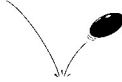


## OUR ROOTS #6



by Gary Bartholomeusz



One of the most decorated footballers to play in Albany came to town aboard the steamship 'Innamincka' on Saturday June 11, 1898. And, after learning that East Albany and North Albany were to play a match at Parade Street Recreation Reserve that afternoon, headed to the town's football mecca. Both clubs needed more players and recruited from amongst those around the boundary line. East selected **C McInnes** from West Albany and two visiting passengers from the 'Innamincka'. North picked West duo **Jerry Arundel** and **Charles Milne** plus a passenger from the steamship. North Albany's visiting recruit was one of the best in Australian Rules history - **Albert Thurgood**, of Essendon Football Club fame. He, and the other steamship passengers, left the venue at three-quarter time as the 'Innamincka' was due to leave the town jetty. Despite his brief stay, Thurgood left an impression as stated in a local newspaper that "the stranger treated the crowd to some very fine long kicking."

Thurgood played in four consecutive Victorian Football Association premierships from its inaugural title in 1891 to 1894 when the Club won 77 games, lost three and drew on eight occasions before joining the Fremantle Football Club to win the West Australian National Football League goalkicking in 1895 (with 53 majors) and repeated the feat in 1896 (57) and 1897 (27). He played just five games for Fremantle in 1898, then returned to Victoria, via Albany, aboard the 'Innamincka'. Like Albany Football Association, the Victorian Football League was founded in 1897 and, on returning to Victoria, the VFL hierarchy refused to allow Thurgood to play for Essendon again until 1899 on residential grounds. There he won the goalkicking in 1900 (26) and shared the honours with Collingwood's **Ted Rowell** in 1902 (33).

Following is what some of the Nation's leading football journalists have written about Albert Thurgood... "Thurgood had a lordly appearance on the field." (**Cecil Mullen**, 1958).

"Thurgood deserves to be in discussions of the greatest footballer of all time! Tall and magnificently built, he could play in any position and was extraordinarily fast. His high marking was superb, ground work robust and was as nimble as a hare. He could kick brilliantly with every type of kick imaginable. Like a true champion, he rarely had an off day." (**Jim Main**, 2002).

"Thurgood, one of the greatest players of all time, was thrown into the ruck when Essendon trailed Melbourne by three goals with eight minutes to go on July 1, 1893. He then scored three goals and the game was drawn. In the return match that season, although Essendon's case looked hopeless, when behind Melbourne by three goals with four minutes remaining, its captain sent Thurgood onto the ball. The scene changed in a most amazing manner! The champion dominated the game, took complete control of the ruck, marked when and where he liked and got the four goals necessary, one from 90 yards (82 metres) out and Essendon won the game. No other footballer in Australian history could have done that - especially against a team like Melbourne." (**Graeme Atkinson**, 1981).

"If any player was to be classified as the first real star in WA football, then surely that title should go to Albert Thurgood. When he returned to Essendon, some Victorian football writers declared that it would only be fair for other teams to be allowed to have an extra man when Thurgood was playing." (Excerpt from Football 150, 1979).

During a game at Fremantle Oval, Thurgood had eleven shots for goals and scored 10.1 - the behind was from a kick which hit the top of a goalpost. Each of the eleven shots were place kicks, where the ball sits on the ground to be booted. The shortest of the eleven kicks is reported to have been airborne for at least 60 yards. He is officially credited having the longest place kick in history, being just under 108 yards (98.48 metres) while practising with Essendon at the East Melbourne Cricket Ground on Thursday June 22, 1899. Also at practice, he booted an officially-measured drop kick around 90 yards (82.30 metres).

Albert Thurgood is an Australian football legend and won the precursor award to the Brownlow Medal, (Victoria's Champion-of-the-Colony) in 1893, 1894 and 1901. Albany, particularly North Albany Football Club, has been blessed by his presence - even though a very short time! NOTE: The steamship 'Innamincka' was sunk in December 1941 by a Japanese air attack at Manila Bay, the Philippines. #

\*When initials are used and you know the christian name, please notify me on 0428 514 605 or [gj.bartholomeusz@westnet.com.au](mailto:gj.bartholomeusz@westnet.com.au)

Albany Football Association 1897 - 1941

Recess 1914 - 1918 and 1942 - 1944 due to War



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Southern Districts Football League 1945 - 1990

Great Southern Football League 1991 - current