

## The Duke Perpetual Trophy

Written by Len Duke's sister, Lillian

This trophy was donated by my brother, Victorian speed skater Len Duke in 1953, and has been raced for in Interstate competition for the past 50 years, having celebrated its Golden Anniversary at Acacia Ridge Ice Rink, Brisbane in August 2003.

**Leonard Charles Humphry Duke** was born in Melbourne in 1932, grew up in the suburbs of Melbourne and took up skating at St. Moritz Ice Skating Palais on the Upper Esplanade, St. Kilda in 1946. He became interested in speed skating & ice hockey and played in the Juniors for the Monarchs, but speed skating was his main interest. With his long time school friend David Morgan, in 1948 he became a founding member of the Melbourne Amateur Speed Skating Club, for which he wrote the Constitution. He was later the first Secretary-Treasurer of the Australian Amateur Ice Racing Council.

Len won several Victorian and Australian titles over the years and at 17 he was a member of the 1951 Victorian team to go to Sydney to compete in the Australian Championships. That week he won three Senior titles, ¼ mile, ½ mile and 1 mile, setting new Australian records for all three although still a Junior. These records are listed along with those of many other skaters' in the Ampol Book of Sporting Records 1951-87. Earlier records are in the previous issue. For a time was unable to race due to a serious bike accident after which he was encased in plaster from neck to waist for 6 months.

- 1948: Won Victorian Junior ¼ & ½ mile championships  
Won Australian Junior ¼ mile championship  
Foundation member of the M.A.S.S.C.
- 1949: Won Victorian Junior ¼ mile championship
- 1950: Foundation member of Jaguar Speed Skating Club, also Hon. Sec. J.S.S.
- 1951: Honorary Secretary, Cpt-Coach Jaguar Speed Skating Club  
Honorary Secretary of Victorian Speed Skating Union  
Won Victorian Senior ½ mile Championship  
Won Australian Senior ¼, ½ & 1 mile Championships – broke all Aust. Records.  
Won "Rushall Trophy"- "For being Victoria's best skater over all distances".
- 1952: President Southern Flyers Speed Skating Club  
Honorary Secretary of Victorian Speed Skating Union  
Chief Starter of V.S.S.U
- 1953: President of Southern Flyers Speed Skating Club  
Honorary Secretary of V.S.S.U. & Chief Judge  
Honorary Secretary-Treasurer of Australian Amateur Ice Racing Council  
Delegate to Victorian Olympic Council
- 1954: Vice-President of Victorian Speed Skating Union  
Racing Secretary of V.S.S.U  
President of Southern Flyers Speed Skating Club  
Honorary Secretary-Treasurer of Australian Amateur Ice Racing Council  
Delegate to Victorian Olympic Council

Member of Victorian Teams 1948/50/51

He retained his interest in the sport for many years and served on various bodies connected to Speed Skating.

As a young man he was interested in joining the Police force but at 5'10" was under the regulation height of 6 ft. He was eventually able to become a member of the Commonwealth Police Force in his 40s due to a reduction in the height requirement. Unfortunately, he was struck down in 1982 with a brain tumour at 49 & died 6 months later. His wife returned his trophies to the Victorian Speed Skating Union, one of which was modified to become the Best & Fairest trophy for the Duke Perpetual competition. So, his name lives on in the speed skating world and although those who race for the trophy today may not know who he was, there are some who skated in the 50s still connected to the sport who would remember him. He would be very proud to see the present high standard of racing, and to know that with the young skaters coming up the future of the sport is in good hands.

Lillian Dillon  
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