



Rustlers INTERVIEWS



Interview with **Dave “Clarko” Clarkson**, Winter Rustlers A1 Club Coach, former ABL star and Australian Baseball Hall of Fame inductee.

Another fantastic read in our ***Rustlers Interviews*** series; this time with a real Australian baseball star in Clarko. Most of us know him as the Cheltenham BC Senior Winter coach, but read this interview and you’ll see there’s a fair bit more ...

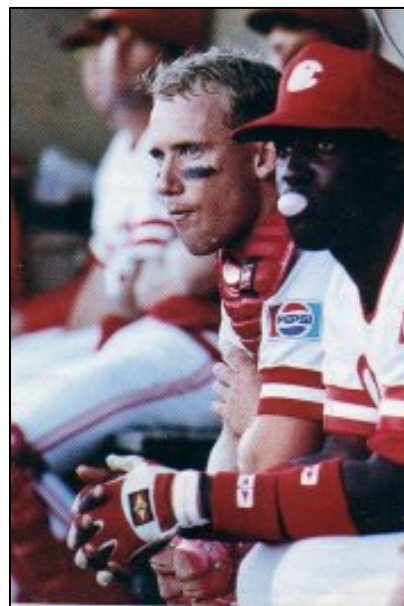
Chelt website: How long you've been involved in baseball. How did you get into it? Tell us a bit about your baseball background.

Clarko: I have been involved in baseball now for 42 years.

I started playing in a school team competition run by Waverley baseball club and was selected from this competition to play for WBC in the VBA competition. In those days I was a shortstop, but in my very first Waverley game a ground ball bounced up and got me in the nose so I decided to take up catching at that point.

I have represented Victoria in Under 15 in 1976 and 1977, Under 18 in 1979 and 1980. Was selected in Victorian Claxton Shield team in 1981, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989. Was appointed Captain of Claxton Shield team from 1984 to 1989. Represented Australia in Under 18's 1979 and 1980 and the Australian Senior team from 1984 thru to 1995. Represented Australia at the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. Selected to the Australian Baseball Hall of Fame in 2010.

Played ABL from 1990 thru to 1998 and then on the coaching panel with the Waverley / Melbourne Reds. The Reds won 3 ABL titles over the duration of the first ABL. This was a great time playing baseball, my fondest memories was playing in front of 12000 people at AFL/Waverley Park and flying around the country every second weekend to play baseball. I am now an assistant with Melbourne Aces where I help out in any way I can in the new version of the ABL.



Clarko in his ABL days with a younger Ronnie Carothers!



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Clarko (right) with Matthew Sheldon-Collins (left) at Waverley Park in the old ABL days

Chelt website: *So who are the best players you have played with in your time in baseball?*

Clarko: Best player I have played with as far as hitting goes would have to be Dave Nilsson, pitching would have to be Graeme Lloyd. Didn't have great velocity but could make the ball move from the sweet spot of the bat to the end of the bat or the handle of the bat.

There were also guys like Phil Dale, Jon Deeble and Brian Wannacott who pitched some great games for Country, State and Club teams.

Chelt website: *What are some of the highlights and achievements for you in baseball?*

Clarko: Highlights would have to be 1988 Olympics and one just last year, being selected to enter the Australian Baseball Hall of Fame* (right). To be recognised along with the greats who have baseball in this country was mind blowing.



Achievements along the way: captaining both State and National teams. Being a part of 11 Division 1 premierships for Waverley, 8 as player, 3 as coach. 15 A grade DBA premierships, 6 at Monash University, 2 at Berwick and 7 at Cheltenham, hopefully 8 on the weekend. I coached at Chelt early in the 80's and won one back then.

*(*Chelt website: See Clarko's Australian Baseball Hall of Fame citation at the end of the interview)*

Chelt website: *What are some of your thoughts as a coach?*

Clarko: I love to see players improving when coaching. You see the player at the start of the season and then see how much he has improved at the end of the season. That's what gives you satisfaction. Thoughts on coaching; you got to make it enjoyable for the players. During games, just let them play. A coach doesn't have that much influence on games.

I have had some great players that I have coached, Brad Harman I coached in Under 18 state teams. He was small back then but did everything right and now he has grown into one of the best moving infielders I have seen.

For hard work comes Andrew Russell, who we know at Cheltenham. He puts in a lot of work on the training track and also in the gym and is reaping those rewards now playing High A professional baseball with the Atlanta Braves.



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Adam Blackley is a great pitcher with great poise on the mound. Never seen this guy show emotion on the mound at all, just gets on with the job at hand.

Chelt website: What are some of the positives of Cheltenham baseball club?



Clarko passing along some baseball wisdom to young Rustler Dante Caruso

Clarko: Positives of Chelt BC. It's a great club with a lot of juniors. It's like building a house, you have a great base and the rest will flourish. I can see Cheltenham taking it to Waverley in the years to come. Will be a great rivalry and I look forward to being right in the middle of it.

The club is getting better. You are now a strong force in Summer baseball where before you were always going up and down from Div 1 to Div 2 and back. You have brought in some outside players to establish this, but I feel now you need to work on getting your home grown talent to push for positions in your firsts.

Cheltenham is a strong club cause it has had, and always will have, great people around the club. You look at the work John Ferguson, Michael Trevorah, John Carlile and the Dave Stenhouse's of this world, they have done for this the club. Sorry if I have forgotten some names here, but people like the people I have

named are the reason the club is where it is at the moment. The facilities also help, except for those bloody planes!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Chelt website: And finally, what are your thoughts on this week's A1 Grand final?

Clarko: As far as this weekend's Grand Final, if the boys play as a team and do the right things at the right time we should walk away with our 4th in a row and 7th in 9 years. Remember what I said before, a coach doesn't have any influence on the outcome of a game. It's up to the players alone.

Thanks Clarko, another great read in what is proving to be a great series of interviews.




Turn over to read Clarko's Australian Baseball Hall of Fame citation.



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Clarko's Baseball Australia Hall of Fame citation

2010 HALL OF FAME INDUCTIONS



DAVID CLARKSON
1989 - 1999

David Clarkson's four decade baseball career commenced with the Waverley Baseball Club at the age of eight. Over the past forty years he has achieved many milestones in Australian baseball, and cemented his reputation as one of the game's elite.

In his 619 games as a player for the Waverley Baseball Club, Clarkson was named as the 'Club Champion' an amazing seven times between 1980 and 1999; and was the Waverley Baseball 'Club Coach' for two seasons.

David soon became a legend of the Waverley Baseball Club as both player and coach, but it was as a Representative player that Clarkson solidified his reputation as an exceptional catcher - and a dominating hitter who flourished in tough situations at the plate.

Clarkson competed in 6 Claxton Shield Series; posting a career batting average of .322.

Ever a fan favourite, 'Clarko' was a staple fixture on the 'Reds' Australian Baseball League team between 1990 and 1997; and boasts a life time batting average of .300 in 342 ABL games; and was awarded the first ever ABL Batting Champion in 1990 with a batting average of .444 - with 33 Home Runs.

Clarkson made his Australian Team debut in 1983 - and went on to don the 'green and gold' a further 9 times. In 1985 Clarkson travelled to Canada to compete in the 1985 Intercontinental Cup; and in 1988 he competed in the Seoul Olympics.

He was inducted into 'Flintoff & Dunn's Australian Major League Baseball Hall-of-Fame following his magnificent career.

In 2009 his state acknowledged his achievements when Baseball Victoria through his selection in the Diamond Anniversary 'Victorian Claxton Shield' Team of the Century.

Today, the nation acknowledges those same achievements, as David 'Clarko' Clarkson becomes a welcomed and well deserved inductee into the Baseball Australia Hall of Fame.