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OBITUARIES

Non-stop role model for Jewish participation in sport

DARYL COHEN

Sportsman and lawyer
12-7-1935 - 4-3-2016

Annette Nankin

Daryl Cohen, who became the first Victorian Jewish Olympian at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome and was a passionate advocate for Jewish sport, has died aged 80. His desire to see a Jewish football team represented at VAFA level was realised in 1957 with the formation of the Ajax football club.

Daryl Godfrey Cohen was born in Caulfield, the second of three children to Myra and Godfrey Cohen, whose forebears were Melbourne pioneers.

As a child he was a non-stop bundle of energy with a loud and infectious personality. You could always find him kicking or throwing a ball or coordinating an outdoor cricket or football match with his cousins and friends who lived in Kent Avenue, Elwood and close by. He needed noise and activity around him, to be doing something, to be bringing people together.

Flounder-spearfishing, boating and fishing were his greatest passions as a young boy and you could often find him decked out in his waders walking the shallow tides off Brighton Beach.

Following the tradition of his father and uncles, Daryl attended Wesley College and went on to Melbourne University to study law. He joined the Melbourne University Weightlifting Club, where he discovered his natural talent and passion for weights. It wasn't long before he was breaking records, representing Australia at the Maccabi Games in Israel and the Empire Games in Cardiff, as well as the Rome Olympics.

If something needed to be done, Daryl would always take it on and see it through. While playing for Wesley Old Collegians at the time, he passionately embarked on his desire to see a team of Jewish footballers affiliated with the VAFA. His tireless pursuit became a reality in 1957 with the first Ajax team to take the field. To see hundreds of young Jewish footballers proudly wearing the Ajax guernsey will always be his legacy.

While not a man known for public displays of affection, his fondest memories were those where he was hand in hand with Hannah, the love of his life. The two went on their first date the evening he made newspaper headlines when his car rolled down the steps onto a packed Bondi Beach. They complemented one another, with Daryl being loud, boisterous and spontaneous and Hannah calmer and more considered. Mar-



ried in 1959 and together for nearly 60 years, they made a formidable pair and raised four beautiful daughters. Activities would begin before 6am for the children and often included gym, spearfishing, tennis, football and training for sports carnivals. Daryl's girls were probably the only children at Mount Scopus College who were actively trained for the duck waddle, egg and spoon and sack races!

Together with his brother Trevor and their wives, Daryl established the law partnership Cohen & Cohen. From tiny offices in Bourke House, where Daryl's booming voice as he spoke through the intercom to Trevor of confidentialities could be heard not only in reception but out in the passage, it grew into a sub-

stantial practice.

They moved into purpose-built law offices in Russell Street in the early 1970s, where they would continue to practise for well over 20 years and eventually amalgamate to become Wisewould Cohens.

Daryl returned to his beloved Ajax in the 70s, and as Ajax "Coach of the Century" and later as

president was instrumental in seeing them reach A grade by the end of that decade. He contributed greatly to the Maccabi organisation as an athlete, mentor and role model and was a proud member of the Maccabi Hall of Fame.

In the years following his retirement from the law, Daryl was very involved in the administration of Godfreys, the family business founded by his father, and was meticulous in his management of family real estate.

He gave freely of his time to charitable causes. He was on the board of management of the Montefiore Homes and continued the family's lifelong association with the Melbourne Jewish Orphan And Children's Aid Society, an organisation

for which he was honorary solicitor for many years and which he later presided over following his father's death.

In 1990 his youngest daughter Donna was seriously injured in a car accident. This had a profound effect on him and he was to devote much of his energy and focus towards her rehabilitation.

"What will you do with your one wild and precious life?" was a question that Daryl often posed to his grandchildren. He certainly led by example. The loss to his family, the Melbourne community and the sports world is immeasurable.

Daryl passed away peacefully, surrounded by loving family who had flown in from all over the world to be at his bedside.

Although he had been a highly successful sportsman, lawyer and investor his morals, values and strength of character made him so much more than that. The love and support from family and friends near and far was a reflection of how he had touched so many on a personal level.

He is survived by Hannah, daughters Karen Gutman, Lorelle Krulis, Tania Smorgon and Donna Cohen and 10 grandchildren and by his sister Natalie Kotzman, brother Trevor and their families.

Edited from eulogies by his family