

GLADESVILLE- HORNSBY FOOTBALL CLUB

In 1962 a group of players from the Thornleigh, West Ryde Rovers and the Gladesville Ravens Clubs playing under the name of Hornsby Northend won the U21 NSW State Championship and later played in the 3rd division Inter suburban competition run by the NSW Football Federation.

This team later won promotion to the 2nd Division and changed its name to Northern Districts United and played its home games at Englefield Stadium and in about 1974 again changed its name to the Gladesville-Hornsby Football Club. Although this Club had no connection with the Gladesville-Hornsby Football Association it played in the same coloured strip as the GHFA Youth League teams.

The GHFA had been involved in Youth League for the young players in the Association for a number of years, however it had no Interest in the future of players after they attained 16 years of age and good players were lost from our District.

In November 1980, GHFA Vice Presidents George Hodgekiss and Bill Cullinan and Bob Whiley from Eastwood St Andrews had a meeting to try to organise an entry into the NSW Federation. We were aware that several Clubs within the GHFA were currently fielding teams in the NSW Federation Competition.

These Clubs were Gladesville Ravens (Div 1), North Ryde Football Club (Div 2), Eastwood St Andrews, who played under the name of Eastwood Town in (Div 2) and the Gladesville-Hornsby Football Club mentioned above. These Clubs attended a meeting in November 1980 and were asked if any of them would be prepared to hand over control of their Club to a body set up by George, Bill and Bob. The Clubs all declined to accept our offer and the meeting ended.

Shortly after, we were approached by Bob Marsham who was the President of Gladesville Hornsby Football Club who had two sons Peter and Ian playing for the Club who stated that it had been very difficult running the Club on a shoestring for the last five years and he was very happy to hand over the Club to George who became President, Bill who became Secretary and Bob who became Treasurer.

As this was now November 1980, we were faced with finding players for all three grades and coaches. Fortunately, the majority of senior players agreed to play for the new management. We appointed Tony Clare from St Andrews as coach of first Grade. However, we only had three players for our Under 18 team. We approached the North Epping under 15 team who were a very good group of boys and ultimately 8 of them agreed to play for our new Club. This team finished 3rd in the 1981 season and were Premiers and Champions in the 1982 and 1983 seasons and our Reserve Grade team who were Premiers in 1982 and Champions in 1983. Two of these players, Bruce Baker and Paul Van Der Leeden played in the first-grade side when only eighteen.

As we had no funds for Registration fees or Insurance of our players, we approached the GHFA for assistance and were offered a \$5,000 loan to be repaid at the end of the 1981 season. We had no option but to accept and were faced with organising and holding an Annual raffle to repay them. This was also applied for the 1982 Season.

Despite some good results, our 1st grade team finished last in the 1981 season and we were faced with a play off with a team from the 3rd Division to retain our place in the 2nd division. We appointed a new 1st Grade coach John Symon and won the playoff against Artarmon by 2 goals to nil and we thus remained in 2nd Division.

At the commencement of the 1983 Season the GHFA informed us that they were now going to fund us and our raffles would not be necessary. The GHFA were now in control

however, the old management were still running the club under the auspices of the Association.

In about 1987 or 1988, we were approached by the Gladesville Ravens Football Club who were in Div 1 advising that they were going to drop out of the Federation and offered us their position. We accepted and were looking forward to playing in Div 1 in the 1988 or 1989 Season. Unfortunately, just prior to the start of the season we were informed that the NSW Football Federation had installed another Division above us and we were back in Division 2 again.

In about 1992, we were approached by a First Division club, Nepean District who wanted to drop out and wanted \$25,000 for their position. The Association paid the money and just before the season was about to begin, the Federation again brought in a new First Division and once again we were back in Second Division where we remain to this day.

The Club became known as Northern Spirit in the days of Graham Arnold which lasted for a few years before reverting back to Gladesville and adopting the name of Spirit.

There have been many high and low spots in the last 38 years of my involvement with the District Association, with Spirit and the Football Club but the ones that I remember most have been the 1982 and the 1983 under 18 teams and our performance in the McDonalds Cup in 2010 when we finished runner up to Marconi after losing 8-7 on penalties in the final and winning the Division 2 Club Championship in 1985 and 1986 under John Symon.

George Hodgekiss
July 2018