

John J. Woods



STATISTICS

Career: 1882 to 1892

Premierships: 1882, 1883, 1887, 1888, 1889, 1891

NFC Life Member

NFC Hall of Fame

League Coach: 1909-1910

John Joseph Woods was Norwood's first coach, in 1909. He was also just about everything else to the club - six times premiership player as an accomplished follower, centreman and half-back, secretary, treasurer, SANFL delegate, benefactor and inspiration.

One of four Woods brothers to play for Norwood in its heady early days, "JJ" made a success of everything he turned his hand to. In the mid-1920s, as Mayor of Kensington and Norwood, he was instrumental in the building of the Sir Edwin T. Smith Stand, which secured Norwood Oval as an SANFL venue.

By then the tireless JJ, or Jack as he was also known, already had been a State player, State coach and manager, umpire for every interstate game between 1893 and 1899, chairman of the Australian National Football Council and deputy vice-chairman of the SANFL. He stayed on in the latter position until his death at 86 in 1952.

Woods Street alongside Norwood Oval is named after JJ, and the club's Woods Medal for outstanding leadership and service honours the family name. But his brothers Ted, Julian and Charlie would admit that JJ was first when it came to Norwood, and Norwood came first for JJ.

- Norwood Management Committee 1896 - 1897
- Secretary Norwood 1902 - 1919

- Treasurer Norwood 1919 - 1922
- SANFL Delegate for Norwood 1902 - 1922
- Deputy Vice Chairman of SANFL 1923 - 1952
- ANFC Committee 1909 - 1919
- ANFC Chairman 1911 - 1914
- Umpire 1893 - 1899 (every interstate appointment)
- Life member of Australian National Football Council

The following is an article featuring John J Woods, as published in *The Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Thursday 13 July, 1922, page 6.

"Let Well Alone."

MR. J. J. WOODS ON THE LAWS OF THE GAME.

The name of Woods has been before football enthusiasts for long than many of them care to remember. Get an old Norwoodite talking of the old days, and before many minutes he will mention Jack Woods, one of a quartet of brilliant brothers, who donned the red and blue uniform. Jack Woods first played for Norwood in 1880 and assisted the club to many premierships in the 13 years he was an active playing member. He was a stocky, dashing footballer, and stripped at 12 st. 5 lb. He started on the wing with the redlegs, but it was as a follower that he came into prominence. For the last ten years, of his career, however, he played at centre.

When asked by a representative, of "The Express" how the game of his day compared with the present, Mr. Woods said:- "Today the game is much faster, and though I do not think present-day footballers are cleverer than the old-timers they are better conditioned. The faster and more strenuous games require greater stamina, but players like Les Merrigan (South), Vic Stephens (Adelaide), a brilliant rover and wonderfully clever little footballer, the MacKenzies, (Port Adelaide), Alf and Bill Bushby (South and Port), 'Goody' Hamilton, Ben Rischbieth, 'Bunny' Daly the incomparable, and Topsy Waldron (Norwood), could hold their own in any company. The men of today train harder than we did, and much better facilities are provided for them. Our training used to consist simply of a run round, a cold shower, and a rub down with a pair of flesh gloves. We would stand up on a form and one man would do 16 or 17 of us. Now the players are massaged thoroughly by trained masseurs, and have an army of attendants to look after them. I think, however, that the old timer-was a more solid type than the man of today."

When in 1893 he retired from active participation in the game, Mr. Woods for five years acted as central umpire. "Was umpiring more difficult in your days?" he was asked. "No," he replied. "The introduction of boundary umpires has made the game a great deal faster, and that, combined with alterations to the rules, because of which more is left to the discretion of the central official than was the case previously, has made umpiring more difficult. In my days little short marks and pushing behind were allowed. The latter was cut out in 1886 by mutual consent between Victoria and South Australia. Undoubtedly a weak spot in our game is that so much depends on the umpire, but the more we alter the rules and the more discretion we give to that official the harder we are going to make his task. I am a great believer in allowing the rules to stand as they are. The more we tinker with them the greater confusion will we create. The trouble is that once a rule is altered it takes a long time to educate the public. How many football supporters have even a working knowledge of

the laws of the game? If a rule be changed immediately an umpire puts it into operation, he is sure to be abused by a section of the crowd who are not aware of the alteration. I say 'Let well alone'. Our game is well balanced and highly spectacular. The rapid movement and the ever-changing fortunes of a well-fought match are peculiarly suitable to the volatile Australian temperament. The Australian game is a game of thrills and tense moments, that is what makes it so attractive."

Chris Brown, August 2022

Sources:

Trove - *The Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922), Thursday 13 July, 1922, page 6.

Redlegs Museum – Player profile, John J Woods