

DUBBO CYCLE CLUB HERITAGE



Dubbo Bicycle Club on the steps of the Court House 1901 - Dubbo, NSW
Image is from the collections of the State Library of New South Wales.



Victoria Park, Darling St Dubbo
A.B.N. 801 492 731 94

CYCLING NSW HERITAGE INFORMATION

Dubbo's Penny Farthing Champion George Roth who was a top class rider for Dubbo in the first Western Division Championships in the 1880s. He was also the first Dubbo rider on Pneumatic Tyres and the Safety Bicycle; and continued his success at some of Australia's Top Carnivals. Roth was he was involved when the track moved to Victoria Park in the 1890 - and amazingly he was believed to be involved in initial discussion for the big 1940 track upgrade.

The Papers reported Roth making a very grand return to Dubbo in his Rolls Royce in the mid 1930's for the Cities Celebrations when it was believed he used his prominence in the community to suggest an upgrade to the Cycle Track. This Upgrade was to be quite extensive with Dubbo inviting the great Sir Hubert Opperman to city to inspect the new track before its official opening in 1940.

The Dubbo cycling track was originally at the Agricultural Show Grounds but a huge effort was made to upgrade the facility by the Bicycle club and the council after visiting cyclists at the 1888 and 1889 Annual Dubbo Bicycle Club Carnival complained the track was not up to standard.

Having joined the NSWCU in the first year of operation (1883/4) the Dubbo Bicycle Club and the city had a very proud cycling heritage and urgently organized to fix the venue to remain an important centre for the sport in the colony.

Lead by Honourable Secretary Dal Campbell the Club and Council unbelievably moved the cycle track from the Showground to the Cricket Ground and then excited the cyclists across the colony by laying what was described in the Sydney Newspapers as a first class asphalt track.

This track was potentially was the 3rd asphalt track in the state, remembering at the time Sydney didn't have an Asphalt Track. In fact it was also promoted as the best Track in NSW in 1890 and drew riders from across the state to Dubbo's third annual carnival.

The track was that successful after the asphaltting in the 1890s that the government proclaimed the area an **Athletic Sports Ground - Gazette 4 November 1903 (3ha)** from the original 6 Dec 1867 Dedication Res for Recreation – Cricket Ground 10ac.

The Track would have to be the oldest track in Australia still used for state level competition. It would be the oldest track still functioning in the colony.

Mark Windsor

Chairman CNSW Heritage Commission.

THE BOY FROM DUBBO



Champion of the World 1920

Bob Spears - 8 August 1893 - 5 July 1950 (aged 56) died in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France

Australian Sporting Hall of Fame Cyclist and would have to be Dubbo's greatest sporting hero.

Bob Spears was universally accepted as Australia's first great international sprinter and often referred to as assisting greatly with putting Australia on the Cycling Map. Ranked as Dubbo's Greatest simply on his position in Australian Cycling and on the World Scene. Bob Spears proved him to be the first great sprinter Australia produced and probably among the first dozen in history.

Spears won his first race in Dubbo, New South Wales, at the age of 14. He started serious racing early in 1910. As far as Spears and his development on the local Dubbo Track – Well that Dubbo Track Culture is the main reason for Spears Career.

Young Robert Spears was more into running and footy (& playing cornet in the local brass-band) till his mum bought him a bike as a teenager. He soon after won a 14 mile road race at Narromine and most people say - "HE WAS ON HIS WAY". Well not really!! - As there is a lot of progress required between riding on a road around Narromine and winning a world title on the track in Europe.

Given Bobby Spears was a sprinter with a brilliant career on the Track, it would be the local Dubbo Cycling Track where this wonderful Australian Cyclist would be found and created.

For Spears loved track racing and as a 14 year old would spend all his time at the Dubbo Cycling Track. In fact the story is that the young Bobby Spears was frequently chased off the track as he would wait for the local champions to come out training and beat them all in sprints. He may have annoyed Dubbo's best riders of the time but obviously this approach developed his skills very quickly.

Of Course since the start of cycling in Australia the Dubbo Cycling was somewhat famous for its Social type Family Atmosphere; of which, the Track is at the core of this club characteristic. The track being the symbolic home of cycling in the district where doting Parents such as Mr and Mrs Spears were happy to let children spend their time.

There were no Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), New South Wales Institute of Sport (NSWIS) program when Bob Spears got into cycling; in fact there wasn't even an Amateur Club option for the young Spears in Dubbo then called "the town of bikes". He was straight into Pros (League of Wheelman racing) at 14 years of age, so it was the Local Community Track with "Come N Join-in" environment that not only allowed him to develop his skills so quickly but developed his love & respect for racing.



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The local track allowed him to be riding with quality senior riders such as Alfred Carrett. Who better to learn to respect racing from; old Alf Carrett would still be winning races in the Western NSW Region in the 1950's.

Alf Carrett (a holder of the Dubbo to Narromine record for some time) was the person who actually encouraged Bob's Parents to fast track his career by allowing the youngster to travelling interstate for further racing. Sure there was an underlining objective around Carrett involvement, who after talk to visiting cyclist Teddy Rodgers hatch a cunning plan to hit the bookies at Queensland's Maryborough and Rockhampton Wheelraces.

This was certainly learning in the deep end, but it was very effective, as in 2 years, young Bob Spears was the Australian 5 mile Champion and his path was set to become the world's number 1 sprinter at the Antwerp World Pro Championships in August 1920.

So the Question is - Was this rapid development of Bob Spears cycling skills on the Dubbo Track with these local senior champions that important to his career success? The answer is not only Yes!! But it was essential for his amazing career!! - as Bob Spears had only 5 years to develop from a 14yr old having his first race, to an international level rider due to upcoming World War.

A young Bob Spears secured a professional contract to race the World 6 day circuit prior to WW1, while other riders such as talented young Bathurst Champion R G Honeyman, who Spears raced in the International Sydney 6 day would be drafted into the 7th Light Horse Regiment and never return from Europe.

To summarise his career, the first win of importance was in Rockhampton, Queensland, in the wheelrace. At the eight hours day sports in Sydney, he won the double - the one and two mile events. Near the end of December he visited South Australia and was successful in the lap dash, half mile, and finished second in the two mile wheelrace. That season, Bob won the half and one mile championships of NSW. The following year, he showed great improvement to win the five mile championships of Australia.

Early in 1913, he finished second in a six-day race in Sydney and won a similar event in Melbourne. At the end of the 1913 season he travelled to America and after a successful opening, he demonstrated his class by winning the five mile championship of Vailsburg, and with Joe Fogler, won the team sprint race. In 1914 he won numerous match races and won the three mile national championship of America. During the 1918 season he won 27 races to win the all-round championship of America.

Bob went to Europe in 1919 and caused a sensation by decisively defeating all the European champions. During the trip, he won 19 races and won the six day race. He was soon recognised as the fastest sprinter in the world. At the end of the European season, Bob came back to Australia and rode part of the season in Sydney, winning several handicaps, including the golden wheelrace, and the six scratch races he entered. He travelled back to Europe for the 1920 season, winning the Grand Prix of Paris. Then came his victory in the world's sprint championship. The starters in the final were Spears, Bailey from England, and Kauffmann from Switzerland. Bob won by over a length from Kauffmann. He finished second in 1921 and 1922. He will always be remembered throughout the world as one of cycling's finest sprinters in cycling's golden era.