

SOUTH ADELAIDE FOOTBALL CLUB

A Perspective on the Past

Mick Rivers
2016

Mick Rivers talking with Tony Shaw at the 2016 Reunion of the 1964 SAFC Premiership side at Strathmore Hotel Adelaide on 26 May 2016.

ATS: Mick Rivers has led a very eventful life centred around his true loves, sport (particularly Australian Rules) and education. Let's talk to one of the most talked about football recruits ever to leave Broken Hill. Welcome Mick. You were born and educated in Broken Hill. Tell us a bit.

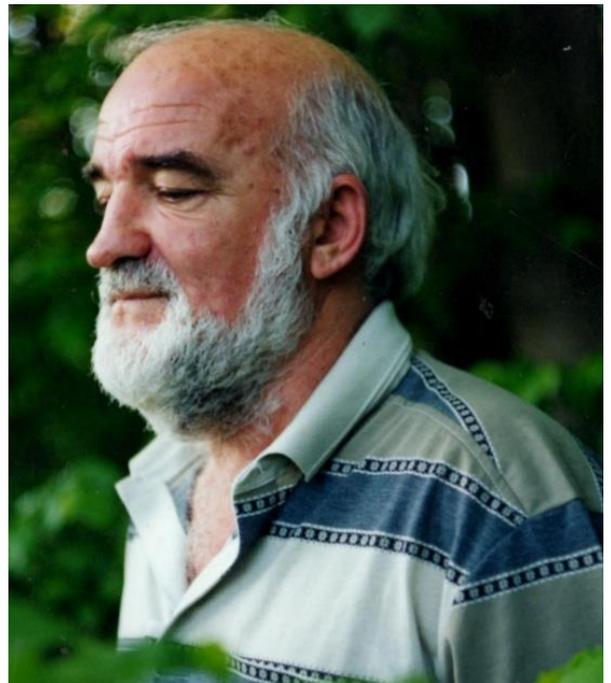
MR: Well, I don't know about educated but I went to school there. There were 69 students in my year 9 class. Being the shy, scared little rabbit I was, I hid at the back behind other kids so I missed being asked questions. I was born in a famous Broken Hill red dust storm. The storm lasted three days, and us 3 new babies needed wet cloths regularly put over our faces (dust got in hospital). It was a rough start, so I should have known then, life would be a bit tough. When pregnant with me, Mum lost both her parents. When born, I was the only one of nine kids that Mum had a false alarm with.

Because of both parents' death, she was terribly distressed during my pregnancy/and after, for about the next two years. When she was 70 years of age she said, "I really was hoping for a girl" and that she had uttered, "Oh!" when she saw I was a boy. So no wonder I became a complex, sensitive, shy, but good looking boy.

Mum converted to Catholic for marriage. This (and no T.V.) resulted in we nine kids, me second eldest, so I was babysitter for many of them. We lived in a four room house. Dad was an underground miner, working seven days a week for the first 25 years, so we didn't see much of him. He was a tough old bugger whom I loved dearly, but with Mum always controlling us kids by saying, "I will tell your Dad when he comes home," that was enough to keep most of us under control. She gave unconditional love to her kids, rarely saying no to any kid. We went to Sunday church, with Dad tooting the horn madly, because Mum was always late.

Family life had us seven boys all sleeping on the verandah, so basically any early morning visitors were ushered through the front verandah door of 'the boys bedroom'. We had no cupboards, no clothes storage of our own, but I never even noticed it. I loved my childhood 0-9yrs, filled with playing with neighbours' kids. Then from 10-11 years old, Marty and me started playing in about eight teams early (competition sport). On reflection, ours was a magnificent environment, for kids and teenagers, to spread our young wings. We rode our bikes all over town visiting many tennis courts, two big swimming pools, dozens and dozens of ovals, basketball courts, and particularly the 3-4 main teenager milk-bar haunts (especially looking at the scores of beautiful B. H. girls).

ATS: Mick, you said your mum surprised you a couple of memorable times.



MR: Yes, doing two unforgettable things even after all these years. One, after my first League game at 15 (back sports page photo and article), she organised a coup, ringing the club President, and succeeded in getting me dropped to C grade. At Mum's first league game attendance for years (to see her 15 year old son, me, play), she witnessed my eldest brother's best friend break an ankle. It frightened her. Mum saw the size of some of players who were under-ground miners.

She never told us about what she requested from the club President, and when we read the newspaper dropping me from A Grade to C Grade, I had no idea why. Wednesday night my eldest brother Marty was sitting at the table, still talking/querying it. Mum burst out howling, running from the room. Dad looked at me saying "Look what you've done. She wrote a letter to the President and asked you be dropped. Now, you go out there and make her feel better". Out there she was howling her eyes out. I gritted my teeth and said it was okay but really wanted to punch her in the head.

ATS: You told me you didn't play league for another 2½ years. She wouldn't let you.

MR: Yeah! That's right. However it was probably the best thing that happened to me, related to football development, because I ended up playing C grade, B grade, Under 21. I played C.H.B in all of those and won the Best and Fairest in all grades. For 2½ years I enjoyed my footy without worrying much, just enjoying everything, and developing my skills to higher levels. Reflecting back, it probably was a great 'Mum' decision.

Anyway, when I was 18 and finally playing A grade, I always stood 6'4", 6'3" C.H.F. underground miners, so that was a quite challenge. I did love having to find out how to beat them. At 15-16 years of age, I would have been crapping myself, intimidated, and maybe losing confidence and the love of the game forever.

ATS: But you were only 15 when you first played.

MR: They picked me out of C grade, but Mum made sure I stayed in C grade. Another B.H. footy fact I remember (with a great deal of envy) was about when I finally played A grade at 18, I only played for 1½ yrs (the bridge accident) before I left for Adelaide. Although there were only four teams in the competition, we didn't win a game in those 1½ years against the three other teams. I played for Centrals. That's why I became a pretty good back man getting a lot of the ball because it just rained the footy into our backline during all those losses. I didn't even notice the losses. Never did, having so much fun just getting the footy so often.

A couple of years ago I was reminded of all those losses. At a South Adelaide v Port match, the South current day players wore jumpers with our '64 premiership side names and numbers on. All jumpers were auctioned at a fundraiser lunch. Several '64 Port players joined our 50 years anniversary of the 1964 match lunch. Jeff Potter, a famous 60's Port Adelaide player (rover), was one of them. I walked up to him as a joke and abused him for causing me pain. He looked puzzled! I said, "My brother Peter (A.F.L Jared's father) played in three premierships when you came to B. Hill to coach my old team Centrals. I never played in one winning game in my 1½ year league career with Centrals. Thanks! He thought it very funny. Thanks Jeff!

ATS: Can I come back to my questions. You were only 15MR (Interrupts).

MR: Second thing about Mum. She was a great Catholic, with our family expected to attend confession. I hated it because I was expected to confess impure thoughts. Impure thoughts were considered mortal sins, and you needed to confess all to be allowed into heaven. As a teenager, I regularly needed confession urgently. Anyway I was studying in the back room that Dad had converted. It was a bathroom converted to half toilet/shower & study room, the curtain separating the toilet from my study desk. (I was doing my Matric).

While shopping, Mum bought a lovely desk lamp, surprising me by putting it on my study table. Surprised, because on the frame was built a beautiful statue of a naked African woman. Next night I noticed Mum had put a blouse over the breasts which were jutting out (crowd laughter). Obviously she was worried by the prospect of me committing a – no, many 'mortal sins' with impure thoughts. She didn't consider how when she closed the door, I could always lift up the blouse. (MR and crowd laughter). That was my dear old Mum.

ATS: At 17 years you received an offer from Richmond. Tell us what happened.

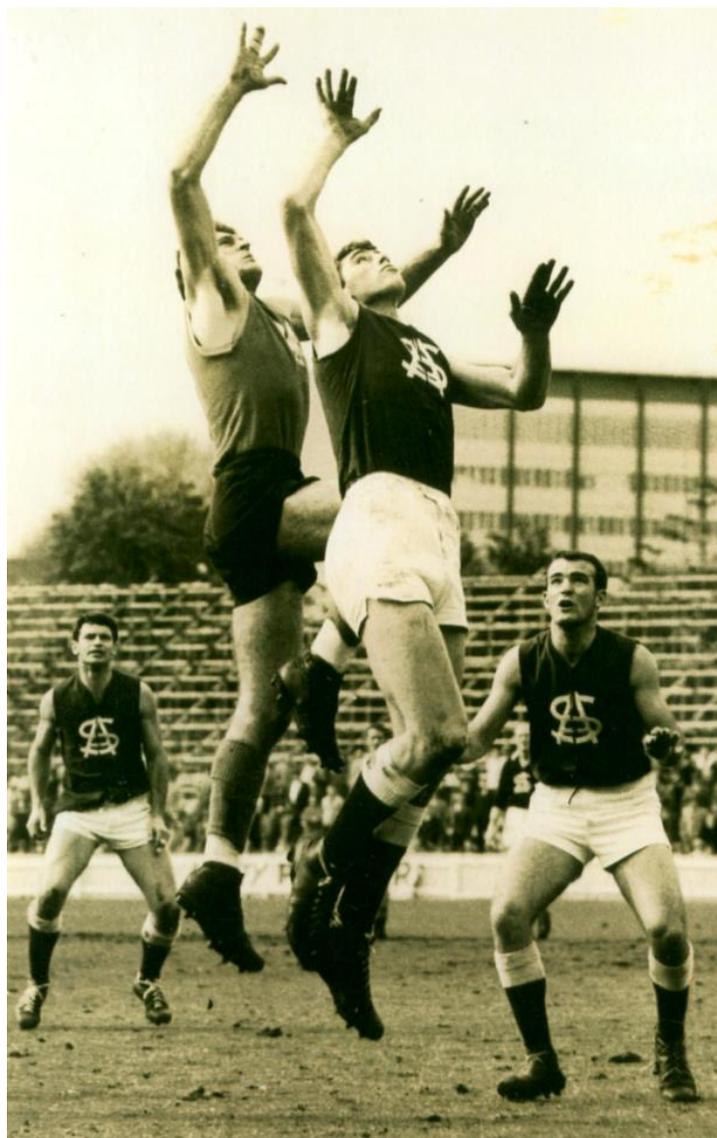
MR: I've got no idea how I got that offer, because we had no T.V. or much journalism. I had played my first full season after waiting 2½ years, so I guess they had a 'spotter'. I ended up being flown to Melbourne (first plane ride) and watched the 1961 Grand Final when Hawthorn won their first Premiership. The Richmond President and I watched it together from the top tier with 107,000 people. He also personally entertained us (another young obnoxious B.H. player) on the Saturday night, taking us to a classy show. I signed the next day.

When I was writing Tony's book, I visited quite a few players, Barry Ion being one. I found out Tony and he were best mates through Victoria v. S.A. (Y.C.W footy matches yearly). He asked about my nephew Jared. I revealed I'd seen only one game in Melbourne and that was in 1961. Barry then told me that he had played in that match for the Bulldogs in 1961. So there you are, 50 years later, I find out I was watching Barry Ion play, as well as T.J Whitten.

ATS: Actually, that was Barry's second full game in his career with Footscray.

MR: Anyway, having signed with Richmond, I received a great offer for those days.

It was a promise of two League games in 1962, Phys. Ed. scholarship, transport to training for the first six months. Shit, looking back it sounds pretty amazing. But, with one week before I left for Victoria, I rang the President and said, "Sorry no! I'm too scared to leave home. It's too far, etc." Thus ended a probable V.F.L. dream. I possibly could have made it. Well, the bridge fell on my head two years later. If I'd left before in '61, the accident wouldn't have happened. Life would've been so different. At least I would have had more chance for a longer teaching career as well as footy.



ATS: But you also got an offer from Norwood after that.

MR: Yeah. They flew me to a Grand Final. It probably was 1961 also. I luckily heard the wonderful Victorian coach and orator Alan Killagrew give pre-match and half-time speeches. Excited, I said I'd think on it, but three weeks later, communicated, citing the usual (leaving home etc). Dejavu - Richmond.

ATS: Was that the same year Max Murdy came to Broken Hill and signed you?

MR: No! After I had refused both Norwood and Richmond, He came the next year 1962. In early '62, I had also received letters from Torrens and West Adelaide, wanting to talk to me, but said I preferred not. 1961 had been my first season (at 18 yrs) when I was runner-up in the B.H. League B. & F. It was after that, those clubs and Souths' interest probably emerged.

ATS: You probably undersold yourself a bit how South might have known of you. You mentioned in 1962 you played in a combined Broken Hill side against a combined South Australian Seconds team. You stood Bob Simunsen, and Gary Window, some pretty good players, and you must have had a good game.

MR: I don't know about that. Simunsenn broke my toe in the first half, so they moved me to half-back flank. I said to the coach "I can't run," and he said "Don't worry, we'll put you on the flank". Hello, Gary Window, future Magarey medallist. I probably must have got a few kicks, I suppose.

ATS: How did you get on with Max? Did he make an appointment to come and see you?

MR: No, he didn't make any appointments. Max Murdy just turned up on the doorstep and made the offer. I'd hated accountancy for three years, and was failing it terribly. Often I left the night lecture at half time, went to the movies with a Centrals mate also doing accountancy. At 8.30 every morning I looked at the clock, saying "Shit, what am I doing here, I hate this job, I hate accountancy." So when Murdy turned up, I decided to get out and accepted South's offer on one condition. For two years previously, I had applied for Teachers College Scholarships, received / refused them each time. Thinking I might not get accepted a third time, I said to Murdy, "I'd like to teach so if you can help me get a Teachers' Scholarship, I'll go". He agreed. So I signed. After I'd signed with Souths, one week later, the bridge fell on me.



ATS: When you look back Mick, the world was in front of you, football and education opportunity, new Adelaide life, sitting next to girls at college lectures (for the first time in your life). But, of course, late in 1962, you had that devastating accident.

MR: A footbridge fell on my head. I was hospitalised for six weeks. Initially I didn't know it had damaged me apart from the stitches in my scalp. However, I had 42 stitches put in the head and went to bed for two days. I didn't move much in those five days, hadn't trained, but they picked me in the side, so my head pain must have gone. I played, couldn't last five minutes. I felt

pretty sick and puzzled. Ten minutes later I was leaning 45 degrees to the side like this, so they carried me off on a stretcher. Everyone (my family, masseurs, me) believed it happened in the footy game . This was because for the 3-4 days after the accident, I didn't move much and hadn't felt any spinal pain or difficulty with spinal movement. After 10 mins of the game, my body was twisted and enveloped with sharp and chronic pain (sitting, walking and lying in bed). Hospitalised, I still couldn't walk, lie, or sit without excruciating pain. The next 6 - 8 months, severe debilitating pain plagued my life the rest of the 1962 year and a couple of months into 1963.

I decided to still take the Teachers' Scholarship and not tell Souths - they wouldn't know.

Why? I have no idea. I do know that I'd been told by specialists I would never be able to play sport again ...!

ATS: So you decided to come to Adelaide for ... Teachers College –not to play football!

MR: Well, the doctors said, "You'll never be able to play sport again," and I'd always half wanted to be a teacher, probably of Phys Ed. When Souths arranged the scholarship with the Education Department, I couldn't get into Phys. Ed. Thank God for that; I would have hated P.E. all day. I loved what I eventually did which was teaching primary school, high school and eventually training teachers and ended up becoming my second most ardent passion in my life. I never felt I was going to work. I thank God every day since for allowing me to have a second life. And after all those doctors putting the 'out of business' sign over my body's future, I was able to explore and thrill to two doses of a 'Camelot' existence.

ONE: I discovered the beauty of teaching / helping people to grow confident, skilled, and smart enough to consider their own choices for life, and maybe recognise what helps them to follow a fulfilling path.

TWO: I pushed and adapted with my body and enjoyed five wonderful years of thrills playing the team game I truly loved - football.

ATS: How did you get started in Adelaide?

MR: Reaching Adelaide, I worried about informing Souths and Education Department, faking my fitness certificate test to get into Teachers College. Souths rang me halfway through the trials, and said, "You haven't been at training!" "Well", I said, "I can't walk". So they took me to a chiropractor regularly three times weekly for five weeks. I began to walk, and eventually run again. I had never even heard of chiros. Thanks to Souths, chiros probably extended my life span, giving me a reasonable quality of life for many years. Chiros on and off regularly kept me playing through South years. Not too frequently though!

In 1963 I played in the last trial match, got a few kicks, and was picked for Seconds Squad of approximately 40 players. Actually I was thrilled to achieve that, because I hadn't played sport, or ran for over 8 months. I'm sure they picked me in the Seconds squad because I had been signed. So, that's how I started my South Adelaide career

ATS: Did you win the Brown's Cup (Seconds Best and Fairest)?

MR: Eventually, yeah! I was surprised to discover I hadn't lost much fitness. I had always played many sports seven days a week from age 11-20 years. Can't remember playing much sport before 9-10, as it was usually cowboys and Indians, marbles, monopoly, hidey, soldiers and trains (always those Christmas toys requested).

ATS: You said you played for Wattle Park Teachers College and also Souths simultaneously.

MR: Because of the accident, in the first six weeks, I was struggling to make it through the Seconds game. So I played for Wattle Park T.C. A3 Amateur League, to help my recovery.

Also, third year T.C. boys said anyone who played for Teachers College Firsts would have a better chance to be granted a third year at T. College. (It was usually a two year course.) So the first 4-5 weeks I'd play for South Seconds, then took a taxi to a T. College match playing for them, with about half hour between matches. Played centre for T. College, and luckily the grounds were small. I loved the challenge. South Adelaide never knew. That's dedication and stupidity for you. I was hell bent on eventually making the League side.

Five weeks into the season, I was banned from playing because the coach of Adelaide T.C. protested against me for being a professional. I didn't know we were paid \$1 - \$2 a game. So banned, I only played for Souths the rest of the year of 1963.



MICK RIVERS
Winner Brown's Ltd. Cup, 1963

Scoring the League's umpires' three votes (3 times), and two votes (1 time) in those four games for College, I actually won the A3 College Best & Fairest with 11 umpire votes, playing only 4-5 matches. College B & F voting was traditionally based on official votes. The old Phys. Ed. lecturer and A3 footy team coach privately and apologetically informed me at the end of season. We both unhesitatingly agreed the news would be buried. The B & F. system next year was changed. A new T.C. A3 team's traditional system began.

Souths never even knew I played two games an afternoon that year for four or five matches and that I unofficially won two clubs' B & F.

ATS: In that same year 1963 we played Broken Hill and you played with us and you would have been playing against all your old mates.

MR: I think the Committee offered me that trip because I was a Broken Hill person. I certainly wasn't playing brilliantly, though gradually improving. I did play in that game. Mum, Dad and my ex-club medico were all staggered that I visited as a player (not just a Teachers College student) a year later. The local doctor who said never sport again was dumbfounded. The amazing thing ... South Adelaide were bottom of the SANFL ladder, yet they won by 100 points. Broken Hill people were stunned because B.H was a pretty good side in those days. The big loss was a shock. On the front page of the local paper sports page was a photo of Soapy and me changing in the rooms. Soapy visited our house, had my young brothers in awe playing with them out on the front lawn. He also watched one of them in a competition game on the Sunday morning. He didn't really know me well as I was still playing Seconds. Both Mum and Dad were impressed.

ATS: Your thoughts on Bill Sutherland and Kerls as coaches.

MR: Bill I rarely saw, me being a Seconds player, but I remember the night he spoke to the players when he was leaving. He seemed a real nice guy with respect for his players.

ATS: Did Kerls help you at all, even though he wouldn't change with you?

MR: Of course! I could tell so much about Kerls, but one or two do fascinate me. Firstly, when I won the trophy in B grade in 1964, four weeks in a row, I got pissed off because I was studying hard at Ts' College, didn't look like getting in the side, so I missed training (twice). A Club phone call directed me to a committee meeting. Kerls sat in the middle. Kerls asked, "Where have you been?" I replied: "Well, I have been at Teachers College". Kerls said: "Why haven't you been at training?" I said, "Well, I'm pissed off with everything." Now I was a shy country boy, but I was upset. Kerls said, "You can't kick can ya?" I said, "No I can't, but I get the ball twice as much as anyone else". Apologising, I said I had needed the break (I think.) Next week I was picked on the bench in the A grade side. I still only got 13 games as reserve in that year. That was one of the things that happened to me with Kerls.

The second thing is when Kantilla and me (still a poor student) often walked into the oval together on match day. Being a broke student, I would just wrap up my boots, socks and pants in a towel. One day, Kerls saw me carrying gear wrapped in a towel on match day. Next night at training, Kerls threw one of his old State training bags at me, saying, "Here, put your clothes in this and don't embarrass us when you come Saturdays". (Crowd chuckle).



The main thing I remember about Kerls was he was a fantastic player, and when I was changing in the back pocket, ruck-rovng with him for at least a year. A couple of times he puzzled me by letting me play/rove on the ball for three quarters. By the third week, we would be playing a side, like Norwood, with Bill Wedding a big ruck threat, and Kerls would jump and run all over him day long. He seemed to have been resting himself up for that main match. Here's me thinking, "He must think I've improved," but there he was, just wanting to save himself for a good game. He was about 31 or 32 at the time.

ATS: I always remember Kerls's comments about you at our 50th Reunion.

MR: Aw, don't!

ATS: I just wondered what you were thinking, when Kerls said: "If there is one player in footy that I had a little bit of difficulty understanding, it was this bloke. He was so bloody brilliant, I couldn't quite work out where to play him, and he gave me a few problems mentally, not physically, because he was a damn good player. I didn't recognise the talent he had until it was too late. But this bloke against Melbourne playing on a HBF, was best on ground." Mick, what did you think about what he was saying ...

MR: It was about time (crowd laughter). It was nice. And I was always disappointed when I arrived in Adelaide, and though eventually got enough miraculous help enough to actually play sport again, I knew it'd only be me - 60% at my best. It hurt deep in my gut that Kerls and my team would not see me anywhere near the best I could have offered. It wasn't vanity - I just wanted them to know and enjoy my game more. The best part about it was that I met Jimmy Deane's grandsons that night and because of that statement by Kerls, they came up to me, patted me on the back and said, "Congratulations on what Kerley just said." I said, "I'm sorry but I don't know who you are" and then they told me. Luckily, I had met Jimmy for the first time at



Denis Parham's 80th birthday (a year before). I had had a long chat with him for about an hour. So I sat and was able to tell them how I thought their Grandad was a lovely man. I chatted with them for about a half hour, all as a result of Kerls's comments about me. Jimmy had died a few months before. I had never met him till that time the previous year.

ATS: It must have been a great night, though, that night against Melbourne, when everything must have gone right for you.

MR: Oh... Melbourne!!

ATS: Yes.... the Melbourne

game.

MR: Oh well ... I was very anxious before the game.

ATS: In case you guys have forgotten, Mick stood Ron Barassi.

MR: Anxious before the game, but excited. During the game I was shitting myself the whole time because I stood Barassi for half the game. Every time he came towards me, after fighting with Kerley all night, (screaming at each other) I was terrified. Norwood was like an amphitheatre, so when he came back I was shit scared. I decided my plan would be to anticipate (my strength), and I'd just tick off very fast as soon as Barrassi got within 60m. I would take risks - judge it, grab it, run like hell another 30m just in case he was behind me.

That's how I played a very good game, terrified. But it was one of my career highlights. Thankfully to Kerls, being 21st man, I trained my guts out for 5 weeks, without any game or match time. The team was set in cement. My only complaint about it was, without any match practice, with 7-10 minutes to go, I got the cramps in both legs and was carried off on a stretcher. Thanks Kerls – first time I ever didn't finish off a match, and what a match.

ATS: You have a personal memory of this game.

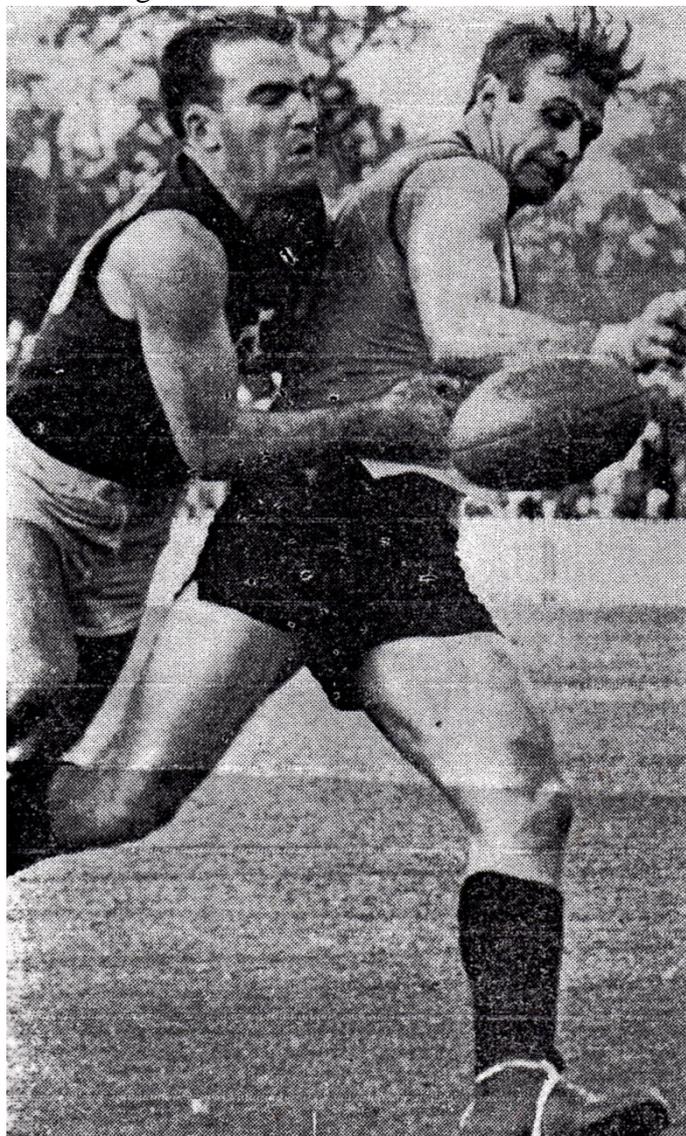
MR: Yes, a memory which is still precious to me even now in 2016.

Very tired, I arrived late to a Teachers College Nature Science lecture next morning after the match. Some friends (students) saw me sneak in, and within ten seconds, I was getting a standing ovation from about 200 students (about 150 girls, as College ratio was 3 to 1 girls).

It certainly interrupted the Nature Science lecture for 3-5 minutes. I can still picture it. I will never forget it. Don't think the lecturer will either! I still wonder if the Lecturer felt pissed. It was October, and we received our exam results mid-November. Nature Science was the only subject I failed at College.

ATS: In 1967 you made a South Australian team to play an Australian Aboriginal side. Remember?

MR: Yes, but Darls doesn't. It was a letter invitation to play in Don Dunstan's team. Two players from each league side were chosen. Don Dunstan bounced the first ball of the match.



I was thrilled to play alongside C.H.B. Norwood Magarey Medallist Ron Kneebone on the H.B.F. Over the years I have had huge respect for Ronny. I met him 40 years later when he recognised me while delivering Meals On Wheels to my mum, greeting me ever so friendly. Recently, I've seen him down the beach several times, chatted a fair bit. What I loved about playing sixties football with South Adelaide has been meeting players from opposing clubs and when they see you, they're as friendly as hell. I love that part.

ATS: In 1967, you were actually captain of South Adelaide for one game (v West Torrens).

MR: Thanks to Darls I took the heat.

ATS: I discovered we only played Torrens twice and the first one was in Round 7 and the best players were Rivers, Pascoe, Darley, White, Ploenges, Schmidt and Bais, we got beaten. The second game we won; the best players were Skuse, Howe, Schmidt, Ball, Rivers, Shaw, so you were captain of a winning side.

MR: That's wrong. The best player was David Darcy, the 'name' player the committee wanted to make captain when Darls argued for me to be captain. We found Darc played with German measles. What a player.

ATS: When playing against Glenelg (Kerls was coach) I remember you saying how Kerls gave you a hard time on the field.

MR: Well, I spent three years defending Kerls to friends, family, Broken Hill people, school teacher friends whilst I was playing with him as captain-coach. I always said I hardly ever noticed him doing a dirty thing. In the first game we played against him and Glenelg, I had taken a mark, he elbowed me in my eardrum, as he charged through seemingly hours after I'd marked it. My Dad, down from B.H., was watching his one and only game for the year, jumped out of the grandstand seats, and was headed for the fence to climb, but Mum

quietened him down. Kerls also grabbed me by the balls to stop me running faster than him, and a couple of other things. I really changed my mind about what I said to all those people. He shook my hand after the game and said I played a good game. Glad he shook my hand that time and not my balls again.

ATS: Some of you may have forgotten that Mick was runner-up in the 1967 Knuckey Cup, a great achievement.

MR: I was disappointed in that.

ATS: What, not winning it?

MR: No! In retrospect Peter Darley should have realised he'd go on to win another six or seven. I'd had a great year and made him look good as I ruck- roved to him. That year '67 he beat me by one vote. He could have at least let me have one!! But I forgive him!

ATS: Did you ever give advice to your nephew Jared Rivers when playing with Melbourne and Geelong?

MR: I wrote a letter to him prior to him playing his first match, telling him how I had felt for my first League game and how most players looked ten feet tall, but they were normal. I wrote six years later when my brother said Jared was doing something wrong. He wanted my opinion of him. I told him Jared had something on his mind, after watching for two weeks. Peter denied this. I watched three more weeks, gave him same answer! He later admitted he told Jared to forget contract signing till end of year. Jared next week signed, and played really well (unusually taking several marks).

ATS: Any South Adelaide memories you wish to recall?

MR: Two things I mainly remember. One, I really liked the B grade boys, welcoming and friendly when I came and played with them in 1963. We made the G.F. I was a shy, country kid, going to Teachers' College. Bob Richardson and his Mum and Dad were very kind to me. The other thing was my regret that my South team mates and South supporters never got to see my most valued skill that people in Broken Hill admired. I loved the high mark in a pack, went for it every day at school even in a rock-filled playground. I always went for it in all C, B, A grade Broken Hill matches. When I came to Adelaide after the accident, I couldn't jump any higher than about half metre off the ground for the rest of my life and so the high marking part of my game was gone. I would have loved my team mates to have seen my major skill (before the accident).

ATS: What happened in 1968, your final season, and later years?

MR: I played three games without much pre-season, but loss of balance became a very regular visitor, making it impossible to turn quickly, look up or bend down. I also vomited during the night after my last two of the three games I played. When I informed the selectors, Max Murdy said, "What about playing Seconds next week?" I just turned and walked off without speaking. Only contact I got from Souths was from Murdy asking for my season ticket (his letter said if I wasn't using it, could he have it for someone else). Gee, thanks for the support Max!! I had only been injured for six weeks, and been the previous year's runner-up in South's Knuckey Cup. From then I've never watched footy or visited Souths till 1994 at the 30th Reunion.

I hated to watch others having so much fun but illness struck again. I spent 6 -8 years in bed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. From that happening, I also lost my permanent teacher career forever after this period.

ATS: What did you do? Did anyone attempt to help you?

MR: Two outstanding people. 1. Jack Salter my school Deputy Head at the time. 2. Doc Harley South Adelaide's club doctor (unofficially).

I could easily have lost my job but the Deputy Head of Woodville School was a friend and a fan of both my teaching and football. He basically protected me till I got more chiro and physio help. It was the scariest time of my life. For the next four months, I regularly had to be relieved in class lessons because it was impossible to keep my balance. I had brain, skull spasms many nights which led me to many brain scans and x-rays at the Q.E.H. Souths were not a party to any of this. They had vanished.

ATS: You once wrote a piece about how Doc Harley helped you. You gave it to his son.

MR: Doc Harley helped me discover the truth about my spine's collapse when he called me to his surgery months after I'd dropped out of sight in 1968 and Souths hadn't called. He questioned me for ages and finally helped me discover what had caused everything. The damage had been caused by the two ton bridge falling on my head, causing severe damage to three parts of the spine, and its corresponding discs and facet joints. The lower lumber was the only section which caved in that first year. The neck section and mid-back section (thorax) caved in badly in early 1968, and that's when I had to throw in the towel. That was how my career ended, at age 25 .

ATS: At a young age, was teaching always going to be a vocation for you?

MR: I probably thought about it at 15-16 but at that age didn't have a clue really.

As a teacher, the first 20 years, I mainly taught primary school students. I actually never felt like I was going to work. I enjoyed it so much. In the late 80's early 90's, I only taught secondary students (5 years). Over four years I had approx. 800-1000 teachers visit my classroom for day visits and (8 week) half day courses within the classroom. I trained, taught teachers for a long time and ran training workshops for teachers over many years (probably over 15 years). For five years I taught years 8 and 9 schools in New Zealand, using the same methods as with the Aussie students. They were as applicable with Pacific Islanders, Maori students.

In N.Z. there were 44 in a class, 90% Pacific Islanders and Maoris. These were the toughest schools or classrooms I'd ever been in, but I loved the challenge. These schools had the best Phys Ed. programme of any school I'd been in. They had 32 sports that they played in interclass competition five days a week and it was mainly done to stop the fighting and suspensions from the school. A lot of the Australian schools could do with something like that.



ATS: The Department of Education recognised your teaching skills and offered you a Government position to introduce a new wave of teaching.

MR: In my last three years of teaching, I did have about 1000 teachers and education officials come visit my classroom. Then I got ill with chronic fatigue and was in bed for six years (1980-1988), wasting away to 10 stone, becoming very ill with recurring viruses. It was a very scary time, again. When I tried to get work after recovering, the Education Department wouldn't re-employ me because they passed a law in 1985, if you had had temporary invalidity, that was the end. I then scrounged for jobs for the next four to five years. That's why I went to New Zealand and finally have been on a disability pension from 40 years of age to 60 years.

ATS: What achievements are you proud of?

MR: You mentioned achievements in life, apart from footy. Starting running at 55 years of age, became a great achievement, and I now jog 4 -5 kms for most days of the week. It usually takes me about 40-45 minutes. Ten minutes to put on shoes. I couldn't run the first 30 years after my spine caved in at the end of my very successful season with Souths in 1967. It finally collapsed in December of that year. I discovered alternative exercises and treatment (chiro, acupuncture, others) which now help.



'Although I am incredibly proud of my football successes, I consider the event that the photo on the left represents to be one of my greatest footy achievements.'

It was the day that the primary school team that I coached, Lockleys Demonstration, won the West Adelaide District Saturday morning competition by defeating Fulham Primary who hadn't been beaten in over five years, and were coached by Ron Kneebone, Peter Aish and John Judd.'

Another achievement was to write three personal history accounts, but only recording other people's memories and feelings about one person. Your book, Tony, was one. All three books using the same model were done in a two year period, and though tortuous, I felt prouder of those than all the others I had completed. However it was tough to gain the memories and facts, as well as organise them into a story of life over a certain time. Each took 10 hrs a day for about 8 months before being fit to print.

The books and booklets about education, professional development, teacher training, and classroom methodology were another matter. I worked almost full-time over a 20 year period as a project. On reflection now I feel I wasted a big hunk of my personal life. In education I always was an alive active person, a doer at the 'coal face'. I only got stuck for so long because many teachers seemed to need much more help before feeling confident with the Methodologies. One book (Education) was reported and praised in a widely read American Education publication. I completed seven considerably long education books. These were supplemented by another 20-30 smaller booklets.

ATS: Mick, I really, really did appreciate you creating my book. I will be forever grateful. To have all those memories available from the comments made by you guys here today, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

ATS: Mick, you wrote you were a shy, country Catholic boy, too nervous to ask out Broken Hill girls before you reached the age of 30. You did OK with that blind date I organised, beautiful looking, stunning figure, great personality, picking you up in a new model Jaguar, and she spoke well of you.

Mick, you can be proud of your football and teaching achievements. Thank you for sharing your life with us today, and we hope your health will treat you more kindly in the future than what it has in the past.



Mick Rivers (Back row, second from right)