

MITCHAM FOOTBALL CLUB – ‘HALL OF FAME MEMBER’ (#9)

Ray Ireland

(1919 – 1997 Age 72)



18-year-old Ray Ireland, in 1938:
Runners Up.

A Mitcham local boy, Ray was born in 1919. Ray was a key member of the famous Ireland ‘family-dynasty’. The Irelands owned much of Mitcham with their orchards and were well-known for their involvement at the Mitcham FC. Ray’s father started one of the largest orchards in Mitcham, where Ray worked his whole life.

Ray worked hard and played even harder over a long and very distinguished playing career spanning 20 years from 1935 - 1955. Ray was a talented Centre Half Forward or Ruck Rover. Like the great Bob Pratt before him, Ray was a boy prodigy. At 15 years of age in 1935, Ray was:

- Captain of the Victorian School Boy football team
- A Senior Premiership player in 1935 (as a 15-year-old!)
- Best & Fairest in 1935, his first year of Senior football
- After 1935, Ray went on to win a total of 6 Best & Fairest awards at Mitcham

Service / Achievements:

268 Games (over 20 years):	1935 - 1955
2 Premierships:	1935 and 1952
Best and Fairest Awards	6 Senior B&Fs
Life Membership:	1950
Team of the Century:	1998
Hall of Fame Member:	2011

In addition, Ray served on the General Committee and was the Club League Delegate. Ray never held a Senior role on Committee but was nonetheless regarded as ‘a power behind the throne’.



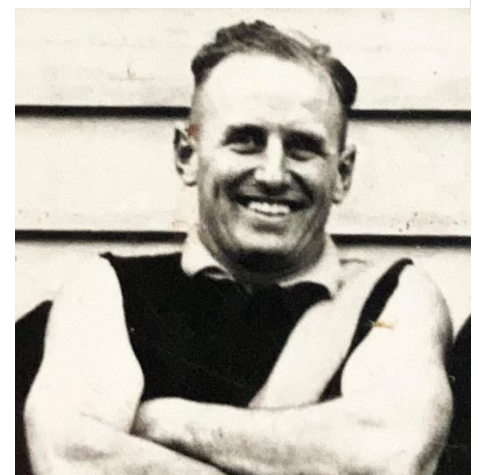
Ray in 1948

When the old grandstand burnt down at Walker Park in 1955, Ray arranged, and had built the temporary change rooms plus installed his old chip heater for the showers.



The Blue Room on the left, alongside the new Grandstand built in 1957.

After the new Grandstand was built in 1957, the temporary rooms became a very large canteen and storeroom for the next 35 years until 1990 (*painted blue and known as the Blue Room*). The new brick Grandstand was a huge facility for its time, thanks to Ray’s fellow MFC teammate and Life Member in Bill Sewart, who happened to be City Engineer at the Nunawading City Council.



Ray in the 1952 Premiership Team

Ray’s only regret:

Ray’s biggest regret was leaving Mitcham for just the one year, to play for Camberwell in 1947, alongside the South Melbourne legends Bob Pratt and Laurie Nash. In doing so, Ray missed Mitcham’s highly successful year and the ‘nail biting’ 1947 Grand Final. That match was where his beloved Mitcham Tigers defeated a gallant Box Hill FC by one point at the Box Hill home ground at City Oval Box Hill. What a year and Premiership to miss! However, Ray will always be regarded as one of the greatest and most decorated players to have played for Mitcham.