

FOSTERING – MORE THAN A – PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Cricketing is a tradition for the Giles family. Aged five, Stuart Giles was in his first set of whites and was his father's shadow as he coached a junior team at the Ringwood Cricket Club. By the time Stuart was 16 years old he already had a successful junior career and set a club games record.

Having topped both the competition batting and bowling averages in his final year as a junior cricketer, Stuart debuted for Ringwood First XI in his first year out of high school after captaining the Victorian under 19s schoolboys team. Stuart and his father (himself a former Ringwood player, junior coach, administrator and now life member) remain connected to the current Premier Cricket titleholders as members of their Ringwood President's XI coterie group. Maintaining the passion, Stuart's son Sam's own career is underway further north with the University of Queensland Club.

At the end of his teens, Stuart felt despite possessing a good cricketing brain and a fiercely competitive streak, he needed to make his education the priority. He knew that to be an international cricketer he would have to consider going abroad straight from school but he didn't follow the dream, although other more talented members of that same Under 19 school boys team such as Shane Warne did

–and the rest as they say is cricketing history. Stuart had other goals though. He went straight to university, which would eventually lead him to becoming a ground-breaking innovator and entrepreneurial pharmacist.

'I looked forward to getting my degree and then traveling, and hopefully playing one day in the UK,' Stuart says positively from Epic Pharmacy headquarters in Brisbane. He continued to play cricket at Ringwood and when Yorkshire County player Michael Foster joined them for a season, the two men quickly became buddies thanks to their shared love of the game. The following year when Michael's home club, Great Preston Cricket Club (GPCC) was looking for an international player, Stuart knew it was his time, 'I'd finished my degree and the planets aligned and I went in 1994 and again in 1997.'



MATTHEW IN ACTION

There was a return to the UK for another season in the offing for 1998, but a slight hiccup changed all that for Stuart. He met the love of his life Cathie Reid, also a pharmacist. They had a whirlwind start to an epic romance. Cathie's best friend had advised her Stuart was a cricketer, having watched him play overseas but Cathie wasn't necessarily impressed with his cricketing prowess or even interested in how he looked in his whites. When Stuart invited her to watch a game at Richmond's famous Punt Rd Oval, Cathie went but didn't know anyone, so she took her laptop for company. 'I may as well get some work done,' she laughs at the memory of what she thought that day. 'Begin as you aim to proceed,' the recognised Telstra Business Women Award winner adds.

Cathie admits she didn't see the whole game out that day. Rather, she left and went shopping on nearby Chapel St. Cathie you see is also one of Brisbane's fashionistas when not creatively disrupting the pharmaceutical industry.

Love took top priority and the couple married within the year. It didn't matter that Stuart didn't return to the GPCC because he had already become a second son of the Foster family during his time there previously. Two decades on the two families may be oceans apart but they are as close as ever.



Stuart and Michael's daughters – Sascha and Rosie – are instagram besties, sharing pics on a daily basis, which Stuart suggests consist mainly of the boy band of the moment, their food or their "selfies".

It is the history of the Giles family at Ringwood and the Foster family at GPCC – Michael's father Paul also coached – that lead to the establishment of the Giles Foster Scholarship, first awarded in 2015. 'It's about the sense of fellowship that the game fostered for both our families and for young men generally in the game,' Stuart says with gratitude for what his time in the UK gave him personally. 'It's also a nod to our respective fathers in coaching and developing cricket in our own communities.'

The six-month scholarship goes over the English cricket season and provides \$5000 in funds to cover travel to and from the UK, a kick-starting sign on fee, and a tailored vocational experience matched to the recipient's current and future career aspirations. GPCC provide the balance of the player's package with provision of accommodation, transportation and additional income opportunities.

The inaugural recipient of the GFS is Matthew King – one of the King family dynasty synonymous with the Ringwood Club. The GFS selection panel (chaired by Stuart and manned by three former Ringwood teammates who remain heavily involved in local cricket, Sean Flynn, Darren Roe and Jason Evans) had detailed discussions with a number of individuals who remain on their radar for future scholarships but Stuart says, 'We are confident that Matthew will fulfil and exceed the expectations of Great Preston on and off the field,' adding, 'I saw in Matthew a lot of what I saw in myself. Particularly the second time I went to England. He has experienced enough in his cricketing career to understand it's not going to be the be all and end all in your life.'

On being the scholarship recipient, Matthew says 'I am very proud and fortunate to have been awarded the opportunity to be the first GFS recipient. The season is going well in both a team (GPCC are top of the table currently) and an individual sense, but it's a long season which will hopefully conclude with me having helped GPCC to achieve the goal of promotion into the championship division for next season.'



Matthew reflects on his own history with Ringwood when talking about the scholarship: 'Being the first GFS recipient means a great deal to me. I have been a part of the Ringwood Cricket Club for most of my life. From a young age I can remember watching many of the Ringwood greats including Stuart Giles, Jason Evans and Michael Foster. These three players I later found out had all played for the Great Preston Cricket Club. In my early years I remember that Stuart would come over for dinner every second Monday night. He had a good relationship with my father who was heavily involved with the club during that time.'

With his GFS season at Great Preston well underway, it's to the club's enjoyment that Matthew is thriving. Ian Newton, First Team Captain of GPCC believes Matthew is the ideal person to be the first recipient of the GFS and the club is delighted to have him. No doubt it's because Matthew's batting stats are breaking records already! A small snapshot of his success looks like this:

- he started the season in fine style, scoring exactly 300 runs in his first three innings with only one dismissal;
- his highest score to date is a terrific 153 not out against Crossbank Methodists;
- he currently has 648 runs in the league at an unbelievable average of 129.6 including one century and five half centuries;
- including cup competitions, he has so far scored 763 runs in 15 innings, with two half centuries in games against higher ranked opposition;
- he has shared in five century partnerships and has also chimed in with the ball taking 14 valuable wickets at an average of 23, with a best of 4-67;
- he has only been dismissed in five of his 12 innings.

Matthew's leadership skills have also had an opportunity to shine, according to Ian, 'Matt has also been a massive help to me (as Captain) through his support in preparations for games (training and warm-ups), his willingness to input to discussions around selection and tactics and his general approach to his cricket. His dedication to batting and commitment in not giving up his wicket easily is starting to rub off on the other lads. Matt has set the standard and they are all following.'

The benefits of the GFS and the exchange of an international player of Matthew's ability have far reaching consequences as Ian explains, 'It sends out a message to the administrators of the league that we are not just here to make up the numbers and are an ambitious club. The same message applies to other prospective players, that we are an ambitious club and have talented players.'

Ian is also grateful for the expertise the GFS brings to the Club saying, 'It helps bring a more professional approach to the club through the introduction of new training and coaching methods that are being employed in Australia while developing our junior players, many of whom are new to the game of cricket.'

Ian hopes that by creating a link with a top club in Australia that GPCC will in time send a player of their own abroad. Most importantly, he believes the process of the GFS 'Allows us to have confidence that the player we are getting is of the right quality and character to fit in at the club.'

Cricket is about playing as a team, but Matthew recognises the GFS is bigger than himself: 'To me the scholarship for GPCC is not only just an individual opportunity, but an opportunity to hopefully play well for a club, that a few of the past players that I grew up with at Ringwood played for back in

their cricketing careers. The connection between RCC and GPCC is something that makes my current season in the UK even more special.'

An emphasis that both Stuart and Cathie have placed on the GFS and it's meaning is that it is bigger than just having the chance to play. 'One of the things throughout my professional career is that I've always been able to draw on the skills and life lessons I gained when I went to England. The people and the personal dynamics of working and living with others. The link between being privileged to do so and the responsibility that comes with representing cricket clubs and your country etc,' Stuart admits.

The scholarship in Stuart's eyes also teaches the recipient how to be an ambassador. 'It's about trying to give young emerging cricketers the chance to have the same experience as I did,' he reminisces. 'We want to provide the opportunity to broaden the experience so that the individual can gain something not only as cricketers but as people.'

This desire for greater personal growth is echoed by Cathie, 'The thing I love about it is the opportunity to go away and do something different. If you only stay in the same place doing the same thing, then you don't know what you don't know. A broader perspective on the world will change the way you think. Forging friendships abroad are another bonus of international exchanges. I'm happy to support it because I know what an impact that opportunity had on Stuart's life and what it meant to him and what an opportunity this could present to someone else.'

Matthew also recognises the benefits which being in the UK delivers. 'Being placed in England will also give me a great opportunity to travel to many places around Europe and in the UK. This is something that would not have been affordable or possible without the GFS.'

Stuart Giles and Michael Foster and their families love cricket. But the GFS is about the greater life journey and personal development that Stuart and Cathie mentioned above. This has already impacted on Matthew who feels his greatest opportunity will come from outside of cricket, and the chance to take a six-month break from his day-to-day job/life back in Australia.



TOP OF THE TABLE - GPCC 2015 1STXI



'I've been able to have time to think, research, plan the next stage of my life. As well as get a great insight on how another country goes about its business and how people from another country operate. I don't think that any of these things would be possible without the chance to play cricket in England, with a club like GPCC that are very accommodating and full of fantastic helpful people.'

In August 2015, the official launch of the GFS will take place at Great Preston. It will be a pivotal moment for the Giles family, as the GFS Australian Invitational XI will take the field versus a Great Preston team peppered with Stuart's former teammates. More importantly it will be the first game that Stuart and Sam will play as father and son, thereby establishing a new Giles family international cricketing tradition. Stuart can't wait to don the whites and Cathie has confirmed she probably won't even go shopping!



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– MATTHEW KING