

# Jim 'Juby' Wandin:

## Legend of the Healesville Football Club

by Charles Richards

Juby was already a legend of the Healesville Football Club before I came to know him as my first senior football coach. Like many of my friends I was too young to have seen him play at his peak, but the locals who had witnessed him playing made up for it as they spoke of Juby like some kind of football god. Apparently, he had silky skills, was a beautiful mark, could run all day, and could do it all so gracefully.

Coming out of the Under 17s and falling under the footballing tutelage of Juby was my good fortune as not only was he a wonderful teacher but someone who you couldn't help but admire. From that day things had changed for me. It used to be... "there goes Juby in the PMG van and he gave me a wave", then it was "there goes Juby in the PMG van and he gave me a wave and he is my football coach, how lucky am I".

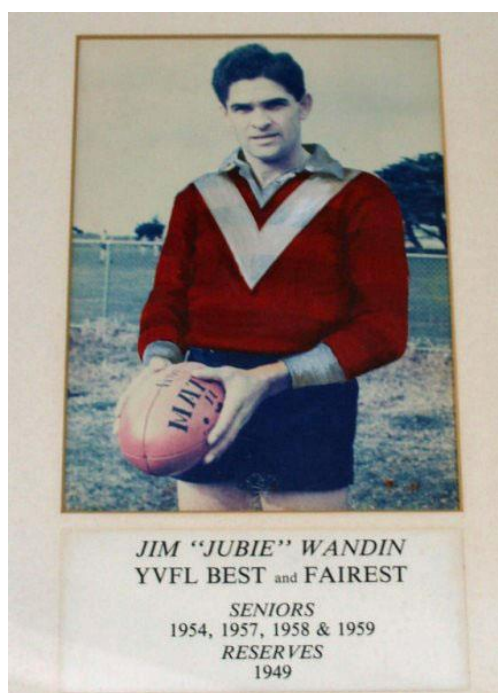
This applied to everyone Juby came in touch with, you see he wasn't rich, but money doesn't define you. He wasn't a famous star, but fame doesn't define you. But he was respected and that does define you and because of that he left a lasting impression where ever he went.

In fact, even though Juby had hung up the boots many years beforehand and was then coaching, he still could have gone back playing and he probably would have stood out. He coached at Healesville, Apollo Bay and Yarra Glen and tasted success, leaving a lasting impression where ever he went.

But there was more to James Wandin...Juby as we all knew him, was always born to be a leader, it was something that came naturally for him. Whether it be as a player, coach or Leader of his people, he excelled at it.

He was a great-great nephew to William Barak, the last traditional Ngurungaeta of the Wurundjeri-willam clan. He was the last person born at Coranderrk Station, in 1933, in the home of his grandmother, Jemima Wandin. When the Station was closed in 1923 Jemima Wandin was one of five elderly people who refused to leave. She is buried in the Coranderrk Cemetery.

Juby's father, Jarlo Wandoon, tried to enlist for World War I, but was rejected due to being an Aboriginal. When he attempted to enlist under his whitefella name, James Wandin, he was accepted into the army and served in France and is listed under that name on the honour roll in the Healesville RSL. On returning home, Jarlo Wandoon had to get permission from the police to visit his mother, was escorted onto Coranderrk, and was only allowed half an hour with her before he was sent to off



to the Lake Tyers Mission in Gippsland. Much of Coranderrk was divided up and sold for soldier settlement allotments.

Jarlo found work with the Postmaster-General's Department, and was able to buy a block of land at Healesville – a home for his family on Wurundjeri land.

Juby held the position of Ngurungaeta in the Wurundjeri nation. He was also President of the Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council.

On the 26th of May 2000 Juby, along with Carolyn Briggs, representing the Wurundjeri and Boonwuring peoples of the Kulin nation, gave historic 'Welcome to Country' speeches at a sitting of the Victorian Parliament. Parliament Hill was noted in Juby's speech as one of the Wurundjeri ceremonial corroboree grounds.

He concluded his speech to Parliament saying:

*"We are sorry for the pain and suffering of our ancestors, and we will never forget them. We need to heal and strengthen ourselves to continue on with their struggle for equality and justice for Aboriginal people. We as the Wurundjeri people urge the Victorian government not to lose sight of this significant change to history. Otherwise we may never have cultural harmony. To achieve this will not be easy, and we all recognise that. Positive action and your support will help us to find the necessary answers along the way to reforms compatible and acceptable to all".*

*"Times are changing. You the Victorian government have invited and welcomed us to your place, and we as the traditional owners and custodians of this land give back to you our welcome. Wominjeka yearmenn koondee-bik Wurundjeri-Ballak, which simply means, 'Welcome to the land of the Wurundjeri people'".*

Juby was one of ten children. He left school at 15 in 1949 and played Australian rules football with the Healesville seconds. The team won the premiership and Juby was awarded the Best and Fairest. He moved on to play with the seniors who won a premiership in 1951. He joined St Kilda Football Club in 1952, after a period of training with them at Junction Oval. He was the first Aboriginal footballer with St Kilda, playing centre half forward. Other Aboriginal players in the VFL at the time were Essendon's Norm McDonald and Melbourne's Eddie Jackson. Juby left St Kilda Football Club after just 17 games due to "homesickness" and what he later reflected on as a lack of support.



In 2003 Wandin reflected on the racist taunts he faced during games in the VFL in a report in The Age newspaper:

*HFC Life Members 1988*

*"Opposition players would call you niggers and all that, the whole lot, Kooris and whatever week in, week out. Pretty rash things said, I can tell you. You had to just deal with it yourself, nothing like what Michael Long's got now going. You dealt with it, you just got on with the game."*

Juby was called up for National Service in 1952. After leaving St Kilda Football Club he took up a position of player coach in 1954 with the Healesville seniors and coached until 1961. He joined the Postmaster-General's Department and worked for 37 years, but continuing to coach football at Healesville and Apollo Bay.

He was a special footballer. At Juby's funeral former teammate, Neil Roberts, recalled his skills, his dignity and the fact that no one would have abused him during his VFL career because "everyone had too much respect" for him. Indeed, "if Jimmy got whacked during a match, his teammates would be queuing up to whack the guy who hit him. He was special. A big man in every way." No one ever heard Juby swear.

At some point a long time ago, (maybe it was 1933 the day Juby was born), something magical happened along the way between Healesville and Coranderrk...someone turned the lights off in Healesville. And when they turned them on there was no Black or White, there were just people. The rest of the world had let people's heritage define who they were and how they were viewed, but in Healesville your heritage meant nothing, just treat people the way you wanted to be treated yourself.

You can tell from Juby's famous parliamentary speech that that is how he wanted it. Racism is a terrible thing, fortunately we would all like to think that it is on the way out. Now you can call me naive, but growing up in Healesville we never had issues with it. In Healesville, racism had no currency. And at the Healesville Football Club it didn't exist, the Smiths, the Peters and the Wandins were held in the same esteem as the Christies, the Hays or the Fishers, or anyone for that matter. It's just that the Smiths, the Peters and the Wandins probably had better skills than the rest of us...lol.

I find it difficult and frustrating to understand how Jarlo Wandoon could have been rejected when he tried to enlist, but his son James was the footballing God of the Yarra Valley and accepted and admired by everyone he knew. Maybe things started to change the day a little James Wandin was born?

When I grew up in Healesville things were a lot simpler. We didn't know much about the world beyond the Yarra River. Sure we all had friends whose ancestors were from all over the world. At primary school I knew a boy named Bruno Fredarici, his parents were European, but I never stopped to think about that. I just played with him because he was one of the funniest people I ever met. And then there was Eddie Schultz whose parents were German. I never stopped to think about that either. I just knew he was a nice kid who would offer you the biscuits his mother made from his lunch box. I remember at Primary School, Mrs. Bates sat Billy Bell with Alan Martin and I, not because he had been naughty, not because of his heritage, but because he needed help with his maths and she felt we could help him.



*Jim 'Juby' Wandin*



You hung out with whoever you wanted to, not because of their wealth, or job, their standing or their heritage. And Juby was a pioneer who forged a trail for many of his predecessors. If you ask Andrew Peters today about whether Juby was a pioneer, he would say damn right he was.

We looked up to Juby, Alex and Russell Smith amongst many others, in the same light as the VFL players we collected on the Scanlen's Football Cards. It's just how it was.



*Juby Wandin*

Many years ago Craig Wild and I decided to buy two cowboy hats, don't ask me why but we thought we would be trend setters and look cool. We went to a party one weekend at Gariboldi Street and saw Juby and Norm Wandin. After too many refreshments we gave the hats to Juby and Norm to try on. I think they suited them better than us.

While ill with cancer in February 2006, Juby prepared a statutory declaration declaring his nephew Murrundindi as his successor as Wurundjeri Ngurungaeta. After his death his partner, Judy Freeman, symbolically passed to Murrundindi a lil-lal, or hunting boomerang, and a sprig of pale yellow wattle. A massive crowd attended Healesville football oval to pay their respects to a respected Wurundjeri elder and great footballer. He was buried at Healesville Cemetery, in the shadow of Mount Riddell, as he requested.

The Annual Best and Fairest player award in Division Two of the Yarra Valley Mountain Football League is called the Wandin Medal. The James (Juby) Wandin Memorial Match has been established by Yarra Glen Football Club to commemorate Juby's 55 years contribution to the sport as a player and coach at local level and at Apollo Bay. The inaugural match in May 2008, won by Yarra Glen Football Club, was used to raise funds to erect a memorial at Juby's grave and for a perpetual trophy.

The talent that followed little James Wandin's birth at Coranderrk in 1933 was insurmountable. You just have to mention names like Peters, Wandin, Smith and the accolades flow from the memories of the Healesville faithful. If there is a debt owed it is owed by the Healesville Football Club to James Wandin and his fellow proud Aboriginal families who represented with such dignity the Red and White Bloods.

*James 'Juby' Wandin: Legend of the Yarra Valley.*