

Hunter Academy of Sport's Ken Clifford dies

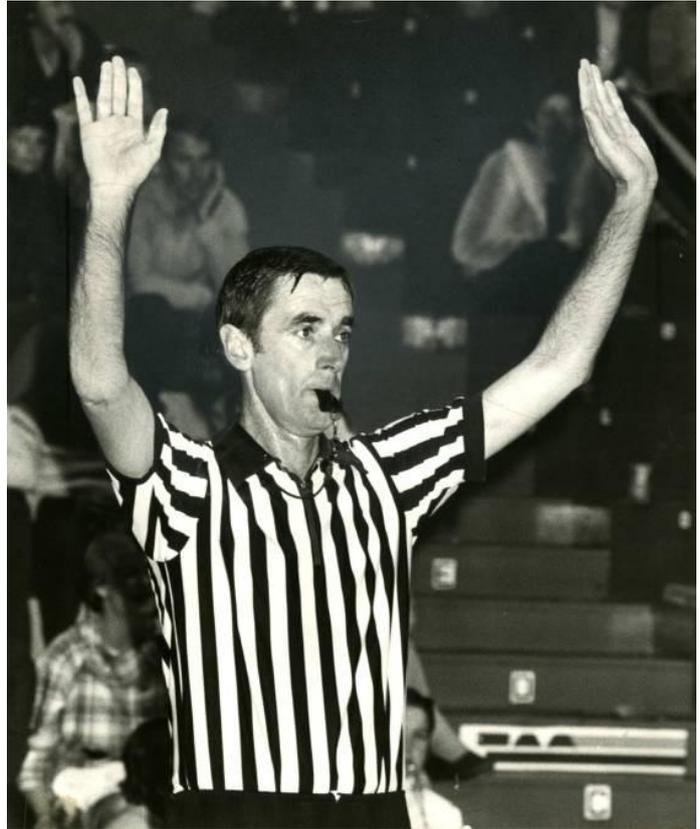
By VIC LEVI
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One of the Hunter's best known sportsmen and sporting administrators, Mr Ken Clifford, died in Newcastle Private Hospital last night after a battle with cancer.

Mr Clifford, aged 73, was Chief Executive Officer of the Hunter Academy of Sport for 27 years and retired only last year.

Under his leadership, the Academy grew from having an initial program for basketball only to caring for more than 550 elite young sports people in 28 different programs.

Mr Clifford was President of the Newcastle District Cricket Association for 12 years, a life member of the Association, President of Newcastle Basketball Association, a foundation member of the Lord Taverners' Newcastle Branch and was also heavily involved in the administration of regional water polo.



He was a talented first grade cricketer with the Waratah and University Clubs and was an outstanding basketball referee for many years, officiating around Australia and overseas at the top level.

Mr Clifford left a successful career as a high school teacher and school sports administrator to join the Academy in 1988.

He took his love of all sport and his service to the sporting community to a level well beyond his paid job as Academy CEO.

Under his guidance, scores of talented youngsters have passed through the Academy to go on to represent their region, their state and their nation.

In 1991, he helped introduce the Hunter Festival of Sport to provide opportunities for many more people, young and old, to simply participate in sport, not necessarily at the elite level.

This festival attracts more than 20,000 participants every year.

His leadership led to the establishment in 1999 of the Academy's School Sports Awards which attract representation from all over the Hunter region and as far away as Taree, Forster, Scone and Muswellbrook.

His initiative also led to the Academy's successful program for athletes with a disability.

Mr Clifford is survived by his wife Laraine, his daughters Stephanie and Jacqueline, his step children, Glen and Rochelle, and his grand children, Sarah, Luke, Eleanor, Josephine, Perry, Amelia, Sonny, Isobel, Abbey and Sophie.

Funeral arrangements have not yet been finalised.