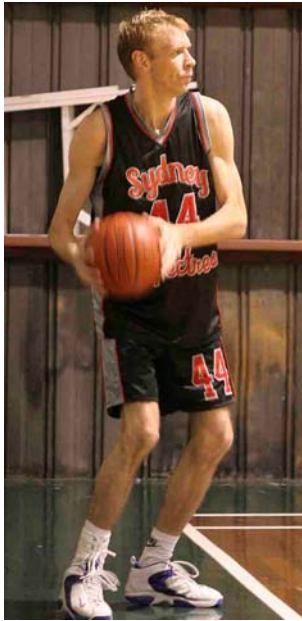


Everyone Welcome • Get Fit • Have Fun

More Than a Ghost of a Chance



Sydney Spectres Gay Basketball Club Was Founded Four Years Ago. Spectres Women's And Men's Teams Have Made Their League's Finals. Dave Randall Tells Their Story

You would think that all the hard work would be rewarded by a trophy, a nice piece of crystal perhaps, but the only recognition for the season's effort was a Runners Up mug. A mug just like you can buy in the supermarket. It could have been a solid silver platter or a Waterford bowl but that wouldn't have made the team spirit any bigger.

Sometimes it's just pushing, shoving and bruising. Sometimes it's a bit worse. Carefully aimed elbows leave fat lips and sore faces. Then there are the trodden on feet and deliberate moves to keep you from doing your best. All out of view of officialdom of course. Sometimes it is just plain old homophobia getting in the way. Straight opponents, in your face, with the sole intention of showing you that you aren't going to make it in their world; who think you can never equal or better them. Well, they were wrong!

About four years ago Jaye Mitchell founded Sydney Spectres Gay Basketball and 2002 saw them competing at the Gay Games in Sydney. Since then Spectres has grown to four registered teams. The group includes Tim; his claims to fame are that he is straight and the best point scorer. His team mates are trying to beat his point score but they don't mind the straight bit; seems to fit with the scene they play in.

They've got Trevor, an ex-Australian representative player; "TJ" is the youngest at sixteen and the oldest is Kevin at forty-six. Kevin gets called "Nanna" by his team mates and the opposition. In this environment that's real progress.

At the Gay Games, Spectres beat the French and the Germans but succumbed to American might. Last year the girls' team made the finals in their division, this year the semis. This year two Spectres men's teams made the finals. These were no small efforts. This was not a cosy low grade league they were playing in. Oh no, this was the City of Sydney Basketball Association, the top amateur league in Sydney full of very serious straights very serious about winning. Gays and lesbians open about their sexuality were not always what this league wanted to see but the Spectres saw the scene as just another obstacle to proving how good they were. A bit like life really!

The girls were disappointed not to be playing. Like the boys they had survived fourteen weeks of round robin competition to be one of the four teams in the finals rounds, only to be knocked out in the semis the week before. But here they were, showing the team spirit and supporting the boys. Division Four men were playing the Knights, very professional looking and sponsorship logos all over their gear. Division Three men were playing Nadds who were mainly security guards and bouncers. It all seemed a pretty tough ask. Sadly, both the Spectres' teams were beaten. It didn't seem to dull the enthusiasm. Every player got a mug. As Brian, who started playing when he was six, said "When we started three years ago we were crap. Now look at us, in the finals, out and proud."

Next season, Spectres will be out to win again in this no holds barred Sydney competition. They aim to send at least one team to the Gay Games in Chicago in 2006.

They train at the Dulwich High School in Seaview Street at 6:15 on Monday evenings. If you want to join the world of dunks, rebounds and blocked shots visit www.sydneyspectres.com or send an email to play@sydneyspectres.com or just rock up for training.

Maybe next year your mug will say "Winners" on it! And you never know, if our community can make even more inroads into the sport, we may be able to add a teensy weensy bit more style to the trophies! Dave Randall dave@randall.name

WWW.SYDNEYSPECTRES.COM

Gay Games VII Chicago • Make New Friends • Social Events

Gay Games VII Chicago • Make New Friends • Social Events