

1931-2014

Tom Hafey

TIGER TOUGH

The football world is mourning the loss of a coaching icon and one of the game's great men. **ADAM McNICOL**

Few people have had a greater impact on Australian Football than Thomas Stanley Raymond Hafey, who died on Monday, aged 82, of cancer. And although he played at the highest level, the renowned fitness fanatic will be remembered as one of the greatest coaches the game has seen.

Between 1966 and 1988, Hafey coached Richmond, Collingwood, Geelong and the Sydney Swans in 522 games. He won four premierships with the Tigers, led his clubs to 10 Grand Finals and recorded a winning percentage of 64.

A Collingwood supporter in his youth, Hafey grew up in East Malvern in Melbourne's inner-east, which was then in Richmond's metropolitan recruiting zone.

After he won two senior best and fairest awards with the East Malvern Football Club in 1951 and '52, the Tigers, aware that Fitzroy and the Magpies were keen on him, invited Hafey to training.

Although his relationship with Richmond would wax and wane at times, he developed a close bond with the club from that moment on.

A man who never drank alcohol nor smoked, Hafey played 67 games for the Tigers over five seasons, most of them in the back pocket. But after

spending a large part of the 1958 season on the bench, he came to the conclusion his time was up at the highest level.

He spent the 1959 season running around with a Richmond-based team in Melbourne's amateur competition, then accepted the position as playing-coach of Goulburn Valley League club Shepparton.

Hafey led the Maroons for six seasons and took great pride in pushing his players to their physical limits. Under his guidance, Shepparton made four Grand Finals and won a hat-trick of flags in his last three years there.



Few people have had a greater impact

Hafey kept in contact with Richmond during that time, scouting potential players for the club. And when Tigers coach Len Smith suffered health problems during the 1965 season and had to relinquish his position, Hafey's impressive bush coaching record saw him lured back to the Punt Road Oval. At the age of



HOT AND STRONG:
A teetotaler, Tom Hafey liked nothing better than a cup of tea.

34, he was appointed Richmond's senior coach.

Not in their wildest dreams could the Tigers' powerbrokers have imagined how successful Hafey's coaching tenure would be.

By ensuring his players were fit and by using a simple game-plan that can best be described as long kicks to mercurial centre half-forward Royce Hart, Hafey led Richmond to a premiership in just his second season back at the club.

With an array of other brilliant players at his disposal, including Kevin Bartlett, Ian Stewart, Francis Bourke and Dick Clay, Hafey led the Tigers to another flag in 1969, then back-to-back premierships in 1973 and '74. Ever the teetotaler, he celebrated his successes by drinking cups of tea.

But his relationship with Richmond's committee, namely the godfather of the club, Graeme Richmond, broke down after the 1976 season. Hafey quit the Tigers and headed to one of the club's arch enemies, Collingwood.

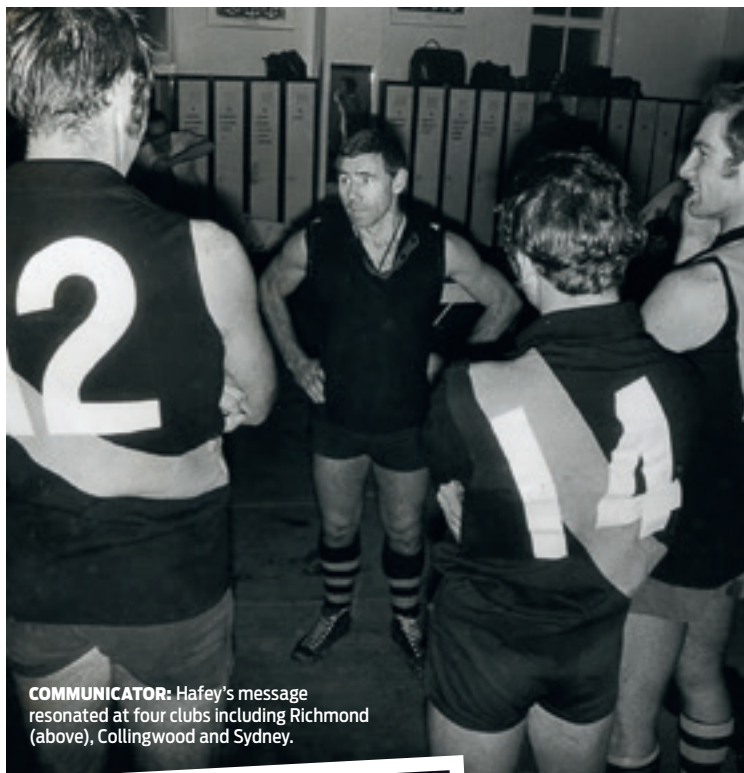
By then known as 'T-shirt Tommy', due to his penchant for wearing T-shirts regardless of the weather, he led the Magpies to five Grand Finals – the same number he took Richmond to. Yet he was heartbroken on each occasion.

In 1977, he almost performed a miracle, leading a Collingwood side that had finished on the bottom of the ladder the previous year all the way to the last Saturday in September. But after leading North Melbourne by 27 points at three-quarter time, the Magpies were overrun in the final term and the game ended in a draw. The Kangaroos then easily won the replay.

The rest of Hafey's time at Collingwood played out in a similar way. He was continually able to get his teams to the pointy end of the season, but they faltered again and again when it mattered most.

Hafey's Magpies lost the 1979 and '81 Grand Finals to Carlton and, most galling of all for the former Tiger, were thrashed in the 1980 decider by Richmond.

Collingwood slumped in 1982 and Hafey was sacked, yet he picked himself up off the canvas again, soon winning the position as Geelong's



COMMUNICATOR: Hafey's message resonated at four clubs including Richmond (above), Collingwood and Sydney.



He led the Magpies to five Grand Finals – the same number he took Richmond to

senior coach. His time at the Cattery was unsuccessful, but he never lost faith in his methods.

In late 1985, he found himself back in business when he took over as boss of the reinvigorated, and then privately owned, Sydney Swans.

With the VFL's highest-paid squad of players to pick from, a group that included star midfielders Gerard Healy and Greg Williams

and high-flying forward Warwick Capper, Hafey took the Swans to the finals in 1986 and '87, yet his men floundered in September in both years.

Hafey left Sydney after the 1988 season. Although he was often mentioned as a candidate for other coaching jobs during the following decade, especially whenever Richmond found itself in turmoil, ►

TOM HAFEY BY THE NUMBERS

COACHING RECORD

RICHMOND 1966-76

248 games, 173 wins, 73 losses, 2 draws

COLLINGWOOD 1977-82

138 games, 89 wins, 47 losses, 2 draws

GEELONG 1983-85

66 games, 31 wins, 35 losses

SYDNEY 1986-88

70 games, 43 wins, 27 losses

OVERALL

GAMES	522
WINS	336
LOSSES	182
DRAW	4
WIN %	64
SEASONS	23

COACHING HONOURS

RICHMOND PREMIERSHIPS

1967, 1969, 1973, 1974

Richmond Team of the Century coach

PLAYING CAREER

RICHMOND 1953-58

67 games, 10 goals



which was often, Hafey never coached again.

However, the end of his coaching career didn't slow him down. He became a gifted public speaker, inspiring thousands of school children around the nation with his messages about being active and dreaming big.

Even as Hafey entered his 80s, keeping fit remained an obsession. He rose every morning at 5.20am and went for a run, a swim in Port Phillip Bay, and did an inordinate number of push-ups and sit-ups. Before his illness, he could have been mistaken for being 20 years younger than he was.

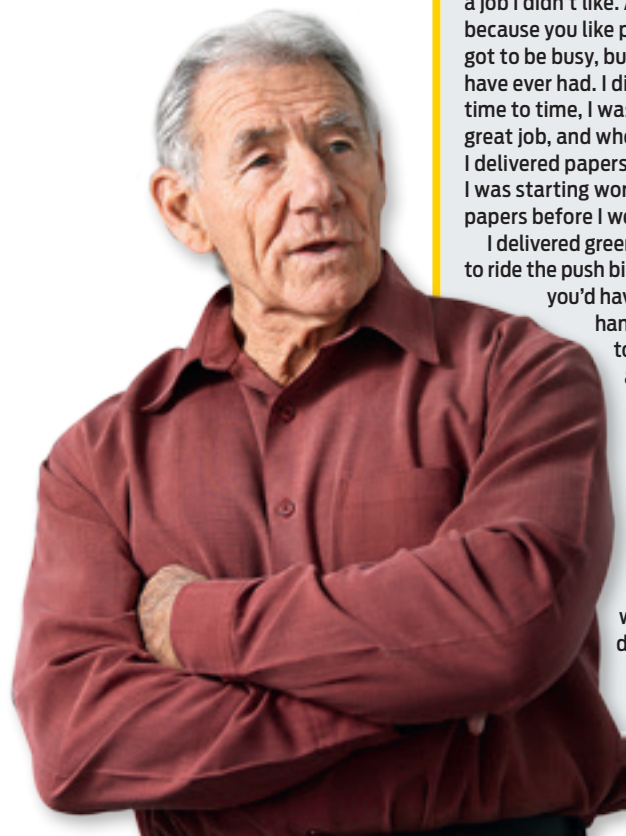
Something that warmed Hafey's heart was his reconciliation with Richmond during his later years. He was welcomed back into the Tiger fold, with the Tommy Hafey Club, which financially supports Richmond and its past players, founded in his honour.

The recipient of an MBE in 1981, Hafey was part of the inaugural intake into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 1996. He was named coach of Richmond's Team of the Century in 1998 and was named an 'Immortal' by the club in 2003.

His death will be felt throughout football, but it will resonate most at the Tigers, who have truly lost one of their own.

Hafey is survived by his wife Maureen and his daughters Rhonda, Karen and Jo. 📧

🐦 @AFL_AdamMcNicol



A SIMPLE MESSAGE



Tom Hafey's philosophy on life was simple: treat everyone equal, work hard and love your family. Fittingly, this extract from *The Tigers: A Proud History of a Great Club* by Rhett Bartlett, sums up his attitude.

Every day's a great day; if you don't believe me, try missing one. I say that all the time now. So many people have got a grouch on the world, got a terrible attitude. I just think you're dead for a long time, why don't you enjoy what you're doing?

When I come to think of my life, I never had a job I didn't like. And that just comes about because you like people and like working. You've got to be busy, busy, busy, busy, like every job I have ever had. I did leave the printing trade from time to time, I was a brickie's labourer, it was a great job, and when I delivered papers I loved it. I delivered papers for five years, even when I was starting work I would still go in and deliver papers before I went to work, it was a great job.

I delivered green groceries, because you used to ride the push bike on a Saturday morning and you'd have the banana box between the handlebars. You've got to do things to make dollars. I sold the papers after school from time to time. But I always did two out of the three paper rounds from around when I was 11 or 12 to the time I was a second year apprentice (16 or 17).

I had a milk bar in Bridge Road, Richmond. Loved the milk bar, even though we worked 12-14 hours a day, seven days a week.

It was great; I met a lot of lovely people, made a lot of

friends. I think being very family is a big help, you've got a beautiful loving family and very close, I think that's lovely.

You only get out what you put in. You learn so much about football. Look, there's no race, colour, creed in a football or netball club.

There's no rule for the rich or rule for the poor in a football or netball club. It doesn't matter what school you went to, what car you drive, or how big the house you live in is, when you get down to the ground everybody is an equal.

The camaraderie, the respect, and the getting to know the life disciplines, whether you're a youngster, older folk, parents, grandparents, there's history and tradition that comes from football clubs that is so special and I don't think people understand that.

I've just finished reading 'Polly' Farmer's book. He said, even though he was a boy from an orphanage, and he loved the orphanage:

'When I got down to the football club, it was like the home I never had'. Isn't that a lovely way of putting it.



The Tigers: A Proud History of a Great Club by Rhett Bartlett. Published by Slattery Media Group. RRP \$54.95. Available from Richmond Football Club and via slatterymedia.com