

CATHY GRAY

Cathy commenced her volunteering career with NSW in the late eighties and became a National Selector for her state in 1992 continuing in that role until 1997.

It was in the following year the Talent Identification Program was introduced at the national level and Cathy was seconded by the then National Director Ian Stanley to join his team. The TID program later became the High Performance Program.



Cathy is a highly valued TFA volunteer in the High Performance, Athlete Monitoring and Integrity role. She moved to the TFA Talent Identification Panel in 1990 and continued until 1998 when she became the National Director, a position she held until her retirement in 2024.

She was a member of the National Selectors Panel from 1996 to 1998 and the Director of Selectors 1998 and 1999. She was also awarded the Ron Hanson Medal at the 2010 Masters Trans-Tasman Series and the Phil Smith Medal at the 2011 World Cup in Scotland. In 2012 Cathy became the first female Life Member of Touch Football Australia.

When interviewed at the NTL in 2004 about her and the selectors' role, she said despite the crazily hectic lifestyle that it seems to throw at selectors they love what they are doing.

It's a lot of work, but very rewarding, especially when Australian Teams achieve success at international events, then it makes all the hard work worthwhile. It is just such an honour to be able to support the teams and be a part of everything.

The full interview went as follows:

What is your history as a National Team Selector i.e. when did you start?

I selected at the first NSWTA Regional Championships in 1984. When I finished playing in open representative teams, I continued selecting for NSWTA and was Team Leader for Women's Open for several years.

My first National Championships was in Hobart in 1992 where I again selected the Women's Open Australian Team. In 1993 I became the National Team Leader for Women's Open.

What does your role as Director of Elite Programs encompass?

Leadership and provision of a national direction in the TFA High Performance Program for elite and potentially elite Touch players. Develop, coordinate, review and oversee the High-Performance Program which includes regular consultation with GDM, High Performance Manager, National Coaches, CBs, NTL Permits etc.

Oversee the selection of the National Training Squads. Monitor the selected players to ensure they are meeting their agreed responsibilities. Be available if the players have concerns and/or queries. Attend training and selection camps. Liaison with medical staff in monitoring injuries.

Co-ordinate and monitor the selection of all National Teams-opens, juniors, seniors. Appointment of Team Leaders and selectors. Coordinate process for replacement players. Follow up players to ensure they are meeting administration responsibilities e.g. levies, paperwork etc. Provide feedback, if required, to any player who requests it after a selection tournament.

Write and implement National Policies and papers e.g. TFA Talent Identification and Selection Process and Policy, Youth Squad Process and Policy, Selector standards and qualifications etc. Oversee the presentation of Level 1 and 2 Selectors Courses, assess presenters, rewrite courses when appropriate, present selector's courses when required and implementing and overseeing the new TFA Youth Program which will complement the Open Program.

3. How did you become involved in the sport?

I had to teach a unit on Touch Football to a boy's PE class at Castle Hill High School in 1982. I had no knowledge or experience of the sport (Tennis was my main sport) so had theory lessons from Tim O'Brien who was in the Australian Men's Open Touch Football Team and a fellow staff member. He suggested I play and knew of a team at Parramatta who needed players. I remember he asked "can you catch a ball and touch people? You'll be right!". I joined the team and played in the Women's Div 1 Comp at Parramatta.

Many of my team-mates were in the Parramatta Women's Open Rep team and in my 2nd week of Touch I went along to watch them play. They were short of players, so I got coerced into playing. My first taste of rep touch and we were playing Port Hacking which had Lisa Neal, Jenny Parke and several other Australian players in the team so it was a Baptism by fire!

After each game, I used to come back to school and ask Tim to explain more of the rules and what all the terms meant e.g. blind/open sides, settles etc. I usually played and/or trained at least 5 days a week in affiliate and rep competitions.

4. What are the achievements/ highlights of your contribution to the sport thus far?

Hopefully making a difference to the way selectors are regarded. Helping bring a more professional image and more accountability to the selection process. A highlight was being present when Australia won all 5 divisions at the World Cup in Japan in 2003. The best moment was when the Mixed Team defeated NZ in the Final.

5. What makes a good selector?

Integrity, listening to everyone's point of view, reliability, knowledge, impartiality, being open to other points of view, prepared to give own opinion and being able to back it up with facts, able to work as a member of a team, confidentiality

6. What's the toughest/hardest part of the job?

Meeting all the responsibilities of my 'real' job at school with all the Touch commitments. Trying to find some free time away from the 2 areas. Trying to keep everyone happy! I have to take into account the needs and wants of all the coaches, players and selectors involved but without compromising the integrity of the process and my own integrity.

It's always tough to inform players their position is under review, or they have been withdrawn from squads/teams. As the selection buck stops with me, I often have to respond to queries about individual selections. Most people are reasonably polite, even though they are disappointed, but some people have been very difficult to deal with e.g. I have been sworn at, harassed, called a liar, abused and hung up on; none of which is very pleasant. Dealing with the negativity of some people is very difficult.

7. What's the most positive/gratifying part of the job?

Contacting players to tell them they have been selected in Australian Teams. Being able to watch and support the selected teams in international competitions. Knowing that the Selection Process is open and accountable Working with many wonderful people, who put in so much time and effort to help players achieve their goals and dreams.

Having the support of TFA Staff, coaches, players and many others keeps me going in the difficult and stressful times.

8. What do you do away from Touch? Interests, hobbies etc.

Very little spare time between teaching and Touch. But I love to travel—I went to Antarctica in 2005, which was amazing and so far removed from all the cares and responsibilities of the “real” world. I also enjoy reading, crosswords, sudoku and catching up with family and friends.

I have also become an accredited rescuer and carer for wildlife.

In her professional career as a teacher, Cathy taught at Castle Hill High School and was the Sports Organiser from 1981-1998, Hills Zone Treasurer, Tennis Convenor, Touch Football Convenor and Grade Sport Coach. She was granted the first Life Membership of the Hills Zone Combined High School Sports Association.

In 2007 Cathy was interviewed by Touch Football Australia for an article in their High Performance Herald - Official Australian Team World Cup Newsletter. The article from the publication can be found by clicking on this link : https://835b9133-e554-4760ba7fdcb06dff5411.usrfiles.com/ugd/835b91_47793492fbb04e9795e51733676c6769.pdf

Cathy Gray’s Short CV reads

Touch

TFA Life Member

TFA Director of Elite Programs / High Performance Director / Athlete Monitoring and Integrity Advisor: 1999 - 2024

TFA Director of Selectors: 1998-1999

TFA National Technical Panel:1998 onwards

TFA Talent Identification / High Performance Panel:1996 - 2024

NSWTA Selector’s Panel:1990-1998

NSWTA Selector/Team Leader: Women’s Open -1990-1998

NSWTA Regional Director: Women/Juniors 1985 -1990

Teaching

Schools: Turrumurra, Kuringai, Hunters Hill, Engadine, Castle Hill, Cheltenham Girls

PD/H/PE Teacher, Sport Co-ordinator, Student Advisor

Relieving/Acting Head Teacher PDHPE; Relieving/Acting Head Teacher Welfare

Advanced Skills Teacher – Student Leadership, Pastoral Care, Sport Leadership, Gifted and Talented in Sport

Hills Zone CHS Sports Association - inaugural Life Member

Hills Zone - Treasurer; Touch, Tennis and Grade Sport Convenor

Metropolitan North Secondary Schools CHS Girls Sports Zone – Treasurer, Grade Sport and Tennis Convenor

Other

Finalist – 2006 Australian Sport Awards – Volunteer of the Year

Australian Sports Medal 2000

NSW Justice of the Peace

WIRES Accredited Wildlife Rescuer and Carer

As part of her role in the High Performance arena Cathy needed to attend National and International events to monitor player specific performances and conduct assessments while athletes are playing under pressure conditions.

CATHY GRAY – TFA HIGH PERFORMANCE - OFFICIAL TOURS

World Cups:

1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, 2024

Trans-Tasman Test Series/All Nations:

1993 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed

1997 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed

Trans-Tasman Test Series/All Nations:

1998 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed
2001 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed
2002 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed
2005 - All Nations (NZ) - Men, Women, Mixed; Men/Women/Mixed 30; Mens 40; Mens 50
2009 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed
2010 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed
2010 v New Zealand - Men 30 /40 /45/ 50; Women 30
2012 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed
2013 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed; Men/Women/Mixed 30; Mens 40; Mens 50
2014 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed
2016 v Japan - Men, Women
2016 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed
2017 v Japan - Men
2017 v New Zealand - Men, Women, Mixed
2017 v New Zealand - Men 30 /40 /45/ 50; Women 30
2018 v NZ - Men, Women, Mixed
2023 V NZ and Japan – Men, Women, Mixed

Youth Trans-Tasman Test Series v NZ:

1992 – Auckland, New Zealand
1998 - Auckland, New Zealand
1999 - Canberra/Yass, Australia
2000 - Auckland, New Zealand
2004 - Christchurch, New Zealand
2009 - Auckland, New Zealand
2011 - Canberra, Australia
2013 - Auckland, New Zealand
2015 - Sydney, Australia
2017 - Auckland, New Zealand
2020 - Newcastle, Australia

Youth World Cups:

2001 – Auckland, New Zealand
2005 – Sunshine Coast, Australia
2018 – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Asia Pacific Youth Cup

2023 – Brisbane, Australia

A role model of the administration sector of Touch, Cathy can get no higher praise than that given to her by the Chair of the Federation of International Touch when he wrote to me and said: *“..she is one of the most ethical individuals I know, and her views are respected everywhere.”*

When asked to comment on Cathy’s retirement, Wayne Grant, General Manager Participation Touch Football Australia wrote, *“She has long been the guiding light for the HP program at TFA and will leave a massive hole to replace. Would be one of the longest serving volunteers the sport has ever had and has been hugely responsible for the success of Australian teams internationally for a very long time.”*

In this day and age of declining volunteerism we will never see another Cathy Gray. A person who has selflessly dedicated over 35 years towards the sport and the HP Program at TFA. Her work ethic and standards of ethics and integrity were what will always position Cathy as an icon of our sport.”

Cathy no doubt has her detractors as does anyone in authority that make the difficult decisions, but her gentle nature and professional approach to such people generally leaves them in awe of her knowledge and professionalism. She is a true legend of Touch.

