

## 50 Years Strong

### Saint Donnelly: the First Club Captain

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"Bindi-eye, buffalo grass, you name it. And we played bare feet! Some wore sandals though I didn't like wearing shoes. I liked bare feet, I could feel the ball and kick really well."

"I could kick the ball 60 metres no problem at all."

There was one stand out kick for Saints that remains imprinted in Donnelly's memory, and he wishes there was photographic proof of it.

"There was a cricket pitch in the middle of the oval, so the centre was to one side of it making one end of the field shorter than the other."

"It was a windy day. I marked the ball right in the middle and thought 'I'm gonna give it a good whack' [towards goal]."

"The mob in defence came forward thinking they'd mark it, but it went right over their heads, bounced three times and went through the goal!"

"I was more surprised than anyone," he laughs.

The demise of Commonwealth in 1959 saw the rise of a new force in Broome football. Father Kevin McKelson approached Donnelly to help him start a new team called Saints, after St Mary's school.

"I was with Towns, but my heart was with St Mary's because I played basketball for St Mary's and went to school there."

"I was in my prime, so I said yes - as long as we can find a team."

Along with his older brother Frank, they played in singlets dyed green with black shorts and won the 1960 premiership.

Donnelly was an excellent player at centre or centre half forward. He recalls many other brilliant players like Dominic Matsumoto, Wayne Edgar, Peter "Nugget" Matsumoto, David Djiagween, Gordon Lee and Tommy King.

"We were good mates, we grew up together. So many of them have passed on, but their sons and grandsons play."

When Fr McKelson left for Bidadanga in 1961 (and later started the Emus), Fr Brian Murray - a football fanatic - took over coaching Saints.

"He was great, a real instigator. We'd talk a lot of tactics."

But between 1965 and 1969 there was no com-

petition played in Broome, much to Donnelly's disappointment, until another football mad catholic priest came along.

"Father McMahon said to me 'C'mon lets start St Mary's again', and I said Father I'm too old, I'm 31. I think he was 32 and he said 'I'll play if you do'."

They did, and Saints won their second premiership in 1971.

"Father Mac did so much for Broome football I think it's a great thing the new oval is named for him, and the other oval for Nipper Roe."

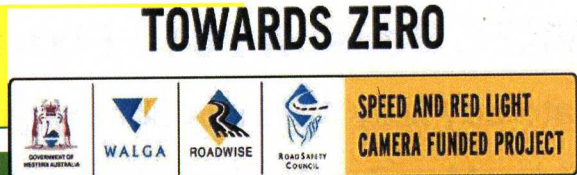
When asked why he thinks Saints have lasted for 50 years, the father of six says it's because of the friendship between players.

"I'm really pleased to see the Club still going. I still go down to watch."

"To win you have to give 100 per cent, you can't stop. You gotta move I say to those boys now. I never stopped until the end of the game."

Donnelly's son Micklo is also a Saints Club legend, who played more than 300 games and is the assistant coach for the club's 50<sup>th</sup> year.

"It's a good thing see my son and grandsons play for Saints. I'm proud."



*getting there together*

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