

The Pioneering Roygirls of 2015—a legend is born

By David Leydon

After some planning and quick development in late 2014, the Fitzroy Board made the momentous decision to field a Fitzroy Women's team for the first time in the 2015 season.

A unique and enduring partnership was formed with Australian Catholic University and the mighty Roygirls took to the field as Fitzroy-ACU for their first official game on Sunday 19 April, 2015 at Brunswick Street Oval against a well-established team from Chirnside Park.

An excited crowd of friends, family and supporters cheered our newest team on all day and a great smother, superb handballs and big tackles all met with thunderous applause.

In the end, the Roygirls only kicked a solitary point and lost that first game by 69 points against an opposition with far more experience.

None of that mattered however, as what started out as a dream – to put a Fitzroy women's team on the ground wearing the famous guernsey and singing the much loved theme song – became a reality. The dream has gone from strength to strength in the years that have followed.

A look back at the players who were judged best afield in that first game includes the names Sarah Lynas, Alexa Madden, Liz Olney and Tess Young – all of whom are still playing at the club in 2024, as indeed are a number of others from the team of 2015.

In a stellar first year, Alexa Madden was named in the best players a staggering 9 times in 12 games. What a champion of our club Lex has been since day one. The Roygirls had a wonderful inaugural year finishing a respectable fifth on the ladder with some great wins over Hallam (twice) and Melbourne University.

Who were the ground-breaking original Roygirls of 2015?

Check out this list of names: Christina Atkinson, Lauren Atkinson, Alice Batterton, Sonia Bayley, Claudia Bell, Indi Benjamin, Michelle Booth, Hannah Coffey, Remy Coleman, Tara Degraft-Hayford, Elizabeth Derrick, Helen Dickinson, Claire Forbes, Kristy Freeman, Colleen Fyfe, Maggie Gilder, Jane Gibson, Hillary Grubb, Matilda Hemming, Bonnie Johnson, Sarah Lynas, Alice Mackinnon, Alexa Madden, Bianca Maes, Gemma Minuz, Lucinda Murphy, Janine O'Flynn, Elizabeth Olney, Bethany Rennes, Angela Richards, Laura Royce, Larissa Sahyoune, Georgina Steggall, Grace Wilkinson, Tess Young and Amelia Zehnirith.

The legacy of these pioneering players has been immense as the team, in its second year in 2016, played in a Grand Final and have had a number of finals appearances since including another Grand Final in 2022.

Liz, Luci and Lex all clocked up their 100 game milestones in 2023, with Lauren Atkinson joining this exclusive club early this season - a wonderful achievement.

These are the girls from old Fitzroy forever!