

James H Gosse

- Norwood President 1920-1939
- Norwood Chairman 1920-1938

Playing Statistics:

Career: 1896 to 1905

NFC Games: 112

NFC Goals: 23

Debut: v Port Adelaide (Adelaide) 25th July 1896

Finale: v North Adelaide (Adelaide) 1st September 1905

- Norwood Captain: 1905
- Premierships: 1901, 1904
- NFC Life Member
- NFC Hall of Fame
- Best and Fairest: 1901



Sir James Hay Gosse (1876-1952), businessman, was born on 21 December 1876 at Kent Town, Adelaide, second son of William Christie Gosse, an English-born surveyor, and his second wife Agnes, daughter of Alexander Hay. William died in 1881, leaving his widow with three small children. Educated (1886-96) at the Collegiate School of St Peter, James excelled at football and rowing. In 1894-1905 he played as a ruckman for Norwood and represented the State five times. 'A giant in the boat', in 1902-05 he rowed in the South Australian VIII and was president (1924-31) of Adelaide Rowing Club.

Sir James Gosse once said that Australian football was the finest thing in existence for the public to look at, and he spent all of his rich sporting life putting his time and his money where his mouth

was.

Jimmy, as he was popularly known, started with Norwood as a teenage ruckman in 1894, going on to captain both his club and his State in 1905, his last year as a player. He participated in two Norwood premierships, but it was as an administrator and benefactor that Sir James had his greatest influence on the game.

He was president of Norwood for 20 years, and of the SANFL from 1945 until his death in 1952. Sir James had a special interest in past players and officials of all clubs. He believed they should stay involved with the game, to the benefit of everyone. As patron of their association, he was always helping out.

The former great Tom Leahy told the past players' annual dinner that each year Sir James paid for the tickets of those who couldn't afford them. Tom said Sir James would kick him in the backside for letting on about this, but he thought the players should know. At the other end of the football lifecycle, Sir James was known for his generosity to junior and school teams.

On leaving school, Gosse was employed as a clerk at George Wills & Co. Ltd; he was to remain with the firm for fifty years and rise to managing director. He also became a director and chairman of the boards of the Adelaide Steamship Co. Ltd and the Bank of Adelaide, and was a board-member of News Ltd, the Executor Trustee & Agency Co. of South Australia Ltd, G. & R. Wills & Co. Ltd and James & Alexander Brown & Abermain Seaham Collieries Ltd. Chairman of the Australian Association of British Manufacturers, he was president of the South Australian Chamber of Commerce, the Boy Scouts' Association and St Peter's Collegians' Association (1937-38), as well as being a governor (1917-38) of his old school. Gosse also served on the boards of the Adelaide Steamship Company, and the Bank of Adelaide. He was chairman of the last two for periods.

In 1907 Gosse had joined the Adelaide Club. At St Andrew's Anglican Church, Walkerville, on 29 April 1908 he married 21-year-old Joanna Lang, daughter of Tom Elder Barr Smith; they lived at St Margarets, Parkside. Gosse was intensely interested in his forebears, and kept up a friendship with his English cousins, among them the critic (Sir) Edmund Gosse. Travelling throughout Australia, and frequently abroad, James Gosse belonged to the Melbourne, Union (Sydney), Weld (Perth) and Queensland clubs. He was gregarious, hospitable—'On we go!' was his favourite toast—and a great promoter of his State. In 1911-18 he was manager of George Wills & Co. in Perth. Returning to Adelaide, he served as honorary consul (1923-52) for Denmark and was appointed to the Order of the Dannebrog (1936).

A bustling, forthright and active man, irascible and genial by turn, Gosse was much sought after for his zest and entrepreneurial skills. He was never idle or detached from the causes he adopted. President (1923-31 and 1935-47) of the Royal South Australian Zoological and Acclimatization Society, on Sundays he carried a basket of stale bread to distribute as he walked around the cages discussing affairs with the director. From 1933 until his death he was a councillor of the local branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia. In 1947 he was knighted. As chairman (1940-52) of the State's Fauna and Flora Board, he fostered its Flinders Chase wildlife sanctuary on Kangaroo Island and holidayed there annually. He was a member (from 1939) of the board of the South Australian Museum and in 1948 gave the State government 3000 acres (1214 ha) in the Coorong to

restore the sandhills to the condition depicted by George French Angas. Survived by his wife, daughter and four sons, Sir James died on 14 August 1952 at Stirling and was cremated. His nephew George Gosse won the George Cross and a grandson Alexander Downer entered Federal parliament.

Sources:

Fayette Gosse, 'Gosse, Sir James Hay (1876–1952)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University.

Redlegs Museum Website – Player bio, James H Gosse

Wikipedia website – James Hay Gosse

Chris Brown, August 2022