



OLYMPIC ULTRAS SAVE PRECIOUS CLUB RELICS

A clever mix of initiative and teamwork by the Olympic Ultras saw them save a number of priceless relics from Sydney Olympic's former home, just hours before the building was to be demolished. A chance bicycle ride by one of the group led to discussion on their forum, olympicultras.proboards.com, and sparked an expedition to ensure that none of the club's history was left to the elements or the local dump.

Paul Antonopoulos opted for some fresh air on Tuesday, taking his bike down to the water for Sydney Olympic's former clubhouse at Hurlstone Park.

"It was sad to see the club being knocked down," said Antonopoulos, "and I really hoped that there wasn't anything of Olympic's still inside."

Meanwhile, and throughout the past few weeks, one of the hot topics on the Ultras forum was focused on the Hurlstone Park location, its opening and the role it once played as Sydney Olympic's home.

Long-time Olympic fan Manoli Plomaritis has posted on the forum some of his memories from the Hurlstone Park club.

"There was a vision to have our own club at Hurlstone Park," said Plomaritis afterwards via phone, "and I remember the 12 o'clock lunch time buffet, the bouzoukia nights, seeing all the players and Sydney Olympic community together."

"They were the good old days."

He continued, adding, "From what I remembered, the club was doing alright for a while but then started to lose some money, so it was sub-leased and that was that."

It was in that topic thread that members first realised that there

could still be a number of extremely sentimental items to the club worth saving.

"From the discussion on the forum, we thought that the plaque would be our best chance of saving something," mentioned Antonopoulos.

That plaque commemorated the opening of the club by none other than then-Prime Minister Paul Keating.

Taking a detour while at work on Friday morning, Ultras member Spiro Mavridis drove down to the Tennent Parade address to discover workers on site knocking down the few remaining walls.

Mavridis started looking through the ruins before being stopped by one of the workers.

"I told them where I was from and they asked me for a case of beer just to look around," Mavridis told the Ultras, "so we negotiated and I promised him the beer if I could find something of sentimental value."

"That was when he said there were a few things still here."

And, to Mavridis' amazement, there were four precious relics still

on-site.

"Two photographs and two jerseys, all framed," said a proud Mavridis, who could barely contain his joy on the phone.

The photographs were of Sydney Olympic legend goalkeeper Gary Meier and cup-winning Peter Raskopoulos, while the jerseys were both from the 1990s, including one from Olympic's 40th anniversary over ten years ago.

Taking them straight to the Sydney Olympic offices in Belmore Sports Ground, Mavridis delighted club official Chris Kalavas with the treasures he had found.

"When I saw Spiro walk through the door with the frames I was completely shocked," admitted Kalavas.

"This is a part of our history as a club and the entire Board are extremely grateful to the Ultras for saving these items."

Through a combination of chance, good fortune, thought and action, the Olympic Ultras were able to save a number of priceless club relics from the brink and return them to where they hope they will be cherished and honoured.



Olympic Ultras
www.olympicultras.com.au