

The following article is an interview conducted between Alan Garside senior, a former Socceroo and Granville district player, and Greg Stock, soccer statistician and fan working on this site as well as Matthew Hall, journalist working for the magazine 'Total Sport'. This interview also appeared in the fanzine Studs-Up November 1997.

## Where have all the forwards gone?

Asked the question what is Australia's oldest soccer club and most Australian soccer fans could peel off the answer in moments. The book 'Jack Pollard's Soccer Records' tells us that it was the Granville club in located Sydney's western suburbs. Formed in 1882 by Scottish ironworkers and founded in 1885 the club is no longer a part of the NSWFSF competition having fallen victim to financial circumstances years ago. But if you were asked to name some of its greatest ever players the mind would strangely fall blank and who could blame you.

Arguably the best player to have ever been produced by the Granville club was centre-forward Alan Garside. During Granville's 'golden era' in the late 40's and 50's he was the focal point for the Granville attack. His father Frank was club president for eighteen years and had Macarthur Park named in his honour while younger brother Frank junior was the sides centre-half.

Alan's career began in 1943 as a tearaway teenager at Macarthur Park and ended with the demise of the N.S.W. soccer football association in 1958. Along the way he scored 188 goals in a career which saw him play over 210 premierships matches and countless knockout and cup games. He represented the Granville district representative side and was a fixture in the NSW state team between 1949 and 1958. He represented his country 5 times against South Africa, China and the Hungarian club side Ferencváros though his international career was severely restricted with a bad leg injury. His ability to score goals at club or representative level was remarkable. His scoring rate per number of games played was a lot better than some of the so called "great forwards" of the game that followed him years later.

Still residing on the same block of land in the Granville district as he did when he was taking opposition defences to the cleaners in the 50's, Mathew Hall and I spent an evening with one of the great characters of the game. Joined by his lovely wife Nita, over a cup of tea and a piece of cake with his old scrapbooks and photographs, Alan opened up and gave us a unique insight into his outstanding career and the ways of soccer 1950's style. We started off by asking him about the English tour of 1951 and the match between Australia and England where we were beaten 17-0.

**AG:** "I was there but I wasn't playing of course. Australia wasn't playing that badly. Australia had as much play as England but every time Australia got into England's half they attacked. As soon as the English goalkeeper got the ball he would kick it over the fullbacks head to the wing. The winger would come right down bringing the fullback with him. They were playing the third back game where the centre half would mark the centre-forward. The winger would push it to the centre forward who would have the centre half out there. He'd beat him and draw the other fullback and there was always one or two Pommies ready to kick it into the net. And that's what happened every time left or right.

I was standing there watching with a few blokes and I called over my father (Frank Garside - Granville president) and Matty McGilvery (Granville's coach) and said you see what's happening here. So we stood and watched. We were playing the next day on the Sunday, and after talking to Matty again about it the next day at the game he said "Were playing a new style of football today". And that is what we did that day. From there we fine tuned it and that's how we won the State Cup and premiership.

**MH:** Using the same tactic??

**AG:** "Exactly the same tactic. I was the centre-forward and I could run. We had two international wingers in George Sanders and Ray Marshall. The wingers would go back exactly the same as the pommies were playing. The problem with the third back game was the centre forward was in all sorts of trouble because the centre half would stand on him all day. I used to talk to Andy Henderson about it plenty of times. I said "your just standing there - you've got to move away," but every time you moved away, everyone would be on your back saying get back, you have got to back to the centre. That was until this happened. Matty the coach decided to play this new way. Anyway we played at Cessnock after playing this style a couple of weeks. Bobby McKenzie was playing right wing that day. Bobby or Ray Marshall on the left got back. I ended up with the ball and beat the fullback drew the centre half and was looking around to push it back to the inside forwards but there was nobody there, just me holding the ball. Next Tuesday night at training Matty the coach said to the halves', If you don't get there you won't be playing next week'.

**GS:** Did teams try to counter the style??

**AG:** "Clubs tried all different sorts of tricks. Some of them even tried to take you out like 'Radioactive man' Radnoanovic but that's another story."

Being the first Australian side to use this new style of football to perfection Granville took all before them in 1951. Other teams could not counter the English style quickly and they either adapted to it or were beaten. They won the State Cup with a 3-0 victory in the final against Mayfield United and the State Premiership double with a side boasting some of Australia's greatest players. For the record that side was Bill Henderson, Bob Lee, Bob McLelland, Andy Henderson, Frank Garside, Bob Wall, Bobby Dawson, George Sanders, Alan Garside, Ken Vairy and Ray Marshall.

I continued by asking Alan a little about his club career at Granville and the way in which it operated in the 1950's;

**AG:** You got your jumper and socks supplied and you bought your boots and your shorts. What Granville did was whatever money they had leftover at the end of the season you got so much on how many games you played. Everyone was even so if you played the most games in a season you got the most money and if you played one you got paid for that one on the same ratio. The most I ever got was one hundred pounds".

**Mrs Garside :** "You didn't get much at all".

**GS:** In the 1950's doubled header games were common. Some sides would travel to play two games in two days. How did you ever back-up??

**AG:** "How would you have any problem backing up? I done the milk run on Saturday morning, I played on Saturday afternoon away at Woonona, did the milk run again on Sunday morning and then went to Newcastle and played Sunday afternoon, came back Sunday night to do the milk run Monday morning. We often played two games a weekend as halfway through the year they would start the State Cup competition."

**GS:** Did you score??

**AG:** "I scored 2 goals in each game - 2 goals in the first half".

Alan played for Australia against F.K.Austria which boasted players like Leopold Baumgartner and Karl Jaros I asked him a little about this time in soccer and the turbulence of the FIFA ban;

**AG:** "F.K. Austria were too good, just too good. They came and thought what a wonderful country. They had been over in Europe being bombed out in the war, living on nothing and all that sort of thing. They came out here and saw how great it was and couldn't get back quick enough. It would have been okay if they had have gone to a club like Granville, Canterbury or Gladesville or the like but they didn't. There was no transfer fee and that was the problem. It was a bit of a rough time."

**GS:** Some of the great forwards of your day included such names as Reg Date. Did you ever get the opportunity to play with him in the N.S.W. or Australian sides?

**AG:** "I would have loved to have played centre-forward with Datey at inside right, but it never happened. I have never seen Reg Date do anything wrong, he was just that sort of player. He was only ever out there to play football. You see some of the Australian strikers of today on television missing the goal by yards. But he never did, he was just unbelievable. You could see him hit a ball on the volley 2 feet off the ground the whole way. He was something else. The last game Datey played for Australia was in 1953 in Brisbane against the Chinese and he played for Wallsend when they beat Granville 2-1 in the final and that was it for him"

**GS:** And Len Quested from Auburn?

**AG:** "Len played for HMS Golden Hind, an English servicemen's side that entered the competition in 1944-45. They also had a number of handy players and made life hard for you. Len went back to England at the end of the war and went to play for Huddersfield Town and Fulham. He came back a few years later with Auburn and scored quite a few goals for them"

**GS:** What about Bruce Morrow and Jackie Lennard?

**AG:** "Bruce loved to score goals and when you were playing if you had the ball he wanted it, even if he had two blokes on him and someone else was unmarked. He was a true finisher and just wanted to score. I played with Jack a few times for N.S.W. and Australia. He was a great finisher and a great team player."

**GS:** One of the best centre-halves of the era was Joe Marston. You played a lot of you rep football with him.

**AG:** "We were playing Queensland at Wallsend getting beat 4 to 2 at halftime. Kevin O'Neill was at fullback and Joe was at centre-half. Joe was captain and said to Kevin O'Neill that the only way we were going to win this is to play football from the back. He said don't anyone kick the ball unless you give it to someone its got to be football all the way. After that we ended up beating them 7 to 4. That's the kind of player Joe was - a thinker. He was a really hard opponent but most of all he was a great player without question"

**GS:** The stories of games between Granville and Joe's team Leichhardt-Annandale in the 50's are of legendary proportions. Joe Marston who was captain always used to personally mark you.

**AG:** "It didn't matter whether we were playing at Macarthur Park or at Lambert Park, they would always draw a crowd and be a hard and tough game. Joe never used to like playing man on man against me because I was quick and I could run. We used to play a lateral game and I used to try and drag Joe as wide as possible so he couldn't get into the game. He never used to know whether to stay with you when you ran or stay in the centre. We used to have some great clashes."

**GS:** Your partner in crime at Granville was Eric Hulme.

**AG:** "He could score with either foot. All you had to do was give him a bit of room and that was it. He went onto play in England but had trouble with his ankles. Give him open space and he could hit it but he couldn't play against the third back game, so they played him at inside right with me at centre forward. We played down at Macarthur Park one day and he scored 5 goals and never touched the ball in the movement till he put it in the back of the net."

**GS:** Another to play for Granville was Englishman Jack Aston.

**AG:** "Jack was based with the English army in Sydney when he approached one of the Granville committee in a shop in the main street for a game. He was bought down for a trial at Lambert Park and came on after half-time when we were playing Leichhardt. After seeing him in action for ten minutes the coach bought him straight off and kept him fresh for firsts. He signed for us then and there. He went home to England and played for Manchester United and when he retired they even bought him a sports store. His son also played in an FA Cup final later on. When Jack left Granville he gave me his boots."

**MH:** Did you ever wear them?

**AG:** "No they were too heavy. I always used to wear the lightest boots I could find and these were too damn heavy. I kept them for many years though."

**GS:** And the wingers

**AG:** "We had two international wingers at Granville, George Sanders and Ray Marshall. He was one of the star juniors for Granville before Metters got him but he came back when they folded. He scored 178 goals in total and was very quick. Unfortunately he passed away about twelve months ago."

**GS:** What about your younger brother Frank

**AG:** "Frank was a centre half. His first 3 games was on Reg Date, Frank Parsons and Jack Drinkwater from Cessnock. He was a better player at 18 than he ever was. They said he would play for South that year but I said there was no way they would ever drop big Billy Wilson because he never played a bad game for N.S.W. or the south or rep football at centre-half. And sure enough they didn't drop him. He never let you down but he let it get to him a bit when he didn't play reps when they said he was going to"

Alan Garside's career ended with the demise of the association in 1958. After struggling with leg injuries in his later years which had curtailed regular selection for the Australian side, he retired and never played a match on principle for the newly formed federation. He was made offers by other clubs including his beloved Granville but decided to stay retired and never looked back. Frank Garside the club president resigned his post and the club moved into the federation where it competed for a couple of seasons but was relegated at the end of the 1960 season. Younger brother Frank stayed with Granville but after a disagreement with selection policy he too retired in 1961 never to play another game.

I concluded by asking Alan a little about what he thought of the game today.

**AG:** "57 - 97 is forty years and they are still getting the same crowds they did back then. In my day there was 45,000 at the S.C.G. in international matches. Where are they now?"

**MH:** With all the promotion in the media and on television.

**AG:** "It's unfortunate that even though the standard of play has improved the club games don't draw any bigger crowds than they did in the 50's."

Alan is now enjoying his retirement with his wife only a few miles from his old home ground in F.S.Garside Park (formerly Macarthur Park). The Garside contribution to Australian football is immeasurable and his forward play developed by watching English centre-forward Ike Clarke in 1951 was a turning point in Australian soccer. Although he doesn't attend any games these days he still maintains a keen interest in the game watching it on television. When the Socceroos go out onto the M.C.G. on November 29th to make history there will be no more a proud old Socceroo than Alan. Although he never played a world cup qualifier nor an international in 40 years the Socceroos will be carrying the hopes and dreams of former players like Alan Garside who gave their all for their country to carry the game where it is today.