

Cliff Pearce

..... played in West's first Grand Final win in 1930 and made seven Test appearances during his career, all against England. He represented NSW in 1928-29 while playing for Tamworth and later scored a try on debut while playing on the wing for Australia in the Third Test of the 1928 Ashes series.

The Referee newspaper in June 1931 observed that Pearce is a product of Tamworth (NSW), and has been moulded from a very raw player, who joined up with Wests in the later part of the 1929 season. Given Cliff's status as a representative player he immediately was selected in Wests First Grade team when he arrived in 1929.

Cliff Pearce was a regular in the state sides during the early 1930's. He played in three Tests against England in 1932, before touring with the Kangaroos in 1933-34. On the Kangaroo Tour he played in all three Tests and twenty four other matches. On his return, Cliff Pearce broke his leg in a Kangaroos v The Rest promotional match which ended his season and the opportunity to play in Wests second premiership team in 1934. There was some doubt that Cliff had fully recovered by the start of 1935, and as a true Club man, he took on the coaching duties of the Reserve Grade team. However in a surprise come back he was able to return to the field as the season progressed.

I saw Cliff Pearce on Saturday and he told me that, although his leg felt all right, he did not think he would make an appearance on the football field this season. He has been training regularly for some weeks and in his position as coach for the reserve grade, Western Suburbs team, he will continue his activity. Perhaps if the necessity arises later in the season, Cliff will once more be seen in his crashing runs down the centre!

The Sun 1 May 1935

International Rugby League player, Cliff Pearce, made a sensational reappearance for Western Suburbs on Saturday. A broken leg had kept him out of action for a season and a half, and what a "hand" he got when the crowd saw him!

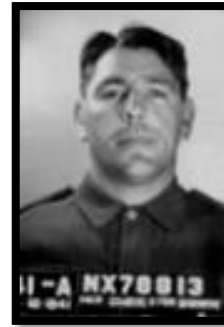
Daily telegraph 8 July 1935

Cliff spent nine seasons at Wests and played seventy nine First Grade games and playing only the one Reserve Grade game when he returned to play in the 1935 season after he broke his leg. He also played four City Cup games for Wests in 1937. He scored twenty six tries and kicked nine goals in First Grade for a tally of ninety six points. He scored a try and a goal in City Cup matches to take his overall point tally with Wests to one hundred and one.

While playing with Wests, Cliff Pearce resided at 7 Hampden St Ashfield between 1930 and 1933 along with his team mate Les Mead. Club stalwart, Ted Mead lived at 13 Hampden St. A search of records from the time indicates that the principal resident of 7 Hampden St was Joseph Richard Ibbett. Joseph Ibbett is the grandfather of Wests researcher and historian, Geoff Ibbett. Wests has truly been a family club since its foundation.

In October 1935, Cliff Pearce married Jean O'Donnell of Lavender Bay, NSW. It was reported that Jean was a keen follower of rugby league and was one of the foundation members of the Western Suburbs Rugby League Supporters Club. With Jean O'Donnell's connection to the North Sydney area, it is not surprising that Cliff Pearce ultimately made the move to the northern side of the harbour. Cliff played with North Sydney Rugby League Club from 1938 until 1940, when the Second World War intervened. He only played five First Grade games with North Sydney.

Cliff enlisted with the AIF in December 1941 for service in the Second World War. He served with the 8th Training Battalion and was located in the Dubbo/Bathurst region until mid 1943. He served in Queensland from mid 1943 with the 2/3 and 2/1 Machine Gun Battalions until the end of 1944 when he transferred to the School of Military Engineering in Sydney. Cliff was discharged from the Army in November 1945.



Cliff Pearce 1941

While in the Army, Cliff became a great ambassador for rugby league. Sport in the military camps was an important outlet to keep the troops occupied. Many top ranking sportsmen had enlisted, so it was not difficult to form teams to play scratch matches. Cliff Pearce kept himself busy as a letter from one of his comrades to The Sun newspaper in April 1944 attests. The article says that Cliff was running a "Play Rugby League" campaign wherever he went in the Army and was up for coaching players from all backgrounds in the fundamentals of rugby league.

NSWRL should have Cliff Pearce's picture framed in gold for the good work he has done for the code throughout the Army. Wherever he has gone, he has staged a "Play Rugby League" campaign. This statement is contained in a letter from a soldier comrade. "Cliff has coached players	from Union, Soccer, Rules and even 'Boongs' in the fundamentals of RL, and has also had a game with them," the writer adds, and continues: "Cliff is about the only man I know able to convince men from the far southern States that Rugby League is a better game than Australian Rules."
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Cliff returned to civilian life and coached North Sydney First Grade in 1947 and 1948 and lived in the district for a number of years. He eventually moved back across the harbour and settled at The Rocks in central Sydney where he died in July 1976.

In 2004, Cliff Pearce in a fitting tribute, was named as a Centre in Wests Team of the Century. In 2009 he was inducted into Wests Hall of fame.