



FAREWELL BILL OUTERSIDE

most capped player in Myrtle Green.

by Jim Webster

I was very saddened to learn last month of the death of Bill Outterside, as I'd seen him only a short while beforehand when he was as chirpy as ever. We chatted about old times, of rugby generally, of his recent passion for golf and how much he was enjoying retirement. He was then in remission from cancer, but the horrid thing suddenly caught up with him again a short while later.

Many of you mightn't remember or even have heard of Bill, but he was the core of Randwick's First Grade pack for more years than I care to remember.

Just take a moment to absorb his playing statistics. He wore the famous green jersey in 432 grade games, making him the most capped player in history with the Galloping Greens. They included 202 games in First Grade, which placed him eighth on the club's all-time list of First Grade appearances. He was also a member of their First Grade Premiership teams in 1959-1966-1971.

But, damn it, stats never tell the proper story.

The brother of the former Test forward Bob Outterside, Bill had the physique all potential props dreamt of having. He was as broad as he was tall and a starting gig on Dancing with the Stars was way beyond him, as was touching his toes (well almost).

He was reliable and very capable in every aspect of front row play. His side of the scrum never moved an inch. While Bill was as hard as an old boot, he was also a very clean footballer, in the days when forwards were made of granite. Some of the very tough men who come readily to mind during my time in the game are Tony (Slaggy) Miller, Alan Cameron, Keith Ellis, Steve Finnane, Laurie Fahy, Tim Bristow, Ken Yanz, Les Austin, Jim Miller, Tony Shaw, Gregg (Tiny) Melrose and Steve Temple to name a few.

Many of them did business in the front row and while Bill didn't pack against all of them, he packed against quite a few.

And the greatest legacy Bill took from those many years in rugby's engine-room was the respect of all other forwards. Former Wallaby & Drummoyne prop John Freedman was among those who swapped pleasantries and rubbed ears with Bill on countless occasions and today salutes him as a "strong and fair opponent".

The death notice reminded us that Bill, born in 1933, and his wife Susie also had six children, so he didn't spend all his time buried in scrums, washing green jerseys or calling for another shout at the bar of the licensed Randwick Rugby Club.

As I said, Bill played his rugby in the time of some of the toughest blokes who ever pulled on a football boot. They gave no quarter and asked for none. If someone was transgressing, then he was politely told to stop. One warning was enough. After

that, remedial action was smartly administered.

Which reminds me of the story which filtered across my desk the very day of Bill's passing.

It came from the former Queensland Reds and Wallaby midfielder Dick Marks, who says he often talks about the game between Queensland and King Country in Tamaranui in 1963. "You all think there's great camaraderie and loyalty out there in a rugby team – well, not that day in our team," he says. "It was every man for himself."

Leo Williams was marking the greatest and the toughest of All Black forwards, Colin Meads, in the second-row and as Queensland's forwards were running to a scrum towards the end of the game, which turned out to be a massacre, Leo turned to his second-rower partner and asked: "Do you mind swapping sides for this one, because I've pinched a nerve in my pushing shoulder?"

His trusting mate, who happened to be former Wallaby assistant coach Alex Evans, said 'sure' and went over to the side opposite Meads.

As soon as the scrum went down, Meads came through the scrum with a very well-placed uppercut. Alex saw stars and after the scrum yelled to Leo, "that bastard hit me!"

And Leo's reply: "well, I'm not surprised because I gave him one in the scrum before."

Rest in peace up there, Bill Outterside, but don't ever change places with anyone...