

## VALE

### John "Lightning" Lyons

The passing of John Lyons at the age of 76 brings back reminders of his short but interesting career with Norths. He was a member of the drought breaking premiership winning team for the 1969/70 season.

John was a legendary figure in business, social and sporting circles in Townsville and that is well documented elsewhere so I just want to restrict my comments to his cricket career with Norths.

I first knew of John when we were both still at school playing for our respective schools in the mid 1960s and then we were both members of the 1969/70 Norths A grade team.

John was a left arm orthodox spin bowler and a right hand batsman. He had family pedigree as his father, Murray Lyons, was a very good cricketer in his time.

John brought a sense of humour and fun to the team so everyone had to have a nickname. John earned his nickname from our wicket keeper, Dr John Morrissey, who was not impressed with his lack of speed across the turf, hence the nickname "Lightning".

However, Doc Morrissey went on to become captain when Dave Applegarth was transferred back to Brisbane and he believed so much in John's ability with the ball that he set out extra training sessions in the nets to get John fitter and bowling better. Doc always said "he will win a game for us one day". That didn't actually eventuate but he did pick up some good wickets along the way.

John used to bat No.11 and made few runs so Doc came up with the plan that he would put him up the order to open with the idea it would upset the opening bowlers because of "Lightning's" unorthodox batting style. It worked to a certain extent and provided some fun along the way.

The first time John went out to open was against Wests who had John Baldwin in his prime as the fastest bowler in town. After a few overs John came walking back to the pavilion ashen faced and when asked what was wrong, he advised that he had forgotten to put a protector on!

We were playing in the days of the 8 ball over and John was a bit the worse for wear from the night before one day and Doc bought him on first change in the heat of the day. John bowled the one over and said "that's it, I can't bowl any more, I'm stuffed!" So much for Doc's fitness campaign. It brought laughter all round. That was Lightning.

He only played a couple of seasons for Norths as other things in life took him away from serious cricket. However, he loved social cricket and formed the renowned Mr Walkers XI as he was a fan of the Phantom from comics fame. Mr Walkers XI was made up of mates and the odd celebrity and played in the Goldfield Ashes as well as other places such as Dunk Island. He even used to get Wendy Wimbush, a renowned scorer, to come up as a celebrity scorer. No doubt much fun and enjoyment was had by all.

Cricket clubs produce many personalities and Norths has produced its share over the years but none more memorable than John "Lightning" Lyons. It is a privilege to have known and played with him in a Norths Premiership Team.

Ray Kohn