

# Australia's golden girl delighted to get a bronze



Betty Cuthbert shows her delight with the statue of her in full flight and with mouth agape.

## Larissa Dubecki

Four-time Australian Olympic gold medallist Betty Cuthbert wept yesterday as a statue depicting her in full flight was unveiled outside the MCG.

The 2.75-metre bronze work by sculptor Louis Laumen shows her in full stride in her 1956 Melbourne Olympics victory in the 100 metres.

Ms Cuthbert, 65, flew from her home outside Perth for the ceremony. "I think (the honour) is absolutely marvellous," she said. "It's exactly like I was . . . I always ran with my mouth wide open."

Australia's Golden Girl won three gold medals in Melbourne and staged a remarkable comeback eight years later, winning at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

Her medals reside in the MCG's Australian Gallery of Sport and Olympic Museum.

Now suffering multiple sclerosis and confined to a wheelchair, Ms Cuthbert is well known as a campaigner for funding and education on the debilitating illness.

The ceremony was attended by members of the Australian Olympic Committee and Premier Steve Bracks.

Veteran Australian Olympic official Judy Patching, who fired the starting gun for Ms Cuthbert's three Melbourne events, described his close friend as "a great athlete, but modest to the point of being humble, and she's proven to be an even greater person".

Ms Cuthbert's statue joins one of cricket legend Donald Bradman. They are the first of 10 statues of MCG sporting heroes commissioned by Tattersalls to comprise a Parade of Champions.

Statues of footballer Ron Barassi and cricketer Keith "Nugget" Miller will be unveiled in coming months, with all 10 statues due to be finished by the start of the Commonwealth Games in 2006.

# Golden turns bronzed

By TANYA GILES

AUSTRALIA'S golden girl, Betty Cuthbert, sobbed as a statue honouring her achievements was unveiled at the MCG yesterday.

The bronze statue captures Cuthbert in full stride as she raced to victory in the 100m at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games.

"I think it's absolutely marvellous. It's exactly like I was ... running with my mouth wide open," Cuthbert said, with tears in her eyes.

Cuthbert won three of her Olympic gold medals at the MCG for the 100m, the 200m and the 100m relay. She fought off a foot injury to win her fourth gold in the inaugural 400m women's race in Toyko eight years later.

Cuthbert, 65, who lives in Perth, said she was blessed with an ability to run. "A gift to run ... was given to me by God and I had to use it to the best of my ability," she said.

Cuthbert, who has battled multiple sclerosis and almost died after a brain hemorrhage last year, said she hoped her life would encourage young Australians to pursue their dreams.

"If they take on any sport, or anything they really believe in, stick to it, no matter what happens, because you do get setbacks. Stick to it and it will happen for you," she said.



**Golden girl:** Betty Cuthbert yesterday. Picture: BILL MCAULEY

# Bronze tribute, golden spirit

NOT for the first time, Betty Cuthbert's jaw dropped at the MCG yesterday.

The original Golden Girl of Australian sport was moved to tears when she saw the new statue of her at the stadium where she won three sprinting gold medals at the 1956 Olympic Games.

She cried after the Premier, Steve Bracks, helped her to unveil sculptor Louis Laumen's magnificent bronze depiction of her in full flight as she hits the tape at the finish of the 100m — her mouth wide open.

"I don't know why, but I always ran with my mouth open," Cuthbert said.

"In fact, it threw my jawbones out slightly and they still click when I open and close my mouth."

-So Laumen got that right. In fact, he got everything right.

The guest list, which included many eminent Olympic athletes and officials, was unanimous that the statue, now standing near gate six and light tower two, is a striking work of art.

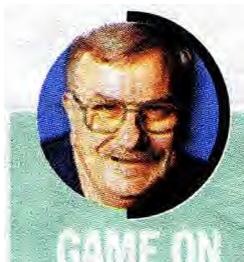
And Cuthbert, who described it publicly as "absolutely beautiful," later confided that she was equally impressed by Laumen's technical accuracy.

She said he had captured her sprinting technique of driving off her back leg, and the relaxed manner she adopted.

"It is perfect — there is nothing I would change about it," she said.

The Melbourne Cricket Club has commissioned Laumen to produce 10 statues for a Parade of Champions, all of which will be in place by the time the stadium redevelopment is completed for the Commonwealth Games in 2006.

Cuthbert is the second to be



RON REED

unveiled after Australia's greatest cricketer, the late Sir Donald Bradman

Football legend Ron Barassi will be unveiled next month, with cricketer Keith Miller to follow.

Footballers Haydn Bunton, Dick Reynolds and Leigh Matthews; cricketers Dennis Lillee and Bill Ponsford and sprinter Shirley Strickland-de la Hunty will be the others to line the parade.

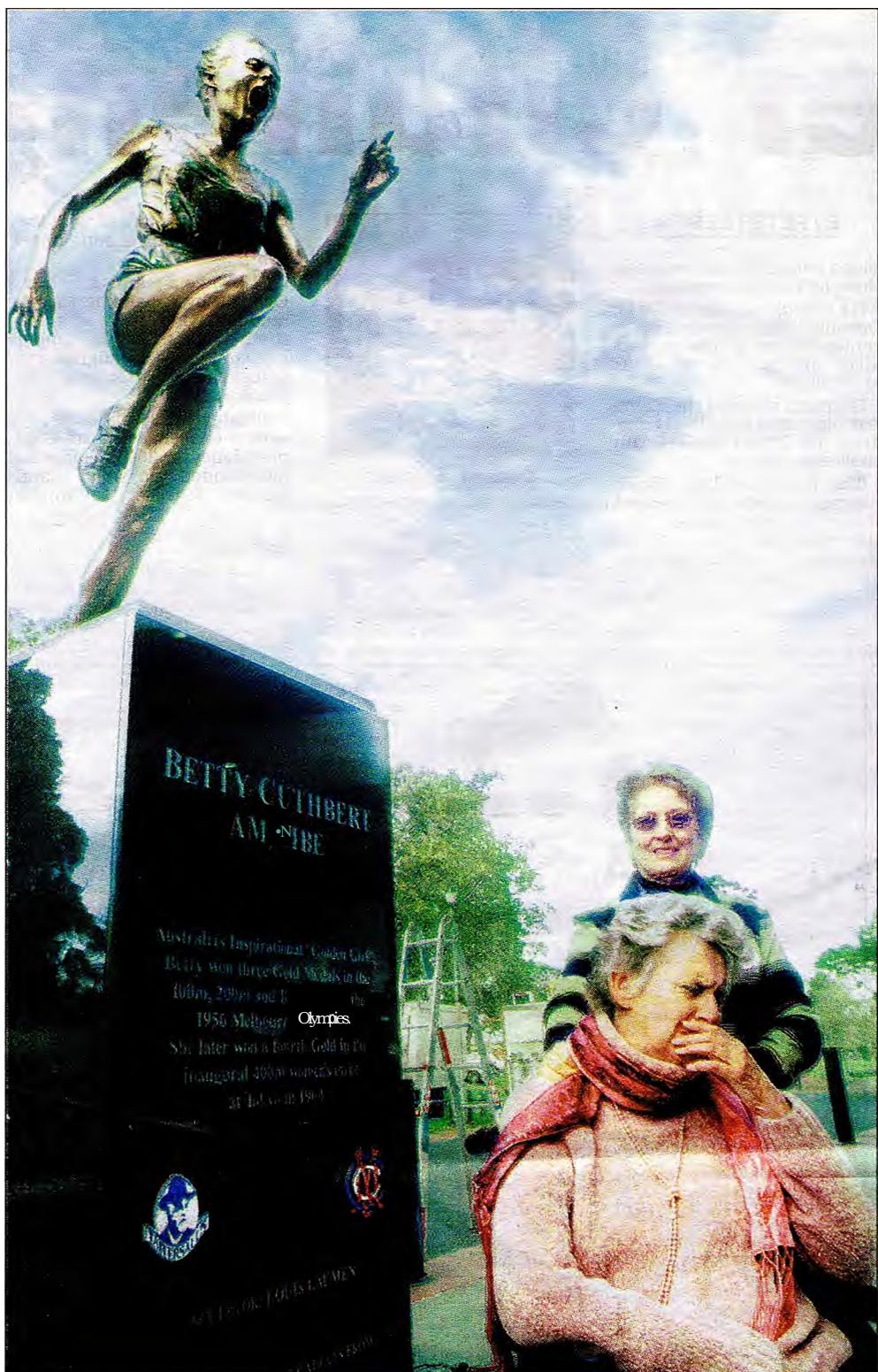
De la Hunty, a triple gold medallist herself and a contemporary of Cuthbert, wasn't at the unveiling, but will be at the MCG today for another function leading into the stadium's 150th birthday celebrations next month.

The two women — who both live in Western Australia — will watch today's AFL blockbuster between the Brisbane Lions and Collingwood together.

However, it is fair to suggest that even though they won gold together in a relay, they are not close friends.

To pick up on that, you only had to listen closely to well-known Olympic identity Julius "Judy" Patching's tribute speech to Cuthbert yesterday.

Patching was the official starter at the Melbourne Games and, later, a team official at Cuthbert's other two Olympics, and has always been a close friend and mentor.



Art and soul: Betty Cuthbert sheds a tear after her statue is unveiled at the MCG yesterday. Cuthbert said sculptor Louis Laumen got everything right, down to her open mouth. Picture: BILL MCAULEY

He reminded guests that Cuthbert had donated her medals and memorabilia to the MCG's Olympic museum, where they could be appreciated by the public.

Others, he said, naming nobody, had "flogged" theirs, which was "quite contrary to the spirit and success of this girl."

De la Hunty sold all her memorabilia last year, with the unidentified buyers giving it to the MCG.

Cuthbert, who has long used a wheelchair because she suffers from multiple sclerosis, came close to death when she

suffered a stroke about 18 months ago, and has endured another trauma with a con-man swindling her and her carer and friend, Rhonda Gilham, out of much of their savings.

"Even when she was robbed, Betty wouldn't sell her medals to pay her debts," Mrs Gilham said yesterday.

Be that as it may, the good news is that the museum, which closed yesterday for the duration of the redevelopment, now has both sets.

So posterity is the winner.

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WITH one year to go until the start of the Athens Olympics, Australian fans can now apply for tickets for all sports.

The ticket brochure is available from Sydney-based company Sportsworld Pacific.

"We have been delighted by the level of initial interest in travelling to Athens and are confident, thanks to our guaranteed ticket allocation, we will be able to meet most people's requests for specific tickets," Sportsworld general manager Anne Meacham said.

AAP

FOOTBALL

## Barassi joins MCG's parade of champions



A statue of Ron Barassi was unveiled outside the Dick Reynolds Gate at the MCG yesterday, as the Australian Army Band played the theme songs of Melbourne, Carlton, the Kangaroos and Sydney. Barassi is the third of 10 sportspeople to be honoured with an MCG statue and the full complement will form the Parade of the Champions, due to be in place by the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Louis Laumen's Barassi bronze — capturing the ferocity of the ruck-rover in his playing days, with jaw set, eyes ablaze, arms out and right leg straight — joins statues of Don Bradman and Betty Cuthbert. Picture: Jason South



**That's me:** Ron Barassi at the MCG yesterday where his statue was unveiled. Picture: JON HARGEST

# Barassi larger than life and loving it

RON Barassi acknowledged his good fortune yesterday as a statue honouring his sporting achievements was unveiled outside the MCG.

The bronze statue, by sculptor Louis Laumen, shows Barassi launching a long kick.

Barassi was surprised by the statue's sheer size — but pleased with the likeness and the intense expression on his face.

"It is fantastic. I look as though I really mean what I'm trying to do," he said.

**By KATE  
UEBERGANG  
and RON REED**

"It was based on a photograph of me, but I can't remember the game now.

"To see that statue brings back a lot of memories of being a player. I had a lot of good fortune."

Barassi is now cast in bronze alongside Sir Donald Bradman and Betty Cuthbert in the MCC's evolving Parade of Champions, which will eventually pay tribute to 10 of the

greatest figures to grace the great stadium, 150 years old this week.

Yesterday's ceremony had a melancholy moment when the spirit of Barassi's long-dead father — also a league footballer — was invoked.

Among the audience was the last man to see Ron Barassi senior alive.

Alan Eadie, 86, was a captain in the army unit in which Barassi's father was serving when he was killed by a sea mine in Tobruk in 1941, but he had never met his old

comrade's famous son until they were introduced yesterday.

Barassi said when he had asked the old officer for details about what happened, he was advised "not to go there".

Mr Eadie was happy to elaborate later to the **Herald Sun**.

"There was nothing embarrassing about it at all, no other inference — his father was simply killed in the line of duty," he said.

"He was a good bloke, very loyal to his friends."



**Above:** Dick's grandson, Joel, with grandmother Jean.

**Left:** Dick Reynolds' widow, Jean, and John Birt with the statue of her late husband.

Pictures: TRAV MUNRO

## Statue fit for 'King'

THE tenacity and skill of Essendon legend Dick Reynolds is immortalised in a statue unveiled yesterday at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Reynolds, a three-time Brownlow medallist, who died two years ago at 87, is a major part of Bomber history.

"King Richard" Reynolds was a legendary rover who played 320 games and was a member of four premierships-winning sides.

He coached the Bombers for 22 years.

The statue is the fifth of 10 commissioned for Tattersall's Parade of the Champions.

Reynolds' widow Jean yesterday watched former Bombers star rover and family friend John Birt unveil the statue.

Dick's grandson, Joel, plays with the 2004 Bombers and was with his grandmother for the unveiling.

# Greatest Vic bat joins MCG parade

By **STEVE WALDON**

THE statue of Bill Ponsford depicts the prolific run-scorer setting off for a run after driving the ball through covers.

The eyes and set of his mouth suggest he knows he need not bother; that ball is already being retrieved from the gutter by a dejected fieldsman, and Ponsford's score has increased by four.

He has the merest hint of a knowing smirk — a satisfied batsman's Mona Lisa smile.

Sculptor Lou Laumen has captured something else about Ponsford — a posterior for posterity, as it were. He has moulded Ponsford's formidable rump, the bane of wicket-keepers everywhere who, in standing up to the stumps to a spinner, would have been lucky to see the bowler's delivery, let alone the arrival of the ball.

Which, by the way, Ponsford consistently sent to all parts of a ground during his great career.

This was the recurring theme at yesterday's unveiling outside the MCG of the ninth in the Parade of Champions, a series of 10 statues celebrating the sporting achievements of Ron Barassi, Betty Cuthbert and Don Bradman among others.

Ponsford, it was repeated, accumulated runs in such a manner that he must have seemed to despairing bowlers as immovable as the bronze statue commemorating his feats.

His obduracy, you expect, must have more than troubled opposing captains.

You could imagine one exasperated skipper approaching the Victorian and Australian batsman and trying to reason with him: "Now look, chap, you are either obstinately refusing to go out, or resolutely insisting on staying in. Either way, the net effect is the same, and my bowlers might as well be tossing down lemon meringue pies or tennis balls.

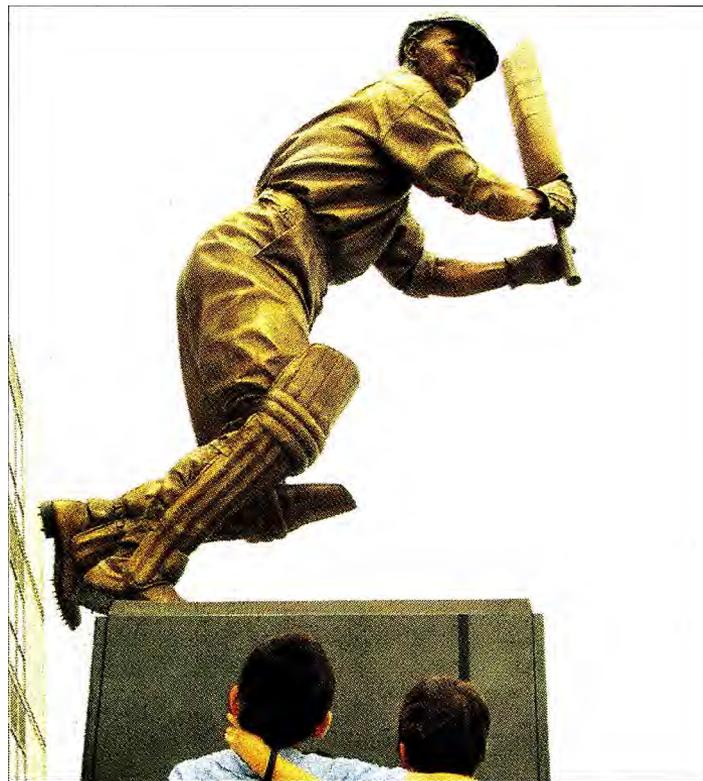
"Now that you have reached 400, perhaps you might entertain some encouragement to dolly up a catch or permit the passage of the ball past your legs and on to your stumps?"

Ponsford's sons, Bill and Geoff, and subsequent generations of Ponsfords were there to hear former Test opener Colin McDonald's warmly eloquent recollections of Bill Ponsford.

"(He) was quite simply the greatest Victorian batsman of the 20th century," he said.

"I could stop now, because that alone is an adequate justification for the commissioning of his statue at this great stadium."

"Ponny" scored centuries in the first and last of the 29 Tests he played from 1924, and amassed 13,819 runs in his 14 years of first-class cricket. In 87 innings for Victoria, he accrued 6902 runs to secure an average of 86.27.



**Man on the run: Bill Ponsford's great-grandchildren Ed and Alex Brunetti admire the statue of their forebear, unveiled at the MCG yesterday.**

PICTURE BY SCALA

So many of his best innings were on the MCG, and it seemed fitting that he worked there for 37 years, retiring as office manager in 1969. He died in 1991.

The last statue in the parade, to be unveiled before next year's Boxing Day Ashes Test, will show Dennis Lillee in full and

ferocious flight. Very quick early, and guileful as his career closed, Lillee might have tested Ponsford's occupation of the crease had they met in Sheffield Shield cricket in the same era. Now, such delicious contests can only play in our imaginations.