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**Bro. ALFRED HENRY (HARRY) BATH
RUGBY LEAGUE GREAT
(1925 - 2008)**

Alfred Henry (Harry) Bath was one of rugby league's greatest players, coaches and characters, the quintessential football man. "I think it was my game," Bath reflected in a final interview with the film maker, Graham McNeice in 2008. "I was never much good at school because I was always playing bloody football."

A family photo from 1927 shows young Harry Bath at two and a half years of age, already in rugby league-mascot of the team for which his dad, Dixie, played. Harry Bath died at 83 years of age on the eve of the 2008 rugby league grand final.

In playing "bloody football", which he did with a mixture of subtle skills and ferocity, Bath constructed a career without peer or parallel. In league's pantheon he and his Warrington team mate Brian Bevan, ("the Wizard of Aus"), are the greatest players never to have played for their country. Both were lost early to the Australian game, travelling as young men in the 1940s to England where they built legendary careers.

Bath should have had a green and gold jumper by then but he wrecked a knee playing for the NSW side against the touring Great Britain team in 1946. "I only had to stand on my feet and I would have played for Australia" he recalled "I was as fit as a bull." Before long he was gone-to England with Barrow club. There he married Gwen Howe, whom he had met when working at Brand's Electrical in Clarence Street, Sydney.

It wasn't until 1967 that Bath, then 37, returned to Australia – to play three seasons and 60 games with St George where he smashed records and amassed 510 points. Saints won the premierships of 1957, 1958 and 1959. His last day as a player ended with him and Manly's Rex Mossop sent off in the grand final of 1959 after a furious fight. When referee Darcy Lawler took no action after Mossop had administered some "treatment" in a ruck, Bath declared, "I'll look after it me bloody self." He did, boots, fists and all.

The hat trick with Saints made it a remarkable six premierships for Bath, including South Brisbane in 1945 and Balmain in 1946-47. But his golden playing period came in 10 seasons with the Lancashire Club, Warrington (1947-56), which he joined after an 18 game stay at Barrow, and where he set records tumbling while constructing a reputation as probably the finest rugby league forward anywhere. He played 346 games for Warrington and scored 1894 points (90 tries, 812 goals). They were triumphant years for the club, most famously in 1954 when a crowd guessed at 102,569, but more likely 120,000, crammed Odsal stadium, Bradford, to see Warrington defeat Halifax 8-4 in a replay of the Challenge Cup final.

On his retirement as a player in 1959 Bath began building a second life as perhaps the finest "pure" football coach the Australian game has seen. The champion second-rower, Bob McCarthy, who played his football under coaches such as Dennis

Donoghue, Bernie Purcell, Clive Churchill and Jack Gibson said, "He was streets in front of them all. No one I have met matched him for football knowledge."

Bath was gruff at times and a strict disciplinarian yet even players who clashed with him, such as Arthur Beetson, greatly respected him. When he was named the game's seventh immortal in 2003 Beetson made a point of thanking Bath.

Harry Bath spent his first twenty-one years in Brisbane's West End, the only son of Alfred Henry (Dixie) and Marj Bath. He had two sisters, Edna and Marj. He was playing league by five years, was a state representative at 12, and joined Southern Suburbs club at 16. In late 1945 he was enticed to Sydney by the canny Balmain club identity, Norman "Latchem" Robinson.

Bath's working life was largely in the hotel industry. Mine host of the Britannia Inn in Warrington for six years, he later owned and managed four pubs in Sydney and one in Warwick, Queensland. At other times he was a taxi driver and a newsagent. But for Bath, above everything else, life was about family and football. When he finally retired from coaching in 1981 he told a football lunch, "Those who drink the water should never forget those who dug the well."

By then Bath, the "old fox", had done it all. As a coach he had engineered great successes for Australia, including the winning of the World Cup of 1968 and 1970-the latter after one of the fiercest games ever played, the infamous "Battle of Leeds" final against Great Britain.



Grinning winners ... Kangaroo captain Johnny Raper and coach Harry Bath in 1968.



Rising star ... young Tiger Harry Bath in his Balmain jersey circa 1946.

He had won premierships with St George-in 1977 (With the team known as "Bath's Babes"⁰ and in 1979, taken Balmain to two grand finals (1964 & 1966)- and added polish and skill to countless players.

Like many of his generation he was no great fan of the modern game. He remained phlegmatic about the passing parade, declaring players to be "like mushrooms after rain, a new crop springing up every year".

Harry Bath fought desperately against ill health for two decades He was survived by Gwen, his son, Harry and daughter-in-law, Kathy, and six grandchildren. A daughter, Diane, died in 1996.

His funeral service was held at St Andrew's Anglican Church followed by a gathering at St George Leagues Club.

Alfred Henry (Harry) BATH was initiated, passed and raised in the three degrees of freemasonry on 23 January 1947, 13 June 1947 and 1 September 1947 respectively in Lodge Birkenhead No 332 UGL of NSW & ACT and affiliated in Lodge Bexley No 328 on 23 July 1958. He called off freemasonry on 22 April 1984.

Ref: Ian Heads, SMH 9.10.2008

Records of UGL of NSW & ACT.