

A JOURNEY IN FOOTBALL
FROM PIER STREET TO AN AFL PREMIERSHIP
SAM ROBERTSON



**Sam Robertson with the AFL
Premiership Cup in 2016.**

Sam Robertson's pathway from local football, at Dromana, to AFL ranks is a compelling story and well worth telling. It is an account of which DFNC club members should be immensely proud; and, hopefully, it may inspire young Dromana footballers to 'pursue their dreams' in the years to come.

Sam Robertson (born: 1983) grew up in Dromana. He loved outdoor life, sports and physical activity from an early age. He took to under-age football with unbridled enthusiasm; and he attracted quite a deal of interest in junior ranks with his style of play and his excellent kicking skills.

While Sam was successful in being listed with the **Dandenong Stingrays** in 1996, he is best remembered at DFNC for the manner in which he wholeheartedly threw himself into assisting the club rebuild the **Under: 18 team** in the late 1990's.

Sam's father, **Ray**, who played for **Castlemaine** in the Bendigo FL and **Dromana FC** was also active in resurrecting the Under: 18 team at Dromana in that period of the club's history. Ray was an ever-willing volunteer in various ways such as: goal umpire, assistant coach, team manager, selector and runner.

Note: Ray was granted **DFNC Life Membership** in 2005.

Ray and Sam Robertson played pivotal roles in recruiting young players to Pier Street. On his own initiative, Sam undertook to recruit school friends (e.g. **Dan Hooper, Andrew Vine, Adrian Marriott, Tom Colcott, Dan Anderson, Chris Marriott**) and other local boys to join the football club.

Note: Sam's brother, **Joshua**, and his two sisters, **Krystin** and **Leah** were also committed to assisting the team on match days wherever required (e.g. boundary, umpiring, scoreboard duties). Joshua also played with DFNC Under: 18 team in **2001-2002**.

Krystin Robertson (Mynard) is currently the **Secretary of Katamatite FC** in the **Picola Football League**; and, as the key administrator of the club, she has a plethora of duties to fulfil in her role. Many readers, of this website, will be cognizant that the **Picola & District FL** is currently involved in the on-going dispute regarding affiliation with the AFL; and, in turn, Krystin is extremely busy dealing with a complex set of issues related to that matter.

Krystin recently won an **AFL award** for her services to country football.

Note: Krystin's husband **Tim Mynard** is a **Life Member** of the Katamatite FC; and it is known that he played in club premierships, was the recipient of several prestigious awards (e.g. the **Fitzpatrick Award**) and, like Krystin , is an indefatigable worker for the club.

Dromana supporters will be pleased to hear that **Katamatite Football Club** is also known as the **Tigers**.

Despite some 'dreadful drubbings' and challenges, the **Dromana Under:18** team 'inched' its way forward and finally 'broke through' to establish itself as a competitive combination in NFL Under:18 football. The following season,

Sam Robertson graduated to senior football; and as club records indicate, he played eight Senior XVIII games for DFNC, usually across half back, before embarking upon the next phase of his education.

Like so many local youngsters, Sam had to 'leave town' to pursue his tertiary studies which, in his case, was a degree course in Sports Science (with specific research related to professional golf, rugby and Australian Rules).

Sam's studies and practicums took him to numerous sporting organizations and clubs; and, during these formative years, he met a long list distinguished personalities in Australian football including: **Barry Cable, Shane Woewodin, Steve Malaxos, Leon Davis, Harley Bennell, Jack Darling, David Swallow and Jaeger O'Meara.**

After nearly a decade of dedicated study, a **Doctorate in Philosophy in Sports Performance and Analysis** was bestowed upon Sam in 2012. It was a fitting reward for his long hours of demanding scholarship; and with such an impressive qualification, new career opportunities, in various sporting organizations, opened up for Sam.

Consequently, Sam 'crossed the Nullabor' and became involved with clubs in the **WAFL** such as: **East Fremantle, Perth** and later, as a skills coach, with the **WA Under: 18 squad**. Sam not only felt at home 'around football clubs' but, having played the game and grown up in a 'football family', he closely identified with the physical and psychological aspects of football.

Sam was eager to 'master his trade' and absorbed as much information and data as possible about the scientific aspects of football training and playing. His years in the 'West were most productive; and he had garnered a good reputation in assisting footballers to reach their full potential.

'Opportunity knocked' in the way of a position back in Victoria; and, in late 2014, Sam packed his books and football gear and headed back 'home.' He arrived at the **Western Bulldogs** as the **Head of Research and Innovation** and commenced his new duties at the **Western Oval** in the very same week that the current **Senior Bulldogs' Coach, Luke Beveridge** 'took the reins' at the **WBFC.**

The importance of preparing footballers physically, technically, tactically and mentally has reached unprecedented levels; and qualified sports scientists, such as Sam, are very much a part of AFL football clubs these days. Sam Robertson was one of the off-field team that supported Luke Beveridge in ensuring that the Bulldogs' players had every chance to perform at their peak 'week in and week out.'

If **Charlie Sutton** (Footscray's formidable premiership coach of 1954) was still alive he would be astonished by the advances that have transpired in national football. For example: One known AFL club has 15 coaches and 17 members listed on its Football Operations staff. Charlie would be flabbergasted by the facilities, equipment, support staff and skills coaches that exist today.

As is well-known, the Bulldogs' premiership in 2016 was nothing short of spectacular; and must rank as one of the finest victories in the long history of Australian football.

In an unforgettable season, the **Western Bulldogs** came from seventh position on the AFL Ladder to snare the flag. It was a victory full of fight spirit, character, and team work (on and off the field).

Sam Robertson will always remember the 2016 home and away series, the exciting finals and, of course, the celebrations that followed that mighty win over the Swans in the **Grand Final** in front of nearly **100,000** people.

It was a year of which most young men can only dream; and for the former Dromana footballer it was a just reward for years of dedicated study and work...

“ I was fortunate enough to play an active role in Footscray's amazing premiership and also operated the bench on game days. My current position consists of overseeing Sport Science activity and research at the club, as well as working on performance innovations in conjunction with the Director of Football, Chris Grant...”

As can be imagined, Sam has witnessed and learnt much at the top echelon of AFL football; and his work in assisting footballers perform at their optimum has made him quite a 'wanted man' on the speakers circuit. Sam's work has also taken him to **Harvard University** and other centres of sporting excellence throughout the world e.g. **Spain, Japan, USA** and the **Middle East**.

Note: Sam is also an Associate Professor in Sport Science at **Victoria University**; and is currently a post-doctoral research fellow with **Champion Data** (who are world leaders in the field of player tracking technologies) and with **Tennis Australia**.

After much travelling, Sam Robertson has returned to the **Mornington Peninsula** to live and he hopes to attend some of Dromana's games this season. Sam will always be a welcome guest at Pier Street; and he is to be warmly congratulated for: (i) Achieving so much in his chosen field of studies and (ii) The role he played in helping the Bulldogs win the flag in 2016.

FOOTNOTES REGARDING: SAM ROBERTSON, FAMILY & FOOTSCRAY

Footnote: 1 Since the club's entry into the VFL in 1925, **Footscray /WBFC** has won two only premierships (**1954** and **2016**); and it is quite remarkable to think that Dromana has strong links with **both** of those winning teams As described above, Sam Robertson played an significant role with Luke Beveridge and the team in winning football's 'Holy Grail' in 2016.

However, there is another Dromana connection with the Bulldogs' flags as **Luke Martin**, who played 34 senior games with DFNC between **2000 and 2002**, is the nephew of **Alan Martin** who played in **Footscray's historic premiership** team in 1954.

Alan Martin played 105 games for Footscray; and he was part of the brilliant Bulldog half back line (**Gallagher-Whitten-Martin**) that blanketed the brilliant Melbourne forward line on that memorable day in 1954. Like his uncle, Luke Martin was a solid defender; and he served the DFNC well during those difficult times in the club's history.

Footnote: 2 Sam's Robertson's great uncle, **Keith Robertson**, played 69 games with North Melbourne, in two stints, between 1957 and 1963. Keith (**ex-Tempy FC-Mallee FL**) played two games for Victoria, as a wing man, against **Tasmania** and **South Australia** in 1962; and his two sons (**Rohan** and **Shane**) also played with the **Kangaroos**.

It is known that Keith Robertson was **Runner-up** in North Melbourne's **Best and Fairest Trophy** in 1962; and according to one reliable text, the 'reward' for Keith that season was an electric frypan. There would be little doubt that Keith would fully concur with **Charlie Sutton** (see above) about the changing nature of the game of football.

Footnote: 3 Any readers who wish to hear more about Sam's work at the Victoria University (including aspects of his work with the Western Bulldogs) can follow this link....

<https://www.strengthofscience.com/pacey-performance-podcast/pacey-performance-podcast-168-sam-robertson/>

RESEARCH AND REFERENCE INFORMATION.

- DFNC history and personal library files.
- Interview with family members.
- Various AFL texts (NMFC, VFL history etc.)
- Photograph from Robertson family collection.

- 'Researched and written for the DFNC History Page by Roger Spaul in April 2018.
- DFNC Website administrator/contact: Graham Stelling
Email: historian@dromanatigers.com.au.or admin@dromanatigers.com.au