

IS MILBURN THE BEST SINCE MULLINS ?

First Australian to win Basketball Scholarship



By
GEORGE THOMPSON

John Milburn (extreme right) checks sun dial for accuracy at 1961 A.B.A. Conference, with him are (from left: Neil Kibble, Les Atkins and John's brother, Graham.

This is the question that many basketball players have been asking since learning of 20-year-old John Milburn's Basketball Scholarship to the University of Oregon, U.S.A., this year.

John will be doing a course in Business Administration whilst at the University and plans to be away for two years. His scholarship includes free fees, books and board for one year, and if he is successful in making the first 10 on the University's Basketball Team (The Oregon University team were ranked fifth in the National Championships last year) he will be offered the same conditions for another year.

Although Peter Mullins and John excelled at all sports when at school and started their basketball careers on outdoor courts at an early age, they are quite a few years apart — Peter began playing basketball in 1945 at the Moore Park Playground (see The Peter Mullins Story—April, 1960 issue, "Hoop High"), while John's first game was in 1955 on Newcastle Boys' High School court. (In comparison, Mullins was a brilliant 6ft. 5in. centre, whilst Milburn has developed into one of the finest guards in Australia at 5ft. 9in.)

John's first team played in the Northern Districts Junior Competition, then later on playing under the name of Eagles, they won their first "A" grade competition. With the amalgamation of the Newcastle and Northern Districts Associations a new team was formed — "Police Boys Bouncers".

With this team John has travelled all over N.S.W., winning tournaments at Griffith, Casino and Brisbane. (This team has also won 4 out of 5 Grand Finals in the strong Newcastle Association.)

FIRST REP. GAME

His first appearance for N.S.W. was in 1957 where he played for the Under 16's in the Australian Championships in Sydney, being narrowly defeated by Victoria in the final. From there he moved into the Under 18 State team which won the Australian Championships at Tasmania. Here John hit with a remarkable 59.5% shooting average, to be the Tournament's most accurate shot.

The following year (1959) he again made the Under 18 side and with players of the calibre of Livermore, Heaton, Soothill and Peterson, etc., helped to roll the strong Victorian team 67-55 in the final.

1960 saw John make his first Open State Team — here again he put in an outstanding performance, leading his State in rebounds both defensive and offensive and also assists. He finished a very creditable third in the Championship's Top Rebounders, giving several inches in height to Les Hody — Best and Fairest from South Australia, first, and F. Edwards, Queensland, second. (This N.S.W. team also had three Olym-

pic stars in Terry Charlton, Colin Whitehead and Ross Graham.)

It therefore seems a fitting tribute for John Milburn to receive this scholarship from Oregon, and I am sure that the best wishes of every Australian Basketballer go with him for the success in both his sporting and academic careers.



John Milburn sinks his famous top of the key jump. Kibble watches with Victorian player.

Basketball Star For America

Milburn Testimonial Next Friday At Wickham Court

Newcastle's finest basketball prospect, John Milburn, will play his last representative match for at least two years at the Newcastle Basketball Stadium at Wickham on Friday night.

Newcastle Association has arranged a testimonial night for Milburn on Friday and more than 800 spectators are expected to be at Wickham Stadium.

Milburn will lead Newcastle against Combined Sydney in the main match of the night.

It will be his last representative match as he will leave for America on June 8.

There he will join the University of Oregon on a sporting scholarship, similar to one already being undertaken by Belmont swimmer Arthur Thomson.

Milburn has been a byword, although only 18 years of age, in Newcastle basketball for the last three years.

He has been rated by several Mormon teams as outstanding material for an American university side.

Although he is undoubtedly small by present-day American standards, Milburn's uncanny control and fine, flat jump or set shooting should enable him to do well in America.

Milburn learned to control the ball and to rebound on the asphalt courts at Newcastle Boys' High, where as many as 20 boys would pack one court at recess.

Together with most of the present members of Police Boys Bouncers, he got his early grounding in competition with the now defunct Northern Districts Association under coach Norm Kelly

Modest Sportsman

It wasn't long before Milburn made his mark on junior tournaments and subsequently he has represented NSW in under 16, under 18 and senior basketball.

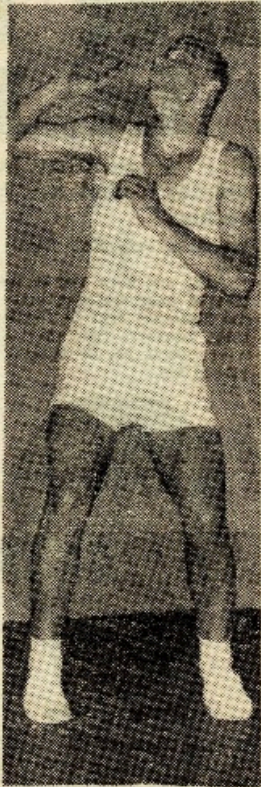
Two years ago he was adjudged the best and fairest player in the Australian under 18 championship carnival.

As well as being an exceptionally gifted player, Milburn is acknowledged by all who have met him to be a good and, above all, a modest sportsman.

He will take with him to America the best wishes of all players and officials of Newcastle Basketball Association.

Tickets for the testimonial are available from any Newcastle Basketball Association official, but may also be purchased at the door. Matches are Sydney women v Newcastle, Newcastle No. 2 v the Mormons and Newcastle No. 1 v Sydney.

NTC Newtec, striving again for the leadership of the Newcastle Basketball Association winter competition, will be the latest team to attempt to



John Milburn

defeat the Mormon Yankees at Wickham Stadium tomorrow night.

Newtec, now equal second with the Mormons, has had

the easiest draw of all teams so far and faces crucial matches against Mormons and Dynamo in the next week.

Mormons last week surprised with an apathetic showing against Dynamo in which it made many elementary defensive mistakes.

It seems feasible that the team would have corrected this during the week but it could still be vulnerable to a fast break.

Mormons Again

However, Newtec is the team least equipped to fast-break in this competition and may have to rely on its screens and jump shots to a great extent.

Mormons must show more vigor than it did last week under the basket and Felt and Johnson, if fit, should provide this.

I think Mormons will return to the winning list again provided its zone can get back in time.

Dynamo recovered from its slump last week and should again win tomorrow night over Bill Walmsley's Novos at 9.30.

Key Dynamo players will be guard Ken Brogan and centre John Gardiner, although Harry Firkin reached peak shooting form in Sydney at the weekend.

To have any chance, Novos will have to give its shooters more room to work in, particularly Terry Charlton, who has been wasted in recent games.

In the remaining match, undefeated Bouncers will give Aruntas a hard-running 40 minutes and should win comfortably.

Aruntas is improving but has not the speed or shooting to match the brilliant Bouncers.

Wednesday, 24 May 1961



Heather Milburn

20 January

(Frank Milburn here!) Suz Zii, David Green, Denis Kibble, etc. For those who ever wondered whatever happened to John Milburn; here's a clip from the paper from almost 58 years ago. John stayed in America; became a High School Maths and Science Teacher; married; had two kids; divorced; and then remarried. He has four grandchildren; is retired; and lives at Boulder City, Nevada; just outside Las Vegas.

2

3 comments

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Eric Harvey Heather Milburn I played a few seasons with Graham and also surfed a bit with him.

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1



David Green Thanks for that update

Like · Reply · 2d

1



Dick Sanders Hi Frank. I'll put the clipping and your words on the OBA web page if you don't mind. Regards

Like · Reply · 23h

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Write a reply...

