

Siggy Nowak (1975-1983)



My wife and I both landed secondary school teaching postings near Bendigo in 1975. I had played soccer in First Division and then in the Premier League in Melbourne in my youth and also more recently for the Army in PNG (National Service) - football was definitely my passion.

I remember driving to the Institute of Technology nearby to our place when we first arrived in Bendigo and started chatting to the young guys kicking a ball around on the oval. Bob Seviour was there and I really enjoyed his banter. I was quickly approached by a chap by the name of Ian Platt. He had a pen and registration form in his hand. The rest is history.

My first year in BIT was most enjoyable. With a solid back line of Bob Seviour and Max Beever, a skilful mid fielder in Glen Roff and Ken Chilligo plus a tall goal scoring freak in Chris Ricketts, BIT was both exciting to watch and a joy to be a social member of. I ended my first year with the club by winning the Player of the Year. Chris won the top goalscorer award (and for the next 3 years).

In the early days, pre 1974, the team was made up primarily of college students and staff but over the next 8 years we were able to recruit some of the most exciting players seen in the local competition. The name change to Bendigo College of Advanced Education in mid 1976 symbolised the rising skill level of football played. The team and the individual players prospered by playing an exciting brand of free flowing football. BCAE continued to dominate the Bendigo League for the next 8 years. It was the team to be in, and the team to beat.

Not to be outdone, my wife Heather and some of the wives/female spectators/partners/onlookers, decided to set up a league of their own - the first such women's league in Australia I believe. Football, football, football.

BIT/BCAE's trophy room is full of team and individual silverware won over those years. In addition, many of BCAE players (including me) went on to represent the Bendigo League in the various state and national amateur football association fixtures. Bendigo even fielded a team in the Melbourne Industrial League for a couple of years so that meant training 3 days a week and playing Sat and Sun which was quite waring for my family.

Heather accompanied me everywhere as we carted our kids all around the countryside indulging my passion. Little wonder I eventually slowed down for a few years to coach my son and assist my daughter with her horse at pony club events.

I look back with lots of pride on those years playing the game I loved. Our life was hectic but it coincided with some of the most creative and satisfying times.

In 1983 Heather and I, with two young children, went touring overseas for 7 months. When we arrived back home I found BCAE, under Stuart Gibson, had enjoyed a very successful year. Playing one last game I realised my time was up. Unencumbered by coaching or other responsibilities I was coaxed to join the Bendigo Old Boys team for a kick-around for a couple of years. My "dad" duties eventually left little time for my sport. We shifted to Sale in 1989 and then on to Brisbane where we have lived since 1994. I have continued to play indoor and more recently, walking football, to this very day.

9 months ago I accidentally came across a social media site where BCAE "old boys" have a chat and reminisce (talk shit). A reunion was always on the cards.