

## Robert Edgar Townsend [3A30]



L to R. Robert [3A30], Lynda [3A32], Kay [3A31] and Donald [3A30]

### Sporting Tribute



**STAR PLAYER:** Robert Townsend (front row, second from left) is pictured with the Riverina team in the 1960s. The team is (back row, from left): J Johnston (manager), T Slack-Smith (reserve), J Bonetti, B Broad, R Crowe (capt), K Broad, G Snowden, E Flack, P Carver, J Maxwell, M Cafe (trainer); (front row, from left): R Davis, R Townsend, R Budd, P Broad (reserve), G Hay, N Foley; (mascot) Michael Crowe.

## ‘Rocket’ a Riverina sporting legend

ONE OF the Riverina's best sportsmen of the 1960s and 70s passed away following a nine month battle with cancer last month.

Robert Edgar Townsend, better known as “Robbie” or “Rocket”, died at Lake Cargelligo hospital at the age of 57 years.

A talented five-eighth, Townsend's career highlight was representing Riverina against New Zealand in 1967.

The Riverina team – led by league legend Ron Crowe – lost

the game in the final minutes, going down 21-19, however, Townsend starred in setting up two tries.

Townsend also played with the Lake Bears in the Group 17 competition, where he took them to a premiership in the club's last year as captain-coach in 1970.

He later was part of premiership glory again in 1974 with Lakes United and represented Group 17 and 20 during his decorated career, which culminated when he

received life membership at the club.

Townsend remained involved in rugby league until 1981, his last year as coach of the Lake Cargelligo second grade team, before returning to coach the club's under 16 team in 1991, three decades after making his first division debut with Yanco Agricultural High School.

However, his talents were not only confined to rugby league, as Townsend had also starred in Australian football.

He won a stunning nine

Northern Riverina premierships for the Lake Cargelligo Tigers between 1962 and 1976, which included many best and fairest awards.

Townsend also represented the competition in the inter-league championships and captain-coached the Lake Swans.

Townsend is survived by his wife Topsy, children Shawn, Brendan and Lauren, their partners Prue and Jason and grandchildren Mikayla and Lachlan.

# Robert Edgar (Robbie) Townsend

Robert Edgar (Robbie) Townsend, who fought cancer with great courage and determination, was one of Lake Cargelligo's favourite sons and sportsmen.

The second son of Edgar and Francis Townsend, he was born in Lake Cargelligo on February 7, 1946, and finally lost his battle with the disease on Wednesday, October 15, at the age of 57.

His funeral in Lake Cargelligo on Saturday, October 18, showed the respect he was held in when it was attended by one of the largest crowd of mourners seen in the town.

The Townsend family was close and loving, with a strong bond between Robbie, his brother Donald and sisters Kay and Linda.

After early schooldays at Lake Cargelligo Central School, Mr Townsend joined his older brother at Yanco Agricultural High School, which he greatly enjoyed, not because of the classroom, but because it enabled him to develop and indulge in what was to become a lifelong passion, sport.

After three years at Yanco, the headmaster called Mr Townsend's father into his office to advise that as much as he liked having his son at the school, he suggested it was not worth attending, just for sport.

So Mr Townsend returned home to Lake Cargelligo, where he commenced work at Townsend and Harris Stock and Station Agency.

There he worked like he played his sport, with a 100 per cent commitment.

As the first player for the Lake Bears to leave for a paid playing position, he worked at the flour mill in Narrandera.

Later his vocation took him to Beaurepaire and A. and G. before returning to Beaurepaire as manager.

In January 1972, he married Topsy

Attwood and they had three children, Shawn, Brendon and Lauren, whom they nurtured into fine young adults.

All three excelled at sport, which pleased him no end.

Prue and Jason Jones joined the family, which was further extended this year, with the arrival of two grandchildren, Mikayla and Lachlan.

A sportsman in the true meaning of the word, Mr Townsend was very proud of, but never boasted about his sporting achievements.

He played hard and fair and both his team mates and opponents considered it an honour to play with and against him.

Enjoying and excelling at many different sports, he was a strong swimmer and a good water skier, an all rounder at cricket and a representative Australian rules and rugby league player.

He captained the 1972-73 premiership Burgoooney cricket side and the Wanderers, as well as the Lake Cargelligo intertown team.

In Australian rules he won many premierships with Lake Tigers, collecting a number of best and fairest awards along the way, played inter-league for the Northern Riverina and was captain-coach of the Lake Swans.

During one game the Swans were short of players so Shawn, then 11, played alongside his father.

In rugby league, Mr Townsend played just about all of his career as a five-eighth.

A member of the Yanco first grade side, although only in third year at the time, he was later captain-coach of the Group 17 premiership winning Lake Cargelligo Bears, in their final year, 1970.

Best and Fairest awards again came his way with the Bears and then Lakes United, with whom he won a premiership in 1974.

Mr Townsend represented Group

20 and one of his greatest moments in the sport was playing for Riverina against New Zealand at Ron Crowe Oval in 1967.

After his footballing days he played tennis with his wife in the Wanderers team and also enjoyed bowls and social golf.

But his love of football drew him back helping to get the ground ready, assisting on the gate and cleaning up after the game.

Further sporting awards came his way with an Australian Sports medal in recognition of his services to rugby league in 2000, and in September this year, he and his good mate Harry Sanson were made life members of Lakes United.

Mr Townsend was also very community minded and generous with his time and favours giving, his support to many local organisations.

Typical of this was Anzac Day which saw him helping to set up and take down the seating from the hall.

He was also member of the volunteer fire brigade for 15 years.

In 1994, he and his wife bought the Beaurepaire franchise, providing a high standard of service to the town and district. No job was too big or too hard for them.

A true mate and friend, Mr Townsend fought hard and bravely against his illness, with much support from his wife Topsy, family and friends.

He touched them all with his life.

Good friends Peter McFadyen and Barry Glasgow participated in the service, conducted in the Lake Cargelligo Uniting Church by Rev. Robyn Wilkins, after which interment took place in the Lake Cargelligo cemetery.

Pall bearers were sons Shawn and Brendon, Mark Chatterton, Leigh Phillips, Brett Phillips and Don Townsend.