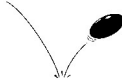


## OUR ROOTS #12



by Gary Bartholomeusz



Listening via radio from his Vancouver Street home on Saturday April 28, 1938, renown Albany football identity **John 'Jack' Cooper** heard his son score a behind with five seconds remaining in a Victorian Football League match against Richmond to give Carlton a one-point win. In Melbourne the following month, **Ron 'Pom' Cooper** also played an integral part in a unique challenge between Stanford University of America and the Carlton Football Club when he was engaged in a kicking and throwing competition using American Gridiron and Australian Rules balls.

The best results were...

**Bill Paulman** (USA) place-kicked an Aussie footy 79 yards, 1 foot & 11 inches (72.57 metres)

**F Anderson** (Australia) drop-kicked an Aussie football 69.5 yards (63.55 metres)

**T Cavelli** (USA) threw a gridiron ball 75 yards, 1 foot & 8 inches (68.89 metres)

**Ron Cooper** (Australia) the best Aussie throw of a gridiron ball 49.5 yards (45.27 metres)

Ron, nicknamed 'Socks' at Carlton because he always played with his socks down, was arguably the best Albany footballer to play in the VFL. In 1936, he was named in a Melbourne newspaper as the eighth "most valuable player" in the League having built a reputation for his uncanny skills, speed, goal-sense and easily losing taggers. Famous Collingwood coach **Jack 'Jock' McHale** said "Ron could do anything with a football. He could hide then whammo, take on the world!"

Legendary VFL goalkicker **Gordon Coventry** was quoted saying "no one can create the loose man like Ron Cooper. It puzzles opponents no end! Many pow-wows were held to try and counter his cleverness." Triple Brownlow (VFL) and triple Sandover (WAFL) medallist **Haydn Bunton** Snr claimed "Ron Cooper is a wonderful football talent!"

The elusive centreman / rover achieved an 157-game career with 'The Blues' from 1932 to 1942 but, alas, missed two chances of playing in a VFL premiership side. He was voted Carlton's best player in the 1932 losing grand final to Richmond, in front of 96,000 spectators, and missed the Club's 1938 premiership over Collingwood due to suspension for striking St. Kilda 'hard nut' **Doug Rayment** in the last qualifying game of the season. In 1943, he played two more VFL games - but this time with North Melbourne. His top-level career ended with Prahran in the Victorian Football Association.

Ron played for West Albany for two and a half seasons, starting in 1926, and was cleared to North Mount Barker on June 23, 1928, to become a member in the Club's Mount Barker Football Association premiership that year. 'Pom' then began a West Australian Football League career with Claremont / Cottesloe in 1929 and, over three seasons, notched up 48 league games.

Despite missing the first six games with Claremont / Cottesloe in 1931, when he returned to Albany, he had another change of mind and headed back to the metropolitan area and was runner-up to East Fremantle's **Lin 'Blue' Richards** for WAFL's highest individual honour, the Sandover Medal, the same year. It was a remarkable feat when you learn that Ron also won Claremont / Cottesloe's fairest & best that season at only 18 years of age. The following season, 1932, he signed as captain / coach of South Fremantle Football Club but never began in the role. Instead, he was coaxed to Victoria.

There were many significant branches to the Cooper footballing family tree over the first four decades of the Albany Football Association but the one which reached the highest was a diminutive character named Ron 'Pom' Cooper. His input into the AFA was short-lived but his impact lingers on today. #

*\*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