

Shona Bass

The early history of the women's game in Australia goes back deep into the nineteenth century. Thereafter women had a very tough time establishing their right to play the game in the face of strong opposition from male officialdom. However each generation overcame obstacles both here and overseas and women continued to play. It was in the 1970s that the women's game really took off in an organised way in Australia. In Victoria a group of pioneers started a state competition in the 1970s. A national competition began in 1974 and there were enough teams in Victoria that year to split the state league into two divisions—western and eastern—won by Melton and Doveton respectively.

Among those taking part in these years were a number of women who have since been recognised in national and state halls of fame or by the naming of trophies after them. They include Janette Melvin, Theresa Deas and Betty Hoar. Another player who made a significant contribution at that time was Shona Bass. She represented Victoria and then was selected for the Australian team which took part in the inaugural Trans-Tasman Cup in New South Wales and Queensland in 1979. These were among the first recognised international matches played by the Australian women's team. The first game drawn, while the second was won by New Zealand by one-nil and third by Australia by the same score. Shona Bass went on to play in the second Trans-Tasman Cup in New Zealand in 1980. This time the Australians came out on top in the third game by 3-2 after two draws. Sandra Brentnall scored all three goals for the Australia in the final match.

As with all the players at that time, Shona Bass, had to pay for the privilege of playing and meet most of the expenses of her representative matches. She was already heavily involved in coaching and player development and was studying for a career in teaching. This limited her opportunities to appear with the national team but she took part in the second Oceania Cup in 1987 in New Zealand when the women's Australian team came runner-up to Chinese Taipei in the final. The team included Julie Murray, Karen Menzies, Renaye Iserief, Sue Buswell, Sabine Buschmann, Sue Monteath, Leanne Priestley, Joanne Millman, Terri McQueen, Moya Dodd, Mariana Milanovic, Lisa Rader, Theresa Jones, Shona Bass, Andrea Martin and Sharon Mateljan. There had been a major dispute within the women's ranks just prior to the tournament and the NSW players were withdrawn. In all Shona Bass won eight caps for what became known as the Matildas.

Though she continued to be involved in the development of the game, Shona Bass's academic career became her main focus. She completed a PhD in the Department of Medicine at the University of Melbourne and later became a professor and head of school at Deakin University and a widely published author. She is now involved with Early Foundations as a Director concerned with the development of children. Recently she debated the need for much greater public

support for early intervention in children's education with the Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan on Channel Ten.

Shona was a long standing State team player and a member of the National team that played the first A internationals. She also coached Junior state teams and is a highly qualified coach. Theresa Deas.