to goals from Nestory Irankunda and Connor Metcalfe, they lost their second game against the US by the same margin before closing out the group stage with a nil all draw against Paraguay, setting up a knockout game against Egypt.

At the time of writing, halfway through the round of 32 knockout games, several highly fancied teams have already been sent packing with the likes of Germany and the

Netherlands eliminated in heartbreaking penalty shoot-outs while Türkiye and Uruguay never made it beyond their groups.

While some countries have stumbled, others have shone, including 2022 finalists Argentina and France, African champions (controversially) Morocco and all three host nations.

Despite some stumbles, previous winners Spain, Brazil and England remain in the running with the extended format providing these teams with an opportunity to improve throughout the tournament.

In the stadiums and on the streets of host cities, parties have been pumping with Scottish fans drinking Boston dry, Norwegian fans celebrating their Viking heritage with some impressive synchronised rowing and orange clad Dutch fans going left... then right in unison and all the other colour and flair that football's passionate and exuberant supporters typically bring.

While the Cup has been generally well received, it would be remiss of me not to mention some of the more disappointing aspects of the Cup so far.

Firstly, the so-called "hydration breaks" which have resulted in the games effectively being played in quarters as opposed to the traditional halves, have undoubtedly been cynically inserted to appease corporate sponsors trying to maximise advertising opportunities rather than any player safety.

These have had an impact on the momentum in games, provided opportunities for additional coaching and have been met with a chorus of boos on every occasion.

Secondly, the treatment of the Iranian team, forced to fly in and out of the United States from their base in Mexico on matchdays for purely political reasons, put them at a significant disadvantage and seemingly goes against FIFA's policies of remaining apolitical during their showcase event.

By the time this has gone to print, Australia's fate against Egypt will be known. Here's hoping we've been granted more opportunities to cheer the boys on.

It has been great to see supporters gathering together to cheer on the team. Whether it be at the live sites in capital cities or at the Nimbin Bowlo, these shared moments can create long lasting memories and inspire future generations of players. GO SOCCEROOS!



John
0428 200 288



Jacqui
0439 15 6666



Samara
0429 806 288



Suzy
0429 492 477



Vicki
0409 914 433



Michelle
0489 238 889

We are the **Highest** selling Agency in Northern Rivers 2026

For properties SOLD on realestate.com.au
Data from 1 May 2025 to 20 May 2026

FROM THE HILLS TO THE COAST!



175 Oakey Creek Road, Georgica
3 1 2 2.71 ha
\$850,000 Agent: Michelle



46 Kirkland Road, Nimbin
15.5 Acres Vacant land
\$750,000 Agent: Jacqui



2286 Nimbin Road, Nimbin
3 1 1 4952m²
\$815,000 Agents: John & Michelle



29 Nimbin Street, The Channon
4 2 3 880m²
\$765,000 Agents: John & Samara



240 Stanger Road, Stony Chute
3 1 7 3 Hectares
\$860,000 Agents: John & Michelle



41/4505 Kyogle Road, Wadeville
5 Acres Vacant land
\$250,000 Agent: Jacqui



476 Wallace Road, Terania Creek
5 4 2 7 Hectares
\$1,595,000 Agents: Samara & John



1/4 Wallaby Road, Nimbin
3 1 2 8 Acres
\$580,000 - \$620,000 Agent: Samara



1740 Nimbin Road, Koonorigan
37.4 Ha Vacant land
\$1,150,000 Agent: Samara



312 Gungas Road, Nimbin
5 1 7 36 Hectares
\$1,050,000 Agent: Jacqui



431 Borton Road, Tullera
2 1 4 5 Acres
\$1,150,000 Agents: John & Samara



2/269 Upper Tuntable Falls Rd, Nimbin
3 1 1 2 Hectares
\$820,000 Agent: Samara

25 Basil Road, Nimbin
144 Link Road, Wadeville
8 Earls Court, Goonellabah
5330 Kyogle Road, Cawongla
59/74 Currajong Street, Evans Head

SOLD

\$860,000 - John & Samara
\$865,000 - John & Michelle
\$1,100,000 - Vicki
\$570,000 - Jacqui
\$750,000 - Vicki