



# *Rustlers* **INTERVIEWS**



## Interview with **Dan “The Hyphen” Ward-Bourton**

In this interview we attempt to keep pace with ‘Mega Mind’ Dan WB. In a bit of a departure from our usual fare, Dan offers us a different perspective on baseball; a sort of ‘walk on the other side’ if you will.

Here’s Dan:

***Chelt website:*** So Dan, tell us how long you've been involved in baseball. How did you get into it? Tell us a bit about your baseball background.

***Dan WB:*** Will these all be baseball related questions? Because I’ve got a lot of thoughts on advanced string-theory that I’d like to share.

I played a little T-Ball before starting with Baseball. I figure it was as far back as 91’. 20 years! Jesus when you say it like that. You wonder where it went (that’s a Shawshank reference, for those of you playing at home).

I barely knew the game existed before my older brother took it up. Pom’s don’t play baseball you see. It’s a dirty game better left to the colonies.

But since my brother was involved, I was subjected to unrelenting parental intimidation until I was convinced to do likewise. It was either that or the military academy, I was told. I’d have done well in the army, don’t you think?

***Chelt website:*** Yes, you’d be a full Colonel by now. So, how did you come to Cheltenham? How long have you been at the club?

***Dan WB:*** From day 1. Cheltenham was originally chosen for pure convenience. We used to live on Centre-Dandenong road so I could walk to training/games. Come on, what kind of person would belong to a club that isn’t just around the corner? What’s that you say? Don’t I live miles away now? Well, yes, I do. But Chelt is still the closest club ... that will have me. As soon as I find another club that will put up with me, I’m outta here.



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***Chelt website: What's your favourite position and why?***

**Dan WB:** Pitcher, on the good days at least, although those are getting fewer and further between. Why? Egotism, I suppose. I like having everyone waiting on me. That appeals to my inflated sense of self-importance.

I'm not saying I hate playing in the field, I'm just saying that if I had to choose between watching someone walk hitters or jabbing myself in the eyeball with a dirty needle full of Magic Johnson's blood, it would be a difficult decision for me.

Another reason would be because I've always liked throwing things at people. Even before I was a baseballer, that was just something I loved to do and I do believe I'm quite good at it. Especially with water-bombs and rocks.

***Chelt website: What are some of your highlights in baseball? Achievements? Best game?***

**Dan WB:** I guess I could hit you with my most memorable moment. Everybody's probably already heard this one, because I tell it every week. I don't even wait for it to come up in conversation. It's like "Hi, Wardus", "Hey [insert name], did I ever tell you about my famous suicide squeeze?"

So, did I ever tell you about my famous Suicide Squeeze? No? Oh goody.

I was just a rosy-cheeked kid playing under Brad Lark in the 3rds against Bonbeach. Down by 1 in the 9th and yours truly having an absolute stinker of a game. A donut for however many at bats I'd had. The likelihood of me having a hit that day was on par with Vanilla Ice having one in 2011. If there would have been anyone to come on off the bench you can bet that my butt cheeks would have been getting to know their new friend named Pine in a hurry, if you catch my drift.

So, having a day like that it should have been obvious that I'd find myself up to bat with bases loaded in the 9<sup>th</sup>. And that's just where I was, crapping my daks.

Larky had worded me up that the suicide squeeze bunt would be on before I got to the plate. But upon informing the runner at 3<sup>rd</sup> base he was promptly greeted with the reply "Are you crazy? I don't trust him!"

Wise words, but never the less, he repeated the signal. Obviously secure in the knowledge that I was a strikeout or double play waiting to happen.

The pitcher delivered a big loopy curve ball to the plate and Ricky "Don't trust him" Wheeler broke for home. I ... for some reason ... swung as hard as I could!

Even to this day I can't tell you why. Divine intervention perhaps? Or more accurately, perhaps just because I'm an idiot.

So what happened then? I hit a walk off grand-slam, duh. Idiot like a fox.



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The epilogue to that story is the serve Larky gave me afterwards. Something about not listening to him or doing the team thing, I dunno, I wasn't really paying attention. Much too busy basking in the glow of victory and dreaming about my trophy.

Isn't it funny, if one of my players pulled something like that, I'd sharpen up the edge of my working with children's card and slit their throat. Then give their corpse 3 votes.

***Chelt website: So, what's funniest thing you've seen on the field?***

**Dan WB:** That's a tough one. Not because I can't decide what the funniest thing is from a wealth of material, but more because my memory is so shot these days from all the hallucinogens. But I'll tell you the funniest thing I've seen this year.

Here's the scene. It's round, whatever, against Mornington at home. Steven Kavanagh is on the mound and carrying a shutout in the last inning. The score is a lot to zip and for dramatic purposes, let's say its 2 out.

Kav beans the hitter square in the back. But random Mornington-hitter-guy wants no part of the free base. "Nah, [expletive deleted] that." He said. "I want to hit." (I think he was quoting Aristotle.)

Given the lopsided nature of the scoreboard, his request was granted.

Now, when you're on a shut out, there is always some customary ball busting that goes with it. So at the time, "I hope he takes you deep now, Kav" was the verbal encouragement I decided on. Little did I know that comment was delivered direct from my magic crystal ball. Because the very next pitch was smashed into the trees in left field. And when I say smashed I mean this thing was the hardest anything has been clubbed since the extinction of Neanderthal. Bye, bye baby and bye, bye shut out.

With the sounds of outfielders falling over in hysterics and infielders giving the hitter high-fives as he rounded the bases (you gotta love team camaraderie), poor Steven tried to get back to work and immediately drilled the next batter as well. Who, after quoting what I'm sure was a line from Confucius decided he'd rather hit than take the walk too. So Kav plunked him again! I don't know what happened after that. I think I blacked out from lack of oxygen.

***Chelt website: What's the thing you witnessed during a game that made you go "wow!"?***

**Dan WB:** Hmm. That Grand Final in which Steve Babidge pitched 17 innings is the first thing that springs to mind. I just experienced that as a spectator, but it still struck me as pretty special. Seeing an old dude (no offense) do something I couldn't do with all the steroids in Barry Bonds' cabinet is kind of humbling.



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***Chelt website: What do you like about coaching? (PS. For those of you wondering right about now, no, this family-friendly website is not going into how DWB actually got himself into coaching. If you want that R rated story, ask the man himself, or perhaps Stenny, the man who actually forcibly brought DWB into the coaching ranks as a result.)***

**Dan WB:** Winning. Seriously, I don't do it enough as a player. You can never do it enough. Living vicariously through others more talented than you is tremendous. I don't want to make it sound like winning is everything. But winning really is everything.

I'm loving watching our young players grow and develop with the knowledge that I had a small hand in it. I guess it's like being a parent on a smaller, less stressful scale. There's an immense sense of pride seeing 'your kids' succeed. Then if they turn out really good you can brag and take all the credit for their achievements.

The more I coach the more I realise how emotionally invested I become in other people's performances. Even if I'm not coaching or haven't helped them in any way, I still find myself enjoying other people's success more. Just wanting to see people do well.

For a notoriously selfish human being like me to say that is a scary paradigm shift. But that's the major thing I'm getting out of it personally I'd say.

Wow, I got really serious for a minute then didn't I? I'd better make a bodily function joke to make up for it.

***Chelt website: What are we doing well at Chelt? What's good about Chelt BC?***

**Dan WB:** Providing incredibly intellectually stimulating content for the website. Right?

Our junior programs are sensational. We're blessed with plenty of numbers and brimming with talent from my perspective. We seem to be enjoying success at every junior level at the moment. So, whatever we're doing there we're doing well.

***Chelt website: What do we need to do better?***

**Dan WB:** We could start by getting seniors to train. 6 sides yet only a dozen senior players even at the club of a Thursday can't be seen as ideal. I'll cut myself off here before I start sounding like a drag.

But, here's a personal dig from me. I want more Dads who can umpire. I've encountered this too often. We get plenty of parents at our junior games, which is great. But few who are comfortable officiating them.



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Get those dads (or mums, why not?) and blood them early as umpires back in under 12's. So by the time you have an under 16 team and kids have played more than 4 years of juniors, we can have maybe 9 umpiring options to choose from. That way it's not the one dad who actually plays the game who gets stuck with it every week. There, cop that.

***Chelt website:*** *And anything else you want to add, that's consumable in a PG environment.*

***Dan WB:*** The second part of that question severely limits the possibilities. But I'd like to thank Jesus, Allah, Odin, Vishnu, and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

***That's the way Dan, wonderful job.***