

Ray Waldon

.... was a talented rugby league player who, at the age of nineteen was drafted from Third Grade to play for Wests First Grade in 1935. In his first game at the top level he played against the experienced hooker Arthur Folwell of Newtown and competed well. Ray became a successful and highly regarded hooker.

This rapid rise of Ray Waldon into the graded ranks is even more meritorious as he had only started playing the game a couple of years earlier and was still playing for his junior club, Homebush, at the start of the 1935 season.

RAY WALDON, the new Western Suburbs hooker, was completely taken by surprise when selected to play for the firsts against Newtown at Pratten Park next Saturday.

Waldon, who has been promoted straight from the thirds, without having played in reserve grade, trained as usual with Wests' thirds on Tuesday night.

After the "run" he had a shower, and was dressing, when he was told that he had been chosen to play with the firsts. He then had to don his togs again, and train with the firsts.

The newcomer, who stands 5ft. 7in. and weighs 12st. 4lb., was recruited from Homebush juniors, for whom he began to play about three years ago. After two rounds this season, he was pulled up by Western Suburbs Club, and made his debut in grade football against Eastern Suburbs. Now, at 19 years of age, he finds himself in first grade.

He says that he owes much of his success to the coaching of Jack Connolly. The latter was hooker for Western Suburbs reserves last year, but, after having had his collarbone broken in five places, he has given up the game.

Waldon was a champion swimmer when a pupil at the Homebush Public School. He carried off a junior championship and also filled third place in a metropolitan public schools race at the Domain Baths. Swimming now helps to keep him fit for football.

Waldon will have a big job ahead on Saturday, as he will be opposed by the Kangaroo hooker, Arthur Folwell.

"I hope to give a good account of myself," he said last night. "Anyhow, it will not be for the want of trying if I don't."

Daily Telegraph 22 August 1935

Ray Waldon maintained his form into the 1936 season and in May was selected in a Reserve Grade Possibles v Probables match.

SYDNEY CRICKET GROUND—1.45 p.m. Saturday, May 30, 1936
RESERVE GRADE

POSSIBLES v. PROBABLES

RESERVE GRADE POSSIBLES (Color—Gold)	RESERVE GRADE PROBABLES (Color—Emerald Green)
FULL-BACK: 13— F. JOHNSON (Balmain)	FULL-BACK: 13— A. HORSELL (East. Subs.)
THREE-QUARTERS: 12— R. HINES (West. Subs.)	THREE-QUARTERS: 12— R. O'LOAN (East. Subs.)
11— C. DEEGAN (West. Subs.)	11— J. O'SULLIVAN (Cant.-B'town)
R. STUNTZ —10 (Newtown)	J. LYNCH —10 (East. Subs.)
E. JONES —9 (North Sydney)	J. HEWITT —9 (South Sydney)
HALVES: 8— H. WRIGHT (Capt.) (Balmain)	HALVES: 8— J. SIMPSON (St. George)
R. HYDE —7 (North Sydney)	F. ROBINSON (Capt.)—7 (East. Subs.)
FORWARDS: 6— A. LYONS (North Sydney)	FORWARDS: 6— W. KNOWLES (Cant.-B'town)
5— J. RUBENSON (University)	5— W. SUMMERELL (St. George)
M. GRAY —4 (West. Subs.)	W. CAMERON —4 (South Sydney)
3— W. JOHNSTONE (Balmain)	3— E. BURNS (Cant.-B'town)
2— R. WALDON (West. Subs.)	2— L. PERRY (South Sydney)
A. ELVY —1 (Newtown)	J. COOTE —1 (East. Subs.)
RESERVES: 14— A. SMITH W. PURCELL —15 (West. Subs.) (West. Subs.)	RESERVES: 14— F. BARNES J. CLARKE —15 (St. George) (East. Subs.)

Reserve Grade Possibles v Probables 30 May 1936

He played hooker for the Possibles team which had a good representation of Wests players. Ray Hines, Cliff Deegan, and Max Gray were also in the run on side with future Wests player Jack Rubinson and former Wests lower grade player, Bill Knowles making up the numbers. The Possibles team won 17-13 and Ray Waldon scored one of the five tries for the winners.

1936 was probably Ray's best season with Wests. Apart from achieving representative honors he also played nine First grade games as well as four in Reserve Grade. Ray started the season behind NSW hooker Mick Shields but when Shields succumbed to injury in round four of the competition, Ray took over the First Grade hooking position and remained there for the remainder of the season.

The Referee newspaper noted in July that year noted Ray's progress.

Western Suburbs showed their best form of the season. Waldon, the hooker, is young and sturdy—on the short side and 12½ stone. Full-back, Sharman, sur-

Referee 16 July 1936

1937 would have had some disappointments for Ray. He played the eight rounds of the regular competition in Reserve Grade, firstly being overlooked for the top job in favor of Edward Murphy who came down from Newcastle and then by the tough forward from Fairfield, Ken Lock.

Ray made his first appearance in First Grade in round five of the City Cup competition after Ken Lock was dropped for disciplinary reasons. Ray immediately had an impact as reported in the Sun newspaper on July 25. He played a further two First Grade matches in the City Cup competition before Ken Lock returned.

Down 10-5 at half-time, Western Suburbs Rugby League team yesterday went on to beat South Sydney by 22 points to 10.
Though Souths was assisted, during the first half, by a strong southerly wind, the new hooker, Waldon, balanced things by winning the ball very frequently.

The Sun 25 July 1937

The new season didn't start well for Wests. In 1938 Cec Fifield became the Coach and after five successive losses, changes were made. Cec Fifield came back to play in round four. However Ray Waldon was playing well and winning more than his fair share of the scrums as noted in the Truth newspaper on 8 May.

Souths finally won 8-4.
After their recent games, even Wests' officials thought it would be no race. The usual 5000 crowd witnessed a hectic tussle, where the issue was in doubt right up to no-side. Congrats., Wests.
The Magpies had themselves to blame, for Waldon served them up a "feast of the pudden."

Truth 8 May 1938

The following week was a turning point for Ray's season. Wests played North Sydney and in that match, Wests players Ray Waldon and Ted Mewton along with two North Sydney players were sent off. Ken Lock came into the team and played the remainder of the season as the First Grade hooker.

Players sent off were Mewton and Waldon (Western Suburbs) and Kirby and Cole (North Sydney).
North Sydney won by 25 to 6.
Although Wests had a fair share of the ball early, North Sydney, with Bennett, Harrison, and quick forwards completely dominated in all departments.

The Sun 15 May 1938

Ray played only the one First Grade game in 1939 but played a further twelve lower grade games. However, he did represent Wests in a forwards Scratch Race at the end of season Rugby League State Championship Final in September. Ray finished in third place behind J Brown of Souths and Harry Pierce of Easts.

Rugby League
State Championship.—Final: Canterbury 25 (J. Champion 2, J. Gartner, R. McCarter, P. Sponberg), tries; H. Porter 2, E. Anderson, R. McCarter, goals) d. South Sydney 12 (E. Hinson, F. Felsch, tries; F. Felsch, 3 goals) at S.C.G.
Night Match.—Police 32 (H. Thompson 2, W. Purcell, V. Miller, C. Diamond, H. Pierce, P. Felsch, J. Armstrong, tries; F. Felsch 2, R. Stehr, J. Kadwell, goals) d. Combined Team 11 (H. Gilbert, J. Redman, F. Hyde, tries; A. McGuinness, goal), at Sports Ground.
110 Yards Forwards' Scratch Race: J. Brown (S.S.) 1, H. Pierce (E.S.) 2, R. Waldon (W.S.) 3.
110 Yards Backs' Scratch Race: O. Samuels (C.B.) 1, D. Manson (S.S.) 2, C. Diamond 3. Goal-kicking: A. Kent (C.-B.).

Daily Telegraph 25 September 1939

By late 1939 the world's attention was focussed on the war in Europe and like many young men at this time, Ray Waldon wanted to serve. He initially made an application to join the RAAF in January 1940 and was eventually accepted in May of that year. He was transferred to Ascot Vale in Victoria for training and later served at Wagga Wagga, NSW. Ray played in the pre-season trials but did not play any competition games for Wests in 1940. His military record explains why he was unavailable.

In February 1941 Ray was placed on the RAAF Reserve list and went to work in a wartime essential industry in Waterloo, NSW. Ray had experience in the manufacture of electrical and communication devices. Ray played for Wests in the trial matches and also two Reserve Grade games in 1941.

No record has been found of Ray Waldon playing rugby league in 1942. However in 1943 a news article appeared in the Daily Telegraph on 24 March, celebrating the return of the 9th Division of the AIF from the Middle East. It noted that many sportsmen were "quickly back with their old clubs." A number of Newtown players were mentioned including "R Walder." There may have been some confusion with the spelling as there was an R Wilder who played with Newtown in 1939 and 1942. This player did not play with Newtown after the middle of 1942.

The R Walder referred to, no doubt was R Waldon. The news article conveyed the impression that R Waldon had returned with the 9th Division on or about 23 March.

9th Div. Men Quickly Back With Old Clubs

Within a few days of their return from the Middle East with the 9th Division, many of Sydney's leading sportsmen were active with their old clubs.

Cricketers, swimmers, and surfers rallied to clubs which were short of members because of enlistments.

Some of the Rugby League players who returned are:

J. Grainger, C. Russell, jun., R. Walder, Alex Walker, R. Bladwell (Newtown), R. Dunn (Balmain), Leo Reilly, George O'Reilly, Ron Buffett, Jack McDonough, E. Broomham, H. Norman (North Sydney), H. Paull (South Sydney), J. Piper (Western Suburbs), and Leo Baggott (referee).

Daily Telegraph 24 March 1943

However R Waldon (Walden) could not have returned with the 9th Division as he had played in trial matches with Newtown in the weeks before. The confusion with the spelling of his name may have been deliberate as service men were not subject to the residential qualification rules and Ray Waldon was living at Summer Hill in Wests territory in 1943, which would have disqualified him playing for Newtown. While Ray was in the RAAF Reserve, he was not actively serving.

Newtown players for the main match against St. George at Prince Edward Park, Carlton, on Sunday are: First half, K. Burnell; S. Goodwin, E. McKinley, P. Haines, J. O'Toole; R. J. Kelly and J. Haines; P. Norrish, J. Ryan, C. Rowsell, J. Wade, R. Walden, J. Guest. Second half, K. Burnell, A. Gleeson, D. Fullerton, D. Carrick, N. Jacobson; T. Nevin and P. Bugden; G. Walsh, J. Stonestreet, G. McLennan, F. Farrell, J. Brailey, J. Hall, J. Roberts.

SMH 12 March 1943

Newtown Trial Team

To play South Sydney at Henson Park tomorrow:
K. Burnell; A. Gleeson, D. Fullerton, L. Smith, D. Carrick, N. Jacobson, S. Goodwin, J. O'Toole; T. Nevin, P. Bugden, P. Morrissey, B. Bamford, G. McLennan, C. Rowsell, G. Stonestreet, F. Farrell, J. Brailey, J. Hall, R. Walden, J. Guest.

Daily Telegraph 19 March 1943

The confusion with the spelling of his name continued with him appearing as A Walden in a team list on 31 March and C Waldon and R Waldon on separate occasions. However he was reported as R Waldon on most other occasions.

NEWTOWN.—K. Burnell, T. Jones; S. Goodwin, A. Gleeson, D. Fullerton, D. Carrick, N. Jacobson, J. Hourigan, B. Ryan, W. van Rues, J. O'Toole; T. Nevin, P. Bugden, C. Noble, B. Drew, B. Burnett, G. Norrish, K. Phillips, G. McLennan, J. Ryan, F. Speechley, G. Stonestreet, F. Farrell, J. Brailey, W. Holmes, C. Rowsell, A. Walden, J. Guest, J. Hall.

SMH 31 March 1943

Interstate half, Keith Froome, ably assisted by C. Noble, the five-eighth gave prominent displays for Newtown, whose full-back, T. Jones, was superior to Tipping. Speechley who scored two tries, Walden and Holmes gave great displays in the forwards. In the centre, F. Haines was a constant danger.

St George Call 28 May 1943

Ray Waldon played with Newtown again in 1944 but the reporting of his name continued to be variable. He was referred to on a number of occasions as A Waldron, W Waldron, and R Waldron. During his time at Newtown Ray Waldon played as the Reserve Grade hooker, although he was selected as a reserve for First Grade on one occasion. He was unfortunately the under study to representative hooker Jim Brailey who didn't miss a First Grade game for Newtown in 1943 and 1944.

A news article in the Daily Telegraph on 21 July 1944 referred to the number of international and First Grade players that were in Newtown's Reserve Grade team. As Ray did not play First Grade with Newtown, the reference had to be to his time at Wests.

LEAGUE STARS IN LOWER GRADES

Two internationals and eight first-graders will play in the Newtown reserve grade team at the S.C.G. tomorrow.

The Australian representatives are L. Dawson and Gordon McLennan, and the first-graders N. Jacobson, E. McKinley, J. Kadwell, W. Raby, M. Shortus, F. Speechley, R. Walder, and L. Bell.

Daily Telegraph 21 July 1944

Ray Waldon returned to Wests in 1945. A news item in the Sun newspaper indicated that he was playing in the trials with Canterbury but that was not the case. He played for Wests against Canterbury, replacing Neville Spence in the second half.

R. Waldron, who played hooker for Newtown seconds last year, was tried out with Canterbury today. He replaced N. Spence in the second half.

The Sun 24 March 1945

Ray started the 1945 season in Reserve Grade but in round four replaced an injured Frank Dodson in First grade and remained in the top team throughout 1945, including the semi-final loss to Eastern Suburbs. He appeared again in the pre-season trials of 1946 but there is no further record of Ray Waldon playing Premiership rugby league.

During his time at Wests Ray played twenty eight First Grade, thirty one Reserve Grade, eighteen Third Grade and seven City Cup games.

He was discharged from the RAAF Reserve in 1946 and started up an Engineering business at Balmain. He later moved to that district but it is unknown where he resided in later life. Ray Waldon died in December 1988.