

Briars Hockey's Internationals and Hockey today

In 2001 **Mick McCann** joined Briars - we had our first Kookaburra and it paid dividends. The team almost won the comp losing the grand final to Sutherland. Despite the loss it proved that Briars were now a serious hockey club. With Mick and Busta, supported by former NSW rep John Suraci, we were able to attract more state and national players. Mick found out the day of our 2003 Parliament House luncheon that he was named in the 2004 Olympic squad. He was not allowed to tell anybody for several days however he promised me that if he smiled when I asked if he had been selected then it was a good sign. I remember his face when he arrived at the luncheon, I didn't have to ask him any questions, I just knew he was in the squad - Briars first ever Olympian.

In the heat of Athens in 2004 and the Olympic Games Gold Medal Match, Jamie Dwyer converted a penalty corner in the last minute of the game to give Mick McCann an Olympic Gold Medal. Mick now coaches in Germany with his club side winning the European Championship in 2017. Mick is also assistant coach for the German's Men's program and remains to this day a proud Briar.

Kookaburra **Matthew Smith** also joined us in years to follow as we started to develop our own home grown national players.

Since Mick left the Briars to pursue his Olympic dream we have seen many more talented players come through the Briars ranks starting with **Josh Miller** who had followed his brother Kurt to Briars as a 15-year-old snotty nosed country bumpkin. He came to every session with Kurt and used to collect the balls for the big boys. Miller learnt under Busta for several years before heading to Perth to pursue his dream of making the Kookaburras. In 2013 Josh debut for the Kookaburra's in the Azlan Shah tournament in Malaysia and won his first ever Gold Medal. In 2016 Josh returned to Sydney from Perth and has recommenced playing and coaching at Briars. His enthusiasm and clubmanship are an inspiration to all in the Briars 1st grade men's squad.

Kieran Govers played with Briars for 2 seasons before moving to Perth and becoming an Olympian. His Brother **Blake** joined us in 2015 only to be immediately drafted into the national program and become one of the world's dominant drag flickers and is part of the current Australian Squad for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Matthew Dawson also joined Briars in 2011 as a young teenager from Newcastle wanting to play at the highest level in NSW on a regular basis. Matt raced through the ranks of U18 and U21 for both NSW and Australia. Dawson played 3 seasons with Briars before being called into the Kookaburras squad in 2015 and playing at the Brazil Olympics. He is part of the current Australian team to play at the Commonwealth Games in 2018.

Adam Imer joined Briars as a little boy in our U11 team back in 1999. Adam played for many years in our junior program before breaking into our men's 1st grade team in 2006 as a 17-year-old. He went on to represent NSW at the National Championships but soon after fell in love with a young Brazilian lady who was studying in Queensland. Soon after Adam packed his bags and moved to the Gold Coast and went on to win several Australian Championships playing for the maroons – Boo! His relationship with his now Brazilian wife Tatiana, qualified him to represent Brazil at the 2016

Olympic Games where he played against our very own Matt Dawson and Blake Govers who were representing the Kookaburra's.

In 2002 Briars decided we needed to expand our Women's program to be equivalent to our Men's success. With this in mind we began a series of meetings with a successful Women's Club known as Everjays. Everjays although successful we only a small 2 team club which made them vulnerable should some of their players decide to leave. They saw that joining an established club like Briars gave them more stability. After many meetings Gil Burns and her girls decided to link up and play under the Briars banner.

This was met with immediate success with Briars winning the Women's 1st grade in 2003,2005 and 2006 in Sydney's premier Competition.

Included in our team were 3 Hockeyroos. Megan Sargent, Mel Twit and Jo Banning all represented Australia (records below) at various times with Mel twit also becoming an Olympic in 2004 and 2008. The addition of Everjay's secured a successful future for briar's Women's program

- Champions Trophy 2001 in Amstelveen, Netherlands (Mel, Megs and Jo)
- Champions Trophy 2002 in Macau, China (Mel, Megs and Jo)
- Commonwealth Games 2002 in Manchester, England (Mel and Jo)
- World Cup 2002 in Perth, Australia (Mel)
- Champions Trophy 2003 in Sydney, Australia (Mel)
- Olympics 2004 in Athens, Greece (Mel)
- Champions Trophy 2005 in Canberra, Australia (Mel)
- Champions Trophy 2006 in Amstelveen, Netherlands (Mel)
- World Cup 2006 in Madrid, Spain (Mel)
- Champions Trophy in Quilmes, Argentina (Mel)
- Champions Trophy in 2008 Monchengladbach, Germany (Mel)
- Olympics 2008 in Beijing, China (Mel)

Jocelyn Bartram moved to Sydney in 2013 as a rookie from Albury. As back-up goalie for NSW Arrow's, Joc provided the platform for a successful era for Briars Women. Joc made Briar's defence one of the strongest in the league as she was well supported by up and coming Kaitlin Nobbs. In 2015 Joc became Club Captain as she set standards both on and off the field and even coached one of our junior teams. Finally, in 2016 Joc was summoned to Perth to join the Hockeyroo's program and is now part of the senior Australian squad with a hope to complete on the Gold Coast in the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Kaitlin Nobbs moved to Sydney in 2013 mid-season when her family re-located here. Kaitlin was only 16 years old but immediately made an impact in our 1st grade women's team. After representing NSW in U18 and U21s the following season, Kaitlin debuted for the NSW Arrows in 2015 before being drafted to Perth and debuting for the Hockeyroo's in 2016. Kaitlin is now one of the dominant players for Australia and will have a long and successful career in the National Team.

Kate Hanna joined Briars in 2014 with immediate success. Our women's team lost the grand final that year with Kate being drafted to Perth and the national program. Kate's speed and skill have seen her succeed at the highest level.

Briars has seen a significant growth period across all areas since 2005 but in particular our juniors have expanded significantly which is a great reflection of the focus put on the expansion and growth of the club.

2006 was a hugely significant year as it saw the joining of the men, women and junior sections of the club to form one club – a rare event for a hockey club with the majority of hockey clubs in Sydney still having separate committees and organisation throughout their clubs. This was a huge progressive leap for our club and helped to strengthen our skill, development and growth and has helped to maintain our status of one of the biggest and most integrated clubs in Sydney hockey.

Throughout the following 8 years we saw our junior teams grown to over 13 teams with all grades having teams in the A division of their age group which is a huge achievement. Our men and women boasted 8 strong teams each as well as our men commencing their involvement in Masters Hockey which to this day continues to grow in size. We saw our top women's team make grand finals over 3 consecutive years and our top men's grades continue to succeed with our 2nd grade securing 3 premierships between 2007 and 2016 which is a massive accomplishment.

2014 saw us commence construction of our new field at St Luke's on the Northern side of Queen St as the Government advised us that they would be acquiring Cintra Park which has been our home since before the Sydney Olympics. Whilst this was a sad time with the farewell of our long-term home, it presented us with an amazing opportunity to install a world class turf and improve our facilities. Our new home in St Luke Park is a quality facility that has been embraced by the Briars Hockey Family.

Briars has had countless NSW representatives of all ages over the years, many of which graduated into the Senior squads. We have gusted numerous international players from various locations including Germany, Holland, Spain, Switzerland, Ireland, England many of which have returned to their country and gone on to represent at subsequent Olympic Games.

Hockey is the only sport Briars participates in that provides a pathway for both National and Olympic representation as well as providing an opportunity for both Senior and Junior Men & Women – quite the achievement. Briars Hockey will continue to thrive and grow for another hundred years mainly off the backs of our brilliant volunteers who have push and developed the club over the last 50 years in particular.

John Price 2018