

NSW Bar FC goes from strength to strength

By Anthonoy Lo Surdo SC

Introduction

The NSW Bar Football Club (NSW Bar FC) has grown in strength, popularity and skill since its inception in 2008. NSW Bar FC is open to barristers, members of the judiciary, clerks and employees of the Bar Association regardless of level of ability or fitness but who are united in a passion for the World Game and a determination to free themselves, if only temporarily, of the shackles of professional life.

This year, NSW Bar FC competed in the Domain Soccer League, in the annual 'State of Origin' tournament against teams from the Victoria and Queensland Bars and in the Law Firm Champions Cup.

New members

In 2012, we welcomed new members Evan Walker, Martin Smith, Faraz Maghami, Pouyan Mazandara, Ben Phillips, Darren Covell and Matthew Vickers.

Domain Lunchtime Competition

NSW Bar FC competed for the fourth successive year in the Domain Soccer League (DSL) Competition. If success is measured by fun, fitness and collegiality then NSW Bar FC enjoyed yet another enormously successful and productive year in the DSL even if that success may not have been reflected in the competition table.

Sports Law Conference and Bar Football 'State of Origin'

On 20 October 2012, over 60 barristers convened in Melbourne to attend the 2nd annual Sports Law Conference, the 5th annual Suncorp NSW Bar v Victoria Bar Annual

Challenge Cup and the 3rd annual Suncorp NSW Bar v Victoria Bar v Queensland Bar Annual Football Challenge Cup.

The NSW Bar FC touring party consisted of Houda Younan, David Patch, Rohan de Meyrick, Graham Turnbull SC, Anthony Lo Surdo SC, Vahan Bedrossian, Daniel Tynan, Gillian Mahony, Hon Justice Geoff Lindsay, David Stanton, Craig Bolger, Pouyan Mazandara, Greg Watkins, Simon Philips, Cameron Jackson, Faraz Maghami, Michael Fordham SC, Adrian Canceri and Alex Kuklik.

With the generous support of the Victorian Bar Association and especially its chair, Melanie Sloss SC, the Sports Law Conference was held in the Neil McPhee Room in Owen Dixon Chambers. The conference, chaired by Anthony Lo Surdo SC was attended by in excess of 50 barristers from the NSW, Victoria and Queensland bars.

Participants were informed and entertained by Ian Pendergast, general manager player relations of the AFL Players Association, who spoke about the often conflicting interests of the player, the club and the AFL arising from players' off-field conduct, Stephen Lee of the Queensland Bar whose presentation covered the circumstances in which a court will intervene in the affairs of a club, including the potential causes of action available to an aggrieved member, Chris Nikou from Middletons, also a director of the Asian Cup 2015 local organising committee addressed the legal, political and commercial issues faced by Australia as the host nation for the Asian Cup in 2015 and Graham Turnbull SC of the NSW

Bar provided an ever entertaining insight into the circumstances in which non-contact sport such as feigning injury, sledging and racial abuse can constitute a crime.

Following lunch, the action moved from the intellectual arena of Owen Dixon Chambers to the more familiar synthetic pitch of the Darebin International Sports Centre for the Bar Football 'State of Origin'. The skies above Darebin were mostly sunny with a slight breeze from the south-east and with temperatures hovering in the early to mid-20s made for perfect football conditions!

Game 1 – NSW v Victoria

Victoria had amassed a huge home squad in an effort to wrest the coveted title from an all-conquering NSW team which had successfully defended the prize on both home turf and away since the tournament's inception in 2008.

Tension was high in the NSW camp as Captain Simon Philips gave necessary instructions to his charges for some of whom this was their first interstate encounter. Victorian Captain Warwick Rothnie similarly sought to settle his troops for the challenge.

The teams were competitive for most of the first half as each made foray after foray into each other's half. Patch continued his run of bad luck with an opportunity that went begging. The Victorian advances were repelled by an impressive defence led by Philips, Mahony, de Meyrick, Younan and Fordham SC for the Blues. Persistence paid off minutes before the end of the first term with Bedrossian snaring one after good lead up passing through Watkins, Maghami and Mazandara.

The score at half-time was 1-0.

NSW continued its late first half dominance with Bedrossian aided by an impressive attacking mid-field slotting another about half way through the last term. A late rally by the Victorians caught a complacent, if not napping, defence with Adrian Bates scoring from a beautifully placed corner just seconds from the final whistle.

NSW won the game 2-1 and retained for the fifth successive year the Suncorp NSW Bar v Victoria Bar Annual Challenge Cup. Best and Fairest honours for NSW went to Bedrossian and Adrian Bates took the goal for Victoria.

The match was refereed by Anthony Lo Surdo SC.

Game 2 – Victoria v Queensland

The Victorians, strangely, opted to play again rather than take what some may have considered to have been a tactical redeployment (rest) of forces. The explanation appears to be that the Victorians were so buoyed by numbers that they engaged a fresh team, led by Chris Archibald, for this encounter.

The ever competitive Queenslanders captained by Johnny Selfridge were dressed to impress in traditional maroon and white and impress they did. Right from the first whistle, the Queenslanders played disciplined positional football which made up for a (not uncommon given age and other debilitating factors) lack of agility and speed. The Maroons were more than a little assisted by the Sonn brothers (not barristers) who were co-opted by Selfridge to play for the Queenslanders when two of their star players were struck down by injury.



The Queensland tactics paid enormous dividends with the tourists slamming home 4 unanswered goals.

Best and fairest for Victoria went to Lionel Wirth and for Queensland to Lee Clark.

The match was refereed by Alex Kuklik.

Game 3 – NSW v Queensland

With such an enormous lead in goal difference, the Queenslanders only needed to draw against New South Wales to take home the State of Origin silverware, a fact which they used to advantage in the psychological stakes in the final match of the 2012 series.

In what was undoubtedly the best game in the history of the 'State of Origin', first blood went to Bedrossian from NSW. Despite heroic defending by a stalwart backline consisting of Philips, Younan, Fordham SC and Mahony, the Queenslanders struck back with the score at half-time level at one apiece.

The second half saw plenty of scoring opportunities go begging for both sides and which each failed to convert.

With the score tied at one all at full-time and with the 'State of Origin' series also tied at one win and one draw a piece to NSW and Queensland, the Suncorp NSW Bar v Victoria Bar v Queensland Bar Annual Football Challenge Cup went to a deserving Queensland.

The match was refereed by Anthony Lo Surdo SC.

Thanks

The organisers wish to thank all those whose support made the day a great success and especially the conference speakers for devoting their considerable time and expertise. Special mention should be made of Peter Agardy of the Victoria Bar, John Selfridge of the Queensland Bar and Anthony Lo Surdo SC of the NSW Bar for organising the day.

Thanks also to Alex Kuklik and Anthony Lo Surdo SC who officiated.

NSW Bar FC acknowledges Suncorp, MLIG and Peter Steele for their continuing support. The Sports Law Conference and Bar Football 'State of Origin' heads to Sydney next year.