



**1992 UWA First Grade Premiers “the first in 43 years”**  
**Todd Williams holding the R&I Cup**



**1993 Todd “Noddy” Williams in action in the R&I Cup Final**

## **“THE ULTIMATE PAYBACK”**

**By Todd (Noddy) Williams, joined the club as an AIS recruit in 1992 from Tasmania**

Although I was only at UWAHC for three years, I am proud to say that they were three of the most enjoyable and successful years of my hockey career. Two Premierships, 3 Challenge Cups, top goal scorer and the prestigious “Players Player” were the high points associated with what was undoubtedly the strongest Club side in Australia. Hey, we could even afford to give Blades Viner a game! Despite the success and quality of the team and its personnel, my favourite story that epitomises the club, actually relates to two well known members of the first squad at the time, one an average player, and the other who was awful.

To be fair, Darren Steinberg played 200 games for the 1’s and whilst decidedly average in our eyes, would have played in any other first team in any remote country region you care to name. Furthermore, whilst Hayden Smith was the sort of hockey player for whom concrete surrounding walls were invented, it should be noted that he was only the Manager of the 1’s.

Except, almost on one fateful night...

The background to this story involves what started as a harmless passing comment from Smith to Steinberg when the latter was speaking about the house he had just purchased through the formers property agency. “It’s on fire” was meant as a joke, but escalated into an untidy episode, with shock, tears and eventually phone calls to the vendor, who ironically was standing in his decidedly “un” burning kitchen. Steinberg consequently vowed revenge.

Those aware of what happened stood back and waited for an immediate response but none came. Time drifted on and many started to think that perhaps Steinberg had swept it under the carpet of his undamaged new house. That was until one Friday afternoon before an evening game for the 1’s when Coach Nobbs rang the Manager.

At the time, the 1’s were 12 points clear on top and the 2’s were struggling to make the finals with 2 games remaining. Consequently, the 1’s were playing with a bare 11 in order to give the 2’s the use of our bench players. This was the nature of the conversation with Hayden, when the Coach recommended that the Manager had “better bring his gear”.

Now those of you who know Hayden know that there is only one salvation when it comes to hockey and his ego, and that is that he has never played in the 1’s. We know it, he knows it and most importantly, Darren Steinberg knew it.

To cut a long story short, we warmed up and with barely a minute before pushback, Rob Clement fell into a heap and was immediately surrounded by the Coach and the Physio. “Hayden, you’re on” was the instruction from Nobbs and immediately, the Manager went into what can only be described as a tizzy. Desperately trying to pull his tracksuit bottoms over his shoes whilst fumbling for his stick, he became visibly worse when the ground announcer advised the crowd “there has been a late change, number 6 Rob Clement is to be replaced by number 58, Hayden Smith”.

At this point, as he lined up at right wing, with his back to the crowd and technical bench, there were two things that everyone except Hayden could see. The first was that quite obviously Hayden was approaching a watershed moment in his life where, forevermore, he would be able to lay claim to, and bore everyone senseless about, his career in the 1’s. The second, and far more important, was that with barely seconds before the pushback, the match controller was now standing behind Hayden with a fit Rob Clement and the numbers 6 and 58 above his head.

With the umpires under strict instruction not to start the game at any cost, the ground announcer, by this stage barely controllable, declared that “there has been a late, late change, number 58 Hayden Smith to be replaced by Rob Clement”. Those that were there will remember Hayden spinning around, throwing his stick into the dugout and directing a string of expletives at Steinberg that, had he played, would have resulted in the quickest yellow card in history. But then, he didn’t, and it wasn’t!