

# Basketball

The pinnacle of the SSPAs sporting competition has been the NSW v Victoria Annual Basketball match

## History

At the 1990 Mt. Evelyn (Vic.) Convention, the SSPA inaugurated a basketball competition between teams of short-statured people from Victoria and New South Wales. The first match was played at the Kilsyth Stadium in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne and resulted in a victory to Victoria by 9 points. The scores were: Victoria 22 New South Wales 13. A trophy was donated for perpetual competition between the two teams and was named the Rosemary Hobbs Trophy, after the S.S.P.A.'s co-founder.

The idea for starting the basketball competition can be traced back to 1989 when two members of the SSPA travelled to the L.P.A. Convention in Baltimore, Maryland and became participants in the Dwarf Athletics Association of America (DAAA) Games. Impressed with the organisation of the various sports, both members came back to Australia with ideas of how short-statured people could be involved in such sports as track and field, swimming and basketball. As basketball was a team sport, it was decided to interest as many S.S.P.A. members as possible in that sport, particularly in the two states with the biggest membership – New South Wales and Victoria. Eventually, training squads were formed and coaches appointed.

Originally, it was hoped that the competition would become an annual event to be held as part of the S.S.P.A. National Convention programme. However, after the inaugural match had been played in 1990, the next match between the two teams did not take place until two years later, at the 1992 Gold Coast (Qld.) Convention. Again, the Victorians won, this time by a smaller margin of 6 points. The scores were: Victoria 16 New South Wales 10. Another two years passed before the two teams played again. In a break from tradition, the match was played on the Queen's Birthday weekend in June in Melbourne. New South Wales broke through for its first victory by defeating Victoria 25-8 – a thrashing by 17 points!

Since 1994, matches have been organised on an annual basis. In fact, in 1997 two games were organised in the one year. In June, 1996, Wodonga, a rural city on the border of Victoria and New South Wales became the next venue for the S.S.P.A. basketball competition. Although not held at the National Convention that year, the decision to hold it at this location on the Queen's Birthday weekend proved to be successful. So successful in fact, that the same event has been held every year since, in conjunction with the S.S.P.A.'s quarterly National Council meeting. The Wodonga basketball weekend has become the second biggest event on the S.S.P.A.'s calendar, behind the National Convention. By 1996, Victoria had won four of the five matches held between the two teams. However, in recent years, New South Wales has made up some ground by winning five of the next six games.

Attempts to develop the basketball competition beyond Victoria and New South Wales have so far proved to be fruitless, for the simple reason that the membership in the other states (South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland) isn't big enough to sustain the numbers required for ongoing basketball squads. Given this scenario, individual

members from those states have been given the opportunity to participate by playing for an "adopted" state e.g. Victoria "recruited" a South Australian as well as a Western Australian member for its team at the 1997 National Convention. Also, these states formed the nucleus of a team known as the "Allies" which played the Victorians at the 1998 National Convention. Although this particular match was an unofficial fixture, the Allies managed to beat Victoria.

While the possibility of developing a national basketball competition for short-statured people in the future is a remote one, both Victoria and New South Wales continue to sustain sufficient numbers of basketball players for its respective training squads. In particular, New South Wales has been able to split its training squad into two distinct teams for a regular competition of its own. This competition started in 1998 between the Eastern Sydney Eagles and the Western Sydney Redbacks. With lesser numbers in Victoria, the emphasis has been on nurturing a junior squad of players from the ages of 8-12 so they can eventually graduate to the senior team's training squad.

In June, 1999, Victoria and New South Wales once again did battle for the Rosemary Hobbs Trophy at the Wodonga Basketball Stadium in Victoria. After an even first half where Victoria led 25-23 in an entertaining shoot-out, the New South Wales team completely dominated the rest of the match scoring 30 points to 4! The final scores: New South Wales 53, Victoria 29. In winning the game, New South Wales not only achieved the highest score by either team in this competition but also the greatest winning margin.

The year 2000 has seen the tenth contest between New South Wales and Victoria. In this contest, held once again at Wodonga Basketball Stadium on the June long weekend, New South Wales made it three wins in a row – the first time that either side had managed the feat in the ten-year history of the competition. In a one-sided contest, New South Wales won 39-17.

In 2001, New South Wales made it four wins in a row by defeating Victoria 64-29 in a one-sided contest.