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## Ross "Nut" Hazel Memorial League Game

One of Barcaldine's most loved and respected footballers will be honoured in a memorial game to be played at this year's Tree of Knowledge Festival over the May Day long weekend.

Ross "Nut" Hazel was only in his forties when he recently passed away and this year his footy mates, coaches and managers from the two clubs he played for throughout his football career, will return to Barcaldine to take to the field in his memory in a Golden Oldies league game.

According to former team member, cousin and mate, Parker Dancey, "Nut was just one big mass of a gorilla! He had big bushy eyebrows like Mal Meninga and even though he was a massive man he never harmed anyone. Everyone loved him, he was unreal, just an all time inspiration to everyone."

"Nut was not only a great footballer, but a great bloke," says Parker and for this reason he has teamed up with David Kerrigan and Geoff Rafter, also a former team member, to organise the Ross "Nut" Hazel Memorial to be held on Sunday, May 2 as part of the Festival's rugby league line up.

Throughout his football career, Nut was a highly respected member of both the Barcaldine and Sarina clubs and the organisers are expecting a huge showing of both Sarina and Barcaldine "old boys" for the game

According to Parker, Nut was one of those fellas who did it tough in life but lived it to the maximum.

At an early age he lost both his mother and father and with the help of an aunt took on much of the responsibility of raising his siblings.

At a young age he found a love of and flair for football and impressed from the moment he laced up his boots and stepped onto the paddock.

He played for Barcaldine though the junior ranks going straight from the Under 12 side into the infamous Under 16 team.

This team in the late 70's, under coach, Frank Lawson, reigned supreme in the central west boasting a run of never losing a game in four years.

A tribute to this will be paid to Frank Lawson who has been asked to kick off the Nut Hazel Memorial game.

Under Lawson, Nut played on the wing, while off the field he also excelled as a sprinter.

One year he earned a place in the 100m final in Brisbane, running third in front of the Queen and earning the respect of his team mates when he returned to Barcaldine to take to the field for their game the next day.

Nut, along with a number of other Barcy boys including, Parker Dancey, Selwyn Fogarty and Nut's two other brothers, was poached straight from the Barcy Under 16 side by Alf Abdullah to join the Sarina club. Alf had married Barcy girl and Nut's aunty, Maisey Thompson.

"A lot of fellas from this area went up there over the years," says Parker Dancey.

“Alf was heavily involved with the Sarina club and a big boss with the railway, to get a job on the maintenance gang all you had to do was turn up wearing footy gear and you had a job as long as you played football for Sarina..

“Frank Lawson often used to complain that he made all the footballers and Alf pinched them.”

At Sarina Nut went on to play in the Queensland Under 18 representative side and got a number of offers from Sydney clubs, in particular from the old Newtown Club where he was offered to board with multi-millionaire, John Shillingworth, but Nut declined saying he didn't know anyone down there.

He stayed with Sarina and over the years he moved to the front row and played alongside other former Sarina greats such as Dale Shearer and Martin Bellah.

In 1983, Nut was part of the winning team which finally won a premiership for the club after 34 years of drought.

In all he played first grade for Sarina for over ten years and was honoured by life membership.

So highly thought of in the Sarina Club, around 30 of Nut's former team mates and friends, including the man who coaxed him north, Alf Abdullah, are expected to make the trip to Barcaldine .

“Martin Bellah, Dale Shearer and Kevin Campion are all making an effort to get out here for the memorial game,” says Parker.

Parker himself, sidelined by every footballer's nightmare, crook knees, will coach the Barcaldine side.

“Fellas like Kevin Alexander, the Lawrence boys, Steven Imhoff, Paddy Arthur, John Anderson and Chris Currier who captained the Sarina sides that Nut played in, are coming from far and wide to run onto the field for Nut,” says Parker.

The game will be played according to NRL Golden Oldies rules and Parker is hoping that it will become a regular event every year.

“We are looking at taking a team to Sarina next year to return the favour and hopefully it will keep going.”

“In many ways it has given us a good reason to have one hell of a reunion,” he says.

No doubt the stories and the beers will flow as a host of activities for the “old boys” have been organised to coincide and build on Festival events over the weekend.

The Golden Oldies game will be just one of many games as Barcaldine sees a feast of football action as part of the Festival on Sunday afternoon, May 2.

All age groups of the junior divisions will be played prior to the Nut Hazel Memorial which will act as a curtain raiser for the main game between Winton and Barcaldine.

The showgrounds is the place to be this Tree of Knowledge Festival to catch up with Barcy's league stars of the past and the future.

For more information visit the website [www.treeofknowledge.com.au](http://www.treeofknowledge.com.au) or contact 46515636