

Lyall Wall

..... played junior football with his brother at the Leichhardt Royals Rugby Union Club in 1909 and was selected along with William Palmer, Wests player #187, in a Glebe Rugby Union representative team also in that year. L. Wall was selected at fullback, Palmer was selected in the forwards and the other Wall was an emergency for that team. A descendant of George Wall recalls that he played for Balmain but did not recall him playing with Wests. This is probably accurate as George Wall appears to have been a decent player and may well have played for Balmain, even if it was the lower grades.

John Craik Lyall Sydney Wall appears to have been the more prominent player from an early age and went on to achieve a distinguished career in both rugby league and cricket. He played First Grade cricket with the Western Suburbs Club and made eleven appearances for NSW between 1914-15 and 1924-25. In the cricket records he is recorded as J.C.L.S. Wall.

To further address his identity it is noted that Lyall Wall played five First Grade games with the Balmain Club in 1913 before the neighbouring Annandale Club protested to the effect that Lyall Wall was not residentially qualified to play with Balmain. The protest was successful and Lyall Wall had to play the remainder of the 1913 season with Annandale. However, in May 1914 the NSW Rugby League further considered the appeal by the Annandale Club against the residential qualification of Lyall Wall as well as Roy and Ray Norman and dismissed all cases. As such, Lyall Wall was free to play once more with the Balmain Club. He played with the Balmain Club until the end of the 1919 season.

To further distinguish between John (Lyall) Wall and George (Lyall) Wall, it is noted that John Wall was married in the Parish of Rozelle (Balmain) in 1916 while his brother George Wall was living in Surry Hills in the South Sydney District when he married in 1917. Given the history that Lyall Wall had with his residential qualification in 1913, this further supports that John Craik Lyall Sydney Wall was Wests player #196.

Lyall Wall made an impact in his first year playing with the Balmain Rugby League Club. The Sun newspaper reported; "Lyall Wall's game at fullback for Balmain against Newtown was a display worthy of Fraser and could hardly have been improved upon. Time and again he held Newtown off without support and proved himself adept at taking the ball from their possession and punting away. Wall's future seems full of promise."

In April 1919 it was reported in the Sydney Sportsman that Lyall Wall had made a return to the Balmain Club after not playing "a season or so", owing to some difference with the Club concerning the late "big strike." It is not clear what this dispute was about but it was probably related to the transport strike of 1917. The newspaper reported that; "The reception that greeted the champion fullback on entering the arena fully proves that the public and Club following were not in accord with those officials who have kept this player out of his position so long. The crowd showed their belief that a man should be picked on his football ability."

While there was a positive response to Lyall Wall at the start of 1919, this changed significantly at the end of the year in a City Cup match. The Arrow newspaper reported in September 1919 that; "L. Wall, the Balmain fullback, appears to be the target for abuse from a section of the barrackers, who labor under the idea that he committed some offence against trade unionism in connection with the 1917 strike." Lyall Wall in his defence said; "I challenge anyone to prove that I went back to work before the strike was declared off."

The Arrow editorialised stating; "It is deplorable that such things can be obtruded into sport even by the most one eyed barrackers. If the Balmain man had done that which the sections evidently

thought he did, there would be no excuse for their abuse. There is not an element of sportsmanship in people who do such things." It was subsequently reported that Lyall Wall had been struck by a bottle from the grandstand when he was heading back to the dressing room.

There is little information about the original incident in 1917 and the sanctions that were imposed on Lyall Wall. It is known that he was sent off in a match late in 1917 and had been subsequently selected to play for the Balmain Australian Rules team. 1918 was a missing year for Lyall Wall.

Lyall Wall had a long standing friendship with Herb Gilbert who he connected with at Wests in 1920 and then both went across to the newly formed St George Rugby League Club in 1921. It is not known whether this friendship or his treatment by barrackers at the end of 1919 caused him to change Clubs in 1920. It is also noted that Lyall Wall's wife had family connections to the suburb of Enfield, so it may have been a combination of these factors that brought Lyall Wall to Wests.

Lyall Wall had a productive year in 1920 while at Wests. He played thirteen First Grade and two City Cup matches for the Club. In competition games he scored three tries and kicked twenty seven goals and a field goal for a tally of sixty five points. He scored another three tries in City Cup games.

Lyall Wall had a distinguished rugby league career, playing 130 First Grade games (all clubs), scoring 275 points from 11 tries, 120 goals and 1 field goal. Lyall Wall is player #197 of the Western Suburbs Cricket Club and player #3 of the St George Cricket Club. In 1928 Lyall Wall was appointed as the Cricket Coach at Scots College, Sydney.

Lyall Wall's son, Joseph Lyall Wall was a champion schoolboy footballer and all round athlete in the 1930's. A knee injury brought his football career to an end however he continued with athletics, specialising in the high jump and hurdles. He was touted as being a selection for the 1940 Olympics in Tokyo, however as fate would have it, that was quashed by the outbreak of the Second World War.

Lyall Wall died at West Pymble, NSW, in Balmain territory in 1969.