

## Mick Liubinskas

.... was selected to play with Wests Jersey Flegg Cup team from the Concord United juniors in 1972. The Jersey Flegg team of 1972 was arguably one of the best junior representative teams that Wests have ever fielded. In that squad, alongside Mick, were future First Grade players, Jim Myers, Trevor Reardon, Ron Giteau, Geoff Gardner, Steve Blyth and Steve Rigney.



### Concord United JRLFC

**Back:** A Kates, K Weale, R Hansen, M Warren, Steve Rigney, D Peters, S Wilkinson

**Middle:** S Chapman, W Thompson, C Charter, W Barnes (C), G Barnes (Ball Boy), R Siely (VC), K Berneur, G Roberts, Michael Liubinskas

**Front:** G Wheatley, R Murphy, P Watson, P Rodwell, **Absent:** G Beattie

**Officials:** R Marsh (Coach), W Kirby (Selector), A Barnes (Manager)

The team went through the preliminary rounds and semi-final undefeated and faced South Sydney in the Final. In what proved to be a tough and at times brutal match, South Sydney won 15-5 on the back of a superior penalty count which they took advantage of through the goal kicking of John Berne. Wests scored the only try of the match.

FLEGG MEMORIAL CUP			
Copyright. 12.45 p.m. 30 mins. each way.			
SOUTH SYDNEY (Red and Green) Coach: RAY STIG		WESTERN SUBURBS (Black and White) Coach: A. BROWN	
1—S. LOUGHNAN		1—J. ROBERTS	
2—P. HICKEY	J. BERNE— 3	2—A. SPENCER	T. REARDON 3
4—B. ROWAN	G. BULTITUDE— 5	4—R. GITEAU	G. EDWARDS—16
6—B. WALL (C)	W. SMITH— 7	7—S. MCKENZIE	G. GARDINER—14
8—C. MORAGHAN	J. HARRIOTT— 9	8—J. MYERS (C)	S. BLYTH—10
10—W. GRIFFIN	D. WILSON—11	17—R. SPICER	S. RIGNEY—11
12—S. MAGNUS	B. JONES—13	18—C. BRENNAN	M. LIUBINAKAS—13
D. Woods (14), S. Westaway (15), G. Loughnan (16), R. Hartley (17), M. Stores (18), G. Sommerville (19), G. Martin (20).		N. Clinch (5), B. Jones (9), C. Davies (15), J. Rolston (6), P. Campbell (12), N. Bennett (19), S. Wilkinson (20).	

Wests Jersey Flegg Cup Team v South Sydney – Final 17 June 1972



### Western Suburbs Jersey Flegg Cup Team - Finalists 1972

(Played 6, Won 5, Lost 1 - Points: For 85 Against 47)

**Back:** H Burns (President), S Swan (Manager), S Coghlan (Secretary), B Jones, C Davies, M Liubinskas, A Brown (Coach), A Spencer, S Rigney, S Blyth, D Ewings (Trainer), E Jackman (Selector), W Roberts (Treasurer), W Ginn (Rep Selector)

**Sitting:** G Roberts, T Reardon, S Wilkinson, J Rolston, J Myers (C), S McKenzie, R Spicer, G Edwards, P Campbell

**Front:** N Clinch, G Gardner, M Brown (Ball Boy), S Rigney (Sand Boy), C Brennan, N Bennett

**Absent:** R Giteau

### Results Jersey Flegg Competition 1972

v St George Won 10-7 (Tries: S Rigney, J Myers, Goals: J Myers S McKenzie)

v Parramatta Won 12-2 (Tries: J Myers, T Reardon, Goals: J Myers, S McKenzie f.g.)

v Eastern Suburbs Won 28-8 (Tries: T Reardon 3, J Myers, N Clinch, G Edwards, Goals: S McKenzie 2, P Campbell 2, J Myers)

v Penrith Won 17-13 (Tries: T Reardon, C Brennan, S Rigney, Goals: S McKenzie 3, J Myers)

v Canterbury Bankstown (Semi Final) Won 13-2 (Tries: G Gardner, R Giteau, G Edwards, Goals: J Myers, S McKenzie)

v South Sydney (Final) Lost 5-15 (Tries T Reardon, Goals: S McKenzie)

Within a fortnight of the Jersey Flegg final being played, a number of the team were graded. Initially Jim Myers and Trevor Reardon were selected in Third Grade with Mick Liubinskas and Steve Rigney on the bench. This was a game against Manly at the Sydney Cricket Ground and therefore quite an experience for young players just out of the juniors. As Mick explained, he was somewhat star struck as he was called off the bench to play in this game. Mick's first game in a run on side was played on 6 August 1972 when he was selected in Wests Third Grade team to take on St George at Kogarah.

Mick played two games in Third Grade in 1972 and was rotated to the bench on several other occasions. At eighteen years of age, he was still developing but it was evident that he had a promising future, one that would endure eight seasons in Sydney premiership rugby league.

THIRD GRADE — 12.00 Noon	
WESTERN SUBURBS	
(Black and White)	
Coach: GARRY RUSSELL	
Fullback:	
27—D. LEWIS	
Threequarters:	
28—T. ENDICOTT	T. SCARR—29
30—T. REARDON	W. GINN—31
Halves:	
32—D. ALLEN	J. MAXWELL (C)—33
Forwards:	
34—J. MYERS	K. BROWN—35
36—T. ROSE	M. ANDERSON—37
38—J. CROUCHER	A. RIDDELL—39
Reserves:	
A. James (40), K. Green (41), D. Johanson (42), S. Askar (43), G. Russell (44), S. Rigney (45), N. Liubinskas (46).	

THIRD GRADE — 12.00 Noon	
WESTERN SUBURBS	
(Black and White)	
Coach: GARRY RUSSELL	
Fullback:	
27—J. MAXWELL	
Threequarters:	
28—G. FOSTER	N. HURFORD—29
30—T. SCARR	T. REARDON—31
Halves:	
32—G. ROSE	D. ALLEN—33
Forwards:	
34—J. MYERS	J. PURCELL—35
36—M. LUIBINASKAS	A. RIDDELL—37
38—J. CROUCHER	N. MOROKO—39
Reserves:	
P. Stewart (40), S. Rigney (41), K. Brown (42), E. Rowell (43), T. Endicott (44), S. Askar (45), W. Ginn (46).	

1 July 1972 v Manly at SCG

6 August 1972 v St George at Kogarah

Mick Liubinskas' two Third Grade games with Wests in 1972



In 1973, Mick started out as a regular member of Wests Under 23 team before stepping up to Reserve Grade about half way through the season. In 1973 the Under 23's replaced the Third Grade competition.

Mick had a break out year in 1974. He had his initial taste of First Grade football off the bench in a round two match against North Sydney and then followed up three days later in an AMCO Cup match against a strong Eastern Suburbs team. He came into that team after John Elford pulled out the day before.

Western Suburbs 18		drew with	North Sydney 18	
Tony FORD	<i>Fullback</i>		Derek MORITZ	
Robbie PARKER	<i>Wing</i>		Paul HOPE	
Stephen KNIGHT	<i>Centre</i>		Mal McLACHLIN	
Dave OLIVERI	<i>Centre</i>		Keith HARRIS	
Russell MULLINS	<i>Wing</i>		George AMBRUM	
John HEYWARD	<i>Five-eighth</i>		Tim PICKUP (c)	
Tom RAUDONIKIS (c)	<i>Half</i>		Keith OUTTEN	
Warren SNODGRASS	<i>Lock</i>		Rex MURPHY	
John ELFORD	<i>Second Row</i>		Bruce WALKER	
Geoff FOSTER	<i>Second Row</i>		Roger LAVIS	
Jim MURPHY	<i>Front Row</i>		Brian ANDERSON	
Shane DAY	<i>Hooker</i>		Ross WARNER	
John O'BRYAN	<i>Front Row</i>		Eddie HEATLEY	
Steve RIGNEY	<i>Replacement</i>		Bruce FOYE	
Mick LIUBINSKAS	<i>Replacement</i>			

Mick Liubinskas' first appearance in First Grade - Round 2 1974

Mick had another run in First Grade from the bench in round six and then in round eleven, against Cronulla, he made his First Grade debut in a run-on side. It was a brilliant debut which stamped his credentials as a First Grade player and kept him in the First Grade team for the remainder of the year. The news reports from this match were glowing.

The Sun newspaper reported;

*"Wests had eight men eligible to play in the Under-23 Grade, but they played their hearts out to set up what proved to be a match-winning 9-0 lead at half-time running against a strong southerly. Taking advantage of an early share of possession the Magpies put Cronulla under great pressure. Rookie prop Mick Liubinskas, one of Wests' best players, sent winger Russell Mullins over after 15 minutes. The decision of Wests' selectors to go for youth paid off. Liubinskas, Purcell, Hundy, all 21- year-olds, appear to be in first grade to stay."*

The Daily Telegraph reported;

*"Two promoted 20-year-old props, Mick Liubinskas and Pat Hundy, paved the way for Western Suburbs' shock 16-6 win over Cronulla at Lidcombe Oval. Their tough, non-stop play was cleverly directed by Kangaroo half Tom Raudonikis. Liubinskas and Hundy made the break for Wests' early tries."*

The Wests Archive web site noted;

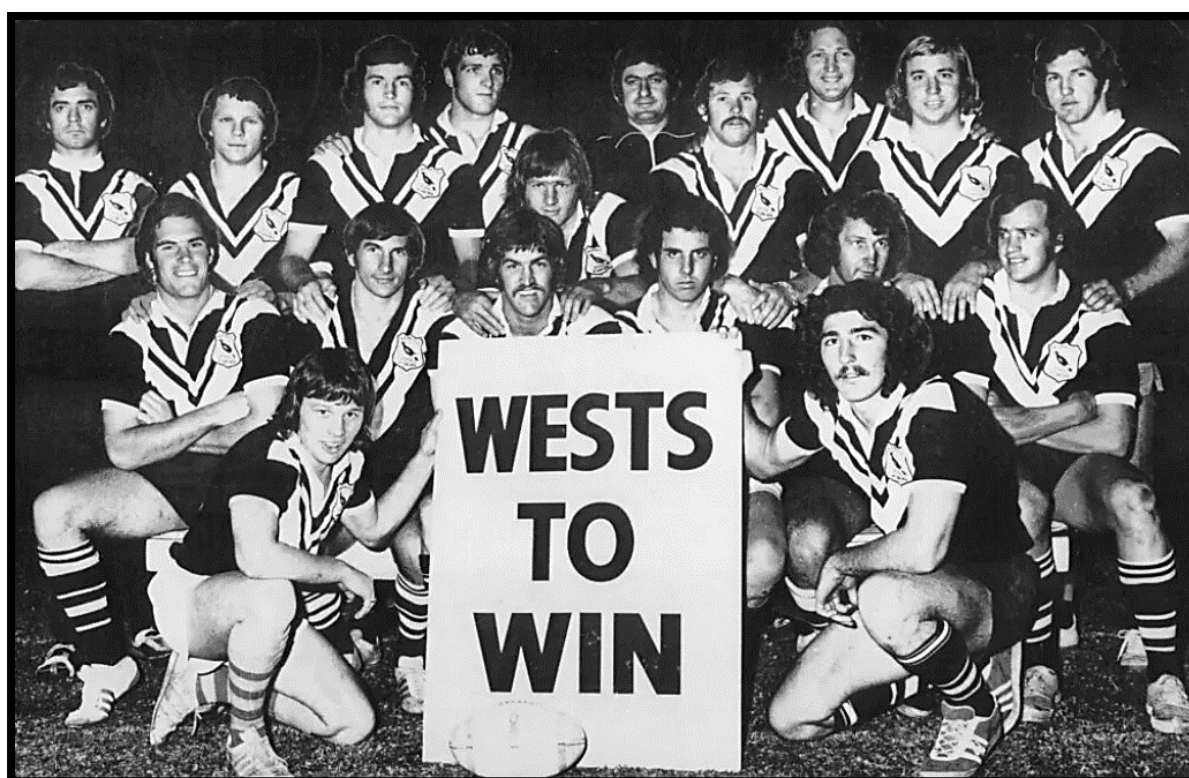
*"Don Parish and the selectors put the broom through the team, with Satterly, Myers, Hundy, Raudonikis (back from rep duties) coming in and Ford, O'Grady, Foster and Rigney (suspended) out. Eight of the players were eligible for U23's. The return of Tom Raudonikis was significant. He played a blinder, leading from the front and was ably supported by Pat Hundy and particularly Mick Liubinskas who was outstanding in attack and defence."*

Source: [westsarchives.com.au](http://westsarchives.com.au)

WESTERN SUBURBS		1974 Round 11 Sunday 9th June Lidcombe Oval		WESTERN SUBURBS	
Western Suburbs 16		def.		Cronulla-Sutherland 6	
John DORAHY	<i>Fullback</i>			Rick BOURKE	
Stephen SATTERLY	<i>Wing</i>			Ray CORCORAN	
Stephen KNIGHT	<i>Centre</i>			Bob WEAR	
Robbie PARKER	<i>Centre</i>			Eric ARCHER	
Russell MULLINS	<i>Wing</i>			David WAITE	
Russell WORTH	<i>Five-eighth</i>			Maurie RAPER	
Tom RAUDONIKIS (c)	<i>Half</i>			Fred DENNEHY	
Jim MYERS	<i>Lock</i>			Greg PIERCE	
Warren SNODGRASS	<i>Second Row</i>			John MAGUIRE	
John ELFORD	<i>Second Row</i>			Ken MADDISON (c)	
Pat HUNDY	<i>Front Row</i>			Greg ALLEN	
John PURCELL	<i>Hooker</i>			Ron TURNER	
Mick LIUBINSKAS	<i>Front Row</i>			Vince FARRAR	
Geoff FOSTER	<i>Replacement</i>				

Mick Liubinskas - Selected for his First Grade Debut v Cronulla-Sutherland 9 June 1972

Mick played all of the finals series games in 1974. Wests had wins over Souths and Manly in the preliminary minor semi-final and minor semi-final respectively but came up against a hot Eastern Suburbs team in the preliminary final. After a tight first half, Easts eventually wore down the Magpies to take out the match and ultimately the 1974 premiership.



### Western Suburbs Rugby League Team 1974

**Back:** Shane Day, Graeme O'Grady, John Purcell, Geoff Foster, Tom Raudonikis (C), Don Parish (Coach), Robbie Parker, Warren Snodgrass, John Heyward, John Dorahy

**Sitting:** Stephen Knight, Steve Satterly, Russell Mullins, Pat Hundy, John Elford, Brian Isbester

**Front:** Russell Worth, Mick Liubinskas

WESTERN SUBURBS		1974 Prelim. Final Saturday 14th September Cricket Ground		WESTERN SUBURBS	
Eastern Suburbs 25		def.	Western Suburbs 2		
Russell FAIRFAX	<i>Fullback</i>	John DORAHY			
Jim PORTER	<i>Wing</i>	Stephen SATTERLY			
John BRASS	<i>Centre</i>	Stephen KNIGHT			
Mark HARRIS	<i>Centre</i>	Robbie PARKER			
Bill MULLINS	<i>Wing</i>	Russell MULLINS			
John PEARD	<i>Five-eighth</i>	Russell WORTH			
John MAYES	<i>Half</i>	Tom RAUDONIKIS (c)			
Ron COOTE	<i>Lock</i>	Warren SNODGRASS			
Barry REILLY	<i>Second Row</i>	Mick LIUBINSKAS			
Laurie FREIER	<i>Second Row</i>	Geoff FOSTER			
Arthur BEETSON (c)	<i>Front Row</i>	Pat HUNDY			
Elwyn WALTERS	<i>Hooker</i>	John PURCELL			
Ken JONES	<i>Front Row</i>	Brian ISBESTER			
Ian MCKAY	<i>Replacement</i>	John ELFORD			
Greg BANDIERA	<i>Replacement</i>	Graeme O'GRADY			

Wests came up against a very good Easts team in the 1974 Final. Wests were down 2-3 at half time.

In 1975, Mick was caught up in a controversy not of his making. He started the year playing in the Wills Cup pre-season competition including the semi-final against Parramatta. He played in the First Grade team for the first half of the season but was out of the team during the month of June. In his second game back in a match against Canterbury, he came on as a replacement for Jim Murphy, scored a try and played well. The match ended in a 7-7 draw.

After the match Canterbury lodged a protest as Mick hadn't played a full Reserve Grade game as was required by the rules at that time. The protest was upheld and Wests lost the one competition point it gained from the drawn game.

The ramifications of the lost competition point played out at the end of the season when Wests finished on equal competition points with Parramatta and Balmain. Wests lost the play-off and therefore the chance to play in the semi-finals. Had the competition point not been lost then Wests would have been semi-finalists in 1975.

Mick brushed off the controversy and came back strongly in the next two rounds. The first of these games was a one point loss to Eastern suburbs which went on to win the 1975 premiership and the week after Wests had a very good win over Souths that consigned the Rabbitohs to a wooden spoon, the first time since 1962.

The Daily Telegraph reported;

*"Wests, with four tries, had established a winning 20-3 break at half-time. Lanky second-rower Mick Liubinskas began their scoring with two early tries. Liubinskas intercepted a Bob McCarthy pass in the sixth minute to score unopposed near the posts. Liubinskas soon after was on the spot again in a 50-metre dash along the sideline which left Souths' Bob Grant and Eric Simms stranded."*

This was the last First Grade game that Mick played in 1975. He had injured a knee earlier in the year and as a result of the injury to his knee in the Souths game he ended up with both cartilages removed.





Mick Liubinskas



**Western Suburbs DRLFC First Grade 1975**

**Back:** Shane Day, Geoff Foster, Mick Liubinskas, Russell Mullins, Tim Murphy, Jim Murphy, Don Rogers, Stephen Knight  
**Front:** Don Parish (Coach), John Donnelly, Tom Raudonikis (C), Chris Wellman, Robbie Parker, John Dorahy

In 1976, Mick was in the starting lineup for the Wills Cup competition and then played the first three games of the premiership off the bench. However injury once again took its toll, this time from a debilitating shoulder injury. It was a lengthy recovery process which saw him miss much of the 1976 season. He did come though and played six Under 23's games towards the back end of the season.

A strong start in 1977 saw Mick playing in the Wills Cup pre-season competition, an AMCO Cup match and First Grade up to round six. Injury once again affected his season and this time he was out of the First Grade team for two months.

He made his way back to the top team by round thirteen and was part of Wests charge to AMCO Cup glory. He played in the AMCO Cup quarter final win over St George and then from the bench in the semi-final against St George. That was the last game he played in 1977 thereby missing the opportunity to play in the AMCO Cup Final in which Wests defeated Easts 6-5.



Western Suburbs DRLFC AMCO Cup Winners 1977



#### **Western Suburbs First Grade Team 1977**

**Back:** Robert Rowland Smith (Conditioner), Doug Lucas, Peter Young, Geoff Foster, Russell Mullins, Ron Giteau, Wayne Smith, Mick Liubinskas, Keith Holman (Coach), Stephen Blyth,

**Middle:** John Donnelly, Shane Day, John Purcell, Tom Raudonikis (C), Don Moseley, Neville Sinclair,

**Front:** Les Boyd, Gavin Miller, Graeme O'Grady, John Dorahy

The 1978 season again started with great promise. Mick played three pre-season Cup games, an AMCO Cup game, and the first two rounds of the premiership. In the round two premiership match which saw Wests defeat St George, Mick was once again in great form. The Wests Archive web site has recorded the following notes from that match.

*“With Geoff Foster and Mick Liubinskas leading the way, the forwards were very dominant and the backs ran riot late in the game. Peter Rowles, again playing five-eighth, also had a blinder, and capped off a good game with a great late try and conversion from the sideline.”*

Source: [westsarchives.com.au](http://westsarchives.com.au)

The game against St George came at some cost, as Mick suffered a painful shoulder injury. He was selected for the round three game against Penrith but succumbed to the injury and was a late withdrawal. He played again ten days later from the bench in an AMCO Cup game but the shoulder injury continued to hinder him. Recovery took some time but Mick eventually made his way back playing in Reserve Grade for the remainder of the season.

It was no doubt a frustrating year for Mick as Wests First Grade team were playing quite well with plenty of firepower in the forwards. The side was a settled combination that took out the minor premiership that year. Breaking back into the top team was never going to be easy under those circumstances.

It was his last year at Wests as in 1979 Mick decided to change his playing environment and hopefully remain injury free. He went across to rugby league neighbours, Balmain.

During his time at Wests, Mick Liubinskas played forty four First Grade, forty five Reserve Grade, two Third Grade, sixteen Under 23's, ten Pre Season Cup and five AMCO Cup games for a total of one hundred and twenty two games in all grades. He also scored twenty five tries in all grades for a tally of seventy five points.

Surname	Forename	Year	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	U/23's	Pre-Season Cup	AMCO Cup	Tries	Goals	Total Points
Liubinskas	Mick	1972			2						
Liubinskas	Mick	1973		13					1		3
Liubinskas	Mick	1973				8			4		12
Liubinskas	Mick	1974	18						3		9
Liubinskas	Mick	1974		9					1		3
Liubinskas	Mick	1974						1			
Liubinskas	Mick	1975	12						5		15
Liubinskas	Mick	1975		4					1		3
Liubinskas	Mick	1975					3		1		3
Liubinskas	Mick	1976	3								
Liubinskas	Mick	1976				6					
Liubinskas	Mick	1976					2				
Liubinskas	Mick	1977	9						1		3
Liubinskas	Mick	1977		7					2		6
Liubinskas	Mick	1977				2			2		6
Liubinskas	Mick	1977					2				
Liubinskas	Mick	1977						3	1		3
Liubinskas	Mick	1978	2						1		3
Liubinskas	Mick	1978		12					1		3
Liubinskas	Mick	1978					3				
Liubinskas	Mick	1978						1	1		3
<b>Total</b>			<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>75</b>

Mick Liubinskas' Playing Record at Wests



Mick started afresh in 1979 with his new club, Balmain. He played in all of the pre-season Cup games which included a one point win over his former club, Wests, and a loss in the final of the Cup series to Eastern Suburbs.

Things were looking bright in 1979. Mick played in the round one premiership game against Easts which resulted in a 27-5 win and a reversal of the pre-season Cup final result.

He then lined up against Wests in the round two premiership game. He was only on the field for ten minutes when he suffered an injury that proved to be a season and ultimately a career defining moment.

Mick indicated that he smashed his good knee, which turned out to be a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). The ACL fundamentally holds bones and cartilage around the knee together and keeps everything stable.

Mick was operated on by Doctor Merv Cross who was one of the best in his field at the time, but the repair of the cruciate took months to heal and strengthen. The injury was another blow to Mick which would put him out of action for much of the season.

As he played little football in 1979, it was unlikely that Balmain would offer him a contract for the 1980 season. There is some irony in that it was his last First Grade game against Wests that ultimately brought his Sydney premiership career to an end.

WESTERN SUBURBS		1979 Round 2 Saturday 31st March Lidcombe Oval		WESTERN SUBURBS	
Western Suburbs 22		def.	Balmain 12		
Don MOSELEY	<i>Fullback</i>	Allan McMAHON			
Wayne SMITH	<i>Wing</i>	Wayne MIRANDA			
Ron BRODRICK	<i>Centre</i>	Dennis BENDALL			
John DORAHY	<i>Centre</i>	Wayne WIGHAM			
Warren BOLAND	<i>Wing</i>	Larry COROWA			
Graeme O'GRADY	<i>Five-eighth</i>	Les MARA			
Tom RAUDONIKIS (c)	<i>Half</i>	Greg OLIPHANT (c)			
Les BOYD	<i>Lock</i>	Gary SPEARS			
Ray BROWN	<i>Second Row</i>	Steve LAVERS			
Bob COOPER	<i>Second Row</i>	Mick LIUBINSKAS			
Bill CLOUGHESY	<i>Front Row</i>	David GRANT			
Jack JEFFRIES	<i>Hooker</i>	Frank MARINO			
Bruce GIBBS	<i>Front Row</i>	Rod MORRIS			
Brian COOK	<i>Replacement</i>	Steve FREWIN			

Mick Liubinskas' last First Grade Game – Round Two 1979

In 1980 Mick had quite a number of offers to play Country football. There was a good opportunity at Lithgow but ultimately the coastal climate at Umina on the NSW Central Coast won out. Mick spent two years at Umina making the grand final in 1980.



Mick Liubinskas with Tony Thom and Martin Briggs backing up. Umina v Woy Woy 1980 Grand Final

Mick had not long married and while he was doing well in his employment with the national communications carrier, the PMG, he realised that he needed to advance his career and so he undertook further education and obtained an engineering degree in communications/information technology. Mick has subsequently built a successful career in the information technology sector.

However, Mick wasn't lost to rugby league. Tommy Raudonikis encouraged him to come out to Campbelltown to coach the Jersey Flegg representative team in 1995 and 1996. He then followed up by coaching the Wests Third Grade team in 1997.

Mick then coached the Wests Metropolitan Cup team in 2000. Additional funding was needed if the team was to be competitive in ongoing years but that was not forthcoming. That effectively closed Mick Liubinskas' coaching career.

He did continue as a selector for Wests junior representative teams between 2003 and 2009 but more of his time was taken up with the Wests Magpies Rugby League Board, The Wests Ashfield Board, and as committeeman and President of the Pratten Park Magpies.

In a tribute to Mick Liubinskas, he was selected in Wests Team of the 1970's as a Reserve along with fellow forwards Bruce Gibbs and John Baker. The pack chosen in the Team of the 1970's, included five internationals, and was comprised of Les Boyd, John Elford, Geoff Foster, Jim Murphy, John Donnelly and Ray Brown.

Mick was never selected in a senior representative team during his eight seasons playing in the Sydney rugby league premierships. There is no doubt that he was capable of competing at the highest level but his career was hampered by serious injuries at critical times. Each time momentum was building towards peak form, there seemed to be another setback.

The fact that he was selected in the Wests 1970's Team of the Decade alongside some of the great Wests players speaks volumes as to how well he was regarded as a football player and team mate.

These days Mick enjoys keeping fit with surfing and golf and is on hand to provide support and advice to some of the young up and coming players.



The great Michael Liubinskas giving a few of our U9's some tips on how to be just like him!  
Credit: #weststigers meet your future stars! (Concord Burwood Wolves Facebook)



**Mick Liubinskas - Magpies always close to his heart!**