

VALE - Graham "Flash" Askern

I first recall Graham being a "day boy" at Townsville Grammar when I was a boarder there in the 1960s. He was a couple of years below me in class so when I finished in 1964 he was completing year 10 or Junior as it was then called. He then went to Toowoomba Grammar as a boarder where he played Firsts Cricket and our paths did not cross again until 1968 when I came back to Townsville in National Service as I had been posted to Lavarack Barracks with 6RAR.

In the 1968/69 cricket season, I was able fit in some games of cricket between army training. My old team, Past Grammars had folded and I joined Norths as my old school mate Dennis Cook was now playing for them in Reserve Grade. As it turns out, Graham was also playing in that team for Norths and it was then our friendship began to develop.

When I came out of National Service in October 1969, I came back to Townsville to work. This is when our friendship developed further. We played cricket for Norths in the 1969/70 season and won the A Grade Premiership, defeating Wests who had won 10 Premierships in a row. Some feat!

We continued to play cricket for Norths in the coming seasons and even coached the Norths Under 12 team in our spare time. One funny story from this time was when I introduced a new cricket umpire in town to the Cricket Association as he had umpired in Perth and seemed the real deal. He did some peculiar things when umpiring, including calling "one short" for a single run by the batsmen. Marge Souter and I were scoring at the time and just looked at each other in amusement as we disregarded the signal. He umpired a junior match for us on Cutharinga Park and held up play while he cleared children on bicycles some 100 meters away from our wicket and not on the field of play. The joke was on me and was brought up many times over the years when it was found out that he was actually a patient at the Psychiatric Ward of the Townsville General Hospital, North Ward!

Graham got his nickname "Flash" from his cricket team mates due to the slow speed at which he covered the ground when chasing the ball. He eventually found a home in the slips cordon where he didn't have to run. Another team mate, John Lyons, was similarly endowed with a lack of pace and was nicknamed "Lightning". In a game in Ingham it came to pass that Flash and Lightning were batting together and Flash unfortunately was run out for a duck. This would have been the only time they ever batted together. The scorecard appears on this website.

Graham played in a second A Grade premiership in the 1972/73 season under the captaincy of Bill Souter.

The final time Graham and I played cricket together was after we had both retired. We joined a group of Townsville cricketers who played in the 1988 International Golden Oldies Cricket Festival held in Brisbane during EXPO 88. A photo of this team appears on this website.

Ray Kohn