

Tributes flow for Newcastle sporting legend Ken Clifford



PASSIONATE, committed, meticulous, a pioneer, straight shooter, an advocate for the Hunter and its young sportspeople and a thorough gentleman.

Few, if any, have made a greater contribution to Hunter sport than Ken Clifford.

One of the region's best-known sportsmen and administrators, Clifford died on Monday after a battle with cancer. He was 73.

A former teacher, Clifford devoted his life to sport and family.

A president and life member of Newcastle District Cricket Association and Newcastle Basketball, Clifford was the Hunter Academy of Sport chief executive for 27 years until his retirement last year.

Under his stewardship, the academy grew from an initial program for basketball in 1988 to encompass 28 different programs and involve more than 550 elite young sportspeople.

"Sadly, we have lost a legendary figure in Hunter sport," former Olympic basketballer and close friend Terry Charlton said.

"Without a doubt one of our greatest sporting administrators.

"If you look at the number of sports he crossed, there would not be anyone more involved. He has been a dedicated servant to sport.

"He built the Hunter Academy basically from nothing and was always available, 24/7.

"He was very strong on sports ethics and people doing the right thing. I think the way he presented himself was born from his teaching background.

"He liked to take control and was certainly a leader."

Cricket was Clifford's first love. A fast bowler, he made his first-grade debut at 14 and had stints with Waratah-Mayfield, University and Merewether.

In 1968 he took up the role of NDCA registrar, serving 34 years, before taking the role of president from 1993-94 until 2004-05.

He was awarded life membership in 2005, and the Clifford Medal for the player of the first-grade final was struck this year in recognition of his contribution.

"It's a sad day for sport and specifically Newcastle cricket," NDCA president Paul Marjoribanks said. "He has been president, registrar, a selector, has sat on junior committees, fixture committees ... every possible role within cricket Ken has been involved and worked tirelessly in at some stage."