

Vale: Craig PIERCE

1970 – 2003

In his time Craig was one of Australia's most capped representatives and showed strong determination, leadership and a fighting spirit that encouraged and inspired many around him.



Craig played for Australia 37 times, including 28 World Cup games as well as nine Test matches. Sadly, Craig passed away not long after being inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2003. Craig will always be remembered as a character of Australian Touch Football.

World Cup

10 caps at World Cup in Auckland, New Zealand 3rd to 7th December 1991

10 caps at World Cup in Hawaii, USA 21st March to 25th March 1995

8 caps at World Cup in Sydney, Australia 21st to 24th April 1999

Test Matches

1 cap v New Zealand at Hamilton, NZ - 30th November 1999

3 caps v New Zealand at Brisbane, Australia 21st June 1997

3 caps v New Zealand at Auckland, NZ – 3rd to 4th April 1998

2 caps v New Zealand at Hamilton, NZ – 8th to 10th November 2001

Queensland - 23 Caps

9 Caps - Nationals, Gold Coast Qld, 15th to 19th October 1995

2 Caps State of Origin – Port Macquarie, December 1995

3 Caps State of Origin – Port Macquarie, December 1996

3 Caps State of Origin – Brisbane, 1998

3 Caps State of Origin – Wollongong, 2001

3 Caps Interstate Challenge – Brisbane, 2002

Razorbacks – 20 Caps

7 Caps - 1997 NTL
7 Caps - 1998 NTL
6 Caps - 2001 NTL

Barbarians - 7 Caps

7 Caps - 2001 NTL

Rest in Peace my friend

Memories of the Zip-Zip Man

St. Anthony's Church Toowoomba was full to overflowing yesterday as family and friends gathered to afford a right and proper send-off to Craig Piercey, one of the true champions of Touch. The heartfelt outpouring of emotion for the little zip-zip man in the #7 spoke volumes for the high esteem in which Piercey is held. In any walk of life, to be universally liked and respected is a tough task, but Craig always did it easily.

It was testimony to his standing in hearts and minds that mourners gathered in Toowoomba from all parts of the country to attend what was essentially, a celebration of an exceptional life. The funeral service was beautifully done with all of Piercey's favourite songs included.

Family and friends then gave moving tributes and shared cherished memories of Craig's life and amongst the many tears, there were a lot of laughs, as the crowd listened intently and reflected on their own special times spent with the little maestro. A video tribute featuring some of Piercey's greatest moments in Touch and Rugby League reminded all present of the pure genius that existed inside of him.

Watching reel after reel of 'Piercey magic' brought wide grins to tear stained faces, and after one typically audacious "length of the field- beat the whole team on your own " efforts - the big crowd inside the church could not contain itself and clapped and cheered the little bloke over the tryline .

Piercey would have loved that!

The tribute also included snaps of Craig's life - taking us through the significant moments of his time with us - of course his many sporting achievements, but also some great footage of his time with his Mum and Dad and brother Scott growing up, and with his wonderful wife Jodie and their four gorgeous children, Sam, Lachlan, Georga and Melissa.

Piercey's brave fight with the cancer that eventually claimed his life was starkly highlighted both in video footage and in the recounts of close family and friends. The courage and dignity Craig displayed throughout this traumatic time was typical of the man. His will to prevail, his determination to fight, his indomitable spirit, his love of life and his passion

for the family and friends he loved was always clearly on show- even through the most difficult and heart wrenching times in his life. His strength and depth of character humbles but inspires at the same time.

Jodie blessed Craig's coffin with Holy water, bidding him a safe journey to the big Footy field in the sky, where I'm sure he'll be rustling up a game of "two on one" before too long. Like the old days in the Pierce's backyard with Scoot and Rowie.

Just quietly, I think God and Jesus will have their work cut out, Piercey will smash 'em. "Penalty, penalty, penalty" you can hear Craig bleating. To the strains of Summer of 69, (I can still see him as a 16 year-old playing air guitar and singing that song) some of his best mates, many of whom had had the pleasure of being carried across the line in games and in life by the little fella, had their chance to repay the favour and carried him out of the church towards his new destination.

After gathering at Craig's graveside at the Garden of Remembrance, and saying final farewells, most people adjourned to the nearby Valleys Rugby League club, where Piercey had spent many hours playing and training for the Roosters as a kid and when he got older (I won't say bigger because we all know he never got any taller!)

At Valleys, People had a few quite ales for him, regularly toasting him, and his tribute video got a few more plays as the afternoon stretched in the early evening.

Everywhere you looked were people who had been touched by him in some way.

Family and friends, his work colleagues at USQ, his many mates from Rugby League, his friends from school and the local community, and of course the Touch fraternity who came in droves to honour this amazing player and friend. Craig was a one club man in all that he did, and it brought back great memories and touched his family to see many of the original players and supporters from his beloved Drayton Sharks Touch Club, South African Running Ducks, and Toowoomba Touch teams present.

Mates from South West Qld Razorbacks and Barbarians teams, Qld, NSW, and Australian team mates also made great efforts to be present and the efforts made by all these people was not lost on the Pierce/Luck family, who were uplifted by the response to Craig's passing.

Officials from the ATA, QTA, Razorbacks, SWQ, Barbarians, TTA and their respective clubs, and representatives from touch clubs and teams across the country attended to pay their respects. Coaches, Referees, selectors and spectators from the game came along to thank the little guy for making this sport, and our lives so much richer.

Reminiscing, sharing stories about his legendary skills, abilities, pranks, jokes, his courage, his loyalty, his friendship. There was a lot of love, a lot of hugs, moist eyes, and many laughs. Towards the end of the evening, the kids who were present did what kids do, and led by Craig's sons Sam and Lachie, started playing Touch

A little while later the adults joined the fun. Off came the ties and the high heels. Seeing Sam do the aeroplane and high- five spectators after scoring a great solo try, brought back more than a few memories of the young Craig.

Watching Jodie, in her formal black dress, kick off her shoes then run 40 metres to score a try, laughing and delighting in the sense of fun and enjoyment experienced by everyone, was amazing.

I stood there laughing and crying - tears streaming down my face, thinking how fantastic is this? In my mind's eye I could see Piercey out there carving up, taking on anyone who wanted a game, for hours on end, like the old days in the Pierce's backyard.

The Zip-zip man from his vantage point in heaven must have sent down the word to Scoot, as Scooter put an ankle tap on a try-bound Amanda Bliss which sent Blissy sprawling along the ground.

The crowd laughed, and I reckon Piercey would have given Scoot a trademark wink and flashed that cheeky smile to his partner in crime.

Later on I stood with some friends, most of the original guys and girls who played junior touch together as kids, who practically lived at the Pierce residence in West Street, we were all adopted by Brian and Heather ("my Littlies" Mrs Pierce would call us, because we were so small compared to other teams) and there was always room for everyone.

We used to pile into the 'Pierce mobile' every weekend for another touch game in Toowoomba, Ipswich, Laidley, Gatton (or the Coast and Brisbane when we took on the City slickers in the big games) - and led by Captain Craig we'd go and play, give it everything we had and do our best, then hang out and stick together.

We thought we were pretty cool in our 80's striped tracky with our nick-names on them...I won't even start on the Mullet hair...or the Violent Femmes music. we'll blame Piercey. Craig and Scooter were the glue, and the friendship and fun we had made playing touch a joy. That is perhaps the greatest gift Piercey has given us, his love and passion for a good time no matter what the circumstance, he always found value in everything. Always enjoyed himself and helped you to enjoy the moment.

Like anyone who has met him, had the privilege to know him, to play with him, to call him a friend (or put him in the bin if you're a ref - just kidding) I have many cherished memories of Craig.

I will forever see him in the backyard of the Pierce's pretending to be Phil Blake and practising that chip kick, remember him delving deep into his bag of tricks to conjure victory for his team and doing things freakishly that no one else could do for more than 18 years and at all levels.

I remember him being 4 or five plays ahead - but never making you feel bad because he was so good. I think about when Craig and Scott would make me line up with 10 year old's at the Ekka (when they were 16 & 18) to get show bags for them. Mostly I will remember Craig giving me this piece of advice when I was very young on my first away trip for touch.

Piercey pulled me aside and said, "Karls, see those older guys over there?" I nodded earnestly. "Yes Craig"
"Well if they kiss you, you will be diseased."

Being very naive, I complied with my captain, steered clear and thought those older guys must have some sort of fungus on their lips or something - it was only later on I realized Piercey was just looking out for me, making sure I didn't get in any strife.

He was like that, I'm sure he'll be looking out for us all still from his grandstand seat in heaven. We will all miss him; remember his courage, his talent, his love of life, and his laughter. No doubt last night, the boys would have had a few then removed their shirts as a tribute to the Piercey tradition - the little bloke would have been happy.

The depth of feeling, support, and love for Piercey and his family is so heartfelt and genuine. Our sport, like all others, can get bogged down in pettiness, innuendo, and ill will at times - it heartens you when you see the response generated by the touch community in this instance.

I have no doubt Craig's life example lifted people's own level of selflessness and determination to seek positives and find the strength to prevail. I reckon he'd want that for the future for the sport he loved so dearly.

Craig Pierce - A champion with exceptional qualities on the field, but where it really mattered most, in the game of life.

Miss you Zip-Zip man,
Karley Banks.

