

Jack Spillane

.... was a regular First Grade player with the University Club in 1933 and again in 1934 when his brother Frank Spillane joined him at that Club. Although University finished 7th in the competition in 1933, it was one of their better years, finishing with five wins and a draw. 1934 was the start of four consecutive wooden spoons for the University club which ultimately saw their demise in 1937.

1934 was also a watershed for the Spillanes. Frank Spillane retired at the end of the season and Jack Spillane went back to Wests for the 1935 season. Jack made his way into the Wests First Grade team but in Round 9 against Canterbury Bankstown he received a punch that shattered his jaw.

The reporting of the incident was somewhat confusing as various accounts referred to him as F. Spillane and also A. Spillane, however there is no doubt that it was Jack Spillane that was the victim.

A report in Rugby League News noted; " Jack Spillane, only just released from Lewisham Hospital, was a very interested spectator at Pratten Park last Saturday. The injury to Jack's jaw proved to be so serious that it is extremely doubtful if he will play again this season. This is most unfortunate, both for the fair haired forward and his club, as he was playing right at the top of his form when injured." Jack Spillane didn't play another game in 1935.

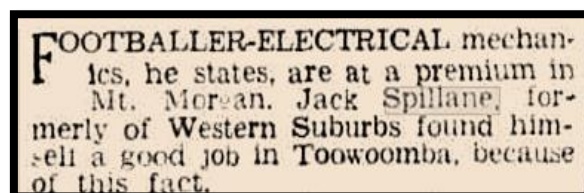
Wests looked after the injured Jack Spillane and put on a benefit for him at the end of the season. The Daily Telegraph on 3 December 1935 reported;

"A feast of cycling will be served up at Pratten Park tomorrow night. Ashfield Amateur Cycling Club and other clubs associated with the track, will stage a benefit carnival in aid of Western Suburbs Rugby League footballer Spillane, who it will be remembered had his jaw fractured early in the season. Spillane has had a lot of trouble with the fracture, and the District Club is cooperating with the cycling enthusiasts to make it one of the biggest carnivals seen on the track."

Jack carried the scar on his jawbone from this incident for the rest of his life. His military record noted the scar on his medical report.

Jack Spillane came back and played in the 1936 season, but only played three First Grade and one Reserve game before retiring from Grade football. During his five seasons at Wests he played seven First Grade, thirty Reserve Grade and nine Third Grade games. In all grades Jack scored four tries and kicked forty goals for a tally of ninety two points.

However Jack was not finished with rugby league and he was able to bring together his profession as an Electrical Engineer and his love of football. He found work in 1937 at Mount Morgan in Queensland.



FOOTBALLER-ELECTRICAL mechanics, he states, are at a premium in Mt. Morgan. Jack Spillane, formerly of Western Suburbs found himself a good job in Toowoomba, because of this fact.

Truth April 1937

While the article in the Truth newspaper on 4 April 1937 indicated that Jack was going to Toowoomba, he actually played rugby league with Ipswich Tivoli and represented in the Ipswich District team. It is not clear how long Jack was in Queensland but he returned to Sydney and enlisted with the Army

Citizen Forces for service in the Second World War, in January 1942. He served with the General Headquarters in NSW and reached the rank of Sargeant. He was medically discharged by the end of 1942.

After the war Jack found his way to the central west NSW town of Cowra where he married in 1950. In March 1950, the Burrowa News speculated that Jack Spillane would apply for the vacant Cowra Rugby League player/coach position. While the newspaper had his name correct, they referred to him as a former South Sydney First Grade player. This description was clearly incorrect. The newspaper confused him with A. Spillane who was a fullback for Souths.

There is no information to indicate that Jack Spillane did take up the player/coach position in 1950, but he certainly was the coach of Cowra in 1953. Cowra had not been performing well for some time and had been through a number of coaches, Jack Spillane was the latest, and he resigned from the position in mid-May 1953.

Jack Spillane returned to Sydney and lived at Hurlstone Park before finally settling at Eastwood. He kept his interest in rugby league and became a Selector for the newly formed Ryde-Eastwood Club which played in the Sydney Second Division in 1963.

John Bernard Spillane died at Eastwood, NSW in August 1988, and is buried at Macquarie Park Cemetery, Catholic Lawn, Block 11, Row 2.