

Stuart Gibson (1981-1983)



I played for College from 1981 till 1983 and have the fondest memories of those years. My wife Sue and I had only been in Australia from the UK for a few

months and we both moved to Bendigo from Melbourne. I had secured the job as the Recreation Officer at BCAE, and was very pleased when I heard that there was a football team (soccer as it was called - I still hate the word soccer!) Although we no longer live there, and have travelled and stayed in many places in Australia, Bendigo still has a special place in our hearts. We still have many close friends there.

I can remember the first game of the 1981 season, where we were expecting to win and went down 4-1 to South Bendigo. Greg (Toots) Trewella took us apart on that day. Toots became a great friend and team mate in 1986. RIP Toots. That defeat was a shock to the system, as was playing at our home ground at Osborne Street which had a sand cricket pitch in the middle. I had never played on a football pitch like that in the UK!!

The next game was against Colts away, where we held on to get a scoreless draw. Not a great start to the season, but we won every game after that, taking out the League title as well as the Knock Out Cup. For good measure we also won the 5 a side that year, so it was a very successful first year for College and my first year in Australia.

I played in 1982 and 1983, but apart from winning the 5 a side, we were not to repeat the success of 1981. I coached the reserves and the first teams in 1983, due to Siggie being overseas. It was very pleasing that the Reserves won the League and the Knock Out Cup in 1983, and Marty Hurst's celebrations live on in my memory.

Looking back on my days with College, I can remember how close the players were, and there was always a few beers after the games at someone's house, with copious amounts of fish, chips, scallops and potato cakes, and of course beer! In those days pubs weren't open on a Sunday night, so it was always easier to go back to one of the player's houses. One night our resident chemical engineer Ray Gill plied us with some of the very potent wine he had made. He could make wine out of anything. Ray passed away a few years ago, but his reputation remains.

I went on to live in WA, back to Bendigo (where I had a very enjoyable season at Spring Gully in 1986, due to the demise of College). Then we moved to Darwin for 10 years where both our kids Sean and Steffi were born, then 7 Years in the Whitsundays and the last 19 years in Townsville. I played in various teams until I was about 47 (and getting slower and even dirtier!) and then coached for a number of years. I am still involved with a club here in Townsville, Brothers FC, and although I have stopped coaching, I am now a life member and make sure the grounds are in good shape and process the various grants.

Looking back on my 3 years of playing with College, we had a very good team in 1981 and always tried to play attractive football. Tony Long was a good keeper, and our back four was great, and had plenty of height and tough tacklers - Albert Lebbink, Guy Congdon, Voldi Snijders, and me. I think I was the smallest of the defence, so was happy to play the sweeper role! The

midfield was one of the best I ever played with, they complimented each other. Siggie Nowak, Marty Hurst and the brilliant Mick Roche. Mick is one of the best players I have ever played with. He was certainly the fittest! He ran to games in a track suit he owned for 20 years with his three dogs, and told them to sit, which is exactly what they did until the game ended. The midfield worked hard to get back and many times Marty was seen to be sweeping behind me, as I would shout "out" only to see this bustling bloke run behind me, and after I asked what the hell he was doing, he would answer " Can't take any chances mate!"

Siggie always lead by example and was often the best player on the park, and a great captain. The front three of Paul Ayre, Greg Hall and Sandy Geddis were industrious and shared many goals. Greg was top scorer that year, Paul scored the winning goal in the Cup Final and Sandy caused many problems on the left. Other players to feature that year included stalwart Bob Seviour, Dave Damond and Michael Moore, who scored the winning goal against Colts in the league, which effectively won the title for us.

Whilst the next two years were hugely enjoyable, and we attracted players such as the Bracey brothers, Mick and Clive, and Celly McCuskey, we never reached the heights of 1981. I also really enjoyed playing for the Bendigo rep teams over those years and in 1986, with particular great memories of playing in Melbourne and beating their top amateur teams. The Country Championships were always very enjoyable and I became great friends with players from other clubs. The Bendigo League was very well organised and administratively was the best I have ever encountered. I am looking forward to the reunion and exchanging memories with a lot of old friends. See you in September 24th hopefully.