



Business leader loves league with all his art

Bernie Pramberg

MICK Power has a passion for sport, especially rugby league.

That's why the Brisbane businessman paid \$90,000 for an oil painting of Queensland's Team of the Century at a celebratory dinner in Brisbane this week.

Mr Power, who started the successful BMD Construction company in 1974 and is ranked in Australia's wealthiest 100, prevailed in a spirited bidding joust at the function attended by 1800 people.

"I think it's important to preserve the history of rugby league and I've always been passionate about the game," he said. "It's great to honour the legends of the game and this painting does that."

Mr Power, 58, was a lower-grade player with Wynnum-Manly in the 1970s and has sponsored the Seagulls senior club for 11 years.

"I've always had a keen interest in helping the game at grassroots level and have tended to keep donations and sponsorship in the local community," he said. "I've been involved with Wynnum juniors for 20 years."

Mr Power believes the painting by Welsh-born artist Davis Thomas should be available for the public to enjoy. He has already opened negotiations to loan it to the Queensland Rugby League.

"We're talking to the QRL along the lines of loaning the painting to them so it can be placed somewhere so that the public can view

the work," he said. "I don't want it hanging in a boardroom."

Mr Power has a personal wealth estimated at \$450 million.

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PAINTING bought for public to enjoy ... Mick Power.



For the love of the game

Bernie Pramberg

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League heroes who wore maroon

Cream of the century captured on canvas

THIS is rugby league's Queensland Team of the Century.

It's a team to be enjoyed by everyone who loves the game.

Portrayed by artist Dave Thomas in a work that was auctioned for \$90,000 at the QRL Centenary Celebration Dinner last Tuesday, the oil painting captures the pride and passion of the very best to wear the maroon jersey.

It was an occasion when rugby league bared its soul and rediscovered its past. The night was about history, endeavour, spirit and recognition. For the 1800 guests at Brisbane Convention Centre, the celebration was truly uplifting.

It was a timely reminder that whenever we drink the water, we should remember those who dug the well.

A positive by-product of RL's Centenary celebrations has been the discovery of a treasure trove of inspiring anecdotes from the past.

It has sent a subtle message to younger generations of league followers that the game had a rich and robust existence for 72 years before State of Origin was spawned in 1980.

Many of us have been fortunate to have witnessed the marvellous players of the Origin era selected in the team — Darren Lockyer, Mal Meninga, captain Wally Lewis, Allan Langer, Bob Lindner and Gene Miles.

More of us watched Artie Beetson evolve through Roma, Redcliffe, Sydney club football, New South Wales and Australia ... and then unforgettably leading Queensland in the first Origin match.

Hooker Noel Kelly, one of the game's great characters, played his best football through the 1960s. And

others can still remember those fabulous players of the 1950s ... flying Ipswich winger Denis Flannery and the rock-hard forwards Duncan Hall and Brian Davies.

Kelly, a Goodna butcher who graduated to the green and gold, was his usual jocular self on Tuesday night while Flannery, who is battling illness, was engulfed by emotion. A champion schoolboy athlete at Nudgee College and Ipswich Grammar, Flannery was an Ipswich stalwart who played 26 games for Queensland and 13 Tests for Australia.

He married the daughter of legendary Ipswich hardman Dan Dempsey and for many years ran the Ulster Hotel in that city. Hall, widely regarded as the greatest prop to play the game, resides at a nursing home on the Sunshine Coast and was represented on the night by his two sons.

And Davies, selected in the second-row and described as a "colossal forward", played 37 games for Queensland and 27 Tests for Australia, three as captain.

Exceedingly modest, Davies was captain-coach of the Australian team that played Great Britain in the 1958 Ashes series.

"And I was the only Queenslander in the side," he recalled.

But what of the others in this historic team ... those league heroes from the 1920s, widely regarded as the vintage era of Queensland football.

Winger Cec Aynsley's daughter, a sprightly 75 years, described her father as "a larrikin" ... and an electrifying winger who was also a wizard goal-kicker.

Originally from Charters Towers,

Aynsley played for Brisbane, Ipswich, Queensland and Australia before ending his career with a five-year stint with English club Rochdale Hornets.

In England, he was also manager of a greyhound racing club where his daughter reported he "got up to a few tricks".

Tommy Gorman, the first Queenslander to captain Australia, was a classic centre endowed with bewildering attacking skills. He was also universally considered a gentleman in the truest sense.

He was an integral member of the famous Toowoomba sides of the 1920s, forging a world-class centre combination with E. S. "Nigger" Brown.

Other Toowoomba players of the era in the ultimate Maroons line-up are flint-hard props Mick Madsen and Herb Steinhart, and mercurial half-back Duncan Thompson.

As team coach Wayne Bennett said on the night, nobody ever grew up on the Darling Downs without hearing stories of those legendary players.

Immensely strong, Madsen reportedly was ploughing a paddock one day when a stranger asked for directions to Warwick. Big Mick obliged, pointing toward the town by lifting the plough in the air.

Steinhart captained Australia in the brutally infamous Battle of Brisbane in 1932 and I can recall watching him coach a Toowoomba under-16 team in a freezing and foggy night when he was in his 70s.

The late QRL chairman Ron McAuliffe dubbed Steinhart an "immortal" for his contribution to the game.

Thompson, who was told he would



never play again after being shot through the chest in World War I, was a master tactician who became a genius coach.

To complete the 17, utility Jimmy Craig was the consummate reserve.

It is said he played every position except prop in a dazzling career.

There was no official manager of the team, but in an emotional finale on Tuesday night, the ailing Dick "Tosser" Turner was presented to the crowd of 1800 and awarded the title.

There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

FOOTNOTE: Brisbane businessman and sporting benefactor Mick Power purchased the painting for \$90,000 and has not made a decision as to where the work will hang.

Power, a former player at Wynnum-Manly, has been major sponsor of the Seagulls through his BMD Constructions for more than 10 years.

He is also on the board of the Greg Norman junior golf foundation.



PRIDE and passion . . . back, from left, Duncan Thompson, Jimmy Craig, Cec Aynsley, Herb Steinhort, Mick Madsen, Duncan Hall, Denis Flannery, Noel Kelly, Arthur Beetson, Wally Lewis (c), Gene Miles, Bob Lindner, Allan Langer, Darren Lockyer, Wayne Bennett (coach); front, Tommy Gorman, Brian Davies, Mal Meninga.