

# OAM Recipient's Lifelong Commitment Recognised – Terry Blake

Muswellbrook had its own Queen's Birthday Award recipient when Terry Blake received an Order of Australia (OAM) for his services to polocrosse.

Terry Blake 74, of Rosebrook, Muswellbrook achieved this high accolade due to his service to polocrosse through a range of administrative roles and as a coach and umpire.

Journalist, Colleen O'Sullivan spoke to him about the top honour.

Terry has taken his passion for horses and polocrosse, which began in Muswellbrook 50 years ago, to the highest levels of the sport. He was a member of the International Polocrosse Council from 1976 to 1996, a council member of the Polocrosse Association of Australia from 1967 to 2000, Chief Umpire from 1975 to 2000 and Australian Selector and Coach from 1977 to 1991. Needless to say Terry's a Life Member of the Australian Association and the Polocrosse Association of NSW of which he was president for 28 years.

Terry first heard about polocrosse at the age of 25 when he came across a rulebook for the game. "Frank (his brother) picked up a rulebook and I began reading that and made a few enquiries. I heard that they'd started playing in Maitland and Singleton then came back to start up the Muswellbrook Polocrosse Association". Terry is one of only three original players; the others are Judy Simpson and Bruce Parkinson. He has been President of the Muswellbrook Polocrosse Club since 1958 and President of the Hunter Valley Polocrosse Association since 1963.

Since the OAM was announced, Terry has taken numerous calls from well-wishers and the media. "It has been very surprising all the calls coming in from people who have heard about the award, especially the number from interstate," he said. Terry has his suspicions about who exactly nominated him for the award and lists as a possibility the Polocrosse Association of Australia President and then maybe a local polocrosse person. Realistically, it could be a great number of people involved in the sport both in Australia and overseas.

Terry lists the opportunity to travel overseas coaching the Australian team in Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe as highlights of his time in the sport. He was also part of a team that put on a polocrosse exhibition in China. "They took great interest in it. I would not be surprised if they are in the next titles," Terry said. At the moment polocrosse is played in 14 countries around the world. Some of these countries, such as France and Holland are classified as beginners and not classed in the top barrack alongside Australia.



*Terry Blake (right) was inducted to the Polocrosse Wall of Fame at the Ridley Polocrosse World Cup at Warwick, April 2007. Terry is pictured with the other Wall of Fame inductees, Joy Poole and John Thompson. Photo: Narelle Wockner*

Terry bred 24 Australian Stock Horses that competed at the National Polocrosse titles held at Werribee in Victoria and supplied horses for the Polocrosse World Cup recently at Warwick, Queensland.

He also attended the World Cup in Warwick earlier this year where teams from America, South Africa, Canada, France and New Zealand competed against Australia. "It is terrific up there. You get to see different styles of the game played by the Americans and South Africans. That has to do with the Thoroughbred horses they play on," Terry said. In comparison to other countries Australia has its own Stock Horse at its disposal.

"In the Australian Stock Horse Society there'd be more polocrosse horses registered than any other," Terry said. His love of the Australian Stock Horse is evident in the way Terry describes the process of training such a horse for polocrosse. "If the horse is seasoned to the game, educated and fit it is like a top athlete," he said.

The Australian Stock Horses Terry has bred have been named champions at shows in most Australian capital cities. He was also a Foundation Member of The Australian Stock Horse Society in 1971 and has been President of the Hunter Branch of The Australian Stock Horse Society for many years.

Another achievement which Terry is particularly proud of is the part he played in revamping the polocrosse rulebook. This occurred when he was Chief Umpire of Australian Polocrosse. Other horse sports such as campdrafting have also taken Terry's interest over the years.

Terry has also been a member of the Upper Hunter Show Committee for many years and Ringmaster for about 12 years. He was also an Instructor, Secretary and Patron of the Muswellbrook Pony Club. 🐾

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