

# Jack Ryan

..... was mentioned In a report in the Cumberland Argus in May 1920. The match between Auburn and Parramatta Endeavours showcased the cream of future Western Suburbs rugby league players, with the report noting;

"It was a clean hard game and well fought out. For Auburn, Yanz, at fullback was very solid and did not make a mistake. Matterson and Ryan played well. The scrum half (Ryan) played a heady game, and was very tricky. The way he cut through the ruck was a treat to watch. For Endeavours, McMillan (Frank) at full back did some brilliant bits of play, but on the whole was unreliable. In the forwards, Drew was always on the ball, he showed great dash, and is in the makings of a fine player."

At the Western Districts Annual Presentation in April 1921, J. Ryan the Auburn player was awarded the trophy for the best President's Cup player for 1920, and the most improved player in the A Grade competition for 1920. The Western District President's Cup team was an impressive side containing players such as Fred Yanz, Frank McMillan, Joshua Plumb, Neil Matterson and Joseph Drew, all future Wests First Grade players.

**trophies. The following trophies were allotted:—Best player in President Cup matches, Mr. J. Ryan (Auburn); most improved player in the A Grade, Mr. J. Ryan (Auburn); most improved player in the**

Cumberland Argus 6 April 1921

However J. Ryan, the Smithfield fullback and Southern Districts representative of 1920 was also a very good player and would be often referred to in the local newspapers for his fine play. In the Sunday Times on 10 April 1921, and again in the Cumberland Argus on 23 April 1921, the issue of player movement was being discussed and it was noted that Wests were introducing a number of new players into their ranks for the 1921 season.

Some of the local juniors that were being graded included, J. Plumb, E. Doig, F. McMillan and "J. Ryan from the Smithfield team in the Southern District Junior competition." Charlie Hare from Smithfield was also supposedly graded in 1921. This appears to make it quite clear that it was J. Ryan from Smithfield that played First Grade with Wests in 1921.

**Plumb, a youthful five-eighth from Parramatta Juniors; E. Burnicle, the Balmain forward; J. Ryan, from the Smithfield team in the Southern District Junior competition; Doig, a promising**

Sunday Times 10 April 1921

**Both Messrs. Ryan and Hare, two of Smithfield's last season's players, are this year playing with Western Suburbs second-grade football teams.**

Cumberland Argus 23 April 1921

However upon further examination, there would appear to be conflicting information creating doubt about the identity of J. Ryan who played with Wests. J. Ryan when he played First Grade with Wests was primarily a half back or five-eighth. He played in the halves with Eric Doig for most of the season and wore the no. 6 jersey. However it is possible that he interchanged between half and five-eighth.

It would therefore appear that J. Ryan the Auburn half back better fitted this profile as J. Ryan from Smithfield was a noted fullback. Also in 1921 Western Suburbs Third Grade was mostly made up from the 1920 Auburn team which could imply that J. Ryan the Auburn half back was trialling with

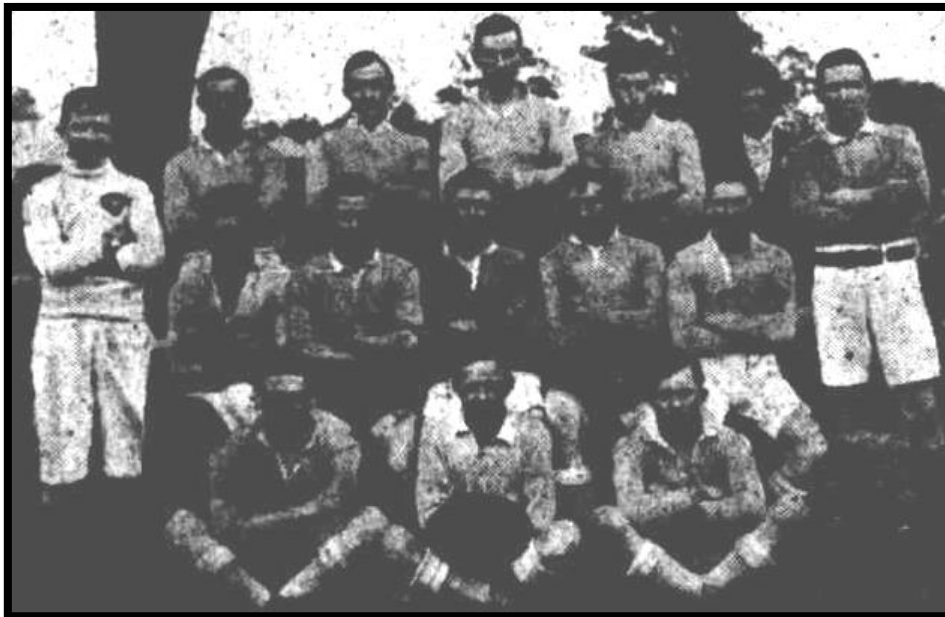
West's Third Grade and perhaps was elevated to Reserve Grade at the start of the season and then to First Grade.

Western Suburbs III., which includes most of the players who represented Auburn in the junior competition last season, play Marrickville at the Parramatta Oval this afternoon. Auburn had a good team last year, and they should give a good account of themselves in the higher grade.

Cumberland Argus 30 April 1921

However it is also worth noting that J. Ryan the West's player, made his debut at five-eighth in Reserves and then played four games in the centres before being selected at five-eighth in First Grade. The Reserve Grade fullback in 1920 and 1921 was Mathew Downie, the team's goal kicker, and so if the player was J. Ryan from Smithfield, he probably couldn't dislodge Downie from the fullback position, and an alternative position was found for Ryan.

A further piece of information was found in a news article in the Biz newspaper from 29 May 1957. The article was reminiscing about past times in the suburb of Smithfield and a photograph of the Smithfield Rugby League team, supposedly from 1922 was printed with a commentary on the players. The photo was actually of the 1920 team.



### Smithfield Rugby League Team - 1920

**Back:** M Walker (Referee), C "Yorky" Nunn, Wal Robson, J "Johnno" Morrison, E "Ted" Clarke, F Kean (Sec), E Keogh (Treas)

**Middle:** Jack "Darky" Ryan, Max Canning, Charlie Hare, W "Bill" Campbell, Jack Peterson

**Front:** Harry Coleman, Ossie Peterson (C), George Clarke

In the photograph was two players of interest. The first being Jack "Darky" Ryan, the Smithfield fullback and the other was Jack Peterson, the Smithfield hooker who played First Grade with Wests and South Sydney. It was noted that Jack "Darky" Ryan is still spoken of as the greatest fullback of all times in Southern Districts junior football, while Jack "Dumplings" Peterson went on to bigger things and became the first Smithfield player to enter Grade football.

From this article, it could be concluded that Jack Ryan, the Smithfield player, never played with Wests. However the article was written from information provided by older Smithfield supporters,

thirty six years after the event. It is evident that these memories were not altogether accurate noting that the team photograph was referred to as being from 1922 when in fact it was from 1920.

names of the players as they appeared will bring back memories to many of our readers: Referee, M. Walker (wearing knee-length knickerbockers); C. (Yorky) Nunn, Wal Robson, J. (Johnno) Morrison, Ted Clarke, P. Kean (secretary), E. Keogh (player and treasurer); three players from Guildford, J. (Darky) Ryan, Max Canning and Charlie Hare; Bi'l Campbell, Jack Peterson, Harry Coleman, Oadie Peterson (capt.), George Clarke	Of that team "Darky" Ryan is still spoken of as the greatest fullback of all times in Southern Districts junior football; while Jack (Dumplings) Peterson went on to bigger things, and became the first Smithfield player to enter Grade football. He was
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The Biz 29 May 1957

Given the choice between the news article from 1957 with the spectrum of fading memories and the contemporaneous news articles from April 1921, it is considered that the earlier news articles would be the source to be relied upon. These news articles are the most direct account of what occurred with Wests playing ranks in 1921, and while it is tempting to consider J. Ryan from Auburn as a possibility, there is no direct link confirming that he was the Wests player. Given the available information it can only be concluded that it was Jack "Darky" Ryan from Smithfield that played with Wests.

Jack Ryan played with Wests only in 1921. No record has been found of Jack Ryan playing in any of the Western Suburbs junior competitions in 1922 or immediately beyond, so it is evident that he either retired from playing rugby league or went to the Country to play. A search of past newspapers indicated that there were a few players with the surname of Ryan playing for Country teams in the early to mid 1920's but the only one that played in the half or five-eighth position was Jack Ryan who played at Bathurst. The Rugby League Project designated the playing career of Jack Ryan who played with Bathurst to Jack Ryan who played with Wests.

Jack "Pronto" Ryan who played with Bathurst from 1922 had a distinguished playing record. This record is only partly covered in the Rugby League Project. A summary of his playing record has been compiled below;

- St Stanislaus RL (one trial game) 1922
- Old Boys Bathurst RL (one competition game) 1922
- Railway Bathurst RL 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1933
- Canowindra RL 1924 (Player/Coach)
- St Stanislaus RL (Player/Coach) 1932
- Western District RL 1922, 1923, 1925, 1926
- Combined Country RL v Newcastle RL 1926 (Captain)
- Group 10 RL 1923, 1925, 1927
- Bathurst District RL 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933
- Bathurst District RL (Coach) 1933
- Bathurst Railway RL v Goulburn Railway RL (Railway Championship Shield) 1928
- St Stanislaus RL 1929 (Captain)
- Bathurst District RL 1929 (Captain/Coach)
- Bathurst RL Selector 1931, 1934

The question to be determined was whether these players were one and same. From a review of newspapers from the time there are some details that are problematic. The player in question is John Cecil Ryan. He enlisted for the First World War in 1916 at the age of twenty seven. His mother

lived at Summer Hill in 1916 and then at Rosehill in 1930. John Cecil Ryan was married at Burwood in 1924.

If John Cecil Ryan played with Wests, he would have been 31 years of age. This is not unheard of, but it is quite an age to have commenced a First Grade rugby league career. Nevertheless he did appear to have an extended career playing at Bathurst. A search of past newspapers makes no mention of an earlier playing career in Sydney. Also his physical description on his attestation form describes him as having a fresh complexion, blue eyes and fair hair. From what can be made out from the Smithfield team photo, which is of poor quality, and the fact that he had a nick name of "Darky", it is highly unlikely that the Bathurst player was the same person as Jack Ryan who played with Wests.

No further information has been found to assist in finding the true identity of Jack Ryan. A photograph of the Parramatta Marist Bros Old Boys A Grade Rugby League team of 1929 has been found. The photo includes a J. Ryan and in the team is Joseph Drew, Jack's former team mate at Wests. Is this Jack Ryan?



#### **Parramatta Marist Brothers Old Boys - A Grade 1929**

**Caption:** "The popular Parramatta A Grade Football team at Merrylands. The Club plays in the Southern Districts competition."

**Back:** R Williams, H Neave, J Flynn, J McCaffery (Sec), E McCaffery, Bros Anthony (Patron), T Barron, J Tunk (Train), E McCheane,

**Centre:** H McCaffery, A Gillett, A Dunne (C), L Gillett,

**Front:** C Nagle, L Mockler, J Ryan, B Carlson, E McCheane, J Drew