Heroes honoured

DESSERT SPORTS

Dale Fletcher
Steve Menzies

ANOTHER 10 local sporting identities were added to the League of Champions honour roll on Saturday night at the O’Connor Club.

John Bell, Geoff Curtis, Matt Gadsby, Lillian (Billie) Hill, Max Horton, Lyel Kempster, Hamish McDonald, Reg Preece, Christine Trefry and David Yeaman were honoured at the induction ceremony.

A clearly emotional John Bell said: “This is the best moment of my sporting life.”

Desert Sports Foundation chairman Murray Stewart was thrilled with the evening which followed the Centralian Advocate Sports History Expo.

Stewart said: “It was a marvellous day. Such a special day.”

“I look forward to the Centralian Advocate Sports History Expo becoming bigger and better next year when another 10 people will be inducted to the Desert Sports Promotion League of Champions.”

“I think the 10 this year totally deserve their honour.”

Bell ran the May Day Mile for 31 years from 1972-2002, winning an amazing 28 times, and also ran longer distances. Bell, Geoff Curtis and the marathon and won the NT 100 mile race in 1984, finishing fourth in two Australian titles as a swimmer. He was also an accomplished Speedway rider and finished fourth in two Australian titles as a swimmer.

Curtis won the first Fink Desert Race in 1976 and two more in 1978 and 1980. He also raced the famous Baja 1000 mile desert race with teammates and as a warm-up the weekend before raced and finished the 400 mile Vegas to Reno Desert Race. He was also an accomplished Speedway rider and finished fourth in two Australian titles as a swimmer.

Gadsby had a career cut short due to injury but became the first Territorian to be selected in a full Australian Track and Field team after winning the under-18 shot put at the national championship in 1992. He has numerous other championship wins and the NT Junior Sportsman and Sportsperson of the Year in 1989. He also became a mentor and coach to Hamish MacDonald.

Hill reached international competition in darts, often in partnership with 2010 induction inductee Ivy Hampton, and represented the NT in the Australian Championships for many years, winning numerous trophies. But she was more than a player as she served as the president of the association and formed the first junior training session in the mid-80s, helping many young players to learn the sport and watching them become top players in the year to come.

Horton was Alice Springs Tennis Association president from 1975-80 and Foundation president of Tennis NT from 1980-2000. He was a Councillor for Tennis Australia from 1981-2000 and its delegate to the International Tennis Federation and the official representative of Tennis Australia at the French Open, Wimbledon, Davis Cup, Fed Cup and at the US Open.

Kempster was a tireless sportsman in the Territory and in the 1960s he was responsible for revitalising competition in Alice Springs when baseball was played at Anzac Oval. It was during this period that his somewhat controversial vision for an NT state field in Alice Springs that became a reality, but only after navigating the tricky political arena.

Yeaman has had a varied sporting career in sports such as basketball, hockey, Australian Rules, netball and horse racing — as a bookmaker. He turned his talent to sports administration including serving as the West Football Club president for nine years and for the past 18 years with the NT Netball Association, including a term as president, which led to being on the NT Netball Hall of Fame since 1995 and a delegate to Netball Australia since 1996.

David Yeaman, Ruth Lacanau (for Lillian Hill), John Bell, Hamish McDonald, Kylie Preece, Bill Lowe (for Christine Trefry), Naomi Preece, Tony Jennison (for Max Horton), Ian Bruce (for Lyel Kempster), Terry Gadsby (for Matt Gadsby) and Geoff Curtis.

Registration down at Alice Plaza. Monday 15th August - Friday 19th August.