

It is Gayle and my privilege today to speak about our esteemed colleague and friend, Sue Classon, on behalf of the Heathmont Hornets Basketball Club, the Ringwood Basketball Association and our basketball community in general. Sue's involvement in basketball covered many roles including player, coach, team manager, parent, spectator and official.

Gayle and I met Sue through basketball and so on behalf of the extended basketball community I would like to share some memories about Sue's passion and dedication for the sport of basketball. Sue's involvement in basketball obviously started as a player. She was strong, fast and skilful on the court.

My sister told me the other night that she played against Sue when they were in their late 20's. Sue and her sister-in-law, Judy, played in a team in the local Sunday Knox competition. My sister recalled how every time they had to play Sue's team they always had to put half their team on her, or else Sue dominated the game. The friendship and respect that was created back then is still present and some of her team mates and opponents from the early years are here today.

Sue continued to be active in the basketball community and when her children were at school, Sue formed a team when they opened the Thursday morning Women's Competition which was held at Maroondah Indoor Sports Centre. Sue, Gayle and other friends played for many years in this competition. This was the beginning of a very close friendship between Sue and Gayle.

The Classon family joined the local Heathmont Hornets Basketball Club in the 2001 Summer Season with both Marcus and Brendan playing in the Under 10's. This was the start of a wonderful 10 year association. Sue and John would be there to encourage and support the boys every week. Sue also assisted the Club by taking on the team manager's role.

In 2004, with Chantal playing her first season in the Under 8's, Sue decided to take on the role of coach. The team comprised of a group of girls from Chantal's primary school, Eastwood. Sue was quite nervous about taking on a coaching position but it proved a pivotal point in her life. She gained immense personal growth through her coaching role. The first season was punctuated by Chantal performing cartwheels up and down the court; and a couple other girls thought they should join in as well. Sue guided them through this first season teaching them through her positive attitude about game skills, ball skills and ultimately life skills. Sue led the girls to winning four grand finals and two runners up in eleven seasons in total. Sue had a huge positive impact on all the girls she coached.

In 2007, Sue found time to join the Heathmont Hornet's committee, taking on the role of the Under 16 Boys coordinator. This was just another way she could be involved with her boys whilst also helping our Club.

As the years progressed, Sue and John's children started to play representative basketball for the Ringwood Hawks. Sue would again find time to go to their matches, initially as a parent and later as team manager and assistant coach. This would involve many distant trips around Melbourne and outer suburbs arriving home late on Friday nights.

Anyone who has been involved in representative basketball will know the commitment that is involved in travelling on a Friday night to places like Broadmeadows, Traralgon, Werribee, Sherbrooke, & Bendigo.

One of the RBA organisers and Hawks Coaches Ross Charles, told me how remarkable it was that Sue worked so hard at making sure she got to see her children play every single possible game, no matter where it was held. And I can vouch for this, because when I was refereeing on Friday nights at Maroondah, Sue was always there to support her children and the team.

In 2009, Sue took on the position of assistant coach to Joe Egan for the Ringwood Hawks Under 14 girls team and she played a significant role in helping this team (with Chantal as a player) secure a long desired grand final win. Sue continued to coach and be team manager for her children in both the RBA and Heathmont Hornets until recent times, when her illness would no longer permit her to do so.

Four years ago, Sue also took up coaching 6 and 7 year olds at "Oz Ball" on Thursday afternoons at the Maroondah Stadium. Sue loved children and had a natural way of teaching them, always with a kind smile. Her patience with young children was remarkable.

More recently Sue took on the role of teaching and coaching "Special Needs" children. This was one of Sue's favourite jobs. Sue told Gayle that once she was feeling better she was going to find a job that would involve teaching Special Children.

The Heathmont Hornets Basketball Club was going to present Sue with a special Life Membership Award in recognition and appreciation of her time and effort in supporting our Club. Due to Sue's poor health, this unfortunately was not possible. This award will be forwarded shortly to John, Marcus, Brendan and Chantal, and is our small way of saying "thank you" and "you will always be remembered".

In closing I would like to quote some of the comments that were placed in the newspapers by Sue's players, as I think they clearly summarise Sue's contribution to basketball and their lives.

- "You encouraged us and are always cheerful."
- "You were so much more than just my basketball coach, more like another mum to me."
- "You are special in our lives."

Sue Classon touched the hearts and lives of so many people associated with our basketball community. Sue's love for her family and her passion for basketball made for a great and successful combination. The basketball community has benefited greatly from Sue's contribution, and is equally devastated by our loss. Without reservation, we would all agree that Sue was special to each and every one of us; and we are also each better for knowing our friend, Sue Classon.

Gus Zuccon
President Heathmont Hornets Basketball Club