



GREY MORRIS PICKS HIS

TOP 50 TERRITORY SPORTS PEOPLE OF ALL TIME

TERRITORY sport with all of its passion and excitement built up over more than a century has produced the very best of the best.

Sportsmen and women who can combine skill with commitment, focus and a deep seated passion

and desire to succeed.

This is the best 50 Territory sportspeople in my time and well before I started as a sportswriter with the Northern Territory News almost a quarter of a century ago.

When NT News editor Matt

Williams suggested _ with my right arm twisted up my back _ that I compile a Top 50 article on all the greats of Territory sport the task seemed relatively simple _ until now.

Some may disagree, others will agree and the people in

between will agree to disagree with my selections.

That is the path you take when you are picking the best in any sport, let alone combining them all and coming up with a top 50.

50: Ian Van Der Wal (swimming)

Van Der Wal swam for Australia at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and the Pan Pacific Games a year later when he won a silver medal. He shared the pool with greats like Ian Thorpe, Michael Klim and Grant Hackett and deserves at least a top 50 berth.

49: Ivy Hampton (Darts)

Ivy Hampton was born at McLaren Station, about 80km south of Tennant Creek. I don't know if Ivy could throw a dart that far, or how accurate she would have been. But she was part of the 1980 Pacific Cup-winning national team, where she won the singles and pairs and she represented Australia in the esteemed Winmau Ladies' Masters in England.

48: Steven Bowditch (Squash)

The forgotten man of Territory sport, Bowditch rose to No.16 in the world in the highly competitive sport of squash when stars like Geoff Hunt were around in the mid 1980s. Bowditch took up squash as an 11-year-old and won the NT Open title aged just 15. A member of Squash Australia's prestigious Hall of Fame, Bowditch was runner-up to Pakistan great Jahangir Khan in the richest tournament on the professional tour at the time, the 1985 Drakkar North American Squash Open.

47: Frank Stokes (Rugby League)

Spotted by then Manly coach Bob Fulton when his Sea Eagles played an end-of-season trip in Darwin, Stokes lit up the NSW Rugby League competition with his evasive skills and leg speed. He scored 17 tries for Manly in 51 games, most of them as a winger, though he did play at fullback and five-eighth where he also excelled.

46: Emma Kraft (Athletics)

The Centralian distance runner has dominated the sport in the Red Centre, going on to represent Australia in mountain running teams in 2013, '14 and '17, the same year she finished a creditable sixth in the XTerra Trail Run world titles. A City2Surf winner through the streets of Darwin, Kraft is one of Alice Springs' greatest sporting products.

45: Ralph Wiese (Cricket)

A giant of the game of cricket since arriving in Darwin on a teaching assignment in the early 1960s, Wiese was the greatest batsman of his time, making big scores for Darwin district

club Waratah and Darwin representative side at the former Calder Shield intertown tournaments almost at will.

44: Bob Holt (Speedway)

A photo of Bob Holt's car flying high into the night sky during a Sydney Showground feature race in 1963 told a lot about the Katherine fuel distributor. Clad in shorts and a sleeveless shirt, Holt survived the mighty shunt and 35 years later _ older, wiser and still crazy _ he won the national speedcar title at Darwin's Northline Speedway.

43: Reuben Cooper Sr (Australian Football)

This man was a sporting colossus of his time and we are talking about the first 40 years of the 1900s. Blessed with exquisite skills and boundless courage, Cooper was the foreunner to indigenous footballers dominating the game in Australia's Top End and could even have represented Australia at swimming, so talented was he.

42: Mark Hickman (Hockey)

One of the best goalkeepers in the tough world of hockey that Australia has produced. A product of the powerful Darwin Hockey Association, the man they called "Hicko" played an integral part in snapping a gold medal drought for the Australian Kookaburras at the 2004 Athen Olympics that had stretched back to this country's first involvement at the Games in 1956.

41: Luis Casimiro (Soccer)

A long-term presence in Darwin soccer through the 1970s, '80s and '90s, Casimiro had all the skills, a huge appetite for goals and the round ball game. He could delight his own fans and upset rival supporters by controlling the ball with both feet and never backing down from an on-field confrontation with opponents or referees.

40: Greg Chan (Clay Target Shooting)

"Channy" coached the Australian clay target shooting team for 10 years from the mid 1990s and it was the Territorian's influence that brought out the best in Olympic gold medallists Michael Diamond, Russell Mark and Adam Vella. He travelled around the world for most of those 10 years and told everyone he was a Territory boy and always will be.

39: Shane Bannan (Cycling)

Bannan began coaching cyclists in 1986 after a riding career that included representing the NT at world junior titles and winning the 50km points title at the nationals. He was selected for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics but contracted glandular fever and was forced to withdraw. Bannan coached at the Northern Territory Institute of Sport before moving into the national program in 1987, filling the dual roles of Cycling Australia National Performance Director and the Australian Institute of Sport's Head Cycling Coach.

38: David Ross (Rugby Union/Aust Football/ Rugby League)

David Ross did it all as a young gun in three different sporting codes. He was an All-Australian under-15 rugby league player, an Australian Affiliate (rugby union) rep in 1982, a junior Wallaby in 1984 and an All-Australian Teal Cup player in 1983.

37: William (Nungah) AhMat (Aust Football/Rugby League)

'Nungah' was a star midfielder with the powerful Darwin Buffaloes through the 1960s and '70s and a superb centre with Brothers Rugby League club in the same period. He represented the NT in both codes with his hardness and superb hand skills.

36: Clive Baxter (Speedway)

This man won a national Formula 500 title as a disabled athlete after a motocross accident left him wheelchair bound. A rider and driver of tremendous skill, he added the Northern Territory, Western Australian and South Australian F500 titles to his growing list of achievements. Still held in high regard three decades after his retirement, Baxter is the first _ and only _ disabled competitor to win an Australian speedway title.

35: Boyd Scully (Boxing)

If there is a person across the Northern Territory with more passion for the sport of boxing than the late Boyd Scully, I would love to meet them. Boxing NT's president for 12 years, an ambassador for Boxing Australia and a coach at the Oceania Games and national championships, the kid who learned his craft at the old police paddock in the Darwin suburb of Stuart Park will forever be an icon for boxing.

34: Rebecca Voukolous (Tenpin bowling)

It is not what Voukolous has done in the complex world of tenpin bowling, it's what she has not and that is very little. Voukolous has competed at national championship level since 1999 in a glittering career that includes Australian Masters title wins and representing her country at World Cup level.

33: Paul Shiers (Horseracing)

The master of the apprentices, jockey Paul Shiers' riding skills have elevated him to the top of a school of excellence in Northern Territory racing. Nine Darwin Guineas and four NT Derby winners are testimony to his ability to get the best out of his mounts.

32: Des Abbott (Hockey)

The first indigenous male to represent Australia at the Olympic Games in field hockey, Abbott terrorised international defences with his great pace and huge appetite for goals. A bronze medallist at the 2008 Olympics and a three-time Champions Trophy gold medallist with the Kookaburras, Abbott's hockey bloodlines came from his uncle Joe Daby.

31: Phil de la Cruz (Rugby League)

A legend in Darwin rugby league, de la Cruz was a star with Wallabies, Nightcliff, RSL and Northern Suburbs throughout the 1960s and '70s. He captained the NT against the visiting French in 1964 with the strength of a buffalo and the skills of a gazelle.

30: Craig Leach (Rugby Union)

Leach played the role of fly half to perfection in an NT Rugby Union playing career that took him to the elite level in club and representative rugby. A 300-plus game player with Palmerston who captained the Northern Territory against Scotland in the prime of his career, Leach was one of the very best at his trade.

29: David Bates (Horseracing)

A 19-time winner of the jockey's premiership at Fannie Bay Racecourse, Bates was the essence of a horseman, both in riding and training them for short or long distance races. A three-time Darwin Cup winner, one as a trainer-jockey when he rode Lanson to victory almost bareback when the saddle slipped, Bates also has four Palmerston Sprints and two Alice Springs Cups to his name.

28: Teri Cubillo (Softball)

An extraordinary player with the Rebels and Tracy Village, Cubillo's skill and workrate work at shortstop and later as a catcher made her one of Territory softball's most recognisable figures through three decades of Territory sport.

27: Don Bonson Sr (Australian Football)

Don Bonson Sr was a big contributor to the sport of Australian football through the 1930s when he won two league best and fairest awards while plying his trade with the Darwin Buffaloes and was their secretary-treasurer from 1933-35. A league and Buffaloes life member, he was the patriarch of the skilful Bonson sporting family.

26: Stephen Holt (Hockey)

They called him "Shaggy" because of his laconic approach to life and sport, but once he stepped on to a hockey field Stephen Holt was all business. A clever, smart thinking defender, he won a bronze medal for Australia at Sydney 2000 and Commonwealth Games gold with the Kookaburras in 1998.

25: Mark Motlop (Australian Football)

The patriarch of the extraordinary Motlop sporting dynasty since the death of his father Chico, Mark Motlop was a league and club best and fairest winner with Nightcliff and later played at Wanderers and Southern Districts where he was the first NTFL player to reach 300 games. Continued to give back to the game he loves with coaching stints at Districts _ where he won the club's first premiership _ Wanderers and Darwin.

24: James Swan (Boxing)

"Swanny" won bronze medals in the bantamweight division at the 1994 and '98 Commonwealth Games and fought for Australia at the 1996 and 2000 Olympics. Short in stature but capable of hitting hard with both hands, Swan was inducted into the NT's Hall of Champions in 2014.

23: Maisie Austin (Basketball)

The first woman to be elected president of the Darwin Basketball Association and NT Basketball Association, Austin's involvement in Territory sport as a player, referee and administrator knows no bounds. She was also the first Territory woman to be nationally accredited as a Level 2 basketball coach and was chairperson of the inaugural Arafura Games in 1991.