

Duke Trophy

The Duke Trophy was made in 1952 and donated to the AAIRC by Len Duke, the first Secretary/Treasurer of the AAIRC, with the help of an old school friend Dave Morgan. They started skating at St. Moritz Ice Palais in St. Kilda in June 1946 and both eventually represented Victoria in interstate competition.

There had been Interstate Racing between NSW and Victoria for many years, initially managed by the Ice Hockey Association as an additional attraction to the Interstate Hockey matches at the time however; there was nothing tangible to record the winning teams in these competitions. The inscription on the plate of the original part of the trophy reads "**The Australian Amateur Ice Racing Council Trophy for Interstate Racing**".

By 1951 the AAIRC was formed and had separate associations for Speed Skating in Victoria and NSW and even for a short time in Tasmania, which was the venue for the 1952 Australian Championships. Len felt there should be a separate trophy for Interstate Racing; especially after the Victorian team was very successful in Hobart in 1952. The idea of the skater on the top was born after he won the three distances in the 1951 Australian Championships, and brought back to Melbourne **three beautiful trophies donated by Graeme Smith's father in the form of a globe of the world on which was mounted a speed skater**. (Copy of Newspaper article included). One of these original trophies was donated back to the VSSU (which later became VIRA) after Len's death, and has since been made into the **Best and Fairest Trophy** for the Duke Trophy competition. In 2002, **The Spirit of the Duke Trophy** perpetual trophy was donated by Australian Olympian, **Colin Coates** and is awarded to a skater has the "spirit" of the Duke Trophy.

After a bike accident in 1952 in which Len damaged discs in his spine and was encased in a plaster cast for several months. Len could not skate and defend his titles that year. For various reasons he finally dropped out of participation in Speed Skating. In either 1956 or 1957 and it was suggested that the trophy become "**Duke Trophy**" to keep his name in the sport. This was not widely accepted in Melbourne for a few years, but by **1963 when the competition moved away from the Australian Championships to it's own time slot of Queen's Birthday weekend, the name settled in as the Duke Trophy**.

The original format was a competition between **6 senior men and 2 junior men** with races ranging from quarter mile, through half mile to 1 mile. **Two skaters per State** competed in each race, except for the 1 mile in which there were three skaters per state. The Juniors skated quarter and half mile only, then there was also a **2 mile Relay for the seniors**. By 1955 a 2 mile race for Seniors was included. **The whole program was held over a half hour period on the last night of the Australian Championships**.

Ladies came later in the early 1960's - initially there were only three - with a special trophy for the **Ladies Relay** donated by **Teddi Jenkins of Victoria**, a previous Victorian and National titleholder.

Thanks to Dave Morgan for his reflections.

Dave Morgan

AAIRC Oresident - August 1961 to August 1993

Duke Trophy - Referee - several competitions.