

# Snowy Martin

.... and his family were last record at Wallerawang in 1930 and by 1932 they were living in the Sydney suburb of Fairfield. It was evident that Snowy Martin had some involvement with the Fairfield Rugby League Club, as he was recorded in the Biz newspaper providing entertainment at the Club's presentation night in April 1932.

The Waratah orchestra rendered selections during the evening, and songs were given by Messrs. "Snowy" Martin (two), W. Smith (three and encores), R. Moore, A. Bowtell and

The Biz April 1932

Snowy's time in Sydney was short-lived as he was reported in the Wagga Wagga Express on 7 May 1932, arriving in the south west NSW country town of Cootamundra where he immediately joined the Cootamundra Rugby League Club.

The news report indicated that he was a Western Suburbs player but that was not correct. There is no record of Snowy Martin playing for Wests in 1931 or 1932.

Cootamundra has another importation in "Snowy" Martin, of Western Suburbs, who is to fill the full back position. He arrived at Cootamundra on Saturday and played at Junee on Sunday.

Wagga Wagga Express 7 May 1932

Snowy Martin had an immediate impact, playing for the Cootamundra Club locally and in three Maher Cup matches in 1932. He was selected for the Group 9 team that played the 1932 Sydney Premiers, South Sydney in a State Championship Challenge in October of that year.

The accolades attributed to Snowy were numerous and from respected sources such as State Selector Bert Gray and former player Dinny Campbell.

S. Martin, the snowy-haired young three-quarter with the Cootamundra team, has made a sensational rise this year. Martin hails originally from Sydney. When he first stripped with the Cootamundra team he was played as full-back, and then as a centre, with varying success. Later he was tried on the wing, and here he found his true position. Of him, Bert Gray, the State selector, who toured with the Group 9 team, holds a high opinion.

Labor Daily 1 October 1932



### **Group 9 Rugby League Team that played South Sydney - 1932**

**Back:** Albert Worthing Thrussell (Publican, Murrumburrah), Norman 'Latchem' Robinson (Tumut, ex Balmain), Jack Kingston (Cootamundra), Laurie Ward? (Teacher at Murrumburrah, later an International), Bill Maizey (Cowra, ex Balmain), Gordon Hinton (Cootamundra), Len Cooper (West Wyalong), Player ?, Syd Moxon (Young, ex Cowra), Fred Cahill (Young, Manager)

**Middle:** Player ?, Gus Gray (Junee, ex Wagga and Temora), Player ?, Abe Hall (Young), Jim Mortimer (Junee)

**Front:** Ern 'Snowy' Martin (Cootamundra, future Western Suburbs - Sydney), Eric Weissel (Temora, ex Cootamundra)

Neil Pollock from the Maher Cup web site has attempted to identify the players in the photograph above. He notes that the three players with question marks are likely to be Norrie Forrest (Cootamundra), George 'Biggun' Williams (Junee), and Phil 'Barney' King (West Wyalong). However Lew Boyd from Scone was invited to play in the second Sydney match and may be included in the photo.

Neil notes that the photo appears to have been taken at the Sydney Showground. The team that played Souths was;

Laurie Ward (Harden), Len Cooper, (West Wyalong), Abe Hall (Young), Jim Mortimer (Junee), Snowy Martin (Cootamundra), Eric Weissel (Temora), Latchem Robinson (Tumut), Jack Kingston, Gordon Hinton, and Norrie Forrest (all Cootamundra), Bill Maizey (Cowra), Gus Gray and George 'Biggun' Williams (both Junee).

Bert Gray, the State Selector who accompanied the Group 9 tour, assessed the players and their potential, and made the following comments regarding Snowy Martin.

He said; "E. Martin (Cootamundra), right wing three-quarter, 13st., a very forceful player, who both receives and gives a pass in true orthodox manner. Martin just lacks a little bit of pace which would make him a representative player. Properly trained in running shoes, and taught how to run properly, this could easily be obtained. In addition, this player is absolutely fearless in his determination."

### **COUNTRY STARS.**

Selector Bert Gray, who accompanied the Group Nine team on its recent country tour, stated in a report to the League that he considered a number of country players were well worthy of consideration by the State selectors. He named the following: J. Stephenson (Temora), M. Torpy (Young), S. Davis (Parkes), N. Forrest (Cootamundra), R. O'Keefe, A. Pivetta (Glen Innes), all second row forwards; C. Rothnie (Parkes), E. Stehr, M. McGhee (Glen Innes), G. Hinton (Group 9), all front row forwards; B. Clifton (Parkes), S. Moxan (Young), lock-forwards; L. Curran (Temora), J. Brown (Young), hookers; L. Ward (Harden), full-back; L. Boyd (Scone), centre three-quarter; E. Martin (Cootamundra), right wing; B. King (West Wyalong), left wing; L. Cooper (West Wyalong) right wing.

Labor Daily 20 September 1932

Commenting upon Group Nine's players in the match against Upper Hunter, Dinny Campbell said:—

**"Ward, the full-back, played football of the highest class, and is easily the best player in this position in the State.**

**"He never made a mistake, and his coming up and feeding his supports was of international standard.**

**"Martin, on the wing, enhanced his reputation, as he gave a grand exhibition. His two tries were very popular with the crowd.**

Daily Telegraph 17 September 1932

In 1933, Snowy moved to the Riverina town of Leeton and played with the Leeton District Rugby League Club. It was another successful year for Snowy with him being selected in the Group 17 representative team.

In 1934, Snowy tried his luck in Sydney and trialled with the powerful Eastern Suburbs team. He was referred to as the snow-thatched player from Young, but this was a reporting error as no record has been found of him playing with Young in 1933. There is no indication that he was graded with Easts and it is unclear where he played in 1934, if he played at all.

The following season, 1935, found "Snowy" back at Cootamundra. He once again had a successful season and played six Maher Cup matches. Cootamundra held the Maher Cup on two occasions in 1935.



### **Cootamundra Maher Cup Team - 1935**

**Back:** Hugh Kennedy, Jock Hetherington, Noel Walpole, Jim Gibbs, Jim Winter, Possibly Jim Campbell holding the Cup  
**Kneeling:** Charlie Fennell, Ern "Snowy" Martin, Charlie Rowe, Bill Argæet  
**Sitting:** Clem Scrivener, Clarence "Jum" Miller, Jim Malone  
**Ballboys:** Starr brothers, **Source:** Phil Winter



**From the Maher Cup Web Site:** "On 23 June 1935, the Cootamundra team flew on two Butler Air Transport planes to challenge Forbes for the Jack Hore Gold Cup. The Cootamundra Herald thought that the team would make history by being the first to make use of this modern method of travel.

Team members to fly were, Bill Argæet, Jock Hetherington, Jim Winter, Ray Ward, Clem Scrivener, Fred Thompson, Alf Tasker, W. Ayres, Charlie Rowe, Leo Sheedy, Noel Walpole, and Pat Muffett. 'Snowy Martin' refused to fly and drove to Forbes."

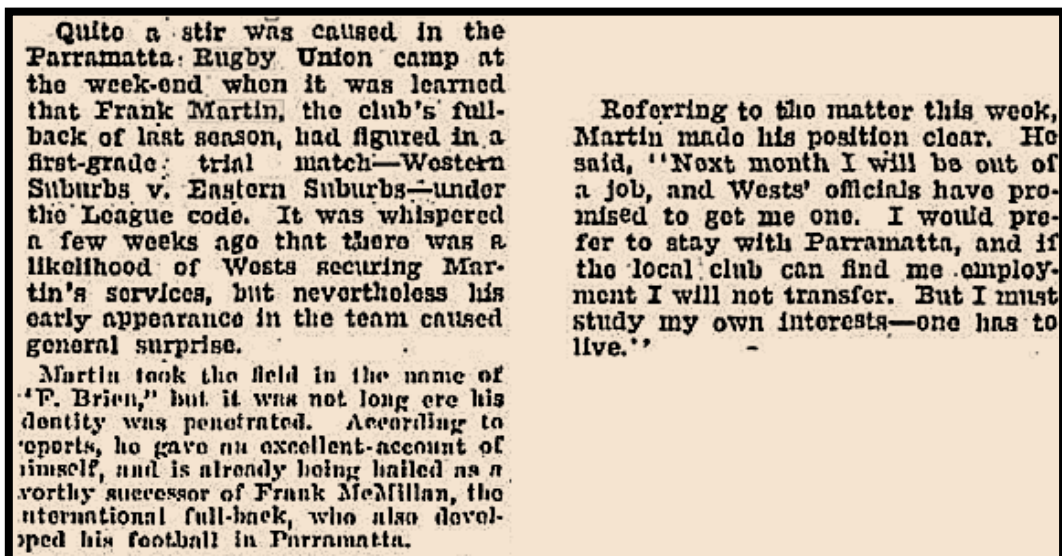
Snowy Martin returned to the Sydney suburb of Fairfield in 1936. Finding his career in football at this point required some research. Snowy's brother, Henry "Mick" Martin who also played for Wests was playing for the Fairfield Club as well as the Southern Districts President's Cup team in 1936. Often there would be no first name or initial in news reports to enable the reader to know who was playing.

There was also a number of players by the name of Martin playing rugby league and rugby union in the broader Parramatta area at the time. Again, as news reports generally only contained a surname, it was difficult to determine which Martin was playing and when. A news article in the Cumberland Argus in 1938 helped in unravelling players with the name of Martin.

The news article noted; "A quintet of celebrated sportsmen - Putt, Joe, Vic, Skin and Ned. You know the brothers we mean, of course, the Martins from Westmead. Few families in the district have such a glittering record on the field of sport." The news article gave a brief outline of the sporting achievements of each of the brothers, but as it only referred to nick names, the next task was to identify their birth names through Ancestry and NSW Births, Deaths, and Marriages. None of these brothers were Snowy Martin.

However two of these brothers, Frank Brien "Putt" Martin and Joe Martin were playing First Grade with the Parramatta Rugby Union Club in 1936. Frank Martin had a long career with the Parramatta Rugby Club and was at one time captain of the team.

What is of most interest to Wests is that Frank Martin trialled with Wests at the start of 1935 under the name of Frank Brien, which was his first and middle name. The following news article from 1935 sets out the circumstances of Frank Martin's appearance at Wests.



Cumberland Argus 1935

Even very good footballers were not immune to the difficult economic and employment conditions created by the Great Depression. It appears that the Parramatta Rugby Union found Frank Martin employment as he returned to that Club and after making an application for readmission to the Union, he continued playing.

While it was known that brothers, Frank and Joe Martin were playing First Grade rugby union with Parramatta in 1936, there was also a third Martin who played that year. The following news article

from the Biz newspaper noted that the; "Martins, F.B. and E.J. were the outstanding backs for Parramatta." This made it appear that these players were brothers, but that was not the case.

**The Martins, F. B. and E. J., were the outstanding backs for Parramatta.**

A further search found reports in The Biz newspaper in 1936, that made it clear that E.J. Martin was in fact Ernest James "Snowy" Martin. He was recorded as E. Martin, E.J. Martin, or "Snowy" Martin.

**Cormick, Crockart, Hammond (until injured), E. ("Snowy") Martin and Clelland also showed good form. A. Holland play-**

**University. Others to shine throughout were Cerutti and E. J. Martin, of Parramatta.**

How Snowy Martin was able to play rugby union after being such a prominent rugby league player was the next question. The local newspapers provided some insight as to what was happening in 1936. The Rugby Union had a concerted push to establish junior and sub-district team competitions. It did so with some success.

**Enthusiasts will be glad to know that the western line has gone over wholeheartedly to the union code and great things are expected from Richmond and surrounding teams.**

**Many league players are participating in the trials this year and, naturally, they are ignorant of the finer points of the game as played under Union rules.**

A number of rugby league players had taken the opportunity to switch allegiances. Jack Tisdale (Wests #344) and two of his younger brothers came across. Jack Tisdale made his First Grade debut with the Parramatta Rugby Union Club in 1936.

Alex McDonald (Wests #295) who had played with Wests in 1934 and 1935, and was now the Sports Master at the Burnside School, became the Parramatta First Grade Rugby Union Coach in August 1936, when Bill Cerutti went on tour to New Zealand with the Australian Rugby Union team. Alex McDonald remained with the Parramatta Club for a number of years, both as Coach and Selector.

But perhaps the most prominent rugby league gain that year for rugby union was Snowy Martin. The Daily Telegraph on 14 April 1936 gave the following account;

**S. Martin, a former Cootamundra Rugby League player, is playing with the Parramatta Rugby Union Club.**

**Martin represented Group 9, then champion country side, in Sydney several years ago against South Sydney, the N.S.W.R.L. premiers. He played on the wing.**

**Parramatta tried him out at full-back on Saturday in the absence of a namesake, F. Martin, who was the club's first grade custodian last year.**

**The newcomer will certainly prove a welcome addition to the Parramatta ranks, as the club, though strong in the forwards, requires strengthening in the back division.**

**S. Martin will have to apply to the New South Wales Rugby Union for reinstatement. It is understood that he received no remuneration for playing football in the country.**

The Rugby Union, notwithstanding its amateur ideals had little hesitation in reinstating or perhaps more accurately instating many league players who had never played rugby union previously. Most of these were for the Parramatta Club, which no doubt reflected the push to be competitive with rugby league in the Western Suburbs. Snowy Martin was one of those permitted to play.

**T**HE following players were re-instated by the council of the N.S.W. Rugby Union on Monday night: T. H. Bates, R. H. Newson, M. L. Leabenter, L. W. Preston, W. D. Fryer, G. E. Parker, L. Watkins, D. J. Tisdale, J. Tisdale, E. J. Martin, H. A. Minter (all for Parramatta Club), H. Snell, G. W. Brown, L. J. Cranney, E. K. Hindmarsh, and H. Herd.

The rugby league converts did quite well playing rugby union but every now and then old habits would emerge. In August 1936 the Cumberland Argus noted; "E. J. Martin, Parramatta's winger a product of the rugby league code, was evident on Saturday. A laugh went up among local fans when Martin, who is a great defender, 'played the ball' in orthodox league style after having been tackled."

While Snowy Martin had a successful 1936 and was regarded as one of the better Parramatta players, cracks were starting to appear when the Cumberland Argus reported on 27 August 1936 that; "Rumour had it in Parramatta this week that Snowy Martin might be going back to his first love, league football. It was stated that Frank McMillan had been up to see Martin and had asked him to play with Western Suburbs, in the position vacated by Alan Ridley. What Martin intends to do; he alone appears to know."

Snowy remained with the Parramatta Rugby Union Club for the remainder of the season, but it did not work out as well in 1937. A report in the Parramatta Argus on 11 May 1938 referred to him being "dumped" by Parramatta, no doubt referring to him losing his position in First Grade. Snowy at this point in his career wasn't waiting around and moved on from rugby union, playing out the 1937 season with the Goodyear Rugby League team that was in the City Business Houses Rugby League competition.

1938 brought about another chapter in Snowy's football career. He trialed with Wests and was graded at the start of the season. He was selected for First Grade and played in the first, fourth and fifth rounds of the competition. He played another four matches in Reserve Grade before hanging up his boots. Perhaps he should have taken up Frank McMillan's offer in 1936 and capped off the last couple of years in a distinguished career with Wests.

After the war, Snowy moved to the eastern suburbs of Sydney before eventually moving to the NSW Central Coast, where he lived for the remainder of his life. His death was recorded at Toukley, NSW in May 1989. Ernest "Snowy" Martin's memorial is located at Palmdale Cemetery, Palmdale, NSW, Native Garden, Section 2, Site 80.

