**Cordner Family**

**1952 article**

**That amazing Cordner family**

by Percy Taylor

In a feature for ***The Argus*** in 1952, *Percy Taylor* looks at the Cordner family and their extraordinary sporting and academic record.

*There seldom has been a lineup of family talent like the Cordner's. Family likeness runs in their appearance, their superb sporting abilities, and their record in the world of science. Their story is unique.*

Brawn and brains combined gives them a record unique in Victorian history. There never has been, and there probably never will be, a more remarkable football family in Victoria than the Cordners, father and four sons. All five played football for Melbourne Grammar School, University, and Melbourne Football Club. Three played interstate football for Victoria; one played interstate cricket; one won the highest award in Victorian football; two captained a League club, and four played senior cricket.

Few families have won so many University Blues between them.

Dr. Cordner, senior, won cricket and football blues between 1906 and 1910. Dr. Ted Cordner, junior, won a football blue in 1938 and a half-blue for cricket in 1940. Dr. Don Cordner was a 1942 football blue winner. Denis won his football blue in 1946, cricket in 1947, and gained a half-blue for athletics in the same year. He was the best all-rounder of them all. He is a Master of Science. John was a football blue in 1949, and also won a cricket blue. He, too, is a Master of Science.

Let's look at them, one by one.

**FIRST, the father Edward**

Cordner: "Today's teams would beat those of prewar days only because there are now more good players in every team," he says. "That could be, of course, because our population has grown considerably. Dr. Cordner thinks that kicking was better in his day, but that marking was not so good.

Edward Cordner played senior football with Melbourne in 1905 while he was still a pupil at Melbourne Grammar School. A year later he played for University in the Metropolitan Association, which is now the Victorian Amateurs. A year later still University challenged Essendon and won - a performance which must have had something to do with University being preferred to Brighton when both clubs sought admittance to the League.

University played in the League for the first time in 1908, and in their brief senior career defeated every League team except Collingwood.

In 1913 Ted Cordner, by then a doctor, went to England and did not play senior football again. But he did become a V.F.L. delegate when he returned.

**NOW for the four sons**

The Cordners are particularly good club men, almost fanatically Melbourne-minded. The Cordners have never spared themselves on the field. "If we had l8 players with a heart as big as Denis has, we would be playing off for the premiership," one of the players said the other day.

**All fair, tall**

Each is fair and tall, with Denis, at 6ft. 4in., towering over Don, who is 6ft. 2 1n. John, at 6ft. 1 in., is the smallest, but looks more rugged-he is nearly 14st.

Don was almost a film star a few years ago, when there was a suggestion to make a football film, with Don the hero. Don saw professional difficulties, however, and nothing more was done about it. He certainly has glamor-in his sport. He first appeared for Melbourne in the 1941 semi-final and final, his team winning the premiership. He went on to play a remarkable number of games in succession, and retired in 1950 with the grand record of 168 games played.

Everyone was happy when he won football's highest award, the Brownlow Medal, for best and fairest V.F.L. player, in 1946. In 1948 he became captain, and led Melbourne to a premiership.

LIKE his father, Don has ideas about the game.

"If I had my way," he says, "I would make a change or two. "One of the most irritating tricks is to knock the ball out of an opponent's hands when he has taken a mark or has received a free kick. This is done to waste time and to allow players to get into position. "Give me the power, and I would allow the man with the ball to move down the field a bit to take his kick. "I would do the same when a ball has been thrown away instead of being handed to the man who is to have the kick. Offenders would soon learn that those tricks didn't pay."

Don is emphatic about inter-state games. "They are a farce," he says. "The method of selection is ridiculous, and players don't always do their best. A much better idea would be for the premier teams in each State to play off for the championship of Australia."

Don picks Norman Smith, present Melbourne coach, as his greatest player. He said competition was always keen when he was playing against Bill Morris (Richmond, now Box Hill captain-coach) or Jack Howell (Carlton).

TED, first of the brothers to join Melbourne, started halfway through 1941. He missed a year and had played 52 games when the claims of his profession forced his retirement in 1946. He was a grand centre halfback, with tons of "sand" in his make-up, and opponents respected his strong dashes.

**Denis flattened**

DENIS never had an idea that he would play League football, but he came down from the North on leave, and brother Don suggested that he might get a game. That was in 1943.

He played once or twice with the seconds, and had his first game against Richmond. Five seconds after the ball had been bounced he was flattened. He soon recovered, kicked a couple of goals, and thoroughly enjoyed it all. Next day he went north again, and that was his last game until the grand final in 1948.

He became leader last year, and is still skipper. Superb in the ruck and in the air, he has done a grand job for his club and has been a regular State player in the last two seasons.

Denis picks Bob McClure (Essendon) as the best ruckman he has met. Others he names are Bill Morris (Richmond) and John Kennedy (Hawthorn), "who is an awkward customer." When he was playing at centre half-back he found Fred Flanagan (Geelong skipper) a tough opponent.

JOHN, the youngest, started with Melbourne last year and played in six games. He left for England before the season ended, having previously gained his degree of Master of Science.

Now, newly married to a Melbourne girl, he is doing scientific work with a big paint firm in Birmingham, and is expected to return within two years. John was a leading left-hand bowler for the University and played in several Shield games toward the end of last season. In this he outshone his more glamorous brothers, who did not get past pennant cricket.

His fame preceded him to Birmingham, where he now plays in a Saturday afternoon competition in the Lancashire League. In recent match he was opposed to Dick Pollard, the former Lancashire and Test pace bowler. Dick bundled John's team out for 80, taking seven for 20-odd. Then John turned on the heat with the ball, his average of 7/33 being sufficient to win the game for his side.

It has been hinted in cables that John may qualify for county cricket, but it appears that he will not be in England long enough to gain the residential qualifications.

But what a family!

**Footnotes**

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