

ASHLEY
COOPER



**S P O R T S
S E R I E S**

INTERNATIONAL TENNIS PLAYER ASHLEY COOPER

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Ashley Cooper
National Library Australia

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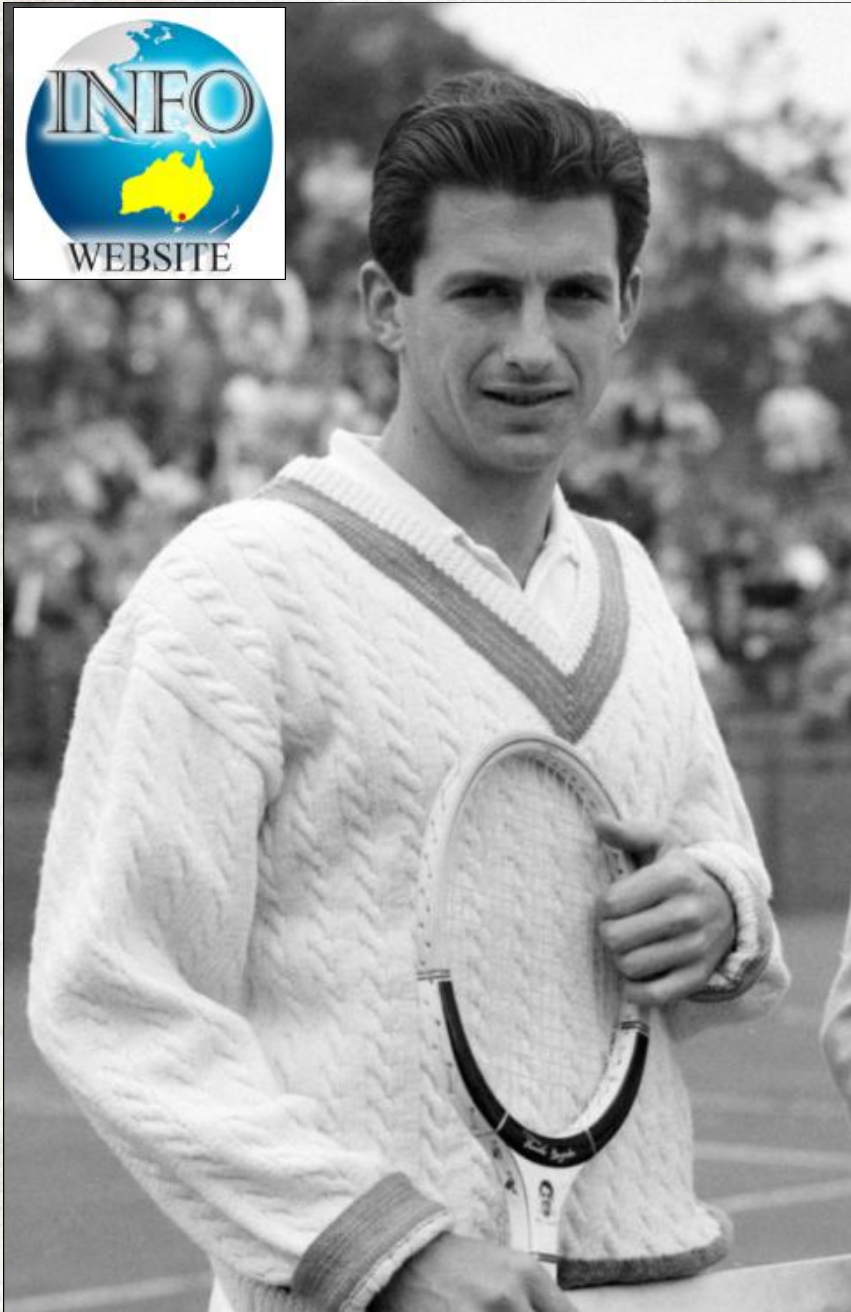
FACTSHEET #295

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

ASHLEY COOPER

Name: Ashley John Cooper
Born: 15 September 1936
Known for: International Tennis Player
Finalist Wimbledon 1957
Winner Wimbledon 1958

Ashley Cooper was an international tennis player and Wimbledon Finalist 1957 (doubles partner Neale Fraser) and Forest Hills. He married Miss Australia 1957, Helen Wood, in 1959.



Wiki CCL 3.0. Courtesy Dutch National Archives.

Ashley Cooper was born the eldest child of Ray Cooper and his wife in 1936 at Melbourne. He later attended the Alexandra Higher Elementary School where his father was a teacher. His mother was also a respected teacher and taught at the Eildon Weir State School where she is remembered as a good, thorough and well liked teacher.

The Cooper family were in the district for around three years and lived in an old school house opposite the General Store at Eildon, Victoria.

Ashley excelled in most sports, though did exceedingly well at cricket and tennis. He often played tennis on the tennis courts located at the southern end of the Alexandra Higher Elementary School (corner Webster and Nihil Streets) and it was here that his tennis skills were first noticed. He also trained on courts at the Burness property and Eildon's Harrison's Guest House.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

ASHLEY COOPER

Ashley practised during school recess and lunchtimes and that while he mostly played against his father, sometimes older boys were called upon to fill in the gap.

Some locals wanted Ashley to play cricket, however his father moved him towards tennis—acting as his coach and helping him to achieve a thorough training regime.

Ashley was trained by Harry Hopman, one of Australia's great coaches, and was first selected to play in the Davis Cup Team in April 1954, requiring him to travel overseas for the first time. In honour of the occasion, the local Alexandra community gifted Ashley with a Shavemaster Electric Razor. A letter from Ashley thanking those behind the gift was received by Roy Cumming and published in the Alexandra Standard on Friday 7 May 1954.

In 1957, Ashley led the Australian Davis Cup team, defeating the United States in the Challenge round at Kooyong. In 1959, Ashley married Helen Wood, who was herself a popular celebrity as the reigning Miss Australia in 1957. Their wedding was a high profile public event which attracted over 3000 people.

Ashley was 5 foot 10 inches tall, right handed and a solidly built player. He excelled with his backhand return of serve which elevated him to one of the best tennis players Australia has ever produced. This was evident when in 1958 he won Wimbledon in both the singles (against Australian Neale Fraser) and in the doubles.

He turned professional on 4 January 1959 and retired in 1962. Upon retirement, Ashley moved to Brisbane where he ran a family tennis and squash complex. He was a tennis player development administrator with Tennis Queensland and sat on the Board of Directors at Tennis Australia. He established the 'Coops' Centre and was a central figure in the early development of tennis player Pat Rafter.

Ashley was inducted into the Sports Australia Hall of Fame in 1987 and has an inscription that reads: 'Give it your best shot'. He was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, Rhode Island, USA, 1991.

Ashley is the older brother of John Cooper, who also played tennis and reached a world ranking of 30 in April 1968. He was a winner at the Davis Cup in 1973 and retired from tennis in 1975.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

ASHLEY COOPER

Ashley died on 22 May 2020 after a long battle with illness. He was aged 83. His death came during the Covid-19 lockdown which robbed the family of a larger funeral.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

- 15 September 1936** Ashley Cooper was born.
- Unknown** The Cooper family moved to Eildon in Central Victoria where they lived in an old school house opposite the Eildon General Store for around three years.
- 1947** Ashley Cooper features in Eildon Weir Primary School Sport's results.
- 1947** A member of the Thornton Junior Cricket Club.
- 1948** Played senior cricket for Eildon Weir.
- 1948** Competed as a junior boy in the annual school sports of the Alexandra Higher Elementary School.
- 1949** Received First Prize for Form 2 at the Alexandra School. (*Alexandra Standard*, 16 December 1949).
- April 1954** Picked to play in the Davis Cup overseas.
- April 1954** Presented with a Shavemaster electric razor as a gift for his selection from a number of Alexandra locals.
- 1956** Finalist French Championships (doubles).
- 1957** Finalist Wimbledon.
- 1957** Finalist Australian Championships (doubles).
- 1957** Runner up at U.S. Championships.
- 1957** Married Miss Australia Helen Wood (Miss Queensland), a grade two teacher at Tinaroo Falls, 80 miles from Cairns.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

- 1957-1958** Ranked world number one amateur tennis player for 1957 and 1958.
- 1958** Winner Australian Championships.
- 1958** Winner Australian Championships (doubles).
- 1958** Winner Wimbledon (opponent Australian Neale Fraser).
- 1958** Winner at U.S. Championships.
- 1958** Finalist Wimbledon (doubles).
- 1958** Winner French Championships.
- 4 January 1959** Turned Professional.
- 1960** Finalist European Grand Prix.
- 1962** Retired from tennis.
- 22 August 2015** Artworkz commenced work on this factsheet.
- 1987** Inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame.
- 1991** Inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, Rhode Island, USA in 1991.
- 2007** Presented with the Officer of the Order of Australia during the Queen's Birthday list for his service to Tennis.
- 2009** Inducted into the Queensland Hall of Fame.
- 22 May 2020** Ashley died aged 83, after a long battle with illness.

TITLES

Four singles and four doubles:

Singles:

Australian Championships: Winner 1957, 1958

French Championships: Semifinalist 1956, 1957, 1958

Wimbledon: Winner 1958

U.S. Nationals: Winner 1958

Doubles:

Australian Championships: Winner 1958

French Championships: Winner 1957, 1958

Wimbledon: Finalist 1958

U.S. Nationals: Winner 1957



*Watch Ashley Cooper
winning Wimbledon in 1958*

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

JUNIOR TENNIS TOURNAMENT AT ALEXANDRA.

Very keen matches prevailed right throughout the tournament among junior contestants for the girls' and boys' singles championships.

Experience gained for A. Shaw, of Gobur, the boys' title against younger players, and he went through to the final with little difficulty.

Promising styles were shown by Bruce Delzoppo and Ashley Cooper, and these lads have the makings of very good players.

Alexandra & Yea Standard
Friday 7 May 1948
Courtesy National Library Australia

NEWSPAPERS

"Schoolboy" in team of seven **COOPER NAMED FOR TENNIS TOUR**

By ALAN TRENGOVE

SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD Ashley Cooper, of Brunswick, who did not leave school until Christmas, has been included in Australia's seven-man tennis team for Wimbledon and America.

The team is the biggest Australia has ever sent overseas.

It is also the youngest.

Members of the team are:

Lewis Hoad, 19, and Ken Rosewall, 19, of N.S.W.; Mervyn Rose, 24; Rex Hartwig, 24; Neale Fraser, 20, and Ashley Cooper, 17, of Victoria; Roy Emerson, 18, of Queensland.

The team will leave Sydney by air on May 8, and will return not later than September 19.

It was also announced yesterday that a women's team would be sent overseas in 1955, "subject to women of suitable calibre being available."

Australian selectors recommended the men's team to the annual interstate tennis conference in Melbourne yesterday. It was unanimously approved.

Cooper, "baby" of the team, is as young as Rosewall and Hoad were when they first toured abroad two years ago.

A bright scholar, he originally hoped to become a school teacher.

He is at present on a year's furlough from studies, and intended to give up big tennis if he had not made the grade in that time.

Fraser, a left-hander, is the son of Victoria's Labor Minister.

The Argus

Thursday 4 February 1954

Courtesy National Library Australia

NEWSPAPERS

CUP TALENT TO GET TENNIS TOUR

MELBOURNE.—Three juniors were included in the tennis team to be sent overseas this year.

THEY were Neil Fraser and Ashley Cooper, of Victoria, and Roy Emerson, Queensland.

Other members of the seven-man team were Lewis Hoad, Mervyn Rose, Rex Hartwig and Ken Rosewall.

The players were approved at the annual conference of the Lawn Tennis Association of Australia yesterday. They would leave on May 9 and return not later than September 19.

The chairman of selectors (Sir Norman Brookes), announcing the team, said the selectors had chosen 17-year-old Cooper and 18-year-old Emerson because they felt an overseas tour would greatly benefit these promising juniors.

In addition, Fraser's play recently had been outstanding.

The itinerary included the French, Wimbledon and U.S. singles and doubles championships as the main tournaments to be contested.

Sir Norman said the selectors did discuss sending two teams abroad this year, but this would involve two managers and a

lot of extra work. It was felt the juniors would benefit by travelling with the senior players.

Mr. C. Sproule (N.S.W.) said the itinerary would allow the team to be split up if this was thought advisable.

Mr. W. Edwards (Queensland) congratulated the selectors on looking ahead with the younger players. He believed that Cooper and Emerson were Australia's future Davis Cup team.

Cup In Sydney

Sydney was unanimously chosen by delegates as the venue for the 1954 Davis Cup Challenge Round.

The matches, in which Australia will defend the Davis Cup, will be played on December 27, 28 and 29.

Tasmanian delegates sought the earmarking of £5000 from the L.T.A.A.'s profit for this year to finance the cost of sending a women's team abroad.

Eventually, it was decided to finance the cost of next year's tour out of the profits of the next Davis Cup Challenge Round.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

NOTICE

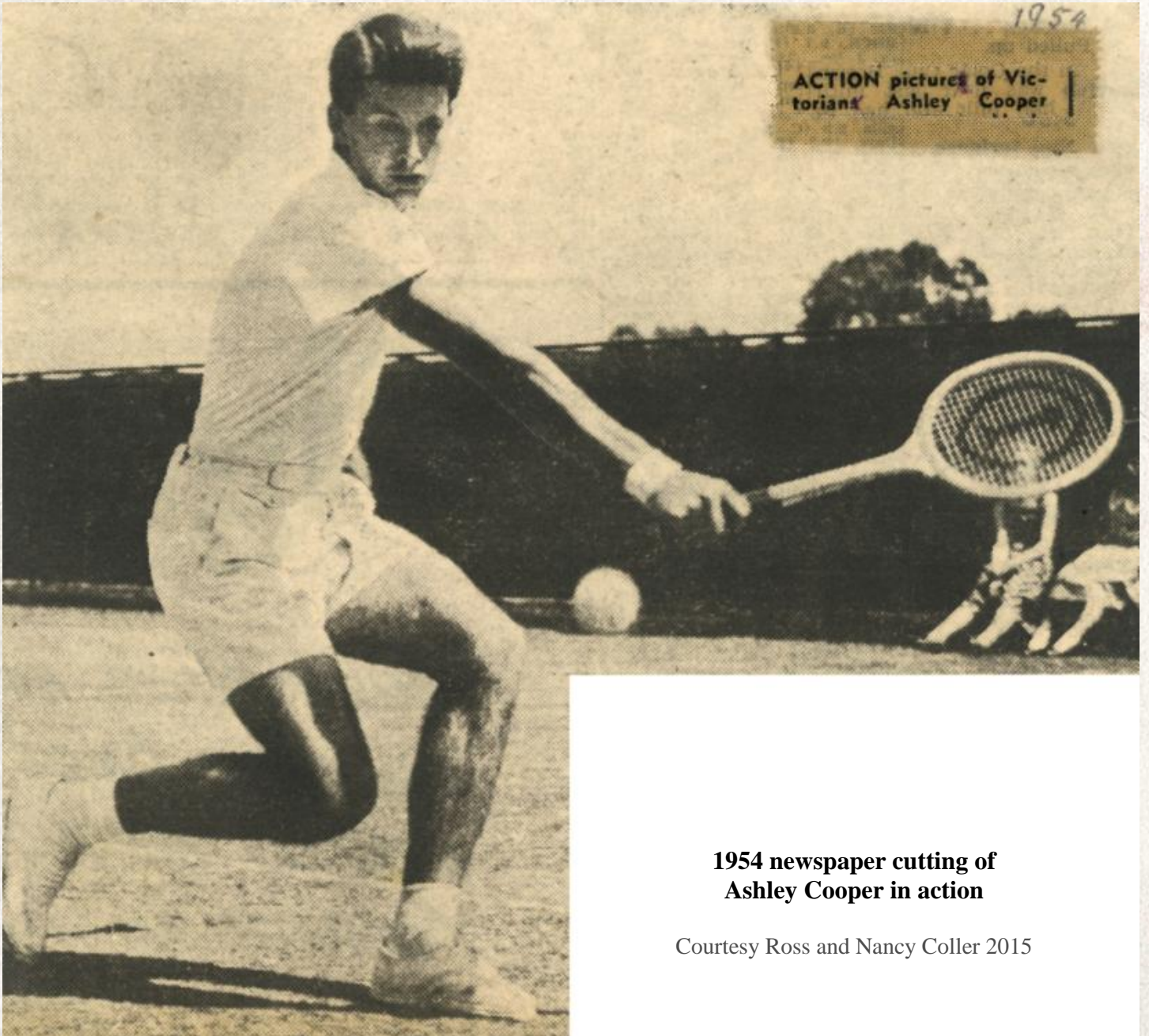
Anyone interested in presentation to **ASHLEY COOPER**, who has obtained selection in the Australian Touring Tennis Team, please contact Thornton 451 immediately.

(Signed) **KATIE ROLLASON.**

Alexandra & Yea Standard
Friday 2 April 1954
Courtesy National Library Australia

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS



**1954 newspaper cutting of
Ashley Cooper in action**

Courtesy Ross and Nancy Collier 2015

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

Presentation

A few weeks ago a presentation of a Shavemaster electric razor was made to Ashley Cooper, who has been selected as a Davis Cup player and will be making the trip overseas. Ashley is a former resident of Alexandra district.

Those who made donations are:—
Mr. A. Girdwood, Mr. and Mrs. Rollason, Mr. E. J. Ryan, Mr. Alan Ryan, Mr. Reg Sparkes, Mrs. Burness, Mrs. Weeks, Mr. R. Gillespie, Cumming, Culhane and Co., Mr. J. Price, Mrs. Reg Payne, Miss M. Dick, Mr. R. Cumming, Mr. J. Hewitt, Mr. B. Milne, and B. Petersen, Alexandra Tennis Association, Rev. S. Taylor, Mr. and Mrs. Reg Robb, Mr. Doug Meldrum, Mr. Brent Collier, Alexandra Tennis Club.

Below is a letter received by Mr. Roy Cumming from Ashley, thanking the donors for the fine gift:

"Will you please convey my appreciation and thanks to those Alexandra district folk who so generously subscribed to the fine gift I received. You can assure them that the razor will not only be most useful, but will remind me of Alexandra days and the folk mentioned in your letter. I am glad to hear you are establishing grass courts at Alex. It's a good move, and when I return I'd very much like to have a hit on them and renew old acquaintances. If the club is interested, I suggest you get in touch with Mr. C. Long, of Spalding's, 405 Lonsdale street. I feel sure that Rex Hartwig, myself and others will be able to make the trip later in the year for an exhibition at your club. Thanks for your best wishes for the trip. I don't expect to do anything startling, but should gain experience and improve my game. Thanks again, and best wishes to your new tennis project.—
Ashley Cooper."

Alexandra & Yea Standard
Friday 7 May 1954
Courtesy National Library Australia



Artworkz

Serving the Community

