

Paul Connellan

Paul grew up in Yagoona, which was then a working class western suburb of Sydney. He played his junior



football with Yagoona Soccer Club and Bass Hill RSL Soccer Club as well as for his schools Yagoona Primary and Birrong Boys' High. Under 14's was a stellar year with his Bass Hill team winning the Minor & Major Premiership double plus the President's Cup but Paul walked away from competitive football at the end of that year, unhappy with the coach's emphasis on winning and also due to Paul's desire to concentrate more on his studies leading up to the HSC.

Paul did have regrets not playing football from age 15-20 years as a number of his peers went on to play professionally in Sydney. After completing a Bachelor of Science at UNSW, Paul returned to playing football at Yagoona and eventually played in Yagoona's 1st Division All Age squad in the Bankstown Association where he played a midfield role alongside and against some very talented players. Dual registration with Division 1 and Federation players lead to player dissatisfaction around team selection, so Paul returned to Bass Hill RSL Soccer Club where he played football for several more years before relocating to the NSW Far North Coast where he quickly established himself as a central defender with the Alstonville FC Premier Division squad. Paul played 1st and Premier Division with Alstonville FC from the mid 1980s to mid 1990s when in his early forties, thankfully over 35s

football started and Paul joined Goonellabah FC o-35s where he enjoyed the camaraderie and team work of a great group of guys. Highlights of his over 35s experience included playing for Goonellabah FC in the o-35 World Fun Cup at Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast in 1996 and playing for the Harlequins, the Lismore o-35 rep squad, in the Pan Pacific Masters Games in 1997 on the Gold Coast. By 1998, at age 45, with no o-45s comp in sight and some niggling injuries, Paul reluctantly retired from football. Paul was to have one more foray with football, before Walking Football (WF), when in 2001, while travelling through Europe, he was convinced to play in an indoor tournament in Nauheim Germany. Despite not speaking a word of German, Paul did perform well, scoring several goals with his team just missing out on the play offs for a monetary prize. It was worth the experience, despite not being able to walk for a day or so afterward!

Bring the clock forward nearly 20 years, a few chance meetings, then Paul, John Galletly and Jimmy Britton formed Ballina WF. Initially playing 2v2 & 3v3 at the local park in Ballina, Ballina WF has grown to in excess of 50 playing members, both men and women, has sponsorship from the local sports club and access to both indoor and outdoor facilities. Ballina WF punches well above its weight at tournaments but most importantly it has a great group of players, from complete novices to former professionals, and it has been such a great development in the player's lives from both a physical and mental perspective. Paul hopes to continue playing WF for as long as possible.