

William Ryan

..... was his birth name but he was most commonly referred to as Bill. Although when he was playing in the Country areas of NSW, he earned the nickname of "Hoot" and when he was in Queensland he was often referred to as "Bricky."

In 1931, at the age of twenty, Bill Ryan secured an apprenticeship with the NSW Railways which required him to attend the Eveleigh railway workshops in Sydney to undertake his training as a Boilermaker. It was evident at this stage that Bill Ryan was a good but raw rugby league player, but it can be seen from the following news article that he was keen and rapidly improving.

The Daily Advertiser (Wagga Wagga) on 5 July 1932 reported; " 'Hoot' Ryan played First Grade football for Western Suburbs against South Sydney on Saturday. He then caught the express train to Junee and played with the Junee team against Cootamundra, scoring two tries and kicking two goals. Ryan finishes his apprenticeship at the Eveleigh railway workshops in a fortnight and then will be out of work. What an improved player he is since Junee supporters saw him last play on Junee Park." In December 1932, it was reported that 'Hoot' Ryan had secured work at Temora and he was likely to play with the Temora Maher Cup team.

While Bill Ryan was a talented rugby league player his temperament got him into trouble at times . In May 1931, the State Selectors included him in a Metropolitan team to play against England, while at the same time the Wests selectors dropped him from First Grade to Reserve Grade. A news report indicated that the reason for his relegation was that on the previous Saturday he made some remark to Bill Brogan, the Western Suburbs captain during the match against Balmain. After Bill Ryan scored a try, Brogan informed him that he should have passed the ball, to which Ryan did not reply in diplomatic terms. Ryan at twenty years of age was just starting to learn the game.

Bill Ryan played sixteen First Grade and ten Reserve Grade games in his two years with Wests. His form with Wests First Grade was so good that in 1932 he was selected to represent, Sydney and City against Country Firsts, and Metropolis against the touring England team. He was then selected for the NSW team that played Queensland in 1932.



Bill Ryan being wrapped up by English forward J. Feetham - Metropolis v England 1932

In 1933, Bill Ryan was able to find relief work with the NSW Railways at Temora, NSW. This gave him the opportunity to play rugby league with the Temora Rugby League Club and Maher Cup football. However just after his arrival in town in January 1933, he was brought before the Temora Police Court charged with assault.

When Sgt. Dwyer had stated the case for the prosecution, the magistrate said that he did not wish to hear Mr. Dibbs (Solicitor for 'Hoot' Ryan) in reply, and dismissed the case. Mr Dibbs was not satisfied, however, and wished to clear the matter up altogether as far as his client was concerned. He said that Ryan is a prominent footballer and has played for NSW, and as he hoped to represent Australia when the team went to England next year, he asked the bench to acquit him 'without a stain' on his character. The Police Magistrate readily concurred, remarking that 'Ryan leaves the Court without a stain on his character!'

On 8 April 1933, the Wagga Wagga Express reported that; " 'Hoot' Ryan is to remain in Temora and play with the red and whites this season. The young Hercules is training already, and the fans are well pleased with his style. Another new man who is causing a good impression is V. Dwyer." V. Dwyer was Wests player Victor Dwyer, who was working as a Bank Clerk at Temora in early 1933.

There were ten Maher Cup matches played in 1933 with Temora featuring in nine of these. Bill Ryan played in every match with Temora.

Temora were the dominant team that year, but lost a match to West Wyalong on May 17, on protest that Temora played an illegible player. This decision was subsequently overturned and a replay ordered. The next match between Temora and West Wyalong ended in a 5-5 draw. A third match was played on a neutral ground (Barmedman) and Temora won this match, however technically there was no holder of the Maher Cup. A fourth match was played between the two teams on 9 August and once again Temora came out on top on the scoreboard. The two teams met again for a final time on 23 August and this time West Wyalong pipped Temora 19-15, to be Maher Cup holders going into 1934.

The 1933 season created great rivalry and also a great deal of angst in Maher Cup circles. However the Maher Cup competition survived this and remained the pinnacle of Country rugby league for years to come. Alongside Bill Ryan in the Temora team in 1933, was the great Eric Weissel and a future Wests First Grade player, Cal Lynch.

Bill Ryan did not leave Temora by choice at the end of 1933. These were the days of the Great Depression and work was difficult to find, and even if work had been secured there was no guarantee that it would continue. The West Wyalong advocate reported on 28 November 1933; "Mr. W. 'Hoot' Ryan has left Temora! Owing to retrenchment he and others working in his shift were put on the mine at Sebastopol, and 'Hoot' has gone home to Junee. Saying good-bye to us, the popular footballer-cricketer said that he hopes to be returning to Temora for the football season, and his admirers here will be pleased to welcome him back."

In January 1934 it was reported in the Gundagai Independent that "Bill Ryan would be playing for the Griffith Rugby League team, having got work at that centre." However it seems that Bill either did not arrive in Griffith or was there for a very short time. It appears that he also had pursued a number of opportunities at the start of the 1934 season.

The Daily Mercury (Mackay, Queensland) reported on 26 March that Bill Ryan had been appointed as a co-coach of the Mackay Rugby League team along with George Lockie of Queensland. However there is no indication that he entertained taking on the Queensland role, as the following day, the

Murrumbidgee Irrigator (Leeton) reported that "Hoot" Ryan had secured a job at Leeton and would be playing rugby league with the local team in 1934. Bill joined his younger brother, Matt Ryan at Leeton. There was also an indication that Bill Ryan had been offered a coaching position at West Wyalong but no explanation has been found as to why that did not proceed.

GEO. LOCKIE AND W. RYAN.
As proposed the Rugby League management committee appointed two playing coaches from the applications received at the meeting on Saturday night. The selections were George Lockie (playing back), and W. ("Hoot") Ryan (playing forward). Lockie is a well-known Brisbane and Queensland player, and "Hoot" Ryan, at present residing at Temora, played with Western Suburbs, Sydney, and represented N.S. Wales.

Daily Mercury (Mackay Qld) 26 March 1934

Hooray for "Hoot" Ryan, one of the finest players in Group 9. He has secured a job here and so will be donning the tri-colours this season.

Murrumbidgee Irrigator (Leeton) 27 March 1934

It appears that work took Bill Ryan away from Leeton. A news item in the Murrumbidgee Irrigator on 5 June indicated that the Railway Department wanted Bill in Sydney for work. He immediately boarded a train but only got as far as Junee when he realised that he had time to play a game with Leeton on the Sunday before he had to be in Sydney. That was Bill's last game with Leeton. Bill's work in Sydney was of short duration as the following week he was back in Country NSW playing for Cootamundra.

LOYAL TO HIS CLUB
On Friday W Ryan received word that the Railway Department had a job for him. "Hoot" immediately boarded the train and was making for Eveleigh workshops, where he served his apprenticeship. On arrival at Junee he learned that he was not required to report until Tuesday. Ryan caught the next train back to Leeton in order to play with the "Tricolors" at Wyalong on Sunday. It was a splendid exhibition of club loyalty and Rugby supporters are loud in their praises of such sportsmanship.

Murrumbidgee Irrigator 5 June 1934

Bill's final appearance for Cootamundra was in a Maher Cup game against Young on 18 July 1934. He was sent off towards the end of the match after a number of cautions. Then on 13 August he appeared with the Ungarie Rugby League team, leading them to a number of victories and playing with that team until the end of the season.

"Hoot" Ryan to Lead Ungarie
On Sunday next Ungarie Rugby League will visit West Wyalong in search of the Chigwidden Cup and judging by the team selected they should not have much trouble in collecting the trophy.
It is understood that Ungarie will be led by "Hoot" Ryan, brilliant ex-interstate forward and one of the best players in the Country to-day.
"Hoot" Ryan, who is known throughout Group 9, played with Leeton early in the season, and later linked up with Cootamundra. He has figured in several Gleeson Shield and Maher Cup matches.
Ryan played with Cootamundra a few weeks ago against Young for the Maher Cup, and was told to take a stroll by the "Footer."

West Wyalong Advocate 10 August and 7 September 1934

Ungarie successfully retained the Rugby Cup against Tallimba on Sunday last in one of the best matches played here this season. The final scores were 8/6 in favor of Ungarie.
The outstanding player on the field was W. ("Hoot") Ryan, the ex-interstate and Maher Cup man, who led Ungarie.
Ryan played dazzling football from start to finish, and had fans on their toes, and brought a splendid game to a fitting climax by scoring two tries and a goal—the whole of Ungarie's points.

In late September it was reported that "Hoot" Ryan was working on the railway at Stockinbingal where he injured both of his ankles. The next report was in December 1934 in the Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser, noting that "Hoot" Ryan had resigned from his position with the Railway Department to take up employment at the Christmas Gift Mine near Cootamundra.

In 1935, Bill Ryan returned to Sydney and played with St George in the Sydney premierships. He was an influential player, but St George just missed the semi-finals that year. True to his earlier form Bill did not see out the season with St George. In a news article from the time it was noted that; " 'Hoot' Ryan played a brilliant game against Eastern Suburbs at headquarters in his final appearance with his new club, St George. Bill has accepted a permanent position with the Queensland Railways Department at Ipswich. Football never entered the question with Bill, unlike many prominent athletes, the genial one put work first. Bill will be missed up in the Illawarra suburbs, for he endeared himself to all and sundry with his pleasing personality."

Mr. W. ("Hoot") Ryan, well-known and much travelled Rugby footballer, who was an outstanding performer with the Temora team two seasons ago, has now bobbed up in Queensland.
"Hoot" has accepted a position in the Queensland railway service as a boiler maker, and is now playing good football with the Ipswich first-grade team.

Bill Ryan immediately commenced playing with the Ipswich Eastern Suburbs Rugby League team, late in 1935. He was subsequently selected in the Ipswich District Rugby League team that played in the various "Cup" competitions. At the end of the season, Bill became a member of the Ipswich Cricket Club, being a competent batsman and a very good wicket keeper. A report in the Queensland Times in October 1935 noted that; "Ryan's wicket keeping, by the way is some class. The best display of keeping I've seen in Ipswich for 20 years."

A news article in the Brisbane Daily Standard on 3 June 1936 noted that; "Bill Ryan, the Ipswich forward, whose deeds on the field this season have brought him into striking prominence. Ryan is a versatile type of footballer, who has played in all positions, from rake to fullback. He kicks with remarkable accuracy, and thus is an invaluable man not only for Ipswich, but also for the State. Bill Ryan within the next fortnight was selected to play for Queensland against the touring England team and the following week for Queensland against NSW.

Bill Ryan again represented Queensland against NSW in 1938, as well as being part of the touring team of 1939. Bill Ryan's contribution to Queensland rugby league leading up to the Second World War was significant. He was a prominent player in the local Ipswich rugby league competition as well as the Ipswich District team. Ipswich was a dominant force in the premier Bulimba Cup competition losing the Cup only once in the mid to late 1930's. Bill always kicked goals throughout his career, but as he matured he could often be the difference between a winning and losing score line.

**RYAN KICKED IPSWICH TO
BULIMBA CUP VICTORY.**
Local Full-Back's Grand Game.

Ipswich v Brisbane Bulimba Cup 1939



Queensland Rugby League Team 1938

Back L to R: L Kearney, W Doherty, J Ebborn, J Doyle, J Little, Vic Jensen (Patron QRL), W Riordan
 Standing: H Kitching, T Dickson, E Collins, L Heidke, N Smith, C Wright (VC), J Ryrie, J Bates
 Sitting: WJ Marden (Manager), W Ryan, H Melrose, G Whittle, J Reardon (C), J Stapleton, J Gayler, T Rowe, H
 Sunderland (Sec QRL and Manager)
 Front: I Blow, L Ridgewell

With the outbreak of war, Bill Ryan remained front and centre of Queensland rugby league and continued playing Club and District representative football. His form was good enough for him to be again selected for the Queensland team to play the interstate series against NSW in 1941.

However, a news article in the Daily Advertiser of Wagga Wagga on 21 December 1942, led with the headline "**W. 'HOOT' RYAN KILLED.**" The report indicated that he was killed in action in New Guinea and provided the following eulogy.

"Regret was freely expressed in Junee when it was learned that Lieut. Bill 'Hoot' Ryan had been killed in action in New Guinea. The deceased joined the railway service at Junee, and in his apprenticeship, he showed promise as a junior footballer, and with the advent of star footballers Fifield, Keith Ellis, Fitzgerald, and Stan Waterson he became an apt pupil.

Of powerful physique, he quickly went into A Grade games, and became a stalwart in the Maher Cup and other games in the south. On finishing his apprenticeship in the railway workshops at Junee he was transferred to Sydney workshops where he quickly rose in football circles. He represented NSW against Queensland on a number of occasions. He was noted for his accurate goal kicking. After he obtained a position as a boilermaker at Ipswich (Q), he represented that State against NSW."

The eulogy in the Daily Advertiser gave a great account of Bill Ryan's life, however the news of his death was greatly exaggerated. The problem was that Bill 'Hoot' Ryan was never in the Army and secondly he was not dead! The news report had him mixed up with Bill Ryan, a very good Newtown rugby league player who tragically lost his life.

In 1943, Bill Ryan was playing with the C.Y.M.S Club at Ipswich. It appears that this Club had replaced the Eastern Suburbs Ipswich Club which Bill had played with since his arrival in Queensland in 1935.

In 1944, Bill Ryan's 19 year old brother Kevin Ryan joined Bill in the Ipswich District team to meet Brisbane in the Bulimba Cup. Bill Ryan was in the second row with Les Heidke, who was a Kangaroo tourist in 1937-38. A news article in the Courier Mail Newspaper on 10 May 1944, indicated that Kevin Ryan had made a favourable impression in Sydney First Grade rugby league in 1943.

W. ("Bricky") RYAN, 14½ stone second-rower: Been a star goal-kicker for many years; his kicking ability beat Brisbane in 1939 and 1941; landed 14 goals in three matches.

K. RYAN, stand-off half, 19-year-old brother of Bill Ryan (forward): Created fine impression in Sydney first grade football last year; weighs 13 stone; both attack and defence first class.

Kevin Ryan is not recorded as playing First Grade football in Sydney. He did trial with Newtown in 1943 and he did make a favourable impression. However he was in Newtown's Second Grade team in 1944. His brother, Leo Ryan did play First Grade with Newtown in 1944 and another brother Matthew Ryan played with Junee, Leeton, and First Grade with St George in 1936.

The Ryans were quite a sporting family. The father of the Ryan boys, James Ryan died in July 1941 and in his obituary in the Sydney Morning Herald, the following was reported; "Mr. James Ryan, father of four footballers, died at Marrickville yesterday morning at the age of 62. He played Australian Rules for Geelong and represented Victoria. His son, W. Ryan, who is a member of the Ipswich (Queensland) Rugby League Club, represented NSW, and played for Queensland against this State last year. He also represented Queensland in 1936, 1938 and 1939. Matt played in the St George team and captained the NSW Colts in 1936. James represented NSW in Australian Rules in 1927, and Cletus is a member of the Newcastle Central Club. There are five other sons."

By 1945, time was catching up with Bill Ryan. He switched across to the Booval Swifts Club in Ipswich and played out the season. The Ipswich Rugby League decided to honour Bill Ryan, Les Heidke and Col Thornton, all stalwarts of Ipswich Rugby League, with a testimonial. In their honour, a match between Ipswich and the touring Balmain Rugby League Club from Sydney had been arranged in September, with the Ipswich share of the match proceeds being devoted to a testimonial fund.

**LEAGUE FANS TO SAY "THANKS" TO
"MONTY," "BRICKY," AND "BULL"**
(By E.P.)
Balmain Rugby League circles must have heard a lot about Ipswich since the "daddy of them all" returned to Sydney, for Jim Craig was once a Balmain player himself. They also know of the prowess of Heidke, Ryan, and Thornton; and nothing is more certain than that their touring side will feel honoured to be associated with to-morrow's testimonial match.

Queensland Times 13 September 1945

Bill Ryan played on in 1946, returning to Ipswich C.Y.M.S. and coaching the team. This was his final year playing rugby league. Bill maintained his interest in sport including rugby league and cricket and was appointed as a Selector for the Ipswich Bulimba Cup team in 1950.

Bill Ryan lived at Ipswich until about 1954 when he relocated to Mayne Junction in Central Brisbane. Mayne Junction was the site of Queensland Railways locomotive yards and marshalling area. As a Boilermaker, Bill would have been employed in this locality.

He remained at Mayne Junction until at least 1972 but was living at Murphy St Ipswich in 1977 after his wife Dorothy died. Bill returned to Brisbane by 1980 and died there in July 1994. His memorial is at the Pinnaroo Lawn Cemetery and Crematorium, Bridgeman Downs, Brisbane, Queensland.

Bill Ryan was recorded as William Joseph Ryan on Australian Electoral Rolls for most of his life but his birth record and death memorial, records him simply as William Ryan. He proudly referred to himself as a Boilermaker throughout his life. While rugby league gave him notoriety, his trade gave him a better life.

