The Games Are Not the Same

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The Political Economy of Football in Australia

Edited by
Bob Stewart

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Preface

While this book is all about football, it does not pretend to be a chronicle of every star player, successful coach, or great match. Neither does it list every premiership team, leading goal kicker, or best player award. This is a book about the business and management of football, and the ways in which the various football codes evolved from essentially community-based sports underpinned by a local supporter base, into multi-layered enterprises that compete in the mass entertainment industry.

The focus will be on Australian football, rugby league, rugby union and soccer, and the different ways in which they have responded to changing contextual and environmental conditions over their lifetime as codified and organised sport activities. These contextual factors include the growth of consumer capitalism, urbanisation and demographic change, competition from other leisure activities, the cultural dominance of media (and in particular television), the commercial dominance of the corporate sector, and finally, government policy. The book will be also framed by the premise that while each of the codes and their respective leagues has been transformed over the last sixty years, there has been considerable tension both between the codes and within them, as stakeholders who wanted change battled those who resisted it.

The book covers both the community and high-performance sides of each code, although the major focus will be on the top end of sports-town, where high performance and commercial connections matter most. In other words, most of the analysis will centre on the premier and national leagues for each code and the ways they shifted, restructured and ultimately reinvented themselves to varying degrees as corporate enterprises.

The book seeks to reveal the causes of the changes that took place in each code and league, and to identify crucial incidents and turning points. In doing so, it will discuss the roles of the key actors in the transformation, which include governing bodies, officials, players, sponsors, fans and broadcasters, and what they stood to gain and lose from the changes. Special attention will be given to the fans and how they resisted some of the more corporate intrusions into their games.

In this respect, a major theme running through the analysis is the question of just who owns the games, and whether the cultural significance of each code has been destroyed by its marketisation and corporatisation.

The book will also examine the current status of the football codes and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. This examination will be underpinned by the proposition that each code is operating in a competitive marketplace, where effective planning and policy making are crucial ingredients of future successes. The book will end with a wrap-up of football's evolution in Australia and a discussion of various scenarios for each code.

The idea to bring together all the football codes under the same analytical umbrella, and chart their progress, arose out of a number of Melbourne-based conferences organised by Victoria University's Football Studies Unit. It was apparent that while many writers had a conceptual handle on specific aspects of a code's development, there was no one doing multi-code work that examined their business operations. Previous books on football in Australia focused on a single code, which immediately eliminated a large part of the context within which to explain its development. As a result, the Football Studies Unit resolved to initiate writing projects that integrated the codes. This book is a first step in making the project happen.

It is anticipated that this comparative analysis of the main football codes in Australia will not only show how each game developed in either similar or different ways, but also how the development of one code was influenced by the development of another. Moreover, more sport fans than ever before in Australia follow at least two football codes, and this book will, for the first time, give the reader a broad understanding of the relationships and tensions between the codes, and explain just how each football code changed in the ways it did.

The Political Economy of Football
Framing the Analysis

Bob Stewart

Why Football?

By any measure football is the most popular sport in the world. It has been estimated that more than 210 million people play the game, including 105 million in Asia and around 50 million in Europe.[1] Football also has a massive following and, apart from the Olympic Games, attracts more television viewers than any other sporting event. There are many explanations for the global popularity of football, ranging from its aesthetics and theatrics to its camaraderie, physicality and even discipline.[2] One of the more novel explanations comes from Desmond Morris, an English anthropologist and sports fan, who suggested football meets a deep-seated need for tribal identity, and provides an archetypal ritual where fans can relive ancient ceremonies and social practices, and thereby compete for power, status and recognition.[3] According to Morris, football tribes are led by tribal elders who comprise the club president or chairperson, board members and senior officials, coaches, fitness advisors and medical support staff. The elders and players enact tribal rituals that both reinforce

the sport's values and regulate the behaviours of its participants. Rituals include mid-week commentary, pre-game preparation, the display of signs and slogans that emphasise discipline and endeavour, and pre-match addresses that urge players to selflessly contribute to the greater good. The players are the tribal heroes, and are cheered and lauded, and perform on the field of play until their time is up, in which case they are replaced by newly trained warriors. There are also many tribal trappings like player outfits, club photos, club colours, insignia, badges, emblems and trophies that provide colour, noise and public exposure. Central to the tribal practices are the tribal-followers, or fans, who demonstrate their passion and commitment by proudly displaying their loyalty, and accentuate inter-tribal rivalries by purchasing memorabilia, dressing in club colours and inciting the followers of other teams and rival tribes. They also compose tribal chants and team songs, which are used not only to assert their identity, but to also intimidate rival tribes. In short, football has an unrivalled capacity to 'bring people together' and help them define their 'sense of identity and belonging'.[4]

What Is Football?

While football taps into a universal need to establish strong and lasting tribal identities, and occupies vastly more cultural and commercial space that other sports, there is no agreement on what is meant by the term 'football' and what comes under the football umbrella. In Australia in particular, football is a contested descriptor of an array of team games that involve the movement of an oval or spherical ball by hand or foot, and where the aim is to gain territory or kick goals. To get the record straight, there are at least six significant games that fit the above description, and which at some time or another use the word football in their name. The first is association football, which originated in England in the 1860s, and gradually diffused to most parts of the world.[5] It has been described as soccer, the world game, and even the beautiful game, but more recently its nomenclature has settled down and it is now universally known as football. The second is American football, which was once called gridiron and is frequently abbreviated to just plain football, but which has now slotted comfortably into the sporting lexicon as American football. The third code is Australian football, which has gone through a number of name

changes in its long history. As Rob Hess and Matthew Nicholson indicate in Chapter 3, it originated as Melbourne rules, shifted to Victorian rules, and subsequently became Australian Rules, or Aussie Rules in its abbreviated form. At the moment there is no agreement as what it should be called. Some commentators opt for Australian Rules football and others prefer Australian football, while those new to the code often refer to it as AFL, which is a direct reference to the name of Australian football's national league. Most fans, though, call it football, or footy for short. The fourth code is Gaelic football, which originated in Ireland and for the most part is played there, with pockets of the game located in countries with strong Irish-immigrant communities. There is little ambiguity about this game's name, which arises out of its strong links to Irish nationalism. The fifth code is rugby union, which, like association football, originated in England and spread to many other countries. It has been variously called rugger, the game they play in heaven, or just union. For the most part, and unlike soccer fans, rugby union fans rarely use the term football to label the contemporary game. The sixth code is rugby league, which originated as a breakaway game from union, but quickly became a strong and self-reliant competition in the northern counties of England before spreading to western Europe and Australia. Rugby league was once championed as the greatest game, and the people's game, but is now more modestly known as league, or, as is the case with soccer and Aussie Rules, just football.

In this book, four football codes will be discussed. They are, in chapter order, Australian Rules football, rugby league, rugby union and association football. However, in view of the fact that three of these codes often use the term football to label the game, it is important to establish some agreement on the code titles to both ensure consistency and avoid confusion. With this requirement in mind, it has been decided to use the following terms: Australian football, rugby league, rugby union and soccer. At the same time it is conceded that this nomenclature will not satisfy some purists, and that other labels may be convincingly applied to each of the above codes. It is also clear that football as a game descriptor has important ideological, commercial and cultural significance, and the code that can claim ownership of the football term will have an important competitive advantage. As Matthew Nicholson has noted elsewhere, the battle over its ownership

in the Australian sporting landscape has just begun.[6] At the moment it is unclear as to who will win the football nomenclature war.

Understanding the Evolution of Football in Australia

As Chapter 2 notes, Australians are intensely proud of their sporting traditions and have a particular passion for the football codes. Moreover, Australia is the only country in the world that supports four different professional football leagues, which are the Australian Football League (AFL), the Football (soccer) Federation of Australia A-League, the National Rugby League (NRL) and the Super 14 rugby union competition, which also includes teams from New Zealand and South Africa. However, it is one thing to support so many national football leagues, have a broad collective knowledge of the various football codes played in Australia, and be able to list the dates of major events and critical incidents. It is another thing to understand what all the events and incidents mean, demonstrate how they shaped the subsequent development of the codes, and explain how it is that a nation of only 20 million people can sustain the viability of four disparate and distinctive football codes at the professional level.

This book of readings will not only highlight what and when things happened, but also provide a reference-point by which to compare developments in one code with developments in another. The readings also go a bit further, analytically speaking, by providing readers with a conceptual framework that locates the events and incidents in a context, and breaks down their progress into discrete stages and periods, where a particular stage or period reveals something important about how and why the code changed in the way that it did. The evolution of the codes will be framed by a model of sport-as-business that sees sport in general going through a number of developmental phases over the last fifty years.

This metamorphosis into sport-as-business begins with sport as a recreational and cultural practice where sport organisations are rudimentary, their revenue streams are small, sport is played mainly for fun, and activities are organised and managed by volunteer officials. This model is often described as a kitchen-table approach to sport management, since the game is administered by a few officials making key decisions from a member's home.[7] It has some strengths since it not only ensures the involvement of grassroots players and

members, and provides a strong local community club focus, but it also nurtures a strong set of values that centre on playing the game for its own sake, and the concomitant ideal of amateurism.[8] At the same time, it perpetuates a primitive system of management driven by an administrative committee made up of a few elected members and self-appointed officials. There is the president who is the public face of the club or association, and a secretary who keeps things ticking over by maintaining a member register, organising others to manage teams and run events, and maintaining the clubrooms and playing facilities. There is also a treasurer who looks after the financial affairs of the organisation. The treasurer is more often than not unfamiliar with the theory and principles of accounting, but makes up for a lack of expertise with a mind for detail, and a desire to ensure receipts run ahead of expenses.

The second phase is commercialisation, or, as it is sometimes called, the traditional professional model, where more revenue streams are utilised, and both staff and players are paid for their services.[9] Whereas the kitchen-table model depends on member subscriptions, player registration fees and social activities for its financial viability, the commercialised sport model uses sports' commercial value to attract corporate and other sponsors. In this phase, sports that have the capacity to draw large crowds increasingly understand that these crowds can be used to attract businesses who want to increase product awareness, secure a special and exclusive sales channel, or obtain access to a market segment that will be receptive to their product.[10] Sport is still a recreational and cultural practice, where the sport's overall development is the primary goal, but there is also an emerging or secondary strategy that focuses on elite development and the building of pathways by which players can move to the premier league or competition.

The third phase is bureaucratisation, where the structures of sport organisations become more complex, administrative controls are established, and functional specialisation increases.[11] This phase is heavily dependent upon its antecedent phase, since an effective bureaucracy requires additional resources. In this phase club, league and association structures are transformed so as to include a board of directors whose prime responsibilities are to set the strategic direction and ensure compliance with government regulation.[12] This, then,

establishes an organisational divide between the steerers (the board) and the rowers (the chief executive officer and operational staff), who are expected to implement the board's plans and policies.[13] In addition, a business-like set of functions and processes are created, which are built around administrative support, marketing, finance, game development, coaching, player development and the like. In this phase less management space is given to the sport-as-recreation-and-cultural-practice model, and more to the sport-as-business model.

The fourth and final phase is corporatisation, where sport embraces the business model by valuing brand management as much as it does player and fan relations.[14] Revenue streams are increasingly dominated by sponsorships and broadcast rights fees, merchandise sales are deepened, and the need to secure a competitive edge overrules the desire to hold on to old traditions.[15] This is the phase in which players become full-time employees, the market for the game is expanded, and merchandise that bears the names, colours, and logos of clubs is sold to fans across the nation and around the world.[16] At the same time, associations are established to protect player interests, and a formal industrial relations system is created that leads to collective bargaining agreements and codes of conduct. The marketing process also becomes increasingly more sophisticated as the sport club, association or league becomes a brand, members and fans become customers, sponsors become corporate partners, and the brand name and image is used to strengthen corporate partner arrangements and merchandising arms.[17] This phase also features a move towards managerialism, whereby sport becomes more accountable to its stakeholders for its performance and use of resources.[18] This is particularly evident in sport's relationship with government, where government funding becomes increasingly contingent upon sport meeting certain specific and agreed-upon outcomes. This focus on managerialism also leads to greater transparency through an emphasis on performance measurement. Under this framework it is appropriate to not only measure player performance, but also things like internal processes and efficiency, financial performance, market performance, employee development, player behaviour, and even social responsibility. Finally, sport becomes more regulated, being defined both by government-framed parameters and legislation, and internal measures. The more-government-bound controls involve venue safety,

anti-discrimination programs and crowd-control policies.[19] Internal regulation is highly visible within professional sport leagues and competitions, where player recruitment is governed by drafting rules, player behaviour is constrained by a combination of collective agreements and codes of conduct, salaries are set under a total wage ceiling, revenues are redistributed from the most wealthy to the most needy clubs and associations, and games are scheduled to ensure the lowest cost and greatest revenue.[20] While this type of corporate regulation can be problematic because of its heavy emphasis on bureaucratic control and detailed performance measurement, it also creates cartel discipline, which, as Braham Dabscheck notes in Chapter 7, can improve the overall viability of a sport competition by creating a common purpose, setting a clear strategic direction and securing strong leadership. A summary of each phase in the sport-as-business evolution is provided in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Sport-as-business Evolutionary Phases and Features

	Values	Revenue focus	Structural focus	Management focus
STAGE 1 Kitchen-table	Amateurism Volunteerism	Member funds Social club income	Management committee	Sustaining operations
STAGE 2 Commercial	Viability of sport Member services	Gate receipts Sponsorship	Management portfolios	Marketing the club
STAGE 3 Bureaucratic	Efficient use of sport resources Accountability	Corporate income Merchandising	Divisions and departments	Improving club efficiency
STAGE 4 Corporate	Delivering outputs Building the brand	Brand value Broadcast rights	Board policymaking Staff operations	Increasing club value Regulating constituents

A detailed analysis of corporate sport's features was undertaken by Foster, Greyser and Walsh in their book *The Business of Sports,*

where they identified not only those features that sport shares with the world of business, but also those features that differentiate it from the world of business.[21] The main areas of commonality are an emphasis on leadership and strategy, revenue growth and value creation, building and sharing value-chain profits, product quality and innovation, building brand equity, converting fans and customers into core business pillars, and finally, establishing a global market. The areas of difference are also important since they reveal sport's special structures that make its effective management both more complex and more subtle. They include the centrality of on-field success, having to balance multiple objectives, the need to manage in a fishbowl climate, the need to support the weakest and handicap the strongest, the construction of revenue pools and rules for redistributing funds, treating players as business assets, the importance of disciplining players and coaches who behave badly, and finally, the capacity to view sport as an integral ingredient in the entertainment-cocktail.[22] But despite their increasingly sophisticated commercial arrangements, many sport clubs and associations still have trouble balancing their books, and transforming 'income into profits'.[23]

Once a sport has moved through all of these stages we can say it has become fully captured by the sport-as-business model.[24] The cultural dimensions of sport, which focus on its capacity to provide meaning, identity and sociability, are still relevant, but an increasing amount of resources are allocated to sport's commercial imperatives, which in the corporate phase is essentially about attracting fans, selling merchandise, securing sponsors, getting the best broadcast rights deal, and building the brand.[25] In other words, cultural and community values are subordinated to business and commercial values, where, according to Stephen Wagg, professional players became the standard bearers for consumer capitalism.[26]

As Wagg's comment suggests, the sport-as-business model is not without its critics. According to John Stewart, the increasingly rationalised and consumerised sport landscape of the 1980s not only created commodified athletic activity, but also provided the platform for its corruption and dehumanisation.[27] In their analysis of English football in the 1990s, Paul Dempsey and Kevan Reilley concluded that the beautiful game had descended into a corporate mire and been slaughtered by the intrusion of big money, and that community control had

become nothing more than 'sentimental claptrap'.[28] Ed Horton, another critic of soccer's corporate seduction, lamented that while the game had secured 'new-found wealth', it had degenerated into an 'avaricious and expensive circus', become 'aloof from its supporters', and 'sold its soul'.[29] However, even the critics recognised a degree of inevitability about sport's adaptation of the sport-as-business model. David Conn, in another study of English football in the 1990s, found that the game was no longer guided by human force, and predicted that it would 'follow the course of every industry that has been subjected to the divisive acid of market forces'.[30] According to Anthony King, these market forces ultimately 'Thatcherised' English football and forced administrators to improve management efficiency, broaden clubs' revenue base, and understand that economic failure may lead to insolvency and closure.[31]

Preconditions for the Development of Corporate Football

A precondition for the transition from the kitchen-table model to the sport-as-business model is an industrial, market-oriented economy where most people are educated to higher level secondary school, with a majority of the workforce employed in the service sector and a minority in agriculture.[32] As a result society becomes highly urbanised, new technology increases productivity, leisure time expands, and the desire to engage in sports and games, as either players or spectators, becomes increasingly strong.[33] These conditions not only produce high disposable incomes that can be spent on sport activities, but also provide the capital base for the building of community sport infrastructure, the establishment of professional sport leagues, and the staging of mega-sport events.[34]

Australia has always been a relatively wealthy nation, which dates back to the 1850s when the discovery of gold led to a large increase in the nation's living standards. Melbourne and Sydney in particular became two of the world's wealthiest cities, and since that time Australia has used its strength in the pastoral and mining industries to develop an internationally competitive economy that has generated high per-capita incomes.[35] It also spawned a highly tuned consumer culture that initially created a 'car owning democracy' and subsequently led to the mass consumption of television sets, household appliances and, more recently, computers and mobile phones.[36]

Apart from a decline in economic activity in the late 1980s (it was, according to then-Federal Treasurer Paul Keating, the recession we had to have), the last twenty-five years has produced significant economic growth. John Edwards, who was an advisor to Keating, found that Australia grew more rapidly than all other industrialised nations, including the USA, during this period.[37] It is therefore not surprising that the most recent United Nations human development index, which measures national achievements in the areas of life expectancy, adult literacy rates and gross national output, ranks Australia third behind Norway and Iceland.

The other precondition for the emergence of the sport-as-business model is a strong sporting culture that is embedded in the national psyche. As Matthew Nicholson and Rob Hess highlight in Chapter 2, Australians value sport so highly that it sometimes becomes an obsession. Moreover, this obsession covers all levels of sport, ranging from community commitment to suburban and country sport competitions, to nationwide support for our international sport teams and individual athletes.

Periodising the Emergence of Corporate Football

It is one thing to argue that Australia was a prime candidate for sports' corporatisation, but it is another thing to establish exactly when it infected our sport institutions. While there is no definitive agreement on just when corporate sport took off in Australia, Peter Drucker, the eminent American writer on business affairs, provides a hint as to its emergence when he concluded that sometime between 1965 and 1973 Western society passed over a cultural and economic divide, 'entered the next century', and in doing so moved into a new cultural and commercial space.[38] David Harvey posited a similar turning point that produced 'a full blown, though still incoherent movement'.[39] The shift was gradual, but of sufficient strength to suggest that 'what appears on one level as the latest fad, advertising pitch and hollow spectacle is part of a slowly emerging cultural transformation in Western societies'.[40]

This so-called postmodern society became a complex mix of values and cultures where ambiguity and contradiction undermined the search for universal truths, business organisations reorganised their work methods, and customers changed their patterns of buying

and consumption.[41] Rigid hierarchies and mass production gave way to organic ways of managing and a more customised delivery of products and services [42]. At the same time, the gradual commercialisation of the arts and sport blurred the traditional distinction between leisure, culture and business. These changes not only influenced the ways in which people occupied their time, but also created new ways of viewing the world as consumer capitalism entered a post-Fordist stage of flexible accumulation, marketisation and, ultimately, the corporatisation of institutions like the arts and sport.[43]

The cultural and economic divide described by Drucker provides a useful tool for periodising the changing pattern of Australian sport in general and football in particular. It suggests that the period prior to the 1970s provided a sport experience that was culturally modern and commercially Fordist, in the sense that it was structured and organised along strict hierarchical lines where officials, coaches, players and fans knew their place.[44] The workplace need for a compliant labour force was replicated in sport's paternalistic ethos of obedience and discipline, where elite players were rarely consulted on management issues, forced into restrictive contractual arrangements, and more often than not paid wages that just exceeded the costs of playing.[45] At the community level sport was also poorly resourced, run by volunteers, simply organised, and for the most part played without the expectation of earning a living from the game.[46] On the other hand, the period after the 1970s provided a sporting experience that was radically different.

At the international level, tennis jettisoned its amateur values and became fully professional, while soccer was bureaucratised as FIFA, the game's international governing body, extended its control over the world game.[47] At the local level, Australian cricket provided a stark reminder of how sport could be transformed, with customised seating in the form of private boxes and suites being a perfect exemplar.[48] The introduction of Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket in 1977 also produced many changes, including instant television replays on giant video screens, games being played under floodlights, and the use of marketing plans to improve cricket's public profile. Heroic and sexual images were used to promote the game, and players like Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson became celebrities. Limited-over matches played in coloured uniforms took fans away from the traditional

five-day test matches and fed them a diet of time-efficient and time-compressed contests. Finally, whereas Australia's international cricketers had effectively paid to play in the 1950s, by the 1980s they earned more than $2000 from a single test match, which was well above average weekly earnings.[49]

Television also impacted upon cricket at this time, and its hyperreal emphasis on excitement, speed, the intimate close-up, slow-motion replays and quick grabs created a collective effervescence, and conditioned viewers to demand constant entertainment, dramatic tension and its quick resolution. Improvements in satellite technology also enabled global markets to emerge and expanded the cricket audience beyond the wildest dreams of administrators who had managed the game a decade earlier. A nationwide audience for live sport telecasts in Australia was created in 1971, and cricket's growing nexus with television was consolidated in 1975 with the introduction of colour television. Two years later, video replays were enhanced and international sporting telecasts via satellite were introduced. When Packer's Channel 9 television station provided a live telecast of the 1977 test series in England, it signalled the globalisation of sport for Australian sport fans, and the internationalisation of its commercial arrangements.[50]

Like cricket, the Olympic Games were also transformed from the 1970s onward. By the 1980s the Olympics had thrown away their amateur pretensions and autocratic patronage, and replaced them with a hybrid sporting competition where elite athletes on limited incomes mixed with highly paid professionals, and where crusty Eurocentric officials bound by tradition and hierarchy deferred to globalised, corporate giants like NBC, Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Reebok. Whereas the traditional Olympics were underwritten by aristocratic privilege, the corporate Olympics were sustained by business and commercial linkages.[51] Television became the pivotal revenue source, and whereas the 1956 Melbourne Olympics Organising Committee received a few thousand dollars for the newsreel rights, the 2000 Sydney Games generated about $900 million for the Organising Committee. The Olympic ideals of friendly competition and the joy of participation were subjugated to the spectacular event and the big performance. According to Michael Real, the Olympic brand became a complex mix of cultural artefacts where titillation, superlatives and historical allusion were

used to bombard the viewer's senses.[52] A carefully managed pastiche was used to overlay the athletic competition with 'promotions, commercial interruption, sponsor logos, abrupt transitions and entertainment packaging'.[53] As a result, the singularly sequential and loosely scripted sports production was replaced by a strictly controlled and fast-paced presentation of multiple events with on-screen graphics and multi-announcer commentary. With the proliferation of the Olympic brand, the consolidation of its global corporate partners and its increasingly centralised governance, the Olympic movement's corporatisation was close to completion as the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games approached.

Football's Place in the Sport-As-Business Model

The above discussion begs the question of how Australia's four football codes, and in particular their professional leagues, are placed with respect to the sport-as-business model. Are they all located in the corporate phase, as Drucker's thesis would predict, or are some just coming out of their commercial and bureaucratic phases? Moreover, even if they are all corporatised in the way that cricket and the Olympic Games have been, are some more corporatised than others? Alternatively, do they share the same corporate features? This immediately raises the question of whether these common features constitute an Australian way of running sport leagues and competitions. And does this Australian way provide a better set of outcomes? Or, is there something beyond corporatisation that the codes are moving towards? And if there is, then what might the leagues look like in, say, the years 2020 and 2050? These and many other questions will be addressed in the chapters that follow.

Providing Answers to these Questions

In order to answer the above questions this book will undertake a detailed analysis of the evolution and current status of Australia's four main football codes. Whereas the current chapter presents a sport-as-business model, Chapter 2 examines the cultural dimensions of sport in Australia and how it embedded itself in the national psyche very early on. Matthew Nicholson and Rob Hess show how Australia's sport system evolved, and in particular the role that colonial sport played in building a sporting culture. The place occupied by the football

codes is also examined, in particular their capacity to attract players, spectators and television viewers. Chapter 3 examines the development of the football codes in colonial Australia and the ways in which they spread across the nation. Rob Hess and Matthew Nicholson explain how some codes came to dominate some parts of Australia, while other codes captured the hearts and minds of people in other areas of the country. Rob and Matthew also examine the ways in which soccer spread itself across the nation without ever becoming the major code in any city or region. At the same time, they suggest that the football divide is not as severe as it seems, and that what we have in practice is a rich tapestry of codes played in every corner of the nation.

Chapter 4 covers Australian football, and Bob Stewart and Geoff Dickson chart its shift from a suburban and country game centred in Australia's southern states to a game that is played and watched all over the nation. Bob and Geoff also examine the transformation of the Victorian Football League into the Australian Football League, and the associated costs and benefits of this transformation. In Chapter 5 James Skinner and Allan Edwards examine the growth of rugby league from the 1940s to the present. They detail the many ebbs and flows, and provide a critical analysis of the Super League/ Australian Rugby League war and its metamorphosis into the National Rugby League. Despite the trauma that emerged, they suggest that the code is stronger now than it was twenty years ago. Chapter 6 looks at rugby union, with Dwight Zakus and Peter Horton providing a detailed review of its growth along the east coast of Australia. They highlight the dramatic shift from amateurism to professionalism, the subsequent establishment of the Super 10 and 12 competitions, and their recent reinvention as the Super 14 league. Like James and Allan, they conclude that rugby's transformation and ultimate corporatisation has been largely driven by media conglomerates in general, and television broadcasters in particular. Chapter 7 examines soccer, or world football, as some people are now inclined to label it. Braham Dabscheck does a forensic analysis of its chronic problems over many years, and provides a detailed discussion of its ethnic and multicultural influences and how they impacted on the game's structure and development. Braham not only critically examines the newly formed A League and discusses its future, but also makes the interesting

point that its corporatisation was fuelled by the players' association, as well as media support and government regulation.

In Chapter 8 Robert Macdonald and Ross Booth do a detailed comparative analysis of the codes. They examine not only the general popularity of the codes, but also the strengths and weaknesses of each of the national sport leagues. Robert and Ross give special attention to league governance and structures, and conclude that a uniquely Australian model has emerged that is both similar to and different from American and European sport leagues. They also argue that while each of the codes has corporatised its operations, the AFL has so far taken it further than the others. The final chapter looks at the future for the football codes in Australia. Geoff Dickson and Bob Stewart provide scenarios where all the codes are sustainable, but also where changes are likely to occur. Geoff and Bob argue that while there will be a post-corporate world for the football codes, the changes are unlikely to be as traumatic over the next twenty to forty years as they were over the past two decades.

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Australia's Sporting Culture
Riding on the Back of Its Footballers

Matthew Nicholson and Rob Hess

Introduction

In one of the first scholarly analyses of Australian sporting culture, Brian Stoddart acknowledged that the nation had a worldwide reputation for being obsessed with sport.[1] Stoddart also provided a caveat when he noted that Australia is not unique in its devotion, for to claim so would be to deny the strong sporting cultures of other countries.[2] However, more than twenty years later and approaching the second decade of the twenty-first century, Australia is in a class of its own when it comes to a passion for sport, and its image as a sporting nation continues to define its national identity and sense of self. Events such as the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the growing list of Australian world champions have confirmed the notion that Australia is sport-mad, despite claims that sport is ephemeral and the Olympics have a limited legacy.[3] While detractors argue that sport has thwarted an alternative national identity and denied recognition for important achievements in other endeavours, supporters claim that without sport Australia might have no international reputation at all. This

chapter provides a snapshot of Australia's sporting history and culture, with the aim of explaining the role of sport in Australian society and contextualising the evolution of the football codes up to the present time.

Early Sport Culture

While 1788 marked the beginning of white settlement in Australia, Australia's sport and recreation culture began more than 40 000 years before with the arrival of native Aborigines. In the main, Aboriginal games were played for enjoyment, with little competition and few rules. Aboriginal tribes played games that encouraged intellectual and physical maturity, and developed skills that were necessary for hunting and warfare.[4] These games were not isolated from other ceremonies, rituals and activities, but were an integral part of daily life, and as such resulted in Aborigines being fit and athletic.[5] Despite the fact that Aborigines eventually became highly skilled participants in popular sports throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was little continuity between Aboriginal games and imported games of European origin.[6]

By the time of Australia's white settlement, sport had become prominent in the lives of the majority of British people.[7] While class barriers were still firmly erected, sport of the less gentle type had permeated through to the commoners in various forms. The sports that arrived in colonial Australia were from three different cultural origins: English national sports like cricket and horseracing; traditional sports that were distinctively Scottish or Irish, namely shinty and hurling; and local versions of British sports such as wrestling and football. These sports became as important in the lives of colonial Australians as they were in the lives of their originators.

From 1788 sports linked to gambling and drinking quickly took hold, including disorderly activities such as bare-knuckle boxing, wrestling and cockfighting.[8] Horseracing was well patronised, as were other recreational activities that required little or no equipment in the harsh and restrictive environment of a penal colony. The public hotel played an important role in the development of this sporting culture, and also served to strengthen the links between masculinity and sport in a population where men outnumbered women by a ratio of three to one.[9] A wide range of sports such as cricket, foot races, billiards,

bowling, quoits, skittles, pigeon shooting, boxing, wrestling and trotting all took place at or within close proximity of pubs during the first half of the nineteenth century.[10]

The pursuit of sport was widely encouraged throughout the early part of the nineteenth century in Australia, with colonial values reinforcing the claim that sport created emotionally strong and well-rounded individuals, subsequently leading to a better society. Sport was the cure-all for social deviance and dysfunction. According to colonial administrators it developed character and elevated national worth. The belief that sport should be socially productive remains a stalwart of government motivation for sporting development.[11]

Gaming and betting also became important pastimes during the early colonial period, particularly among ex-convicts and working people.[12] Gaming with coins, dice and cards was practised in the colonies from their inception, while public house practices, such as betting on tests of drinking prowess, were also popular. Allied with the development of gaming and betting was the maturation of what contemporary Australian society refers to as mateship. This boisterous camaraderie provided the social glue and cohesion that 'bonded the colonies together' when they participated in sporting pursuits against British-bred opposition, a proclivity that seems as fervent today.[13]

Sport consequently provided the opportunity for the colonials to beat their masters at their own game, and this became a significant measure of achievement.[14] It was during this pioneering period that Australians adopted pride in their sporting prowess, which is still evident in Australian society today. It must be remembered that there were two distinct constituents in colonial society: the convict settlers and the ruling and free settler group. Recreational pastimes were originally denied to convicts, but free members of society could participate in whatever they wished.[15] When sport was introduced into the convict ranks as both a recreational pastime and character-building exercise, it was adopted with fervour by an opportunity-starved community, where it became a form of emancipation into which they zealously threw themselves. This passion for sport is a part of contemporary Australian society, although it is now more often evident in spectatorship than participation.

The Evolution of a Sporting Culture

The arrival of free settlers during the early part of the nineteenth century consolidated the institutions of sport that had been established by the military class.[16] As a prosperous and free urban society began to emerge in Australia during the first half of the nineteenth century, the ideals and culture of organised British sport determined the types of games that were played, the equipment used and the rules that were adhered to. This gradual preference for organised and regulated sport slowly loosened the grip that informal sport had on the Australian public. The shift to more structure and organisation was particularly strong given what was identified as a dearth of recreational facilities in the 1820s and 1830s.[17] As Richard Cashman explained, prior to 1850 the character of Australian sport:

> consisted in part of informal, unregulated and sometimes boisterous customs which were allied with public house culture or local carnivals. There were also the tentative beginnings of more formal sporting clubs and institutions, such as the Melbourne Cricket Club … [yet] the development of a sporting culture was restricted by insufficient resources and infrastructure, a lack of regular time for leisure, a small population and limited development of the economy.[18]

The economic development and social status of sport was bolstered by the gold rush of the 1850s. Successful miners, with their new-found wealth, created substantial demand for goods and services. With the influx of capital came substantial social infrastructure development, which had a generative effect on the already firm social institution of sport. Groups that had prospered during the economic expansion adopted European games such as tennis and lawn bowls. At another level, the gold fever indirectly introduced new sports and games into Australia, such as baseball, imported by American miners.[19]

Many sporting clubs and associations were formed throughout the nineteenth century, and as a result sporting competitions emerged. Some of the earliest sport clubs centred on bathing, cricket, football, horseracing, lawn bowls and rowing. In some cases they

attracted a strong supporter base. The Victorian Football Association was formed in 1877 and soon attracted single-game attendances of up to 20 000. In 1859 a crowd of almost 60 000 was reported at Flemington Racecourse in Melbourne, which by the 1880s was hosting crowds of more than 100 000 for the running of the Melbourne Cup.[20] Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century local sport contests were transformed into regional or inter-colonial competitions. This created the need for greater sport administration and event-management skills. With the advent of Federation in 1901, national organisations in a range of sports gradually developed despite the tyranny of distance, and by 1910 there were national governing bodies for sports such as Australian football, cricket, cycling, golf, lawn bowls and rifle shooting.[21]

The late nineteenth century saw sport create a diverse and robust following, and it quickly developed into a 'social metaphor for national development', with sporting accomplishments synonymous with social improvement.[22] One of the most influential catalysts of this social metaphor lay in private school education, where British traditions of fair play, amateurism and character building through sport were strictly upheld.[23] Rowing, cricket, football and rugby were especially cultivated as 'character-building sports'.[24] In addition, in all schools, physical education became compulsory, which stimulated many schools to measure their success on the field rather than in the classroom. On the other hand, females were explicitly discouraged from participation in any type of vigorous activity that would diminish their femininity, and were relegated to spectator and supporter roles.[25]

Twentieth-century Sport Development

Australian sporting culture during the early part of the twentieth century became increasingly formalised, a codification of sport that laid the foundation for the club system of sport participation that is evident more than a century later. Governing bodies were established in the early part of the century, but governing power was not evenly distributed. A division existed between upper- and middle-class administrators, who exercised control and power in the sporting organisations, and the working-class players and participants, who enjoyed the rough and tumble but had little influence over the management of clubs and leagues.

Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz argued that 'for the first half of the twentieth century, Australia remained a comfortable sporting dominion'.[26] Australians looked towards their British ancestry for their identity, and the development of mass communication technologies and an increasing awareness of what Stoddart referred to as the economic value of sport, began to alter the orientation of Australian sport.[27] Although the 1970s are regarded by many as a watershed in terms of the commercial transformation of Australian sport, commercial interests had begun to change sport in the early twentieth century, as players were paid and grounds enclosed in order that spectators could be charged for admission. Both the Australian economy and sport grew strongly between Federation and the beginning of World War II, and the ability of the public to wager on games and pastimes meant that boxing and horseracing were highly commercialised. Sports such as Australian football, rugby league and tennis attracted strong crowds, while sports such as golf, rugby union, soccer and netball attracted a significant number of players.[28]

While Australians celebrated the achievements of their sport stars throughout the post-Federation period, most notably Don Bradman (a cricketer) and Phar Lap (a racehorse), they were also encouraged to participate by a warm, stable climate that enabled outdoor physical activity throughout the year, and also by an expanding sports infrastructure. For the first forty years of Federation, neither the federal nor state governments had policies that articulated how sport might contribute to national or community development; however, local governments were an important contributor by providing playground facilities, which comprised slides, swings, hoops and bars. These facilities were usually located in public parks and gave children the opportunity not just to play, but also to develop their confidence and skills. Local governments also constructed sports-grounds and pavilions, which meant that Australia's community sporting infrastructure was dependent upon local councils, particularly when a large open space was required for the activity. In this respect, the football codes, cricket, swimming, tennis and netball benefited substantially from local government support.[29]

The beginning of World War II was the impetus for a shift in Federal Government thinking about the place of sport and physical activity in Australian life. Under Prime Minister Robert Menzies, the

ruling United Australia Party established the National Co-ordinating Council for Physical Fitness (NCCPF) in 1939, which was subsequently given legislative legitimacy in 1941 through the *National Fitness Act*.[30] The NCCPF was established with the aim of creating a national fitness movement and one of its many recommendations was that more professionally trained physical education instructors were required. The notion of using sport as a mechanism to increase the health and fitness of the Australian population is a theme that has wound its way through Australian sport and health policy ever since, although in recent times the desire for both elite success and widespread health benefits have often been difficult to reconcile. In general the period prior to World War II was marked by very little government intervention and the delivery of sport services was achieved primarily through the non-profit component of the private sector.[31]

The Maturation of Australian Sport

Australia's sporting culture diversified with the inflow of migrants from the 1950s onwards. European and American sports like baseball, basketball and soccer gained popularity, although competitive British team sports were still dominant.[32] The next decades were transformational for Australia as a nation, with sport leading the way. Until that time, the Australian economy was based on farming communities that created their prosperity through the wool trade. However, Australia began to emerge as an industrialised and urbanised society with a 'strong consumer culture'.[33]

The largely ambivalent and arms-length relationship between sport and the Federal Government was increasingly questioned as Australia's sporting reputation began to decline in the 1960s and 1970s, and the sport landscape began to undergo irrevocable change. In many respects the 1970s was an important period for Australian sport. First and foremost, professional sport leagues, such as the Victorian Football League, became increasingly commercialised. This commercialisation was both created by and resulted in the growing importance of revenue sources outside gate takings, such as sponsorship and later media rights. This commercialisation also created inflationary pressures and put into stark relief the largely amateur administrative and governance structures that had evolved throughout the twentieth century.

Related to the increasing commercialisation of Australian sport was the creation of World Series Cricket (WSC) by media magnate Kerry Packer towards the end of the 1970s. Unable to secure the exclusive rights to televise cricket, Packer created his own rival cricket competition and signed many of the world's leading players. His endeavour worked in part because of player dissatisfaction with their share of cricket revenue and the control of amateur administrators that was typical in Australian sport at the time. The WSC affair illustrated not only the volatility of professional sport, but also the growing influence and importance of the media.

Gough Whitlam's Labor government was elected in 1972 and before being deposed in 1975 set out to address Whitlam's belief that 'there was no greater social problem facing Australia than the good use of leisure'.[34] Although many of the initiatives of this period were rolled back or not given serious attention under the subsequent Fraser government, a separate department of recreation and the commissioning of various reports were key indications that sport and recreation were firmly on the government agenda. The impetus created by the Whitlam government resulted in the formation of the Confederation of Australian Sport, a body that represented the interests of Australian national sport organisations. This was another indication that Australian sport was not only beginning to professionalise, but also that the hands-off approach that had been adopted by previous federal governments was slowly coming to an end.

In the 1970s the reports by Bloomfield and Coles to government identified that Australia's natural physical and environmental advantages were being eroded and that an elite sport training institute was essential if the country hoped to be competitive at an international level.[35] The 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, at which Australia failed to win a gold medal for the first time since 1936 in Berlin, confirmed that the rest of the world had not only caught up, but in some instances had careered ahead, particularly since the 1956 Melbourne Olympics at which Australia was extremely successful. The Coles report noted that many European countries were far more systematic in terms of elite athlete development and support, which led to the establishment of the Australian Institute of Sport by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, which opened in 1981. It was modelled on the successful East German and Chinese sport academies, had an elitist agenda and

focused its resources on Olympic sports in which success was likely. It was complemented by the formation of the Australian Sports Commission in 1985 under the Hawke government, its role being to support sport development across the nation.

The 1970s were a tipping point for Australian sport and provided the impetus for a sport system with three distinct yet interrelated high-performance sectors. First, international success, particularly at the Olympic Games, became highly valued by the Federal Government, the media and the Australian people. This international success was facilitated by funding of elite training institutes and a selection of national sport organisations that could deliver world-leading athletes, whether or not these sports had high participation rates. Second, Australian states, national sporting bodies and the Federal Government saw value in hosting major events such as the Formula One Grand Prix, Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games and world championships in a range of sports. One of the earliest ventures in this respect was when the Hawke Labor government allocated $30 million to help develop the infrastructure for the defence of the America's Cup in Fremantle in 1987.[36] Third, professional sport leagues attracted large national audiences, both live and mediated. These leagues were dominated by the football codes, although as indicated previously, American sports such as basketball and baseball had brief periods of popularity. Australia's national sport of cricket spanned all three sectors. It generated international success, it staged major events each summer, and it organised a national league, although it generated only moderate levels of spectator interest. By the early 1980s a growing professionalism in sport had pushed the old amateur ideal to the margins, and sport became a lucrative vehicle for entertainment, sponsorship and large-scale television broadcasting.[37]

Women also occupied more sporting space during the 1970s and 1980s. Shane Gould took women's swimming to new levels of performance, the women's field hockey team became world champions, and Glynis Nunn and Debra Flintoff-King won Olympic Games gold medals in track and field. Australian women road athletes also achieved strong international prominence when Kerry Saxby broke a number of world walking records and Lisa Martin secured a silver medal at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. However, despite

their successes, women athletes still found it difficult to attract large-scale sponsorship and media attention.[38] This has resulted in female athletes resorting to the sexualisation of their bodies and their sports to gain public interest and recognition. This is most evident in the publication of nude calendars by Olympic athletes and national teams and the appearance of scantily-clad female athletes in popular men's magazines.[39] At the same time the contemporary dominance of the media by the highly masculinist football codes hindered the possibility that Australian sportswomen could live as professional athletes in Australia. Every four years the Olympic Games represent the high mark of public and media interest in female athletes, yet between times they struggle for awareness and recognition. For example, despite being Australia's most popular club-based sport for women, netball has struggled to attract media attention and sponsorship for its national league, while the players are not paid as full-time professionals, despite training and playing as if they were.

A Corporate and Masculinist Sporting Culture

By the 1990s many sports organisations embraced the characteristics of business enterprises.[40] The influence of modern communication technologies was profound, with international sporting broadcasts and results as readily available as their domestic equivalent. Australian sporting organisations realised that in order to remain competitive they must provide entertainment value that at least equals their overseas competitors. Consequently, levels of professionalism and sponsorship revenue increased, leading to a proliferation of corporate boxes that lined major sporting venues, where company executives wined, dined and entertained clients. These developments mirrored the hyper-commercialisation of Australian sport in which Australian football, basketball, cricket, golf, rugby union and league, soccer and tennis supported a coterie of professional players and administrators.[41] Organisations such as the Australian Football League (AFL), Cricket Australia (CA) and the Australian Rugby Union (ARU) have become significant business enterprises. In 2005 the revenue of the AFL Commission exceeded $200 million for the first time in its history, compared to $72 million for CA and $73 million for the ARU.[42] Even lower profile sports like swimming, with annual revenues of

approximately $15 million[43], now sustain solid organisational structures and well-paid athletes, in large part due to the Olympic success of talented athletes and the expansion of individual sponsorships.

The subsequent corporatisation of Australian sport has been accompanied by an insatiable need for sporting heroes, in large part fuelled by increasing media coverage across television, pay television and newspapers. According to Australian sporting folklore, heroic individuals emerge from the rank and file of the population and, because they are in some way seen to be extraordinary, become symbols of their time and embodiments of idealised moral and cultural values.[44] However, not all of Australia's contemporary sporting heroes fit the archetypal mould. Cathy Freeman does because she is unassuming, dedicated, courageous and a great spokesperson for the Aboriginal community.[45] Lleyton Hewitt did not fit the mould for a long time because he was too competitive and opinionated, and not as modest as we like our heroes to be. The player who best fitted the archetype was Pat Rafter. He was not only an outstanding tennis player, but also good looking, self-deprecating, close to his family, every mother's ideal son, and one of the boys. Sporting heroes are an important part of Australia's sporting landscape and are used to not only promote their sport, but also endorse all sorts of consumer products. It is also worth noting than 25 per cent of all people who won the Australian of the Year award over the last thirty years were sports men and women; the last three former Australian cricket team captains have all become Australians of the Year.

Australians also like their sporting heroes to be extraordinary in the sense that they should both win against the world's best and symbolise sport's working-class traditions and tribal relations.[46] Australian sporting larrikins are revered for their indifference to authority, loud humour and 'heavy drinking'.[47] There is, however, a downside to this hyper-masculine and blokey sporting ethos. In addition to its tendency to marginalise the participation of women, it produces chronic displays of poor sportsmanship and crass behaviour. While sporting larrikins are quintessentially Australian, they also reveal an ugly and anti-intellectual side of the Australian sporting culture, where boisterous good humour degenerates into personal abuse, racist taunts

and physical violence. At the same time, larrikinism is a strong reminder that the Australian passion for sport is buried deep in the national psyche.

The football codes have contributed significantly to the hyper-masculine character of Australian sport. The AFL and the National Rugby League (NRL) have been particularly prominent in this respect, in part because they dominate both the electronic and print media. During the first decade of the twenty-first century the actions of players from both codes have been questioned, with media reports continually alluding to behaviour that crosses the lines of accepta-bility and hints to a dysfunctional culture.[48] While it is difficult to quantify the impact of the football codes on Australian sport culture, there are markers that provide clues to their significance. Take, for example, the AFL version of *The Footy Show* hosted by Eddie McGuire, Sam Newman and Trevor Marmalade. First aired in 1994, it was a ratings success for broadcaster Channel 9. The show has thrived on controversy, but has also deftly chartered a course that has seen the show become part serious football commentary and part football vaudeville, where the objectification of women and mock homo-erotic behaviour is never far from the surface. A boy's own bawdy humour is also evident on the NRL version of *The Footy Show*, produced in Sydney.

Football and Physical Activity

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the Australian sport land-scape was marked by two distinct features. In many respects these features are not recent phenomena but the interrelated products of decades of prior development.

The first feature can be broadly characterised as physical inac-tivity. In 1973 in his seminal report to the Federal Government on the role, scope and development of recreation in Australia, John Bloomfield noted that the idea that Australians are either very fit or very fat had merit.[49] In part this was the result of a divide between those that were and were not physically gifted and an emphasis on winning at all levels of the Australian sport system. More than thirty years later the view of Australia as a nation of 'bronzed athletes of magnificent proportions, living in a land of perpetual leisure'[50], if it was ever true, is a distant memory but still a dominant myth. The

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data for the period 2001–02 shows that although 62.4 per cent of the Australian adult population participated in some form of physical activity during the year, only 10.5 per cent did so two or more times per week, and only 5.3 per cent participated in organised sport two or more times per week.[51] Despite Australia's sporting achievements and the willingness with which Australians consume both mediated and live sporting events, Australia is the second-most obese nation on the globe, outranked only by the United States. In many respects, the increasing success of Australia's athletes has been paralleled by a difficulty in getting more people to participate in enough physical activity to provide mental and physical health benefits.

Table 2.1: Football Code Participation Statistics, 2001–02

Sport	Number of participants	Male[1]	Aged 18–34	Organised	27 or more times p/yr[2]
Soccer	371 000	86%	71%	56%	38%
Australian Football	308 000	97%	83%	72%	46%
Rugby League	104 000	95%	82%	77%	39%
Rugby Union	93 000	94%	78%	93%	50%

1 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the female participation figure for Australian football is an estimate that has a relative standard error of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent and should be used with caution, while the figures used for rugby league and rugby union are estimates that have a relative standard error greater than 50 per cent and are considered too unreliable for general use.
2 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the figures for rugby league participation twenty-seven to fifty-two times and rugby union fifty-three or more times are estimates that have a relative standard error of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent and should be used with caution.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Participation in Sport and Physical Activities* (catalogue no. 4177.0), ABS, Canberra, 2002, pp. 15–21.

One of the key questions is what role football plays in this culture of general physical inactivity. Only soccer and Australian football feature in the top ten sports with the highest organised adult participation rates and it is clear that the football codes are only attractive as participant sports to a small minority of the Australian population. Table 2.1 shows that significant numbers of young men play football

in a predominantly organised setting. This seems to make sense both statistically and intuitively, for the football codes encourage a high degree of physical contact, which in turn suits younger and stronger bodies. The physical contact and complexity of the rules also make it difficult to play these codes on a social basis, particularly rugby union and to a lesser degree rugby league and Australian football. Table 2.1 also demonstrates that a minority of participants engage in these activities on a regular basis. This is partly explained by the fact that the football seasons are limited to the winter months, although a significant number of participants only played between one and six times during the year.

The number of football code participants is relatively small compared to the numbers of people participating in unstructured and informal physical activity, such as walking for exercise (3 663 000 participants). These activities are usually undertaken by significantly more women than men (2 407 000 to 1 255 000 in the case of walking for exercise). From a range of Australian sport participation data, it can be concluded that the football codes play a relatively minor role in ensuring Australians are physically active.

Table 2.2: 2005 Sport Program Audience Figures

Program	Audience (millions of viewers)
AFL Grand Final	3.4
NRL Grand Final	2.6
Melbourne Cup	2.5
World Cup Qualifier	2.5
AFL Grand Final Pre-Match	1.9
NRL State of Origin 3	1.9
AFL Preliminary Final	1.8
NRL State of Origin 2	1.8
ICC One Day Cricket – Aus v WI	1.8
NRL State of Origin 1	1.7

Source: Cox Media, http://www.coxmedia.com.au/www/media_ratings_2005_top_ranking_tv_shows.html, accessed 23 January 2007.

The football codes do, however, play a significant role in the second important feature of the contemporary Australian sport

landscape, which is a strong culture of spectatorship. The exemplar in this respect is the AFL. In 2005 almost 6.3 million people attended games during the regular season of the AFL, an all-time record for the league. If the pre-season competition and the finals are added, the number was more than seven million.[52] Television ratings are also an indication of the popularity of the mediated version of the football codes. As demonstrated in Table 2.2, the football codes contributed eight of the top ten sport programs in 2005, with rugby union the only football code missing from the list. Furthermore, in 2005 the top six programs with the highest audience of any genre were all sport or sport-related programs, including the AFL grand final, the NRL grand final, an Australian qualifier for the 2006 FIFA World Cup, and the AFL grand final preview and wrap-up programs.

Sport and Identity

Australia not only has a strong culture of sport participation and sport watching, but as noted previously also uses sport to establish a sense of collective identity, self-respect, and national sense of self.[53] If sport is more important than most other facets of Australian society, it might perhaps be so because Australia's white history is short and that Australia's social and political institutions are not very inspirational. More positively, it might be because sporting success has a unique capacity to unite Australians and construct a sense of community. In an increasingly globalised world, sport has become the primary vehicle for expressing national legitimacy, pride and independence. For a small country with only 20 million inhabitants, and geographically isolated from the rest of the world, sporting success is a highly visible and potent way of achieving global media exposure and international awareness.

To some critics, sport is too much a part of our national character and culture and, as a result, Australia has become culturally dysfunctional. One critic noted that in the run–up to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, Australia's sporting obsession had become 'frenzied and hysterical'. Moreover, the resultant collective euphoria concealed a deep-seated anxiety and tension about issues like racism, social inequality, foreigners 'and irrational fears about our Asian neighbours'.[54] Other critics have acknowledged the Australian passion for sport, but found 'little to celebrate in the Australian sporting

character'. In this context an obsessive interest in sport has been used to hide many unpleasant realities like 'aboriginal living conditions, urban sprawl, water and air pollution, forest clearance, and over-grazing'.[55]

Any disquiet at the place of sport in Australian society is typically soothed by international success and the ebb and flow of the football season. Australian football has largely been played by Australians within Australia, despite pockets of international interest, while rugby league and to a lesser extent rugby union are confined to a limited number of countries, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom among them. Only in recent times has Australia become internationally competitive in soccer, the most global of the football codes. At the same time each of the codes is supported by a national or quasi-international league. Most of Australia's other international successes are supported by a federally funded sport system that has become adept at identifying and training high-quality athletes. The Australian Institute of Sport has been so successful that it and the Australian sport system are being copied by countries attempting to increase their international sport success. At the Sydney (2000) and Athens (2004) Olympic Games, Australia finished fourth on the medal tally, behind the United States, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on each occasion. This international success at the Olympic Games, as well as at other major events and world championships, has exacerbated the sense of Australia as a paradise of sport[56], which in turn has enabled it to export its knowledge and expertise in the fields of sport science, coaching and event management. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that the rest of the world is catching up, and in the case of China and India, just beginning to exploit vast human resources in the interests of sport.

Concluding Comments

According to Brian Stoddart, Australia's post-Federation sporting culture was distinguished by a tension between its social education function and its capacity to add economic value. The notion of sport as a vehicle for training young men (and young women less frequently) in life skills and social and moral values was juxtaposed with an increasing professionalism in many sports. Despite the changes to sport throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries,

including globalisation and corporatisation, Australian sporting institutions are still fighting over the balance between these often opposing forces. While the Australian sport landscape is undeniably professional (with the ideal of amateurism now largely irrelevant), it is nevertheless underpinned by the sense that sport has a socialising value, even in the football codes, where economic value has become the driver of their recent progress.

Since the early 1970s Australia has grown to become one of the world's sporting powers, and has done so with a relatively small population and a geographic location that isolates it from most of the rest of the world. It used to be said that Australia rode on the sheep's back, a phrase that indicated Australia was dependent on its agricultural and pastoral industries for its economic success and international reputation. In the light of Australia's strong sporting culture and its critical importance in defining national identity, it can equally be concluded that Australia rides on the backs of its players and athletes, and in particular its footballers.

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Notes

[1] Brian Stoddart, *Saturday Afternoon Fever: Sport in Australian Culture*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1986, pp. 3–4.

[2] See also Richard Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995; Daryl Adair and Wray Vamplew, *Sport in Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997; and Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, *One-Eyed: A View of Australian Sport*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2000.

3   Booth and Tatz, p. xiv.
4   Adair and Vamplew, p. 1.
5   Ibid., p. 1.
6   Cashman, *Paradise of Sport,* p. 17.
7   Ibid., *Paradise of Sport*, pp. 1–14.
8   Booth and Tatz, p. 31; Stoddart, p. 16.
9   See Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p.17, who noted that although this initial imbalance was reduced after the 1820s, men outnumbered women throughout the nineteenth century.
10 Ibid., *Paradise of Sport,* p. 23.
11 Stoddart, pp. 22–3.
12 See Adair and Vamplew.
13 William Mandle, 'Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century', in T Jaques and G Pavia (eds), *Sport in Australia*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney, p. 46.
14 See Keith Dunstan, *Sports*, Cassell, Melbourne, 1973.
15 See Booth and Tatz.
16 See Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*.
17 See discussion of the local press in Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 28.
18 Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, pp. 32–3.
19 See Stoddart, p. 17.
20 Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, p. 42.
21 David Shilbury and John Deane, *Sport Management in Australia*, Strategic Sport Management, Melbourne, 2001, p. 47.
22 Stoddart, p. 27.
23 See Adair and Vamplew.
24 Bob Stewart, 'Athleticism Revisited: Sport, Character Building and Protestant School Education in 19th Century Melbourne', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1992, pp. 40–5.
25 Booth and Tatz, p. 61; Stoddart, p. 19.
26 Booth and Tatz, p. 109.
27 See Stoddart.
28 See Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, esp. ch. 3.
29 See ibid., *Paradise of Sport.*
30 See Elery Hamilton-Smith and Robert Robertson, 'Recreation and Government in Australia', in D Mercer (ed.), *Leisure and Recreation in Australia*, Sorrett, Melbourne, 1977.
31 See Bob Stewart, Matthew Nicholson, Aaron Smith and Hans Westerbeek, *Australian Sport: Better by Design? The Evolution of Australian Sport Policy*, Routledge, London, 2004.
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33 Greg Whitwell, *Making the Market: The Rise of Consumer Society*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1989, pp. 29–31.
34 Hamilton-Smith and Robertson, p. 180.
35 Stewart et al., *Australian Sport*, pp. 50–4.

36 See Stoddart.

37 See Bob Stewart and Aaron Smith, 'Australian Sport in a Postmodern Age', in J Mangan and J Nauright (eds), *Sport in Australasian Society*, Frank Cass, London, 2000, pp. 279–322.

38 See Marion Stell, *Half the Race: A History of Australian Women in Sport*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1991.

39 The Golden Girls calendars of the mid-1990s started the trend. The calendar of the Matildas, the Australian women's soccer team, was one example of a team-sport approach to the phenomenon, while the appearance of Tamsyn Lewis in the magazine *Ralph* was a 'celebrated' case.

40 Bob Stewart and Aaron Smith, 'The Special Features of Sport', *Annals of Leisure Research*, vol. 2, pp. 87–99.

41 Stewart and Smith, 'Australian Sport in a Postmodern Age'.

42 Australian Football League, *2005 Annual Report*, AFL, Melbourne, p. 86; Cricket Australia, *2004/5 Annual Report*, Cricket Australia, Jolimont, Melbourne, p. 16; Australian Rugby Union, *2005 Annual Report*, ARU, St Leonards, NSW, p. 88.

43 Swimming Australia, *2005/6 Annual Report*, Swimming Australia, Belconnen, ACT, p. 38.

44 Ian Jobling, 'Australian Sporting Heroes', in W Vamplew (ed.), *Sport, Nationalism and Internationalism*, Australian Society for Sport History, Australia, 1987, pp. 91–118.

45 See Toni Bruce and Chris Hallinan, 'Cathy Freeman: The Quest for Australian Identity', in D Andrews and S Jackson (eds), *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*, Routledge, London, 2001, pp. 257–70.

46 Richard Cashman, '*Ave a Go Yer Mug!: Cricket Crowds from Larrikin to Ocker*, Collins, Sydney, 1984.

47 Stoddart, p. 110.

48 Ian Warren, 'Footballers, Culture and Sexual Assault', in R Hess, M Nicholson and B Stewart (eds), *Football Fever: Crossing Boundaries*, Maribyrnong Press, Melbourne, 2005, pp. 133–45.

49 John Bloomfield, *The Role, Scope and Development of Recreation in Australia*, Department of Tourism and Recreation, Canberra, Australia, 1974, p. 3.

50 Ibid., p. 1.

51 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Participation in Sport and Physical Activities* (catalogue no. 4177.0), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2002.

52 Australian Football League, p. 72.

53 Stoddart, p. 71.

54 Peter Kell, *Good Sports: Australian Sport and the Myth of the Fair Go*, Pluto Press, Annandale, NSW, 2000, pp. 9–11.

55 Booth and Tatz, pp. 210, 218.

56 See Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*.

Beyond the Barassi Line

The Origins and Diffusion of Football Codes in Australia

Rob Hess and Matthew Nicholson

Introduction

Drawing his inspiration from the iconic Australian Rules football player and coach Ron Barassi, the late Ian Turner first put forward the view that 'Australia is divided by a deep cultural rift known as the Barassi Line. It runs between Canberra, Broken Hill, Birdsville and Maningrida [Arnhem Land] and it divides Australia between Rugby and Rules'.[1] The separation of Australia's football codes on geographical and cultural lines has since been argued by various football historians, most recently by Robert Pascoe, but none of these scholars offer a detailed comparative analysis of the history of each code across various states.[2] Geoffrey Blainey, on the other hand, in the penultimate chapter of his book on the origins of Australian Rules football, argues that the diffusion of that particular code throughout the nation was much patchier than other writers have suggested, and that any division on geographical grounds was certainly less definitive in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. In South Australia and

Tasmania, for example, clubs freely flirted with a variety of football codes for a number of years, and the Victorian game was not played with any consistency or regularity until after 1877. Conversely, in Queensland, the Victorian form of football was initially relatively strong, judging by the evidence that the first major schoolboys' match, played between Ipswich and Brisbane grammar schools in 1870, took place under 'Victorian Rules'.[3]

The spread of Australian Rules football at a national level is also reflected in the changing nomenclature for the sport. The code was originally known as 'Melbourne Rules', following the involvement of the Melbourne Football Club in codifying the embryonic laws of play, then 'Victorian Rules', as the Victorian Football Association (VFA) and individual clubs began to propagate the code in other colonies, and finally 'Australian Rules', as early manifestations of the Australasian Football Council (AFC) recognised the need for standardised rules and a representative body to promote the national and international interests of the game. Debate over the name of this code is also revealing in another sense, for it provides some indication as to why New South Wales, or at least the insular press of Sydney, resisted attempts to popularise the Victorian game. Inter-colonial jealousy, and the desire to reject anything of value from Victoria, appeared to be at the heart of this opposition. In its inaugural year, the VFA was so keen to promote its own brand of football that it offered to send a representative team to play two exhibition matches against the Southern (New South Wales) Rugby Football Union (SRFU), with one game to be played according to Victorian Rules and the other according to the rules of the Union. The SRFU rejected the invitation, but agreed that individual clubs could take up the offer. This led to a series of matches between Waratah Football Club and Carlton Football Club in 1877, and by the 1880s inter-colonial tours by individual clubs became increasingly common.[4] However, when Victoria did eventually play a representative NSW team in Melbourne in 1881, and again in a return visit to Sydney in 1882, the size and humiliating nature of the Victoria victories gave the Sydney press an excuse to reject the Victorian game. One reporter, writing under the name 'Orange and Blue', summed up the anti-Victorian feeling by declaring:

The great objection to the rules in New South Wales was that they were styled 'The Victorian Rules of Football'. Had they been dubbed the Scandinavian rules, well and good; but *Victorian* – perish the thought![5]

In a similar vein, and in recognition of the national aspirations of the Australian code, the editor of the *Footballer* suggested in 1881 that the sooner the name of the game was altered to the 'Australian Rules of Football' the better.[6]

It is within this general historiographical setting that the literature dealing with the history and development of various football codes can be understood. Part of the intention, therefore, is to consider the truth or otherwise of the premises underlying the so-called 'Barassi Line', and to this end the narrative relies heavily on the agenda set by developments in Australian Rules football. However, the overall aim is to provide a general overview of the origins, development and early diffusion of all the major football codes in Australia by focusing on several key periods and selected events. Such an overview serves as the foundation for more detailed analyses of the political economy of the football world in the period after World War II, a task taken up in the remaining chapters of the book.

Murky Origins

Despite claims to the contrary, the origins of all the world's major football codes are still the subject of dispute. The notion that an act of pragmatic defiance by a student at Rugby School in England was the stepping-stone to the creation of rugby union football, a view of history commemorated with a statue at the school, has been exposed as nothing more than a myth[7], and the orthodox view that a select number of British public schools were responsible for the eventual formation of the (soccer) Football Association in 1863 has also been challenged.[8] On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the supposedly key role of Walter Camp in defining crucial aspects of the American game, resulting in its bifurcation from the rugby code, has similarly been hotly debated.[9] Part of the problem, as Tony Collins, the pre-eminent scholar of rugby league, points out, is that most historians of the various codes of football have 'telescoped' the current balance of power between the codes back into the past. In his view, the most

absurd example of this is 'the widely held assumption that the folk football of pre-industrial society was the direct precursor of modern soccer'.[10] In fact, there was a remarkable fluidity between the football codes of the nineteenth century, and the struggle for supremacy and pre-eminence was not as clear-cut as some historians claim.

The historiography dealing with the beginnings of 'football' in Australia is no less murky, and increasingly just as contested. As noted above, an important issue in the 'balance of power' between the codes is the nomenclature of the sport, with each code in Australia now vying for the mantle of being able to represent itself as the paramount game, worthy of the generic title of 'football'.[11] But the historical roots of the tussle over the naming of football codes can be traced back to the nineteenth century, with much of the battle fought in the pages of the press. Then, as now, the matter was not helped by the tendency for imprecision in terminology. References to activities designated as 'football' occur in newspapers both prior to and after the international codification of Gaelic football, American football, soccer and the two rugby games, so the origins and diffusion of such codes in Australia cannot always be traced with certainty. Even the indigenous game of Australian Rules football, widely acknowledged as having its roots in the games played in the parklands of Melbourne during the late 1850s, suffers in this respect. As Andrew Brown-May, co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, has observed, it is prudent to be reminded that a great deal of Melbourne's past has been recorded inaccurately. He claims that unsubstantiated historical information and narrow interpretations have thus been recycled for subsequent generations, and the result is 'lineages of misunderstanding'. In his view, when a small number of works are overused, then the problem becomes exacerbated and the credibility of the discipline, and the authenticity of the histories being written, is threatened.[12]

Such an outlook reflects much of the historiography of Australian Rules football. Cecil Mullen's centenary history of the game, for instance, has long served as the font of much historical information about the code, with the result that many unsubstantiated claims made by Mullen have become part of folklore. The same is true of a number of official publications by the Australian Football League (AFL), where information released under the imprimatur of the League has frequently been in error.[13] Even in the lower tiers of the

game, the same sorts of misunderstandings are perpetuated, perhaps even more so. Marc Fiddian, for example, has an enviable publication record. But the mere fact that he is such a prolific author, writing more than half a dozen individual Victoria Football Association club histories, the official VFA centenary book, and a subsequently updated and expanded version of the Association's history, means that his interpretation of the VFA's development has become almost orthodox.[14] Given that Fiddian also edited the VFA's official match-day publication *The Recorder* for a number of years, it becomes obvious that the lack of alternative interpretations of VFA history remains problematic. Moreover, like Mullen, very few of Fiddian's books are indexed and the bibliographies are extremely brief – a recipe for the lineages of misunderstanding that are bemoaned by Brown-May. With such cautionary tales and caveats as background, an overview of the beginnings of football in Australia can be outlined.

British Traditions

As Richard Cashman correctly points out, sport in early colonial society was characterised by informality and often went unreported. He acknowledges, however, that from 1829 there were occasional brief references to games of football in the press, and most of these contests would have been informal scratch matches. The first such report, which featured in the *Sydney Monitor* of 25 July 1829, reflects the influence of the military on colonial sport, with a correspondent noting that 'the privates in the barracks are in the habit of amusing themselves with a game of football'.[15] Further scattered reports point towards the rough and tumble nature of these games, and the variety of rules under which the contests took place, with public holidays often marked by a football match in an open paddock. In essence, sport during this period was usually part of a rowdy set of traditions associated with pubs or carnival events. On occasion, there were some tentative links with more formal sporting institutions, such as the Melbourne Cricket Club (formed in 1838), but highly organised forms of sport did not really develop until the middle decades of the century. Importantly, the sports and recreations played in Australia were also very much derivative in nature and it was the model of British games that set the standard and provided the inspiration for leisure-time activities.[16]

In this context, it is worthwhile to note that when football began to appear in Australia as an organised game, there were no formally arranged codes in Britain. British traditions of football were still very much in a state of flux, and so, by the 1840s, when there seemed to be something of a general upsurge in football activity, it is impossible to say with certainty what form of football was being played.[17] From 1840 in Melbourne, for example, it is likely that at least one football match, and in certain years up to five matches, was played each year. These included games in diverse settings, such as contests played as part of Christmas celebrations, a fair that ended with a 'Grand Match at the old English Game of Football', and a six-a-side match for a wager in Geelong.[18] It is also difficult to know what sort of ball was being used for such matches. Sporting equipment was usually hand-made, and items such as leather balls, stitched around an inflated pig's bladder when they could be procured, had a reputation for being misshapen or of poor quality. Balls would often burst during the course of play and sometimes games were abandoned when a replace-ment could not be found. Even in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the quality of footballs varied and it was not unusual for odd-shaped balls to be used in official matches.[19]

It was in the middle decades of the nineteenth century that the games ethic and the cult of athleticism was propagated in British public schools, and it was inevitable that remnants of winter sports and the attendant philosophy found their way to the colonies.[20] A few immigrants were former headmasters, but many of the new colonists had actually played football at schools such as Eton, Harrow or Rugby, and although their knowledge of the rules might have been hazy, their experiences were crucial in determining the types of games to be played in Australia. There was no agreed or universally accepted code for any type of football in England at this time, and each school was a fortress of tradition. The emphasis was on internally organised 'House' sports, and until transport and communication technologies improved there were few, if any, occasions where boys would indulge in contests against other schools. This made the decade of the 1850s a veritable football crucible, as young men in Australia, from a variety of scholastic backgrounds, sought to develop a form of the game that suited their new environment, their adult status and their social needs.[21]

This period of experimentation with rules and forms of the game also helps to explain why the sport of football developed at different times and in different locations within Australia. In Melbourne, there was a pocket of influential British-schooled individuals, and all had connections to the administrative structures of the Melbourne Cricket Club. Organised football emerged at an earlier stage in Melbourne than it did in other Australian cities as the Victorian gold rush of 1851 created not only a sustained period of economic growth, but provided the conditions for an atmosphere of freedom, entrepreneurialism and experimentation in many facets of economic and social life. Coupled with relatively flat and abundant parkland, the foundations for a strong sporting culture in Melbourne were solid. Other cities, notably Adelaide and Brisbane, lagged behind Melbourne's economic growth, and in the case of Sydney especially there were restrictions created by the physical environment, where footballers had continuing problems in finding suitable spaces for the game.[22]

Football in Melbourne

Despite an exponential increase in football research over the past two decades, myths about the origins of Australian Rules football still abound. It was only in 1990 that Geoffrey Blainey produced the most comprehensive account of the game's origins, and in one of two extra sections that were included in a reissue of the book thirteen years later, Blainey devoted an entire chapter to 'Myths: Gaelic and Aboriginal'.[23] In this section, he specifically debunked the persistent but unfounded notion that the game had somehow received its inspiration from Gaelic football, which was not formally codified until 1884.[24] He also devoted attention to the 'recent' suggestion that the Aboriginal game of marngrook influenced the early development of Australian Rules football. Indeed, Blainey was particularly critical of official AFL publications which suggested that the code was 'strongly influenced' by traditional Aboriginal games.[25] In his view, 'the theory stressing an Aboriginal origin has so far skimped the task of accumulating evidence'.[26]

Blainey's position found support in a number of areas, most notably in a detailed study of the life of Tom Wills. Gregory de Moore, a doctoral student at Victoria University and author of a forthcoming book on Wills, has completed the first exhaustive biography of one of

the central characters involved in the foundation of the game. While the role of Wills is discussed more specifically below, in terms of mythology it is pertinent to reiterate de Moore's conclusion that 'there is no evidence to date that supports the notion that Tom Wills observed or played an indigenous game of football and later incorporated elements into Australian Rules football'.[27]

The orthodox version of the origins of the Australian code of football is supported by the weight of evidence and is most elegantly presented by Blainey. While he admits that a number of games took place in Melbourne during 1858, Blainey suggests that the match between students of Scotch College and Melbourne Grammar, played over three Saturday afternoons in August of that year, can rightfully claim to be the progenitor of Australian Rules football. He candidly outlines the role of Wills in umpiring the match and, in the same vein as de Moore, he explains how the return of Wills to Melbourne in December 1856, following five years of education at Rugby School, was especially fortuitous.[28] As Blainey notes, 'Football was not a once-only invention, recognisable from the outset, but a game that evolved during many decades', and the charismatic figure of Wills, a champion cricketer and promoter of football as a winter sport, played an important part in its evolution.[29] Also relevant to the conjunction of the events was the massive readership attracted to 'the most influential book ever written about school days in the English-speaking world'.[30] *Tom Brown's School Days* was published just four months after Wills returned to Melbourne and was an instant best-seller. Capturing the mood of the post-Crimean War world, the semi-autobiographical novel penned by Thomas Hughes described life at Rugby School in great detail; as a manifesto for the game played at Rugby School, the book must have exerted some influence on the distinctive code of football that was soon to emerge in gold-rich Melbourne.

A number of styles of play were experimented with during the winter and early spring of 1858, and there are indications that both running and kicking-only forms of football were evident in what were initially fairly anarchic Saturday afternoon games. However, as Blainey notes, certain ways of playing eventually became more legitimate as the participants themselves sought efficient rules that 'suited the mixture of players and the distinctive open spaces and climate of Melbourne'.[31] In this milieu, the Melbourne Football Club was formed

and although initially confined to members of the cricket club, by the following season it had become less exclusive.[32] By 1859 the Geelong Football Club was established, and it was clear that the enthusiasm for football among formal clubs and a growing number of scratch teams needed to be tempered by an agreed-upon set of rules.

The first set of formal rules was agreed upon by a small committee which met on 17 May 1859 at the Parade Hotel in Wellington Parade, East Melbourne. Blainey believes that Wills was probably foremost in the discussions, but Gillian Hibbins has suggested that other influential members of the committee, namely WJ Hammersley, JB Thompson and Thomas Smith (all of whom had played or watched different versions of football at British schools or universities), would also have spoken freely.[33] Whatever the case, Blainey explains that the committee was not merely plucking out rules at random and then combining them. Rather, in his view, certain rules and styles had already come into prominence and on behalf of the existing players 'the new committee had to confirm those rules which most footballers were likely to accept'.[34] In other words, 'With these first written rules, the Melbourne footballers stood on their own, sponsoring a game that was neither like Rugby nor soccer, though blending the skills and rules of both codes'.[35]

Importantly, it appears that unlike the emerging codes of rugby and soccer, the committee was not predisposed to an offside rule, something that helped to mark the new game as quite distinctive from nearly all other football games in the world. Blainey also observes that most football matches in Victoria at this time were not played on cricket ovals but in parklands, where a rectangular field of irregular size was marked out (in fact, Australian Rules football is still the only major code in the world which is not played on grounds of a standard dimension). In the next decade or so, however, the growing number of spectators and their tendency to invade the field of play encouraged the transfer of games to enclosed cricket arenas, a move made easier given that cricket ovals in Australia and England were not yet standardised in either length or width.[36]

Early Development

It was not long after the game originated that teams and clubs became increasingly aware that a central body was needed to control the

code. This was especially the case following the introduction of 'Challenge Cups' in the 1860s, and a revision and expansion of the rules in 1866.[37] Throughout May 1877 the press reported on proposals that an association be instituted and in the same month a meeting of the senior metropolitan clubs was provided with a draft constitution and a set of by-laws. The VFA was to consist of one delegate (later increased to two) from each of the senior clubs, and country teams were to be represented by proxy, with other junior clubs to be taken 'under its sheltering wing'.[38] After just one year of operation, the VFA was applauded in the press for a range of much-needed initiatives, including a further revision of the rules, a reduction in the number of disputes, the commencement of inter-colonial matches, improvements in on-field play and the continued development of a number of grounds.[39]

Given the rapid urban growth of Melbourne during this period, it is not surprising that the new Association soon expanded from its original base of senior clubs. The VFA also adopted an evangelical approach to the promotion of the game and its member clubs received every encouragement to play matches in provincial centres and other colonies.[40] When three Ballarat teams joined the Association in 1887, however, the senior competition had grown to such a large and unwieldy number that its unchecked expansion eventually led to a series of administrative crises and widespread discontent with the operations of the VFA. It was these rumblings that eventually led to a schism, a key turning point in the history of the code.

The Split

On 2 October 1896, delegates from six clubs gathered at Buxton's Art Gallery while a scheduled meeting of the VFA took place elsewhere. News of a rebellion quickly spread and the six dissident clubs, namely Carlton, Essendon, Fitzroy, Geelong, Melbourne and South Melbourne, soon invited St Kilda and Collingwood to join them in the formation of the breakaway Victorian Football League (VFL).[41] With hindsight, as Richard Stremski explains, the crucial issue which precipitated the schism was 'relativity' – the stronger, wealthier clubs were resentful of carrying the poorer, weaker ones.[42] In the aftermath of the Depression, financial solvency was of vital concern to all football clubs in Melbourne. Therefore, when the secretary of the Association put

forward a plan to centralise and equalise the distribution of revenue, the clubs in a stronger financial position felt disadvantaged and soon realised that they would be better off without their poorer neighbours.

The VFL, or 'League' as it was colloquially known, was determined to improve the game as a spectacle and continually tinkered with the rules. Banning short kicks, allowing the scoring of one point for a behind, and reducing teams from twenty to eighteen men were some of its initiatives. The scheduling of finals games was also an area of experimentation. While the Association doggedly stuck to its formula of allowing the top team to claim the 'premiership', the League eventually instituted a system whereby an end-of-season finals series took place and a play-off for the premiership occurred. Indeed, it was the League's new formula for the finals that was critical in winning over the support of the press and, most importantly, paying spectators.[43]

The pre-eminent position of the League was confirmed when the Australasian Football Council was established in 1906. The League had taken a leading role in encouraging some of its teams to 'spread the gospel' by playing matches in Sydney and by fostering visits to Victoria by representative teams from Western Australia and NSW. With the nation now federated as a political body, administrators in Victoria were keen to realise the benefits of a 'football federation'. Although there had been short-lived predecessors to the AFC, this new body, under the direction of VFL officials, Con Hickey, who assumed the presidency, and Edwin Wilson, who acted as secretary, had far-reaching effects on the future of the code.[44] With representation from all states and New Zealand (hence the use of 'Australasian' in the title of the Council), the AFC quickly rejected a submission that would have allowed the VFA to be part of the Council and set itself up as the arbiter of the game by ratifying and then publishing 'Laws of the Australasian Game of Football'.[45] Thus, not only was the VFA denied any effective involvement in the future direction of Australian Rules football, it was further sidelined when the Council refused to allow the Association to participate in a key initiative, the staging of the inaugural 'Australasian Football Championship', a jubilee carnival of football scheduled to be held in Melbourne in August 1908.[46]

Football Snapshots

Before examining the jubilee carnival, an event that essentially marked the zenith of Australian Rules football, it is important to assess the status of other codes at this point in time. While comprehensive national histories of Australian soccer and the two rugby codes have yet to be written, there is enough evidence to compile a snapshot of these codes in the early part of the twentieth century.

In the case of rugby (later rugby union), it is clear that the antecedents of the game (as played at Rugby School) were well known, if not popular in Australia during the middle of the nineteenth century. Murray Phillips explains that at least three clubs in NSW–University of Sydney (1863), Sydney (1865), and Wallaroo (1870)–claim responsibility for initiating the code in Australia.[47] In many respects, the debates over rugby's origins are just as murky as those over Australian Rules football, as the records are sparse and the definitions and terminology surrounding features of the games are imprecise.[48] It is clear, however, that a more formalised version of the code first began in Sydney, where the game was marked by exclusiveness and hypermasculinity. Both the organisers and the participants were from the upper echelons of society, and according to Phillips the exclusive, class-based nature of rugby in its early years 'was perpetuated by the private-school education system which was crucial in the development and diffusion of the game'.[49] Significantly, a number of the schools played matches against touring teams and the schools themselves were instrumental in forming the SRFU in 1874. The establishment of such a body was critical as it swiftly adopted and endorsed the English rules for the code, which had only been ratified in England three years earlier. In fact, given that unions in New Zealand, Wales, Ireland and South Africa quickly followed, it is obvious that imperial ties were a strong driving force in such sports at this time. In the following decades, graduates from the schools and Sydney University founded a number of new rugby clubs, and the game also spread from its narrow and confined geographical base to the rural regions of NSW and Queensland.[50] Indeed, while the Sydney competition grew from five clubs with one team in 1874, to five competitions with seventy-nine clubs in 1899, the boom was matched in Brisbane, where the initial two clubs blossomed to seventy-two by the end of the century. As most historians have noted, the chief stimulus for the game in the

northern colony was an inter-colonial contest with NSW, staged in 1882, which was soon followed by the creation of the Central Queensland Rugby Union in 1886.[51] International tours began in 1884 and in 1899 Australia witnessed the first official rugby union test match against Great Britain. Phillips notes that victories against the tourists by both the national team and the Queensland side proved a great fillip for the game and a number of attendance records were set in the first decade of the twentieth century, including one occasion in 1907 when 52 000 people, one-tenth of the population of Sydney, watched NSW play New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground.[52] The increased patronage of the game was also a sign that it was beginning to hold more appeal for a broader cross-section of the populace. The adoption of the code in state schools from 1888, and its wider diffusion to the working classes at the turn of the century, ensured that it had a strong foothold in the northern colonies, although as Phillips notes there were also humble beginnings for the formal version of the code in both Victoria and Western Australia in the 1880s.[53]

Tony Collins has expertly explained how class considerations were at the heart of the formation of a semi-professional rugby league in the north of England in 1895.[54] Given the class dimensions of the game in the Australian context (described above), it was not surprising that two other bastions of the code, New South Wales and New Zealand, should follow suit. In Sydney, the NSWRU was already being 'castigated for its total reliance on English authorities for rules and regulations and its inability to make the game more appealing for spectators', and, according to Phillips, administrators displayed very little flexibility when it came to incorporating the needs of the lower classes, especially in terms of financial hardships for injured players.[55] Matters came to a head when claims for compensation following injuries sustained in a representative game were rejected, and on 8 August 1907 the New South Wales Rugby Football League was established. The attraction of international contests for professional players was also a stimulus for the breakaway professional club competitions in Sydney and Brisbane (and throughout New Zealand), and by 1908 the worldwide split between union and league seemed irreversible.[56]

Despite being codified in England in 1863, soccer did not formally commence in Australia until 1880 when the Wanderers played King's School under (British) Football Association rules in Sydney.[57]

Like the rugby union code, soccer can point to links with various kicking games that were popular throughout the colonies, but the threads are weak and discontinuous. As Philip Mosely and Bill Murray point out, although soccer in England was originally dominated by the middle classes, by the 1880s it was beginning to be seen as a working-class game, and outside of Sydney the code thrived in coal- and shale-mining districts. The game was first played in Victoria and Queensland in 1883 and then found its way to Perth (1892), Adelaide (1893) and Hobart (1908).[58] As a relative 'late-starter' in terms of Australian football chronology, soccer enjoyed several surges of popularity, notably in times of prosperity (such as the 1880s and the years before World War I, as well as the 1920s), but these boom periods were fuelled by immigrants rather than by locally born participants. As Mosely and Murray confirm, these various waves of players were dissatisfied with the existing district allegiances in Australian sport and so the participants tended to establish their teams with an ethnic bias (a problem that was later to be exacerbated after World War II).[59] Various tours also stimulated the code, beginning with trips between NSW and New Zealand in 1904 and 1905. However, the significant financial burden involved, and the fact that Queensland and Victoria were left off the touring schedule, meant that the impact was limited.[60] A national body, the Commonwealth Football Association (CFA), was formed in 1911, but it was heavily dominated by NSW and Queensland and ceased its activities for the duration of World War I.[61]

The Carnival

Providing a snapshot of codes is important for another reason, as plans for strengthening the hold of Australian Rules football throughout the Commonwealth and New Zealand proved to be the basis for spirited public discussion in the months before the 1908 carnival. For example, in a lengthy article devoted to developments in 'International Football', published in January 1907, the *Australasian* lamented 'the fact that Rugby is or shortly will be the world's game in football'. According to an anonymous writer, the success of New Zealand and South African tours to Great Britain gave rugby 'an importance it never knew before', and the possibility of Germany,

France, Holland and even the United States taking part in interna-
tional games meant that other forms of football, whatever their
merits, would struggle to compete.[62] Letters to the editor on this
matter soon followed, with JJ Davoren from Sydney suggesting that
the imperial dimensions of the rugby union code demanded that
Victoria eschew its love of Australian Rules for a renewed commit-
ment to the 'world' game.[63] B Sandford, writing his lengthy rebuttal
from Wellington, New Zealand, not only lampooned this idea but
made a strong case for the national and international aspirations of
Australian Rules football. Apart from the observation that the game of
rugby lacked spectacle, he claimed it made more sense for the two
'lonely' states of New South Wales and Queensland to fall in line with
the code of football played elsewhere in Australia, rather than have
the other states convert to an 'obsolete style of football'. The Australian
code, Sandford argued, 'with its more reasonable motto of patriotism',
had the potential to 'cement the whole continent together in one
great national game'.[64]

Given this context, where proponents of each code took the
opportunity to sing the praises of their preferred game, the Melbourne
carnival to mark the jubilee of Australian Rules football occurred at
an opportune time for the boosters of the indigenous game. Club
administrators, who had been beset in the previous decade with
problems of violent play, gambling and creeping professionalism,
could enjoy what was essentially a celebratory exercise, while the AFC
took the opportunity to respond to the bifurcation of the rugby code
by espousing a jingoistic agenda for the future of football, encapsu-
lated in the slogan adopted by the Council – 'One Flag, One Destiny,
One Football Game: The Australian'.[65] These patriotic desires were
also given full support when the Council declared that henceforth its
own colours would be green and gold, and that the Australian flag
would be flown at all matches, both initiatives reflecting the AFC's
desire to transcend local and interstate rivalries by making use of
national colours and symbols.[66]

In effect, the jubilee events of August 1908 signified that the
game had reached its peak. Representative teams from Victoria, South
Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, New South Wales, Queensland
and New Zealand were invited to participate in what was to become

the first of regular interstate carnivals, and large numbers of specta-
tors flocked to the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) to witness more
than a dozen matches over a ten-day period. Depicted as an event of
national, and even international significance, the carnival was a cel-
ebration of all that was perceived as good by the boosters of the game,
and received nothing but support by all sections of the press.[67]

During the carnival, debate over the merits of particular codes
also found expression in related events. Attendance figures were
boosted by crowds that had flocked to Melbourne to see ships from
the Great White Fleet, part of an armada of sixteen United States bat-
tleships and four destroyers touring the Pacific Ocean, but at that
time harbouring in Melbourne. The presence of the Fleet in Melbourne
warrants discussion, for it provided an ideal opportunity for the
Council to emphasise the merits of the Australian game to a small but
significant international audience. A brochure describing 'the evolu-
tion of the Australasian football game' had already been sent to
President Roosevelt and Admiral Sperry, and its receipt had been
'courteously acknowledged'.[68] Confident in the superiority of their
own code, the AFC also took the opportunity to invite the crews of the
United States warships the *Minnesota* and the *Kentucky* to give an
exhibition of American football at the MCG on the final day of the
jubilee celebrations. Given that little research has been undertaken
on the history and development of the American code in Australia,
this event is also significant for it would seem to be the first game of
American football ever played on Australian soil.[69]

Although the match was organised at short notice and the teams
had very little preparation, the press noted that 'the eleven men on
each side went into the game in dead earnest, and … they spared nei-
ther themselves nor their opponents'.[70] It is clear that feelings for
Australian Rules football were at their peak during this period, and
the staging of the gridiron game was therefore yet another means of
displaying and reinforcing the merits of the favoured local winter
sport to both the public and to the participants. In summary, most
correspondents were unimpressed, with one writer describing the
contest as 'twenty-two men rooting around in the mud on the MCG
… [reminding] one of a herd of swine digging for worms'.[71]

Given that a compromise set of rules with rugby had been
rejected in an earlier forum at the carnival, the poor spectacle of

American football in the exhibition match can only have strength-
ened the claims of those who believed Australian Rules football was a
superior code for both players and spectators. The rules of the
American game were still in a state of flux and even the most signifi-
cant bifurcation of the code, represented by the adoption of the for-
ward pass in 1906, was not yet common in a game where the play was
characterised by a lack of openness and an emphasis on physical
strength.[72] In addition, the ball used in the American form of football
had not yet assumed its distinctive shape or size, making it less
suitable for throwing.[73] It is not surprising, therefore, that the
Melbourne press occasionally referred to the exhibition game at
the MCG as 'American Rugby football', emphasising the British
origins of the game.[74]

Although the jubilee carnival represented a high point for
Australian Rules football, the public good will that was engendered
and the positive publicity gained by staging such a successful event
soon dissipated following the outbreak of World War I in 1914. In fact,
all sports, not just the football codes, suffered as a result of Australia's
involvement in military conflicts at this time, making it one of the
most divisive periods in the nation's history. This was especially the
case for the VFL and Sydney's newly formed rugby league competi-
tion, which both controversially continued their competitions during
the war years, albeit with reduced numbers of teams.[75]

Between the Wars

The inter-war decades in Australia fall neatly into two halves. The
1920s were a time of general prosperity and optimism, particularly as
the weariness and painful memories of World War I receded. The
divisions between rugby union and rugby league may have been
entrenched, but the new competition favoured by the working
class maintained its momentum after play continued during the war
years.[76] In 1921 the Commonwealth Football Association re-emerged
and changed its title to the Australian Soccer Football Federation, as a
new wave of immigration and a spate of international tours boosted
the popularity of the code.[77] In Australian Rules football, the VFA
resumed in 1918 after a hiatus but clearly operated in the shadow
of the more powerful VFL, with three clubs defecting to an
expanded league in 1925. In other initiatives, a second eighteen

competition was introduced in 1919, and a medal for the best and fairest player was introduced.[78] New technologies also made their appearance, and the use of radio broadcasts for sporting events not only broadened the audience for sport generally, and the football codes in particular, but helped to change the nature of press reporting.[79]

All of society was drastically effected when the Wall Street crash of 1929 brought about an international depression. Massive numbers of men were thrown out of work and semi-professional football competitions became overly conscious about their financial viability. In response to this, the VFL introduced the Coulter law in 1930, which effectively limited payments to players.[80] None of this had an impact on crowds attending matches of Australian Rules football and, as with other codes, spectator numbers increased markedly during the 1930s. Some of this increase can be attributed to the need for mass entertainment in a depressed economy, but the rise of 'celebrity' footballers, feted by the press and the new medium of radio, also contributed to interest in the various codes.

As noted in the introduction, Turner's formulation of a 'Barassi Line' dividing the codes in the 1970s tends to give a false impression of how football diffused in Australia. Before World War II, every state supported all four of the major football codes in some shape or form, with the only exception being the late-flowering rugby league code, as it relied on payments to players and was not economically viable in smaller cities or towns. While there is a sense of a north–south divide when it comes to Australian Rules football and the rugby codes (with soccer more geographically spread), there are clear examples where pockets of each code have survived, if not flourished, in various places at various times. For instance, as noted above, Brisbane embraced 'Victorian Rules' football in the 1860s, only for it to be supplanted by rugby union in the 1880s, while in Sydney there have usually been enough teams to sustain an Australian Rules football competition since at least 1881.[81]

While all the codes may have espoused the rhetoric of 'conquering' other states (and countries), there have in fact been a number of instances where administrators of the codes have been willing collaborators. Chief among these occasions prior to World War II was the 1933 proposal to fully integrate the codes of Australian Rules

football and rugby league. As Tony Collins points out, 'Coming just months after the Bodyline tour … had seemingly driven a wedge between the two leading sporting nations of the British Empire, the merger seemed to point the way to a football code that was in origin, and geography, wholly Australian'.[82]

Hatched at a meeting between representatives of the NSW Rugby League and the (renamed) Australian National Football Council, the proposal initially generated much enthusiasm, and the result was a merged set of rules and an experimental fourteen-a-side match in Sydney on 11 August 1933. While the scheme never took off, it is pertinent to note that a fusion between the two codes had also been mooted previously at meetings in 1908 and 1914.[83] While not always the rule, cooperation between codes was also evident at other times. For instance, in 1908 some Australian Rules football teams in Brisbane were permitted to play their games on grounds controlled by the governing rugby union body[84], and relations between officials of soccer and rugby union in the 1920s were also very cordial, indicating that the practicalities surrounding the 'business' and financial viability of football may have been a cohesive, rather than a dividing, force in some circumstances.[85]

A Rich Tapestry

In effect, a template of relative peaceful coexistence among the football codes was established in the years leading up to World War II. The fact that the diffusion and early development of the codes had been somewhat patchy cannot be denied, and yet it is the diverse and uneven spread of the codes that provides Australian sport with something of its unique character. Indeed, the ability of all codes to survive in all states belies the notion that support for a particular game automatically precludes interest or financial support for another. Of course, at various times, authorities from each of the codes have either espoused aggressive expansionist agendas or retreated behind a protectionist shield, but this seems part of the natural historical ebb and flow that coexistence implies.

Rather than focusing on artificial dividing lines, therefore, it is better to conceive of football in Australia as something akin to a rich tapestry. Such a conception is enhanced when other aspects of the social histories of the codes are considered. For instance, while space

limitations do not permit a lengthy discussion of female involvement as players in the various codes, it is worth noting the remarkably high percentage (around 50 per cent) of female spectators who have supported Australian Rules football since its inception.[86] This support has translated into almost 100 years of on-field involvement, albeit in a sporadic manner, with the first women's team playing matches in Perth in 1915, in Ballarat in 1920 and in Melbourne in 1921. Moreover, a crowd of around 30 000 spectators watched women's teams representing Carlton and Richmond play a match in 1933.[87] Despite the hyper-masculinity of both rugby codes, women in Sydney also played the game, with evidence of women's rugby league teams being formed as early as 1921.[88] International women's soccer has a longer history, with matches played in England in the late nineteenth century, but in Australia, women's teams only seemed to emerge in the 1920s.[89] Similarly, while little has been discussed concerning ethnicity and football, the involvement of Aboriginals, particularly in Australian Rules football and rugby league, is notable, while the participation of other ethnic groups, notably the Chinese, in the Australian code prior to World War II has only recently been uncovered.[90] And, of course, this brief overview of the codes has explored little of the experience of the codes at the so-called 'grassroots' level, where the nuances of the tapestry analogy are multiplied many times over in suburban or rural competitions across Australia.

As noted earlier in the chapter, explanations of the origins of the various football codes are not always clear, and the momentous task of completing a detailed overview of the diffusion of football throughout Australia is yet to be completed. While the multi-faceted nature of sport in general, and the football codes in particular, tempers the construction of such meta-narratives, the important role of the various codes in the composition of Australian social life in the nineteenth and early twentieth century cannot be ignored.

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Crossing the Barassi Line
The Rise and Rise of Australian Football

Bob Stewart and Geoff Dickson

The Football Divide

Although Australian football is Australia's only indigenous game of any significance, its early diffusion throughout colonial Australia was troublesome and it ended up as a minor football code in New South Wales and Queensland. As Rob Hess and Matthew Nicholson observed in Chapter 3, this mixed level of popularity gave rise to what Ian Turner named 'the Barassi Line', after one of the legends of Australian football, Ron Barassi.[1] In Figure 4.1 below, the regions to the left of the line were dominated by Australian football, while the region to the right was the home of rugby league and union.

The cities of Sydney and Brisbane were imbued with a rugby culture while Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart were saturated with the values of Australian football. Canberra, the national capital, enjoyed a mixture of rugby and Australian football, which reflected the fact that it was a city comprising migrants from both Sydney and Melbourne. The desire to dismantle the Barassi Line became a catalyst for the game's transformation in the 1980s and 1990s.

Figure 4.1: The Demarcation of Football in Australia

Australian Football Leagues

In the 1940s Australian football was the main game in every state or territory except Queensland and New South Wales. It was governed nationally by the Australian National Football Council (ANFC) which not only represented the most powerful state Australian-football organisations like the South Australian National Football League (SANFL), Tasmanian Football League (TFL), Victorian Football League (VFL) and Western Australian Football League (WAFL), but also the New South Wales Australian Football League (NSWAFL) and the Queensland Australian Football League (QAFL). As noted in Chapter 3, the ANFC was previously known as the Australasian Football Council, which was established in 1906. Although dominated by the VFL, its primary role was to promote the game nationally and ensure its viability in both city and country. It was also responsible for regulating the interstate transfer of players through a system of permits and clearances.[2]

The intra-city leagues organised by the SANFL, WAFL, TFL and VFL were well organised, well patronised and embedded in the local

sporting culture. However, the dominant competition, and the most influential football body, was Melbourne's VFL. Not only was Melbourne the birthplace of Australian football, but it was also Australia's second-largest city after Sydney, with its 1.5 million-strong population in the early 1950s greatly exceeding Adelaide and Perth, with 480 000 and 350 000 respectively; Australia's total population at the time was 8.5 million. In addition to people, Melbourne also held corporate clout, with the city playing home to many of Australia's leading mining, retail, finance and manufacturing companies. Melbourne, therefore, had both a commercial and spectator base to support a strong, semi-professional football competition. Although the VFL competition comprised teams that mainly represented Melbourne's inner suburbs, most of the fans came from the sprawling outer suburbs that resulted from the city's rapid post-World War II growth.[3] This inner-city-team-with-outer-suburban-supporter-base scenario would, like the Barassi Line, become a key antecedent to the game's transformation throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

The Structure and Operation of the VFL

The VFL was formed in 1897 in Melbourne, founded upon suburban rivalries in which tribal and community loyalties were displayed through partisan identification and passionate barracking at games. Additional teams were invited to join in the 1920s, and by the 1930s a stable competition of twelve teams was in place. Except for Geelong, all the clubs were clustered around adjoining inner suburbs of Melbourne. Figure 4.2 identifies the spatial distribution of the eleven city-based clubs in the 1950s. This structure remained intact until 1982, when the South Melbourne club relocated to Sydney.

The VFL's twelve competing teams were member-owned clubs that were managed by volunteer committees with one or two paid employees (usually the club secretary and a personal assistant).[4] The VFL central administration, the organisation responsible for coordinating the competition, was managed by a committee of delegates from each of the twelve member clubs, and supported by a small core of paid staff. The two most influential league administrators were the president, who was both the figurehead and spokesperson for the League, and the secretary, who ran its day-to-day operations.[5] The president of the VFL in the early post-World War II period was William
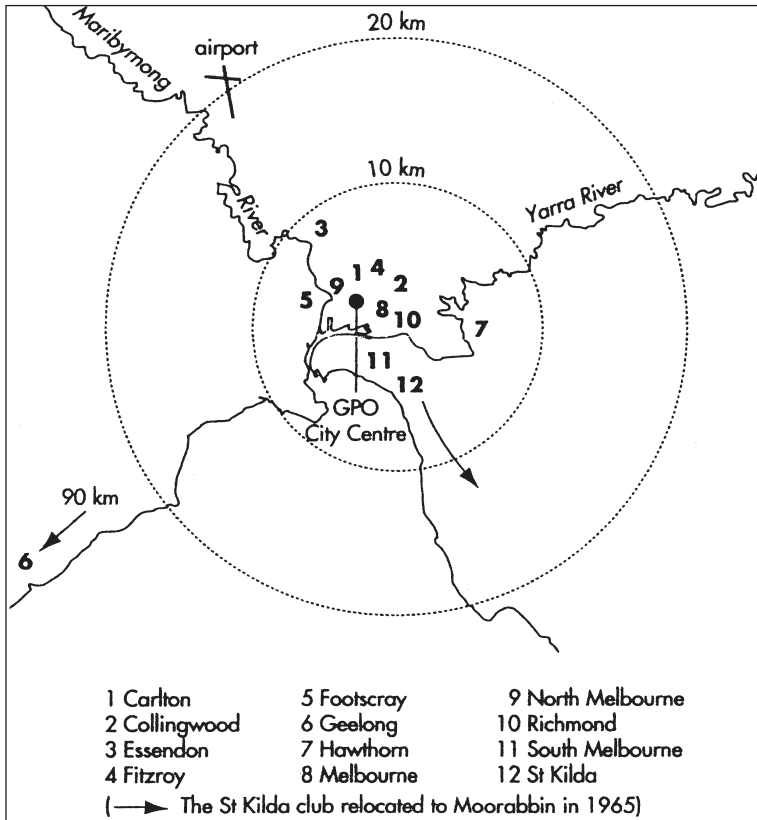
Figure 4.2: The Spatial Distribution of the VFL in 1955

Source: Hess, Rob and Stewart, Bob (eds), *More Than a Game: The Real Story of Australian Rules Football*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Melbourne, 1998, p. 185.

McClelland, a Melbourne Football Club delegate who held the position until 1956, when he was replaced by Carlton delegate Kenneth Luke. In effect, the clubs controlled the league through their membership on the VFL management committee, which was later restructured as a board. This system of governance prevailed until the mid-1980s.[6]

The VFL emerged as the premier Australian football league during the 1940s and 1950s. Average match attendances, even with all matches played simultaneously on a Saturday afternoon, were usually in excess of 20 000, and grand finals could attract over 100 000

spectators. The SANFL and WAFL also had a strong following but, because of their much smaller fan catchments, average attendance levels were always lower than the VFL's match-day crowds.[7] Their average match attendances of 5000 to 10 000 mirrored a strong football culture, but they could never match the VFL's popularity. During the late 1960s crowds fell slightly, but the VFL was still the most popular spectator sport in Australia. The game's popularity was supported by saturation television coverage, and for a short time each of the three commercial television stations as well as the government-owned Australia Broadcasting Commission (ABC) televised an hour of Saturday-afternoon highlights.[8] Live telecasts of games, however, were banned until 1977 on the basis that live coverage would reduce the at-ground attendance. Table 4.1 lists the average weekly attendance for selected years between 1947 and 1972.

This inner-suburban structure was maintained through to the 1980s despite significant population increases along the east and south-east corridors of Melbourne. While the rival Victorian Football Association captured clubs from these corridors of growth, the VFL relied on old clubs, old traditions, old locations, old grounds and old allegiances for their support. At the same time, this parochial approach to club location and fan identity was counterbalanced by a desire to take the VFL well beyond Melbourne's outer suburbs.[9]

Table 4.1: Average Attendances for the Victorian Football League, 1947–72

Year	Average Weekly Attendance	Average Match Attendance
1947	108 000	18 000
1951	116 000	19 000
1957	141 000	24 000
1962	151 000	25 000
1968	121 000	23 000
1972	133 000	24 000

Source: Victorian Football League, *Annual Reports*, VFL, Melbourne, 1946–72.

Thinking Beyond the Barassi Line

While the VFL was conservatively managed throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the central administration was sympathetic to the occasional

interstate incursion. The VFL had always considered itself to be the premier football competition in Australia, and held a vision about it one day being the national game. To this end, in 1948 it organised for Richmond and Footscray to play a fixture in Brisbane as part of its propaganda program.[10] In June 1952, the VFL went a little further by sponsoring a national Australian Rules Football day. In collaboration with the ANFC it scheduled home-and-away games between Melbourne clubs for Sydney and Albury in New South Wales, and Brisbane in Queensland. It culminated in a crowd of 24 000 watching the Collingwood and Richmond game at the Sydney Cricket Ground.[11] However, little follow-up occurred and Australian football was left to languish in the two northern cities for another thirty years. During the 1950s and 1960s a number of national football championships were also conducted under the auspices of the ANFC. These national carnivals, as they were called, were played in different cities and each state sent a representative team. However, they were usually very one-sided, with Victoria winning. The national carnivals were discontinued in the early 1970s.

The Players

Although VFL players played the game on a part-time basis and were employed in businesses outside football, they were paid for their services. In 1930 rules were established which put a ceiling on match payments; however, there were frequent accusations of under-the-table payments.[12] During the 1940s the maximum player payment was fixed around the £4 to £5 mark, which equated to about two-thirds of the basic wage in the wider community. During the 1960s the average individual-player match payment increased to £12, but still accounted for less than 50 per cent of the average weekly wage.[13] So, while players were compensated for their weekly on-field performance, they were part-time players who for the most part worked full-time in some other occupation. At the same time the wealthier clubs were able to pay their players more than the less-well-off clubs. This usually took the form of subsidised accommodation, the free use of motor vehicles and flexible work arrangements that allowed players to train during week-day afternoons. In addition to controls on payments, players were also controlled by rules that tied them to their club until such time as the club decided to grant a transfer. This highly

regulated player environment was compounded by a zoning system that tied anyone who lived in Victoria to a specific club. A metropolitan zone had been in place in 1914, while a country zone was introduced in 1967.[14]

These rigid controls were not good for players since they negated their bargaining power and effectively tied them to a designated club for their whole playing life. Unlike the wider community, where trade unionism was an integral part of working people's lives, there was no union to represent the collective rights of players, although a half-hearted move to set up a players' association occurred in 1955. Tom McNeil, a St Kilda player, used the English soccer players' association as a model to sign up local players. More than 100 players expressed interest in the idea of having a union to press their claims for better pay and playing conditions, but the initiative drowned in a sea of apathy the following year.

Shifting and Upgrading Grounds

While the game maintained its public appeal during the 1960s, a number of VFL clubs were concerned that inner-suburban locations and substandard facilities were a barrier to their outer-suburban growth. At the end of the 1964 season St Kilda moved to Moorabbin, North Melbourne moved to Coburg and Richmond moved to the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). While the St Kilda and Richmond relocations were successful (they subsequently secured more revenue and won more games), the North Melbourne move was a disaster. The relocation lasted only one year, brought undone by a losing team, local council politics and the Coburg community's strong attachment to their own VFA team. [15] This experience demonstrated that even when clubs stand to benefit by better facilities, increased profitability and even improved on-field performance from a change in club location, fan alienation is a natural occurrence. It also confirmed that promises about financial support and facility improvements were not always realised.

The VFL administration continued to argue that in view of the deteriorating condition of many grounds, the high cost of maintenance and the need to take the game to the outer suburbs, it was necessary to rationalise ground usage. As a starting point, the VFL Board of Directors and its president, Kenneth Luke, resolved to build

its own venue at Mulgrave on the fringe of Melbourne's eastern sub-urbs. It did this for two reasons. First the premier facility for football, the MCG, was controlled by a government-appointed trust that favoured cricket over football. Second, it was anticipated that the demand for football would increase rapidly and a large venue was needed to accommodate the increased crowds, particularly at finals times.[16]

The stadium was designed to hold 157 000 spectators, all under-cover. VFL Park opened to great fanfare in 1970 and eventually secured the tenancy of Hawthorn and St Kilda. The stadium was easily acces-sible to people living in Melbourne's expanding south-east suburbs and average crowds were approximately 25 000.[17] However, VFL Park never got the railway link the state government promised, the ground capacity never got beyond 85 000, and most spectators had no pro-tection from the weather. The stadium, later renamed AFL Park, con-tinued operating for another thirty years. It was sold in 1999 with the opening of the new-generation Docklands Stadium (now branded Telstra Dome), a facility that marked the culmination of the League's ground-rationalisation program.

Commercial Progress

Although Australian football enjoyed enormous public support during the 1950s and 1960s, it was still only a semi-professional game. In the early 1960s VFL match payments were set at just over £6, and even when the regulation match payment had increased to just over £12 (or $25, the new decimal currency equivalent) in 1968, this was still only around 40 per cent of average weekly earnings. Clubs were also heavily dependent on gate receipts to fund their operation and around 95 per cent of all club revenues came from this source.[18]

However, the VFL experienced considerable capital accumula-tion throughout the 1970s, which can be explained by four crucial developments. First, sponsorship became a significant revenue stream during this period. Whereas in the late 1960s the major sponsor WD and HO Wills (a tobacco producer that owned the Benson and Hedges brand, amongst others) provided $12 000 to support the finals series, by the late 1970s a rival tobacco producer and cigarette manu-facturer, Philip Morris (using its Marlboro brand), was providing in excess of $150 000. Clubs were also securing sponsor income of

$80 000 to $90 000 each in return for the sponsors' logos being splashed over team uniforms.[19] Second, clubs began to create commercial arms to their football operations. One of the most successful was the North Melbourne club, which set up in-house insurance and travel agencies. Third, clubs joined with ground and stadium managers to introduce premium seating, most notable in the form of corporate boxes. Finally, the fee from television broadcast rights became more lucrative in response to the extra stimulus colour TV gave sport events when it was introduced in 1975. In 1976 the VFL was able to triple the value of its television rights, where, in a landmark five-year agreement with the Channel 7 network and the ABC, it received $3 million in return for the rights to broadcast all home-and-away games.[20] The VFL was clearly distancing itself from its conservative past.

The Paradox of Growth

The 1970s was at one level a golden age for Australian football. Increasing numbers of young men were playing the game in suburban and country leagues, and the SANFL and WAFL were experiencing rapid growth despite the drain of many of their star players to the more glamorous and better-paying VFL.[21] In addition, VFL revenues had expanded exponentially as clubs tapped into new revenue sources (sponsorship in particular) and reorganised themselves as businesses where marketing and promotion were just as important as maintaining traditional community links.[22] The Essendon Football Club exemplified this commercial transformation. Whereas gate receipts and member fees accounted for 89 per cent of total revenue in 1972, they contributed only 50 per cent to total club income in 1979. The club increased its total annual revenues from just over $100 000 to just under $1 million over the same period.[23] A summary of the VFL's financial progress during the 1970s is provided in Table 4.2.

One would have expected clubs to have used this revenue windfall to build their assets and secure their financial futures, but the opposite occurred. Six of the twelve VFL clubs incurred an operating loss in 1979. St Kilda, South Melbourne and Fitzroy were the worst-performing clubs, with an excess of expenditure over income of more than $100 000. The cause of the problem was a massive increase in player payments, which resulted from inflationary pressures in the

wider economy (prices were increasing by 10 per cent a year), the growing bargaining power of players, and the breakdown of League controls over player payment limits. The average club wage bill increased tenfold during the 1970s, and in 1978, and the average weekly match payment per player of $272, was 125 per cent of the average weekly earnings in the wider community,[24] For the first time VFL players were earning more money than the majority of the workforce. This wage explosion was good for player, but it was also the catalyst for a further transformation in the game, as will be illustrated later in this chapter.

Table 4.2: Financial Estimates for the VFL, 1972–78

	1972 ($)	1976 ($)	1978 ($)
Broadcast rights fees to League	200 000	200 000	800 000
League sponsorships	15 000	80 000	150 000
Average club revenues	110 000	350 000	700 000
Average match payment per player	40	180	272

Source: Stewart, Bob, *The Australian Football Business*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, NSW, 1984, pp. 72–4.

Inter-city Transition

As the Victorian Football League entered the 1980s, it was clear to newly appointed VFL President Allen Aylett and other senior administrators that Australian football had a future in rugby-dominated Sydney.[25] Surveys taken during the harbour city games showed that at least 60 000 residents would support a Sydney team in the VFL, and that 90 per cent of all respondents felt that the game could become a major spectator sport in Sydney.[26] At the same time, a number of Melbourne clubs were in financial difficulty. South Melbourne, a founding member of the VFL, was the most problematic, having accumulated losses of nearly $500 000 over the previous three years, and was not able to pay its players.[27] With the support of the VFL's central administration, the club's management resolved to move to Sydney on the grounds that, firstly, it would have the entire New South Wales

region as a recruiting zone; secondly, it would attract more fans to games in view of Sydney's large population; thirdly, it would receive enormous promotional benefits from live television coverage back to Melbourne; and finally, it would secure additional revenue from the telecasts and a more-lucrative sponsorship deal.[28]

After a bitter fight between club officials and the Keep-South-at-South supporter campaign, the club played its first Sydney-based matches in 1982.[29] Not without substantial teething problems, most noticeably its private ownership structure, the Sydney Swans demonstrated that an inter-city competition would provide significant benefits to the VFL. First, Sydney provided a new population centre and catchment of more than three million people, many of whom would follow a successful and well-promoted team. And second, it enabled live telecasts of VFL games to Melbourne. At the time, the VFL still did not allow live coverage of local home-and-away games, which were all played on Saturday because of restrictive state government legislation.[30] Therefore, the telecast of Sunday games from Sydney was the perfect solution – live games broadcast into the lounge rooms of Victorian households without the risk of affecting match attendance.

The Sleeping Giant Awakens

While the VFL was looking to develop the game more in rugby's heartland, they fortunately never had to withstand a major thrust by the rugby codes into Australian football territory. However, the same could not be said for soccer. Since the 1970s, soccer has been the sleeping giant that all Australian football administrators feared would awake and trample over their flagship competitions. As a consequence, soccer has dominated the VFL's strategic thinking and competitive positioning far more than the rugby codes.[31]

Soccer has always had a widespread presence in Australia, but had never been able to claim the public attention to the same extent that Australian football and rugby league could, notwithstanding a powerful wave of post-World War II European migration and the associated baggage of soccer traditions. However, by the early 1970s there were signs that soccer was winning the hearts and minds of non-migrant Australians, particularly schoolchildren. In 1974 Australia qualified for the first time to play in the World Cup, and even though

the team's performance in West Germany was mediocre, it attracted significant media coverage. In 1978, in an attempt to capitalise on the growing popularity of soccer, the Australian Soccer Federation established a national league with teams in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide. The significance of these developments was not lost on VFL President Allen Aylett, who felt the threat of soccer demanded a response. If soccer was to have a competition that transcended state boundaries, then surely Australian football must also develop something similar. National leagues would be the model for leagues to follow in the new era.[32]

The VFL consequently resolved to test the interstate market for Australian football in general and VFL fixtures in particular. In June 1979, the North Melbourne versus Hawthorn game was transferred to the Sydney Cricket Ground and attracted just over 31 000 fans.[33] Another five experimental games were played in Sydney over the next eighteen months and generated an average attendance of 19 000, in spite of a number of games being one-sided. Similar matches were also played in Brisbane. These successes led Aylett to design a vision for Australian football which centred on a national league in which every major Australia city would be represented.[34] While Aylett did not specify just how this vision would be executed, it provided a strategy by which Australian football could position itself as the national game.

The 1980s Financial Crisis

The Sydney experiment was just one of a number of issues that the VFL had to deal with during the early 1980s. As already noted, many clubs were in extreme financial difficulty, and a combination of escalating match payments and massive transfer fees created a cost structure for clubs that raced ahead of their incomes.[35] Whereas it cost $93 000 to field a competitive VFL team in 1968, by 1978 this had risen to $700 000.[36] This problem was compounded by a growing gap between the wealthier clubs and the poorer clubs, and a tendency for the former to finish in the top half of the premiership ladder. Whereas the Richmond Football Club generated revenue of more that $1 million in 1980, the Fitzroy Football Club could only secure $690 000. At this time, at least six clubs were technically bankrupt, with liabilities well in excess of assets.[37]

The VFL Board of Directors initiated a number of consultant reports and task-force inquiries to address the problem.[38] Every report remarked that a system of management which relied on member clubs nominating delegates would not allow decisions to be taken that addressed wider commercial and social issues, but would instead be dominated by the narrow self-interest of clubs. The 1985 Task Force report (*Final Report*) reiterated that the problems facing the VFL (such as stagnant attendances, financial instability, escalating player payments and poor ground conditions) could only be resolved by a radical change in the way the competition was run.[39] It also entertained the idea of a national league as argued by Aylett, but suggested that the VFL should proceed slowly in view of the heavy commercial and cultural costs associated with this type of initiative. Around the same time, John Elliott, president of the Carlton Football Club, convened a meeting of the nine wealthiest clubs where the idea of forming a breakaway league was discussed.[40] The meeting provided the media with great headlines but did not lead anywhere. However, it illustrated the high level of anxiety that existed among member clubs and the uncertainty about how the League should best proceed in these uncertain times.

A further problem arose from the League's player-transfer rules, which tied a player to a club in perpetuity or until such time as the club decided to clear the player to another club. In 1983 Silvio Foschini's request to transfer from the Sydney Football Club to St Kilda was refused. Unlike previous cases of this type, which were always settled out of court, this one was heard by the Victorian Supreme Court, which ruled that the VFL's clearance, transfer and zoning rules comprised an unreasonable restraint of trade.[41] The decision was a double-edged sword for VFL officials: while it gave players more economic freedom, it further destabilised the competition by increasing a player's ability to negotiate higher salaries.

Standing Together

The Foschini case was a coming-of-age for the players' association, which had rallied against the League's restraints on player transfers since its establishment in 1974. The VFL Players' Association (VFLPA) was formed through the efforts of Essendon player Geoff Pryor, who along with a number of other senior players wanted to see a more orderly and equitable approach to player rights and welfare issues

like ground maintenance and safety, injury compensation, player-transfer rules and player payments.[42] Just under 70 per cent of senior-list players had joined the association by the late 1970s, but its ability to influence League policy was weak. In 1980 the VFLPA elected Hawthorn player Michael Moncrieff as president, appointed Peter Allen as its part-time administrator, increased its financial resources through sponsorship and licensing, and consolidated its member-ship.[43] It used its increased political clout to challenge the VFL's player-payment rules, support the Foschini challenge, negotiate penalty payments for Sunday games in Sydney, and argue for the introduction of a player draft. Although its plan to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the VFL was thwarted during the 1980s, it had become an integral part of the football landscape and was a significant influence on subsequent League policy development, particularly in the 1990s.[44]

Great Leap Forward

A major restructuring of the VFL took place in 1985 when the VFL Board of Directors resolved to adopt the Task Force's *Final Report* recommendation on management restructuring and replace itself with a football commission. Elected by the clubs, the VFL Commission possessed widespread powers and could implement policy on all matters except the admission or expulsion of clubs from the competition.[45] This restructuring not only transformed the way the VFL was managed but also provided space for both widening and deepening the market for the game.[46] The market could be widened by expanding the competition interstate, and the game could be deepened by ensuring an exciting and even competition where clubs were finan-cially stable. The Commission could impartially examine the big pic-ture and not be dominated by the parochial and self-interested ambitions of individual clubs. The Commission's management parameters were subsequently framed by its planning report, entitled *Establishing the Basis for Future Success*, which set the agenda for the VFL's operations. The agenda comprised four key strategic pillars: national expansion, ground rationalisation, labour regulation and income equalisation for clubs.[47] These strategic pillars underpinned the long-term development of Australian football's flagship competi-tion. In addition the Commission gave itself the role of not only

establishing a national competition, but also of ensuring the grass-roots development of the game in suburban and regional Australia. It was to become both developer of the national league and keeper of the code, thereby making the ANFC redundant. In this way, the VFL was not only able to ensure that its competition would become the basis for the national competition, it was also able to ensure that it would become the governing body for the sport throughout Australia.[48]

One of the first initiatives introduced by the Commission was a salary cap, which set a ceiling on the amount a club could pay its players, a limit which in theory at least results in a more even distribution of playing talent throughout all of the clubs.[49] Over the next five years a player draft was introduced, player-transfer fees were abolished and player lists were reduced, all of which stabilised the cost structure of clubs. By 1990 all player-recruitment zones had been replaced by a national player draft based on the National Football League model in the USA. Although the elimination of zoning facilitated player movements between clubs, the new rules covering their recruitment and payment ensured continued and rigid control by League officials.

The Commission, and in particular newly appointed Commissioner Ross Oakley, also argued that while the focus of the competition should be on the strong Melbourne crown-jewel rivalries, it should also invite interstate teams to enter the League. The Commission's vision for a national competition also implied that some Melbourne clubs would be forced to either relocate or merge.[50] There was a growing belief that a sustainable national league should comprise no more than fourteen teams, and that no more than eight of these teams should play out of Melbourne.

The Commission agreed that the League's development was thwarted by a structure where nearly all clubs were centred on Melbourne's inner suburbs. The success of the National Soccer League (NSL) and the National Basketball League (NBL) in establishing teams in many parts of Australia only emphasised the need to include teams from beyond Victoria's borders if the VFL was to be a legitimate national league. The Commission was also acutely aware that the Sydney-centric New South Wales Rugby League competition had, after many years of neglect, increased its public support by admitting teams from

the ACT and Wollongong, and was investigating the possibility of admitting two Queensland teams. The Commission's push for a national football league was realised when the Brisbane Bears and Perth's West Coast Eagles were admitted to the VFL in 1986, thus creating a fourteen-team competition covering four of Australia's eight states and territories.

The expanded competition was not all plain sailing. Brisbane lurched from one managerial crisis to another as it tried to establish a strong fan base on the Gold Coast, where its home ground was initially situated. Its private ownership failed to ensure either financial discipline or a successful team, and it survived only through subsidies and grants.[51] On the other hand, the Eagles, with the luxury of operating in a mature Australian football market, quickly made its presence felt. Notwithstanding their own financial and ownership crises, the Eagles reached the finals play-offs in 1991 and won their first premiership in 1992. The restructuring of the VFL was accompanied by a major re-imaging exercise, or rebranding strategy as it is more commonly referred to today, when in 1990 it changed its name to the Australian Football League (AFL). This was of great symbolic significance since it signified the Commission's intention to pursue its national goals and to reshape the League around Australia's major cities. At a practical level, the new name paved the way for an Adelaide-based team to join the competition.

Ground Rationalisation, Sunday Football and Stadium Upgrades

Substandard venues had been a chronic problem since the 1960s.[52] For the AFL vision to succeed, a new name and some interstate teams would not be sufficient. It was also important to provide a quality experience for fans and one way of doing this was to upgrade venues, an approach facilitated by reducing the number of playing venues and investing heavily in a small number of high-quality shared stadiums. Shared stadiums would only become practical if the VFL could obtain permission to play games on Sunday afternoons and on Friday and Saturday nights. The Victorian state government was initially resistant to these changes to playing schedules on the basis that they would negatively affect the VFA and inconvenience residents living adjacent to the MCG.[53] However, the broadcasting of Sydney Swans games on Sundays made the first concern irrelevant and the approval of Sunday

cricket games undermined the second concern. The state govern-
ment relented, and Saturday-afternoon fever spread to the remainder
of the weekend.[54]

Two stadiums would become home to all of Melbourne's AFL
teams. One of these, the MCG, was already built but was in need of
redevelopment. The central place of the MCG in the ground rationali-
sation strategy was apparent by 1992 when the $150 million Great
Southern Stand, funded partly by the AFL, was completed.[55] The new
stand was instrumental in increasing the average MCG attendance
from 25 000 to more than 40 000 during the next few years. Between
2002 and 2006, an additional $430 million was spent redeveloping the
northern side of the stadium–the Pavilion, Ponsford and Olympic
Stands were demolished–as part of preparations for the 2006
Commonwealth Games.[56] As a result the MCG progressively became a
home venue for North Melbourne, Essendon and Hawthorn, in addi-
tion to Melbourne and Richmond, and a major venue for Footscray
and Collingwood.

The AFL also developed a new state-of-the-art stadium in
Melbourne's inner west in the Docklands precinct, next door to the
city's suburban and country rail hub.[57] The stadium was novel in
several aspects – it featured a retractable roof and its $450-million
construction cost was financed through a private consortium
involving the traditional broadcast rights holder, the Seven Network,
with ownership reverting eventually to the AFL.[58] Known as Docklands
throughout its construction, and then as Colonial Stadium and Telstra
Dome as part of naming rights agreements, the stadium was to
become the home ground for Essendon, St Kilda, the Kangaroos and
the Western Bulldogs. Carlton would also become a tenant at the sta-
dium when in 2005 it became the last of the Melbourne teams to forgo
playing at their traditional home ground. By 2006 all of Melbourne's
nine AFL clubs played out of either the MCG or Telstra Dome, and the
ground-rationalisation and venue-improvement program for
Melbourne was complete.

The Big League is Realised

The inclusion of the Adelaide Crows in 1991 effectively filled the
largest missing gap in the AFL expansion jigsaw. The Fremantle
Dockers were admitted in 1995, followed by Port Adelaide Power in

1997. In the aftermath of the Brisbane–Fitzroy merger, the competition now numbered sixteen and provided eight matches in each round. All stadiums were floodlit, making it possible for games to be played and telecast on Friday evenings, Saturday afternoon and evenings, and most of Sunday. As a result, viewers in Melbourne were able to watch up to four games, or twelve hours of national league football, over a single weekend, thus confirming the adage that too much football is never enough.

The Melbourne football clubs found it difficult to resist the expansion initiatives. Concerns regarding the on-field capability of these new teams were allayed by the strategic and financial opportunities they provided. The first was the additional money from television rights fees. The AFL Commission extracted a higher rights fee on the grounds that more games would be televised in prime time and the national audience would be maximised. The second was the payment of a $4 million licence fee by newly admitted clubs which was distributed equally between the other clubs. The third was that these initiatives seemed to be an effective response to the incursions of rugby league into Perth and Adelaide.
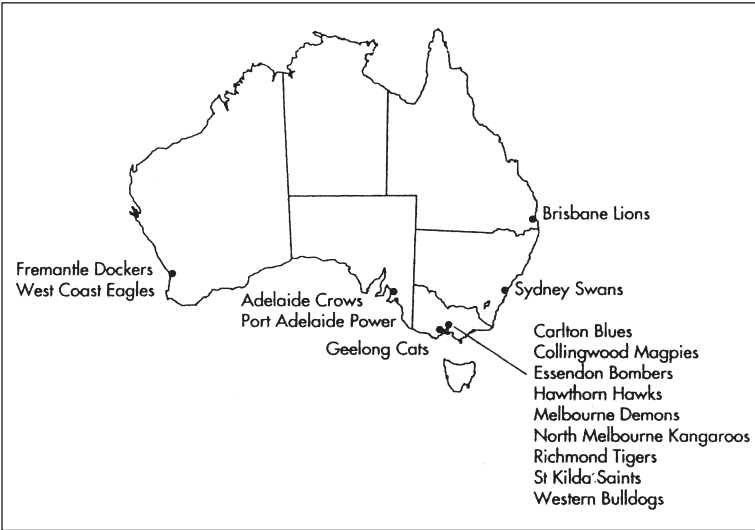
Figure 4.3: The National Spread of the AFL in 1997

Source: Hess, Rob and Stewart, Bob (eds), *More Than a Game: The Real Story of Australian Rules Football*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Melbourne, 1998, p. 236.

By the mid-1990s the AFL had become a multimillion-dollar business that was contributing $1.5 billion to the wider economy. [59] Whereas the annual turnover of the Commission was just over $20 million in 1985, it had risen to $68 million by 1995.[60] The annual television rights fee had increased from $3 million in 1985 to $17 million in 1995, and sponsorship had doubled over the same period to generate an income of $5 million. Clubs shared this revenue bonanza and their annual incomes increased from $2 million in 1985 to an average of nearly $9 million in 1995. Most of this extra income was spent on the salaries of professional administrators and the wages of players. Whereas the average club player wage bill was approximately $500 000 in 1980, it had increased to $2.5 million in 1995. [61] From both a structural and financial perspective the game had changed dramatically.

The AFL had also maintained its position as Australia's most popular sports league. Whereas rugby and basketball accounted for 23 per cent and 1 per cent respectively of total attendances for professional team-sport competitions, the AFL accounted for 52 per cent. While the Australian Rugby League (ARL) competition involving teams from New South Wales and Queensland attracted a seasonal aggregated attendance of just over two million, the AFL fixtures attracted nearly five million fans. The National Soccer League, in contrast, could only attract just under 300 000 spectators. The television audiences for the AFL were also massive when contrasted with other sporting competitions. While the average weekly national audience for ARL matches was 531 000, the AFL audience rating was 738 000. Soccer, the other major football code, could only generate a national weekly television audience of 95 000.[62] The national spread of the AFL in 1997 is illustrated in Figure 4.3.

Mergers, Takeovers and Fan Responses

Despite the healthy growth of the AFL during the 1990s, the commissioners agreed that were too many AFL clubs in Melbourne.[63] In spite of Footscray's successful 1989 campaign to resist a merger with Fitzroy, there was pressure on clubs to either relocate or amalgamate, and a summit was held in 1995 in which the Commission announced a $4 million incentive package for clubs to merge. By the 1996 season the pressures on Fitzroy to merge with another club became enormous.

due to its chronic financial difficulties and inability to field a competitive team. [64] Midway through the season Fitzroy admitted defeat and discussed a merger plan with North Melbourne, another Melbourne inner-city club. At the same time, Brisbane, which had relocated to the Gabba ground in Brisbane, was now seeking to ensure its long-term viability through a combined strategy premised on on-field success and an improved supporter base in Melbourne. Brisbane offered to merge with Fitzroy, offering to use Fitzroy's club colours, jersey design and Lions motif. The AFL announced an increase in the incentive package to $6 million, North Melbourne was levered aside, and Brisbane was awarded the Fitzroy prize in what amounted to a takeover.[65] The Brisbane–Fitzroy merger is somewhat ironic given how close Fitzroy came to relocating to Brisbane in 1987.

Soon after the Fitzroy–Brisbane marriage was consummated, the cash-strapped Hawthorn Football Club began a merger conference with the success-deficient Melbourne Football Club. However, like Fitzroy, and before it, South Melbourne, the merger proposal was angrily resisted by many supporters and ex-players.[66] Public forums to discuss the merger often turned ugly, with opposing groups hurling abuse at each other.[67] A newspaper poll conducted just before the merger meetings found that nearly 60 per cent of Victorian supporters would become less interested in the AFL if clubs merged. In the end, the emotional energy of the anti-merger group won the day. [68] While Melbourne club members narrowly voted in favour of the merger, Hawthorn members voted strongly against it. The merger proposal was therefore denied despite the logic that the city of Melbourne no longer had the capacity to sustain nine or ten teams in this new, national and highly commercial league.[69]

The Shifting Focus

While the Melbourne clubs were fighting for their survival, the interstate clubs were consolidating their national league status. The 1996 season, marketed as the AFL's centenary season, would represent a watershed year. Sydney played in the Grand Final – a remarkable achievement given that the club was as close to death in 1992 as any sporting club could get.[70] On the back of astute management and good coaching, the club's fortunes were assisted by draft

concessions (which gave them some talented young players) and a non-repayable loan by the AFL Commission. Helped by their on-field success, average weekly crowds at home matches increased from 10 000 to nearly 30 000, and the local television ratings for live telecasts exceeded the figures for rugby league. A wave of Swans-mania swept over the city and even politicians jumped onto the bandwagon.[71]

Television ratings from that year provide ample evidence of the game's growing national status. Nearly four million people watched the Grand Final between Sydney and North Melbourne, with more than one million viewers in Sydney. During the 1996 finals series, the Thursday-night *Footy Show* on Channel 9 attracted a national peak viewing audience of 767 000 and a Friday-night AFL match between Brisbane and Carlton attracted another 852 000, while the Saturday-night game between Sydney and Hawthorn obtained a peak rating of 868 000. There were a reported 534 000 Sydney viewers for the Sydney versus Hawthorn game, a figure which exceeded the ARL rugby telecast on the same night.[72] Also in 1996, Michael Voss from the Brisbane Lions was the co-winner of the competition's best and fairest player award, the Brownlow Medal. Wayne Jackson from South Australia replaced Ross Oakley as the AFL's chief executive officer, and Melbourne's demise as the epicentre of the AFL was completed in 1997 and 1998 when the Adelaide Crows won back-to-back premierships.[73]

Further Rebranding

Although the AFL expanded its fan base substantially during the 1980s and early 1990s, it was aware of the growing national presence of rugby league. It was particularly aware of how the ARL's cleverly constructed Tina Turner marketing campaigns during the late 1980s and early 1990s had increased the game's national profile. The AFL responded with its 'I'd like to see that' campaign. The campaign brief was to promote the AFL as a national game and gear it heavily to New South Wales and Queensland. The commercials featured overseas athletes and celebrities who would express amazement about some aspect of the game using the tag line 'I'd like to see that'. For example, Russian cosmonaut Sergei Avdeev provided the narrative,

'Australia launching men into space every few minutes? I'd like to see that!', which introduced a video compilation of high marking. The campaign ran from 1994 to 1998 and by the fourth year had achieved a national recall rate of 97 per cent. It also coincided with an increase in total home-and-away game attendance from 4.9 million in 1994 to 6.1 million in 1998.[74]

Consolidating the Northern Markets

As the custodian of the game, the Commission wanted to make sure that it continued to expand, increase its level of participation and capture the interest of schoolchildren. By the late 1990s the AFL had expanded the market, substantially increased its annual revenue and net worth, maintained control over player wages and transfers, and achieved competitive balance. However, there was a growing concern that while it had managed the national competition well, it had been less successful in pursuing its role as the keeper of the code by developing the game in the northern markets of New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory. AFL administrators were aware that southern Queensland was the fastest growing region of Australia, and that by 2010 Queensland and New South Wales would contain nearly 60 per cent of Australia's population.[75] The northern markets were therefore integral to a sustainable national competition and, in order to secure a strong presence in this developing market, the AFL developed a three-pronged approach – on-field success for the Swans and Lions; greater television exposure of the AFL in those markets; and increased investment in game development and junior participation.

The first prong was to ensure that the Brisbane Lions and Sydney Swans were both financially stable and successful on the field. To that effect, both clubs benefited by draft, salary-cap concessions and direct financial assistance. Brisbane also benefited from the Commission's assistance in bringing about its merger with Fitzroy. The policies were successful insofar as Sydney finished second in both 1996 and 2006, and were premiers in 2005. The Brisbane Lions were premiers in 2001, 2002 and 2003, and finished second in 2004. In terms of television exposure, the AFL was now making it clear to potential broadcasting partners that they were expected to showcase the AFL competition in prime time in the northern markets, and in

doing so encourage greater community awareness of the game. Rather than just maximise the financial return from the broadcast rights agreement, the AFL sought a qualitative dimension to its broadcast rights agreement. This dimension aimed to ensure quality coverage of the game in the northern markets, which translated as free to air and prime time as opposed to late-night replays. In effect the AFL was telling its broadcast partners that it was prepared to forsake additional revenue in exchange for greater exposure in these markets.

To encourage participation at the junior level, the AFL established the Game Development Department in 1999, which was responsible for developing and implementing junior football programs in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory and Tasmania.[76] These initiatives were not without their critics, especially from the Victorian clubs who opposed the amount of money invested in these markets since they believed the scarce funds would be better spent supporting old VFL clubs facing financial hardship. The Victorian clubs also argued that the Brisbane Lions and Sydney Swans had unfairly benefited from the Commission's efforts to develop the New South Wales and Queensland markets. However, the Commission's national vision won out. The AFL plans to spend $100 million on game development in NSW and Queensland between 2007 and 2011, which represents 15 per cent of its planned total expenditure in that period and nearly half of its national game development budget of $208 million. This total investment constitutes an increase of 60 per cent on the $130 million spent during the previous five-year period. In a document titled 'Next Generation – Securing the future of Australian Football', the AFL stated that its aim was to consolidate its position as the pre-eminent sporting code in Australia for the long term.[77]

The Demise of Interstate Football

It is paradoxical that the expansion of the AFL throughout Australia also caused the demise of interstate football. Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia have traditionally been the big players in interstate football. The adoption of state-of-origin (SOO) representation rules in 1977 eliminated the dilemma of having South Australians and West Australians representing Victoria because they were playing

in the VFL competition. However, SOO football waned in popularity for a number of reasons. One of these is that the increasing professionalism of the VFL competition acted as a disincentive for players to put representative honours ahead of their club interests. Further, the Australian football SOO never possessed the simple two-team format that its rugby league cousins were able to enjoy. Consequently, programming the game into the season was always more complicated – and this was without securing players from all states to participate. The Allies–a team selected from Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania and the Northern territory–played two games each against Western Australia and Victoria between 1995 and 1998. The last origin game was played in 1999, with the AFL keen to position the International Rules team as the representative-team alternative.

Australian Football Abroad

Not content with spreading the gospel on the other side of the Barassi Line, the AFL also sought to take the game overseas. Although Australian football is referred to as an indigenous game, it would be a misnomer to not recognise the game's development in other parts of the world. Non-elite Australian football leagues exist in many parts of the world, including New Zealand, the United States, South Africa and England.

Exhibition matches between VFL/AFL teams have been played in overseas locations since the 1960s but only became a regular feature since 1987. [78] The early matches in this era were promoted in conjunction with VFL/AFL sponsor Fosters Brewing, the Australian beer company that was also seeking to position itself in the international marketplace. Exhibition matches have over the years been staged in such cities as London, Vancouver, Tokyo, Los Angeles, Auckland, Wellington and Cape Town. [79]

In the 1980s, the Melbourne Football Club and its coach Ron Barassi embarked on what became known as the Irish Experiment, whereby the club recruited talented Gaelic football players. Jim Stynes (who went on to play 264 games and win a Brownlow Medal in 1991) and Sean Wight (150 games) were notable success stories that prompted more Irish players to seek a career in the AFL, and encouraged AFL clubs to extend their recruitment horizons beyond Australia

and Ireland. [80] Interest in recruiting overseas players was reflected in the AFL's decision in 2006 to permit each club to sign up to two young international players each season without filling valuable places on their rookie lists. Irish players were excluded from the program, with young players from Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and South Africa considered the most likely candidates.

Australian football differs from the other football codes in terms of its inability to compete against other national teams of the same quality. Consequently Australian football has always had to resort to innovative methods to create a national team. The All-Australian team–a team that is selected but does not actually play–was first selected in 1947. A spin-off from the Irish Experiment was the development in 1987 of a series between Australia and Ireland using International Rules. International Rules is a hybrid version of Australian and Gaelic football. This series can arguably trace its origins back to the Ron Barassi-led Australian team that played All-Ireland champion club Meath in 1967. [81] For the International Series matches, the Australian team is currently selected according to the quite different requirements of the hybrid game. Consequently, not all players selected in the All-Australian team also play in the International Rules team for Australia.

The development of the hybrid rules has been a success insofar as the results between the two teams have often been remarkably close over the years. The hybrid game has also become a feature of international elite-underage matches between Australia and Ireland. [82] More remarkably, matches between Australian and Irish women's teams were first played in 2006.

However, controversy has plagued the series since its inception. The Australian team, as full-time professionals, are physically stronger that the Irish, who remain amateurs. It is this characteristic, combined with different expectations and values regarding the level of aggression, that has caused controversy whenever the series has been played. The controversy came to a head in the 2005 and 2006 series, culminating in a decision by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in late 2006 to suspend the series at all levels for a year. [83] The GAA are likely to insist, among other issues, that tackling be removed from the game and that suspensions stemming from International Rules

matches are to be served in regular season AFL or GAA matches. The AFL is keen to ensure that the hybrid game remains in existence at underage level. The motives for the AFL are twofold – an opportunity to identify talented young Irish players, and added legitimacy to their Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) program by ensuring that an international dimension to the game is consolidated.

A New TV Deal

Throughout this period of rapid capital accumulation, the AFL had continued a loyal relationship with the Seven Network, Australia's second-largest commercial television group after the Nine Network.[84] Some even regarded the AFL's loyalty to Seven as being stronger than its loyalty to some clubs. The AFL was the jewel in the crown of Seven's programming and their relationship created a substantial corporate synergy. While the AFL praised the breadth and quality of Seven's football coverage, Seven provided saturation levels of promotion for the AFL. Seven valued the relationship so highly that in 1998 it agreed to pay the AFL $40 million a year for broadcast rights until the end of 2001. Unlike News Limited and the NRL, Seven had no management interest in the AFL but had influence over game scheduling. It was also a member of a consortium that constructed the Docklands Stadium in 1999. While the interests of Seven were not always consistent with the interests of clubs and fans, they were integral to the overall promotion of the League. However, the Seven Network's long-term relationship with the AFL was severed in December 2000, when a consortium headed by Rupert Murdoch's News Limited secured the broadcast rights to all AFL fixtures for a fee of $500 million from 2002 to 2006.[85] This was the most lucrative deal in the history of televised sport in Australia. It amounted to more than double the previous rights fee and reflected both the huge commercial value of the AFL product and the AFL's decision to segment the broadcast rights for the first time.

In a complex arrangement, the rights were spread across one pay-TV provider, Foxtel, and two free-to-air providers, the Nine and Ten networks respectively. Foxtel, through its corporate parents News Limited, PBL (the owners of the Nine Network) and Telstra (Australia's leading telecommunication business), secured the rights to the eight

games played each week, including the option of televising two games live on Saturday and one game live on Sunday. At the same time, News Limited on-sold games to Nine and Ten. Between them, Nine and Ten broadcast five of the eight weekly matches live. Nine was allocated three Friday night and Sunday games, while Ten was allocated two Saturday games. In addition, Telstra snared the Internet rights to the AFL. In return for a $10 million annual fee, Telstra subsequently managed afl.com.au, the AFL's official website. The News Limited consortium valued the rights at around $30 million higher than Seven, and in doing so provided the AFL with an equivalent annual revenue stream of $100 million to 2006.[86]

Stumbling into the New Millennium

Despite the rapid growth in AFL revenues resulting from the new TV deal, a number of clubs had entered the financial doldrums (which quickly turned into a fiscal cyclone) in the early part of the twenty-first century.[87] The 2002 season was particularly traumatic – whereas the 1998 home-and-away attendance was 6.1 million, the 2002 figure was 5.6 million, the lowest since 1996, when home-and-away games attracted 5.2 million.[88] Total Victorian attendances fell by 10 per cent and by the end of the season ten clubs had registered operating losses, with the Kangaroos, St Kilda and the Western Bulldogs each incurring deficits of more than $1 million.[89]

This was a case of 1979 revisited, although in this instance the culprit was not so much heavy spending on players but rather the employment of more specialist coaches and conditioning staff on high salaries. While the salary cap of $5.5 million per club placed a ceiling on player payments, no such ceiling existed for coaches and conditioners, or medical staff and trainers. With a dwindling income from gate receipts but a commitment to pay coaching contracts, budgets quickly blew out. However, the AFL Commission had no such problem since its cash reserves were strong as a result of the sale of AFL Park and the increase in broadcasting rights fees. Clubs subsequently received a share of these revenue windfalls to supplement their losses, while the Kangaroos and the Western Bulldogs secured additional support funding in view of their low revenue base and membership.

Although all member clubs navigated their way successfully through the financial storm, the 2002 incident demonstrates the precarious economic viability of many clubs.[90] This is perhaps the dominant ongoing theme of the last thirty years – clubs facing financial ruin only to be saved by the next strategic initiative. Notwithstanding the income-sharing arrangements whereby all clubs are guaranteed a minimum stream of revenue, some clubs will always have difficulty balancing their books. Whereas Collingwood earned $39 million in 2005, the Kangaroos and the Western Bulldogs could only scrape together around $22 million each.[91] This huge income differential creates an ongoing problem for clubs with small memberships and fan support, and is a major impediment to their future on-field success. It makes the Commission's competitive-balance goal difficult to achieve.

Managing Player Behaviour

While the AFL successfully claimed its position as Australia's most popular sport league as it entered the new millennium, it also had to manage many problems. These problems not only arose from changing economic conditions, shifting demographics, falling crowds, escalating costs, inter-club inequity, poor playing conditions and legal challenges to League rules, but also from the behaviour of some players, coaches and officials that has harmed the image and reputation of the League. Consequently, the AFL has sought to maintain and strengthen its brand by improving the League's overall standing and reputation in the sport world. It is for this reason that the AFL has introduced so many restrictions on player conduct over recent years.

Several incidents of racial abuse occurred during the 1990s, the Nicky Winmar incident being the most iconic, which prompted the AFL to develop a strong religious and racial vilification code.[92] It was the first sporting body in Australia to adopt procedures and regulations of this type and as a result the League has been considered an industry leader. The code of conduct also has regulations related to doping, which reflects the AFL's desire to maintain a clean image, as well as to provide positive role models for young players and supporters. The AFL introduced an anti-doping code as a response to community pressure, the desire to ensure a level playing field, the need to protect the health of athletes, and not least to retain the image

and appeal of the competition.[93] The cases of Richmond player Justin Charles and Brisbane player Alistair Lynch were catalysts for strengthening the anti-doping policy within the League, which included a two-year minimum suspension for a first offence, and life for a second.[94] In 2005, in response to pressure from the World Anti-Doping Agency and the Federal Government, the AFL further tightened its stand on illicit drug use both in and out of competition. As a result, players can be deregistered not only for taking drugs like steroids and human growth hormones such as erythropoletin (EPO), but also cocaine and marijuana.[95] The AFL in 2001 also prohibited the use of intravenous drips by teams to rehydrate their players at half-time breaks. The AFL argued that such a practice was against the spirit of the game and that it failed to set a good example to young players.

The purpose of the code of conduct is to promote and strengthen the good reputation of Australian Rules football, the AFL competition, the clubs and players by establishing standards of performance and behaviour for AFL footballers. In addition, it seeks to deter conduct which could have an adverse effect on the standing and reputation of the game and its participants. It covers all issues related to players and their performance; the 2003–08 code includes sections on player payments, injury and veteran lists, contracts, use of player images and brands of player footwear. The code also covers breaches of discipline, minimum dress standards and inappropriate public commentary, in particular on umpiring and tribunal decisions. In addition, players must attend promotional events for the benefit of official sponsors, while they may not enter into a product endorsement that competes with the AFL's protected sponsors.[96] Again, the player is subject to fines if the code is breached. The code is now reinforced by the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the Commission and AFL Players' Association (AFLPA), which aims to protect the work conditions and salaries of players.[97]

More Management Control

The Commission's other key component of player management has been player payments. In the aftermath of the Foschini case, the Commission set ceilings on player payments that both constrained the player-wage costs of member clubs and forced them to spread playing talent more evenly between competing teams. In 1983 player

wages were set at \$500 000 per member team, but since then have steadily increased. In 1996 they were \$2.5 million and are now \$6.5 million per team.[98] The Commission sets the salary cap, which it recently retitled Total Player Payments on the basis of movements in broadcast rights fees, revenue from finals games and club membership income. This means that the salary cap will increase in line with the League's and, by implication, clubs' capacity to pay. While the salary cap did not significantly constrain the growth of player payments, it did dampen the bargaining strength of recruits and eliminated the player hoarding that occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s. In addition to the salary cap, the CBA sets minimum wages for players depending upon their age and experience.[99]

The AFL Commission has also introduced sanctions that impose penalties on clubs that breach the salary cap provisions. In 2002 Carlton, Richmond, Fremantle and St Kilda were all found to have breached the salary cap and were penalised through a combination of fines and denial of national draft choices. Carlton, having incurred three breaches since 1998, lost both its priority and number-one draft choices for the following season, and was fined \$930 000.[100] These penalties were imposed not only to negate the advantage Carlton obtained by exceeding the salary cap, but also to warn other clubs of the costs of not adhering to the salary cap rules.

Where Do the Players Fit?

The players are fundamental to the AFL's success. They are the main performers and have used their skills and energy to provide an array of high-quality contests over many years. The AFLPA has been instrumental in gradually improving their conditions of employment, which culminated in the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement in 1994. The agreement established a minimum player wage of \$7500, a raft of welfare and income support programs, and a grievance procedure that players could use to challenge club policy decisions.[101] With the support of the AFLPA, players have increased their average gross earnings from \$102 000 in 1998 to \$187 000 in 2005, which places them in the top 5 per cent of income earners in the country.[102] This makes a career in Australian football a very attractive prospect, and as a result many of the nation's best athletes have elected to take the AFL pathway. The AFLPA still has concerns with the player payment

schedule and has fought for some time to have the pay scales linked to a much higher percentage of total League revenues.

On the other hand, as the previous discussion highlights, the AFL Commission has tightly controlled player behaviour in order to maintain the League's reputation and to secure compliance with the League's strategic direction. The national draft, the player code of conduct and anti-doping rules together constitute a powerful tool for managing young men in a work-related setting, and would not be tolerated in any other occupation. These highly regimented work conditions are the price to pay for the glamour, celebrity status and financial rewards that come from being a successful AFL player.

The Mother of All TV Contracts

As noted previously, the Seven Network was flabbergasted in 2000 when it failed to secure the AFL's 2002–06 broadcasting rights, since a major part of its identity was founded on its relationship with Australian football. In addition, its high ratings were for many years dependent upon its football broadcasts. Although it lost the broadcast rights, it held on to the right to have the first and last rights bid for the next rights agreement, which meant that it could counter a rival bid if it needed to, which it did in early 2006 to secure the rights for 2007–11.

The Nine Network, which co-held the 2002–06 rights, began the bidding process with an offer of $780 million, about $90 million of which was in-kind, and mainly in the form of free advertising. This was $280 million more than the previous agreement, but was trumped by a joint submission by the Seven and Ten networks which not only matched the total Nine bid but guaranteed a smaller in-kind and a larger cash component in the fee, as well as a stronger broadcast presence in New South Wales and Queensland.[103] While Seven owner Kerry Stokes was over the moon about the deal, media analysts believed the Seven–Ten partnership had offered too much and would have difficulty in generating the revenue to offset the rights fee.[104] However, Seven and Ten also had the capacity to resell the pay TV rights to some games to Foxtel, which is likely to give them around $30 million to $40 million a year.

The clear winner was the AFL, which secured the largest broadcast deal in Australian sporting history. The guarantee of an annual

cash flow of at least $140 million a year will allow the Commission to not only pay off all League debt, but also pay its players and maintain its subsidies to weaker clubs like the Kangaroos and Western Bulldogs, thereby sustaining the viability of the sixteen-team competition for the next five years at least. It will also enable the Commission to continue its community support projects, its junior development programs and incursion into the northern markets.

Australian Football Transformed

The 2007–11 broadcast rights agreement signified the completed transformation of the AFL from a parochial suburban competition with strong cultural resonance, to a national and corporatised sport business with enormous commercial clout. The AFL, and the VFL before it, has always had a fairly secure commercial base, although for most of its history gate receipts were the dominant income source. In 1980, income from gate receipts accounted for 42 per cent of total VFL income, well ahead of club fundraising activities which only accounted for 23 per cent. Other major revenue sources were league and club membership (12 per cent), league and club sponsorships (7 per cent), television and radio rights fees (5 per cent) and merchandising income (4 per cent). Total revenue for the VFL central administration was estimated to be around $10 million, with average club income at around $1.5 million. Therefore, combined League and club revenues were close to $28 million.[105]

Since then League revenue has exploded, underpinned by massive at-ground crowds, large television audiences and national-brand sponsors. This has in turn provided lucrative career paths for officials, coaches and players. In 1990 total Commission revenue was $30 million, which increased to $111 million in 2000 and to $204 million by 2005.[106] A large part of this growth came from broadcasting rights fees. Whereas the fees contributed just under $8 million in 1990, this increased to $17 million in 1995 and $100 million in 2005. In 2007 it will be approximately $150 million.[107] Sponsorship and merchandising income also increased rapidly over this period, although on a much smaller scale. Club incomes grew at a similar rate. In 1990 average member club income was $4 million, which increased to $8 million in 1995 and escalated to $21 million in 2005.[108] In short, by

2005, combined annual league revenues exceeded $500 million, with broadcasting rights fees accounting for $100 million.[109]

Australian football has changed dramatically over the last twenty-five years. Whereas in 1980 the Victorian Football League was the premier football competition in the nation, despite being based around Melbourne's inner suburbs, the newer league now functions in five of Australia's eight states and territories. The relocation of South Melbourne to Sydney in 1981 and the establishment of teams in Perth (the West Coast Eagles) and in the Brisbane–Gold Coast region (the Bears) in 1986 set the scene for a national league. The admission of the Adelaide Crows in 1991 and the Fremantle Dockers in 1995 extended the game's reach. This was followed by the merger between the Fitzroy Lions and Brisbane in 1996, and the admission of Port Adelaide in 1997, which consolidated the whole expansion process. On the other hand, the proposed merger of the Melbourne Demons with the Hawthorn Hawks was successfully rejected by club members. The negotiation of TV rights agreements in 2001 and 2006 also provided a massive injection of funds that were used to keep unprofitable and mismanaged clubs afloat.

These changes not only created both excitement and trauma, abut also undermined Melbourne's position as the vortex of Australian football. The rampant successes of the interstate teams have led to some notable changes. The last Victorian club to achieve a premiership was Essendon in 2000. While Victorian clubs have complained that this is the result of too much assistance to interstate clubs, it has produced a national focus for the game and effectively broken down the Barassi Line that marked the limits of Australian football for so long. Interstate clubs provided a focal point for city-based identification, and in the case of Sydney and Brisbane added a new dimension to their sporting cultures and created an organisational structure within which to promote the game locally. While recent AFL history is an exemplar of the ways in which centralised power can be used to manage the affairs of a sport league, it has also paradoxically brought about a diffusion of power in which the city of Melbourne unsuccessfully fought to maintain its position as the home of the best teams, the most passionate supporters and largest club memberships. This diffusion of power is exemplified in the scale of the fan base outside

Victoria. A nationwide survey of football supporters found that four of the six best-supported clubs were located outside of Melbourne.[110] As Table 4.3 indicates, the most heavily supported club in 2003 was the Sydney Swans, with a fan base of 1.3 million. On the other hand, when the six least-supported clubs were examined, it was found that four were located in Melbourne. Melbourne, the Kangaroos and the Western Bulldogs have a fan base of 205 000, 249 000 and 254 000 respectively, the lowest in the competition.

Table 4.3: National Support for AFL Clubs

AFL Club	2001 ('000s)	2003 ('000s)
Adelaide Crows	638	699
Brisbane Lions	798	1331
Carlton Blues	603	596
Collingwood Magpies	688	749
Essendon Bombers	862	796
Fremantle Dockers	237	367
Geelong Cats	357	345
Hawthorn Hawks	362	390
Kangaroos	268	249
Melbourne Demons	226	205
Port Adelaide Power	274	315
Richmond Tigers	398	401
St Kilda Saints	321	282
Sydney Swans	1305	1341
West Coast Eagles	692	746
Western Bulldogs	198	254
Total AFL supporters	**7801**	**8568**

Source: Roy Morgan Research, *AFL Monitor*, March 2004.

The transformation of the game has also led to grounds being rationalised, venues upgraded, playing surfaces refined and player skills enhanced. In all, the game has moved to another level, and

while the romantics mourn for the good old days when suburban loyalties ruled the winter weekends, the elite-level game has never been so popular.[111] Many country leagues have been decimated and major city leagues have been weakened, which is in part a result of the AFL's success. As a counterpoint to this decline, there is evidence that schoolchildren, even in Sydney and Brisbane, have an enormous thirst for the game. Finally, the rapid expansion of the competition created a pivotal role for television, which not only gives fans many hours of live telecasts but also provides sponsors with a vast national audience for their products.[112]

How Was It Achieved?

In order to understand the transformation of Australian football it is important to get some idea of what motivated football officials during this period. The primary motive was a missionary zeal to make Australian football a truly national game, with Allen Aylett being a leading light in the 1970s, Ross Oakley a champion for the cause in the 1980s, and Wayne Jackson a key proponent in the 1990s. From the early 1980s the corporate aim of the VFL was to ensure that the game, because of its entertainment, spectacle, patronage and level of participation, became recognised as Australia's 'pre-eminent national football code'.[113] In the jargon of management, it was all about achieving a vision in which one of Australia's great indigenous cultural icons had a strong nationwide presence. Every subsequent goal and strategy was directed to achieving this outcome, whether it was to curb the threat of soccer and rugby league, admit an interstate team into the competition, broaden the fan base, or put money into junior development in the northern markets. Vision is one thing for the AFL, but it can be implemented only if the organisation controls the conduct of its constituent clubs. It has done this very effectively, but only because in 1984 VFL directors transferred their powers to an independent commission which could run the game without having to continually placate club officials. The Commission strengthened its hold over member clubs through a mixture of licensing agreements, coercive rules and financial incentives. It also broadened its control over officials, coaches and players through an array of contracts and codes of conduct. As a result of these developments, the

AFL not only achieved its goal of national expansion but also become one of the most corporatist, collusive and tightly organised sport leagues in the world.

This combination of vision and control generated many grand scenarios, but it also produced widespread hostility, which resulted from the game's commercial ambitions clashing with its cultural traditions. This was not surprising because history and organisational case studies show that large-scale change is rarely accommodated without a fight.[114] In this case the game's parochial history was used by Melbourne-based clubs and supporters to resist the league's rationalisation and expansion. In every case where a restructure of the league was initiated, club officials and supporters mobilised their resources to ensure the survival of clubs as members of the League. In some cases the restructuring went ahead when clubs could no longer operate at the minimum viable level. In 1982, for instance, the South Melbourne Swans relocated to Sydney to avoid bankruptcy and a total loss of identity, while in 1996 the Fitzroy Lions merged with Brisbane for similar reasons. In other restructuring proposals the incentives that were waved in front of the club were unable to compensate for the loss of identity and tribal connection that would result from take-over, merger or relocation. In 1989 the Footscray Bulldogs rejected a merger offer from the Fitzroy Lions, and in 1996 the Melbourne–Hawthorn merger failed to materialise. In general though, the focal point for fan identification and tribal expression was progressively shifted from the suburban team to the city club, and this created many fractured relations between fans and clubs.[115] It also undermined the growth of the existing leagues in Adelaide and Perth by stealing many of their fans, recruiting the best players and securing the wealthiest sponsors.[116]

While the football traditionalists won a few rationalisation battles, they lost the expansionary war. The combination of a national vision, a corporate culture, the drive for control and market expansion, and the lure of nationwide media and business support, overwhelmed the parochial interests of clubs. Despite the anger and alienation of many fans, the drive for national recognition established the AFL as the premier nationwide sport competition in Australia, and Australian football as a significant pastime in every state and territory. The AFL's recent progress also demonstrates that while the

sport-as-business model has become the dominant value that drives its operations, where football is a 'commodity in the broader mass-entertainment market'[117], it still provides significant cultural resonance for millions of fans across the nation.

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Crashing Through the Class Barrier
Rugby League's Metamorphosis

James Skinner and Allan Edwards

The Origins of Rugby League

As Rob Hess and Matthew Nicholson noted in Chapter 3, rugby league became a game in its own right in the 1890s in England as a consequence of its split from rugby union. This split was marred by disagreements on the issue of professionalism and came to a head when anti-professionalism regulations were drawn up in 1895. These regulations magnified an already simmering clash of football cultures, with those in the south embracing amateur values and preferring to play the game for its own sake. In the north, however, union was not as strongly linked to elite public schools such as Rugby, Eton or Westminster, and though they considered themselves gentlemen, northern players frequently ignored the game's protocols and recruited working men as team members using match payments as an incentive. Consequently, rugby union in the northern regions held a lower level of social status than in the south, and the game soon organised itself around a north–south divide.[1]

This juxtaposition of socially exclusive clubs in the south with more open clubs in the north was a configuration full of potential for

tension and conflict. In the south of England amateur ideals were preferred, and the emphasis was on fun, pleasure and character building, but not monetary gain.[2] While the competitive element was crucial to the code's values, striving to win was subordinate to the production of pleasure and sportsmanship. Southern rugby club officials agreed that if the code was to professionalise and pay its players– as it was doing in some northern pockets–it would commercialise the code unnecessarily and destroy its amateur ethos. Officials in the north had no such problem, and quickly embraced the increasingly professional game, which would later become known as rugby league.[3]

Rugby league emerged in Australia in the early 1900s. Its first formal structures were established in 1907 when the New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL) was formed, with its first season of competition played in 1908. Today, rugby league is one of four football codes played in Australia. It's played predominately in the northern states of New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland, and the rules have continued to change since 1908. However, by the 1940s no world governing body had yet been established to supervise these changes and ensure unity between national governing bodies. At this time negotiations began amongst national governing bodies to institute consistent rules that would be used for international tours, although usually nations took their lead from British establishments. This situation lasted until 1948, when France instigated the Rugby League International Federation (RLIF), which was formed at a meeting in Bordeaux.

Tinkering at the Edges

Because of its early commercialisation, rugby league has always functioned as a commodity and has confronted the need for change at an administrative, structural, strategic and commercial level on numerous occasions.[4] In particular, administrators have often linked changes in playing rules to improving the game's attractiveness to fans, spectators and in particular television viewers. The most significant and far-reaching rule change occurred in 1967 when the rule allowing unlimited tackles was changed to a four-tackle rule. It was hoped that this would encourage more attacking play and prevent teams from simply playing to maintain possession of the ball at all

costs. Ken Arthurson suggests that before this rule change there was an unwritten rule that operated on the premise that: 'They can't score if they don't have the ball'.[5] Although successful in that respect, it was felt that four tackles did not allow sufficient time to develop an attack, with play often characterised by pure panic. Consequently the tackle rule was again reviewed and changed in 1971 and the tackle count was increased to a maximum of six tackles.

The 1960s saw the beginning of a new era of rugby league in Australia. Through this decade many changes were made in the administration and development of rugby league by both the controlling bodies and the individual clubs. Moreover, the varying success of different rugby league teams had an economic impact on the clubs and/or home-ground towns, which was evident through the increased revenue received in gate takings due to large crowds. Similarly, there was a rise in player scalping (the poaching of players from weaker clubs by the stronger clubs) which had an adverse effect on the less financially viable clubs. To deal with this problem the NSWRL introduced a transfer fee scheme, which allowed rugby league clubs semi-proprietary rights over players. The transfer scheme replaced the former residential zoning system whereby local players had to live in a district for one year before changing to the local club. The retain-and-transfer system operated on the basis whereby players whom the club wanted to retain were placed on a retention list. Those players who were not listed were placed on a transfer list. The players who were transfer-listed could play for another club as long as the new club was willing to pay the transfer fee being requested.[6]

As the Queensland clubs could not compete with the wealthier clubs of NSW, due to the increasing influence of poker machines on the NSWRL clubs, the Queensland Rugby League (QRL) also adopted the transfer system. The QRL believed that this would thwart the movement of players interstate and therefore not have an adverse effect on the Queensland competition. Although this scheme hindered some transfers, Max Howell and Reet Howell believe it had limited effect in Queensland as 'players seemed to be moving in and out of the State at a rapid rate despite the transfer system'.[7]

At the same time, the introduction of poker machines in NSWRL clubs reduced the steady trickle of Australian players to clubs in England by providing Sydney-based clubs with more buying power in

the player market. In turn, the transfer scheme seemed futile when compared with the player spending power of the strong Sydney clubs.

This increased revenue base of the NSWRL clubs led to a debate over how players were recruited and contracted to a club. The legal validity of the rugby league's retain-and-transfer procedure was contested in 1970 by former Balmain player Dennis Tutty. At the end of the 1967 season Tutty was placed on the list of players the club wished to retain, albeit against his own wishes. Despite this Tutty played for the Balmain club in 1968, and was again placed on the retain list for the 1969 season. Tutty chose to sit out the 1969 season but was again listed at the end of the season as a player the club wished to retain. Tutty challenged the decision and the High Court ruled in his favour following an appeal by the Rugby League Association. Tutty had relinquished two full seasons of league to legally contest the NSWRL transfer system but won his case in December 1971, when the High Court ruled that the NSWRL transfer system was 'an unreasonable restraint of trade'.[8]

The implications of the Tutty case quickly filtered through the game and impacted on Ron Coote, the Australian team captain who stood down from the early rounds of the 1971 season, declining to sign or play with his club South Sydney with whom he had signed a contract in 1970. In May 1971 Coote return to play for South Sydney, but on the basis of the Tutty judgement joined Eastern Suburbs at the end of the season.[9]

Managing Player Payments

Escalating player salaries in this period were becoming a concern for the NSWRL. In response to this the NSWRL was forced to introduce a new set of labour market rules in 1972. It sought to limit the earnings of players and reduce inflationary pressures on clubs by establishing a maximum 'sign-on' fee of $2000 per player, and winning bonuses of $200 per game.[10] The sign-on fee was later increased to $4000 for players who had played at least fifty first-grade games, or played continuously with the same club for four or more seasons. However, these maximums were abolished in 1974.[11]

Following the abolition of these maximum payments the NSWRL established a thirteen-player import rule at the beginning of 1975.

This rule stipulated that clubs would be permitted to 'import' a maximum of thirteen players from outside their residential districts. In 1981 the thirteen-player import rule was adapted to allow any player who had played three consecutive years with a club to be classified as a 'local' player. Players who had played five consecutive years were able to freely move to another club. The thirteen-player import rule was eliminated in 1983 when transfer fees were reintroduced.[12]

In the decade from 1986 to 1996, a player draft and salary cap was introduced. The main argument put forward by the NSWRL for the introduction of the draft system was to ensure that the teams who competed in the league were competitive, meaning teams would be evenly matched. Modelled on the Australian Football League and American professional sport experiences, the NSWRL developed the 'External and Internal Draft system'. Within the external draft, new players were placed in a common pool and clubs then selected players in order of where the club finished on the League's ladder the previous season. The club who finished at the bottom of the table in the previous season had first choice and so on, until the club that finished first took the last choice. The process was then repeated until clubs had filled their quota or the selection pool had expired. The internal draft was a similar procedure in which players in the NSWRL who had not entered into a contract with their previous club would be theoretically placed in a common pool. Clubs would then choose or draft players in order, with the club that finished last having first choice of players in the pool, and the club that finished first having last choice. The method would continue until the clubs had concluded or finished their selections.[13]

There was wide-ranging opposition to the draft and this was a factor in the Internal Draft being challenged by players on a number of occasions. Terry Hill (then a 19-year-old South Sydney centre) maintained that Eastern Suburbs unfairly chose him. In 1991, Hill had already agreed to a significant contract with the Western Suburbs club, had accepted a job working at their leagues club and had already been training with the club six times a week for the past three months.[14] He reportedly had a meeting with Eastern Suburbs management in which he conveyed that he wanted to play for Western Suburbs or alternatively would prefer to stay with South Sydney rather than play for Eastern Suburbs. Hill was subsequently recruited by

Eastern Suburbs as they had first selection in the draft, prior to Western Suburbs. At first Hill's appeal opposing his drafting by Eastern Suburbs was turned down and his lawyer sought to accelerate a hearing with the Industrial Commission, which Eastern Suburbs were prepared to challenge. Hill's parents interceded, however, and convinced him to sign a three-year contract with Eastern Suburbs.[15]

One player who managed to successfully appeal the internal draft was Ron Gibbs, a former Gold Coast player who was drafted by South Sydney after initial negotiations with Western Suburbs. Gibbs refused to consent to his selection and South Sydney Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Terry Parker declared: 'The only way Ron Gibbs can leave us is to appeal or retire. He's our property now and we expect him to accept that.' Gibbs did not accept Parker's position and chose to appeal. His appeal was upheld unanimously.[16]

The main opposition to the external and internal draft by the players and their representatives was based on the restraint-of-trade debate. The draft was seen as a system which restricted the player from freely negotiating with any team in the market for his services for a mutually agreeable fee. Braham Dabscheck points out how the Association of Rugby League Professionals (ARLP), a trade union formed in 1979 to represent NSWRL players, strongly opposed the draft. The Association argued that rugby league players should have the same basic employment rights as other workers, including the right to seek and obtain employment with anyone who is prepared to employ them.[17]

Kevin Ryan, a former international rugby league player who went on to become a prominent barrister, vigorously defended the rights of the league players. Ryan fought the rugby league draft system in court as the president of the ARLP. The League believed the draft would eliminate from the game problems such as the poaching of junior players from clubs who had worked hard on their development programs. Ryan argued, however, that the draft was an artificial form of marketing which would lead to incompetence, inefficiency and even corruption. Moreover, he suggested the draft was an infringement on the freedom of players.[18]

In September 1991, the Federal Court decided that the draft was an unreasonable restraint of trade and therefore illegal. This decision

threw the administration of the game into disarray and the League responded by challenging the decision in the High Court. However, in October 1991 the High Court denied an application by the NSWRL for special leave to appeal against a judgement of the full bench of the Federal Court. Since then players have enjoyed free agency that is only subject to the conditions of their playing contracts and the salary cap.[19]

Following the demise of the draft, rugby league turned its attention to another form of player control: the salary cap. The salary cap was reintroduced by the NSWRL in 1990 as a mechanism to limit the amount of money clubs could spend on players, and as a response to a period of growth where there was a demand for quality players. The NSWRL's objective was to create a competition with evenly balanced and economically viable clubs, thus ensuring the stability of the code and the continued support of all fans. The initial salary cap payment ceilings in 1990 ranged from $800 000 to $1.5 million, with the only increase between 1990 and 1992 given to clubs whose original ceilings were lower than $1.5 million. This variation in the salary cap was dependent upon the financial position of each club.[20]

The salary cap system has been besieged by problems since its introduction. During the 1990 season the Canberra Raiders were fined $86 000 by the League for being in breach of the salary cap and were later fined a further $100 000 based on existing player payments. Canberra players consented to a 15 per cent pay reduction as a direct outcome of this breach in the salary cap system. Other clubs were also found to be in breach of the salary cap but the breaches were deemed to be miscalculations rather than intentional.[21]

In 1992, the League imposed fines on nine out of the sixteen teams in the competition for breaching the salary cap. The fines collected from these infringements netted the League approximately $665 000, with Parramatta incurring the largest fine of $235 000. The Cronulla coach at that time, Arthur Beetson (former Australian captain and Queensland's first State of Origin captain), was reported by the media as stating that the salary cap was unenforceable with the supposed limitation on club spending. Beetson also believed that imposing a common rule on all clubs did little to create an equal competition, and that instead he would have preferred a system that would assist the less financially viable clubs.[22]

One of the most controversial salary cap scandals in the game's history occurred in 2002 when the leaders of that year's competition, the Canterbury Bulldogs, were found to have breached the salary cap by approximately $1 million over two seasons. The National Rugby League (NRL) fined the Bulldogs $500 000 and deducted thirty-seven competition points for the season, effectively relegating them to the bottom of the NRL table.[23] Bulldogs Chairman Gary McIntyre resigned as a consequence of the salary cap breach, as did the entire Bulldogs board, who were replaced by a temporary board. NRL Chief Executive David Gallop said: 'This is unquestionably a bitter day for Rugby League. Indeed, the game has had its heart broken in an unexpected and tragic way'.[24]

James Stewart claims that as a direct result of the 2002 scandal, Gallop asked for the NRL to have the power to examine all players' tax returns as a means of totally eliminating the possibility of 'brown paper bag' deals by clubs to their players. Stewart also suggests that Gallop was seeking new means to make certain that players' actual earnings matched figures lodged with the NRL and the Australian Tax Office, highlighting any discrepancy not only as a breach of NRL rules but also as a criminal offence.[25]

Although the salary cap is considered a necessary component in creating a more evenly balanced competition, it has created unforeseen problems. Robert Macdonald indicates that although player turnover is an acceptable and normal outcome of the workings of the salary cap, problems have emerged by virtue of players becoming free agents once their contracts have expired with their clubs. The main concern was the poaching of players in the final year of their contracts. As a consequence the 'anti-tampering rule' was introduced by the NRL to stop players from signing with a new club before 30 June in the final year of their contract.[26] The future challenge for the NRL, however, is to proactively plan and identify problems that may emerge from the salary cap, rather than merely be reactive to breaches or shortcomings that may come to light.

Let's Talk Expansion

Murray Phillips and Brett Hutchins suggest that from the 1970s rugby league went through structural changes and a philosophical shift by relegating non-profit policies to the periphery of its operations. This

move towards capital accumulation followed on from the realisation that rugby league had produced a market for commercial companies who were eager to invest in the game to sell their products and services. As the NSWRL expanded, the need to appoint its first full-time executive director was recognised, with Kevin Humphreys appointed to the role in 1976. Humphreys took up the position at a time when rugby league was under threat from soccer, with the Australian soccer team having just returned from successfully participating in the 1974 World Cup in West Germany.[27]

The reign of Humphreys was marred by controversy, with allegations ranging from corruption to favouritism made against him. In 1983 the ABC's *Four Corners* program ran a story on rugby league entitled 'The Big League'. Its reporter, Chris Masters, described allegations of corruption within the NSWRL, including suggestions that officials were draining off funds from particular clubs and international matches while players and spectators suffered substandard facilities. It was also suggested that the NSWRL administration was biased in favour of the Manly–Warringah Sea Eagles. The program also made allegations concerning state-government intervention in relation to a misappropriation charge, which resulted in the resignation of Humphreys. The airing of these allegations had wide-ranging political implications and was linked to the downfall of chief stipendiary magistrate Murray Farquahar, and to the ABC being sued for libel by former NSW State Premier Neville Wran.[28]

The public quickly lost confidence in those responsible for overseeing the code, and in a *Rugby League Week* magazine poll taken in late 1983 they conveyed their concerns about the way the game was being managed and administered. Rugby league was seen to be in a condition of chaos and turmoil. Rumours suggesting that backroom deals were occurring and games were being grossly mismanaged, and in some cases fixed, brought it to its lowest ebb. Humphreys' departure created the impetus for a new 'professionalism' and the need for a strategic repositioning of the game. John Quayle, in the newly created position of general manager of the NSWRL, was charged with this responsibility.[29]

When the cigarette company Winfield became the NSWRL's sponsor in 1982 and the premiership became the Winfield Cup, future prospects for the game did not look encouraging. It was still a

two-state sport, its traditional following was waning, and financial support was drying up as the licensed clubs were no longer as profitable as they had been previously. Quayle was also faced with the problems of decreasing crowd numbers, deteriorating grounds and facilities, and a game that was gathering a reputation for high levels of on-field violence. To counter this, Quayle and his new management team made its first strategic priority, that of improving the image of the game and to increase game attendances through a national-expansion policy. Three new teams were introduced to the premiership competition and the supporter base started to grow again as the administration of the League made a concerted effort to reduce on-field violence. Up to 1981 the NSWRL premierships had only been contested by Sydney suburban teams, but in 1982 teams from outside the Sydney area were included in the competition. These new inclusions were the Canberra Raiders (Australian Capital Territory) and the Illawarra Steelers (southern NSW).

This led the way for further expansion and in 1988 the Newcastle franchise returned to the competition as the Newcastle Knights after an absence of 86 years. That year also saw two Queensland teams, the Brisbane Broncos and the Gold Coast–Tweed Giants, join the competition. While this allowed the game to move outside the state boundaries of NSW, the entry of Queensland teams into the NSWRL competition was not without its critics. Scott-Fitzgerald called it the beginning of the end for the local Queensland league. He reported that crowds, which had regularly reached 25 000 at Lang Park, dwindled and that the days of local heroes were over. Moreover, he suggested that the sense of community football and the notion of a team belonging to a district ceased to exist when Brisbane joined the NSWRL competition.[30]

The interstate rivalry between NSW and Queensland was also taken to new levels with a strategic reconfiguration of the rules governing the annual interstate clashes. The State of Origin series was born in 1980. Although matches between the two states had taken place for many years, the State-of-Origin (SOO) concept meant that for the first time, players were selected based on where they played their first senior game rather than on where they were currently playing. The previous rules gave NSW a definite advantage as most clubs were based in Sydney. Consequently, until 1980 the interstate

challenges between NSW and Queensland were no more than a trial between the two states for selection in the Australian rugby league team. There was very little joy in these matches for the Queenslanders as the majority of the top players were playing for NSW, having headed there to compete in the wealthier Sydney premiership. The changing of the eligibility criteria had an immediate effect, evening up the competition. In front of an enthusiastic crowd at Brisbane's Lang Park, Queensland won the first SOO encounter by a score of twenty to ten, which stimulated even greater support for the concept.

However, this expansionist policy ultimately led to a need to change the way the game was governed. In 1984 the competition was renamed the Australian Rugby League (ARL) and responsibility for it was assumed by the governing body, the Australian Rugby League Ltd.[31] Prior to this the NSWRL had run the game and numerous Queensland players and officials had alleged that the NSWRL had used its control to the disadvantage of Queenslanders, particular regarding preference of selection to the national team. To this date, the ARL continues to administer the State of Origin competition, the New South Wales City versus Country competition and the Australian rugby league national team – the Kangaroos.

The Media's Role in Repositioning the Game

With the introduction of colour television in 1975, the commercial value of rugby league escalated dramatically. Colour television was also the catalyst for the corporate sponsorship of the game, its players and clubs, and firmly positioned rugby league as a seriously marketable product. By the 1980s television had played its significant part in revolutionising rugby league, transforming it 'from an activity with restricted coverage, witnessed in person, broadcast on radio and reported in the press into a product mediated spectacle with national and international audiences of millions'.[32]

John Quayle and his new management team had also cracked down on on-field violence and aggressively embarked on the strategic repositioning of the game. They attempted to present the game as 'glamorous, racy and exciting' by using the international recording artist Tina Turner.[33] Before 1986, rugby league advertising consisted of newspaper and occasional television commercials promoting weekly match times and venues. In 1986/1987 a television

promotional campaign was launched to promote rugby league's history and the skills and training regimes of the players. However, following a significant drop in the League's television ratings in 1987, it was decided that the game needed a younger, friendlier image. The 1988 advertising campaign presented a more modern look for rugby league, and concentrated on the skills and emotions associated with the game. It targeted young men and women aged from sixteen to twenty-four, the consumer groups that were either drifting away from the game or traditionally avoided it. During 1988 the idea of using Tina Turner's *What you Get is What you See* song for the League's 1989 promotional campaign was tabled. Turner was approached to appear in the campaign and accepted. The resultant two-minute television commercial repositioned the game and was highly successful in attracting new audiences.[34]

In 1990 the initial Turner campaign was followed up with one that used another of Turner's songs: *Simply the Best.* The *Simply the Best* campaign also involved Australian rock legend Jimmy Barnes and again was highly successful. Helen Yeates suggests that the grass-roots fearlessness of Jimmy Barnes and Tina Turner's high-class seductiveness united to give league stars 'international, racial and class identity endorsement'. She believes that the lyrics of *Simply the Best*–'better than all the rest'–along with the pictures of Turner and Barnes singing together interchanging with images of rugby league stars executing brilliant moves on the field emphasised the dominance of 'rippling specimens of masculine power-in-action'. As a result, the campaign played a key role in converting rugby league footballers into rugged sex symbols.[35]

The Tina Turner campaign was the culmination of a three-year marketing plan aimed at giving rugby league a more contemporary image. It was a campaign that appealed to women and young men, broadened the game's appeal and reached into the white-collar audience without alienating league's traditional blue-collar supporter base. One result was that 'between 1983 and 1990 attendances doubled and television ratings rose by 70%'.[36] Consequently the Turner campaign became an Australian advertising benchmark in repackaging and relaunching a sport product.

The Super League Incident

The successful Tina Turner marketing and promotional campaigns were to be thwarted in 1994 by the potential presence of a rival rugby league competition, touted under the name of Super League. Although some may suggest another strategic repositioning of the game was inevitable, it is debatable that Super League was something that was always going to emerge. The ARL itself commissioned a report in 1992 (*The Bradley Report*) to look at the options for rationalisation and the creation of a 'super league' or premier competition played by the elite of the game. According to the Bradley proposal the eleven Sydney teams would be reduced to five. Teams would be given an option to merge or relocate to a geographical location of their choice or they would be relegated altogether. This report to the ARL and the clubs reached the conclusion that:

> to reduce the number of clubs in Sydney, will be very hard for the League to implement given the long playing traditions of some of those clubs. In the long term, however, it is likely that Sydney is not going to be able to support eleven clubs as it does at present. Therefore in the long term this is the only viable solution. Sydney based clubs are going to have to move to new areas, merge or be relegated from the League. In the long term the ARL should be looking to reduce the number of clubs in the National Competition to fourteen thus allowing clubs to play two complete rounds. This will mean, assuming that only four new clubs are admitted from areas outside Sydney, that there will be only five clubs based in Sydney.[37]

The ARL believed that this option was a painful alternative considering the long history of all teams. Its concern with disenfranchising its traditional supporter base resulted in the report never being acted upon.

During the early 1990s, however, a pay TV (hereafter referred to as subscription TV) war was brewing in Australia because Optus Vision (which was partially owned by US-based Continental Cablevision) began competing with Telstra for the delivery of lucrative telephony services.[38] Both Optus and Telstra developed strategies

involving the rollout of billions of dollars worth of cable capable of providing the end user with additional services apart from the standard home phone, including the Internet and subscription TV. At the same time that this was occurring Optus had linked itself with rugby league after the ARL had been forced to find a new sponsor. The Federal Government legislated against tobacco companies sponsoring sporting events, hence the previously branded Winfield Cup became the Optus Cup. Early in the 1990s News Limited also began to acquire the broadcast rights to popular sports in order to build subscription TV viewership. Among these significant purchases were the English Premier League and the USA National Football League (NFL).

In Australia the race was heating up between Optus and Foxtel for exclusive subscription TV content and sport was a major item on the agenda. Optus was partly owned by Kerry Packer's Publishing and Broadcasting Limited (PBL) and the Seven Network, and Foxtel was owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Limited and the then-Government-owned Telstra. The idea of having no rugby league product was unacceptable to Telstra and as 50 per cent owners of Foxtel the decision was made that rugby league had to be included on Telstra's cable.[39]

In 1993 Kerry Packer purchased the broadcasting rights for rugby league on free-to-air television until 2000. The vital aspects of this deal, however, were the contract clauses, which handed over the subscription TV rights to PBL for free. At the time there was no subscription TV in Australia. However, overseas experience showed that once subscription TV services became available in Australia, these rights would be worth a substantial amount of money to the game. News Limited approached the ARL in 1994 with a view to purchasing the subscription TV rights and was advised to consult with Packer. Packer was now in a position to make a substantial amount of money, while rugby league would receive no additional revenue on their subscription TV rights. Packer declared himself to be the owner of all broadcasting rights for rugby league in Australia in February 1994. It was made clear to all clubs that as affiliates of the ARL, they were bound by the 1993 agreement and legal action would be taken against anyone who did not comply. As a consequence, in August of 1994, News Limited prepared a document entitled *Super League*, which outlined a strategy to establish a company called Super League Ltd. The

company would be owned by News Limited and its aim was to establish an elite national competition between twelve privately owned teams (including a New Zealand Team), with News Limited owning up to four of these teams.[40]

Super League was born out of the frustration experienced by the Brisbane Broncos administration with the ARL and their specific decisions regarding policy on sponsorship and marketing. In late 1993, after the Broncos secured their second consecutive premiership, Broncos CEO John Ribot was in debate with ARL General Manager John Quayle about having the grand final transferred from Sydney to Brisbane. ARL Chairman Ken Arthurson rejected the Broncos' proposition and suggested that if any team were dissatisfied with the ARL, they could go and set up their own competition. Frustrated and furious, Ribot did exactly that, meeting with News Limited representatives about the possibility of setting up Super League.

As early as April 1994, Ribot floated his plans for a global and expanded national competition that involved the games' elite players representing privately owned teams, similar to the NFL in the United States. During this time, reports filtered through to the media concerning increased speculation that a 'rebel league' similar to World Series Cricket in 1977 was about to transpire. Ribot was criticised by both the ARL and the clubs for lacking enterprise and being unimaginative. He blamed the absence of profit motivation as a major cause but also pointed to ARL-created constraints as factors inhibiting enterprise in rugby league. Ribot argued that if the ARL was organised and governed within a North American-style framework, clubs would be more profitable, although he accepted that the end result would be fewer clubs than the twenty involved in the ARL competition.[41]

News Limited embraced the concept and conducted research as to the viability of such a competition. During this time Ribot and anyone else connected to the Broncos was denying any involvement with a push for a rebel league, although privately they were supporting one. The Brisbane Broncos were the only privately owned team in the competition. Competing in the ARL for only five years and lacking any sustained history like the Sydney clubs, it is easy to comprehend why the Broncos were behind a push to change the status quo of the competition, ignoring the traditions and philosophies behind rugby league and adopting a more business-like

approach to the game. The Broncos, however, were not the only club disillusioned by the way the ARL was running the competition. One of the various tactics used by News Limited was to play on the frustration of other clubs located outside of Sydney. These clubs also believed that they experienced discrimination by the Sydney-based ARL administration and were not receiving a fair allocation of television, sponsorship and other forms of revenue being generated by the game. They argued that they were being unfairly used to cross-subsidise loss-making clubs from inner-city Sydney.[42]

Rugby league in Australia was thrown into turmoil with the arrival in 1995 of the new organisation called Super League. The ARL and its affiliated clubs were invited to join the Super League competition but Packer notified the clubs that he held both free-to-air and subscription TV rights to rugby league in Australia until the year 2000 and he would take forceful legal action against any party that chose to violate these rights. The ARL required all affiliated clubs to sign five-year loyalty agreements legally binding them to the existing arrangements. News Limited counteracted this move by signing up as many clubs, coaches and officials as possible in an attempt to isolate the ARL by reaching agreements with major international competitors such as Great Britain and New Zealand. Murdoch's News Limited also threatened Packer and the ARL with legal action over the ARL loyalty agreements, which it stated were 'oppressive and a restraint of trade'.[43] A court solution had to be sought, and in late February 1996 Justice Burchett found in favour of the ARL and Packer's accusations towards Super League and News Limited of 'deceit', 'dishonesty' and 'duplicity'.[44] The lateness of the verdict and legal uncertainty delayed the start of the 1996 season. Super League and News Limited, however, gained consent to appeal to the full bench of the Federal Court against the judgement in May 1996. This resulted in a very disrupted and uncertain season of rugby league in Australia.

In October 1996 the full bench ruled in favour of Super League and determined it to be a lawful enterprise, deeming attempts by the ARL to restrain it unreasonable.[45] The ARL was denied leave to appeal to the High Court of Australia in November 1996, but both parties refused to back down and two rival competitions were played in 1997.

In the context of Australian sport this was a landmark event, but there were potentially dire consequences for rugby league. The game

seemed destined to lose its market position to its competitors and appeared to be fractured beyond the point of repair. Massive increases in player salaries, due to the restricted market of player talent with two elite competitions[46], resulted in a complete disregard for the salary cap despite its ceiling being lifted to $1.8 million per club. Moreover, as Robert Macdonald points out, spending on rugby league players doubled overnight, with leading players securing sign-on fees or annual salaries in excess of $500 000. Leading Super League signings Laurie Daly, Bradley Clyde and Ricky Stuart all signed for $600 000 a year plus a $100 000 signing bonus. The ARL invested heavily in Newcastle Knights players; Paul Harragon was the highest paid, signing for $350 000 with a $650 000 sign-on bonus. This trend resulted in ARL 'expenditure on player wages and sign-on bonuses tripling from $21 million to $63 million between 1994 and 1997. The total expenditure on players by Super League and the ARL rose to an estimated $120 million by the middle of June 1997'.[47] These circumstances led David Rowe to suggest that: 'at a time in Australia when rugby union had recently professionalised, soccer was being restructured, Australian Rules football tendered its premier competition to most states and territories, and basketball was making inroads into player and supporter bases of 'traditional' Australian sports, the "people's game" was in disarray'.[48]

Pressures to Merge

By the end of the 1997 season there was mounting evidence that two competing rugby league competitions could not be sustained. Murray Phillips and Brett Hutchins suggest that the pressure to compromise was driven in part by the fact that the rival competitions had turned fans off the game. The game's plunging popularity and television ratings left no option other than a compromise between the two competitions.[49] Consequently, in late 1997 the NRL was created via a merger agreement between the ARL and News Limited, after Murdoch had announced that he was certain that there would be a single rugby league competition in Australia in 1998. Robert Macdonald suggests that the compromise was developed to ensue that: '(1) public interest and support for the game of rugby league was maximised; (2) the viability and sustainability of the game of rugby league was protected; and (3) sponsors and media companies could obtain access to an

enhanced sports entertainment product'.[50] The newly formed NRL was to be jointly managed by the ARL and News Limited. Its Partnership Executive Committee, comprising three representatives from each organisation, would make decisions on key financial matters and appoint the administration board of the NRL, who would run the competition.

It was announced that twenty teams would be competing in the 1998 season: nineteen Super League/ARL teams and the Melbourne Storm, also owned by News Limited. News Limited made a decision to close down the Hunter Mariners and the bankrupt Western Reds, who at the end of 1997 were reported to be $10 million in debt. The ARL made the decision to close down the South Queensland Crushers, who were also reported to be in financial trouble. At the end of 1998 News Limited also decided to close the Adelaide Rams and the ARL closed the Gold Coast Chargers, although they were one of the few clubs during the Super League war to make a profit. Furthermore, in order to curb the previously out-of-control spending by clubs on players, the salary cap was reinstated in 1999 and set at $3.25 million per club for the period up to 2003.[51]

One of the agreements made between the ARL and News Limited was that there would be a fourteen-team competition in 2000. The twenty clubs that played in 1998 were to be assessed on various items such as sponsorship, crowds and on-field success. There was also an announcement that as an extra incentive, all clubs that merged would receive a large sum of money as well as a guaranteed position in the 2000 NRL competition. To this end, St George and Illawarra Steelers were the first clubs to amalgamate at the end of 1998. Balmain and Western Suburbs followed suit, merging at the end of 1999, and North Sydney and Manly–Warringah joined to form the ill-fated Northern Eagles.

South Sydney, however, was axed from the competition at the end of 1999 for failing to meet the performance criteria set by the newly formed NRL. The highly controversial move by the NRL to eliminate a team in order to make the competition a more profitable capitalist enterprise met with great public resistance. The business arguments put forward suggested that the Australian (and New Zealand) market could not sustain a professional rugby league competition of any more than fourteen clubs. It was argued that the player

talent pool was so shallow that the quality of the national rugby league competition would significantly diminish if the present number of clubs continued to be part of the league, thereby lowering the level of attendances and television ratings.[52]

Ultimately, the list of criteria for evaluating the business performance of NRL clubs saw the South Sydney Rugby League Club ranked fifteenth for the newly proposed fourteen-club national league, and South Sydney was dropped for the 2000 NRL season. South Sydney supporters were outraged by this decision and argued that the criteria and strategic decision-making processes of the NRL paid insufficient attention to the core values and philosophies that underpin rugby league, and ignored its capacity to provide a sense of local community and a shared ethos. Expulsion from the national league was regarded as the death knell for the club and South Sydney supporters feared their local identity would be lost. These fears were further heightened when it was suggested that South Sydney could merge with another NRL club. For many supporters this option was less attractive than the 'death' of the club. It was feared that the local identity of the South Sydney Rugby League Club would be over-whelmed and superseded by the culture and ethos of the new commercial entity.[53]

It was clear that any option apart from the reinstatement of South Sydney to the national competition was likely to have significant consequences for the local community in the long term. Surely, argued South Sydney supporters, these broader ramifications must be factored into the decision-making processes of the NRL if rugby league is to remain 'the people's game'. South Sydney supporters embarked on a series of public protests and street marches. On 11 November 2001, between 30 000 and 50 000 people, including high-profile personalities such as Russell Crowe (Oscar-winner for *Gladiator* and a new part-owner of the South Sydney club), trade union members, Labor Council personnel and supporters from a number of rugby league clubs, marched in protest at South Sydney's continued exclusion from the national competition.[54] The protest was one of the largest public protests in Australia in decades, and some may argue that it made the League rethink its position. In the final analysis, however, the matter was resolved by the Federal Court, who found in favour of South Sydney's allegation that the NRL had

breached the *Trade Practices Act* when applying criteria which resulted in the club's omission from the national competition. South Sydney was subsequently reinstated in the NRL competition in 2002.[55]

Corporatisation Completed

From the management days of 1983 to the advent of Super League in 1994, the NSWRL and the newly formed ARL achieved great success at all levels of the game. Mike Coleman concluded that the game's popularity was at a peak, and the League was talking expansion and a glorious future.[56] The ARL had fought back from a point where the game was in major disarray, had overcome corruption and had reinvented itself with a more-positive public image that achieved wider social appeal. At a corporate level, the income generated continued to grow and the abundance of sponsors and excellent television ratings were the key to attracting a wider fan base. Super League in the short term was a major setback for rugby league. However, in the long term the game was destined to recover. In the context of the ARL/Super League conflict, the media played a key role in exaggerating the significance of performance and suppressing public criticism. Global media corporations played a crucial role in the legitimation and accelerated transformation of rugby league to the sports-as-business model. In the case of rugby league it was the global media organisation News Limited who legitimised its changing commercial nature.[57]

The value of NRL broadcast rights is something that News Limited and other media giants have not ignored.[58] Robert Macdonald outlines a convincing case with respect to the increasing value of NRL broadcast rights. In 1989 the Ten Network paid $48 million for a three-year contract to broadcast the NSWRL, rugby league SOO matches and international rugby league tests played by the Kangaroos. At the end of the 1990 season the NSWRL terminated this contract because Ten was unable to make a scheduled payment after being placed into receivership. The Nine Network purchased the rights to the NSWRL and the SOO games for approximately $6.5 million per year for three years, then on-sold the NSWRL rights back to Ten for approximately $4 million in 1991 while retaining the marquee State of Origin games. In 1992, Nine broadcast both the NSWRL and the SOO series and in 1993 secured the free-to-air and subscription TV rights to the NSWRL, SOO and international rugby leagues matches with a $70 million,

seven-year deal. For the first half of the 1990s the ABC also had a separate deal to broadcast Saturday-afternoon or night league matches, paying an annual fee of more than $1 million. However, the introduction of subscription TV in 1995 saw a dramatic rise in the price paid to secure the rights to broadcast NRL games.[59]

In 1995 and 1996, Optus Vision (with PBL as one of its stakeholders) held the subscription TV rights to the ARL following their on-selling by the Nine Network. Optus continued to broadcast the ARL in 1997, with Foxtel entering the arena by showing Super League, and the Nine Network broadcasting both competitions on free-to-air television. As noted previously, it was a merger agreement between the ARL and News Limited that led to the creation of the NRL. Since the inaugural NRL season in 1998, the Nine Network has broadcast NRL games on Friday and Sunday, as well as the SOO series and Kangaroo tests. Sharing the subscription TV rights with Optus from 1998 to 2000, Foxtel subsequently secured the exclusive subscription TV rights to the NRL games from 2001 to 2006 at a cost of $400 million. However, the effect of Super League combined with the major financial investments by Nine, Optus, News Limited and Telstra in player salaries, payments to various clubs, the NSWRL, the ARL and the NRL, as well as part-ownership of several clubs by News Limited, has clouded the real value of rugby league broadcasting rights.[60]

This level of investment in the game and the alleged lengths to which media giants would go to protect it was highlighted in September 2005 when the Seven Network started proceedings in the Federal Court in Sydney naming twenty-two parties (including the NRL) as part of a conspiracy to shut down the C7 subscription TV station. C7 shut down in March 2002 after failing to win the rights to broadcast the AFL from 2002 to 2006, and rugby league from 2001 to 2006. It is alleged that News Limited worked to put C7 out of business in three ways: first, by using its management control to ensure Foxtel subscribers could not get C7; second, to procure Foxtel to make a predatory bid indirectly through News Limited for the AFL broadcasting rights; and finally by making use of Foxtel's control over the Telstra cable network and of News Limited's part-ownership of the NRL. With these claims, Kerry Stokes' Channel Seven began $1 billion worth of legal action alleging conspiracy and collusion that forced its C7 subscription TV sports channel out of business.[61]

The depth of the corporatisation that has attached itself to the game has had significant operational implications. In 2001 the grand final was moved from the traditional Sunday afternoon timeslot to Sunday night. This impacted on several different aspects of the grand final's atmosphere, one of them stemming from the *Hotels Liquor License Act*. Sunday night trading had to cease by 10 p.m., which would mean all patrons would have to vacate the premises straight after the game had finished or possibly while it was still in progress. This would have caused problems for hotel licensees and police by requiring them to enforce the closing time and would also have put an added strain on local transport and security services. So a bill was passed through the NSW Parliament to provide for an extension of liquor trading until midnight on Sunday, 30 September 2001.

The shift to a Sunday night grand final was criticised most vocally by fans from Queensland, who urged the NRL to restore the game to its traditional, time-honoured Sunday-afternoon timeslot. Andrew Fraser, the Queensland sports minister, suggested that tradition should not be forsaken just so the match could be televised in an evening timeslot for purely commercial considerations. Moreover, the management of the most successful Queensland side in the NRL, the Brisbane Broncos, argued that the game needed to revert to an afternoon timeslot to allow for family viewing, with an emphasis on children, and because the Monday after the Sunday grand final game is not followed by a public holiday in Queensland as it is in NSW.

Increased commercial revenue through broadcasting rights also had a significant impact on the status of players. Professional rugby league players are paid large salaries and some are idolised by sections of the public. Despite their status, players are accessible as they socialise at popular entertainment venues and are not surrounded by security staff. The public are able to converse and approach them in a relatively easy way. At the same time, some players are seen as sex symbols as a result of their substantial wealth and a high media profile, and in some instances this has created problems as a mixture of late nights, alcohol and partying have led to allegations of sexual assault. Allegations of this nature became public during a pre-season training camp at Coffs Harbour, NSW in early 2004, when a young woman claimed that she had been gang-raped by six players from an NRL club. Despite a lengthy investigation by police no player was

officially charged over the incident. The club in question, however, fined six players, which it has never named, for breaching the club's rules that no women are to be brought back to the team's hotel.[62]

The allegations that emerged from the Coffs Harbour incident forced the NRL to commission a $1 million report to examine the attitudes and behaviours of rugby league players towards women. Despite the belief that the cocooning of players in a full-time training environment–in which they are cut off from the moderating influences of families–had led to a decline in players' respect for women, the Sydney University report *Playing by the Rules* suggested there was no evidence that the professionalism of rugby league had led to increased harassment or assault of women. However, some of the report's recommendations did include appointing women to key management roles, educating players to help them deal with sexual advances from female fans, and having clubs follow a standard protocol when women lodge complaints of sexual assault against their players.[63]

What Does It All Mean?

Irrespective of the challenges and controversies that have confronted rugby league in Australia, the game continues to evolve. Rule changes have been made to encourage attacking play and enhance the code's entertainment value, while at the same time recognising the implications for players' welfare. The limited interchange rule which was introduced by the NRL in Australia in 2001 is a case in point. Prior to 2001, players were replaced frequently during matches, with replacements often made after very short bouts of activity. This caused an increased number of injuries as it left players with less time for recovery, forcing them to compete in a fatigued state. Under the limited-interchange rule teams are permitted a maximum of twelve replacements over the course of a match. This allows players to rest and re-enter the game fully recovered which in turn raises the intensity and speed of the game. The 40–20 rule further encouraged attacking play in a bid to raise the entertainment value of the code. Previously, if the team with the ball kicked the ball out of play, the opposition was given the ball to 'feed' to the scrum. Under the 40–20 rule, if the attacking team kicks the ball from behind their own 40-metre line and the ball bounces within the field of play before going

out of play past the opponent's 20-metre line, the team that did the kicking is awarded the scrum feed.

The commercial success of rugby league is evident by its continuing expansionist program. In 2004 consortiums from the Gold Coast, the central coast of NSW and New Zealand put forward bids to enter the NRL competition in 2006. In mid-2004 the NRL announced that the Gold Coast Dolphins, the Central Coast Bears and the Wellington Orcas bids were unsuccessful and that there would not be a sixteenth team in the 2006 competition. Despite the rejection of Gold Coast's bid, the consortium did not give up in their quest for a NRL berth. They dropped the Dolphins nickname and the Queensland Government announced that it would spend $100 million on a new rectangular stadium for a Gold Coast team should it be accepted. This significantly strengthened the bid and in May 2005, NRL CEO David Gallop announced that the Gold Coast had been accepted into the 2007 NRL competition. This announcement coincided with the signing of a new television deal with Nine that would take effect from 2007. The new deal between Nine and Fox Sports extended their coverage of rugby league until 2012. According to Gallop this represented a '60 per cent' annual increase on the existing arrangements, which is believed to be $13 million a year from Nine and $35 million from Fox Sports.[64]

Although the financial signs for the future may be positive for the game at the elite level, the magnitude of the commercial investment by media conglomerates suggests they are not likely to provide a critical perspective on what is best for the game. As David Rowe suggests, 'the flat screen spectacle of sport has come to dominate its three dimensional practice'.[65] This intermeshing of rugby league with consumer capitalism should be treated no differently from any other capitalist venture, and as such, the appropriation of rugby league by the ideology of business has forced rugby league administrators to accept that what is desired by global media conglomerates is also in the best interests of the game. The sports media complex is a primary distributor of the cultural ideology of consumerism, and as a result Murray Phillips and Brett Hutchins argue that rugby league administrators and media organisations have embraced the ideologies and organisational practices of consumer capitalism that have gratified each other's commercial needs.[66] Despite the financial benefits to the

clubs, administrators and players, it is the global media organisations that are the principal beneficiaries of the commercial aspects of rugby league. This means that rugby league's values, practices and structures will continue to be largely shaped by the influences of global media conglomerates and the forces of consumer capitalism.

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<center>6</center>

A Professional Game for Gentlemen
Rugby Union's Transformation

Dwight Zakus and Peter Horton

Rugby and Amateurism

Rugby union football or 'rugby' as it is normally referred to in Australia, is said to be the 'game played in heaven'. Given the body contact and violence built into the game, this reference to the afterworld seems plausible. It is also a contradiction, as one would not usually associate rugby and heaven in the same thought. Rugby is above all, though, a game of the players. This is the central element of rugby's traditional culture of amateurism and anti-commercialisation, and was why rugby was the last football code to become professional.

Lincoln Allison argues that 1895 marked the beginning of the domination of world sport by the amateur hegemony of sport, for not only did professional rugby emerge that year, but it also marked the culmination of Pierre de Coubertin's efforts to re-establish the Olympic Games.[1] For the next seventy-seven years the Olympic movement stridently defended and promoted, albeit hypocritically, the amateur ethos of sport; the International Rugby Board (IRB), however, held out for another eighteen years before it succumbed to the corporatisation of sport driven by the forces of globalisation.

The pivotal change to the rugby culture came on 27 August 1995 when the IRB declared at its meeting in Paris that rugby was no longer an amateur sport, and subsequently adjusted its by-laws to make it official. The inevitable (though for the purists, the unimaginable) had occurred; the final bastion of amateurism in football had finally and officially fallen. The fact that many southern hemisphere players had secretly signed contracts for a new competition, and that the southern hemisphere rugby unions had come to peace terms with their players before this date, shows the recalcitrance of the IRB to deal with current realities. The event was likened by Lincoln Allison to the fall of Byzantium and was, as he suggests, just as predictable.[2] Rugby was never universally amateur.[3] The IRB finally faced the reality that it could no longer hold back the tide of cultural and economic change that characterised postmodern society.[4]

After emerging from an English public school and gaining a foothold in the ancient universities, rugby football became a central element in the cultural fabric of nineteenth-century Britain, and was one of the sports exported as part of the cultural hegemony of British imperialism. As Mangan noted, the proselytisation of sport to colonial spaces was neither complete nor uniform, since each country adapted and localised British sports as they moved through the empire.[5] Rugby's development in Australia varied from that in Britain, and it did not take long for rugby in Australia to generate a culture and economy of its own.

Production and Consumption
In examining a political economy of rugby, the central theme involves the players, the way they play the game, and the game's underlying culture. Players produce and reproduce themselves (physical fitness, skill development, position preparation) in order to be part of the production of a rugby game.[6] While they complete this productive activity, they consume themselves through energy consumption, extending the corporeal limits of the body, fluid loss, and through bruising and injury. This is the key, internal dialectical production/consumption aspect of the sport. This aspect is central to the sport, the production of a match, and ultimately to a commodity throughout all historical moments and activities. The commodity produced then has commercial possibilities in a market. How this individual activity

unfolds over time is central to understanding the political economy of the sport.

Once a match occurs, another production/consumption moment arises, an external one where players collectively produce a game – first for themselves, then for others. Here, players are both producers and products. However, capturing the commercial output of rugby did not occur for some time, unlike soccer, Australian football and rugby league. Early descriptions of rugby focus on the players only[7], with perhaps a passing reference to observers of the match.[8] What surrounds the players are three interconnected elements: the governors or early administrators or 'custodians' of the code; support staff and infrastructure (coaches, professional administrators, sport science and medical support staff, playing grounds and stadiums); and the supporters and media. These three elements, which start as one intertwined thread early in the history of the sport and then grow in individual size and complexity, are discussed below.

Governors and Administrators

In the beginning, players organised teams, arranged matches and completed the other administrative duties required to actually play a game. As the code expanded and as more players met retirement, a separate cadre of administrators arose. The old-boys network became the custodians of the code as board members of various rugby unions. This governing role was not only management-oriented, but also had a power position based on class.[9] The leisured class had the time, inclination and experience to organise sport, but this led to conflict, impeding the code's development.[10] Rugby, as did other British sports, suffered from an old-boy, class-based governance. As the professional management of rugby grew, conflict with boards and staff resulted because of the overly strident position boards held on amateurism. Also, boards interfered with the management aspects of sport, rather than governing and directing the sport.

Central to the production of a rugby match are the referees and game officials. While the referee used to be a volunteer and sole arbiter of matches, modern elite rugby depends on an officiating staff of eight or more members. Many referees are now professionals in their preparation and training, and their remuneration for matches. The education, training, testing and adjudication of officials is now

rationalised and scientifically organised. Since 1995 the development of game officials has paralleled the growing professionalisation of the sport, although at a slower pace.

Support Staff and Infrastructure

The key support person to emerge was the coach. While players, often the team captains, were the first coaches, this position in Australia and New Zealand changed early in the code's history.[11] Team managers and club members filling administrative roles within clubs and in unions were the first management staff, and this was added to later when sport scientists–including physiologists, psychologists, nutritionists, massage therapists and other high performance specialists– became fundamental elements of the game.

The key infrastructure is the playing area, which in recent times has been the mega- (postmodern) stadium. Infrastructure includes club facilities (high-tech meeting rooms and offices), specialised equipment for coaching and training (weights and recovery rooms with pools, spas and other specialised equipment), medical rooms (akin to surgery rooms), travel modes and sport science/medicine modalities (rehydration and circulation routines, ice baths), all of which go well beyond the St John's Ambulance volunteers with their 'magic sponge' and water, and old-style training methods.

Supporters and Media

'Supporters' refers to those who enjoy watching rugby. In the early days, these were often fellow players who waited for their match or who had just finished one. The old boys and acolytes of the sport and the players' partners and families comprised the next level of supporters, while club members and those of the leisured classes were other types of supporter. The expanding interest in the sport eventually led to representative games such as Australia's first-ever rugby test, which was played against Great Britain in 1899 at the Sydney Cricket Ground and attracted a crowd of 30 000. In current times these are a mix of past and present players, as well as those who are just interested in the sport.

The media has always had a synergistic relation with sport. Sport provides content and consumers for the media, while the media provides news and stories about the sport that widen interest in it. Sut

Jhally identified the sport/media relationship as central to sport today.[12] In earlier times the print media was central to this relationship, with radio and television then playing a bigger role. In current times it is the Internet, cable and satellite casting, podcasting and other mobile telephony technology that also spread images of and interest in sport.

Culture

Players are also producers of a unique rugby culture, which sustained the sport for a long time. While the 'old farts' (so aptly identified by former England captain Will Carling) may be the 'custodians' of rugby culture, it is the players who give it continuity.[13] This culture is a discourse, a 'habitus' and a system of values, beliefs and norms.[14] It also formed a hegemony that held rugby in an antiquated mindset for far longer than any other football code. Although the commercial aspects of player commodification were generating huge revenues for the Australian Rugby Union (ARU), it took a very long time to break down this hegemony. As will be shown, this was to the detriment of the 'old farts' and their hegemonic activities.

Rugby players develop by understanding the elements of their culture. Because rugby is a collision sport, with particular physical-contact elements (tackling, scrimmage, rucking/mauling, and many 'biffs'), it takes on many war-like attributes. Heroism, going to battle, overcoming the enemy (opposition), valour, loyalty to team mates, chivalry, and the struggle to the end are all elements of the muscular Christian or samurai ethos of the sport. Expressions of manliness, of prowess, rites of passage, and preparation for life also come out of the culture created by the players.

The Four Phases of Rugby's Evolution

Rugby's culture emanated from Britain in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Suffice to say, this culture was a dominant element of the sport's make-up from this point through to the 1970s, when an emergent professional culture developed. It was the 1995 admission that rugby was professional, following three World Cup tournaments and hidden shamateurism (so-called amateur players being paid to play), that led to the emergence of a new dominant professional culture

that made the older amateur culture a residual element. While rugby's growth has been substantial, the key to understanding it in political economy terms is to clarify certain conceptual elements. A political economy seeks to understand how production, consumption, distribution and exchange operate in some facet of the world. These elements will be defined and expanded through each of rugby's four main historical phases to display the changing nature of the game.

It should be noted that the following analysis of rugby will not follow a traditional linear history. When discussing the history of the code, we identify 'nodal points' where dialectical changes occur, to make this analysis easier to follow. Nodal points represent a change in the nature of the player's relationship to the code (and to a lesser degree to the culture), the support structures around the players, the economic conditions of the code, non-player support of the game, the way media portray matches, and the introduction of world cups and professionalism. In a Marxist sense they occur when a dominant aspect of the game (such as amateurism) becomes a residual element, or when a minor aspect (such as shamateurism) becomes dominant. These changes are ongoing and mark a significant change in the progress of the sport.

We will use four phases to describe the political economy of rugby. These phases mark the progress of the game, with the timeframe being demarcated by a significant change in this progress. The first phase begins with the start of the code and quickly moves to the formation of the ARU in 1949. The second phase covers the period from 1950 to 1981, when Australian rugby formalised its coaching and installed support programs for players, and where the Wallaby team had more players from country clubs than from urban ones; it was also when the first paid administrator was hired. Phase three progresses from 1982 to the declaration of rugby as a professional sport in 1995. This phase includes three Rugby World Cup tournaments and unofficial payments to players, and marks a significant change in the way players and their matches were organised, televised and costed. The final phase of analysis is the fully open professional era of the code from 1996 to the present day. The chapter ends by tying together the changes to rugby since its inception in Australia.

Phase 1: Early Days – 1949

Rugby football was played on a continuing basis in Sydney after 1865, though the founding of the Southern Rugby Football Union (SRFU) in 1874 constitutes the formal beginning of the institutionalised form of the game in Australia.[15] The advent of the inter-colonial rugby football series between NSW and Queensland in 1882 was a pivotal moment in football's history in the colony of Queensland. The first inter-colonial rugby match not only provided an avenue for the promotion of the game in the northern colony but also offered a focus for the game in NSW, thereby offsetting the further encroachment of Australian Rules and soccer.[16] Rugby football eventually gained ascendancy in NSW and Queensland by the 1890s.[17]

While the struggle for dominance between rugby football and Australian Rules in the colonies of Australia in the late nineteenth century was apparently resolved in an almost a haphazard manner, upon close examination it becomes clear that there were powerful underlying social, cultural, political and economic forces at work which predicated the resolution of the struggle for football supremacy in colonial Australia.[18] This was to become more evident with the bifurcation of rugby in Australia, which occurred twelve years after the same split in England. Eric Dunning and Keith Sheard suggest that the split was manifest in the growing 'monetization' of the sport.[19] The same class and financial issues occurred and also were a point of conflict in Australia.

By 1890 rugby football was supreme on the eastern seaboard, with the game dominant in both NSW and Queensland. The Wallaroos Football Club (established in 1870) was the first non-school club in Australia. It was very much a 'gentlemen's club' with strong affiliations with elite education institutions. The Wallaroos were also responsible for football's expansion to Moore Park, a move that provided the vital factor for the game's development in Sydney: regular access to playing grounds.[20] Club members' access and the allocation to and use of suitable grounds, like all other public amenities in all urban centres in the colonies, was very much connected to their position in society.

The social and cultural reality of sport in late-nineteenth-century NSW and Queensland was very different to that which prevailed in England. Sport here, as with most things, was governed by pragmatism, with a frontier value-system at work. The administrators

of rugby were not intimidated by premierships, cup competitions or coaching; they did not view them as a threat to the sport's integrity.[21] The ethos of structured competitions, grading and even the practice of active recruitment of players both locally and from visiting international teams was almost implicit in colonial rugby football since the founding of the SRFU.

In Brisbane and Queensland the sport grew in popularity. As Brisbane's population grew, largely through the migration of young males from Britain, the number of rugby clubs increased rapidly, with seventy-two clubs fielding ninety-five teams that were playing competitively by the turn of the century.[22] The levels of administration and necessary organisational activity and facilities are indicated by the fact that the clubs were affiliated to the Northern Rugby Union (Queensland Rugby Union, in 1892), one of several rugby unions,. Sub-unions were established from 1890, with the Ipswich Rugby Union founded in 1891. A central union around Rockhampton also existed at this time. Rugby in NSW at this time expanded to country regions. By the 1890s the game was being played in Goulburn, Bathurst, Dubbo, Yass, Queanbeyan, Mudgee and Orange in the west of the state, in Wollongong and Monaro to the south of Sydney, in Newcastle, Maitland Patrick Plains and Singleton in the Hunter region, and further north in Tamworth, Armidale, Glen Innes, Clarence River and Grafton.[23]

Since its inception in 1874, the NSW Rugby Union (NSWRU) had assumed the role of leader of the game in Australia, with Sydney its antipodean home. A sense of ownership and the need to control became manifest towards the end of the 1896 season when a powerful bloc of the NSWRU committee moved to establish what in essence was to become a de facto Australian Rugby Union, a position that the NSW body held until the formal establishment of the Australian Rugby Football Union in 1949.[24]

Underpinning and to some extent actually precipitating the seismic cleavage of rugby football in Australia in the 1900s were the attitudes and beliefs of the NSWRU, including their refusal to accept the movement to modify the game's fundamental structure and its laws, and, of course, the consideration of paying players to play. This cast the dye for rugby union. The great split did not occur suddenly or spontaneously, but rather was a gradual resistance to the growing

power of the working class who had flooded the now-bourgeois sport via, initially, the junior clubs of the Metropolitan Rugby Union (MRU) in Sydney after 1897, and then the district clubs in 1900.

The adoption of the game by Sydney's inner-suburban working class, the demise of its 'tone' with the corollary of illicit player payments, and the emergence of 'a win-at-all-costs attitude, turned matches into hard, rough contests'.[25] The establishment of the district competition in Sydney democratised the game even more by ceding financial and organisational control to the clubs themselves, and by allowing individual players 'to be a representative of their locality'.[26] The district competition under the directorship of the MRU, though seen by latter-day critics as a 'democratic and classless competition'[27], shifted the hub of power and control away from those in the upper echelons who ruled via their privileged social position through the traditional gentlemen's clubs, to the newly emerging nouveau riche, commercially driven and community-oriented officers of the district clubs. In addition, the playing culture and tone of the game had assumed a level of competitiveness and violence that was unacceptable to traditionalists.

It was during the 1906 rugby season in Sydney that the social, economic and political forces that were to determine the future of rugby in Australia, and indeed New Zealand, reached a critical state and impacted upon the game. The growing access to the game provided by the MRU to the working-class males of Sydney was overseen by the NSWRU, and its traditionalist leaders were imbued with a capitalistic and commercial ethos.[28] Almost from its foundation the district system, which had rapidly assumed a parochial identity, was beset with open 'shamateurism' and the use of illicit practices to circumvent residential regulations for players, such as the use of billets. Players were recruited with the promise of jobs with sympathetic employers who would tolerate their need to have time off to play, and thus carry the community's flag.[29]

The game had become a significant medium for social advancement for the players and had thus assumed a complex economic function based upon their productivity. It had also become a means of reinforcing the social position of those who sought to control the game through their voluntary work and leadership of the rugby

unions and clubs, and through roles such as patrons, selectors, coaches and referees. The arrogance and intransigence of many of these individuals, who saw themselves not as guardians of the game but rather as 'owners' and 'controllers', caused much of the tension that existed between themselves and many of the players and supporters.[30] This tension and a good deal of mistrust and sense of betrayal on the part of the largely working-class player base fuelled the move to establish rugby league as the dominant rugby code in NSW and Queensland.[31] Underlying all of the drama of the 'split' between the union and league forms of rugby were some deep-seated sentiments that further exacerbated the more obvious class divide that existed in all Australian cities at this time.[32]

Unquestionably, this was a significant nodal point in the history of Australian rugby football, with the traditional loyalties of the two rugby football camps being further entrenched as a consequence of the tensions that arose during and after World War I. Issues of national loyalty, political affiliation, class, sectarianism, parochialism and sporting ethos, as well as amateurism, impacted on how the players, administrators and supporters of each rugby code viewed each other. The cultural identity and definitely the underpinning motivating philosophy of those playing and administering rugby union football in Australia for the next seventy-six years was to be shaped by the loyalties established during this period

The 1919–29 period marked the hibernation of rugby union in Queensland, and NSW assumed both stewardship and, to an extent, ownership of rugby in Australia. The NSW team, the Waratahs, played as the Australian team in rugby tests. During this period NSW played thirty-eight tests, all of which have been retrospectively sanctioned as official tests by the ARU.[33] Who played and supported the game and, most definitely, the manner in which it was played up to beginning of the professional era in the 1990s was established during this decade.

Rugby in Australia has always been dominated in administrative terms and culturally by NSW and Queensland. However, it is interesting to reflect upon the not insignificant contribution that Victorian rugby union players, clubs and supporters made to the viability of the game. Whilst union in Queensland hibernated for ten years after

World War I, it continued to be played in Melbourne, albeit in a meagre manner. Victoria played against many of the major touring rugby nations between the wars, but with only moderate success.

The impact of World War II upon the rugby union fraternity was massive, as clubs and teams lost players, administrators, coaches and followers in action or in prisoner-of-war camps. Yet, despite the ravages of war and the terrifying loss of many players and officials, the game in the key centres of Sydney and Brisbane did not cease as it had during World War I. At the end of World War II both the country and city regions of NSW and Queensland resumed normal rugby service, but the world was never to be the same and in sport, as in the wider geopolitical context, normality was to be a chimerical concept. However, the rugby fraternity was more resilient than other sporting communities in this regard. When interstate and international football was reinstated in 1946, the NSWRU realised that a true national sport governing body was required in Australia.[34] Officials from the NSWRU were instrumental in establishing the ARFU (later the ARU).

The first ARU council meeting occurred on 25 November 1949, the first AGM was held in March 1950, and then the ARU's first delegate to the IRB was appointed. Australia truly entered the official scene of global rugby union.

Phase 2: Consolidation and Expansion
War changes all. Yet rugby in Australia after World War II, though depleted and much scarred, was at least culturally the same game as it was at the onset of 'the war to end all wars'. At the same time in Sydney and Brisbane, and in the bush areas of NSW and Queensland, the game was faced with the ever-growing challenge from rugby league.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s there was a basic post-war ennui while the restoration of normal life continued. Rugby governors and players existed in very much a 'same old, same old' vacuum. While little of substance is reported during this time, the sport saw the expansion of competition leagues as player numbers expanded across the country. The Wallaby teams were neither awe-inspiring nor feared throughout the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. They were labelled the 'woeful Wallabies' and the 'awful Aussies' by the press and had the New Zealand press questioning whether the All Blacks should

even bother playing future matches with the Wallabies. These labels stuck until the late 1970s.

The early 1970s marked a major shift of attitude in the rugby hierarchy, but this did not fundamentally challenge the hegemony of the governors. The year 1972 marks a minor nodal point as the ARU established the Howard Committee to study and make recommendations on the state of Australian rugby. By the end of the 1970s Australia had established the basis of its rise to the status of major rugby-playing nation.

The Players

The criticism of the Wallabies during most of this phase is justified, since it won only 39 per cent of home test matches (of the sixty-seven tests played, it won twenty-six, lost thirty-six and drew five); it performed similarly in away test matches. However its record improved over time and by the 1975–81 period its win–loss record was 14–3.[35] A number of changes occurred in the mid-1970s, which collectively led to success and prestige in the 1980s and beyond – in particular the 1972 Howard Commission which examined the state of Australian rugby. A number of recommendations set the future, including the establishment of a coaching unit, appointment of a national coaching director, and the formation of a national coaching committee to raise the playing standards of the sport. The report also noted that the administration was 'amateurish'.[36]

In 1974 Dick Marks was appointed the first national director of coaching under Rothmans' National Sports Foundation funding. The courses, programs and materials produced under this funding continued until a ban on the advertising of tobacco products in the early 1990s. This formalisation of coaching was paralleled by the rationalisation of player preparation. Players were provided with individual skills, fitness and weight-training regimes, and diets to enhance their physical preparation. While these rationalised programs put further demands on players' time and commitment, they also indicated a professional approach to preparing players.

Another element that arose during this period was a distinctive style of play that came about in Sydney. The link between the Randwick Club and Matraville High School was central to the development of

an Australian style of play. Coaches Cyril Towers and Geoff Mould reinjected a backline style of play that, while actually a revival of the 1927–28 Wallaby team's style, stunned the rugby world during the Australian schoolboys tour of 1977–78. It's true that a team needs the right mix of talent to succeed, but it also needs to apply that talent in ways that let the talent express itself. Rugby in Australia has a long record of quality backs; however, the quantity and quality of ball possession rarely let this talent show. Australian players were often seen as soft and not completely fit for playing at an international level.

While the talent and potential was there to express a successful national style, it took a few additional elements to realise the potential. The first of these was the increase in the number of country players in state and national teams from 1974. Country players were often overlooked for various reasons, mostly to do with training and availability, not because of talent or hardiness. Backline play evolved from the above elements. What was also needed was a harder attitude and style of play, especially from the forwards. Again it was a mix of coaches, talent and new thinking that brought together the final elements required to raise Australian rugby's position internationally.

While the formal, organisational level of coaching development was taken care of, it was the actual coaching appointments during these years that had a significant impact on the future of the Wallabies and Australian rugby. The first appointments were of NSW country coach Daryl Haberecht and Sydney stalwart David Brockoff, first to NSW and then the Wallabies. These two appointments marked a change in the attitude and style of play of the NSW and Wallabies teams. While Haberecht brought a positive attitude to the team players and a belief in their abilities, it was Brockoff's infamous 'step forward' style of play that moved Australian rugby forward. In 1975, 'step forward' led to wins over England, but the 1975–76 UK tour proved disappointing with only two test victories, one against Ireland and the other against the USA on the journey home. On the other hand, the Wallabies were not intimidated in the ferocious series against Fiji in 1976, winning all three tests. Under the coaching of Bob Templeton they toured France at the end of the 1976 season and were very competitive despite losing both tests. The Haberecht-coached side defeated Wales in two very uncompromising tests in 1978. In all these tests the Australian forwards physically challenged their opponents and demonstrated

that the soft performances of the 'awful Aussies' were a thing of the past and that the British and New Zealand teams no longer intimidated them. A new attitude now permeated the Wallabies.

While the Wallabies had not won a series against the New Zealand All Blacks since 1949, a turning point occurred in 1978 when the Wallabies beat the All Blacks 30–16 (the most points scored against the All Blacks in a test match to date) in Auckland in the final test of that series. It was at this point that the configuration of players and the results of new coaching attitudes came together. It also made New Zealand realise that a new era of play was emerging. This win and the injection of country players as well as players from the 1977–78 Australian schoolboy side positioned the team to become a consistent world force.

Governance and Administration

The governors of the game continued their amateur hegemony through this period. This hegemony operated in their administration of the sport and their insistence that playing the game was a privilege that would be destroyed by players receiving remuneration for their on-field efforts. Why should players seek to disturb this historic arrangement? This intransigence remained, but it was in the area of administration that crises arose. Expansion of participation put greater demands on volunteers and the game's limited resource base.

While the details are sketchy, the ARU was in major financial trouble throughout the late 1970s. Things came to a head in 1977 when, other than playing Fiji in the hope of raising revenue, there were no tests; it was the first time since 1960 that no matches were played against the All Blacks. The ARU was described as follows: 'according to the ARU treasurer that year, John Howard, the organisation was effectively broke. "If we had been a company, we would've been declared terminally insolvent and closed instantly."'[37] The plight of the ARU was known to the New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU), who agreed to a one-off test in 1979, with all proceeds going to the ARU. The NZRU also agreed to make this a Bledisloe Cup match, so the Australian victory made it the first Wallaby Bledisloe Cup win since 1949. In 1980 the Wallabies repeated this success over a full test series.

The first paid employee of the ARU was Nancy Fountain, who worked in a variety of roles for the NSWRU after World War II and began with the ARU when it was founded. The sport needed a bigger commitment of time and effort than amateur administrators could provide, now that it was a major national sport, and in 1981 the ARU appointed John Dedrick as chief executive officer to manage the sport. The timing was right for Dedrick and he negotiated 'several landmark sponsorship deals' at the point when Wallabies outcomes were improving. After the dire financial situation of the ARU in the late 1970s, this improvement of business practices moved the Union into the modern period.[38]

Dedrick continued as CEO until 1988 when Bob Fordham, who had a background in sales and marketing, took over the role. During his time in charge of the ARU, Fordham initiated a national registration and insurance scheme and a national youth development plan, and rugby became part of the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS). He also oversaw the move of the ARU headquarters from Kingsford to Rugby House in North Sydney in 1994. By the end of Fordham's term as CEO, a number of sponsorships had been added to the revenue stream of the ARU.

In 1994 Bruce Hayman became the CEO, and he built on the revenue stream that his predecessors had established. At this point, however, rugby was still not in the big league financially. Television revenues were limited through Channel 10 and 7/Prime, but this was about to change with SANZAR negotiating with News Limited. In late 1994 the ARU also signed up the International Management Group (IMG) as its marketing agency. Much of the focus and funding at this point was aimed at the defence of the next Rugby World Cup (RWC), to take place in South Africa in 1995.

From an administrative, governance and financial perspective, this phase of rugby's development evokes the kitchen-table model introduced in Chapter 1. It was also during this phase, however, that the ARU moved solidly into its second commercial stage of existence. This shift was not rationally planned or developed, but was more of a reactionary position, wherein the old amateur management style (hegemony) was not challenged and the commercial style was laid over 'the way things were and shall forever be, amen'.

The production/consumption dialectic had advanced, but in uneven terms. While both grew in productive capacity, only one aspect gained. Production of both the team and its success, and the organisation of the ARU, grew along with the consumption of the sport in terms of players, teams, competitions and audiences. The revenue side clearly advantaged the ARU at this time, even though management seemed to 'drop the ball' and not realise its surplus until the 1980s. The true productive side had advanced, but the players did not realise the extra value they created. The contradiction this threw up in the next phase of the sport's development became too much for the sport to handle. The 'evolutionary phases and features' did not mix well and thus began the major dialectical change in rugby in the 1990s.

Support Staff and Infrastructure

A key to the advance of Australian rugby during this phase was the development of a coaching program and of strong, focused coaches. Emanating from a series of think-tank sessions at Narrabeen and using many of the coaching principles of Wales coach Ray Williams, the first National Rugby Union Coaching Plan and the Level 1 and Level 2 coaching awards made an immediate impact upon coaching in Australia as they helped provide a consistent approach to the development of skills and team principles throughout the country. The team principles of 'Go Forward', 'Support', 'Continuity' and 'Pressure' formed what was referred to in the manual as the 'Team Contract' and proved to be a solid foundation upon which to base the game's future development.[39]

The first conference of referees in NSW was called in 1894 and since then all 'official' referees in the state have been members of the NSW Rugby Union Referees Association.[40] The referees' association of the various state unions controlled the appointment and scrutiny of their own referees and the local associations made the appointment for all representative games, including tests. Australia played under certain dispensations from the IRB until 1947 and even so the game in Australia was played and officiated under 'local' laws and interpretations until the Neutral Referees Plan emerged in the 1980s.[41] The emergence of world-travelling referees in the 1980s and the appearance of southern-hemisphere referees such as Bob Fordham and

Kerry Fitzgerald in Five Nations games in the UK and France heralded the era of professional or at least semi-professional arbiters. The advent of travelling referees considerably advanced the quality of refereeing in Australia, adding to its international position.

However, the selection of such referees was not particularly democratic and once the demand for quality referees increased with the inception of the Super 10, Super 12 and Tri-Nations competitions, and of course with full professionalism in 1995, the whole process of selection and administration had to become not only democratised but professionalised. In 1992 the ARU established the position of National Referee Development Officer. As the players and administrators, and certainly the elite level coaches, have fully embraced professionalism, so did the top flight of referees who kept apace with the demands and expectations of performing at the elite level. The tremendous workload and amount of travel, all done under enormous amounts of stress and scrutiny which were intensified by the gaze of the media, were, however, very well rewarded. The top IRB match officials even matched players in earnings.[42]

Finding suitable grounds for the growing number of rugby competitions, let alone the expansion of other field sports, continued to be a concern. While local leagues had access to club facilities, these soon became inadequate. For the state unions this continued to be a stated concern, but it was some time before action was taken. In 1964 NSW established a trust to develop its own playing grounds, although nothing took place until Ross Turnbull floated the idea of buying Concord Oval. The QRU took longer to develop its home field, Ballymore.

Concord Oval hosted the interstate Centenary Match with the New Zealand All Blacks and the Sydney rugby union grand final in 1984. Following this successful set of matches, funds were found to expand the oval. The newly refurbished Concord Oval opened in May 1986 with an international sevens tournament. The highlight for the new facility was hosting matches in the first RWC tournament in 1987. Concord Oval became Waratah Stadium after its debt was refinanced in 1988. With the start of Super 12 in 1996, the stadium was found to be too small for the larger crowds who attended this competition. From 1996, new super stadiums were used for NSW and Wallaby matches.

Since the inception of the Queensland Rugby Union in 1883, it has been seriously challenged by a lack of quality grounds. The earliest matches against NSW and visiting teams such as the New Zealand Natives or British touring teams invariably proved unprofitable for the home union as the gate takings were collected by the local government or, in the case of the Brisbane Exhibition Ground, the Royal National Association (RNA), who own the showground and surrounding exhibition venues. The hibernation of union after World War I meant that the game lost ground to rugby league football in the acquisition of grounds in Brisbane. It was only in 1950 after the QRU moved to the Normanby Oval of Brisbane Grammar School, paying a peppercorn rent of $2 a year, that it was able to start making any money from gate takings and parking charges.

Hardly the most lugubrious of settings, the venue had two major advantages. First, as it was not a council ground, matches could be played on Sunday; secondly, being a school ground meant it could charge for entry and parking.[43] For fifteen years the QRU was based at this modest venue – the traditional ambience and socialising that came to be associated with club rugby in Brisbane, reminiscent of the car-boot picnics of Twickenham post-World War II that came to be associated with club rugby in Brisbane were born during the Normanby days.[44] The school decided in 1959 that it could not extend the Union's lease past 1965, so a new central venue had to found. Amidst widespread objections from local residents, conservationists and environmental lobbies, the state government deeded the Ballymore land to the QRU on the grounds that like other major sports, rugby should have its own headquarters. The first interstate game was played at Ballymore in July 1967 and the first international matches were played the next year against France and the All Blacks. All clubs in the Brisbane competition, except the teams from the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, still play on Brisbane City Council grounds and have clubhouses at these grounds.

Supporters and the Media

The Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) began televising Sydney premiership matches and internationals in the late 1960s. The unions received little or no payment for these broadcasts and of course they were only broadcast locally. Local matches were shown in

regional centres by local broadcasters such as NBN in Newcastle and WIN in Wollongong. As both the Newcastle and Illawarra representative sides were successful in the Country Week competitions and their sides had several NSW and Australian representatives–such as John Hipwell, Peter Horton, Geoff Shaw, Gary Grey and John Lambie–the game had a good media profile, locally, during the 1970s.

Table 6.1: Wallaby Home Matches, 1947–81

Date	Opponent	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
1947, 14 June	New Zealand (NZ)	L 5–13	Exhibition Ground Brisbane (EGB)	23 000
1947, 28 June	NZ	L 14–27	Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG)	30 000
1949, 4 June	NZ Maoris	L 3–12	SCG	25 392
1949, 11 June	NZ Maoris	D 8–8	EGB	25 000
1949, 25 June	NZ Maoris	W 18–3	SCG	27 612
1950, 19 August	British Lions	L 6–19	Brisbane Cricket Ground (BCG)	20 000
1950, 26 August	British Lions	L 3–24	SCG	20 510
1951, 23 June	NZ	L 0–8	SCG	17 110
1951, 7 July	NZ	L 11–17	SCG	17 274
1951, 21 July	NZ	L 6–16	BCG	4 800
1952, 26 July	Fiji	W 15–9	SCG	13 457
1952, 9 August	Fiji	L 15–17	SCG	42 004
1954, 5 June	Fiji	W 22–19	EGB	29 753
1954, 26 June	Fiji	L 16–18	SCG	33 099
1956, 26 May	South Africa (SA)	L 0–9	SCG	36 000
1956, 2 June	SA	L 6–9	EGB	20 000
1957, 25 May	NZ	L 11–25	SCG	28 125
1957, 1 June	NZ	L 9–22	EGB	13 372
1958, 14 June	NZ Maoris	W 15–14	EGB	13 357
1958, 28 June	NZ Maoris	D 3–3	SCG	10 021

Date	Opponent	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
1958, 5 July	NZ Maoris	L 6–13	Olympic Park. Melbourne (OPM)	7 500
1959, 6 June	British Lions	L 6–17	EGB	20 000
1959, 13 June	British Lions	L 3–24	Sydney Sports Ground (SSG)	15 521
1961, 10 June	Fiji	W 24–6	EGB	7 000
1961, 17 June	Fiji	W 20–14	SCG	20 868
1961, 1 July	Fiji	D 3–3	OPM	7 500
1961, 26 August	France	L 8–15	SCG	11 227
1962, 26 May	NZ	L 6–20	EGB	10 000
1962, 4 June	NZ	L 5–14	SCG	28 206
1963, 4 June	England	W 18–9	SSG	7 864
1965, 19 June	SA	W 18–11	SCG	45 946
1965, 26 June	SA	W 12–8	Lang Park, Brisbane	10 000
1966, 28 May	British Lions	L 8–11	SCG	42 303
1966, 4 June	British Lions	L 0–31	Lang Park	15 000
1967, 13 May	Ireland	L 5–11	SCG	32 605
1968, 15 June	NZ	L 11–27	SCG	24 800
1968, 22 June	NZ	L 18–19	Ballymore, Brisbane	12 000
1968, 17 August	France	W 11–10	SCG	19 493
1969, 21 June	Wales	L 16–19	SCG	26 886
1970, 6 June	Scotland	W 23–3	SCG	26 930
1971, 17 July	SA	L 11–19	SCG	32 000
1971, 31 July	SA	L 6–14	EGB	15 000
1971, 7 August	SA	L 6–18	SCG	22 000
1972, 17 July	France	D 14–14	SCG	31 694
1972, 25 June	France	L 15–16	Ballymore	15 000
1973, 23 June	Tonga	W 30–12	SCG	15 433

Date	Opponent	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
1973, 30 June	Tonga	L 11–16	Ballymore	9 563
1974, 25 May	NZ	L 6–11	SCG	11 000
1974, 1 June	NZ	D 16–16	Ballymore	13 000
1974, 8 June	NZ	L 6–16	SCG	37 225
1975, 2 August	Japan	W 37–7	SCG	9 533
1975, 17 August	Japan	W 50–25	Ballymore	5 000
1975, 24 May	England	W 16–9	SCG	31 247
1975, 31 May	England	W 30–21	Ballymore	12 000
1976, 12 June	Fiji	W 22–6	SCG	14 299
1976, 19 June	Fiji	W 21–9	Ballymore	10 000
1976, 26 June	Fiji	W 27–17	SCG	7 800
1978, 11 June	Wales	W 18–8	Ballymore	15 000
1978, 17 June	Wales	W 19–17	SCG	41 632
1979, 3 June	Ireland	L 12–27	Ballymore	16 500
1979, 16 June	Ireland	L 3–9	SCG	33 476
1979, 28 July	NZ	W 12–6	SCG	32 935
1980, 21 June	NZ	W 13–9	SCG	36 068
1980, 28 June	NZ	L 9–12	Ballymore	18 488
1980, 12 July	NZ	W 26–10	SCG	48 968
1981, 5 July	France	W 17–15	Ballymore	20 500
1981, 11 July	France	W 24–14	SCG	41 234

Notes:
Total home matches: 67 (39% win rate; Wins=26, Losses=36, Draws=5)
Average tests per year: 2
Average attendance: 21 645

Source: compiled by Dwight Zakus and Peter Horton.

Table 6.1 indicates the continued support for Wallaby matches, despite the team's poor results. This indicates that the ARU and sub-unions should have been in a solid financial position. Considering the telecasting of matches and funds from that mediation of the sport, there do not seem to be many excuses for the poor financial situation in 1977–79. It must also be noted that the stadiums used for these

matches were smaller than those used in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

However, test rugby crowds were fickle and fans voted with their feet when teams played badly, as well as when they played dud sides – particularly when the dud sides beat us, as with Tonga in 1973. At the same time, test and state matches at Ballymore in Brisbane were major social events, attracting school children and many women. Another factor that affected crowd sizes was rugby union's nemesis: rugby league. When competing against league games, rugby matches often came off second-best. This was demonstrated in 1951 when a rugby test against New Zealand and a league match occurred at the same time. Apathy was a likely feature as well, as indicated by poor crowds for the Fiji games in 1961 in Brisbane and Melbourne, and the small crowds in Sydney for the game against France and in Brisbane for the match against the British Lions in 1966. All Wallaby home-match attendances between 1947 and 1981 are listed in Table 6.1.

Phase 3: From Shamateurism to Professionalism

The expansion of rugby between 1981 and 1995 established the code as a force not only in Australia, but also globally. The Wallabies moved from easy-beats to registering consistent wins that placed Australia among the top-ranked rugby-playing nations. Through the 1980s Australian rugby also contributed styles of play that became synony-mous with the nation, as well as leading in the areas of coaching development and team preparation. Australian rugby had entered a new phase of existence.

The ARU instituted a professional approach and administrative structure during this period and became highly commercial in its operations. The year 1981 marked the hiring of the first ARU chief executive, John Dedrick. His tenure was marked by the securing of the ARU's financial future through successful sponsorships, and by having Australia named co-host of the inaugural Rugby World Cup in 1987. The dominant culture of an amateur, non-commercial operation was under severe pressure as a professionalised culture took over the structure and operation of the sport.

The key development in this period was the demand by players for paid contracts and the end of the guise of shamateurism. While rugby became a highly commercial property generating millions of

dollars for the code, most of these funds did not go to support the players, the element central to the commercial viability of the sport. Player performances became a viable commodity that was ripe for commercialisation. It was the so-called 'Rugby War' that forced the IRB to finally throw in the amateur towel.

In the 1980s, the sport finally achieved a level of performance that drew increasingly large audiences. This was partly due to the vital input of NSW Country players, coaches and administrators, and to David Brockoff's notorious 'step forward' approach to the game. Another factor was the power and skill of the dominant Queensland side of the late 1970s, plus the injection of players from the very successful 1977–78 Australian schoolboys' team. After a desperate financial situation during the 1970s, the ARU in the 1980s began to generate additional revenue from sponsorships, larger gate receipts, television fees and other commercial activities, all of which was the result of improved performances from the players.

The Players

Throughout the 1970s Australian players either played for a brief period of time or moved to rugby league to continue their careers. The issue of payments to players became increasingly important during this period, culminating in the Rugby War of the mid-1990s.[45] Although rugby always had player payments, these were based on no set minimum and were more the result of a tacit agreement between players and the Unions. This arrangement did not provide a living wage.

The Unions gave players financial help on condition that players did not say anything or complain. Camps for team preparation expanded and, along with long tours, continued to pressure player availability. The activity surrounding the top players was professionally oriented, but the players continued to receive little of the money they generated.

In the early 1980s a hardship allowance of ex-gratia payments and equipment for players was established. These funds were not seen as a payment as such, but as a way of keeping the best players in the sport. This concept continued into the early 1990s when trust funds were established for players. From 1994, leading Australian test players could obtain between $25 000 and $30 000 per season.[46] The

IRB and the Australian Taxation Office both agreed that this money was paid for public relations activities, not for playing. Players could draw on these funds for official appearances and as part of sponsorship arrangements, which sometimes gave players the use of automobiles. But these payment schemes gave players nowhere near as much as they could earn from playing rugby league.

A variety of international competitions evolved during this phase. From 1986–90 a South Pacific Championships competition was held, involving teams from South African and New Zealand provinces, two Australian state teams, and teams from Pacific islands. This competition stopped during 1991, a RWC year, and in 1992 became the Super 6 competition, subsequently evolving into the Super 10 tournament for the years 1993–95. The demands on players' time for extra training and travelling were in addition to more physically demanding competition schedules. It was during this increasingly demanding environment that the call for payments reached a crescendo.

In 1995, media moguls Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch went into battle for sport content/product for their respective television networks. The product was the game of rugby league (read player performances), then controlled by Packer's PBL Corporation, and broadcast through Channel 9 and on OptusNet. Murdoch wanted similar product for his Foxtel subscription network. Thus, in early 1995 the Super League war became an open conflict where players (and athletes) were obtained to stock the teams in both competitions. Again, the rugby league code became a competitor for rugby union players. The money on offer for league players was nonsensical, but attractive to union players struggling as amateurs. This added impetus to the professionalisation of rugby, but it was not the only force.

As noted in the previous phase, a number of entrepreneurial operators with a background in rugby touted new professional, commercialised and international competitions. David Lord had contracted 212 players for The World Rugby Championship in 1983, where they would earn around $180 000 for an eight-nation tournament.[47] However, it was during the tumultuous year of 1995 that Geoff Levy and Ross Turnbull took up the idea again with Packer's PBL executive Brian Powers and began contracting players in secret. The contracting company was the World Rugby Corporation (WRC), which managed to contract most of the top players from the three major

southern-hemisphere unions. In parallel, the major southern unions formed a new company called South Africa-New Zealand-Australia Rugby (SANZAR) to move rugby forwards. SANZAR ultimately formulated an agreement with Murdoch's News Limited and so had the funds, as well as traditional control of the sport. The resultant Rugby War is fully detailed by Peter Fitzsimmons in the book of the same name.

While the WRC had contracted the top players, it had no guaranteed finances. The unions, on the other hand, had guaranteed finances from News Limited, but no signed players. The power relations between the players and the traditional owners of the sport formed a major contradiction. The sport was amateur and players should not have signed contracts, although they had not received remuneration to date. The unions likewise would have abrogated the letter and spirit of the sport by signing players to contracts. In the end the player groups weakened and face-saving agreements were made to right the ship. The unions realised that they had narrowly retained control of the sport. The WRC would have become a rugby company in the unions' place. The struggle ended with the major southern-hemisphere unions retaining their place in the sport, but not without having nearly lost control of the sport. The players proved they were the key producers and products, and that the sport could not continue without them. The unions may have won the day, but rugby would not be the same again. It could be argued that the production/consumption dialectic had shifted in favour of the key producers of rugby: the players.

Through this struggle for control and power in rugby, the Australian players did better. Their agreement with the ARU, the famous Ferrier letter signed on 16 August 1995, before the Paris Declaration made rugby professional, set the course for future labour relations. In Australia and New Zealand the players were able to extract considerable benefits from their unions. This struggle reversed the normal employer/employee status quo and players for once exercised their power to realise contractual value for their efforts.

The Ferrier document was a concession the ARU had to make to obtain top players' productive capacities. The document gave the players the bulk of the News Limited money, player representation on

rugby boards (the ARU and state unions), and a funded players' association. Ian Ferrier, an ARU director, saw the agreement he signed as the only way to bring the players back to union, to block many of them signing with rugby league, to make a peace acceptable to everyone and to make rugby viable in Australia. Through new CEO John O'Neill, the ARU later challenged the Ferrier letter and the ability of the newly formed Rugby Union Players' Association (RUPA) to give direction on the distribution of the News Limited money. From the end of 1995 through to late 1996, RUPA struggled to have its right to direct acknowledged. Finally, the matter went to the courts in late 1997 and the impasse between the ARU and RUPA led to the first Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) in October 1997.[48]

This again was a change in the power relations in rugby as the players resisted and overcame the union's power. This was a much different historical outcome as the various rugby unions previously wielded inordinate power and made backward-looking decisions about the sport and the players. The first CBA set the stage for future agreements. As Braham Dabscheck noted in reference to the Queensland Rugby Union's 1997 *Annual Report*:

> The [first] Collective Bargaining Agreement has been a landmark in the professionalisation of the sport and is likely to provide significant benefits in terms of the relationship between the sport as a whole and professional players. In comparison with other professional sports in Australia, this Agreement has consolidated the relationship between professional players and the sports administrators and reduced the potential for conflict. It has also given the sport and the players greater certainty and predictability about the growth of the sport and the relative distribution of the income generated by the sport.[49]

The first CBA very much felt its way through new labour relations in a newly professionalised sport. RUPA has many other agreements, both in Australia and globally, to model this agreement upon. More discussion of CBAs is presented in the next phase.

Governance and Administration

A scramble to professionalise rugby organisations and competitions ensued over this period. The year 1996 led to major changes to competitions such as Super 10, on its last legs and which became formalised into Super 12, and in the formation of the Tri-Nations annual tournament that took precedence in the international test calendar. These competitions were the product for the News Limited contract, a contract that would change the culture and dynamic of the sport forever.

The contractual relations of players for these competitions led to arrangements between the ARU and the state unions. Players would therefore have a base contract with a state union (NSW, Queensland or the Australian Capital Territory, later to include Western Australia) that would be supplemented for test-level players by the ARU. There was, however, much legal activity and posturing before the new era dawned. Newly appointed ARU CEO John O'Neill took a hard line on the Ferrier letter's content. O'Neill proved that the 'old farts' had been replaced by the corporate leader, but the players merely changed from chattels to employees under the new industrial relationships.

Changes to the governance and full professionalisation of the ARU took longer, and considerable turmoil resulted as the rugby culture changed dramatically. The years 1994–97 were a force majeure in rugby. After John O'Neill took over the ARU CEO role in 1995, he stated that 'the tumultuous 1995' led to 'changes in the ARU's Articles of Association which has effectively "corporatised" the entity and makes for more efficient and effective decision-making and governance whilst recognising the interests of all the stakeholders'.[50] O'Neill arrived from a banking career so he was well placed for rugby's venture into the professional realm, although it is uncertain how much he understood about how some stakeholders were not au fait with these changes.

This also put pressure on the state unions to become professional and corporate in their structures and operations. In each case they too had to change their articles of association. What started to happen was a streamlining of high-performance programs to ensure the continuation of high-calibre players. With the advent of professionalism came the demand for more rationalised production schemes. In the context

of the business-as-sport model, residual elements of the kitchen-table and commercial approaches were mixed with the bureaucratic style. While elements of the bureaucratic style were evident and indeed growing, the old board style remained with its intransigence concerning the amateur code and culture. Observing organisational charts of the 1990s, it is clear that divisions and departments had grown. Likewise the accountability due to business operations was evident. Merchandising and corporate incomes grew, adding to the corporate model. Efficiency became a watchword under John O'Neill.

Rothmans' support for the coaching program ended in 1994. It is widely acknowledged that if a country is to grow a sport and develop good players and good competitions, it must have a wide and good stock of coaches. The twenty years of Rothmans' support for the national coaching director and program development provided the coaches required to develop the increasing number of players coming into rugby. After being named the first National Coaching Director under the Rothmans' sponsorship, Dick Marks moved under the direct auspices of the ARU in 1994. These programs not only provided financial resources which could be put back into other player development programs operated by the state unions, but also became key strategies for growing the sport in Australia.

While the consumption aspect grew and provided the sport with largesse, the production aspect (the players) were able to posit themselves as the major element of the sport. A major dialectical change led to a major (nodal) change in the sport during this phase. Not only did players strengthen their productive capacity, but exchange and distribution had advanced as well. More revenue was generated and more revenue streams were adopted by the ARU and the sub-unions during this phase. Likewise, with advances in the marketing and televising of the sport, new distribution modes were adopted. In all, this phase ended with major and enduring changes to the sport.

Support Staff and Infrastructure

Australian coach Bob Dwyer made the point that from 1988 the support structure around the national team was 'professional'.[51] That is, all the latest technical knowledge, planning, techniques and modalities were available to prepare players. Many of those providing this support were in paid positions, but not the coaches. Certainly the

additional planning and studying of player preparation was advanced considerably by Bob Dwyer in his two sojourns as Wallaby coach; the four-year gap between Dwyer's tenures, beginning in 1984, was filled by Alan Jones.

As with Dwyer, Jones added his own inimitable features to the preparation of the Wallaby team through his coaching philosophy. He was an astute manager of people and fiercely loyal to both his players and Australian rugby. He masterminded the 1984 Grand Slam series with the Eighth Wallabies, and was vitriolic in his criticism of poor referees and equally poor administrators. Despite his outstanding record as Australian coach (twenty-three wins from thirty tests); he soon fell foul of the establishment who used his prioritisation of his radio career over his team during the 1987 World Cup campaign as the basis for a campaign to replace him.

Bob Dwyer returned as Wallaby coach for the first test in 1988 and he remained in that position until 1995; his team won the Rugby World Cup in 1991, beating England 12–6 in the final at Twickenham. Dwyer is as about as typical an Australian rugby figure as one could imagine. Descended from Irish Catholic stock, he was schooled at the great 'Running Rugby' academy of Waverly College and moved on to play at Sydney Boys' High in the GPS competition. He played grade rugby with Randwick and was assistant coach to Bob Outterside at the club before taking over the reins in 1977. After five successful seasons he was elected as Australian coach in 1982, unseating incumbent coach and legendary Queenslander Bob Templeton.

Bob Dwyer ended his national coaching career with a 60 per cent win rate, with forty-five wins from the seventy-two tests he coached. He continued as NSW coach from 2001–03 and coached in Europe for six years. Though a modern coach who embraced many of the technological and analytical tools that had become available to coaches, Dwyer retained much of the earthy wisdom he had assimilated through a real rugby career. The first of his coaching commandments demonstrates this: 'The coach's success is entirely dependent on the success of the players'.[52]

Supporters and the Media

This phase of rugby's development again saw the expansion of audience support for the Wallabies as well as the sub-union competitions.

Table 6.2 shows the growth of this support in terms of average crowd size, the number of matches played, and the likely revenues garnered. The growth in this fan base also enhanced the sponsorship opportunities and grew new revenue streams for branded merchandise, but while it enhanced the bottom line for the sport it still contributed little to players.

At this point fans and supporters were more closely connected to the sport. In other words the commercialisation of matches and other revenue streams kept the fan affiliation more direct. Tickets were available for test matches, there were more old club-based connections to the team(s) and players, and the 'bells and whistles' of corporate rugby had not yet taken over. While the players were about to challenge the hegemony of the sport, the fans were living through the last vestiges of the old ways.

Table 6.2: Wallaby Home Matches, 1982–95

Date	Opponent	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
1982, 4 July	Scotland	L 12–7	Ballymore	21 722
1982, 10 July	Scotland	W 33–9	SCG	36 948
1983, 9 July	USA	W 49–3	SCG	21 737
1983, 31 July	Argentina	L 3–18	Ballymore	22 000
1983, 7 August	Argentina	W 29–13	SCG	25 171
1983, 20 August	NZ	L 8–18	SCG	44 100
1984, 21 July	NZ	W 16–9	SCG	40 797
1984, 4 August	NZ	L 15–19	Ballymore	20 100
1984, 18 August	NZ	L 24–25	SCG	43 949
1985, 23 June	Canada	W 43–15	Ballymore	9 000
1985, 10 August	Fiji	W 52–28	Ballymore	10 000
1985, 17 August	Fiji	W 31–9	SCG	12 987
1986, 1 June	Italy	W 38–18	Ballymore	10 000
1986, 21 June	France	W 27–14	SCG	34 166
1986, 6 July	Argentina	W 39–19	Ballymore	15 000
1986, 12 July	Argentina	W 26–0	SCG	18 799
1987, 17 May	South Korea	W 65–18	Ballymore	4 090
1987, 23 May	England (RWC 1)	W 19–6	Concord Oval (Sydney)	17 896

Date	Opponent	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
1987, 31 May	USA (RWC 1)	W 47–12	Ballymore	10 000
1987, 3 June	Japan	W 42–23	Concord Oval	8 785
1987, 7 June	Ireland (RWC 1)	W 33–15	Concord Oval	14 365
1987, 13 June	France (RWC, S/F)	L 30–24	Concord Oval	17 768
1987, 25 July	NZ	L 30–16	Concord Oval	20 000
1988, 29 May	England	W 22–16	Ballymore	13 500
1988, 12 June	England	W 28–8	Concord Oval	18 109
1988, 3 July	NZ	L 7–32	Concord Oval	20 000
1988, 16 July	NZ	D 16–16	Ballymore	24 000
1988, 30 July	NZ	L 9–30	Concord Oval	20 000
1989, 1 July	British Lions	W 30–12	Sydney Football Stadium (SFS)	39 433
1989, 8 July	British Lions	L 12–18	Ballymore	20 525
1989, 15 July	British Lions	L 18–19	SFS	39 401
1990, 9 June	France	W 21–9	SFS	34 572
1990, 24 June	France	W 48–31	Ballymore	22 173
1990, 30 June	France	L 19–30	SFS	34 776
1990, 8 July	USA	W 67–9	Ballymore	11 928
1991, 21 July	Wales	W 61–6	Ballymore	19 991
1991, 27 July	England	W 40–15	SFS	39 681
1991, 10 August	NZ	W 21–12	SFS	41 565
1992, 13 June	Scotland	W 27–12	SFS	35 535
1992, 21 June	Scotland	W 37–13	Ballymore	21 000
1992, 4 July	NZ	W 16–15	SFS	39 870
1992, 19 July	NZ	W 19–17	Ballymore	27 500
1992, 25 July	NZ	L 23–26	SFS	40 400
1993, 4 July	Tonga	W 52–14	Ballymore	12 925
1994, 31 July	SA	L 12–19	SFS	41 900
1993, 14 August	SA	W 28–20	Ballymore	28 878
1993, 21 August	SA	W 19–12	SFS	41 877
1994, 5 June	Ireland	W 33–13	Ballymore	26 545
1994, 11 June	Ireland	W 32–18	SFS	37 239
1994, 18 June	Italy	W 23–20	Ballymore	20 815

Date	Opponent	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
1994, 25 June	Italy	W 20–7	OPM	15 539
1994, 6 August	Western Samoa	W 73–3	SFS	30 143
1994, 17 August	NZ	W 20–16	SFS	41 917
1995, 30 May	Argentina	W 53–7	Ballymore	20 696
1995, 6 May	Argentina	W 30–13	SFS	27 829
1995, 29 July	NZ	L 23–34	SFS	39 327

Notes:
Total home matches: 56 (71% win rate; Wins=40, Losses=15, Draws=1)
Average tests per year: 4
Average attendance: 25 517

Source: compiled by Dwight Zakus and Peter Horton.

The sport was now totally covered by the commercial television networks and had become a premium form of television product (content) that was attractive to electronic audiences, both local and global. Although the revenue generated for the first RWC was small, revenues for the 1991 and 1995 events grew exponentially. Rugby had sold itself into the larger market for global sport and, as Bob Stewart noted in Chapter 1, it became part of the 'entertainment-cocktail'.

Phase 4: The Open, Professional Era

> Rugby is and always will be a player's game – not just for the elite. The money is now here for the elite – it is up to them to earn it. The Club player will go round week in, week out – may he live forever. (Leo Williams, Chair ARU, 1995)[53]

While a form of peace was set between the players and the unions, it would take time for attitudes and behaviour to change. The long dominant gentleman–amateur ideology of rugby will remain a residual element of the sport, and how long it takes for the 'old farts' or those with nostalgic attitudes to change is indeterminable. The sport has moved on and it is likely that the professional culture will establish itself as one that benefits the whole code.

As noted above, the IRB finally succumbed to the pressures to deal with the 'shamateurism' of rugby and made changes to their by-laws in September 1995 to make the sport open. A number of

concomitant processes were demanded with this and became main-stream realities; that is, matters such as full professional contracts, and changes to union, administrative and governance structures, processes, and constitutions and by-laws, were adjusted to the new reality. Players, especially the Australians, pushed their demands for remuneration, benefits and sponsorship, and led the charge into the open era of corporate rugby.

However, the professional era in rugby unfolded unevenly. While player preparation, coaching, sport science/medicine and attendant services underwent professional development before the players were paid, these elements evolved post-1995. The unevenness occurred in respect to players gaining professional status and the effects of this on their lives, the demand for further commercialisation and professional management of all rugby union structures and operations, and dealing with the fracture between the professional, business side of rugby and the amateur side of rugby.

The Players

The first CBA actually gave the players a better distribution of funds than that offered in the Ferrier letter. Rather than strictly basing the RUPA share on one revenue stream, the CBA used the News Limited revenues as a base amount, but included 25 per cent of total player-generated revenue as the overall sum for distribution. A total of 111 players (thirty-seven per state) would receive contracts for the regional Super 12 competition and, for some, Wallaby contracts. The following table (Table 6.3) from Dabscheck and the Australian Rugby Collective Bargaining Agreement Mark III indicate the minimum money or percentage of player-generated revenue available for players and the maximum number of player contracts under each agreement.

The number of contracts grew to accommodate larger playing lists as the lengthy seasons and injury tolls demanded such an expansion. In 2006 a fourth team from Perth entered the Super Rugby League. This, along with the formation of an Australian Provincial Championship (APC), further expanded the number of professional and semi-professional playing contracts available to rugby players in Australia. The number of contracted players will also expand when the APC starts in August 2007 with an additional ninety-four full-time and 126 part-time contracts available. For a long time the ARU knew

it had to have a major national competition akin to the New Zealand RU's National Provincial Championship or the South African RU's Currie Cup.

Table 6.3: CBA I–III Distributions

Year	CBA	Total Minimum Payment (Million $)	Percentage of Player-generated Revenue (%)	Number of Players
1996	–	9.6	NA	NA
1997	I	11.5	25	111
1998	I	12.0	25	111
1999	I	12.7	25	111
2000	I	13.3	25	111
2001	II	16.6	30	120
2002	II	17.5	30	120
2003	II	19.0	30	120
2004	II	19.6	30	120
2005	III	22.2	25	120
2006	III	25.0	26	132
2007	III	25.8	26	132
2008	III	26.5	26	132

Source: Dabscheck, Braham, 'Paying for Professionalism: Industrial Relations in Australian Rugby Union', The Montague Burton Visiting Professor in Industrial Relations Lecture, Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, Wales, 2002, p. 10.

The third CBA is more comprehensive than the previous ones, developing the key elements of the earlier versions. Safety, insurance and post-career education continue to be core items. The 2004 CBA included the following additions: rookie contracts for up to five players for each Super team union; one extra week of rest and a 'regeneration' period (restricted training) for Wallaby players at the end of each season; $500 000 each year for career training and professional development for players plus compulsory study for a Certificate III in Sport; formation of an Occupational Health and Safety Committee to address player safety and welfare; compulsory accreditation for player managers conducted by RUPA; and a new simplified revenue-sharing model for all professional players.[54] The current contractual reality for

Australian players is far more attractive and real than in the pre-1995 period.

Governance and Administration

The changes to the finances of the ARU improved from the depths of despair in the late 1970s. Table 6.4 indicates this change from late in the previous phase through to the current phase. It displays the changes resulting from the News Limited revenues, expenses and allocations to the sub-unions following 1995. Rugby became 'fully captured by the sport-as-business model'. With these changes also came increased managerialism pressures for accountability, managerial processes and practices, and governance upgrades.

Table 6.4: ARU Revenue, Expenses, Allocation to State Unions and Balance

Year	Revenues	Expenditures	Allocations	Balance (Million $)
1993	3.9	3.1	0.82	0.84
1994	5.1	4.4	0.53	0.66
1995[1]	5.5	6.3	(0.8)	0.0
1996[2]	20.6	11.0	12.6	(2.2)
1997	29.2	17.0	11.3	(1.2)
1998	34.9	30.2	3.8	(0.3)
1999[3]	37.9	32.8	4.6	(0.1)
2000	42.8	36.9	5.7	(0.1)
2001[4]	58.6	51.3	6.1	0.7
2002	61.8	55.2	6.1	0.5
2003[5]	289.5	250.1	39.4	33.0
2004	70.0	66.0	8.4	(4.4)
2005	73.3	67.5	9.0	(3.2)

1 Rugby World Cup in South Africa
2 Start of professional era, first year of Super 12 and Tri-Nations
3 Rugby World Cup in England (Australia won)
4 Australia hosted the British & Irish Lions tour
5 Rugby World Cup in Australia (Australia won); the ARU also changed its financial year so these figures represent a fourteen-month period

Source: compiled by Dwight Zakus and Peter Horton.

Table 6.5: Revenue Sources and Net Revenues[1] (Million $)

Revenue Source	Television	Sponsorship	Gate	Licensing	Corporate Hospitality	Government Grants
1993	2.2	–	NA	NA	Nil	0.2
1994	2.0	–	NA	NA	0.3	0.3
1995	1.8	–	NA	NA	0.2	0.4
1996	14.4	–	4.6	0.2	0.7	0.2
1997	19.2	–	7.4	0.6	1.1	0.3
1998	22.2	–	9.3	0.7	1.8	0.1
1999	25.6	–	85.0	0.9	2.0	0.3
2000[1]	20.8	11.5	7.0	1.4	1.4	0.4
2001	24.9	14.3	11.4	1.6	3.1	0.4
2002	27.0	16.4	12.0	1.4	3.0	0.5
2003	27.0	17.4	11.6	2.6	3.3	0.6
2004	30.0	17.2	13.0	1.6	3.9	0.6
2005	31.9	19.0	12.9	2.0	4.1	0.3

1   In its 2001 *Annual Report* the ARU split the television and sponsorship revenues.

Source: compiled by Dwight Zakus and Peter Horton.

Table 6.5 also shows the increased variety of revenue streams adopted by the ARU under the commercial and corporate changes over the last two phases. Not only are the figures impressive for a newly professionalised sport, but also for a sport that is not one of the top football codes.

ARU annual reports during this time indicate the variety of management activities used in modern corporate organisations. Professionalisation of management, operations and governance is an ongoing flow of activities. The ARU held a National Conference in 1999 on the future of the sport and completed a Memorandum of Agreement with the state unions. The conference brought all elements of the rugby community together to decide how to grow and enhance the sport.

In 2001 ARU Chairman Bob Tuckey noted that a private consulting firm had been hired to conduct a strategic risk assessment and to develop an action plan to address those areas of risk

Table 6.6: National Total Participant Registrations[1]

Category	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Seniors	31 148	33 710	27 506	28 829	33 648	33 767	37 541	36 946	38 919	36 574
Juniors	18 230	21 343	25 486	24 787	27 111	28 945	33 225	32 817	39 406	41 533
Schools[2]	39 273	42 093	41 647	45 424	48 900	54 683	58 773	62 045	66 884	79 437
Women	1 109	1 257	1 670	1 123	1 572	1 866	1 866	1 427	1 754	1 996
Golden Oldies	NA	NA	4 723	4 743	16 570	16 690	16 690	17 000	17 255	17 115
Total	89 760	98 403	101 032	104 906	127 801	135 951	148 750	150 235	165 218	176 655

1 ARU annual reports before 1995 do not record these numbers.
2 In 2000 the counting of school participants was split into two categories (regular and irregular competitions). The figures in this table combine these totals. The greatest growth was in regular competition school numbers.

Source: compiled by Dwight Zakus and Peter Horton.

identified.[55] Under Tuckey's chairmanship, the ARU introduced changes to board policy, code of conduct and board governance practices towards best practice models. In the same report John O'Neill noted the outcome of a Strategic Issues Forum that addressed 'a range of key issues and priorities crucial to the game's continued growth'.[56] Such matters are part of the ongoing corporate managerial activities that a large organisation must follow to keep up with the times and with government legislation (both Australian Sport Commission and federal and state legislation). All of these activities are continually reviewed and improved following best practice and quality standards for business operations.

A key contradiction that grew out of the move to a sport-as-business model was how to reconcile the participative side of the sport with its development focus and the sport-as-business elements. While this was an espoused concern through the late 1990s and early 2000s, it continues to be a source of difficult reconciliation within the code and the culture of rugby. Although participation figures show growth (see Table 6.6, though these figures were suggested to be a bit 'rubbery' in recent media stories), in 2006–07 this became a concern within and between the national and the state unions. Who is really responsible for 'community rugby' and from where does the money derive to fund rugby at this level? This will be one of the greatest challenges for the sport in the next decade.

The Corporate Nexus and the Political Economy of Rugby

Table 6.4 shows, along with data from Table 6.7 (see below), that absolute surplus value generation is occurring; that is, the number of matches or the length of the playing season grows.[57] While the RUPA seeks to monitor and control this expansion of matches within the CBAs, it continues to be a contentious issue. What seems to be happening is that players have less time between contractual commitments to recover, relax, have surgery and to spend time away from rugby. As with all major, global sport, the seasons are blending together. This takes an enormous physical, mental and emotional toll on players. Their time is increasingly taken up with preparation and commercial commitments, both through their own sponsorships and through their union-based contractual

commitments. Some ask if professionalisation of rugby has actually improved the players' lot.

Players' overall commitments have risen in the professional era. Just looking at home test matches we see that they nearly doubled during this phase as compared to the previous phases. In non-World Cup years the cycle of tests include one to two matches in South Africa and New Zealand, plus the spring tour to the UK, France and other nations. Players are becoming stronger and faster. Rugby is a collision sport and puts greater physical and mental challenges on the players. Again, this is why RUPA has carefully delineated periods of complete rest, periods of unsupervised active rest, and restricted training activity. Yet the way for sponsors, television and the unions to earn more revenues is to take more of the players' time for matches, and more for minor public relations and commercial activities.

It is timely to consider how or if we can compare the levels of commitment between the eras; pre- and post-professionalism, and it must be said at the outset that it is probably impossible to do so. In the amateur era, or at least pre-1980s, players were selected upon their performances in matches and not in the laboratory or the weights room. As such they performed largely as an outcome of an uneven balance of their talents and dedication. Some, who had limited talents, made up for it with immense dedication and application, so that the intensity of their personal training regimes could overcome mediocre skills or physique. Others with tremendous 'natural' ability and flair could achieve success without total dedication. This is impossible in the professional era where the analysis and scrutiny of the scientific auditing-like screening systems do not allow for 'free-spirits' even if they are geniuses, such as David Campese.

The comparison in essence addresses the ethical dichotomy between amateur and professional sport, not that the resolution one way or the other can be seen as a justification. Elite players in the amateur era had to gain employment or at least funding from sources outside of the game to secure their continued involvement. Others, as was so typical of the amateur game, were able to combine their sporting careers with university study or with the support of their families. They then in essence had to pay to play; it was not unusual for players selected on Wallaby tours to lose their jobs upon being

selected. Many had to take unpaid leave to even play in home rugby tests. Selection on a major tour such as a Wallaby tour to the UK even in the 1970s or 1980s could mean players without very supportive employers had to take five months leave without pay.

The sixth Wallaby tour, for example, lasted five months, finishing in February 1976. Then the home representative season for the year began at Easter, the interstate series began in June and a three-test series against Fiji ran through the whole of June. And in September the Wallabies departed for a ten-match tour of France and Italy. It was not uncommon that in such teams players continued their university studies; some even undertook final medical or law-school examinations while on tour. Those who were farmers or worked on the family properties, such as Reg Smith, Bill McKid, Greg Cornelsen and Jim Hindmarsh, were able to tour only because their families or friends absorbed the workload. Such players had no time off for training, they had no access to free medical or travel cover, and, indeed, many had to curtail their careers because of the resultant burdens and stress on their family lives.

How then can any 'fair' or worthwhile comparison be made? What has been said by those concerned by the possible demise of the traditional culture of the game in Australia, however, is that in light of such 'burdens' and the fact that professional players of today do not have to balance their football lives with such non-football dimensions, they may lose out in their own development and they will not perpetuate the identity and character of the game. The NSW and Queensland Rugby Academies directly address this concern in their programs by striving to develop opportunities for players both on and off the field and in their lives after rugby. They both provide ongoing educational and vocational training for their charges and offer life-skills development training with links to potential career opportunities.

The RUPA is specifically involved in the development of contracted professional players from all unions. They are jointly involved with the ARU in the Careers Training Scheme for all state and academy players, and they seek to 'capitalise on the culture of Australian rugby to ensure that all players can fully exploit the careers and education opportunities available to them throughout the length of their rugby

Table 6.7: Wallaby Home Matches, 1996–2006

Date	Opposition	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
1996, 8 June	Wales	W 56–25	Ballymore	19 800
1996, 22 June	Wales	W 42–3	SFS	35 784
1996, 29 June	Canada	W 74–9	Ballymore	15 116
1996, 13 July	SA	W 21–26	SFS	41 850
1996, 27 July	NZ	L 25–32	Suncorp Stadium (Lang Park)	40 167
1997, 21 June	France	W 29–15	SFS	31 572
1997, 28 June	France	W 26–19	Ballymore	24 814
1997, 12 July	England	W 25–6	SFS	40 132
1997, 26 July	NZ	L 18–33	Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG)	90 119
1997, 2 August	SA	W 32–30	Suncorp	36 416
1998, 6 June	England	W 76–0	Suncorp	26 691
1998, 13 June	Scotland	W 45–3	SFS	36 263
1998, 20 June	Scotland	W 33–11	Ballymore	24 136
1998, 11 July	NZ	W 24–16	MCG	7 127
1998, 18 August	SA	L 13–14	Subiaco Oval, Perth	38 079
1998, 29 August	NZ	W 19–14	SFS	40 501
1998, 18 September	Fiji	W 66–20	Parramatta Stadium (RWC qualifier)	17 242
1998, 22 September	Tonga	W 74–0	Bruce Stadium, Canberra (RWC qual.)	14 176

Date	Opposition	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
1998, 26 September	Manu Samoa	W 25–13	Ballymore (RWC qual.)	9 239
1999, 12 June	Ireland	W 46–10	Ballymore	24 177
1999, 19 June	Ireland	W 32–26	Subiaco Oval	26 267
1999, 26 June	England	W 22–15	Stadium Australia, Sydney	81 000
1999, 17 July	SA	W 32–6	Ballymore	31 000
1999, 28 August	NZ	W 28–7	Stadium Australia	107 042
1999, 17 July	SA	W 32–6	Ballymore	31 000
2000, 17 June	Argentina	W 53–6	Ballymore	18 216
2000, 24 June	Argentina	W 32–25	Bruce Stadium	15 002
2000, 15 July	NZ	L 35–39	Stadium Australia	109 878
2000, 8 July	SA	W 44–23	Colonial Stadium, Melbourne	34 042
2000, 29 July	SA	W 26–6	Stadium Australia	77 048
2001, 4 June	NZ Maoris	W 41–29	SFS	31 056
2001, 30 June	British/Irish Lions	L 13–29	BCG (Gabba)	37 460
2001, 7 July	British/Irish Lions	W 35–14	Colonial Stadium	56 605
2001, 14 July	British/Irish Lions	W 29–23	SFS	84 188
2001, 18 August	SA	D 14–14	Subiaco Oval	42 658
2001, 1 September	NZ	W 29–26	Stadium Australia	90 978
2002, 15 June	NZ Maoris	W 27–23	Subiaco Oval	33 053

Date	Opposition	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
2002, 22 June	France	W 29–17	Colonial Stadium, Melbourne	37 482
2002, 29 June	France	W 31–25	Stadium Australia	64 703
2002, 27 July	SA	W 38–27	BCG (Gabba)	37 250
2002, 3 August	NZ	W 16–14	Telstra Stadium (Stadium Australia)	79 543
2003, 7 June	Ireland	W 45–16	Subiaco Oval	38 787
2003, 14 June	Wales	W 30–10	Telstra Stadium	63 688
2003, 21 June	England	W 25–14	Telstra Dome (Melbourne)	54 868
2003, 26 July	NZ	L 21–50	Telstra Stadium	82 096
2003, 2 August	SA	W 29–9	Suncorp Stadium (Brisbane)	51 188
2003, 10 October	Argentina	W 24–8	Telstra Stadium (RWC pool match)	81 350
2003, 18 October	Romania	W 90–8	Suncorp Stadium (RWC pool match)	48 778
2003, 25 October	Namibia	W 142–0	Adelaide Oval (RWC pool match)	28 196
2003, 1 November	Ireland	W 17–16	Telstra Dome (RWC pool match)	54 206
2003, 8 November	Scotland	W 33–16	Suncorp Stadium (RWC quarter final)	45 412
2003, 15 November	NZ	W 22–10	Telstra Stadium (RWC semi-final)	82 444
2003, 11 November	England	L 17–20	Telstra Stadium (RWC final)	82 957
2004, 13 June	Scotland	W 35–15	Telstra Dome	38 222
2004, 19 June	Scotland	W 34–13	Telstra Stadium	56 143
2004, 26 June	England	W 51–15	Suncorp Stadium	52 492

Date	Opposition	Score	Venue	Crowd Size
2004, 3 July	Pacific Islanders	W 29–14	Adelaide Oval	19 296
2004, 31 July	SA	W 30–26	Subiaco Oval	42 507
2004, 7 August	NZ	W 23–18	Telstra Stadium	83 418
2005, 11 June	Manu Samoa	W 74–7	Telstra Stadium	38 556
2005, 25 June	Italy	W 69–21	Telstra Dome	26 520
2005, 2 July	France	W 37–31	Suncorp Stadium	50 826
2005, 9 July	SA	W 30–12	Telstra Stadium	61 534
2005, 13 August	NZ	L 13–30	Telstra Stadium	82 309
2005, 20 August	SA	L 19–22	Subiaco Oval	43 278
2006, 11 June	England	W 43–8	Telstra Stadium	60 124
2006, 17 June	England	W 34–3	Telstra Dome	41 278
2006, 24 June	Ireland	W 37–15	Subiaco Oval	38 200
2006, 15 July	SA	W 49–0	Suncorp Stadium	45 978
2006, 29 July	NZ	L 9–13	Suncorp Stadium	52 498
2006, 5 August	SA	W 20–18	Telstra Stadium	60 522

Notes:
Total home matches: 71 (85% win rate; Wins=60, Losses=10, Draws=1)
Average tests per year: 7
Average attendance: 48 323

Source: compiled by Dwight Zakus and Peter Horton.

careers'.[58] There are concerns that this 'culture' may not persist if they do not reproduce it and maintain the traditions as custodians of the game and guardians of its culture.

As with all market-based enterprises, not only do employers seek to increase operating revenue through absolute surplus-value increases, but they seek and pressure to increase the relative surplus value (the extra value extracted from each match). Fully capitalist enterprises are not contractually philanthropic. They seek to maximise their revenue and ultimately profits, or at least the funds they allocate to state unions or hold in contingency funds. A key part of this is to reduce input costs. So the cost of producing matches is the key area that relative surplus value is realised. While rugby has the ability to increase absolute surplus value, both this and the ability to increase relative surplus value are curtailed by the CBAs. Again this shows that the players gained much in their venture with WRC and the power they displayed to protect their playing labour. This also posits rugby as an anomaly in normal corporate activities. Being the 'players' game' never had greater saliency.

A further apparent contradiction appears here. The production aspect of rugby has grown. Players are models of professionalism (with certain residual behaviours of the old code) in their preparation and performance. While their productive capacity has grown, so too has the consumption aspect. Certainly the ARU and other unions generate many commercial opportunities to advance their teams. It could best be said that the production/consumption aspect is a relative period of balance. Exchange aspects have grown considerably as the commodity (rugby matches and leagues) attracts more revenues. Likewise, the current distribution of rugby product is in a relative period of balance. Rugby continues in a temporal period of stability, but this will not last. This will provide more major challenges for the players, administrators, managers and governors of the sport.

Support Staff and Infrastructure

The development and expansion of cutting-edge rugby coaching continued with the appointment of Greg Smith, Rod Macqueen, Eddie Jones and current coach John Connolly. Of these appointments it was Macqueen and Jones who professionalised the sport, increased the

technological aspect and gave notice of Australian rugby globally. Macqueen brought business practices to the coaching role. He introduced the idea that the head coach is a manager of an organisational unit with many, many support and specialist staff below him. The coach here must coordinate the unit and human resources to set the best context possible for players. Jones expanded on this role and gave considerably more information to the players to maximise performance.

During this period Australian sport science and sport medicine were further integrated into the sport, thereby increasing the professionalism of the overall code as these practices became part of the grades below the Wallabies. This is part of the constant evolution of such applied knowledge and was central to Australia's successes across the sport world. It adds to the management role of the coach and the need for quality systems, personnel and preparatory camps, not to mention the costs of these arrangements. In a World Cup year the costs rise significantly.

With Australia hosting the Olympics in 2000, a number of new facilities were built and others modernised, even postmodernised. A case in point was the development of Stadium Australia, now named Telstra Stadium. These stadia allowed for massive crowds, including the world record for a rugby audience in 2000. Today, rugby is well served with stadia, including the MCG and Telstra Dome in Melbourne, that have large seating capacities, corporate boxes and amenities that add value to the hosting of matches in these venues. The Queensland Government built Suncorp Stadium in 2002–03, which provided a facility for the 2003 RWC and for future test matches (not to mention other major events).

But not all was happy in the stadium-development area. Since 1989, and with the rise of Super 12 in 1996, Concord Oval was seen as inadequate for the larger audiences expected. Therefore the NSWRU moved Waratahs matches to Sydney Football Stadium (now Aussie Stadium). This led, in 2000, to the Concord Oval facility accruing a debt of $5 million for the NSWRU, which almost caused the financial collapse of the state union. The NSWRU subsequently restructured its finances and, with assistance from the ARU, dealt with the crisis. This also created massive redundancies in the NSWRU.

Supporters and the Media

The sport/media complex continues to be the sustaining element and source of financial growth in rugby. An ARU website was established in 1998 to further the electronic connection with supporters, but also to allow for further commercial and sales activities. However, it is clearly the News Limited contract to televise rugby that permits the unions to pay for administration overheads, organisational infrastructure, specialised staff and their departments, and, most importantly, the flow of funds for the state unions, community programs and development of specialised support staff such as referees, other game officials and sport science/medicine personnel. While the perceived largesse of the monies flowing to players and to the unions is often regarded as excessive, this is a part of doing business.

The fracturing of rugby's culture continues to be an issue. Rugby's administrators and governors have not dealt with the fragmentation of the sport from its old amateur culture into the new corporate, professional culture. Both the players' culture and the business culture need to operate if rugby is to continue to grow, at all levels of play. The old culture of supporters is also under pressure in this new era. Many complain about the loss of feeling surrounding attending games in a large, impersonal, concrete stadium, the cost of such attendance and the corporatising of attendance. The availability of tickets (and players), especially for major international matches such as the Bledisloe Cup and other major events such as the Rugby World Cup, are often out of reach of the average punter, assuming the tickets can even be obtained. Often tickets are doled out to corporate sponsors, allied travel companies and the 'rah rahs' before the true, ongoing supporters get a sniff.

This fracture, however, did not dissipate audiences for rugby. Table 6.7 shows this increase for test audiences in both absolute and relative terms. Much of this has to do with larger venues. It must be noted that corporate boxes and premium seating add to ARU revenues, making the sport an even more attractive entertainment media show. Super 12 and Super 14 also show some increase in audience size, but accompanied by a relative plateau. While test tickets are still hard to come by, recent Super 14 audiences in NSW and Queensland are declining.

On a final note, much is being made of Fox Sports spreading Super 14 across three of its channels. Many rugby fans are unhappy that no coverage is available on free-to-air stations and that they have to buy an additional cable service to see all rugby. This contradiction is considerable despite ABC contracting to show APC matches. Whether this affects audience support for rugby will be seen in the next few years.

Conclusion

The open era of rugby in Australia progressed towards what might be identified as a corporate model following the official change to professionalism in 1995. Rugby, however, was late in becoming a fully professional sport, much later in fact than all other football codes played in Australia. Rugby players were not openly paid for their playing labour, nor were the trappings of professional organisation, management, support staff and legal operations in place until the last half-decade of the twentieth century. While there are many features of corporate sport in this code, there are many older elements that remain or have not progressed fully to that stage. Indeed, a significant characteristic of rugby is that there are residual elements of the kitchen-table and commercial models. This contradiction leaves rugby in confusion at the developmental/club level of production and at the elite level for players, administrators and supporters.

The cultural code that gave strength to and provided the social capital for rugby changed considerably, yet fundamental elements remain. The amateur–recreationalist player remains but only at the lower levels of the sport (although they form the main consumption group), while the elite professional level has moved away from this. The former still, however, supports the latter. One interesting point about this shift is that professional players are required to go through postmodern production systems in their personal preparation to play more rigidly, and many critics would add the style of play that is 'imposed' upon them. Elite players train daily and need to cope with surveillance methods such as skin-fold measurements, breath analysis (as for drink driving) and regimented fitness evaluations, as well as commercial obligations and appearances, and lifestyle monitoring, which all adds to this position. With all this and team rules seeking to

reduce malapropos behaviour on road trips and in day-to-day social activities, the 'workplace' culture for professional players is far from the 'social' and playing culture of the earlier days of the code. This is especially so for the 'booze culture' that is part of the overall rugby culture.

While this situation only directly applies to the 132 contracted players, it sets the standard for age-group representative teams, premier league-level players, and those seeking contracts with the new Australian provincial competition.[59] While this represents the tip of the player-development pyramid, the decline in the 'traditional' culture of rugby seeps downward to levels below the fully professional, resulting in a commingling of old and new cultures. This is especially so for players at development levels seeking to commodify themselves as paid players. For many this mixing is difficult to deal with it. It is in the 'Golden Oldies', social grades (fifth and sixth), sub-districts, and old boys competitions that senior generations of players and those who just want to play socially seek refuge from the tide of professional rugby's commercial culture, where they can be a part of the traditional culture of rugby.

A key corporate issue for rugby in Australia concerns the place of television in its history. This was at the heart of the Super League war between the late Kerry Packer's PBL Australian Rugby League and Rupert Murdoch's News Limited Super League interloper. Both needed quality teams and competitions to make the product viable as television content. The whole mess involved each seeking television content for their rival media outlets; that is, matches to broadcast (and narrowcast). The need to populate two rugby league competitions made rugby players a key target in this cause. Rugby had a long history of players migrating to the 'filthy lucre' of professional contracts in rugby league to earn a living off their skills and abilities. The proponents of WRC had the vision of a professional rugby competition that would be commercialised content for television, but that more importantly would provide rugby players with remuneration that rewarded their ability to produce rugby spectacles. In the end it was the News Limited deal with the existing major southern-hemisphere unions that swung the balance towards the status quo organisations. It was the need for television content that News Limited sought that won the day.

The pay TV market for the SANZAR, Super 14 and Tri-Nations competitions was the 'sugar daddy' that led to the end of the Rugby War and ultimately pushed the IRB to make their decision in 1995. Since this time television has changed the programming of and to a degree the play in rugby. The addition of American-style spectacles, announcing and technology changed the televising of rugby. The television audience expanded regularly throughout the News Limited contracts. Attendances continue to be strong, although they vary depending on the opponent in matches in Australia. Electronic consumption also varies, with websites for the ARU, each state union, Fox Sports, 'Rugby Heaven.com' and 'Scrum.com' permitting information flows and support for fans.

Australian rugby was ahead of other nations in that the players gained a better position in terms of the formation of the RUPA and with the ARU. The Ferrier letter and its conditions put Australian players in a better position than those from South Africa and New Zealand. This was due to the leadership shown by a number of players during the Rugby War, especially those with legal nous. Current RUPA manager Tony Dempsey was a key person among many during these transitional times. Australian rugby players are currently employed under a third version of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. They not only share proceeds from television but also from a wide range of commercial sources. There is a guaranteed minimum salary amount or a percentage of total revenues to share amongst players. It can be said that Australian rugby players garnered a solid professional accord with the governing bodies that must be seen as the best in the world and which other unions seek to model.

The infrastructure for rugby moved to a corporate model in terms of the playing venues and in terms of the support structures for the players and teams. All state clubs and the ARU have playing venues that accommodate good-sized audiences, have some variation in ticketing levels and amenities (such as corporate boxes, premium seating and club rooms), and that are attractive for audiences. At this time only the Western Force shares a venue that is not as conducive to the code, as they share with an Australian football club. The sight lines are longer, but other audience features are present. Following the 2000 Olympic Games and state governments seeking to build sport infrastructure that will accommodate future

mega-sport events, Australian rugby is well serviced with playing facilities.

While this is a good thing for rugby, it does have a downside in terms of the 'feeling' the venues have for the old rugby code. For example, the forced move of the Queensland Reds to Suncorp Stadium (previously Lang Park) from Ballymore leaves many Queensland fans less enthusiastic about matches. The move may well still prove to be financially unsound as the poor performances of the Queensland Reds in the 2007 Super 14 season have contributed to a budget deficit of $1.5 million at the time of writing. Attendances at the very-expensive-to-use Suncorp Stadium have dropped alarmingly as the performances decline; the crowd of 14 443 that witnessed the mauling of the Reds by the Sharks in early 2007 would have done little to enhance this growing financial concern.

Australia leads the world in its infrastructure for players and teams. The overall structure and provision of staff and management for Australian teams is at the cutting edge globally. This dimension of the sport will continue to grow with the innovation and advances made by Australian sport generally. Australian rugby provided the world with many playing innovations in terms of attack and defence, as well as with player preparation and coaches and administrators for major competitions and organisations. For Australian rugby this success is evident with two Rugby World Cup championships won. Player preparation continues to use modernist techniques, while cross-training and other sport science and sport medicine (postmodernist) advances are also employed. This variation in preparation is more a logical extension of the sport science and sport medicine knowledge that is shared widely in the Australian sport system.

The same could be said of the development of match officials and referees. Again, Australia is a world leader in the identification, education and overall development of game officials. This process occurs within the wider global context and is very much a local advance within the global needs of the sport. Thus Australian rugby ensures that quality game officials are not only developed to advance the sport in the country but also seeks to supply global sport competitions with quality officials.

Patterns of buying and consumption are also following a postmodern and corporatist pathway. Fans purchase licensed kitsch

through all types of consumption outlets, while modern electronic shopping for tickets, memorabilia, team-licensed products and a plethora of other goods are also popular. Moreover, further purchase opportunities exist through digital phone and broadband technologies, and they will continue to alter the rugby media and support options. Finally, sponsorship and marketing deals will enable these options to continue to grow and to move beyond the current modalities of free-to-air and pay television.

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Notes

1   Lincoln Allison, *Amateurism in Sport: An Analysis and a Defence*, Frank Cass, London, 2001, pp. 38–9.
2   Ibid., p. 49.
3   Ibid., p. 19.
4   See Alan Guttmann, *A Whole New Ball Game: An Interpretation of American Sports*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1988.
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7   Eric Dunning and Keith Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players: A Sociological Study of the Development of Rugby Football*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1979.
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11   The role of coach as separate to the coaching performed by the captain was accepted almost from the first representative games played in Australia in the 1880s, whereas it was not until the mid-1970s that the role was formally condoned by the RFU in England.
12   Sut Jhally, 'The Spectacle of Accumulation: Material and Cultural Factors in the Evolution of the Sport/Media Complex', *The Insurgent Sociologist*, vol. 10, 1984, p. 9.
13   Derek Wyatt and Colin Herridge, *The Rugby Revolution*, Metro, London, 2003, p. 84.
14   Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R Nice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.
15   Hickie, p. 48.
16   Peter A Horton, 'Football, Identity, Place: The Emergence of Rugby Football in Brisbane', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 23, no. 8, 2006, pp. 1350–2.
17   See Horton, A History of Rugby Union Football in Queensland 1882–1891; and Hickie, pp. 159–83.
18   PA Horton, 'Dominant Ideologies and Their Role in the Establishment of Rugby Union Football in Victorian Brisbane', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1994, pp. 115–28. Rugby football was played in, South Australia and Western Australia from as early as the 1860s, while the first formal rugby rules game in Victoria took place in 1877. However, the popularity and perhaps the accessibility of the Australian

game saw the decline of rugby rules by the end of the nineteenth century, though game was still going strong in Victoria with the Dewar Shield competition being keenly contested until the onset of World War I. Only the Victorian Rugby Union was to effectively surface in the first half of the twentieth century, while the game in the other southern states was to re-emerge after World War II, with Victoria fielding a number of Australian representatives in the late 1940s and early 1960s.

[19] Dunning and Sheard, p. 145.

[20] Hickie, p. 111.

[21] PA Horton, 'Rugby Union Football and its Role in the Socio-Cultural Development of Queensland 1882–1891', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1992, p. 125.

[22] Ibid., p. 590.

[23] John G Mulford, *Guardians of the Game: The History of the New South Wales Rugby Union 1874–2004*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2005, p. 189.

[24] The formation of the national body did not, however, diminish the hegemony that New South Wales had created seventy-five years before and that, in truth, still exists.

[25] S Fagan, *The Rugby Rebellion: The Divide of League and Union*, RL1908, Sydney, 2005, p. 25.

[26] *The Referee*, 14 February 1900.

[27] Fagan, p. 61.

[28] Parsons, p. 9.

[29] Fagan, p. 67.

[30] Mulford.

[31] See Maxwell Howell and Reet Howell, *The Greatest Game Under the Sun: The Story of Rugby League in Queensland*, Leon Bedington, Brisbane, 1989, p. 5. In their excellent overview of the emergence of the rugby codes, the Howells suggest that there were six primary factors that influenced the development of rugby league football in Australia: the lack of compensation by the various rugby unions in the event of injury; the mounting bank balance of the union while it was apparently refusing to improve player conditions; the purchase of Epping Recreation Ground by the union for £15 000 which provided evidence of money in the union coffers and bolstered the argument that the union was facility-oriented, rather than player-oriented; the union's refusal to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses and recompense players for loss of time from work; the reliance of the various Australian unions on the English unions for laws, regulations, definitions of amateurism etc.; the inability of the NSW Rugby Union to introduce modifications which would make the game more attractive to players and spectators.

[32] See Fagan; Howell and Howell, pp. 2–25; G Lester, *The Story of Australian Rugby League*, Lester Townsend Publishing, Paddington, Sydney, 1988.

[33] Maxwell L Howell, Lingyu Xie and Bensley Wilkes, *The Wallabies: A Definitive History of Australian Test Rugby*, GAP Publishing, Norman Park, Qld, 2000.

[34] Mulford, p. 109.

35 Howell, Xie and Wilkes. If we make this comparison to the six years before 1975 (fifteen matches; with three wins, ten losses and two draws for a win rate of 20 per cent) to match the number of years in the 1975–81 period (seventeen matches, with fourteen wins, three losses and one draw for a win rate of 82 per cent), we see that the numbers are even more indicative.

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37 Ibid., p. 35.

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40 Mulford, p. 264.

41 Ibid., pp. 273–4.

42 Ibid., pp. 273–80.

43 I Diehm, *Red, Red, Red: The Story of Queensland Rugby*, Playright Publishing, Sydney, 1997, pp. 153–4.

44 Ibid.

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46 B Dwyer, *Full Time: A Coach's Memoirs*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2004, p. 136; interview with Rod McCall on *Rugby in the 70s*, video recording, ABC, Sydney, 2006.

47 Fitzsimons, pp. 7–8.

48 Braham Dabscheck, 'Paying for Professionalism: Industrial Relations in Australian Rugby Union', The Montague Burton Visiting Professor in Industrial Relations Lecture, Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, Wales, 2002, pp. 1.

49 Dabscheck, p. 9.

50 ARU, *Annual Report*, ARU, Sydney, 1995, p. 7.

51 B Dwyer, p. 148.

52 Ibid. , p. 143–7.

53 ARU, *Annual Report*, 1995, p. 6.

54 ARU, *Annual Report*, ARU, Sydney, 2004, p. 29.

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57 Rob Beamish, 'Sport and the Logic Of Capitalism', in Hart Cantelon and Richard Gruneau (eds), *Sport, Culture, and the Modern State*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1982.

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59 This figure does not include contracted/scholarship players at state rugby academies and the AIS, nor players on GPS scholarships and in Sport Excellence programs (club academies).

Moving Beyond Ethnicity
Soccer's Evolutionary Progress

Braham Dabscheck[1]

Structure Is Everything

A sporting league is a cartel. Whereas the norm of commercial life is to destroy one's competitors and become a monopoly, this is anathema for a sporting league. Sporting contests require the cooperation of competing clubs/teams to produce a product; that is a game or a series of games. In a celebrated article published in 1964, Walter Neale said 'receipts depend upon competition among the ... teams, not upon business competition running the contenders, for the greater the economic collusion and the more the sporting competition, the greater the profits'.[2]

Economic collusion between clubs, or what will be called cartel discipline, is the key to a league's success. For a sport to be able to maintain itself, let alone grow and prosper, it is necessary for those involved in it to have a common purpose, and to contain within its personnel, leadership capable of responding to changed circumstances. Cartel discipline may derive from the dominant personality or charisma of a particular individual[3]; a group of commissioners

with responsibility for determining the strategic and organisational direction of the league[4]; a clique of dominant/rich clubs who, in seeking to enhance their own individual positions, nonetheless find new ways to enhance revenue, which may (or may not) involve funds trickling down to lesser lights in the league[5]; or through a form of sporting democracy between various clubs and other stakeholders which comprise the league.[6]

Alternatively, cartel discipline may be imposed on a league. It may result from the presence and/or activities of a players' association/union, especially one dissatisfied with the league's operation. By equalising power in the labour market, or as economists would say transforming monopsony into bilateral monopoly, a players' association induces the clubs/league to become more rational and disciplined in their decision making.[7] Or it might result from actions by a government which provides funds to the league, or the actions of broadcasters and sponsors who perceive their own success as being linked to the performance and growth of the league.[8]

Soccer or 'world football' as it is now often referred to, has, with a few exceptions, experienced limited success in Australia. It has been regarded as little more than a sporting backwater, with an administrative and organisational structure subject to internal conflict and faction fighting.[9] It has played second fiddle to other football codes, especially in the early 1990s. Claims were made concerning wrongdoings and possible corruption associated with the transfer of players, as highlighted in the 1995 Stewart Report.[10] In 2003 the sport lurched from crisis to crisis in the wake of the demise of the Australian Soccer Federation (ASF).

With two major exceptions, soccer has lacked cartel discipline. The formation and development of the Australian Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) in 1993, especially its increasing activism from 1995 and the adoption of its vision, shaping the future of the game, was an attempt to establish cartel discipline to enhance the commercial success of the code and the associated income and welfare of its members.[11] In 2002, the Australian government commissioned a review into the structure, governance and management of the sport.[12]. In the wash-up that followed the Football Federation of Australia (FFA) was formed to administer the code.[13] Among other things, it created the Kemeny task force to guide it into the future. The

Kemeny Report essentially adopted the PFA's model of cartel discipline,[14] and with the creation of the A-League, which commenced operations in 2005, soccer entered into a new age in Australia.

The Ethnic Roots of Soccer in Australia

Migration and ethnicity is central to an understanding of soccer in Australia. Especially in the period after World War II, successive waves of migrants formed, or coalesced, in ethnic clubs.[15] Most commentators, in examining this phenomenon, have drawn attention to how soccer was one of the orbits in which the migrant/ethnic experience was played out, and how it helped migrants integrate into Australian society.[16] For example, the Hungarian born Les Murray, a long standing and much revered soccer commentator, said:

> [Ethnic clubs] provide a source of recreational comfort for a small community otherwise stressed by its need to work and struggle while in transition from an old life into a new … They are merely agents of transition, easing the pains of migration and facilitating assimilation. Once the migrant gains confidence, masters the language and the local customs, and gains acceptance, which might be through a second generation, he moves on. He leaves the ghetto and enters his new society as an equal.[17]

While soccer may have been a force which aided the transformation of Australia from an Anglo-Celtic to a multicultural society, what has been the impact of migrants/ethnics on soccer? Have they helped or hindered the development of the code in Australia? In particular, what has been their impact on the attainment of cartel discipline?

League and Club Structures

Soccer did not develop according to any master plan, but instead evolved on a piecemeal, ad hoc basis. Enthusiasts in a particular locality or area formed teams and looked for opponents to play. Regional leagues formed in different parts of the continent.

Soccer adopted three design features. The first was the formation of central coordinating or governing bodies in different states

and nationally, designated as either an 'Association' or 'Federation'. Below these central bodies there was a hierarchy of leagues. The leading league in each state was not in charge of its own destiny, and its affairs were subject to the decisions of the central governing body within its state. This had the potential to institutionalise conflict between the association/federation and its leading premier league.

Second, clubs, initially at least, were organised on a district or regional basis. This emulated arrangements adopted in other codes, such as the Victorian Football League (VFL) and the New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL).[18] The rationale for these zonal rules was to give clubs an exclusive right to the services of players in their district and to stamp out the practice of poaching.

The third was a promotion and relegation system, as utilised in European leagues, to determine the movement of clubs between leagues. In saying this, the system was not automatic or universal. Promotion (and relegation) may be denied to clubs because of the desire to maintain regional balance in respective state leagues. Nonetheless, successful clubs from lower leagues had a strong expectation that they would be promoted to higher leagues, replacing poor performing clubs. Clubs with histories of success could find themselves slipping back into the mire if they experienced a particularly bad year on the pitch.

These two latter features–district clubs and promotion and relegation–or this marriage between codes in Australia and European football, were contradictory and would, in due course, become a major source of conflict and instability. New clubs, especially those formed by migrant groups after World War II, did not form according to any formula or rationale determined from above, but grew like Topsy. When they experienced on-field success, they expected, per the promotion and relegation system, to be promoted to their state's premier league. Their entry, however, had the potential to upset the district or regional base upon which leagues were determined.

This situation can be contrasted with other codes. Both Australian football and rugby league formed stand alone or closed leagues in the form of the VFL, established in 1897, and the NSWRL, created in 1908, and both eschewed promotion and relegation. Up until the 1980s, when both codes transformed themselves from city to national based competitions in an attempt to commercialise

opportunities provided by broadcasting, membership of the two leagues was relatively stable.[19] Teams competed against each other year in, year out. Amongst other things, this meant that the best players invariably gravitated to and found themselves playing with clubs in the VFL and NSWRL, further enhancing their stature as the premier leagues in their respective codes.

This, however, did not apply to soccer. New clubs formed, and some were fortunate to possess talented players in their locality and/or attracted them from elsewhere, especially recently arrived immigrants with football skills in their luggage. Rather than new clubs losing their quality players to more established clubs in their state's premier league, they could, via the promotion and relegation system, join the premier league itself.

A negative effect of promotion and relegation should be noted. In 1989, Graham Bradley was commissioned by the ASF to conduct an inquiry and provide recommendations 'to make the administration of Australian soccer more effective in the 1990s'.[20] In examining the operation of the promotion and relegation system in the National Soccer League (NSL), he said it 'has had the effect of teams concentrating their time and resources on their on field performance and neglecting such areas as the development of facilities and their spectator base'.[21]

Migrants and Management

In the latter part of the 1940s Australia embarked on a program of mass immigration. Steady streams of migrants, many of whom came from continental Europe, were attracted to Australia after the ravages of World War II and the problems of post-war reconstruction. As already indicated above, different groups formed and/or mixed together in football clubs. In the 1950s, and continuing into the 1960s, soccer experienced a boom in Australia, a boom which was due to the growth in clubs, players and spectators associated with immigration.[22] This surge of interest placed increasing pressure on the design features of soccer, pressures which were incapable of being managed or controlled. They collapsed in on themselves. This was a period of high levels of conflict and discord, splits and the formation of rival leagues, where a new generation of leaders, many of whom came from the migrant/ethnic clubs, took over responsibility for the code from old style Anglo-Australian administrators.

The dispute began in New South Wales in 1956 when Hakoah won the championship in the Southern Division. The club expected to be promoted to the New South Wales state league, but was rebuffed. Various meetings were held which resulted in the formation of a breakaway league, the New South Wales Soccer Federation, which challenged the hegemony of the New South Wales Soccer Association. Both Phil Mosely and Tony Hughes point out that the rebels combined migrant/ethnic and district clubs which, for different reasons, were unhappy with the autocratic style of the Association's secretary, Bill Orr.[23]

The dispute spread to other states. Bill Murray observed that 'The issues were much the same in each of the Australian states, but the battles were fought with varying degrees of ferocity … the dispute as it was fought out in each of the states amounted to variations on the same theme'.[24] Traditional Anglo-Australian administrators, many of whom were imbued with the amateur ethos, maintained that they made decisions for the good of the code as a whole, not the narrow interests of premier leagues and their more selfish member clubs. In addition, they wanted to preserve their positions of power and authority, maintaining that under their stewardship, the code had prospered and grown. For their part, the rebels, who combined both migrant/ethnic and district clubs, wanted more resources to be devoted to their premier leagues and enhance the professionalism and the development of the sport. They wanted to emulate the experience of soccer in European leagues. Roy Hay said of this period, 'Though presented as a migrant takeover, it was also a response to changes in the game from being a participatory activity to a gate-money spectator sport'.[25] John Kallinikios, in his study of the Victorian dispute, says that the primary goal of the rebels was 'to establish a more modern and professional code … the objective that drove the clubs was the modernisation of the sport'.[26]

These disputes, however, were not just about different development strategies for the code, between an old guard and Young Turks. They had an added, nasty edge. Australia may have wanted migrants after World War II, but it was not until the 1970s that it transformed itself from an Anglo-Celtic society, with numerous enclaves of migrants sprinkled across the continent, to one based more on tenets of multiculturalism and tolerance of difference. In the 1950s and

1960s, migrants were denigrated and dismissed as second class citizens. Dago was a common term of abuse, and mainstream Australians called soccer wogball.[27] Bill Murray, in his examination of the South Australian split, said, 'In the developing rift between those in power and those who wanted a bigger say in power was a belief on the part of the rising forces that they are being subjected to deliberate bias it not outright racism'.[28] Phil Mosely, in commenting on the New South Wales dispute, said, 'The fact was that migrants, flushed with enthusiasm borne from soccer's dominance in their homelands, could never alter things from within. Faced with local enthusiasts, who, intent on their own ideas, controlled the administration by way of numbers, the migrants were forced to secede in order to effect change'.[29]

The rebels eventually succeeded in their campaigns of reform, and the leagues they formed were more popular and successful than those run by the respective associations. The various disputes came to an end when the respective federations took over and/or merged with the associations. In 1963 the ASF formally replaced the Australian Soccer Football Association, founded in 1912, as the code's national governing body.

Consolidation

The growth in the popularity of the sport in these years was mainly associated with migrants, and ethnics, who Bill Murray described as 'lov[ing] the game'[30] and the clubs they created generated increased revenue. These clubs were able to attract better players to their ranks. A small number of quality players, mainly from continental Europe, decided to play in Australia. Despite this increased revenue and enhanced professionalism, players were, nonetheless, employed on a part-time basis. They needed regular secure employment to provide adequate levels of income for themselves and their families. The 1950s and 1960s were decades of sustained economic growth for Australia. Except for a minor recession in the early 1960s, this was a period of full employment; unemployment levels were between 1 per cent and 2 per cent of the workforce. Clubs, especially migrant/ethnic ones, utilised their networks to provide secure employment for players.[31]

This period also witnessed a number of attempts by players to form player associations. Two of these, one in New South Wales in

1959 and a second in Brisbane in 1963, were little more than cries in the wilderness to improve the lot of players. More serious attempts were made in South Australia in 1960, Victoria in 1964 and New South Wales in 1965. The leaders of these various attempts were invariably immigrant players who had formerly played in England or the European continent and had been members of their respective player associations, such as English football's Professional Footballers' Association.[32] Major motivations for the formation of these player organisations were objections to soccer's retain and transfer system (now known as the transfer and compensation system) and resolution of contractual disputes between players and clubs. Interestingly, one of the reasons for the formation of the South Australian body was the objection of Anglo players to the way in which clubs treated migrant and ethnic players. The three latter attempts were defeated by a combination of the inexperience of part-time leaders and the opposition of clubs and respective state Federations.[33]

Migrants and ethnics were an important force which helped in the modernisation and growth of the sport. They were, however, linked to a less savoury aspect which helped to place soccer outside the mainstream of Australian sport and diminish the significance of their associated involvement with the code. In the post-World War II era soccer has been punctuated by on-field violence. Such violence has involved attacks on referees by individual players and outraged supporters of different clubs concerning particular decisions, players attacking each other or being attacked by supporters of an opposing team, to all in brawls or riots between groups of rival supporters. With respect to the latter, Vamplew has commented that 'The homeland loyalties which underlay the ethnic clubs also included hatreds, so often issues other than soccer were at stake'.[34] A football match was a venue for the venting of old scores and felt injustices and a rallying point for those with a common ancestry.

Ethnic Hegemony

The ascendancy of the ASF in 1963 marked the passing of soccer from an amateur to a semi-professional code and the beginning of a forty year period of ethnic hegemony. Phil Mosely observed that 'the game's chief organising bodies were controlled by immigrants and the top echelons of competition were dominated by ethnic clubs'.[35] Tony

Hughes, on the other hand, maintains that the dominance of the ethnic clubs and the demise of the district clubs have been over exaggerated. He found in examining the New South Wales Soccer Federation from 1957 to 1968 that 'a number of district based clubs persisted successfully'. In 1957, seven of the First Division clubs were district based and four were ethnic based. By 1968, there were eight ethnic and four district based clubs. He maintains that a major impact of these forces for change was the exclusion of teams outside the Sydney metropolitan area. The code was converted from a state to a city based competition.[36]

In the early 1960s attendances at games increased markedly. Again focusing on the situation in New South Wales, average attendances, per round, increased from 13,455 in 1960 (with fourteen teams in the league this translates into an average attendance of 1,922 a game) to 20,681 in 1963 (with twelve teams, an average attendance of 3,447). From then on there was a process of stuttering decline. In 1973 they had fallen to 11,932 (with twelve teams, an average of 1,989).[37] In the second half of the 1960s, continuing into the 1970s, the second phase of the migrant/ethnic experience, of assimilation and absorption into the mainstream, as described by Les Murray above, had begun. As a result, ethnic clubs and attendance at games became less important for an increasing number of migrants. Moreover, the First Division of the New South Wales State Federation was not a stable league. In the 1957–68 period , aided and abetted by promotion and relegation, twenty six different clubs competed in the First Division, fifteen of whom were district based clubs. Of the teams who were in the First Division in 1968, only three had competed in every year since 1957. They were three ethnic clubs: Apia, Hakoah and Prague.[38]

Going National

In the mid 1960s there had been an attempt to form a national league. An editorial from the *Soccer World Annual* of 1965 maintained that 'a national league carefully administered, may inject some new blood into a stagnating game by 1967 or 1968'.[39] This attempt was unsuccessful but in 1975, following Australia's participation in the 1974 World Cup in West Germany, a second attempt was made. According to Trevor Thompson, 'The move to a national league … was made in the belief that a concentration of the best players and teams would

lead to a professional set-up funnelling players into the national squad and a place for football in the front ranks of Australian sport'. He also maintains that 'business assessment [of forming a national league] involved a fair bit of guesswork. Smaller clubs were prepared to rely on providence in their keenness to get in on the ground floor'. In addition, he said, 'Although there was plenty of debate about the business sense of the league, belief simply overwhelmed pragmatism even for the biggest clubs'. Thompson quotes Eddie Marsanich of the Marconi club as saying that 'the decision to start a national competition was based on two grounds – falling crowds and huge financial expenditure'. It was about one objective: 'Survival. It was simply a matter of deciding to back the national competition or play as amateurs'.[40] The NSL, it seems, was formed on a wing and a prayer, one that the gods did not look on too kindly.

The NSL commenced operations in 1977 and was sponsored by the Philips company and broadcast by the Ten Network. However, it did not rate well and was dropped by Ten after the first season.[41] The broadcasting rights were eventually picked up by the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) for a nominal fee and, according to Ross Solly, they acquired it 'for a song'.[42] Paradoxically, soccer broadcasting, especially by SBS (which also showed championship games from leading European and other leagues), had had a negative impact on the NSL. According to Roy Hay, 'Television … brought international soccer to Australian homes for the first time, revealing or confirming the gap in standards in the local game and that played overseas'.[43]

The NSL also inherited one important design feature from its state league past: the promotion and relegation system. This, together with the inability of the NSL to attract adequate numbers of spectators and other commercial partners, resulted in a constant turnover of clubs. Forty-one different clubs participated in the league during the twenty eight years of its operation.[44] The NSL also found it difficult to determine when it should operate. In 1977 it began as a winter competition and from 1984 to 86 it operated a two conference system, as used in America. From 1989/1990 it switched to a summer season to escape head to head competition with Australian football and rugby league, and to synchronise with northern European leagues.

Ethnic Cleansing

Phil Mosely, in conducting research on soccer in New South Wales in the period 1880 to 1957, said that 'Ever since serious attempts were made in the 1920s to increase soccer's popularity, administrators began to play down the game's immigrant element. They believed it was soccer's Achilles heel, not because migrant participation was not appreciated, but because they believed it deterred Australians from becoming involved'.[45] Three attempts were made to de-ethnicise the code, following the formation of the NSL. The first was by Sir Arthur George, the resident of the ASF, when the NSL was formed.[46] Graham Bradley in his 1990 report said, 'In the long term the ASF needs to create the image that soccer is Australian not ethnic'. [47] David Hill, who became Soccer Australia's chairman in 1995, also attempted to de-ethnicise clubs.[48] These attempts were all unsuccessful. Such struggles, especially those under the stewardship of David Hill, meant that valuable funds and the time and energy of league and club administrators were lost in branding disputes; resources could have been directed to more worthwhile pursuits.

Migrants and ethnicity placed soccer between a rock and a hard place. Attempts to de-ethnicise the code threatened to alienate its traditional supporters, who had sustained it since the resolution of the 1957-63 split. However, holding onto this base, a base that was forever shrinking reduced its attraction to the mainstream and its ability to grow and become commercially successful. Ethnicity was a nut which different generations of leaders were unable to crack. It was not until the Crawford Report and the new beginning it ushered in that soccer was able to pursue cartel discipline.

Successive waves of immigrants were associated with the formation of new ethnic clubs and/or the takeover of established clubs. In the periods before and after 1963, and prior to the code going national, this seemingly never ending entry, or on rush, of new clubs meant that the respective state leagues were continually experiencing change in their composition. They were unable to settle down. This process did not stop following the formation of the NSL in 1977. Moreover, the support base of ethnic clubs was being eroded as multiculturalism in Australia took hold.

The Shrinking National League

As indicated above, the NSL proved to be an unstable league, and with a declining supporter base and the added costs of competing in a national competition, rather than state or city based ones, clubs found it difficult to balance their books. Financial survival was dependent on diehard supporters and generous benefactors. Moreover, success on the park did not guarantee financial solvency. Sydney City (nee Sydney Hakoah), the most successful club in the first decade of the NSL's operation, pulled out of the competition at the start of the 1987 season because of its inability to spread its appeal more broadly and sustain the costs of running a team in a national competition.[49] Clubs walked a financial tightrope, owing monies to players and creditors. In the final death throes of the NSL an increasing number of clubs were placed into voluntary administration, receivership or liquidation, or went out of business.[50] The PFA reported that by 2006 it had still only recovered $700 000 (for twenty-six players) of the $1 700 000 owed by the Carlton Soccer Club, which folded in 2000.[51]

Problems for Players and Fans

Because of the precarious financial position of the clubs, the income that players could earn from the game was limited. This reduced their ability to play as full-time professionals. As they became older and took on family responsibilities they needed secular employment. In the absence of full time professionalism, players could not hone their skills and provide an enhanced product on the park.. Clubs in difficult financial circumstances sought to shift such costs onto players. They did not honour contracts, provide injury pay and/or meet medical expenses, and imposed arbitrary fines for minor misdemeanours. This bred a strong sense of cynicism in players against both the league and clubs and proved to be a major factor in explaining the strength, support and cohesion of the PFA.[52]

The combination of a promotion and relegation system and the financial insecurity of clubs resulted in an unstable league. It was a moving feast, or more correctly, a lengthy famine. This chopping and changing of the membership of the NSL imposed an additional set of costs on the code. There was the cost of administrators dealing with the exit of old clubs and the entry of new clubs. What criteria should

be applied to determine the entry of new clubs, especially in a nationally based competition? Should a club be admitted on the basis of objective commercial considerations or regional balance? Or again, was acceptance or rejection of new entrants based on networks and politics? To the extent that the latter applied, this may create a longer term dynamic which would compromise future decisions being determined according to objective criteria.

The instability of the NSL's membership flowed into marketing and branding problems. With the continual movement of clubs in and out of the league, the NSL was unable to develop a tradition of competition between long-term rivals. Most people who follow sport do so because of their attachment to a particular team, or their country, not because of an addiction to an aesthetic spectacle.

This situation can be contrasted with other football codes. While Australian football and rugby league experienced problems in transforming themselves from intra-city/state to national competitions in the 1980s and in the case of rugby league, was wracked by a deleterious league war in the mid 1990s their respective competitions contain longstanding clubs with rich histories and traditions. An overwhelming majority of Australian Football League (AFL) clubs were formed in the nineteenth century. The Melbourne and Geelong clubs both came into existence in 1859. In rugby league the situation is somewhat more fluid. Three clubs date their formation back to the creation of the NSWRL in 1908. Two clubs entered the league in the inter-war years, two more in 1947, another two in 1967, and three each in the 1980s and 1990s respectively, with another club commencing operations in 2007.[53] Of the current A-League clubs only two survived from the NSL. Perth Glory entered the NSL in 1999/2000. Its owners abandoned it at the end of the first season of the A-League, with its operations being managed by FFA.[54] Adelaide United competed in the NSL's final season.

Another difference between soccer and the other football codes should be noted. Australia is a leading nation in Australian football and the two rugby codes. This is an incontrovertible statement to make concerning Australian football, since the game is not played professionally anywhere else in the world! The only qualification to this might be the internationals, played under hybrid rules, where an Australian team competes against the Gaelic Athletic Association.[55] A

handful of Gaelic players have pursued careers in the AFL. Rugby league is only played at a high professional level in Australia and Great Britain, and more recently New Zealand. Having said this, New Zealand has only one major professional club–the New Zealand Warriors–which competes in the NRL. A number of New Zealand players are employed by Australian and British clubs. Australia has dominated international rugby league for more than two decades. Rugby union is a major sport in the Six Nations, a European competition, and the Tri-Nations contest involving Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Australia is a leading force in world rugby, having won two of four World Cups, and is possibly the second strongest nation after New Zealand's All Blacks.

While some Australian players in the rugby codes ply their trade in overseas leagues, the two codes have possessed the financial wherewithal to ensure that star players spend the majority of their careers in Australia. Given the similarities between the two codes, the major problem they experience is raids on each other's star players. The high quality of playing personnel in both codes enhances their stature and income-generating potential. Australian football players, other than a few who have become kickers in America's National Football League at the end of their careers, have nowhere else to go.

The European Connection

The most popular and successful leagues in soccer are in Europe. This has produced a double-edged problem for the code in Australia. First, Australian clubs are not in a position to attract leading players from overseas. They cannot compete with the financial clout of clubs in European leagues. Moreover, there is the encumbrance and disincentive of having to pay transfer and compensation fees for such players, as promulgated under the employment rules of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the self appointed governing body of soccer. A transfer fee is payable for a player who moves to a new club during the period of an existing contract, and a compensation fee at the expiry of a contract.[56]

Between the latter part of the 1950s to the early 1960s a number of high quality European players decided to play in Australia. This coincided with the increased popularity of the code in these years. Such relocation was motivated by either the offer of decent incomes

from ethnic clubs hungry for success or because of lifestyle reasons in seeking to establish a more secure future as Europe slowly recovered from the ravages of World War II. The clubs who obtained such players didn't feel the need to pay transfer fees for these players. This resulted in Australia being excluded from FIFA and international competition from April 1960 to July 1963. The eventual payment of a reduced amount on the fees owed secured Australia's re-admittance to FIFA.[57]

Second, talented Australian players who want to test themselves in the best leagues will want to play and/or will be lured to play in Europe. In the early 1990s, Australian youth teams performed well in international competitions and caught the eyes of talent scouts and player agents. Especially following the 1995 decision of the European Court of Justice in *Bosman*[58], which found soccer's compensation system to be inconsistent with Article 48 (revised 39) of the European Treaty, which prohibits restrictions on 'the freedom of movement of workers' in the European Community, an increasing number of players moved to Europe. In 1997 it was estimated that over ninety players played professionally overseas.[59] In March 2004, the then Australian Soccer Association website listed 136 players in overseas leagues.[60] The PFA said that 146 Australians were overseas, with 54 in England.[61] Unlike other football codes, players who would be regarded as being among the most talented of their respective eras have not played in Australia. Moreover, to the extent that Australia has produced talented players, they have opted to play overseas. This has reduced the appeal of soccer to Australian spectators, broadcasters and sponsors.

The Scarce Resource Problem

Criticism has been directed at the competence of those responsible for the stewardship of soccer, whether it is at the ASF, league or club level, which has further exasperated the problems of developing cartel discipline. Those who have had managerial and administrative responsibility at these different levels have not been of the same calibre and stature as those in other football codes. In the AFL, for example, most club presidents come from the top end of town; persons who have had successful business careers, with well developed commercial and other networks. John Elliott, a former president of Carlton, and Eddie McGuire of Collingwood readily spring to mind.[62]

The AFL Commission has had amongst its members Graham Samuel, the current head of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.[63] Moreover, to the extent that the AFL could not work out solutions to problems internally, it has been wealthy enough to purchase advice from consultants.

Returning to soccer, Phil Mosely has said 'The overwhelming pattern of the game has been one of limited resources, epitomised at the grass roots level by kitchen-table management committees'.[64] *Soccer World Annual* was highly critical of the governance of the code in 1965 when it said:

> The administration of soccer left a great deal to be desired. Club control, in most cases, proved to be a resounding failure as the incredible amount of petty jealousies and red tape stifled whatever original ideas might have been produced. In Australia we are still a frighteningly long way away from possessing top administrators with the right qualities, genuine love of the game, ability to plan and execute progressive moves and remaining detached from affiliations.[65]

A quarter of a century later, the Bradley Report of 1990 reached a similar conclusion. It found that the code was organisationally fragmented, that both the ASF and NSL had deficits which made it difficult to market the game. Only one team in the NSL, Marconi, was 'well developed, financially stable with a strong spectator base'. Coaching levels were deficient and most clubs did not have a full-time administrative officer. The report said 'The ASF does not appear to represent soccer, as a whole, in Australia … is believed to have no clearly defined objectives, plans or policy directions' and there 'is seen to be a lack of direction and leadership'. The Executive Committee was 'seen to be ineffective', apparently spending 'much of its time on interstate rivalries and arguments between the ASF and NSL', with decisions appearing 'to be politically based and not in the best interests of Australian soccer'. With respect to the NSL, concerns were raised about, among other things, constant changes to fixture lists, failure to determine firm criteria for the entry and exclusion of clubs, and the poor quality of grounds and stadiums. Moreover, the NSL's executive

was 'seen by most clubs to be ineffective'. Meeting procedures were criticised concerning the lateness and circulation of agendas and discussion papers, meetings not being long enough to discuss various issues, decisions having already been made prior to meetings and the bona fides of those making decisions.[66]

Worse was yet to come. During 1993 and 1994 rumours circulated within the code concerning wrong-doings, if not corruption, associated with the administration of the sport and the operation of the transfer and compensation system. Before proceeding further, it should be noted, that soccer has been tarnished with allegations concerning malfeasance and corruption, from FIFA down to numerous national associations and officials.[67] It was alleged that the coach and assistant coach of the national team, the Socceroos, had acted as agents in the transfer of players to overseas clubs that agents and club officials had received kickbacks for transferred players, and coaches had demanded payments from players and/or their families to ensure their selection in teams.[68]

In June 1994, the ASF appointed Donald Stewart, a former judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and former head of the National Crime Authority, to conduct an inquiry into the code. His report was not published by the ASF because of fears that persons he identified would initiate legal proceedings to protect their reputations. It was subsequently published by the Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts Reference Committee under parliamentary privilege on 10 January 1995.[69]

Mr Stewart was critical of the transfer and compensation system and recommended that domestic fees be abolished by the end of 1996. This was small beer in comparison to the rest of his report. He recommended that certain persons be precluded from holding office within the sport and various procedures be introduced to enhance its administration. He said:

> It would have been ingenuous of me to expect to be able, in the time available, to unravel the web of power and patronage which characterises the administration of soccer in Australia. A complex network of almost Byzantine proportions exists, most especially in the individual clubs, very

much reflecting the nature of the development of the game in this country.[70]

He also said, 'Nothing less than a sea-change will satisfy the critics of the administration of soccer in Australia. It is nothing less than the players, supporters, and officials alike, deserve. It is what I recommend; without it soccer will never reach its full potential in this country'.[71] The ASF was divided and/or did not know how to respond to Mr Stewart's recommendations. Most of the individuals he recommended be precluded from holding office remained in the game.

Dissent and Fragmentation

Following the Stewart Report, the ASF was wracked by internal dissent and conflict; conflict fanned by intractable and worsening financial circumstances, and an inability on how to reach agreement on reforms to enhance the future of the code. Between April 1995 and July 2003 the ASF had six chairmen. Former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett, who at various times became involved in the affairs of the sport, said there is 'More politics in soccer here in Australia than there ever was in my former occupation, and it has had a debilitating effect on the game'.[72] Ian Knop, who was chairman of the ASF from August 2001 to December 2002, stated 'There is no party political system in soccer. The party is the party of convenience that day'.[73] Former New South Wales Premier Nick Greiner, who became president of the ASF for a brief period following entreaties from Ian Knop, said 'the place wasn't even run like a corner store'. He also said, 'To run a board successfully you need to have respect and authority … The truth is the board of Soccer Australia[74] had no respect and authority, no effective authority'.[75]

The political infighting that consumed those with responsibilities for the governance of the code was reflected in low attendance levels, seemingly never ending financial problems and the negotiation of interesting deals with commercial partners. In the period 1989/1990 to 2002/2003, when the code was played in summer, crowds averaged 4,303 per match.[76] In the period 2000/2001 to 2002/2003 NSL clubs incurred aggregate losses in excess of $52 million.[77] In August 1998, the ASF entered into a ten-year broadcasting

deal with Channel Seven. According to Ross Solly it was worth $2.3 million a year. Seven hoped that such a deal would enhance its subscription service C7. Unfortunately for both Seven and the ASF, C7 collapsed. Seven's coverage of NSL games was desultory, confined to graveyard shifts.[78] The ASF, desperate for income, entered into an agreement with sports promoter International Entertainment Corporation (IEC) for the commercial exploitation of its rights. In mid-2002, IEC commenced proceedings before the Federal Court of Australia, claiming that the ASF owed it $3 million, was insolvent and should be wound up. Justice Emmet's decision revealed that the ASF operated at a loss of $1 730 516, liabilities exceeded assets by $2 290 521 and its financial projections were unsatisfactory. Despite this, he enabled the parties to enter into mediation to resolve the dispute.[79] According to Ross Solly, IEC agreed to a settlement of $2.2 million.[80]

Player Power

In April 1993 the players of the NSL decided to form a players' association.[81] This was to have major implications for soccer. Besides pushing for improved employment rights and benefits for members, the PFA developed a comprehensive plan which attempted to establish cartel discipline to enhance the growth and development of the sport. The minutes of its inaugural meeting state that the PFA was formed to counter problems players encountered under the transfer and compensation system and the harsh treatment they received from clubs. The minutes state 'that a major problem with soccer was its perceived total lack of professionalism and that it was regarded as a "joke" by many other professional sporting bodies. With this in mind, such an association must be encouraged to work for the good of the game'.[82] In September 1993 the PFA merged with the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance as an autonomous branch. They parted company in 1998, after the Alliance decided to rationalise its operation due to financial reasons.

In the early years of its operation, the PFA sought to improve wages and working conditions for players of the NSL and the Socceroos by negotiating collective bargaining agreements. After initiating action before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in 1995, the PFA negotiated a comprehensive collective bargaining deal with Soccer Australia for NSL players.[83] The agreement codified

players' terms and conditions of employment. For example, it included a grievance procedure which reduced the ability of clubs to make arbitrary decisions concerning the employment and remuneration of players.

The agreement contained two particular provisions which enhanced the economic rights of players. First, players who did not receive an offer of employment from their current club thirty days prior to the expiration of their contract, on 'terms and conditions no less favourable than their previous contract', automatically became free agents. Second, players aged twenty-six, or who had played six seasons with the same club, automatically became free agents.[84] The former clause models developments in soccer in England, after *Eastham*[85] found England's transfer and compensation system to be an unreasonable restraint of trade. The latter clause emulates developments in American baseball following the abolition of its reserve/option clause–akin to soccer's transfer and compensation system–in 1975.[86]

A second agreement was entered into in 1999. It established a minimum wage for full-time players, which was linked to the minimum adult wage determined by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.[87] This second agreement was thrice extended for an extra year. The third extension followed proceedings initiated by the PFA before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.[88] In 1996 the average income of players was $20 000. By 2001 it had increased to $43 000; slightly less than that of annual average full-time adult earnings.[89]

In 1997, threatened strike action in FIFA's Confederations Cup in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia resulted in the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement which substantially increased payments to the Socceroos.[90] A second round of deals for the Socceroos was completed in 2001.[91]

While the PFA experienced success in negotiating collective bargaining deals, it was frustrated in its drive to increase the incomes of its members because of the inability of the code to grow. In the absence of what it regarded as leadership from the ASF, the PFA increasingly turned its mind to playing a more active role in reforming and enhancing the financial viability of the code. In July 1997, the PFA developed a five year strategic plan where it said that it needed 'to become a permanent facilitator in the game's expansion. For without

that expansion, the Australian game will only continue to provide inadequate career opportunities for Australian players'.[92]

The PFA adopted a new three year strategic plan in July 2000. It contained a vision statement 'shaping the future of the game'. The plan said, 'Our vision recognises that we must now play a major role in assisting the growth and development of the game so that, in turn, the game can reward and protect our membership'. It also said, 'the PFA must be seen as a provider of solutions to the challenges facing the game … For our vision to be realised our members must own it'.[93]

In December 2000 the PFA obtained the rights to the name the Australian Premier League (APL). In October 2001 it created PFA Management Limited to explore commercial opportunities for the sport. Brendan Schwab, the PFA's leader, said 'the PFA was making its ground-breaking move after years of frustration at numerous false starts and stalled reforms that have foundered on the rocks of bureaucratic self-interest, uninformed opinion and political infighting'. He added:

> With the establishment of PFA management we are simply taking responsibility for the game's failure to produce a comprehensive strategic plan over many years. The failure has seen the game under-valued in a commercial sense at great cost to the players, clubs and fans … we are not going to allow the national league to dither any more than it already has.[94]

PFA Management Limited conducted market research and consulted commercial experts in developing a new model for the code. In December 2003 it released a document entitled the 'Australian Premier League'. It advocated the creation of a new ten team competition to be run by an independent commission. It sought to raise $10 million in capital to start the new league, with clubs required to contribute $750 000 each as shareholders, highlighted the importance of commercial partners and setting targets for attendance and growth.[95]

The Government Intervenes

In mid-2002, as PFA Management Limited was undertaking its research, Ian Knop, chairman of the ASF, entered into discussions

with the Australian government concerning the parlous condition of the code. Senator Rod Kemp, the Minister for the Arts and Sport, announced in August 2002 the appointment of a review committee, to be headed by insolvency expert David Crawford. The committee was 'to examine the structure, management and governance of soccer in Australia' and 'to make recommendations for restructuring and improvement'.[96]

The Crawford Report, presented on 7 April 2003, 'concluded that the current structure of soccer is ineffective, does not work and needs changing'. It recommended that the current board be replaced with an interim board, comprising persons 'who are independent without any conflict of interest and who collectively bring a suitable blend of skills in management, administration and finance, and a knowledge of, and a desire to work in the interests of soccer for the future'.[97] Frank Lowy, who had helped establish the NSL in 1977 and been a mainstay of Sydney City before pulling it out of the league a decade later, would head an interim board. After some initial resistance from incumbent board members, Lowy's team took over responsibility for the code in July 2003.[98] The ASF was wound up and replaced by a new body which (eventually) adopted the title Football Federation Australia (FFA). It received a $15 million rescue package from the Australian government to aid it in its recovery.[99]

Following the Crawford Report, FFA created a task force to inquire into the structure of a new league. It took on board various recommendations of the Crawford Report and ideas developed in PFA Management Limited's APL model. The proposal concerning a suitably capitalised league with financial contributions from clubs was endorsed. The NSL ceased operations at the end of the 2003/2004 season.[100]

A New National League

FFA settled on an eight-team competition known as the A-League, which commenced operations in late 2005. The clubs were based in the capital cities of the mainland states, plus Newcastle, the New South Wales central coast and Auckland, New Zealand. FFA obtained a broadcasting deal with Fox Sports for $750 000 a year for three years and sponsorship income of $12 million in the first year of its operation.[101]

By the standards of the past, the A-League enjoyed a successful first season. Attendances for the twenty-one home-and-away games (teams played each other three times) averaged 10,955. With the inclusion of the final series this figure increased to 11,627, with total gates for the season equal to 1,046,459.[102] Despite this, however, it was estimated that the accumulated losses of the clubs in this inaugural season amounted to $16 million, with Sydney Football Club (Sydney FC) having lost $6 million.[103] Frank Lowy, the FFA chairman, bailed out Sydney FC by taking out a majority shareholding, which in turn has raised the spectre of a conflict of interest[104], which was criticised in the Crawford Report. In addition, there appear to be three weak strands in the A-League. Reference has already been made to the problem of Perth Glory lacking an owner and being managed by FFA. Concerns have been expressed about the administrative acumen of the Newcastle Jets.[105] More worrying, however, is the plight of the New Zealand Knights. In the A-League's first season, average home crowds were equal to 3,909. Partway into the second season they have fallen to 3,581.[106]

Two other developments have aided the cause of soccer and FFA. First, Australia qualified for the 2006 World Cup, held in Germany, for only the second time in its history. It performed relatively well, qualifying for the second round and being beaten by Italy, the eventual champions. FFA received approximately $9.3 million from FIFA for its participation in the World Cup.[107] Second, in January 2006 Australia moved to the Asian Football Confederation from the Oceania Football Confederation.[108] The advantage of this is that the Socceroos (and clubs for confederation and other club competitions) will be in a larger and more competitive confederation, which will provide more chances for games and income generation.

These two factors, together with the success of the first season of the A-League, resulted in increased interest in the code from the commercial world. Fox Sports and FFA entered into a new broadcasting deal, worth more than $120 million over the next seven years. A-League clubs will receive an annual grant of $1.25 million from FFA.[109]

FFA and the PFA negotiated a collective bargaining agreement for the Socceroos whereby players received 30 per cent of player generated revenue from commercial income, after deducting

agreed costs, and 30 per cent of prize money for participating in the Confederations Cup and the World Cup.[110] Under the agreement, the Socceroos each received approximately $220,000.[111] A similar agreement was not completed for the A-League, although FFA imposed a set of employment rules onto players. The most important are player squads of twenty per club, a minimum salary of $30,000 for a full-time player and a salary cap of $1.5 million, increasing by $100,000 a year for the next four seasons. Each club is allowed to employ one marquee player outside the salary cap.[112] It was rumoured that Dwight Yorke, who played with Sydney FC during the 2005/2006 season, received $900 000, plus accommodation and other sundry benefits. A handful of Socceroos who have mainly played in European leagues have, via the marquee player rule, opted to play out the final years of their careers in the A-League.

More or Less Discipline?

Soccer in Australia has traditionally been regarded as the game of migrants and ethnics. Phil Mosely and Bill Murray have said that '[t]his dominance of immigrants has been soccer's blessing and its curse: without the migrants it would lose most of its following, but with them it is dismissed as un-Australian'.[113] Migrants helped bless the code during the 1950s and early 1960s by playing a major role in transforming it from an amateur to a semi-professional sport. Having achieved this, the blessing turned into a curse. Multiculturalism and the melting plot that is Australia reduced the commercial appeal and attractiveness of clubs.

Soccer became a sporting backwater in Australia at this time, and the move to a national league in 1977 was based more on hope than any serious economic and business analysis. Despite the hard work and good intentions of several generations of administrators, they were unable to develop a successful league. For more than a decade and a half, before the eventual collapse of the NSL, the sport was dominated by internal politics and faction fighting. The combination of clubs in dire financial straits, the lack of ability of club and league administrators and a promotion and relegation system combined to produce an inherently unstable league. Like the state leagues before it, the NSL was never able to settle down and develop clubs with rich traditions, and a large supporter base, as

occurred in other sports in Australia. The fluid and fragmented nature of the code, where administrators have long been at logger-heads with each other, has prevented soccer from developing cartel discipline.

This was something that irritated the PFA, since it linked the welfare of its members to the economic growth and survival of the sport. Having reached the conclusion that there was no one within the code able to initiate needed reforms; it formed PFA Management Limited and developed its Australian Premier League model. This in turn prompted Ian Knop to seek help from the Australian government. It commissioned David Crawford to conduct an investigation into the governance of the sport, which, in turn, resulted in the demise of the old guard and the creation of FFA and the A-League. If Knop had not started this process, the PFA would have pressed ahead with its desire to establish a new league. Bill Murray commented that soccer in Australia is 'now under a business consortium free from any ethnic ties or distractions about claiming to love the game'.[114]

FFA and the A-League have so far experienced significant success. Australia has entered the Asian Football Confederation and the exploits of the Socceroos during the World Cup in 2006 generated renewed interest in the code. The inaugural season of the A-League attracted healthy crowds and there has been increased interest from the corporate sector and the negotiation of a more generous broadcasting contract. On the other hand, three of the A-League clubs are experiencing problems, and FFA, apart from negotiating a collective agreement with the Socceroos, has turned its back on the PFA; much to the latter's chagrin. Australian football, cricket and rugby union have all prospered over the last decade following the negotiation of high-trust relationships with their respective player associations.[115] Time will tell whether or not the parties will, or will not, reach a modus operandi. But this and the other problems mentioned above are the stuff of a sporting league resolving the problems of cartel discipline.

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Notes

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[2] Walter C Neale, 'The Peculiar Economics of Professional Sports: A Contribution to the Theory of the Firm in Sporting and in Market Competition', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. LXXVIII, 1964, p.2.

[3] In 1920 American baseball appointed a 'Commissioner' to run the sport. With the passage of time, however, commissioners have held their position at the pleasure of the owners of clubs, who appointment them. See Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Golden Age*, Oxford University Press, New York, ; John Helyar, *Lords of the Realm: The Real History of Baseball*, Ballantine Books, New York, ; and Jerome Holtzman, *The Commissioners: Baseball's Midlife Crisis*, Total Sports, New York, 1998.

[4] In the 1980s, the Victorian Football League established a Commission to run its affairs. In the mid-1990s, the now named Australian Football League enhanced the Commission's powers. See VFL Task Force, *Final Report* (The Mandie Report), VFL, Melbourne, June 1985; Crawford,, D. A., AFL Administrative Structure Review-Findings, March 1993; Garry Linnell, *FOOTBALL LTD, The Inside Story of the AFL*, Ironbark Press, Sydney; Dave Nadel, 'Colour, Corporations and Commissions, 1976–1985', in R Hess and B Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: The Real Story of Australian football*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 200–24; and Dave Nadel, 'The League Goes National, 1986–1997', in R Hess and B Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: The Real Story of Australian football*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 225–55.

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6   This may be nothing more than a theoretical construct.

7   American sports provide the best examples of where strong player associations and the growth of the sport go hand in hand. See Paul D Staudohar, *Playing for Dollars: Labor Relations and the Sports Business*, ILR Press, Ithaca, NY, 1996: and Zimbalist. Australian football, cricket and rugby union would constitute Australian examples of the same phenomenon. See Braham Dabscheck, 'Industrial Relations in Australasian Professional Team Sports', *The Otemon Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 30, 2005, pp. 3–22.

8   Rugby union in Australia (and New Zealand and South Africa) turned professional in 1995 to satisfy the broadcasting needs of Rupert Murdoch's News Limited. See Peter Fitzsimmons, *The Rugby War*, HarperCollins, Sydney, 1996. Arguably, Kerry Packer's Nine Network was a major source of cartel discipline in rugby league. This came unstuck, however, in the mid-1990s with the Super League war, when News Limited sought to take over the game to fill space on its broadcasting network. See Mike Colman, *Super League: The Inside Story*, Ironbark Press, Sydney, 1996.

9   See Roy Hay, '"Our Wicked Foreign Game": Why has Association Football (Soccer) not become the Main Code of Football in Australia?', *Soccer and Society*, vol. 7, 2006, pp. 165–86. Historical information on soccer in Australia can be found in Philip A Mosely, A Social History of Soccer in New South Wales, 1880–1957, PhD, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1987: Philip A Mosely, 'Soccer', in Wray Vamplew, Katherine Moore, John O'Hara, Richard Cashman and Ian F Jobling (eds), *The Oxford Companion To Australian Sport*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, pp. 316–23; Philip Mosely and Bill Murray, 'Soccer', in Wray Vamplew and Brian Stoddart (eds), *Sport in Australia: A Social History*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 213–30; Michael Cockerill, *Australian Soccer's Long Road to the Top*, Lothian Books, Melbourne, 1998; Trevor Thompson, *One Fantastic Goal: A Complete History of Football in Australia*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2006; Ross Solly, *Shoot Out: The Passion and the Politics of Soccer's Fight for Survival in Australia*, John Wiley and Sons, Brisbane, 2004; and Bill Murray and Roy Hay (eds), *The World Game Downunder*, ASSH Studies in Sports History No. 19, Australian Society for Sports History, Melbourne, 2006. The latter contains a bibliography on soccer in Australia.

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11   It was originally called the Australian Soccer Players' Association. The name change occurred on 1 June 1999. For details concerning its history see Braham Dabscheck 'Early Attempts at Forming Soccer Player Unions in Australia', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 10, 1994, pp. 25–40; Dabscheck, 'Assaults on Soccer's Compensation System: Europe and Australia Compared', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 13, 1996, pp. 81–107; Dabscheck, 'Australian Soccer's Freedom of Association Dispute', *Sporting Traditions*,

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12   Crawford, David, *Report of the Independent Soccer Review Committee into the Structure, Governance and Management of Soccer in Australia* (Crawford Report), Australian Sports Commission, Canberra, April 2003.

13   Its initial title was the Australian Soccer Association.

14   NSL Task Force, *Report of the NSL Task Force into the Structure of a New National Soccer League Competition* (Kemeny Report), Australian Soccer Association, Sydney, December 2003.

15   Ethnic here means European, non-British immigrants.

16   See John O'Hara (ed.), *Ethnicity and Soccer in Australia*, ASSH Studies in Sports History No. 10, Australian Society for Sports History, Sydney, 1994; Philip A Mosely, *Ethnic Involvement in Australian Soccer: A History, 1950–1990*, National Sports Centre, Australian Sports Commission, Canberra, 1995 Philip A Mosely, Richard Cashman, John O'Hara and Hilary Weatherburn (eds), *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, Walla Walla Press, Sydney, 1997; ; John A Hughson, A Feel for the Game: An Ethnographic Study of Soccer Support and Identity, PhD, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 1996; Roy Hay, 'Croatia: Community, Conflict and Culture: The Role of Soccer Clubs in Migrant Identity', in Michael Cronin and David Myall (eds), *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity and Assimilation*, Frank Cass, London, 1998, pp. 49–66; Roy Hay, 'Oral History, Migration and Soccer in Australia, 1880–2000', in A James Hammerton and Eric Richards (eds), *Speaking to Immigrants: Oral Testimony and the History of Australian Migration, Visible Immigrants*, History Program and Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, 2002, pp. 39–61; Steve Georgakis, Greek Sporting Traditions in Australia: An Historical Study of Ethnicity, Gender and Youth, PhD, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1999 and Georgakis, *Sport and the Australian Greek: The Historical study of Ethnicity, Gender and Youth*, Standard Publishing House, Sydney, 2000; AT Hughes, The Rise and Fall of Hakoah Soccer Football Club: A Case Study of Sport and Identity in Sydney's Jewish Community, 1923–1987, PhD, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2003; and John Kallinikios, Sporting Realities and Social Meanings: The Transformation and Representation of Soccer in Victoria, 1945–1963, PhD, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 2004,. and Kallinikios, *Soccer Boom: The Transformation of Victorian Soccer Culture 1945-1963*, Walla Walla Press, Sydney (forthcoming).

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19 For details see Booth, p. 17; and Heads.

20 Graham Bradley, *Report to the Australian Soccer Federation on the Structure and Organisation of Australian Soccer* (The Bradley Report), Australian Soccer Federation, Sydney, 18 May 1990, p. 1.

21 Ibid., p. 31.

22 For example, see Kallinikios,

23 See Philip A Mosely, A Social History of Soccer in New South Wales, pp. 330–7; and Hughes, pp. 165–8. A similar point is made by Roy Hay in his account of the split in Victoria: 'Marmaras' Oyster or Seamonds' Baby: The Formation of the Victorian Soccer Federation, 1959–64', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 10, 1994, pp. 3–24.

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25 Roy Hay, 'The Origins of the Australian National Soccer League', in Bill Murray and Roy Hay (eds), *The World Game Downunder*, p. 118.

26 Kallinikios, *Soccer Boom*, ch. 6.

27 It was a term of abuse that the Australian-born Johnny Warren, who captained the national side and had a long and distinguished career as a media commentator where he championed the world game, never forgot or forgave. See Johnny Warren, with Andy Harper and Josh Whittington, *Sheilas, Wogs and Poofters: An Incomplete Biography of Johnny Warren and Soccer in Australia*, Random House Australia, Sydney, 2002.

28 Murray, p. 97.

29 Mosely, A Social History of Soccer in New South Wales, p. 346.

30 Murray, p. 93.

31 See Hay, 'Croatia'.

32 For details of the history of the Professional Footballers' Association, see Braham Dabscheck, '"Defensive Manchester": A History of the Professional Footballers' Association', in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan, *Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting Traditions*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1979, pp. 227–57; Dabscheck, 'Beating the Off-Side Trap: The Case of the Professional Footballers' Association', *Industrial Relations Journal*, vol. 17, 1986, pp. 350–6; Dabscheck, '"A Man or a Puppet?": The Football Association's Attempt to Destroy the Association Football Players' Union', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 8, 1991, pp. 221–38; and John Harding, *For the Good of the Game: The*

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33 See Dabscheck, 'Early Attempts at Forming Soccer Player Unions in Australia'. An association operated in Western Australia from 1976 to the late 1980s.

34 Wray Vamplew, 'Violence in Australian Soccer: The Ethnic Contribution', in John O'Hara (ed.), *Ethnicity and Soccer in Australia*, ASSH Studies in Sports History No. 10, Australian Society for Sports History, Sydney, 1994, pp. 1–15. Also see the other chapters contained in O'Hara for further discussion of these issues.

35 Philip A Mosely, 'Soccer', in Philip A Mosely, Richard Cashman, John O'Hara, and Hilary Weatherburn (eds), *Sporting Immigrants: Sport and Ethnicity in Australia*, p. 155.

36 Hughes, pp. 161–2, 187, 189.

37 Mosely, 'Soccer', 1997, p. 158.

38 Hughes, p. 189.

39 Ibid., p. 202.

40 Thompson, pp. 106, 109, 257. Hughes, p.203, reproduces a similar quote from Frank Lowy of Hakoah. Also see Hay, 'The Origins of the Australian National Soccer League'.

41 Les Murray, p. 135. Murray provides useful information on the code's relationship with broadcasters.

42 Solly, p. 38.

43 Hay, 'The Origins of the Australian National Soccer League', pp. 119–20.

44 See Thompson, pp. 277–302.

45 A Social History of Soccer in New South Wales, p. 324.

46 Hughes, pp. 203–4.

47 Bradley, p. 44.

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50 Brendan Schwab, Affidavit to Australian Industrial Relations Commission re *Australian Professional Footballers' Association v Adelaide Juventus Sports and Social Club*, 28 July 2003..

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53 For details of the membership of the clubs in the two leagues, see the websites for the AFL (http://afl.com.au) and the NRL (http://www.nrl.com).

54 Michael Cockerill, 'FFA won't Give Up on Fading Glory', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 2006, p. 36.

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60   Dabscheck, 'Unions and the Embrace of Partnership', p. 107.

61   PFA, private communication, 11 September 2006.

62   See John Elliott, *Big Jack: My Sporting Life*, Schwartz Publishing, Melbourne, 2003.

63   For details concerning past and current members of the AFL Commission, see the AFL website: http://afl.com.au/default.asp?pg=aflinfosheets&spg=display&articleid=240737. Also see Linnell.

64   Mosely, 'Soccer', 1992, p. 321. Also see Roy Hay, 'British Football, Wogball or the World Game? Towards a Social History of Victorian Soccer', in John O'Hara (ed.), *Ethnicity and Soccer in Australia*, ASSH Studies in Sports History No. 10, Australian Society for Sports History, Sydney, 1994, p. 65.

65   Quoted in Hughes, p. 186.

66   Bradley, pp. 5, 25, 34, 45, 49, 53. Adverse findings re the ASF and NSL are contained in an appendix which does not have page numbers.

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71   Ibid., p. iii.

72   Quoted in Solly, p. 169.

73 Quoted in Ibid., p. 199.

74 The ASF often referred to itself as Soccer Australia.

75 Quoted in Solly, pp. 181, 207.

76 Kemeny Report, p. 16. In the thirteen years played in winter, average crowd attendances were 3,229.

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8

Around the Grounds
A Comparative Analysis of Football in Australia

Robert D Macdonald and Ross Booth[1]

Introduction

The past two decades represent an unprecedented era of reform, a time of significant competition restructuring and corporate reorganisation in all four codes. As rugby league transformed from the New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL) to the National Rugby League (NRL), Super League begat South Africa-New Zealand-Australia Rugby (SANZAR), leading to competing visions of tri-nations rugby. Meanwhile, competing versions of football are now offered by the Australian Football League (AFL) and the A-League. The sports fan of the 1980s would barely recognise football in 2007.

This chapter addresses these reforms by surveying change in governance, regulatory, and competition structures, revenue, player salaries, attendance, participation, media exposure, competitive balance and national-team performance in each football code. The specific focus is the corporate era comprising the 1990s and early years of the twenty-first century, when both crisis and deliberate strategy prompted reform of the governance structures and national competitions in each code.

In his study of the US major leagues, Eric Leifer noted that competition managers seek to create competitive balance so that team performance has no adverse consequences for team survival. Competitive balance allows competition managers to sustain fan interest in upcoming competition, while simultaneously allowing them to celebrate past victories and associated history and traditions.[2] However, the creation of business conditions where poor on-field performances do not destroy the ongoing viability of the club or competition at large, requires more than just the imposition of cartel discipline upon the members of a national league and/or national sporting organisation (NSO).[3] It also requires a business model which nurtures a viable base of elite athletes, recreational participants and fans, while accommodating the interests of commercial partners (especially broadcasters and sponsors) and other stakeholders. Even though the governance and competition structures of the national leagues share sufficient similarities to represent an 'Australian model' of professional team sport, the underlying legal structures are unique and reflect the different histories and challenges facing each code.

The AFL, which as a company is both the 'keeper of the code' and the manager of the national competition,[4] has best handled the challenges of the corporate era. Rugby league was highly popular before the Super League war and the NRL has enjoyed record attendance in recent seasons, but it cannot match the widespread popularity or financial strength of the AFL. Rugby union in Australia has benefited from the advent of professionalism, the Wallaby 1999 International Rugby Board (IRB) Rugby World Cup victory and hosting the 2003 World Cup, yet it still ranks as the least popular of the football codes. Most recently, soccer gained mainstream acceptance courtesy of the Socceroos' participation in the 2006 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup and the launch of the A-League. But recent interest and high participation rates are yet to be converted into financial strength or free-to-air television coverage comparable to that of Australian football or rugby league. Australian football is the healthiest football code, and in most aspects of the sports business, the AFL is the industry leader.

Organisation—Governance and Competition Structures

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development defines 'corporate governance' as concerning the 'set of relationships between a company's management, its board, its shareholders and other stakeholders [and] … the structure through which the objectives of the company are set, and the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance are determined'.[5] In the wake of major corporate collapses, (good) corporate governance—including design and implementation of both formal structures and decision-making and monitoring practices—has become a near 'mantra' of modern business practice.[6] The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and international sports federations have similarly recognised effective 'corporate governance' and/or 'sport governance' structures and practices as the necessary foundation for solid financial and on-field performance.[7]

The 1993 reforms to the AFL Commission mark the first of many such NSO restructurings in the corporate era of football. Since then, the forces of change have transformed each code. The national governance and competition structures that have emerged share certain characteristics which represent an 'Australian model' of professional team sport. Individual sports and national leagues–in all the football codes, cricket, basketball, netball and other sports–do not exhibit all of these characteristics, but a majority of sports exhibit a majority of these features, suggesting a distinctly Australian approach to professional team sport which is more than just an amalgam of features borrowed from the European or US models of professional sport.[8] The characteristics of the Australian model are:

(a) the national league competition organiser is the NSO or part-owned by the NSO and is a company limited by guarantee[9]
(b) the strategic direction of the national league competition organiser is set by an independent 'commission' or board of directors
(c) the national league is a 'closed league' with a fixed number of teams and no promotion/relegation system
(d) minimal team relocation, with competition expansion via the sale or granting of expansion franchises/licences
(e) the national league has a competition format where teams play in a home-and-away season of matches, followed by a finals

series for the best performed teams with a tournament format providing a double-chance for those clubs ranked atop the league ladder after the home-and-away season

(f)   the interests of the national representative team are superordinate to the interests of the national league

(g)   the national league teams (whether fielded by privately owned sporting clubs, member-based sporting clubs or State Sporting Associations (SSOs)) have the primary objective of on-field success–win maximisation–subject to budgetary constraints, rather than profit maximisation

(h)   collective bargaining between competition organisers and player associations over the terms and conditions of player employment and the system of labour market regulation, so as to avoid restraint of trade problems

(i)   salary caps on club player salary expenditure

(j)   collective sale of national broadcasting rights and many intellectual property/merchandising rights

(k)   equal sharing of centrally collected revenue between clubs, and additional grants to clubs in need of special financial assistance

(l)   financing, or cross-subsidisation, of NSO development and participation programs by revenue generated with the national league

(m)   extensive government funding of facilities, stadiums and junior talent identification and development programs.

Australian Football

The Victorian Football League (VFL) was renamed the Australian Football League in 1990 to reflect the growing spread of clubs around the nation. This rebranding followed a series of decisions beginning with the relocation of the South Melbourne Football Club (FC) to Sydney in the early 1980s – the first change to the twelve-club VFL since 1925. The findings of at least seven reports into the financial viability and future direction of the VFL between 1983 and 1985 prompted further growth.[10] The VFL/AFL subsequently sold five new club licences and expanded the competition into south-east Queensland and Perth with the admission of the Brisbane Bears and West Coast Eagles in 1987, and into South Australia with the 1991 admission of the Adelaide FC. Entry of the Fremantle (1995) and Port

Adelaide (1997) clubs and the creation of the Brisbane Lions prior to the 1997 season (when the Brisbane Bears merged with the insolvent Fitzroy FC), has seen the league remain steady at sixteen clubs since 1995. The composition of the league has not changed in the past decade (see Table 8.1).[11]

Table 8.1: VFL/AFL Clubs, 1897–2006

Club	Seasons in Competition	Premierships
Adelaide	1991–2006	2
Brisbane Bears / Brisbane Lions	1987–2006	3
Carlton	1897–2006	16
Collingwood	1897–2006	14
Essendon	1897–2006	16
Fitzroy	1897–1996	8
Footscray / Western Bulldogs	1925–2006	1
Fremantle	1995–2006	–
Geelong	1897–2006	6
Hawthorn	1925–2006	9
Melbourne	1897–2006	12
North Melbourne / Kangaroos	1925–2006	4
Port Adelaide	1997–2006	1
Richmond	1908–2006	10
South Melbourne / Sydney Swans	1897–2006	4
St Kilda	1897–2006	1
University	1908–1914	–
West Coast Eagles	1987–2006	3

Note: VFL: 1897–1989; AFL: 1990–2006.

Source: Lovett, Michael (ed.), *AFL Record Guide to Season 2007*, AFL Publishing, Melbourne, 2007.

The VFL was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in 1929 and traditionally operated under a delegate system. Each league club, as the 'members' of the company, nominated an equal number of delegates, later known as directors, who collectively formed the board of directors – the ultimate decision-making body of the League.

The VFL president was chosen by those directors and the secretary/general manager worked under the direction of the president and club board of directors. By the 1980s, the delegate model had become unsuited to the contemporary demands of managing the VFL as a business. It was also susceptible to exploitation by coalitions of clubs seeking to protect individual interests at the expense of the wider common good.

Following several internal and commissioned reports, governance reform commenced in 1984. The VFL Commission was instituted as an independent body to implement strategies in the furtherance of the policies determined by the board of directors. The original VFL Commission included one full-time commissioner (effectively the chief executive officer (CEO)) and four part-time commissioners, though the clubs–via the board of directors–retained ultimate decision-making power and the capacity to set policy until 1993.

David Crawford's 1993 review of the AFL's structure was to usher in further governance reforms.[12] Following Crawford's report, the AFL clubs voted to abolish the club board of directors in order to transfer the bulk of decision-making authority to the AFL Commission – an independent board of between six and nine individuals, including the AFL CEO and any other executive commissioners who are appointed by the Commission.[13] The AFL clubs retain the right to appoint the non-executive commissioners.[14] The AFL clubs may also overturn a Commission decision to admit, relocate or merge AFL clubs with a two-thirds majority vote. A Commission decision to expel a club must be approved by a simple majority of AFL clubs.[15] The AFL clubs are the only members of the AFL and save for these retained voting rights, the AFL Commission has the right to exercise *all* the powers of the League, including the formulation of policy and implementation of strategy.

National expansion of the competition has also seen the importance of the AFL grow relative to governing bodies in other states. The primary objects of the company (including the three outlined below) reflect the AFL's status as both the national league competition organiser and the national governing body for Australian football:

The objects for which the Australian Football League … is established are:-

(a)   To conduct the Australian Football League.
(b)   To promote and encourage the Australian National Game of Football (hereinafter referred to as 'football').
(c)   To promote and encourage football matches in the States and Territories of the Commonwealth and overseas.[16]

Each AFL club is contracted to participate in the AFL competition by virtue of a perpetual licence, which also confers the club status as a member of the company (with associated voting rights as outlined above). The eleven Victorian clubs were freely granted these licences in 1985, while the licences for the Sydney Swans (when they were privatised in 1985) and all other non-Victorian club licences were sold to the respective licencees.

Experiments with private club ownership have failed, however. In 1993 the Sydney Swans reverted to a company limited by guarantee, with the AFL as the only member. The Brisbane Bears were originally privately owned but reverted to a membership-based structure in the early 1990s. The North Melbourne FC (now trading as the Kangaroos) is part-owned by private investors. All other Victorian clubs are companies limited by guarantee, with members rather than shareholders. The licences for the clubs based in Western Australia and South Australia are held by the West Australian Football Commission (WAFC) and the South Australian National Football League (SANFL). These bodies are the SSO and managers of their respective state leagues, and have granted sub-licences to the companies operating the West Coast, Fremantle, Adelaide and Port Adelaide football clubs. A proportion of the revenue from the AFL clubs based in South Australia and Western Australia is also returned to the SANFL and WAFC respectively.[17] The AFL also has affiliation agreements with the governing bodies in each state and territory. These agreements include provision for the funding of Australian football competitions and development programs.[18]

The independence of the AFL Commission has facilitated the growth of Australian football by allowing decisions to be made which are free from the conflicts of interest present under a delegate system of governance. The AFL, however, is unique among the four codes, for

the national league clubs are the only company members and with one vote each, they elect the NSO board of directors – the AFL Commission.

Rugby League

There has been considerable expansion, contraction and corporate reorganisation of elite rugby league competition in the past twenty-five years as the competition has grown from the metropolitan NSWRL competition to become the sixteen-club NRL in 2007 (see Table 8.2).

The 1967 entry of Cronulla and Penrith saw twelve Sydney-based NSWRL clubs until 1982, when the Canberra Raiders and Illawarra Steelers (based in Wollongong) became the first league clubs based outside of Sydney since 1909.[19] Clubs had been required to apply for readmission to the NSWRL on an annual basis and foundation club Newtown (Jets) was denied it after the 1983 season. The competition organiser, New South Wales Rugby League Limited (NSWRL Ltd), was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee late in 1983,[20] following an unsuccessful attempt to exclude the Western Suburbs club from the 1984 season as well.[21] NSWRL Ltd subsequently resolved to exclude Wests from the 1985 season and the validity of this decision was affirmed by the High Court of Australia.[22] Ironically, Wests were ultimately retained, to leave thirteen clubs until the addition of the Brisbane Broncos, Gold Coast Seagulls and Newcastle Knights in 1988.

Further expansion was first contemplated in 1991, although an independent report by Dr G Bradley recommended fourteen clubs as the optimal long-term competition size. The same report recommended governance reforms.[23] The competition was renamed the Australian Rugby League (ARL) in 1995 and expanded to twenty clubs with the addition of the Auckland/New Zealand Warriors, North Queensland Cowboys (based in Townsville), South Queensland Crushers (based in Brisbane) and the Western/Perth Reds. NSWRL Ltd was contracted to manage the ARL competition on behalf of the Australian Rugby Football League Limited (ARFL Ltd).

The Australian Rugby League Board of Control had been the nominal rugby league NSO since 1924 and was incorporated in 1986 to become ARFL Ltd, a company limited by guarantee with objects including:

Table 8.2: NSWRL / ARL / Super League / NRL Clubs, 1908–2006

Club	Seasons in Competition	1997 Allegiance	Premierships
Adelaide Rams	1997–98	Super League	–
Annandale	1910–20	–	–
Auckland / New Zealand Warriors	1995–2006	Super League	–
Balmain Tigers	1908–99	ARL	11
Brisbane Broncos	1988–2006	Super League	6
Canberra Raiders	1982–2006	Super League	3
Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs / The Bulldogs	1935–2006	Super League	8
Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks / The Sharks	1967–2006	Super League	–
Cumberland	1908	–	–
Eastern Suburbs / Sydney City / Sydney Roosters	1908–2006	ARL	12
Glebe	1908–29	–	–
Gold Coast Giants / Seagulls / Chargers	1988–98	ARL	–
Hunter Mariners	1997	Super League	–
Illawarra Steelers	1982–98	ARL	–
Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles	1947–99; 2003–06	ARL	6
Melbourne Storm	1998–2006	–	1
Newcastle	1908–09	–	–

Club	Seasons in Competition	1997 Allegiance	Premierships
Newcastle Knights	1988–2006	ARL	2
Newtown Blue Baggers / Jets	1908–83	–	3
North Queensland Cowboys	1995–2006	Super League	–
North Sydney Bears	1908–99	ARL	2
Northern Eagles	2000–02	–	–
Parramatta Eels	1947–2006	ARL	4
Penrith Panthers	1967–2006	Super League	2
South Queensland Crushers	1995–97	ARL	–
South Sydney Rabbitohs	1908–99; 2002–06	ARL	20
St George Dragons	1921–98	ARL	15
St George-Illawarra Dragons	1999–2006	–	–
(Sydney) University	1920–37	–	–
Western / Perth Reds	1995–97	Super League	–
Western Suburbs	1908–99	ARL	4
Wests Tigers	2000–06	–	1

Note: NSWRL: 1908–94; ARL: 1995–97; Super League: 1997; NRL: 1998–2006.

Source: Middleton, David (ed.), *2006 Official Rugby League Annual*, NRL, Sydney, 2006.

(b) To foster, develop, extend and control the game of Rugby League Football throughout the States and Territories of Australia and generally to take such action as may be considered conducive to its best interests.

(c) To co-operate within the Rugby Football League International Board and organisations controlling the game in other countries in the fostering and control of the game of Rugby League.[24]

These objects include the administration of representative rugby league at the state and international levels. The ARFL Ltd board of directors has traditionally included an equal number of nominees from the SSOs in the two most powerful rugby league states–NSWRL Ltd and Queensland Rugby Football League Limited–plus a chair and chief executive officer, also from NSW or Queensland, who are appointed by the board.[25] A separate company limited by guarantee, Australian Rugby League Development, was established in 1999 by ARFL Ltd and the National Rugby League Limited (see below) to manage all junior rugby league development programs.[26]

The Super League concept was initially developed by the Brisbane Broncos and Australian media corporation News Limited, and first became public knowledge in 1994. ARFL Ltd and NSWRL Ltd sought to retain control of elite-level rugby league by signing the twenty ARL clubs to 'Loyalty' and 'Commitment' Agreements, in which the clubs agreed to exclusively participate in the ARL for five years. News Limited alleged these agreements were examples of pro-hibited anti-competitive conduct. The Full Court of the Federal Court of Australia agreed, declaring the Agreements were in breach of sections 4D and 45(2) of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (Cth) and hence invalid.[27] The eight 'rebel' clubs (Auckland, Brisbane, Canberra, Canterbury, Cronulla, North Queensland, Penrith and Perth) were joined by expansion franchises from Adelaide and Newcastle ('Hunter') for the inaugural and only season of the Australasian Super League in 1997. Super League ran in direct competition to the twelve-club ARL.

Following the 1997 season, News Limited (via a subsidiary, NRL Investments Pty Ltd) and ARFL Ltd agreed to merge the ARL and

Super League competitions and form a 50–50 partnership to manage a new competition, the NRL. National Rugby League Limited (NRL Ltd) was incorporated in 1998 as a company limited by guarantee, with ARFL Ltd and News Ltd and two nominees of each company as the company members. NRL Ltd is contracted by the NRL Partnership to act as the NRL competition organiser. The decision-making structure underpinning the NRL competition includes a partnership executive committee (PEC) as well as the NRL Ltd board of directors. Both the PEC and the NRL board have six members (three nominees each from ARFL Ltd and News Limited).[28] The Merger Agreement states that the partners agreed to implement the merger so that, amongst other purposes:

(a) public interest and support for the game of rugby league is maximised;

(b) the viability and sustainability of the game of rugby league is protected; and

(c) sponsors and media companies obtain access to an enhanced sports entertainment product.[29]

The Memorandum of Association of NRL Ltd further states:

The objects for which the Company is established are:

(a) to organise and conduct a national rugby league competition (meaning the competition rounds and the finals series) in Australia ('NRL Competition');

(b) to foster and develop the NRL Competition;

(c) to take such action as may be considered conducive to the best interests of the NRL Competition; and

(d) the encouragement and promotion of rugby league players, coaches and administrators in the NRL Competition.[30]

The NRL clubs are contracted to NRL Ltd via multi-year licences, but are neither owners nor members of NRL Ltd. This gives the national league competition manager a high degree of independence from the potentially conflicting interests of the NRL clubs but creates

difficulties in aligning the interests of the NSO (ARFL Ltd), News Limited and the national competition itself. Other potential conflicts exist, for News Limited is the majority shareholder of the Australian Stock Exchange-listed Brisbane Broncos Limited and has had a controlling interest in the Canberra, Melbourne and North Queensland clubs at different times.[31]

The NRL Merger Agreement required the competition be reduced to fourteen clubs by 2000, with between six and eight clubs based in Sydney.[32] This led to the removal of two clubs after the 1997 (Perth, South Queensland) and 1998 (Adelaide, Gold Coast) seasons and mergers to create new clubs, St George-Illawarra, Wests Tigers (Western Suburbs and Balmain) and the Northern Eagles (North Sydney and Manly-Warringah, with Manly becoming a stand-alone NRL club again in 2003 after the financial collapse of the merger). The most controversial decision was the exclusion of South Sydney Rabbitohs from the NRL in the 2000 and 2001 seasons.

Souths were a foundation NSWRL club and have won a record twenty senior-grade premierships, but were excluded on the basis of criteria established in accordance with the requirements of the NRL Merger Agreement. Legal action ultimately led to the High Court of Australia affirming the validity of the NRL's decision to exclude Souths, but NRL Ltd had already relented after a massive public outcry and readmitted South Sydney in 2002.[33] The South Sydney District Rugby League Football Club was privatised in 2006, with 75 per cent of the club sold to private investors, although the terms of the sale guaranteed Souths members significant control over the heritage of the club.[34] There has also been substantial private investment in other clubs, including Manly and St George-Illawarra. The NRL became a sixteen-club competition with the addition of the Gold Coast Titans for season 2007.[35]

Rugby Union

The governance structure of rugby union in Australia reflects both the amateur roots of the sport and the new demands of the professional era. The Australian Rugby Football Union (ARFU) was formed in 1949, after seventy-five years of the Southern Rugby Union (later the NSW Rugby Union) acting as de facto national governing body. The ARFU

was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in 1985.[36] The Australian Rugby Union Limited (ARU Ltd) objects include:

(a) to foster, promote and arrange Rugby football throughout Australia;

(b) to act as the co-ordinator of the activities of the various bodies … which organise Rugby football within the various States and Territories of Australia;

(c) to become a member of the International Rugby Football Board …

(da) to become a member of any other organisation or association of, or representing the interest of, national Rugby Unions; …

(f) to arrange and conduct overseas and international Rugby tours … and the selection, training, transport and assembly of Australian teams …[37]

ARU Ltd has eight voting members, these being the SSO of each Australian state and territory. The NSW and Queensland Rugby Unions have five and three votes respectively at general meetings of the members. All other state and territory unions have one vote each. Member unions elect five company directors, the president and vice-president, and also have the right to admit and expel a member union and non-voting affiliate unions (with a unanimous vote required for the expulsion of a member union).[38] Financial and operational issues are also addressed separately in Memoranda of Understanding between ARU Ltd and the member unions.[39]

The ARU Ltd Board includes five directors elected by the member unions (which must include two each nominated by the NSW and Queensland Rugby Unions and one nominated by the other unions), one nominee of the Rugby Union Players' Association (RUPA),[40] two directors appointed on the recommendation of a board sub-committee, and the managing director, who is appointed by the board. The chairman is elected by the board, while the president and vice-president may attend board meetings in a non-voting capacity.[41]

The president, vice-president and directors are barred from holding a position on the board of any member union. The president

and vice-president are also barred from being a director of ARU Ltd. This requirement of independence was instituted in 2006 and reinforces the right of the board to exercise all powers of the company save for those exercised by the member unions.[42]

The mid-1990s Super League war set off a 'player raid' in both rugby codes that stimulated competing plans for professional rugby union competitions. After considerable pressure, the IRB declared rugby union to be a professional sport in August 1995. In the southern hemisphere, this intense competition for rugby (union) players had already resulted in the formation of SANZAR, an unincorporated joint venture (with related companies) of ARU Ltd, the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU) and the South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU).[43] The joint venture agreement expires at the end of 2010.[44]

SANZAR was created by the three national unions for the purpose of maintaining their control of rugby union, but it has explicitly commercial objectives, based upon the creation and sale of the 'perfect rugby product' which is attractive to players, fans, sponsors and broadcasters alike. The first major activity of SANZAR was hence the signing of a US$555 million broadcasting rights agreement with News Corporation (the parent company of News Limited). This agreement provided News Corp. with the exclusive broadcasting rights to a Tri-Nations test series and the provincial (yet tri-national) 'Super Rugby' competition for the ten years between 1996 and 2005, with News Corp. also having a further five-year option.[45] An executive committee with an equal number of nominees of the three national unions is the ultimate decision-making body of SANZAR. The CEO role and a SANZAR secretariat are staffed by the national unions on a rotational basis.

The original SANZAR Super 12 competition included five franchises in New Zealand, four in South Africa and three in Australia – the ACT Brumbies (based in Canberra), NSW Waratahs (Sydney) and Queensland Reds (Brisbane).[46] The Western Force (Perth) and one extra South African franchise were added in the 2006 expansion to create the current Super 14 line-up.[47] (see Table 8.3).

The SANZAR Tri-Nations competition follows the Super Rugby season. It also expanded in 2006, from six to nine tests played on a home-and-away basis.

Table 8.3: Super Rugby Franchises, 1996–2006

Club	Seasons in Competition	Premiers
ACT Brumbies	1996–2000	2
Blues / Auckland Blues	1996–2006	3
Bulls / Northern Bulls / Blue Bulls / Northern Transvaal	1996–2006	–
Cats / Transvaal / Gauteng Lions / Golden Cats	1996–2006	–
Chiefs / Waikato Chiefs	1996–2006	–
Crusaders / Canterbury Crusaders	1996–2006	6
Highlanders / Otago Highlanders	1996–2006	–
Hurricanes / Wellington Hurricanes	1996–2006	–
Sharks / Coastal Sharks / Natal Sharks / Natal	1996–2006	–
NSW Waratahs	1996–2006	–
QLD Reds	1996–2006	–
Stormers / Western Stormers / Western Province	1996; 1998–2006	–
Orange Free State / Cheetahs	1997 & 2006	–
Western Force	2006	–

Source: Alan Whiticker, *Super Rugby: A History of Super 12 and Super 14 Competitions*, Gary Allen Pty Ltd, Wetherill Park, NSW, 2006.

The Australian Rugby Championship (ARC) will commence play in 2007 with three clubs based in NSW, two in Queensland and one based in each of the ACT, Victoria and Western Australia. The ARC will supplant the long-standing local club competitions, especially those in Sydney and Brisbane, as the stepping-stone for players aspiring to selection in a Super Rugby squad.

Soccer

Australian soccer has long suffered from political infighting between clubs, state associations, the national governing body and the individuals controlling these entities.[48] The Commonwealth Football Association (Australia) was initially formed in 1911, renamed the Australian Soccer Football Association in 1921 and replaced by the

Table 8.4: NSL Clubs, 1977–2003/04

Club	Seasons in Competition	Premiers
Adelaide City Force	1977–2002/03	3
Adelaide Sharks	1977–86; 1989–90; 1991/92–1998/99	1
Adelaide United	2003–04	–
Blacktown City	1984–88; 1984–86; 1989–90	–
Brisbane City	1977–86	–
Brisbane Lions	1977–86; 1988	–
Brisbane Strikers	1991/92–2003/04	1
Brunswick	1977–88; 1993/94–1994/95	1
Canberra City	1977–86	–
Canberra Cosmos	1995/96–2000/01	–
Canterbury	1986	–
Carlton	1997/98–2000/01	–
Collingwood Warriors	1996/97	–
Eastern Pride	1993/94–2000/01	–
Footscray	1977–89	–
Green Gully	1984–86	–
Heidelberg	1977–87; 1989; 1990/91–1994/95	–
Illawarra Lions	1990–91	–
Inter Monaro	1985–86	–
Kingz FC	1999/2000–2003/04	–
Leichhardt	1979–1991/92	1
Marconi Stallions	1977–2003/04	4
Melbourne Knights	1984–2003/04	2
Mooroolbark	1977	–
Newcastle Breakers	1991/92–1993/94; 1995/96–1999/00	–
Newcastle KB/Rosebud	1977–86	–
Newcastle United	2000/01–2003/04	–
Northern Spirit	1989/90–2003/04	–
Olympic Sharks	1977–79; 1981–2003/04	2
Parramatta Eagles	1984; 1989/90–1994/95	–

Club	Seasons in Competition	Premiers
Parramatta Power	1999/00–2003/04	–
Penrith City	1984–85	–
Perth Glory	1996/97–2003/04	2
Preston	1981–1992/93	–
South Melbourne	1977–2003/04	4
St George	1977–80; 1982–1990/91	1
Sunshine George Gross Georgies	1984–1990/91	–
Sydney City	1977–86	4
Sydney United	1984–2003/04	–
Western Suburbs	1977–78	–
Wollongong Wolves	1981–86; 1988–2003/04	2

Sources: National Soccer League, *Official Season Guide, Season 2001–2002*, Soccer Australia, Sydney, 2001; Thompson, Trevor, *One Fantastic Goal: A Complete History of Football in Australia*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2006; Oz Football, http://www.ozfootball.net.

Australian Soccer Federation (ASF) in 1961.[49] Throughout the last century, the powerful state associations and clubs–as outlined in Chapter 7–sought to shape the direction of Australian soccer to suit provincial, if not ethnic or personal interests.

The ASF was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee, later to be renamed Soccer Australia Limited, in 1978. This followed the formation of the fourteen-club National Soccer League (NSL) in 1977.[50] The NSL was the first club-based national sporting competition in Australia and survived for twenty-eight seasons. By the time thirteen clubs ran out to contest the final NSL season in 2003/04, the League was regarded, often in critical tones,[51] as comprising thirteen 'city-regional-ethnic teams' based in Sydney (five clubs), Melbourne (two clubs), Adelaide, Auckland (New Zealand), Brisbane, Newcastle, Perth and Wollongong.[52] Reflecting the financial instability of the NSL and soccer in general, there was a significant turnover of NSL clubs (see Table 8.4). During the corporate era alone (1990–2004), sixteen expansion clubs joined and seventeen clubs departed the League.[53]

Between 1990 and 2003, several reports catalogued the problems with the governance structure of Soccer Australia Limited and

competition structure of the NSL.[54] The most explosive of these was the inquiry by the Honourable Donald Stewart. After initial suppression by soccer officials, the Stewart Report was released in 1995 under parliamentary privilege by the Australian Senate, which had instigated its own investigations into the problems of 'corruption, conflicts of interest, tax evasion and improper financial transactions'.[55] These reports were scathing in their criticism of senior administrators, coaches and business practices in Australian soccer.

The mismanagement of Soccer Australia Limited continued until the intervention of the ASC (which threatened to withdraw funding) and the Federal Government in 2002.[56] This led to the formation of the Independent Soccer Review Committee (ISRC), headed by David Crawford, to review the 'governance, management and structure of soccer in Australia'.[57] The ISRC report made fifty-three recommendations for reform of the game.

The board of Soccer Australia Limited was subsequently replaced in 2003 and proceeded to wind up the old governing body.[58] This strategy facilitated the renegotiation of debts and the breaking of existing commercial relationships, including an unfavourable broadcasting rights agreement with the Seven Network.[59] A new company, Australian Soccer Association Limited, was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in September 2003. Renamed Football Federation Australia Limited (FFA Ltd) in 2005, this company was recognised by FIFA and the Federal Government–which provided the new company $15 million in grants and loans–as the new national governing body for Australian soccer.[60] The objects of FFA Ltd include:

(a) to be the premier body for Soccer in Australia … by:
   (i) controlling the strategic direction of Soccer in Australia;
   (ii) determining the highest level policy for the conduct and management of Soccer in Australia; and
   (iii) supervising and controlling State Bodies, Standing Committees and Soccer Leagues;
(b) to be the Australian member of FIFA …

(h)   to secure and maintain affiliation with other bodies, domestic and international, having a common interest in Soccer;

(i)   to promote, provide for, regulate and manage Soccer tournaments and games …[61]

The governance structure of FFA Ltd provides for an independent board of no more than eight directors. The members of the company elect a president and five other directors, while two directors are appointed by the board.[62] Directors are prohibited from holding an official position with, or being an employee of, FFA Ltd, any state body, and from being a member of any FFA Ltd standing committee. These prohibitions seek to ensure board independence, but independence is compromised by the ability of the board to unilaterally create and terminate memberships.[63] State bodies seeking membership of FFA Ltd are required to reform their constitution in line with FFA Ltd specifications.[64]

FFA Ltd commenced trading with six 'First Directors', led by President Frank Lowy, who were nominated by the Federal Government to guide the reform of soccer. Future directors are elected by the members.[65] The directors have the power to manage the business of FFA Ltd subject only to those powers exercised by the members of the FFA in a general meeting of the company. This broad power includes appointment of the CEO.[66] After an interim period where the 'First Directors' are the 'First Members,'[67] the members, who have differential voting rights at general meetings), include one nominee from each state body (votes allocated on the number of registered players in that state),[68] one nominee from the A-League (one vote),[69] and the chairs of various standing committees (one vote each).[70]

Following the recommendations of the ISRC report, the structure and operation of the NSL was also reviewed in 2003. The NSL Task Force report drew heavily on the model earlier prepared by PFA Management Limited (a commercial offshoot of the players' association).[71] The NSL was terminated and the A-League was born. The 'A' League Pty Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of FFA Ltd.[72]

As with the NSL, the new A-League is scheduled as a summer season (August–February) to avoid conflict with the other football

codes.[73] After a one-year hiatus, the inaugural A-League season kicked off in August 2005 with eight privately owned clubs located in Adelaide, Auckland (NZ), Brisbane, Gosford (NSW central coast), Melbourne, Newcastle, Perth and Sydney (see Table 8.5).

Table 8.5: A-League Clubs, 2005/06–2006/07

Club	Seasons in Competition	Premiers
Adelaide United	2005/06–2006/07	–
Central Coast Mariners	2005/06–2006/07	–
Melbourne Victory	2005/06–2006/07	1
Newcastle Jets	2005/06–2006/07	–
New Zealand Knights	2005/06–2006/07	–
Perth Glory	2005/06–2006/07	–
Queensland Roar	2005/06–2006/07	–
Sydney FC	2005/06–2006/07	1

Source: Football Federation Australia, A-League, http://www.a-league.com.au

Most existing NSL clubs resorted to playing in their respective elite state competitions, with only two former NSL clubs, Perth Glory and a revamped Adelaide United, accepted into the A-League. However, FFA Ltd has been required to take a shareholding in the Central Coast and Melbourne clubs, assume control of Perth Glory and then resell the club, and revoke the participation agreement of the New Zealand Knights and resell the franchise. A clear conflict also exists due to the family of FFA Ltd President Frank Lowy and FFA Ltd Director Phil Wolanski having shareholdings in Sydney FC.[74]

Club owners who purchased a licence to compete in the A-League were given a five-year territorial exclusivity guarantee to allow them to generate sustained commercial and fan support. The one club per city doctrine has been very successful in generating strong support and removing ethnicity as a negative feature of the game.[75]

The other recent change to Australian soccer governance was the FIFA-ratified transfer of Australia from the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in 2005.

The Importance of Governance

The NSOs are custodians of their sport. However, the SANZAR joint venture and NRL Merger Agreement are commercial agreements that explicitly reflect the interests of the broadcasters and other commercial partners. This is in stark contrast to the broader objects of the NSOs, which are constituted to 'foster', 'promote', 'encourage' and/or 'develop' their respective football codes.

The efficiency and effectiveness of each NSO may be hampered by conflicts inherent in the governance and competition structures of each sport. One conflict is between the interests of the national league and the national team. In the Australian model at large, the interests of the national team usually take priority, but the AFL and NRL competitions arguably take precedence over representative teams. Potential conflicts also exist between the interests of the NSO, as represented by the board of directors, and the constituent members who elect the board (national league clubs, state bodies and other stakeholder groups). National league clubs have competing interests requiring the creation of an independent competition organiser to regulate the labour and product markets.[76] State governing bodies have similar interests as well as the desire to maintain or change the traditional distribution of power. Governance is idiosyncratic and efficiency is difficult to assess, but sporting structures where the board (or competition organiser) is independent of the members (or participant clubs) have been recognised as more efficient than delegate-based governance structures.[77]

On balance, the AFL Commission has more independence, fewer potential conflicts of interest and a greater capacity to pursue the best interests of the code at large than the boards of ARFL Ltd, ARU Ltd and FFA Ltd. This begs the question as to which governance model has produced the best outcomes. To date, no econometric study has quantified the relationship between corporate governance and performance in the four NSOs, but a relationship may nevertheless be inferred from case study analysis. A number of performance indicators are discussed below, being financial results, attendance, participation rates and related programs, broadcasting and media rights, and finally, competitive balance in the main leagues and competitions.

Financial Results

Table 8.6 summarises financial results available from the annual reports of the NSO and/or national league competition organiser in each code. Both gross and net surplus are presented to control for accounting differences in the reporting of grants and distributions to national league clubs and state bodies. Even though these results do not include club-level data, football truly is big business. The NSOs collectively generated $1.249 billion between 2003 and 2005. Combined revenue of all AFL and NRL clubs in 2005 (including grants from the competition organisers) was estimated at nearly $600 million.[78] Broadcasting revenue represents a large proportion of this figure.

The AFL is the strongest code in Australia and has generated revenue of more than $100 million per annum since 1999 and $203 million in 2005 alone. In comparison, the financial weakness of soccer is clear. The FFA regards the international success of the Socceroos and development of the A-League as the drivers of future growth, but recent AFL revenues exceed soccer earnings by about a factor of eight.[79]

Available financial reports indicate the revenue of NRL Ltd is primarily an annual grant (of between $53 million and $72 million) from the NRL Partnership – most of which represents a direct grant to the NRL clubs. The financial structure of the NRL competition is clouded by the role of News Limited and public documents do not disclose the recipient of NRL broadcasting and sponsorship revenues, so Table 8.6 probably understates total NRL competition revenue significantly.

Total ARU Ltd revenue nearly quadrupled to $73 million in the first decade of professional rugby, with broadcasting receipts representing around 40 per cent of total revenue in recent years. When the one-off stimulus ($42 million retained from tournament revenue of $221 million) of the 2003 Rugby World Cup is excluded, ARU Ltd revenue averages only 40 per cent of AFL revenue between 2000 and 2005.

Attendance

It is sometimes argued that cricket is the national sport,[80] but Australians love football (see Table 8.7). The AFL is by far the most

Table 8.6: National Sporting Organisations and National Leagues, Financial Summary, 1992–2005

Revenue ($m)	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Australian Football League	42.699	48.879	57.519	68.058	74.246	82.941	92.420	108.447	110.736	116.562	159.700	170.912	186.260	203.7
Australian Rugby Football League Limited				4.343	1.783									
New South Wales Rugby League Limited	22.870	20.010	26.536	29.518	65.729									
National Rugby League Limited						–	62.022	65.914	53.807	59.780	59.904	61.781	66.108	72.477
Australian Rugby Union Limited				9.978	20.553				42.848	57.558	61.782	289.263	69.931	73.288
Soccer Australia Limited											10.783	5.670		
Football Federation Australia Limited	–					–				–	–	–	13.764	25.788

Operating Surplus ($m)	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Australian Football League	24.719	25.091	30.842	34.060	38.926	43.364	49.563	60.952	63.918	68.996	110.091	114.702	124.010	130.4
Australian Rugby Football League Limited				0.156	–1.304									
New South Wales Rugby League Limited	10.062	9.632	12.494	14.163	14.200									
National Rugby League Limited						–	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Australian Rugby Union Limited	–			1.412	9.567				5.999	7.258	6.570	39.395	4.009	5.819
Soccer Australia Limited												–0.264	2.855	
Football Federation Australia Limited	–			–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–4.061	0.575

Net Surplus ($m)	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Australian Football League	–0.423	0.032	1.474	1.855	3.483	1.899	2.122	1.375	–7.228	–16.762	8.824	4.665	1.692	1.7
Australian Rugby Football League Limited				0.156	–1.304									
New South Wales Rugby League Limited	2.016	1.216	2.484	13.383	–9.712									
National Rugby League Limited	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Australian Rugby Union Limited	–	–	–	–0.813	–2.998				–0.135	0.683	0.451	32.979	–4.363	–3.212
Soccer Australia Limited												–0.264	2.855	
Football Federation Australia Limited	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–4.061	0.575

Notes: Operating surplus/deficit and net surplus/deficit are both reported due to differences in the accounting of distributions from league competition managers to participant clubs/teams. Blank spaces indicate information was unavailable at time of writing.

Table 8.7: Aggregate Football Attendance, Australia, 1990–2007

Season	AFL	AF IR	AF SOO	NRL	Kangaroos	RL SOO	S14 / S12	Wallabies	AL / NSL	Socceroos
1990	4 063 385 (161)	–	53 970 (3)	2 209 363 (183)	12 348 (1)	98 451 (3)	–	103 449 (4)	595 104 (182) *	–
1991	4 178 884 (172)	–	86 193 (4)	2 413 318 (183)	91 811 (3)	107 146 (3)	–	101 237 (3)	630 196 (182) *	57 317 (4)
1992	4 814 271 (172)	–	73 359 (3)	2 282 194 (182)	115 929 (4)	113 417 (3)	–	164 343 (5)	639 520 (182) *	59 792 (6) +
1993	4 657 489 (157)	–	85 348 (4)	2 625 467 (182)	28 850 (1)	106 395 (3)	–	124 870 (4)	611 458 (182) *	79 394 (3)
1994	5 237 398 (174)	–	44 598 (1)	2 732 389 (182)	27 318 (1)	169 685 (3)	–	172 198 (6)	626 090 (182) *	27 972 (2)
1995	5 712 693 (185)	–	79 897 (2)	3 352 927 (229)	73 675 (3)	133 024 (3)	–	86 001 (3)	551 431 (156) *	78 691 (7)
1996	5 694 921 (185)	–	52 334 (2)	2 743 516 (223)	19 244 (1)	119 520 (3)	283 331 (18)	152 716 (5)	873 959 (198) ^	36 119 (4) +
1997	6 402 997 (185)	–	57 390 (2)	2 747 817 (237)	38 756 (2)	162 642 (6)	317 052 (17)	223 053 (5)	1 078 633 (190)	153 189 (9)
1998	6 691 897 (185)	–	32 181 (2)	2 921 264 (253)	18 571 (1)	115 469 (3)	282 786 (17)	281 474 (9)	985 535 (191)	34 664 (6) +
1999	6 243 586 (185)	109 513 (2)	26 063 (1)	3 156 483 (213)	42 756 (2)	165 800 (3)	275 249 (17)	270 169 (5)	1 309 134 (219)	121 120 (2)
2000	6 307 373 (185)	–	–	2 902 227 (191)	47 023 (2)	159 074 (3)	361 119 (19)	254 182 (5)	1 503 173 (281)	20 500 (3)
2001	6 447 560 (185)	80 834 (2)	–	2 682 210 (191)	–	158 599 (3)	390 067 (18)	311 889 (5)	1 148 698 (215)	186 305 (6) +
2002	6 092 987 (185)	–	–	2 656 198 (189)	31 844 (1)	178 252 (3)	437 003 (18)	218 986 (4)	945 195 (165)	–
2003	6 351 655 (185)	101 523 (2)	–	2 895 740 (189)	30 605 (1)	183 682 (3)	388 404 (16)	713 970 (12)	754 160 (186)	–
2004	6 368 297 (185)	–	–	2 942 350 (189)	21 537 (1)	203 309 (3)	472 058 (19)	291 678 (6)	733 907 (165)	97 317 (8)
2005	6 763 852 (185)	84 526 (2)	–	3 276 675 (189)	68 572 (2)	187 309 (3)	440 457 (17)	303 023 (6)	–	141 390 (4)
2006	6 736 234 (185)	–	–	3 115 701 (189)	171 559 (5)	180 074 (3)	624 387 (25)	300 600 (6)	1 046 459 (90)	211 940 (4)
2007	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1 086 921 (84) *	–

Notes: Aggregate annual attendance of elite-level football competitions in Australia (number of matches in parentheses), including:

Australian Football League (AFL) – Home-and-away season plus finals series attendance.

Australian Football International Rules (AF IR) – Aggregate attendance for matches played in Australia.

Australian Football State of Origin (AF SOO) – Aggregate attendance.

National Rugby League (NRL) – Home-and-away season plus finals series attendance. The 1995–2006 seasons include home match attendance of one New Zealand–based club. Leagues in time series include the New South Wales Rugby League (1990–94), Australian Rugby League (1995–96); Australian Rugby League plus Super League (1997) and the National Rugby League (1998–2006).

Kangaroos rugby league tests – Aggregate attendance to all Australian Rugby League-endorsed tests played in Australia. The 1997 attendance includes one Super League-endorsed international match played in Australia.

Rugby League State of Origin (RL SOO) – Aggregate attendance to all Australian Rugby League-endorsed State of Origin games. The 1997 attendance includes three Super League-endorsed Tri-Series matches (New South Wales – Queensland – New Zealand).

Wallabies rugby union tests – Aggregate attendance to all rugby tests involving the Wallabies played in Australia in that calendar year. The 2003 attendance includes seven tests played as part of the 2003 Rugby World Cup.

Super 14s / Super 12s rugby union (S14 / S12) – Aggregate attendance to all home-and-away and finals series Super 12s / Super 14s matches played in Australia by the ACT Brumbies, NSW Waratahs, Queensland Reds and Western Force teams.

A-League / National Soccer League (AL / NSL) – Data is for the National Soccer League (1990–2004) and the A-League (2006–07) summer season competitions; for example, 2004 attendance refers to the 2003–04 season. * Home-and-away season attendance only. ^ Home-and-away season plus grand final attendance only. The 2000–04 and 2006–07 seasons include home match attendance of one New Zealand-based club.

Socceroos – Aggregate attendance to Socceroos internationals played in Australia. '+' signifies data is unavailable for some internationals. Data is missing in 1992 (two internationals), 1996 (one international), 1998 (one international) and 2001 (one international). These matches are not included in the count of games in the table.

Sources: Lovett, Michael (ed.), *AFL Record Guide to Season 2007*, AFL Publishing, Melbourne, 2007; Rugby League Tables, http://www.stats.rleague.com/rl, accessed 12 February 2007; Middleton, David (ed.), *2006 Official Rugby League Annual*, NRL, Sydney, 2006; Australian Rugby Union; *Australian Financial Review*, 'Now Soccer Needs a Good PR Team', *Australian Financial Review*, 11 July 2006; Lynch, Michael, 'Buckley Lauds "Fantastic" Crowd, Rating Growth', *The Age*, http://www.theage.com.au, accessed 23 January 2007; Oz Football, http://www.ozfootball.net; Gatt, Ray, 'Domestic Final Overshadows Second Insipid International', *The Australian*, 13 June 2000, LexisNexis News, http://www.lexisnexis.com/news, accessed 10 February 2007; Malone, P, 'Another Cup Plan in Tatters', *Courier Mail*, 5 October 1998, LexisNexis News, http://lexisnexis.com/news, accessed 10 February 2007; Booth, D, 'Poor Crowd Sours Glory', *Herald Sun*, 7 June 1993, LexisNexis News, http://www.lexisnexis.com/news, accessed 10 February 2007; Legg, G, 'Aussies Up 16–0 in Hiding', *Courier Mail*, 29 September 1998, LexisNexis News, http://www.lexisnexis.com/news, accessed 10 February 2007; Oz Football, http://www.ozfootball.net; O'Brien, Bren and Cooper, David, 'Skoko Stunner Sinks Euro Champs', hppt://www.footballaustralia.com.au/default.aspx?s=insideffa_newsfeature_features_item&id=10252, 26 May 2006, accessed 10 February 2007.

popular sporting competition in Australia, with annual attendance since 1997 of more than six million. The AFL accounts for 56 per cent of all elite-level football attendance between 1990 and 2006. The NRL and predecessors rank a distant second, with aggregate attendance of less than half that of the AFL between 1990 and 2006.

Table 8.8: Average Home-and-Away Season Football Attendance, Australian Leagues, 1990–2007

Season	AFL		NRL		S14 / S12		AL / NSL	
1990	23 296	(154)	11 335	(176)	–		3 270	(182)
1991	23 013	(165)	12 408	(176)	–		3 463	(182)
1992	26 260	(165)	11 744	(176)	–		3 514	(182)
1993	27 903	(150)	13 654	(176)	–		3 360	(182)
1994	28 624	(165)	14 215	(176)	–		3 440	(182)
1995	29 078	(175)	13 918	(220)	–		3 535	(156)
1996	29 637	(176)	11 452	(214)	15 741	(18)	4 342	(198)
1997	33 197	(176)	10 901	(204)	18 333	(16)	5 417	(181)
1998	34 768	(176)	10 935	(240)	16 634	(17)	4 931	(182)
1999	32 793	(176)	13 937	(204)	16 134	(16)	5 608	(210)
2000	32 618	(176)	14 366	(182)	18 147	(17)	5 049	(272)
2001	33 643	(176)	13 256	(182)	21 161	(16)	5 104	(206)
2002	32 066	(176)	13 084	(180)	23 580	(17)	5 167	(156)
2003	33 371	(176)	14 469	(180)	24 275	(16)	3 853	(156)
2004	33 579	(176)	14 671	(180)	24 713	(17)	4 121	(165)
2005	35 703	(176)	16 468	(180)	25 314	(16)	–	
2006	35 250	(176)	15 601	(180)	24 975	(25)	10 955	(84)
2007	–		–		–		12 940	(84)

Note: Number of home-and-away games is in parenthesis

Sources: Lovett, Michael (ed.), *AFL Record Guide to Season 2007*, AFL Publishing, Melbourne, 2007; Rugby League Tables, http://www.stats.rleague.com/rl; Australian Rugby Union; *Australian Financial Review*, 'Now Soccer Needs a Good PR Team', *Australian Financial Review*, 11 July 2006; Lynch, Michael, 'Buckley Lauds "Fantastic" Crowd, Rating Growth', *The Age*, http://www.theage.com.au, accessed 23 January 2007; Oz Football, http://www.ozfootball.net.

Average annual VFL/AFL home-and-away season match attendance has exceeded 20 000 for more than forty years and 30 000 since

1997, when the league stabilised with the current sixteen clubs.[81] Average AFL match attendance of more than 35 000 in both 2005 and 2006 (see Table 8.8) ranks the AFL as one of only five sporting leagues in the world with an average of 30 000-plus fans at each game.[82] Average NRL match attendance peaked at 16 648 in 2005. Average Rugby Super 12 match attendance in Australia has exceeded 21 000 since 2001 and peaked at 25 314 in 2005. The NSL never achieved a strong following, arguably due in part to higher quality European soccer being televised on SBS, the ABC and pay TV. But average match attendance of 10 000-plus for both seasons of the new A-League is an indicator of the latent interest in domestic elite-level soccer.

Aggregate national league attendance growth of 66 per cent (AFL, 1990–2006), 41 per cent (rugby league, 1990–2006), 120 per cent (Super Rugby, 1996–2006) and 83 per cent (soccer, 1990–2007) is exceptional. By way of comparison, the Australian population has grown by 19 per cent between 1990 and 2005.[83] Despite academic disagreement over the measurable determinants of attendance, league expansion, improvements to Australian sporting stadiums, match scheduling, marketing and the absolute and relative quality of play (including competitive balance) have all clearly contributed to attendance growth.[84]

Stadium expansion or construction has occurred in all Australian capital cities and more people now attend fewer stadiums in greater comfort. Stadium rationalisation and the demands of broadcasters also mean that football is no longer exclusively played on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Games are now regularly scheduled in timeslots ranging from Thursday night to Monday night.

Effective advertising has most visibly included the memorable Tina Turner-inspired *What You Get is What You See* and *Simply The Best* campaigns (NSWRL, late 1980s and early 1990s), *I'd Like to See That* (AFL, early 1990s), *That's My Team* (NRL, 2003–07) and the FFA campaign to shift public perceptions from 'Old Soccer' to 'New Football'.[85] Diverse marketing strategies including the 'Mascot Manor' AFL website for kids, the ARU EdRugby educational program and special rounds of the AFL and NRL season, where teams play in 'heritage' guernseys, have also boosted awareness, interest and attendance.[86]

Both rugby codes and soccer prove the value of a fresh, new product. The NRL was a necessary and inevitable outcome of the Super League war. Attendance dipped in the mid-1990s, but the NRL

has experienced all-time record rugby league crowds between 2004 and 2006. Super Rugby crowds have grown to the point where the Queensland Reds abandoned Ballymore (the traditional home of Queensland Rugby) for Lang Park. Meanwhile, the A-League replaced the 'substandard' NSL, a competition reported to have lost $65 million in its last three seasons.[87]

All competition organisers sought to improve the absolute and relative quality of national league competition. The NRL Merger Agreement triggered the club rationalisation process between 1998 and 2000 to concentrate financial resources and playing talent in fewer clubs, and the AFL Commission actively encouraged mergers in the 1990s.[88] Super Rugby itself is representative of the new era of high-quality pro rugby. SANZAR encouraged attractive, attacking play by awarding teams one bonus league ladder point for scoring four tries or more and another for losing by seven points or less. These rule changes had an immediate and 'dramatic effect' as Super 12 teams continued to seek tries in what had often been the 'staid' final twenty minutes of games in previous years.[89] Similarly, the AFL and NRL changed the rules of Australian football and rugby league to create more free-flowing, less violent and more attractive sports. Relaxation of interchange player rules particularly increased the intensity of the game in both leagues. Increased revenue in all codes also enhanced absolute game quality by financing an arms race as clubs, competition organisers, NSOs and the government-funded institutes of sport invested unprecedented sums in areas such as coaching techniques and match strategy, player training and conditioning, injury rehabilitation, talent identification and junior development.[90]

Public interest in international representative football varies with the quality of the competing teams and the significance of the individual match. Attendance at Wallaby rugby union test matches has almost doubled since 1996 as the Tri-Nations series and regular tours by northern-hemisphere teams provide a regular supply of high-quality rugby union. As many Australians have seen the Wallaby team play since 1990 as the AFL International Rules team, the ARL Kangaroos and the Socceroos combined. Construction of larger stadiums in Brisbane and Sydney, plus the scheduling of tests in Melbourne and Perth, boosted average rugby union test match attendance to 43 800 – a figure far beyond the capacity of older rugby

Table 8.9: Football Attendance (ABS Survey Data), 1995–2005/06

		Persons ('000)									Attendance Rate (%)								
		NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Aust.	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Aust.
Australian Football	1995	80.6	933.4	69.5	293.1	261.5	78.2	15.9	14.8	1746.9	1.8	27.7	2.9	26.5	20.9	22.7	14.2	6.9	13.1
	1999	203.6	1,178.3	113.9	376.2	327.6	90.4	22.0	18.7	2330.7	4.3	33.2	4.4	33.2	24.0	26.2	21.5	8.3	16.5
	2002	199.9	1,224.9	176.4	379.1	379.9	88.3	18.7	18.8	2486.0	4.1	33.4	6.5	33.4	26.7	25.6	17.8	8.1	17.1
	2005–06	237.2	1,058.6	215.1	356.4	347.3	106.7	17.2	25.6	2364.0	4.7	27.5	7.4	30.5	23.5	29.3	16.7	10.7	15.6
Rugby League	1995	732.2	50.8	407.0	16.4	35.3	2.1	13.8	58.1	1315.7	16.2	1.5	17.1	1.5	2.8	0.6	12.3	27.2	9.9
	1999	796.8	60.7	427.5	13.5	16.7	1.3	10.4	45.2	1371.9	16.7	1.7	16.6	1.2	1.2	0.4	10.2	20.1	9.7
	2002	887.1	60.7	455.8	4.2	13.8	0.3	6.2	36.6	1464.6	18.1	1.7	16.9	0.4	1.0	0.1	5.9	15.8	10.1
	2005–06	813.3	36.5	460.9	3.4	12.6	0.8	3.9	30.6	1362.0	16.0	0.9	15.8	0.3	0.9	0.2	3.8	12.7	9.0
Rugby Union	1995	159.8	19.7	105.6	7.7	17.5	2.7	8.3	8.5	329.9	3.5	0.6	4.4	0.7	1.4	0.8	7.4	4.0	2.5
	1999	235.0	29.4	89.0	3.9	23.6	3.1	3.5	30.4	417.8	4.9	0.8	3.4	0.3	1.7	0.9	3.4	13.5	3.0
	2002	352.6	44.1	162.8	6.5	45.0	3.1	4.5	54.9	673.6	7.2	1.2	6.0	0.6	3.2	0.9	4.3	23.8	4.6
	2005–06	316.8	42.4	177.6	6.9	61.2	1.9	2.6	38.8	648.2	6.2	1.1	6.1	0.6	4.2	0.5	2.5	16.2	4.3

		Persons ('000)									Attendance Rate (%)								
		NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Aust.	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Aust.
Soccer (Outdoor)	1995	185.8	130.1	82.6	47.4	39.1	5.0	6.1	7.4	503.4	4.1	3.9	3.5	4.3	3.1	1.5	5.4	3.5	3.8
	1999	224.6	99.1	82.7	51.9	82.0	7.3	4.2	11.5	563.3	4.7	2.8	3.2	4.6	6.0	2.1	4.1	5.1	4.0
	2002	354.3	144.9	119.9	45.6	114.3	8.4	4.4	10.1	801.9	7.2	4.0	4.4	4.0	8.0	2.4	4.2	4.4	5.5
	2005–06	241.5	91.9	72.5	47.3	46.9	5.5	1.4	9.2	516.4	4.8	2.4	2.5	4.1	3.2	1.5	1.3	3.8	3.4
Total Sports	1995	1721.2	1601.6	990.1	532.6	586.2	158.4	55.2	102.6	5747.8	41.5	51.7	41.6	51.7	50.8	49.2	58.3	49.1	46.3
	1999	1987.2	1835.5	1073.8	585.4	693.8	170.0	59.6	110.3	6515.6	43.7	51.6	46.8	51.9	53.5	47.0	56.7	55.7	48.2
	2002	2138.3	1890.3	1265.3	588.1	762.7	162.3	59.8	128.6	6995.5	41.6	44.7	43.3	47.5	45.4	46.4	49.7	46.9	43.8
	2005–06	2113.1	1717.5	1262.5	554.4	669.3	169.2	51.4	112.6	6650.1	41.2	48.9	43.3	49.8	49.1	47.2	53.5	49.9	45.4

Notes: Caution should be taken when comparing time series data due to differences in the survey and data collection method over time. Survey data is from the population aged fifteen years and over in 1995, 1999 and 2005/06 and the population ages eighteen years and over in 2002. Northern Territory figures refer to mainly urban areas only. 'Total Sports' includes attendance in all sports, where a person attending sports events in a given year is counted once, regardless of how many different sports they may have attended.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Sports Attendance, Australia, 2002; 2005–06* (catalogue no. 4174.0), ABS, Canberra.

stadiums such as Ballymore (Brisbane) or Concord Oval (Sydney). The promotional benefits of the Wallaby 1999 Rugby World Cup (RWC) victory were immense and 1.889 million tickets were sold to the 2003 RWC tournament in Australia.[91]

The Socceroos have shown a capacity to draw near-capacity crowds to the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Stadium Australia for FIFA World Cup qualifying games, especially those against high-quality opponents such as Iran and Uruguay. Yet the lowly Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) nations provided weak competition for the Socceroos and the 2004 OFC Nations Cup had a total attendance of fewer than 30 000.[92] This problem was remedied by Australia's transfer to the Asian Football Confederation from 2006.

The Kangaroos play few tests in Australia each year, but tests are practically insignificant to rugby league fans when compared with the annual three-game New South Wales v Queensland State of Origin Series. The series is the 'jewel in the crown of the modern game', and arguably the highest standard of rugby league in the world.[93] The absolute quality and evenness of 'Origin' has resulted in the average match attendance of 47 000, exceeding the Kangaroos' average crowds by 20 000. Attendance fluctuation for State of Origin is mostly explained by stadium capacity. 'Origin' is also a remarkably even contest. Between 1980 and 2006, both states have won thirty-eight games, with two draws; NSW has won the series fourteen times, Queensland thirteen. In contrast, the Kangaroos have lost only one game in five since 1991.

The AFL has struggled to create a viable form of representative football. State of origin football died in the 1990s. Clubs and then fans were reluctant to support the format, especially once virtual state of origin-quality AFL clubs were established in Adelaide and Perth. The International Rules hybrid of Australian and Gaelic football has attracted high average crowds of 47 000, but the legitimacy and relevance of the annual series between national representative teams selected by the AFL and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is constantly debated.

Wider surveys of football attendance reflect the trends in national league and national team attendance. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has consistently ranked Australian football as the most watched sport in the nation, between 13 and 17 per cent of the Australian population having attended a game of Australian

football in the four years of the ABS attendance surveys (see Table 8.9).[94] Smaller surveys of people in mainland capital cities by market research firm Sweeney Sports further suggest that more people are 'interested' in Australian football than the other codes (Table 8.10).[95]

Table 8.10: Interest in Football, 1988/89–2005/06

Year	Australian Football	Rugby League	Rugby Union	Soccer
1988–89	45	34	15	28
1989–90	45	38	23	32
1990–91	46	40	24	33
1991–92	47	44	31	32
1992–93	45	44	33	32
1993–94	46	44	30	37
1994–95	45	47	32	38
1995–96	51	43	31	37
1996–97	55	41	31	37
1997–98	50	38	30	41
1998–99	48	35	28	37
1999–2000	51	38	33	38
2000–01	50	36	31	39
2001–02	52	43	38	44
2002–03	52	39	37	47
2003–04	54	46	43	47
2004–05	55	41	44	45
2005–06	54	42	40	50

Note: Interest is calculated as the weighted percentage of survey respondents aged 16–65 in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra.

Sources: Hirons, Martin, 'Rugby Codes Prosper as Soccer's Quest for Supremacy Comes to a Halt', media release, http://www.sweeneyresearch.com.au, 10 June 2004; Hirons, Martin, 'Soccer Continuing to Challenge Other Football Codes', media release http://www.sweeneyresearch.com.au, 3 August 2006.

The ABS survey results suggest around 10 per cent of Australians have seen a live game of rugby league, while the attendance rates for soccer and rugby union are less than one-third of those for Australian football. However, 'interest' in soccer has almost doubled in the past eighteen years and the world game has ranked second to Australian

football on this indicator since the Super League war.[96] Soccer attendance, interest and participation (see below) has a natural driver in Australia's immigration policy. Net overseas migration of 1.358 million (41 per cent of Australian population growth) between July 1990 and June 2005 would include many for whom their only conception of football is the round ball code.[97]

The geographic distribution of football patrons reflects the historical strongholds of each code.[98] More than 20 per cent of Victorians, South Australians, Western Australians and Tasmanians have seen a game of Australian football in each ABS survey year. Sports fans also love winners. Australian football attendance growth in NSW and Queensland has been stimulated by the AFL premiership-winning form of the Brisbane Lions (2001–03) and Sydney Swans (2005). More than 15 per cent of people in NSW and Queensland have attended a rugby league game. Rugby union is also popular in these states and in the Australian Capital Territory, where the ACT Brumbies won the Super 12 competition in 2001 and 2004. While soccer attendance rates are lower that for the other codes, there is a consistently higher level of support in NSW.

Participation Rates and Related Programs

More people played soccer between 2001 and 2005 than Australian football and rugby league combined. Official participation rates are difficult to compare as each NSO includes different classes of participants in their census reports. Australian Sports Commission surveys (2001–05) therefore provide a good snapshot of participation (see Table 8.11) and the age distribution of participants (Table 8.12).[99] Between 551 000 and 693 000 people played (outdoor) soccer in each survey year and FFA estimates range from 423 000 club soccer participants in 2006 (see Table 8.13) and 700 000-plus participants in school and club competitions.[100] The ASC surveys indicate a broad spread of soccer players around the nation, with the highest participation rates in NSW and the ACT. Youth participation (ages 15–24) in soccer is the highest of the four codes and between 1.4 and 2.5 times that of the two rugby codes combined. In all survey years except 2005, more people aged thirty-five and above played soccer than the three other codes combined. These trends may reflect the lower physical demands of soccer.

		Persons ('000)									Attendance Rate (%)								
		NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Aust.	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Aust.
Australian Football	2001	–	194.8	23.3	43.6	53.3	12.5	6.2	2.4	353.3	–	5.1	0.8	3.7	3.6	3.4	4.4	1.0	2.3
	2002	–	153.6	24.5	65.4	78.9	18.4	4.8	3.5	379.7	–	4.0	0.9	5.5	5.3	5.0	3.4	1.4	2.5
	2003	52.5	200.9	–	65.7	68.8	15.9	6.2	4.4	433.5	1.0	5.1	–	5.5	4.5	4.3	4.4	1.8	2.8
	2004	43.1	205.5	38.1	54.2	82.3	16.9	6.3	4.5	450.8	0.8	5.2	1.3	4.5	5.3	4.5	4.5	1.8	2.9
	2005	34.4	271.0	55.9	72.1	76.0	16.3	6.3	4.2	536.2	0.6	6.7	1.8	5.9	4.8	4.3	4.5	1.7	3.4
Rugby League	2001	97.4	–	46.1	–	–	–	3.5	3.1	165.5	1.9	–	1.6	–	–	–	2.5	1.3	1.1
	2002	68.4	–	71.7	–	–	–	3.3	–	151.0	1.3	–	2.5	–	–	–	2.3	-	1.0
	2003	84.2	–	70.6	–	–	–	2.0	4.1	172.0	1.6	–	2.4	–	–	–	1.5	1.7	1.1
	2004	85.8	* 14.8	59.5	* 3.3	** 1.3	* 1.7	3.2	* 2.6	172.2	1.6	* 0.4	2.0	* 0.3	** 0.1	* 0.5	2.3	* 1.0	1.1
	2005	111.2	** 5.7	60.9	* 4.7	* 5.7	* 1.9	2.3	3.6	195.9	2.1	** 0.1	2.0	* 0.4	* 0.4	* 0.5	1.7	1.4	1.2
Rugby Union	2001	45.4	–	32.5	–	–	–	2.7	3.5	96.4	0.9	–	1.2	–	–	–	1.9	1.4	0.6
	2002	56.0	–	28.4	–	–	–	2.4	3.4	102.1	1.1	–	1.0	–	–	–	1.7	1.4	0.7
	2003	52.6	–	42.5	–	13.4	–	2.7	4.2	127.8	1.0	–	1.4	–	0.9	–	1.9	1.7	0.8

	Persons ('000)									Attendance Rate (%)								
	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Aust.	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Aust.
2004	80.8	**2.5	42.5	*4.1	*5.6	*1.4	3.0	4.7	144.6	1.5	**0.1	1.4	*0.3	*0.4	*0.4	2.1	1.9	0.9
2005	87.2	*9.3	52.1	*4.6	*6.3	*1.3	*1.1	4.0	165.9	1.6	*0.2	1.7	*0.4	*0.4	*0.3	*0.8	1.6	1.0
Soccer (Outdoor) 2001	237.8	116.5	76.4	44.8	51.9	8.3	5.1	10.1	551.3	4.7	3.1	2.7	3.8	3.5	2.4	3.6	4.2	3.7
2002	313.8	133.0	123.9	38.2	58.4	7.7	5.7	11.6	693.2	6.1	3.5	4.3	3.2	3.9	2.1	4.7	4.7	4.5
2003	279.0	128.1	139.5	35.2	56.9	10.0	5.1	15.4	669.3	5.3	3.3	4.7	2.9	3.7	2.7	3.6	6.3	4.3
2004	328.1	105.1	117.0	30.8	45.0	10.8	6.6	15.8	659.2	6.2	2.6	3.9	2.5	2.9	2.9	4.7	6.3	4.2
2005	301.0	126.4	76.3	32.3	46.3	10.9	6.4	14.7	614.3	5.7	3.1	2.5	2.7	2.9	2.9	4.6	5.8	3.8
Total Sports 2001	3971.4	2937.6	2160.0	886.0	1196.1	280.8	113.3	201.5	11 748.6	77.9	77.4	77.3	74.7	81.0	77.2	80.5	83.2	77.8
2002	3915.2	3026.4	2226.5	928.3	1217.1	277.5	111.4	209.6	11 912.0	76.0	78.5	78.0	77.8	81.0	75.9	78.9	85.9	77.8
2003	4255.0	3317.8	2353.4	992.9	1297.2	298.7	117.2	218.6	12 850.7	81.5	84.6	80.1	82.5	84.4	80.7	83.1	88.7	82.5
2004	4317.0	3378.3	2461.0	970.3	1322.9	304.0	115.5	222.5	13 091.3	82.0	85.1	81.2	80.1	84.8	81.4	82.8	88.2	82.8
2005	4429.6	3402.4	2516.8	1006.7	1326.9	307.0	115.3	225.1	13 329.8	83.5	84.7	80.9	82.6	83.8	81.2	83.0	89.0	83.3

Notes: *Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution. **Estimate has a relative standard error of greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use. Missing data points were not reported in the public report of the survey results. The scope of the survey is all persons aged fifteen years and over in occupied private dwellings.

Source: Australian Sports Commission, *Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport 2001–05*, ASC, Canberra.

Table 8.12: Football Participation by Age Group, 2001–05

		Persons ('000)					Percentage of Total Participants for that Code				
		15–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45 years and over	Total	15–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45 years and over	Total
Australian Football	2001	201.7	79.5	55.6	* 16.5	353.3	57.1	22.5	15.7	4.7	100.0
	2002	199.2	92.5	69.6	* 18.4	379.7	52.5	24.4	18.3	4.8	100.0
	2003	229.1	120.7	63.5	* 20.1	433.5	52.8	27.8	14.6	4.6	100.0
	2004	250.9	102.6	61.4	* 36.0	450.8	55.7	22.8	13.6	8.0	100.0
	2005	313.5	101.4	85.6	* 35.6	536.2	58.5	18.9	16.0	6.6	100.0
Rugby League	2001	108.2	32.2	* 16.2	** 9.0	165.5	65.4	19.5	9.8	5.4	100.0
	2002	108.7	32.7	** 7.6	** 2.0	151.0	72.0	21.7	5.0	1.3	100.0
	2003	124.5	30.8	* 15.1	** 1.5	172.0	72.4	17.9	8.8	0.9	100.0
	2004	132.3	* 22.8	* 12.3	** 4.9	172.2	76.8	13.2	7.1	2.8	100.0
	2005	129.5	35.9	* 26.4	** 4.2	195.9	66.1	18.3	13.5	2.1	100.0
Rugby Union	2001	53.1	28.2	* 8.9	** 6.1	96.4	55.1	29.3	9.2	6.3	100.0
	2002	67.9	* 22.7	** 5.5	** 6.1	102.1	66.5	22.2	5.4	6.0	100.0

2003	85.2	31.1	** 5.7	** 5.7	127.8	66.7	24.3	4.5	4.5	100.0
2004	117.3	* 8.8	* 8.1	** 10.3	144.6	81.1	6.1	5.6	7.1	100.0
2005	108.0	* 25.6	* 18.5	** 13.8	165.9	65.1	15.4	11.2	8.3	100.0
Soccer (Outdoor) 2001	329.6	97.6	90.8	* 33.3	551.3	59.8	17.7	16.5	6.0	100.0
2002	446.1	115.5	98.8	* 32.7	693.2	64.4	16.7	14.3	4.7	100.0
2003	401.9	140.9	91.2	* 35.3	669.3	60.0	21.1	13.6	5.3	100.0
2004	361.3	124.5	119.2	* 54.2	659.2	54.8	18.9	18.1	8.2	100.0
2005	340.8	145.8	92.3	* 35.5	614.3	55.5	23.7	15.0	5.8	100.0
Total Sports 2001	2360.9	2467.1	2364.5	4556.1	11 748.6	20.1	21.0	20.1	38.8	100.0
2002	2407.7	2426.8	2317.4	4760.0	11 912.0	20.2	20.4	19.5	40.0	100.0
2003	2480.3	2554.8	2449.8	5365.8	12 850.7	19.3	19.9	19.1	41.8	100.0
2004	2555.1	2548.8	2487.4	5500.1	13 091.3	19.5	19.5	19.0	42.0	100.0
2005	2572.2	2591.7	2507.0	5658.8	13 329.8	19.3	19.4	18.8	42.5	100.0

Notes: *Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution. **Estimate has a relative standard error of greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use. Missing data points were not reported in the public report of the survey results. Results in the forty-five years and over age bracket are the sum of three age brackets reported in the ASC Survey Results. The scope of the survey is all persons aged fifteen years and over in occupied private dwellings.

Source: Australian Sports Commission, *Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport 2001–05*, ASC, Canberra.

Table 8.13: Official Football Participation, 1990–2006

Year	Australian Football	Rugby League	Rugby Union	Soccer
1990	353 986	–	–	–
1991	–	–	–	–
1992	367 482	–	–	–
1993	–	–	–	–
1994	395 304	–	–	–
1995	–	–	–	–
1996	413 450	–	–	–
1997	428 870	–	98 403	–
1998	438 098	–	101 032	–
1999	447 579	–	104 906	–
2000	436 932	–	127 801	–
2001	443 890	–	135 951	–
2002	466 647	–	148 750	–
2003	482 867	–	150 235	–
2004	516 043	–	165 218	–
2005	539 526	334 204	176 655	–
2006	581 839	371 557	–	423 111

Notes: Missing figures are not available. The participation figures reported are calculated as follows:

Australian Football – AFL National Census results including participants in club competitions, AFL Auskick, primary and secondary school sport competitions, AFL Recreational Football and dedicated veteran and female competitions.

Rugby League – Total participation includes players registered to play in senior and junior club competitions and school registrations.

Rugby Union – Total participation includes players registered to play in senior, junior, female and social club competitions and school registrations.

Soccer – Estimate calculated by applying team size multipliers to a count of the number of clubs in competitions of all age and both genders.

Sources: Lovett, Michael (ed.), *AFL Record Guide to Season 2007*, AFL Publishing, Melbourne, 2007; Australian Football League, *National Census of Australian Football Participation and Players*, AFL, Melbourne, 2004, p. 7; National Rugby League, *ARL's Annual Participation Report*, NRL, http://www.nrl.com/News/Latest/NewsArticle/tabid/76/NewsId/3845/Default.aspx, 23 January 2007, accessed 13 February 2007; Australian Rugby Union Limited, *Annual Reports*, ARU Ltd, Sydney, 2001–05; Football Federation Australia, *Participation Census 2005/06 – All Football Clubs in Australia*, FFA, Sydney, 2006.

Major AFL investments, including $130 million between 2001 and 2006, have paid off and inspired the *Next Generation* plan for a further $208 million investment in game development between 2007–11.[101] Australian football participation grew by 51 per cent (182 000) in the five years of the ASC survey to represent a 2005 participation rate

of 3.4 per cent. This growth has been in all age brackets. Official AFL census data indicates participation growth of 64 per cent between 1990 and 2006 (353 986 to 581 839 participants). Much of this growth is explained by *AFL Auskick* registrations in NSW, ACT and Queensland.[102] Club participation has increased by 20 per cent since 1990 and most players are still found in Victoria, SA, WA, Tasmania and southern NSW.[103]

Rugby league participation has remained steady at around 1.1 per cent in the ASC surveys. Limited official data suggests total participation growth of 11.2 per cent between 2005 and 2006, with an average of 352 000 rugby league participants. Junior development programs account for much of this growth but national registrations of club players also rose by 3.6 percent.[104] The *National Development Plan* developed by the ARL, ARL Development and the ASC seeks to ensure rugby league remains the most popular code of football in NSW and Queensland.[105]

Fewer Australians play rugby union than any of the four codes, though the annual participation rate has grown slowly to 1 per cent in ASC surveys. Official rugby participation jumped by 80 per cent to 176 655 between 1997 and 2005. However, the proportion of all club rugby participants in NSW, ACT and Queensland rose from 80 to 84 per cent in the same period, while the junior participation program, *TryRugby*, had only 10 000 participants between 2001 and 2005.[106] The *True Vision* plan for investment of $18 million (of the $42.6 million 2003 Rugby World Cup surplus) in community rugby seeks to address these weaknesses.[107]

Each code has developed player 'pathways' that combine marketing activities aimed at increasing (junior) participation and the identification and development of elite junior players. The *AFL Auskick* program is the most successful junior program in Australia.[108] The *Auskick* combination of skills coaching, modified games and strong marketing support has been emulated by the other codes, in the form of the *Kids to Kangaroos* (league), *TryRugby* (union) and *Football Anytime* (soccer) programs. Representative competitions at different age groups are the traditional backbone of these talent-development pathways. Each code has also developed elite junior talent-development programs in conjunction with the Australian and/or state institutes of sport.[109]

Table 8.14: Australian Institute of Sport Programs

Sport	Program Founded	Program Structure	Administered from	No. of Athletes	Age/Level of Athletes
Australian Football	1997	Camps	Melbourne	30	16 and 17 year olds forming the Australian U17 International Rules Squad
Rugby League	2002	Camps	Sydney	30	Athletes in Year 11 and 12 based in rural and regional locations
Rugby Union	1988	Camps	Sydney	26	Australian U19 Rugby Union Squad (program jointly run with Australian Rugby Academy)
Men's Soccer	1981	Residential	Canberra	NA	Australian U20 Youth Squad
Women's Soccer	1998	Camps	Canberra	24	Australian Senior Squad ('the Matildas')

Sources: Australian Institute of Sport, http://www.ais.org.au/scholarships/sports.asp, http://www.ais.org.au/sports.asp.

The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) programs include scholarships for attendance at residential programs or short-term training camps to receive specialist instruction from leading coaches, sports scientists and psychologists to prepare scholarship recipients for elite-level competition. Men's soccer was the first AIS program of any football code when it was established in 1981. Programs were subsequently instituted for rugby union (in 1988), Australian football (1997), women's soccer (1998) and rugby league (2002). These programs (see Table 8.14) have been remarkably successful in producing elite athletes. The AIS- and government-supported sport system is a key feature of the Australian model of professional team sport and the system

is among the best in the world. These programs, however, should not overshadow the importance of investments by the NSOs and national league clubs/franchises in talent identification and development. Research by the AFL estimated the net investment in sport development by the AFL, ARU and Soccer Australia as $39 million in 2000/01. The grand total of ASC grants to the four football codes was $34.6 million between 2000/01 and 2005/06.[110]

Broadcasting and Media Rights

Australian television broadcasts commenced in 1956 and there are now five free-to-air (FTA) broadcasters: the Seven, Nine and Ten commercial networks (with regional affiliates); and two public broadcasters, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). Pay Television was first approved by the Federal Government in 1992 and there are now three main service providers: Foxtel, Optus Television (metropolitan service providers) and Austar (regional service provider which carries both Foxtel and Optus channels).[111] The Australian communications industry is dominated by two companies, Telstra and Optus.[112] Foxtel was originally a 50–50 joint venture between News Limited and Telstra, with PBL (the parent company of the Nine Network) acquiring a 25 per cent interest in Foxtel from News Limited about the time of the NRL merger. Optus Television is a subsidiary of Optus, though PBL and Seven both had a financial interest in Optus Television in the 1990s.[113] Since 2002, Foxtel and Optus Television have carried channels owned by each other. The most prominent pay television sports channel is Fox Sports, which is jointly owned (50–50) by PBL and News Limited.[114] Seven established a pay television subsidiary channel, C7, in 1998, but it ceased operation in 2002 after losing the rights to the AFL and NRL to Foxtel/Fox Sports. In 2001, Seven and C7 commenced multiple legal actions against Foxtel, Fox Sports, News Limited, Telstra, PBL, Nine, Ten, Optus, Austar, the AFL, NRL Ltd and related companies, alleging matters related to the sale of those broadcasting rights were in contravention of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (Cth). In April 2007 those claims were still to be decided, though Seven/C7 has settled with the AFL and Ten.[115] While FTA coverage remains, Foxtel/Fox Sports now holds the live or replay broadcast rights to *all* games in the AFL, NRL, Super Rugby and A-League competitions.

The sale of broadcasting rights is a vital revenue stream for each football code. However, broadcasting rights agreements also come at a price, for a competition organiser exchanges more than just the broadcasting rights; it also cedes part of its managerial autonomy to the broadcaster.[116]

Broadcasting Rights History

Reports of the industry regulator suggest total sports programming expenditure by Australian FTA broadcasters alone has risen from $92.6 million in 1990/91 to $225.8 million in 2004/05.[117] Media reports of Australian broadcasting rights agreements often vary widely and the total value of a rights agreement is only sometimes officially announced. Even then, the cash and contra components of rights agreements are often undisclosed.

VFL/AFL football was shown on the Seven Network for every year between 1957 and 2001 except 1987. Media company Broadcom acquired the VFL rights for a guaranteed $24.55 million over six seasons (1987–92) and the 1987 rights were on-sold to the ABC. Seven regained exclusive rights in 1988 for $30 million over five years (1988–92).[118]

The AFL and Seven renegotiated several times in the 1990s to extend Seven's exclusive rights through to 2001, with the network covering up to five games per week. Seven also sub-licensed an independent company (Sportsvision, 1996–98) and then a subsidiary (C7, 1998–2001) to supply coverage of the surplus games to Optus TV.[119]

Media reports generally suggest Seven paid around $12 million in 1993, between $80 and $85 million for the next five years (1994–98), then renegotiated in 1995 to pay $150 million (1997–2001) or $120 million (1999–2001).[120] Seven also paid $20 million in 1997 for the first and last bidding rights to AFL broadcasting between 2002 and 2011.[121]

Seven did not use this option and a consortium headed by News Limited, and including broadcast partners Nine, Ten and Foxtel, acquired the 2002–06 AFL rights for $500 million (including $50 million contra). Nine covered three games (Friday night, two on Sunday), Ten broadcast two games (Saturday afternoon and evening) and all of the AFL finals series, while Foxtel covered three games exclusively live on the 'Fox Footy Channel', which also replayed all eight AFL games

per week, as well as a wide range of other programming on the exclusively Australian football channel. Telstra acquired 'new media' (Internet and mobile phone) rights at the same time.[122]

Partners realigned when next bidding for the AFL rights. After the AFL initially accepted a bid from Nine and Foxtel, a partnership between Seven and Ten matched that bid and acquired the 2007–11 rights for $780 million (including $87.5 million contra), later on-selling four live games to Foxtel and Austar for $315.5 million (including $50 million contra advertising). Seven (Friday nights and Sunday) and Ten (Saturday afternoon and evenings) broadcast two games each in the southern states, either live or on delay. The Fox Sports channel(s) broadcast four live games and replay all eight games each week. The FTA broadcasters will share the finals series and broadcast alternate grand finals. Telstra retained the AFL new media rights for $60 million (2007–11).[123]

Friday and Saturday night games broadcast (near-)live are highly popular in the Australian football states, but in NSW, the ACT and Queensland few games (excluding the AFL finals series and games involving local clubs) have been broadcast live or on delay in prime time. Foxtel now provides live coverage of night games in these states.

Network Ten paid around $48 million in 1989 to broadcast the NSWRL, State of Origin and Kangaroo Tests for three years (1990–92). However, when Ten entered receivership and failed to make a scheduled payment after the 1990 rugby league season, the NSWRL terminated the contract. The Nine Network purchased the NSWRL and State of Origin rights for around $6.5 million per annum for three years and promptly resold the 1991 NSWRL rights to Ten for around $4 million.[124] Nine broadcast both the NSWRL and State of Origin in 1992–93, then secured the 1994–2000 rights to the NSWRL, State of Origin and international rugby league in a seven-year deal for more than $70 million.[125] The ABC also broadcast the NSWRL/ARL on Saturday afternoons (1990–95) in agreements worth at least $5 million.[126]

The Super League war was primarily caused by News Limited as it sought to acquire sporting content for Foxtel. In 1994, the Nine and Seven Networks joined the Optus consortium, which saw both the NSWRL/ARL and AFL being shown on Optus Television. Around the same time, News Limited became involved in the Super League

concept, which eventually commenced play in 1997 after NSWRL Ltd and ARFL Ltd rejected the News Limited concept, and Nine, PBL and Optus unsuccessfully sought to defend their existing broadcast rights.[127] At some point before October 1998, PBL divested the Optus Television stakeholding and acquired 25 per cent of Foxtel.[128] Ironically, Nine broadcast both the ARL and Super League in 1997.

Following the NRL Merger Agreement, Nine signed an estimated $130 to $150 million 10-year FTA rights agreement (1998–2007) with the NRL Partnership.[129] Foxtel and Optus initially shared the NRL pay television rights (1998–2000), before Foxtel acquired exclusive pay television rights (2001–06) for $400 million.[130] In 2005 the NRL signed a six-year, $500 million agreement with Nine and Foxtel, meaning they remain NRL broadcasters until the end of the 2012 season.[131]

The value of rugby league broadcasting rights have been clouded since the Super League war. The massive direct expenditure by Nine, PBL, Optus, Telstra and News Limited on player salaries and grants, loans, sponsorship and ownership of clubs since 1994, would have likely boosted the value of recent broadcasting rights agreements had the Super League war not occurred. For example, in 1996–97, the ARL was sponsored by Optus, while Telstra sponsored Super League. Telstra has also held the NRL competition naming rights since 2001 and further invested in the Internet and mobile phone content rights to rugby league ($72 million between 2001–06 and $90 million between 2007–12).[132]

In NSW, the ACT and Queensland, Nine broadcast two NRL games on delay (Friday night and Sunday), as well as all of the NRL finals series, State of Origin series and international representative games. This has increased to a Friday night double-header from 2007. Free-to-air coverage is far worse in the rest of Australia with a few late-night replays and the NRL Grand Final in prime-time. All NRL games have been shown either live, on delay, or replayed on pay television.

The ABC and Ten broadcast Australian rugby union in the early 1990s. In 1994, Seven acquired broadcasting rights from the ARU and on-sold pay television rights to Optus Television, although News Corporation subsequently purchased the SANZAR broadcasting rights (1996–2005) for US$555 million.[133] An out-of-court settlement ensured Foxtel was the exclusive Australian pay television broadcaster

of the SANZAR competitions.[134] Seven was sub-licensed to broadcast Tri-Nations and Wallaby home tests and occasional repeats of Super Rugby games. Seven also broadcast the 1999 (from Wales) and 2003 (in Australia) Rugby World Cups. Network Ten had earlier broadcast the 1995 Rugby World Cup (from South Africa) and regained the FTA rights for the 2007 tournament (in France). This followed Ten's coverage of the 2006 Wallaby spring tour.[135] In the past decade, Wallaby tests were generally broadcast live or near-live in NSW, Queensland and the ACT, though broadcast (replay) times varied in the rest of Australia.

The current SANZAR broadcasting rights agreement (2006–10) with News Corp. (and South African broadcaster SuperSport) is worth US$323 million. Further agreements outside the geographic scope of the News Corp. agreement take the value to US$341 million.[136] Seven was again sub-licensed to broadcast a similar package of test and Super Rugby fixtures.

The proportion of the SANZAR rights agreement accruing to the ARU is subject to negotiation between the three SANZAR partners. In 1996 the ARU reported net broadcasting rights and sponsorship revenue of $14.4 million; broadcasting rights alone had grown to $31.8 million by 1995.[137]

The inaugural NSL season (1977) was covered by the Ten Network, but SBS has been the true 'home of football', covering the NSL (1981–98); the Socceroos international tournaments, including the FIFA World Cup (1990, 1994, 1998, 2002 (with Nine) and 2006); and many European leagues, either with game coverage, highlights or via the iconic program *The World Game*.[138] The ABC covered the NSL for two seasons (1989/90 and 1990/91), but quickly withdrew due to financial constraints. SBS returned in 1991/92 and reports indicate an annual FTA rights fee of merely $235 000 between 1993/94 and 1997/98, as well as $600 000 from Optus Television for 1996/97 and 1997/98.[139]

Soccer Australia and the Seven Network then signed a ten-year, $23 million agreement (1989/90 to 2008/09) covering FTA and pay television rights to the NSL and the Socceroos.[140] However, coverage was sparse, both on Seven and C7, and some NSL games were on-sold to the ABC. The contentious agreement was eventually renegotiated in 2003, but nullified by mutual agreement later that year when Soccer Australia was wound up.[141]

In 2004, the FFA negotiated a three-year agreement with Fox Sports for exclusive rights to the A-League and delayed telecast of the Socceroos. The rising popularity of soccer saw this agreement renegotiated and extended to a seven-year (2007–13) agreement worth an estimated $120 to $150 million. This agreement covers exclusive rights to the A-League (beginning with the 2006/07 season) and Socceroos home internationals including the 2001 and 2007 Asian Cup (and qualifiers), and World Cup qualifiers in 2008–09 and 2010–11. Fox Sports also has a separate agreement to broadcast the Asian Champions League, which now includes two A-League clubs. Domestic soccer and Socceroos internationals are therefore absent from FTA television for seven years, unless the Socceroos qualify for the 2010 or 2014 FIFA World Cup finals, which will be broadcast by SBS.[142]

Free-to-Air Television Audiences
Available data for the weekly top twenty programs on FTA metropolitan television highlights the clear difference in the recent history of FTA broadcasting rights in each code.[143] The most watched Australian television program between 2001 and 2006 was the 2003 Rugby World Cup Final (Australia versus England, metropolitan audience of 4.016 million). The AFL Grand Final ranked third, sixth, ninth and tenth on this aggregate list.

According to industry lobbyist 'Free TV Australia', football programming also represents six of the fifty highest rating programs in the first fifty years of Australian FTA television (1956–2006). These programs include the 2003 Rugby World Cup Final and closing ceremony (two programs), the 2003–05 AFL Grand Finals (three programs) and a composite of the 1977, 1979, 1982 and 1988 VFL Grand Finals (one program).[144] No other football programs make the list.

The AFL Grand Final, with an average metropolitan audience (for the game itself) of 2.921 million viewers on a Saturday afternoon, is the only program among the four most watched programs for each year between 2001 and 2006.[145] The NRL Grand Final (live in Sunday night prime time since 2001) had an average metropolitan audience of 2.308 million between 2001 and 2006, and ranked in the ten most watched programs in 2005 and 2006.

Table 8.15 highlights the number of football programs in the weekly top twenty most-watched FTA programs between 2001 and

2006. The AFL and NRL are mainstays of Australian FTA sports broadcasting, and the popularity of *The Footy Show*, *Friday Night Football* and *Sunday Football* (all on the Nine Network) is clear. As Nine held the rights to both leagues between 2002 and 2006, it was able to schedule a mix of AFL and NRL programming to suit local markets. Rugby union and soccer only achieved strong FTA audiences on the strength of World Cup tournaments.

Table 8.15: Football Programs in OzTAM Weekly Top Twenty Programs, 2001–06

Year	Australian Football	Rugby League (NRL / Origin)	Rugby Union	Soccer	*The Footy Show*	*Friday Night / Sunday Football*
2001	1	1 / 1	2	1	–	–
2002	1	1 / 3	1	5	2	4
2003	5	2 / 3	9	–	1	12
2004	5	1 / 3	1	–	1	12
2005	8	2 / 3	–	1	1	11
2006	6	3 / 3	5	6	2	5
Total	**26**	**10 / 16**	**18**	**13**	**7**	**44**

Notes: Totals include sports events and related sports programming (pre-game preview, pre-game entertainment, post-game review, post-game entertainment) and are the annual number of programs for each code appearing in the OzTAM ranking reports for the weekly top twenty programs on the basis of estimated free-to-air metropolitan (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth) viewing audience. The Nine Network held the broadcast rights to both the AFL and the NRL between 2002–06. Nine produced two versions of the light-entertainment program *The Footy Show*. The NRL version was broadcast at 9.30 p.m. in Sydney and Brisbane and the AFL version was broadcast at 9.30 p.m. in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. The other version of both programs is broadcast later on Thursday night. Similarly, Nine's prime-time *Friday Night Football* broadcast was the NRL in Sydney and Brisbane and the AFL in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, with the other code shown in a later timeslot. In Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, the *Sunday Football* telecast was two AFL games, while in Sydney and Brisbane the telecast was one AFL and one NRL game. Number of weeks included in data: 2001 – 48; 2002 – 40; 2003 – 40; 2004 – 40; 2005 – 40; 2006 – 44.

Source: OzTAM, *Top 20 Programs–Ranking Reports,* http://www.oztam.com.au

Since 1994, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has been required to maintain a list of events (the 'anti-siphoning list') to which the broadcast rights are available, at first

instance, for purchase by FTA broadcasters.[146] Sports broadcasting of all kinds has represented between 9 and 12 per cent of total FTA hours broadcast between 1995 and 2003.[147] The anti-siphoning regulations are intended to impede the conversion of popular sporting events—that should be available on FTA television—from FTA to exclusive pay television broadcasts. There were only 1.84 million pay television subscribers by June 2006.[148] Football broadcasts on the anti-siphoning list (1 January 2006 – 31 December 2009) are as follows:

Australian Rules Football

4.1 Each match in the Australian Football League Premiership competition, including the Finals Series.

Rugby League Football

5.1 Each match in the National Rugby League Premiership competition, including the Finals Series.

5.2 Each match in the National Rugby League State of Origin Series.

5.3 Each international rugby league 'test' match involving the senior Australian representative team selected by the Australian Rugby League, whether played in Australia or overseas.

Rugby Union Football

6.1 Each international 'test' match involving the senior Australian representative team selected by the Australian Rugby Union, whether played in Australia or overseas.

6.2 Each match in the Rugby World Cup tournament.

…

Soccer

8.1 The English Football Association Cup Final.

8.2 Each match in the Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup tournament held in 2006.

8.3 Each match in the Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup tournament held in 2010.[149]

Listed events include the entire AFL and NRL seasons. However, the AFL, FFA Ltd and NRL Ltd have vocally opposed the list.[150] 'Listing' does not guarantee FTA broadcasters exclusive rights, nor does it compel FTA broadcasters to purchase rights to the listed event and the 'use-it-or-lose-it' guidelines in place to stop FTA hoarding of sports broadcasting rights are weak. Pay television broadcasters may only acquire the rights to listed events in restricted circumstances which afford the FTA broadcasters with the first opportunity to acquire such rights.[151]

Competitive Balance [152]

In the highly competitive sports-entertainment marketplace, it is usually argued that competitive balance is important for it provides the 'passionate partisan' fans and players alike with *hope* that their team will win tomorrow, irrespective of whether they have won or lost today. Team success of some minimal level must be shared among all league clubs to maintain this hope and interest in the longer term. Alternately, the 'theatregoer' desires a highly-skilled, close and exciting sporting contest.[153] Competition organisers recognise the importance of enhancing the absolute and relative quality of play so as to attract and maintain the interest of both the 'passionate partisans' and the 'theatregoers'. They have also understood the underlying source of economic competition is between codes, sports competitions and other entertainment and leisure pursuits, not between individual clubs. Competitive balance is the natural extension of this 'league-think' philosophy.[154] Leagues prosper when all clubs are financially sound, fans of all clubs have a legitimate hope of future success and the sporting contest itself is of a high quality.

Within-season competitive balance measures typically utilise club seasonal winning percentages (WPCT) as the raw data to calculate dispersion statistics. For instance, the ASD/ISD ratio compares the actual dispersion of club WPCT in a season to that expected if all teams had an equal (50 per cent) chance of winning any home-and-away season game. The ASD/ISD ratio thus divides the actual standard deviation (ASD) of all club winning percentages in a given season by the idealised standard deviation (ISD), the dispersion of club winning percentages which would be expected if all teams were of equal playing strength.[155] A lower ASD/ISD ratio indicates a more even

Table 8.16: Australian Leagues, Composition and Competitive Balance, 1990–2007

Season	Australian Football League			NSWRL / ARL / National Rugby League			National Soccer League / A-League			Rugby Super 12s / Super 14s		
	ASD / ISD	Teams	Premier	ASD / ISD	Teams	Premier	ASD / ISD	Teams	Premier	ASD / ISD	Teams	Premier
1990	1.809	14	Collingwood	1.846	16	Canberra	1.598	14	Sydney Olympic	–	–	–
1991	1.878	15	Hawthorn	1.627	16	Penrith	1.229	14	South Melbourne	–	–	–
1992	1.875	15	West Coast Eagles	1.286	16	Brisbane	0.908	14	Adelaide City	–	–	–
1993	1.671	15	Essendon	2.000	16	Brisbane	1.316	14	Marconi	–	–	–
1994	1.408	15	West Coast Eagles	1.862	16	Canberra	1.445	14	Adelaide City	–	–	–
1995	1.839	16	Carlton	2.193	20	Canterbury	1.439	13	Melbourne Knights	–	–	–
1996	1.854	16	North Melbourne	1.752	20	Manly	1.757	12	Melbourne Knights	1.273	12	Auckland Blues
1997	1.156	16	Adelaide	1.547 / 1.261*	12 / 10 *	Newcastle / Brisbane *	1.328	14	Brisbane Strikers	1.181	12	Auckland Blues
1998	1.312	16	Adelaide	1.904	20	Brisbane	1.218	14	South Melbourne	1.308	12	Canterbury Crusaders
1999	1.714	16	(Nth Melb.) Kangaroos	1.745	17	Melbourne	1.507	15	South Melbourne	1.249	12	Canterbury Crusaders
2000	1.768	16	Essendon	1.240	14	Brisbane	1.350	16	Wollongong Wolves	1.320	12	Canterbury Crusaders
2001	1.859	16	Brisbane Lions	1.551	14	Newcastle	1.624	15	Wollongong Wolves	1.000	12	ACT Brumbies

	ASD/ISD (AFL)	Teams	Champion	ASD/ISD (NRL)	Teams	Champion	ASD/ISD (Soccer)	Teams	Champion	ASD/ISD (Rugby)	Teams	Champion
2002	1.610	16	Brisbane Lions	1.809	15	Sydney Roosters	1.407	13	Olympic Sharks	1.767	12	Canterbury Crusaders
2003	1.777	16	Brisbane Lions	1.726	15	Penrith	1.174	13	Perth Glory	1.360	12	Auckland Blues
2004	1.765	16	Port Adelaide	1.618	15	(Canterbury) Bulldogs	1.468	13	Perth Glory	1.059	12	ACT Brumbies
2005	1.611	16	Sydney	1.019	15	Wests Tigers	-	-	-	1.523	12	Canterbury Crusaders
2006	1.758	16	West Coast Eagles	1.535	15	Brisbane	1.496	8	Sydney FC	1.475	14	Canterbury Crusaders
2007	NA	16	NA	NA	16	NA	1.113	8	Melbourne Victory	NA	14	NA
Average (1990–2006)	1.686	15.6	-	1.662	16.0*	-	1.385^	13.9^	-	1.320	12.2	-
Expansion Teams	-	3	-	-	6**	-	-	16^	-	-	3^^	-
Contractions / Mergers	-	0/1	-	-	4**/3	-	-	17^/0	-	-	1^^	-
Premiership Distribution	-	3-3-2-2-2-1-1-1-1	-	-	5-2-2-2-2-1-1-1	-	-	3-2-2-2-2-2-1-1^	-	-	6-3-2	-

Notes:

ASD / ISD is the ratio of the actual standard deviation of regular season team winning percentages in season t to an 'idealised' standard deviation calculated on the basis of all league teams having a 50 per cent chance winning all matches in an x game regular season.

*The 1997 ASD / ISD ratio is for the Australian Rugby League. 1997 was the inaugural and sole season of the ten-team Super League competition, which was won by Brisbane (ASD / ISD = 1.261). The average expansion and contraction statistics for rugby league do not include Super League–related changes.

**NRL expansion and contraction statistics do not include the expulsion and readmission of South Sydney in 2000 and 2002.

^Average ASD / ISD and league size, expansion, contraction, merger and premiership distribution statistics refer only to the National Soccer League. Some NSL clubs have exited and rejoined the League twice (e.g. Newcastle Breakers).

^^Rugby Super 12 expansion and contraction statistics do not include the exclusion and readmission of the South African team The Stormers in 1997 and 1998.

league season than a higher ASD/ISD ratio. However, club win–loss records and league ladder rankings can change from one season to the next; one season's premier could win the next wooden spoon and yet the ASD/ISD ratio could remain constant. Understanding long-run patterns—such as the league-wide distribution of premierships and individual club performance trends—helps counter this problem.

Fans may not experience competitive balance in the same way that it is measured, but measurements of the kind presented in this chapter have informed the strategic planning of leagues in Australia and the United States.[156] Competition organisers typically attribute league competitive balance trends to changes in league composition or labour and product markets regulations.

Table 8.16 presents the ASD/ISD ratios for each competition as calculated on the basis of home-and-away season WPCT. The Super Rugby competition (1996–2006) has exhibited the greatest within-season evenness with an average ASD/ISD ratio of 1.320, closely followed by the NSL (1990–2004) average ASD/ISD ratio of 1.385, while the average ASD/ISD ratio of 1.305 for the first two seasons of the A-League (2005/06 and 2006/07) is even better. The average (1990–2006) levels of within-season competitive balance in the NRL (1.662) and the AFL (1.686) reveal slightly less balanced competitions relative to the NSL and Super Rugby on this measure.

Table 8.16 also highlights the league premier or champion for each season between 1990 and 2006, the distribution of premierships and the compositional stability of leagues in this era. Between 1990 and 2006, the seventeen AFL premierships were shared between ten clubs (with a 3-3-2-2-2-1-1-1-1-1 distribution). With a steady expansion strategy and only one merger, an average of 15.6 clubs contested each AFL season.

Over the same period, the seventeen NSWRL/ARL/NRL premierships were shared between nine clubs (5-2-2-2-2-1-1-1-1 distribution). When the 1997 Super League season is included, the dominance of the Brisbane Broncos (six premierships) is even more impressive. However, the folly of the 1995 ARL expansion, the Super League war and club mergers has seen twenty-six different clubs compete in one of the NSWRL, ARL, Super League or NRL. The NSWRL began with sixteen clubs in 1990 and the NRL finished with fifteen in 2006, for an average of 15.7 clubs per season (including Super League).

The NSL championships between 1990 and 2004 were shared between nine clubs (3-2-2-2-2-2-1-1 distribution). Thirty different NSL clubs in fifteen years (average of 13.9 per season) highlights the sheer instability and financial weakness of the now-defunct league. In contrast, only fourteen teams have participated in the eleven years of Super Rugby. Only three teams (6-3-2 distribution) have won the Super Rugby competition – the Canterbury Crusaders have the impressive record of six championships.

Managing Competitive Balance

Competition organisers have three principal ways to increase competitive balance. The first is to change the geographic distribution of clubs in different cities and states, so as to create conditions where all clubs have a similar market size from which to generate revenue. This may require competition expansion, contraction or the relocation of participant clubs and/or games. A second approach is to share revenue between participant clubs. Competition organisers typically seek to facilitate (revenue-maximising) collective sale of broadcasting and merchandising rights. Such revenue may then be distributed equally among participant clubs and/or used to positively subsidise the financially weakest clubs in the competition. Club-generated revenue—such as match-related receipts—may also be shared, either between the two clubs contesting an individual game; or by pooling such revenue from all games in a season for distribution among all participant clubs. Revenue sharing implies the subsidisation of financially weak clubs by wealthier clubs. The third approach essentially seeks to limit the playing talent acquired by wealthy clubs and thus enhance on-field competitive balance by regulating one or more of the following aspects of the labour market:

(a)   the entry of new players to the competition (for example, via one or more of a player draft, player transfer fees, player roster limitations, a reserve clause, residential zoning or other regulations which assign a player to a particular club)

(b)   the transfer of players between participant clubs in the same competition (again, via one or more of a player draft, player transfer fees, player roster limitations, a reserve clause or other player assignment regulations)

(c)   player salaries (for example, via the capping of total club player salary expenditure and/or individual player salaries).

For the AFL, the within-season competitive balance is greater in the period 1990–2006 than in any other period since 1897. This is arguably due to the AFL's on-field and financial 'equalisation strategy', including the player draft, player lists limitations, the salary cap and related salary regulation, and a multi-faceted system of revenue sharing; as well as the expansion of the AFL competition and consequent changes to the relative spread of AFL clubs across the nation.[157]

The draft has been the primary recruitment mechanism for AFL clubs since 1987, after the player-transfer system had been overturned by the *Foschini v Victorian Football League* decision in 1983.[158] The system now includes the 'national draft' as the primary recruitment mechanism, and the 'pre-season draft' which acts as a means for out-of-contract and delisted players to transfer clubs. These two drafts facilitate the recruitment of players for the senior player list of each club and create a monopsony in the labour market, as players are prohibited from re-entering the draft for two years if drafted but unable to agree to terms of employment. Players do not have free agency in the AFL system, though a unique feature of Australian football is the 'father–son rule', which enables the son of a former long-serving player, coach or administrator to play for the club of his father. The sale of player contracts is banned, though players and national draft picks may be traded. The AFL has also introduced rules affording poorly performed clubs 'priority selections' in the national and/or pre-season draft. Such priority selections have been awarded on the basis of poor on-field performance to give weak clubs an even greater opportunity to recruit high-quality young players. The 'rookie draft' allows each club to draft players to an additional training or 'rookie list' of footballers who only gain the right to join that club's senior player list (and be eligible to play in the AFL) when a vacancy arises, such as in the case of a long-term injury to a senior listed player.[159]

Since 1994, minimum wages have been jointly determined by the AFL and the AFL Players' Association (AFLPA) through a series of collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). While the salary cap has been the central device in AFL salary regulation since 1985, the AFL

afforded the Brisbane and Sydney clubs larger salary caps to help establish those clubs in non-traditional Australian football territory, and compensate for the higher cost of living in Sydney.[160]

Large AFL broadcasting and sponsorship rights fees have facilitated substantial equal sharing of revenue, redevelopment of stadiums and club facilities, and the creation of a special financial assistance fund that has supported the Kangaroos, Melbourne and the Western Bulldogs in particular. Between 1992 and 2005, the AFL generated revenue of $1.523 billion; the total player payments (value of salary cap) were $863.3 million (representing 56.8 per cent of AFL-collected revenue) and the AFL distributed $680.6 million to the clubs (44.2 per cent of AFL-collected revenue).[161] The AFL distributions to clubs represented 78.6 per cent of the value of total player payments.[162] Gate-sharing rules changed in 2000, from 50–50 sharing of match receipts to full home-club retention of match receipts to, paradoxically, create more equalised financial outcomes. Under gate sharing, a home club playing in a large stadium with a large walk-up cash-paying crowd (for example, at the 100 000-capacity Melbourne Cricket Ground) provided a good return for the visiting side. However, games played in smaller stadiums filled mostly with home club members (season ticket holders) and/or reserved seat holders had little room for cash-paying crowds. Revenue from these sources was not shared, so these conditions provided a poor return to the visiting club under the old 50–50 gate sharing regulations. Although the current regulations provide for 100 per cent retention of gate receipts by the home club, some clubs have entered into private side-agreements to maintain some form of gate sharing.[163]

During the corporate era, ten of seventeen AFL premierships have been won by five non-Victorian expansion clubs (Adelaide, Brisbane, Port Adelaide, Sydney and West Coast). The AFL afforded all of these clubs substantial recruiting (if not financial) assistance in the past twenty years, including the right to initially recruit free agents, priority or extra draft picks which afforded greater access to quality draftees than that available via the 'ordinary' operation of the draft system, a larger salary cap, and grants or loans. Expansion into the Australian football markets of Adelaide and Perth created a population and fiscal imbalance in favour of the clubs located in both cities,

but generous recruiting concessions at the time of league entry allowed Adelaide, Port Adelaide and West Coast to quickly build premiership-winning teams.[164]

A similar trend is evident in rugby league, for eleven of the eighteen premierships (1990–2006, including Super League) have been won by expansion clubs (Brisbane have won six, Canberra two, Newcastle two and Melbourne one). The precedent-setting *Bucky v Tutty* and subsequent *Adamson v NSWRL* decisions respectively ruled the NSWRL retain-and-transfer rules and a short-lived 'internal draft' (similar to the AFL pre-season draft) to be unreasonable restraints of trade.[165] Both cases note labour market regulations must impose restraints that go no further than reasonably necessary to protect the legitimate interests of the sporting competition. Regulation of the rugby league (particularly the NRL) labour market has therefore been limited to (nominal) salary caps and ineffective limitations on the time of year when clubs and players can negotiate future player contracts. This environment allowed Brisbane in particular to develop a strong infrastructure and premiership-winning teams as the sole club in town. Canberra and Newcastle enjoyed similar on-field benefits, if not the associated financial support enjoyed by the privately owned Broncos.

Limited regulatory options in the labour market leave competition organisers with few options to improve competitive balance and the relative quality of play. The NRL club rationalisation process cut the Australasian elite-level rugby league player labour market by more than 25 per cent and simultaneously concentrated the financial resources of the weaker Sydney clubs into the merged entities. Revenue-sharing in rugby league is clouded by the NRL governance structure and News Limited ownership of several clubs. Opposing parties in the Super League war (including News Limited and Optus) guaranteed funding of various clubs to meet the escalated player salary commitments of the Super League war. The NRL Partnership has also provided flat funding via NRL Ltd, which disburses annual grants ($2 million per NRL club from 1998, rising to $2.5 million in 2001 and $2.75 million in 2006) to all NRL clubs.[166] Flat funding helps clubs meet salary commitments, but does little to alter (potential) revenue disparities which have contributed to the success of the Brisbane Broncos and Melbourne Storm.

The Australian component of the Super Rugby competition has been stable and the Australian franchises and ARU member unions are unlikely to suffer financial difficulties. Even though Australian rugby union players are effectively free agents, a series of CBAs between the ARU and RUPA have underpinned player salaries. The ARU provides substantial grants to the member unions each year to fund salaries and operations ($124.6 million in total, 33 per cent of ARU revenue from ordinary operations between 2000 and 2005).[167]

On the basis of within-season competitive balance, the Super Rugby competition is the most even. Yet on the distribution of premierships it is the most *un*even competition, due to the absolute strength of the New Zealand franchises. Super Rugby is not a natural comparison for the AFL or NRL. The international dimensions of the SANZAR joint venture alter the relationship between competition organiser and participant by adding the regulatory layer of the national unions in-between competition organiser (SANZAR) and the participants (the Brumbies, Force, Reds and Waratahs in Australia).

Near constant expansion, contraction and turnover of NSL clubs reflected the weaker financial position of this competition. High within-season NSL competitive balance was perhaps as much a consequence of the greater propensity for draws in soccer than the effective regulatory strategies of Soccer Australia. Only three of seventeen NSL championships were won by expansion clubs. Financial strength leads to club stability, the development of a strong team and greater on-field success. The AFL and rugby league expansion clubs were able to consolidate themselves as the only club in large, Australian football- and rugby league-friendly markets. But, in the NSL, financial strength came from a long history of strong (usually ethnic) community relationships. The weaker NSL expansion clubs lacked sufficient comparable support to be able to compete.

The economic structure of the A-League is still developing. Media reports suggest the FFA is providing annual grants of around $1.2 million to each club; the FFA has also actively acquired control or a shareholding in several A-League clubs to ensure their survival.[168]

The AFL–NRL comparison is of interest. The AFL is obviously the most stable competition. The even spread of premiers and evidence suggesting a 10 per cent improvement in within-season competitive

balance since 1987 all suggest the AFL equalisation (draft, salary cap, revenue sharing) and expansion strategies have been highly effective.[169] However, the financial strength and on-field dominance of non-Victorian clubs is of concern and there are fears of a similar outcome to that which has occurred in the NRL, with the absolute dominance of the Brisbane Broncos (one in three premierships since 1990). The Broncos, without the constraints of a player draft, have been able to build consistently strong teams as the only club in Brisbane for most of the past two decades. Many Victorian-based AFL clubs have expressed concerns that the financial strength of the non-Victorian AFL clubs may translate into on-field dominance in the longer-run.

On balance, the evidence supports the AFL approach to equalisation strategy and highlights the importance of competitive balance, cartel discipline and 'league-think' to the viability of a professional sporting competition.

Collective Bargaining and Salaries

Labour market regulations and player salaries have been influenced by CBAs between the competition organisers and player associations; the AFLPA, RLPA, RUPA and the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA). All player associations have threatened or initiated industrial or legal action, but CBAs have been a feature of Australian football since 1994, rugby league since 2005, rugby union since 1995 and soccer between 1996 and 2004.[170] These agreements have evolved far beyond minimum wage fixation and recognition (particularly in the case of the AFL) that regulations such as player drafts and salary caps are 'necessary and reasonable restraints for the proper protection of the legitimate interests' of a professional team sporting competition.[171]

The CBAs set salary caps, minimum salaries and total player payments. The AFL, NRL and A-League caps are all 'soft caps' in the sense that some junior player salaries, 'marquee' and/or 'veteran' player salaries and side-agreements relating to marketing activities may be excluded from cap calculations. The following summaries outline nominal cap values exclusive of such exemptions.

The original VFL/AFL salary cap was introduced in 1985 and initially set relative to individual club capacity to pay. By 1991 the cap had been standardised at $1.5 million per club (total player payments

(TPP) were $22.5 million) and had grown to $6.47 million per club for a list of forty senior players in 2006 (TPP: $103.6 million for 640 players). The actual average salary of those to play senior AFL football grew 376 per cent from $46 212 to $220 027 in the same period. At a minimum, clubs are entitled to count only 50 per cent of the salary of one or two 'veterans' (players with ten years of service to one club) in cap calculations. Clubs may nominate more than two veterans, in which case they are afforded an exemption of (100 / x) per cent of the salary of x number of 'veterans'. For example, three veterans are entitled to a salary cap exemption of 33.3 per cent each, four veterans are entitled to an exemption of 25 per cent each, and so on.[172]

The NSWRL introduced a salary cap in 1990 which varied between $800 000 and $1.5 million per club. This cap rose to a maximum of $1.8 million by 1994. Salaries exploded during the Super League war with elite players earning between $700 000 and $1 million (inclusive of sign-on bonuses). The NRL introduced a salary cap of $3.25 million per club (TPP: $55.25 million) in 1999, but this was calculated on 'nominal' values while playing contracts signed in the Super League war contracts ran their course, for these contracts represented an inflationary bubble in rugby league player salaries. For example, the true wage expenditure of the top five spending NRL clubs alone was $28.02 million in 1999 and $22.62 million in 2001. This was far above the collective nominal salary cap value of $16.25 million (for five clubs) in those years. The NRL cap was $3.6 million for the twenty-five highest paid players at each club in 2006 (TPP: $54 million for 375 players), giving a nominal average salary of $144 000. Salary cap exemptions of $100 000 each are available for one 'veteran' of ten years service and two 'marquee' players drawn from among the five highest paid players at the club.[173]

The A-League has operated with a salary cap of $1.5 million (TPP: $12 million) and $1.6 million for a twenty-player roster (TPP: 12.8 million for 160 players) in seasons one and two, suggesting a nominal average salary of $80 000 for 2006/07. 'Marquee player' salaries are excluded from cap calculations. A-League clubs were allowed to nominate one marquee player in 2005/06. In 2006/07, the salaries of 'guest players' on short-term contracts were also outside the cap.[174]

Clubs in all sports have sought to 'illegally' pay players outside the salary cap. Some of the most prominent transgressors include the Canterbury Bulldogs (NRL), Carlton (AFL) and Sydney FC (A-League). The NRL deducted thirty-seven competition points from the Bulldogs in 2002, the FFA deducted three competition points from Sydney FC in 2006 and the AFL stripped Carlton of national draft selections in 2002 and 2003. Substantial fines were also levied in all cases.[175]

Average Super 12 salaries were estimated at $83 000 in the inaugural 1996 season. The (minimum) average payment for Australia's 132 Super 14 players has grown by 131 per cent to $192 041 in 2006. The SANZAR Super Rugby competition does not have a salary cap. Australian rugby union player payments are determined via collective bargaining. One victory in the 'rugby war' was the 1995 undertaking of the ARU to guarantee (the as-yet-unconstituted) RUPA 95 per cent of ARU television revenue. Subsequent CBAs amended both the percentage value and the revenue streams included in the calculations of player revenue shares. By 2006, the 132 Australian rugby players were entitled to $25 million (or 26 per cent of defined 'Gross Player Revenue', whichever was highest).[176]

National Team Performance

The performance of Australia's national football teams (1990–2006) is compared in Table 8.17. Although the AFL has staged an International Cup tournament in 2002 and 2005 for nations other than Australia, the indigenous code is not played by an Australian representative team. Instead, the AFL and the Gaelic Athletic Association have alternately hosted an annual two-test series of 'International Rules' football since 1998 (earlier series: 1984, 1986–7 and 1990). Australia has a winning percentage of .444 in this era, with the best performance being a 2005 clean sweep of the Irish.[177]

Australia's national rugby league side, the Kangaroos, has an impressive winning percentage of .793 since 1990. However, international rugby league is weak as Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand and to a lesser extent France are the primary professional rugby league nations. The Rugby League International Federation (RLIF) has irregularly conducted a World Cup tournament since 1954. The Kangaroos have won nine of twelve World Cups, including the past six

tournaments (1975, 1977, 1988, 1992, 1995 and 2000). Annual tests against New Zealand (including ANZAC Day tests), occasional tours to Great Britain, a new tri-nations series against these two nations and the World Cup are the current highlights of the international rugby league calendar. The Kangaroos have played on an irregular basis since the Super League war, for a 77 per cent winning record.[178]

In the professional era, international test rugby union for the Wallabies includes the annual Tri-Nations Series against the New Zealand All Blacks and the South African Springboks, with the prestigious Bledisloe Cup (versus All Blacks) and Mandela Plate (versus Springboks) also awarded on the basis of Tri-Nations test results. Australia last held the Bledisloe Cup between 1998 and 2002, and the Mandela plate in 2006. The All Blacks have dominated the Tri-Nations Series, winning seven times. Australia (in 2000 and 2001) and South Africa have won the series twice each. The Wallabies also play annual home test series against non-SANZAR nations and usually tour the northern hemisphere in the latter half of the year. The four-yearly IRB Rugby World Cup was first held in 1987 and won by the All Blacks. The Wallabies have won the Rugby World Cup twice (1991, 1999) and were defeated by England in the 2003 final at Stadium Australia. South Africa won in 1995. The Wallabies have enjoyed moderate success in the professional era, with a winning percentage of .663 since 1996, though Table 8.17 highlights several eras of dominance.[179]

Australia's national men's soccer team, the Socceroos, has a chequered history due to the historical reluctance of foreign-based Australians to play for the Socceroos ahead of their overseas clubs and the poor standard of competition in the Oceania Football Confederation. The Socceroos 1990–2006 winning percentage of .917 against OFC nations is far better than the 50–50 success rate against non-OFC nations. Australia first entered the preliminary rounds of the FIFA World Cup in 1966 and contested the FIFA World Cup Finals for the first time in West Germany in 1974. Subsequent attempts suffered from a qualification process first involving fixtures against the weak OFC nations, followed by a final play-off series against a stronger nation from either the Asian or South American Confederations. This led to a series of near-misses until 2006, when Australia reached the round of sixteen at the FIFA World Cup Finals, again in Germany. Following Australia's acceptance as a member of the Asian Football

Table 8.17: Australian National Football Team Performance, 1990–2006

Australian International Rules Team (AFL National Team)

Year	P	W	L	D	WPCT
1990	3	1	2	0	.333
1991	–	–	–	–	–
1992	–	–	–	–	–
1993	–	–	–	–	–
1994	–	–	–	–	–
1995	–	–	–	–	–
1996	–	–	–	–	–
1997	–	–	–	–	–
1998	2	1	1	0	.500
1999	2	0	1	1	.250
2000	2	1	1	0	.500
2001	2	0	2	0	.000
2002	2	1	0	1	.750
2003	2	1	1	0	.500
2004	2	0	2	0	.000
2005	2	2	0	0	1.000

Kangaroos (and SL Australia 1997) (Rugby League)

Year	P	W	L	D	WPCT
1990	7	6	1	0	.857
1991	5	4	1	0	.800
1992	4	3	1	0	.750
1993	3	2	0	1	.833
1994	5	4	1	0	.800
1995	8	7	1	0	.875
1996	2	2	0	0	1.000
1997	6	4	2	0	.667
1998	3	2	1	0	.667
1999	4	3	1	0	.750
2000	2	2	0	0	1.000
2001	5	4	1	0	.800
2002	2	2	0	0	1.000
2003	5	4	1	0	.800
2004	8	5	2	1	.688
2005	7	5	2	0	.714

Wallabies (Rugby Union)

Year	P	W	L	D	WPCT
1990	7	4	3	0	.571
1991	10	9	1	0	.900
1992	8	7	1	0	.875
1993	8	5	3	0	.625
1994	6	6	0	0	1.000
1995	8	4	4	0	.500
1996	11	8	3	0	.727
1997	12	6	5	1	.542
1998	13	11	2	0	.846
1999	13	11	2	0	.846
2000	10	8	2	0	.800
2001	11	6	4	1	.591
2002	10	6	4	0	.600
2003	14	9	5	0	.643
2004	12	9	3	0	.750
2005	13	5	8	0	.385

Socceroos (Soccer)

Year	P	W	L	D	WPCT
1990	3	1	2	0	.333
1991	13	7	2	4	.692
1992	12	7	4	1	.625
1993	12	7	2	3	.708
1994	3	2	1	0	.667
1995	5	4	1	0	.800
1996	16	9	6	1	.594
1997	15	8	3	4	.667
1998	2	0	1	1	.250
1999	9	4	4	1	.500
2000	19	14	2	3	.816
2001	12	4	6	2	.417
2002	9	4	3	2	.556
2003	6	2	1	3	.583
2004	10	4	4	2	.500
2005	15	10	3	2	.733

Category	2006					1990–2006				
	P	W	L	D	%	P	W	L	D	%
	2	1	1	0	.500	21	8	11	2	.429
	6	5	1	0	.833	82	64	16	2	.793
Pre-Super League (1990–1996)						34	28	5	1	.838
NRL Era (1998–2006)						42	32	9	1	.774
vs ENG GBR NZL SL_NZL SL_GBR						65	47	16	2	.738
vs All Other Teams						17	17	0	0	1.000
	13	7	5	1	.577	179	121	55	3	.684
Amateur Era (1990–1995)						47	35	12	0	.745
Pro Era (1996–2006)						132	86	43	3	.663
vs BL ENG FRA IRE NZL SAF SCO WAL						146	89	54	3	.613
vs All Other Teams						33	32	1	0	.970
	6	2	3	1	.417	167	89	48	30	.623
Pre-FFA (1990–2003)						136	73	38	25	.629
FFA Era (2004–06)						31	16	10	5	.597
vs Non-Oceania Teams						119	46	45	28	.504
vs Oceania Teams						48	43	3	2	.917

Notes: All results are for international matches only. The 1997 rugby league results include those for Super League Australia as this team played fully fledged national teams representing Great Britain and New Zealand, due to the Super League alignment of those nations. National Team Abbreviations: BL – British & Northern Ireland Lions; ENG – England; FRA – France; IRE – Ireland; NZL – New Zealand; SAF – South Africa; SCO – Scotland; SL_NZL – Super League New Zealand; SL_GBR – Super League Great Britain; WAL – Wales.

Sources: Lovett, Michael (ed.), *AFL Record Guide to Season 2007*, AFL Publishing, Melbourne, 2007; Middleton, David (ed.), *2006 Official Rugby League Annual*, NRL, Sydney, 2006; Pick and Go Test Match Rugby Database, http://www.lassen.co.nz/pickandgo; Oz Football, http://www.ozfootball.net

Confederation, the Socceroos easily qualified for the 2007 AFC Cup Finals. The Olyroos—the men's Olympic soccer team—have contested every Olympic tournament since 1988 (as well as the 1956 Melbourne Olympic tournament) with a success rate of 40 per cent across the past five Olympiads. The Olyroos' best result was a loss to Ghana (1–0) in the 1992 bronze medal game.

The national women's soccer team—the Matildas—has a winning percentage of only .488 for all games (including Olympic fixtures) between 1991 and 2006, but attained a highest ever FIFA world ranking of fourteen in March 2007. The Matildas have contested the finals of the last three FIFA Women's World Cup tournaments (1995, 1999 and 2003) and have qualified for the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup Finals. Australia also contested the Olympic tournaments in Sydney and Athens (where they were defeated in a quarter-final).[180]

Conclusion

As the themes addressed in the previous chapters of this book show, football is a serious business. The four national league competition organisers—the AFL, ARU Ltd, NRL Ltd and FFA Ltd—collectively generated revenue of $375 million in 2005 alone. However, there must also be a strong base of grassroots interest and participation for a sport to flourish and NSOs and national league competition organisers alike have a custodial responsibility to their sport. Yet, government reports highlight the fact that elite-level competitions and organisations attract public interest and revenue at the expense of lower-level competitions in each sport.[181] They hence face the constant challenge of balancing sport development goals against the claims of players, coaches and clubs at the elite levels of competition.

During this corporate era of sport the AFL has been an exemplar of how to impose cartel discipline over national league clubs and successfully manage the relationship with elite athletes, players' associations, broadcasters and sponsors. The AFL has also invested heavily in stadium redevelopment and the participatory base of the code and will continue to do so in the next five years. The AFL Commission has proven itself as an independent body able to effectively develop strategy and initiate change in the interests of the sport as a whole, rather than the secular interests of clubs, states or other interest

groups. Such an independent board of directors is the foundation of the Australian model of professional team sport.

Revenue, attendance and participation rates paint three clear pictures. First, Australian football is by far the most popular code in Australia. Annual AFL attendance has exceeded six million since 1997 and 102 million fans have attended an AFL game since 1989. They have had much to cheer about. Fans in all mainland states have had the chance to celebrate a local premier this century and all sixteen clubs have reached the preliminary finals (the games before the grand final) since 1998. Competitive balance is high due to the success of key equalisation strategies—revenue sharing, the national draft and total player payments cap—which help to evenly distribute playing talent and provide sufficient resources to support the financially weaker clubs. National expansion has also contributed to growth and competition evenness. The AFL itself has earned $1.231 billion between 1997 and 2005, with AFL players receiving $778.8 million (63 per cent of centrally collected AFL revenue) in the same period.

'Football' means Australian football in the southern and western states, yet, 54 per cent of the Australian population lives in NSW, the ACT and Queensland, where Australian football is not the traditional code of choice and FTA television coverage is still patchy. For Australian football to continue to prosper, the massive future revenues ($1.4 billion expected between 2007–11) must be spent wisely.[182] *Auskick* participants and their families living north of the Murray River must be converted into open-age players and lifetime fans of Australian football. The heartland in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania must also be nurtured, since:

> icons can fail. … And the nightmare for Australian football would be that while experiencing great success at the elite AFL level of the game, the foundations were crumbling. Lifestyle choices are taking more young people towards touch rugby and basketball, and parents towards soccer. Australia's population and corporate epicentre is between Sydney and Brisbane, where our code ranks behind the two rugby codes and soccer. … Global competition fuels interest in soccer. … We can debate the seriousness of these challenges but we cannot dispute that they exist.[183]

Second, rugby league and rugby union both draw large crowds in Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra. The NRL is world-class and the State of Origin series is the ideal introduction to rugby league for new fans. Rugby league has recovered from the Super League war, player wages have stabilised and the code is growing again. Grassroots participation has climbed since the 1999 formation of ARL Development. The NRL has expanded again to sixteen clubs and recent broadcasting agreements ensure it is on television from Friday to Monday night. Rugby league is part of the popular culture of NSW, the ACT and Queensland. But concerns remain about the health of grassroots rugby league and the capacity to retain elite players who may be attracted to rugby union.[184] Rugby union is also popular in the northern states and benefits from a wealthy supporter base who are exposed to the sport in the private school system. The ARU has enjoyed strong growth in revenue, attendance and participation since rugby went professional in 1996. A $42 million investment fund and growth strategy including the new Super Rugby franchise in Perth and Australian Rugby Championships will ensure rugby union remains part of the national sporting consciousness. In spite of the weaker international dimension, rugby league is stronger in this nation than rugby union. However, both rugby codes struggle to attract players outside of NSW, the ACT and Queensland, while FTA television coverage of both codes is worse in non-rugby states than AFL coverage is in the rugby heartland.

Finally, soccer is the sleeping giant of Australian sport. Structural change including the establishment of the FFA, the new A-League and Australian membership of the Asian Football Confederation have dramatically enhanced the prospects of regular high-quality domestic soccer. A-League attendances have exceeded one million in both seasons to date and the Socceroos have shown the ability to compete at the FIFA World Cup. Regular international fixtures in the AFC Champions League (club soccer) and the Asian Cup (representative soccer) offer additional fixtures for fans and lucrative opportunities for administrators. Such governance reforms, new revenue streams and the removal of ethnic tensions via the A-League one-town/one-team model represent the best opportunity yet for 'new football' to grow from the base of 700 000 participants. Nevertheless, attendance and revenue figures for Australian soccer are less than one-seventh of

those for the AFL. For soccer to become the code of choice for the majority of Australians, the A-League and international club soccer must be shown on FTA television, and a century or more of tradition, culture and support for Australian football and Australian rugby league must be overcome in their cities of birth.

Each code has made significant progress in the corporate era of football. Australian football is now in a position of strength relative to the other codes, yet there is no guarantee of future success for any code. The custodians of Australian football, rugby league, rugby union and soccer in Australia face a perpetual and mighty challenge to maintain and grow their sports.

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Notes

1. Robert D Macdonald is a Senior Fellow, Faculty of Law, University of Melbourne, and Managing Director, Premiership Strategies International Pty Ltd. Part of Macdonald's research is funded by Australian Research Council Discovery Grant 0209564 and also draws on research undertaken for Macdonald's forthcoming PhD, League Structures, Labour Markets and Competitive Balance: A Study of Australian Professional Sporting Leagues, University of Melbourne. Dr Ross Booth is a Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics, Monash University. Thanks to Professor Jeff Borland for advice, comments and permission to use part of the ARC-funded research. Thanks also to Associate Professor Bob Stewart for his advice, encouragement and patience.

2. Eric M Leifer, *Making the Majors: The Transformation of Team Sports in America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1995, pp.2–18.

3. See Chapter 7 for an extended discussion of the sources of 'cartel discipline'.

4. Australian Football League, *2004–2006 Strategic Plan – Summary*, AFL, Melbourne, 2004, p. 3.

5. Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, *OECD Principles of Corporate Governance*, OECD, Paris, 2004, p. 11.

6. Justice Neville Owen, *Report of the HIH Royal Commission*, Commonwealth of Australia, http://www.hihroyalcom.gov.au/finalreport/index.htm, April 2003, p. xxxiii.

7. See Australian Sports Commission, *National Sporting Organisations – Governance: Principles of Best Practice*, ASC, Canberra, May 2002. The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) *Eligibility Criteria for the Recognition of National Sporting Organisations by the Australian Sports Commission*, ASC, Canberra, September 2004, require that an organisation comply with the *Principles of Best Practice* before the ASC will recognise and fund that organisation as an NSO. Also see The Rules of the Game: Europe's First Conference on the Governance of Sport, *Conference Report & Conclusions*, http://www.governance-in-sport.com/GIS%20doc.pdf, Brussels, 26–7 February 2001.

8. This Australian model is distinguished from the US and European models of professional team sport as discussed in Carlos P Barros, Muradali Ibrahímo and Stefan Szymanski (eds), *Transatlantic Sport: The Comparative Economics of North American and European Sports*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, 2002, pp. 11–37; Thomas Hoehn and Stefan Szymanski, 'The Americanization of European Football', *Economic Policy*, vol. 14, 1999, pp. 205–40; Stephen F Ross and Stefan Szymanski, 'Open Competition in League Sports', *Wisconsin Law Review*, 2002, pp. 625–56; Stefan Szymanski, 'The Economic Design of Sporting Contests', *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2003, pp. 1149–52; Szymanski, 'Is There a European Model of Sports?', in Rodney Fort and John Fizel (eds), *International Sports Economics Comparisons*, Praeger, Greenwich, CT, 2004, pp. 19–37; and John Vrooman, 'The Economics of

American Sports Leagues', *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2000, pp. 364–98.

9   Australian companies are most commonly incorporated pursuant to the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) as a company limited by shares, whether as a proprietary company (privately-owned by no more than 50 shareholders) or as public company (stock market-listed). Such companies seek to generate profits and distribute dividends to shareholders. Shareholder liability is limited to the paid-up value (the purchase price) of their shareholding and shareholders may share in any surplus upon the winding up of the company. The *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) also provides for the incorporation of a company limited by guarantee. Although uncommon in business, this corporate form is suited to the not-for-profit purposes of many larger sporting organisations, though smaller-scale not-for-profit (sporting) organisations are often constituted pursuant to separate Associations Incorporation legislation in each state and territory. A company limited by guarantee does not have the power to issue shares and has 'members' rather than 'shareholders'. The liability of a member is limited to the amount that member has guaranteed to contribute if the company has outstanding liabilities when wound up. If there is a surplus upon winding up, that surplus is distributed in accordance with the requirements stated in the company's constitution. Sporting organisations are often income tax-exempt and this exemption requires that any such surplus be distributed to a entity with a like purpose or object.

10   For a summary of these reports, which were written by VFL President Allen Aylett, VFL executives, consultants retained by the VFL or the VFL Commission, and by John Elliott and Ian Collins (the Carlton FC president and CEO), see Dave Nadel, 'Colour, Corporations and Commissioners, 1976–1985', in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: The Real Story of Australian Rules Football*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998, pp. 200–24.

11   AFL Competition Format: VFL/AFL clubs have contested a twenty-two-round home-and-away season since 1970 (excepting 1993 when twenty home-and-away rounds were played), followed by a four-week finals series. A final eight system was first introduced in 1994 (replacing earlier final six, five and four systems) and the current format provides a guaranteed double chance to the clubs finishing in the top four league ladder positions. Home-state advantage is now afforded to clubs ranked higher on the league ladder in all finals matches prior to the grand final, which is played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on the final Saturday in September. See Michael Lovett (ed.), *AFL Record Guide to Season 2007*, AFL Publishing, Melbourne, 2007, pp. 666–7, 704–65 for explanation of the season length and finals format in all seasons of VFL/AFL competition.

12   David Crawford was a Melbourne-based partner of accounting firm KPMG Peak Marwick. See David Crawford, *AFL Administrative Structure Review – Findings* (Crawford AFL Report), Australian Football League, Melbourne, March 1993.

13   The maximum number of AFL commissioners was increased from eight to

nine in 2005 to accommodate the appointment of Ms Sam Moyston, the first female AFL commissioner.

14 AFL, *Articles of Association*, Melbourne, as at 18 November 2006, clauses 37–51.

15 AFL, *Articles of Association*, clauses 12, 13, 15.

16 AFL, *Memorandum of Association*, Melbourne, as at 18 November 2006, clause 2.

17 Adelaide Football Club, 'AFC – The Start', AFC, http://www.afc.com.au/ TheClub/History/AFCthestart/tabid/4493/Default.aspx, accessed 19 April 2007; Ross Booth, 'The Economic Development of the Australian Football League', in Wladimir Andreff and Stefan Szymanski (eds), *Handbook on the Economics of Sports*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, 2006; Port Adelaide Football Club, *2006 Annual Report*, PAFC, Adelaide, 2007; West Australian Football Commission, *2006 Annual Report*, WAFC, Perth, 2007.

18 Football Victoria, *2006 Annual Review*, Football Victoria, Melbourne, 2007; West Australian Football Commission.

19 Between 1967 and 1981, the twelve NSWRL clubs were Balmain, Canterbury, Cronulla, Eastern Suburbs, Manly, Newtown, North Sydney, Parramatta, Penrith, St George, South Sydney and Western Suburbs. All were based in metropolitan Sydney. A Newcastle-based club had contested the first two NSWRL seasons in 1908–09.

20 *News Limited v Australian Rugby Football League Limited* (1996) 64 FCR 410, 436.

21 *Bernansconi v Bellow* (unreported, New South Wales Supreme Court, Helsham CJ in Equity, 22 November 1983).

22 *Wayde v New South Wales Rugby League Ltd* (1985) 180 CLR 459.

23 The 'Bradley Report' was prepared by Dr G Bradley of major Australian consultancy WD Scott & Co. NSWRL Ltd distributed the report to all clubs in August 1992. Recommendations included a fourteen-club national competition with a maximum of five Sydney-based clubs and governance reforms to the NSO, Australian Rugby Football League Ltd, which should also become the manager of the national competition; see *News Limited v Australian Rugby Football League Limited* (1996) 64 FCR 410, 449–50.

24 *News Limited v Australian Rugby Football League Limited* (1996) 64 FCR 410, 445.

25 *New South Wales Rugby League Ltd v Australian Rugby Football League Ltd* (1999) 30 ACSR 354.

26 Australian Rugby League Development, 'About Us', ARL, http://www. arldevelopment.com.au/index.php?id=5, accessed 18 April 2007.

27 *News Limited v Australian Rugby Football League Limited* (1996) 64 FCR 410, overturning *News Limited v Australian Rugby Football League Limited* (1996) 58 FCR 447.

28 National Rugby League Limited, *Articles of Association*, NRL Ltd, Sydney, as at 20 November 2003; *South Sydney District Rugby League Football Club Ltd v News Ltd* (2000) 177 ALR 611, 641.

29 *National Rugby League Members Agreement*, clause 2, cited in *South Sydney*

District Rugby League Football Club Ltd v News Ltd (2000) 177 ALR 611, 626.

30   National Rugby League Ltd*, Memorandum of Association*, NRL Ltd, Sydney, as at 20 November 2003, clause 2.1.

31   Masters, 'Breaking the Code', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, p. 48; McGuire, Sainsbury and Honeysett, 'Ribot Looks to Sell Stake in Storm', p. 16. News Limited subsidiary Nationwide News Pty Limited owns 68.87 per cent of the Brisbane Broncos; see Brisbane Broncos Limited, *Financial Statements*, Broncos Ltd, Brisbane, 31 December 2006, p. 52.

32   Three related parties—New South Wales Rugby League Limited, News Limited and Super League Pty Ltd—are also parties to the Merger Agreement. For further details of the Merger Agreement and genesis of the NRL , the corporate and competition structures of the NRL, the contraction of the NRL competition from twenty to fourteen clubs between 1998 and 2000, and South Sydney's legal challenge to its 2000–01 exclusion from the NRL competition, see *South Sydney District Rugby Football Club Ltd v News Ltd* (1999) 169 ALR 120; *South Sydney District Rugby Football Club Ltd v News Ltd* (2000) 177 ALR 611; *South Sydney District Rugby Football Club Ltd v News Ltd* (2001) 111 FCR 456; *News Ltd v South Sydney District Rugby Football Club Ltd* (2003) 215 CLR 563.

33   NRL Ltd made the decision to exclude South Sydney after the consideration of complex ranking criteria to select the most viable club(s) for the fourteen-club competition. South Sydney alleged the selection criteria and process were in breach of the *Trade Practices Act 1974* (Cth). The High Court dismissed these claims in *News Ltd v South Sydney District Rugby Football Club Ltd* (2003) 215 CLR 563. Also see Piggins, *Never Say Die: The Fight to Save the Rabbitohs*.

34   South Sydney District Rugby League Football Club, 'New Era at Souths Begins Today with Official Handover Ceremony',http://www.souths.com.au/fanzone/viewnewsarticle.asp?ArticleID=1553, accessed 17 April 2007; *South Sydney Rabbotohs Co-Operation and Subscription Deed*, as at 27 February 2006.

35   NRL Competition Format: The rugby league home-and-away season has varied in length in accordance with the number of clubs in the competition. NSWRL/ARL clubs contested a twenty-two-round home-and-away season from 1988 until 1997. The NRL has employed a twenty-four-game season (save for a twenty-six-game season in 2000 and 2001), followed by a four-week finals series. Following numerous finals systems to cater for the changing size of the competition, a final eight system was adopted in 1999. This format (the McIntyre Final Eight) ranks clubs based upon their home-and-away season record. Four games (1 v 8, 2 v 7, 3 v 6, 4 v 5) are played in the first week, This leaves four winners and four losers ranked by their finishing positions. The two lowest ranked losers are eliminated, while the two highest ranked winners proceed to week three. Elimination matches follow to determine the grand finalists and premier. The McIntyre Final Eight system was also used by the AFL between 1994 and 1999. The NRL Grand Final has been played at Stadium Australia since 1999. While traditionally played on a Sunday afternoon, the NRL Grand

Final has been played on Sunday night since 2001 and the season is scheduled so that the NRL Grand Final coincides with the NSW Labour Day long weekend in early October. For further explanation of the home-and-away season and finals format of the NRL and predecessors, see http://stats.rleague.com/rl/snotes.html, accessed 2 April 2007.

36 Australian Rugby Union, 'History of the ARU', ARU, http://www.rugby.com.au/about_the_aru/history_of_the_aru/history_of_the_aru,183.html, accessed 18 April 2007.

37 Australian Rugby Union Limited, *Memorandum of Association*, ARU Ltd, Sydney, as at 16 September 2005, clause 4.

38 Australian Rugby Union Limited, *Articles of Association,* ARU Ltd, Sydney, as at 16 September 2005, clauses 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 6.1.

39 Australian Rugby Union Limited, *Annual Report 2005*, p. 7.

40 The RUPA nominee must have had a contract in the past five years with a member union that fields a Super Rugby franchise.

41 Australian Rugby Union Limited, *Articles of Association*, clauses 4.1, 4.11, 5.1, 6.2, 6.3.

42 Australian Rugby Union Limited, *Articles of Association*, clauses 4.5, 4.6, 6.1.

43 Australian Rugby Union Limited, *Annual Report 2001*, p. 73.

44 Leggat, 'SANZAR Relations "Fine" Claims NZRU Boss', http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/4/story.cfm?c_id=4&objectid=10401568, accessed 19 April 2007.

45 Peter Fitzsimmons, *The Rugby War*, HarperSports, Sydney, 2003; see pp. 95–8 for details of the SANZAR–News Corporation agreement, where the value of the agreement is listed as $555 million. Other sources report the value of the agreement as $550 million; for example, Owen and Weatherston, 'Professionalism and Competitive Balance in New Zealand Rugby Union', p. 228; Stensholt, 'Rugby's Dream Run', p. 70.

46 The New Zealand Super Rugby franchises are based in the cities of Auckland (Auckland Blues/Blues), Christchurch (Canterbury Crusaders/Crusaders), Dunedin (Otago Highlanders/Highlanders), Hamilton (Waikato Chiefs/Chiefs) and Wellington (Wellington Hurricanes/Hurricanes). The original four South African franchises were based in Cape Town (Western Stormers/Stormers), Durban (Natal Sharks/Sharks), Johannesburg (Cats/Lions) and in Pretoria (Northern Transvaal/Northern Bulls/Bulls). The South African Rugby Union (SARU) initially awarded the four teams to franchises, but Western Province was relegated by SARU after finishing last of the South African franchises in 1996. Orange Free State took their place in 1997. In 1998, the SARU decided to field provincial teams, and Western Province returned as the Western Stormers at the expense of the Free State (see Alan Whiticker, Super Rugby: *A History of Super 12 and Super 14 Competitions*, Garry Allen Pty Ltd, Wetherill Park, NSW, 2006, pp. 101–2). The Super 14s competition was created in 2006 with the addition of the Cheetahs (based in Bloemfontein, South Africa) and the Western Force.

47 Super 12 / Super 14 Competition Format: From its inception in 1996, the Super Rugby competition has involved all franchises playing each other

once on a home-and-away basis. The season hence increased from eleven to thirteen games with the expansion from twelve to fourteen franchises in 2006. The Super Rugby finals series include two sudden-death semi-finals (1 v 4, 2 v 3) and a final. All finals games are played at the home ground of the franchise ranked higher after the home-and-away season. The Super Rugby season spans February to May and precedes the international component of the southern hemisphere rugby season. See Whiticker.

[48] For commentary see Roy Hay, '"Our Wicked Foreign Game": Why has Association Football (Soccer) not become the Main Code of Football in Australia?', *Soccer and Society*, vol. 7, 2006, pp. 165–86; Hay, 'The Origins of the Australian National Soccer League', in Bill Murray and Roy Hay (eds), *The World Game Downunder*, pp. 113–31; Philip Mosely and Bill Murray, 'Soccer', in Wray Vamplew and Brian Stoddart (eds), *Sport in Australia: A Social History*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 213–30; Ross Solly, *Shoot Out: The Passion and the Politics of Soccer's Fight for Survival in Australia*, John Wiley and Sons, Brisbane, 2004.

[49] Mosely and Murray, pp. 217–26.

[50] NSL Competition Format: For the final three seasons of the League, the NSL clubs contested a twenty-four-round home-and-away season. In 1988 a finals system was reintroduced for the top five clubs. From season 1992/93, the number of finalists increased to six. This system was used for the rest of the League's duration, except for season 2002/03, when the top six sides played a further series of home-and-away games, with the top two playing off in the grand final. See Trevor Thompson, *One Fantastic Goal: A Complete History of Football in Australia*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2006, Appendix – The National League Record; http://www.ozfootball.net/ark/NSL/NSL.html, accessed 2 April 2007.

[51] Hay, "Our Wicked Foreign Game", offers competing opinions on the value of ethic diversity in Australian soccer.

[52] Gatt, 'Fans Long for Action in Soccer's Quest for Success', p. 28. The ethnic affiliations of the 2003–04 NSL clubs in Sydney were: Sydney Olympic (Greek), Marconi (Italian), Northern Spirit (non-ethnic), Parramatta (non-ethnic) and Sydney United (Croatian); in Melbourne: Melbourne Knights (Croatian) and South Melbourne (Greek); also, Adelaide United (Italian), Kingz FC (non-ethnic) from New Zealand, Brisbane (Italian), Newcastle (non-ethnic), Perth Glory (non-ethnic, but significant British/South African support) and Wollongong (non-ethnic).

[53] The inaugural NSL summer season of 1989–90 included seven teams from Sydney (Apia Leichhardt, Blacktown, Marconi, Parramatta, St George, Sydney Croatia and Sydney Olympic), four from Melbourne (Melbourne Croatia, Preston, South Melbourne and Sunshine George Cross), two from Adelaide (Adelaide City and West Adelaide) and one from Wollongong (Wollongong City). For the 1991 season, Heidelberg United (Melbourne) and Wollongong Makedonia entered whilst West Adelaide and Blacktown left. In 1992, Brisbane United and Newcastle Breakers entered and West Adelaide returned, while St George, Sunshine George Cross and Wollongong Makedonia left. In 1993, Morwell Falcons joined and Apia

Leichhardt left. In 1994, Brunswick Pumas entered and Preston departed. For 1994–95, the number of teams reduced by one to thirteen with the introduction of Melbourne SC and the loss of Newcastle Breakers and Brunswick Pumas. In the following year the NSL shrank by one more to a twelve-team competition with the addition of Canberra Cosmos and Newcastle Breakers and the loss of Melbourne SC, Parramatta Eagles and Heidelberg United. In 1997, the league expanded to fourteen clubs with the addition of Collingwood Warriors and Perth Glory. In 1998, Carlton entered and Collingwood Warriors departed. Expansion continued in 1999 with the addition of Sydney-based Northern Spirit. In 2000, the number of teams became sixteen with Parramatta Power and the New Zealand-based Football Kingz joining, while the Adelaide Sharks departed. In 2001, Newcastle Breakers made way for a new club, Newcastle United. The league contracted to thirteen teams in 2002 with the departure of Canberra Cosmos, Eastern Pride and Carlton. There was no change to the line-up in 2003 but for the final season of the NSL in 2003–04, Adelaide City withdrew just before the season commenced and was replaced by Adelaide United. Information sourced from http://www.ozfootball.net, accessed 2 April 2007.

54   These include the 1990 report of Dr Graham Bradley (as commissioned by the Australian Soccer Federation; see Solly, pp .46–7, 50); the 1995 report of the Hon. D G Stewart, as commissioned by the Australian Soccer Federation, with the findings subsequently released in two reports of the Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts References Committee: *Soccer, First Report* (Senate Report I), Parliament House, Canberra, June 1995; and *Soccer, Second Report* (Senate Report II), Parliament House, Canberra, November 1995. Also see PFA Management Limited, *Australian Premier League: For the Fans*, PFA Management Limited, December 2002; Independent Soccer Review Committee, *Report of the Independent Soccer Review Committee into the Structure, Governance and Management of Soccer in Australia* (Crawford Soccer Report), Australian Sports Commission, Canberra, April 2003; NSL Task Force, *Report of the NSL Task Force into the Structure of a New National Soccer League Competition* (Kemeny Report), Australian Soccer Association, December 2003.

55   Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts References Committee, *Soccer, First Report*, p. iii.

56   ASF Chairman Ian Knop first approached the Australian government for financial assistance in mid-2002, after which the ASC threatened to withdraw funding altogether if Federal Government support was not preceded by a review and structural reform. See Solly, pp.197–8.

57   Independent Soccer Review Committee, p. 41.

58   The Australian Securities & Investments Commission National Names Index indicates the application to wind up Soccer Australia Limited was lodged on 22 December 2003 and withdrawn on 3 March 2004; see http://www.asic.gov.au, accessed 19 April 2007. In January 2004, the Australian Soccer Association explained the strategy as follows: 'a full financial due

diligence [report] … and further financial advice … concluded … that Soccer Australia was nearing insolvency and … it would be unlikely to be able to raise additional funds without major restructuring. [Corporate advisor] Arnold Block Leibler was retained to advise upon a restructuring that would be in the best interests of all stakeholders and which would see the expeditious and cost effective implementation of the Crawford Report.' See Australian Soccer Association, *Strategic/Business Plan 2003–2007*, p. 6. The subsequent withdrawal of the application to wind up Soccer Australia Limited is curious.

59 Solly, pp.300–1.
60 Australian Soccer Association, pp. 3, 7; Senator Kemp, *New Funding Package for Australian Soccer*, media release, http://www.dcita.gov.au/ Article/0,,0_5-2_4009-4_116911,00.html, 23 September 2003, accessed 12 February 2007.
61 Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Constitution*, FFA, Sydney, clause 1.
62 Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Constitution*, clause 10.
63 Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Constitution*, clause3.
64 Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Constitution*, clause 7.
65 Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Constitution*, clause 10.
66 Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Constitution*, clauses 11–13.
67 The First Directors lose their voting rights as First Members after the 2006 annual general meeting. See Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Constitution*, clause 3.
68 State body votes are allocated on the following basis: 1 to 50 000 registered participants (one vote), 50 001 to 200 000 (two votes), 200 001 to 400 000 (three votes), 400 001 to 600 000 (four votes), plus one additional vote for each additional 200 000 participants above 600 000. See Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Constitution*, clause 6.2(d).
69 Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Constitution*, clause 6.2(a).
70 The directors must establish standing committees for referees, coaches, players, women, the sport of futsal (indoor soccer) and for other purposes as they see fit. See Football Federation Australia Limited, *Constitution*, clauses 3.4, 6.2(c).
71 Independent Soccer Review Committee, pp. 27–9; NSL Taskforce; PFA Management Limited
72 Football Federation Australia Ltd, *Annual Financial Report 2005/06*, FFA Ltd, Sydney, 2006, p. 26.
73 A-League competition format: The first two seasons of the A-League have seen eight clubs play a twenty-one-game home-and-away season, with a six game final four system to determine the premier. The finals series is an adaptation of the McIntyre Final Four system, with the first round of the finals determined by home-and-away season rankings. The major semi-finals (1 v 2) and elimination semi-finals (3 v 4) are played on a home-and-away basis with aggregate scores determining the victors. The loser of the major semi-finals series hosts the winner of the elimination semi-finals in the preliminary final. The winner of the major semi-finals hosts the grand final against the winner of the preliminary final in late February/early

March. Information sourced from http://www.a-league.com.au/default.aspx?s=rules, accessed 2 April 2007.

74 Peter Badel and John Taylor, 'The A-League's $19m Black Hole – Special Report: Is Soccer's Resurgence in Australia Built on the Same Shaky Foundation as the Old NSL', *Sunday Telegraph*, 24 December 2006, p. 50; FFA Ltd, *Annual Financial Report 2005/06*; FFA, 'FFA Statement Regarding New Zealand Knights', FFA, http://www.a-league.com.au/default.aspx?s=newsdisplay&id=6349&pageid=11, 14 December 2006, accessed 23 April 2007; FFA, 'New Owners for Glory', FFA, http://www.a-league.com.au/default/aspx?s=newsdisplay&id=7139&pageid=11, 23 February 2007, accessed 23 April 2007; FFA, 'New Zealand Franchise for Hyundai A-League', FFA, http://www.a-league.com.au/default/aspx?s=newsdisplay&id=7283&pageid=11, 19 March 2007, accessed 23 April 2007; Gatt, 'From Derison to a Mainstream Code', *The Australian*, 22 August 2006, p. 16.

75 Frank Lowy, 'Message to the Football Family', Football Australia, http://www.footballaustralia.com.au/default.aspx?s=insideffa_newsfeatures_newsitem&id=979623, December 2005, accessed 14 February; John O'Neill, *National Press Club Address*, http://www.footballaustralia.com.au/default.aspx?s=insideffa_newsfeature_features_item&id=10252, 26 July 2006, accessed 14 February 2005.

76 Crawford; Independent Soccer Review Committee.

77 Macdonald, League Structures, Labour Markets and Competitive Balance; Ross and Szymanski, *Fans of the World, Unite!* (forthcoming); Ross and Szymanski, 'Antitrust and Inefficient Joint Ventures: Why Sports Leagues Should Look More Like McDonald's and Less Like the United Nations'.

78 Stensholt and Thomson, 'Billion-Dollar Brawl', *Business Review Weekly*, 16 March 2006, p. 36.

79 Ben Buckley, 'Confessions of a Convert', *The Age*, 18 February 2007, http://www.theage.com.au, accessed 18 February 2007; O'Neill; Solly, pp.299–313.

80 For example, Cashman, 'Cricket', p. 58; Cricket Australia, *Annual Reports*, Cricket Australia, 2002–03, 2003–04.

81 Lovett, pp. 679–80.

82 *List of Sports Attendance Figures*, www.arikah.net/encyclopedia/List_of_sports_attendance_figures#Table, accessed 20 March 2007.

83 The total Australian population grew from 17.065 million to 20.328 million between 1990 and 2005. Population growth in the Australian football states (Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and Northern Territory) of 1.212 million was outstripped by growth of 2.047 million in the rugby states (New South Wales, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory). Information from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2006* (catalogue no. 3105.0.65.001), ABS, Canberra, 2006.

84 See Jeff Borland and Robert Macdonald, 'Demand for Sport', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2003, pp. 478–502; Downward and Dawson, *The Economics of Professional Team Sports*, pp. 69–179.

85 Australian Football League, *Annual Report*, AFL, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 48–9; National Rugby League, 'That's My Team', media release, http://www.nrl.

com.au/News/MediaReleases/MediaReleaseArticle/tabid/79/NewsId/328/
Default.aspx, accessed 18 April 2007; Parmenter, 'New Football. Re-
Launching the World Game in Australia'.

86 The AFL has identified advertising effectiveness as the second most
significant variable in a model of weekly attendance; see Demetriou,
'Marketing Australian Football'.

87 See O'Neill; also see Solly; and Thompson.

88 AFL, *Annual Report*, 1996, pp. 27–9; Garry Linnell, *FOOTBALL LTD, The
Inside Story of the AFL*, Ironbark Press, Sydney, 1995, pp. 298–311.

89 Thomas and Whelan, *Rugby '97*, p. 53.

90 See for example Bloomfield, *Australia's Sporting Success: The Inside Story*;
Stewart, Nicholson and Dixon, 'The Australian Football League's Recent
Progress: A Study in Cartel Conduct and Monopoly Power', pp.105-6; and
Stewart, Nicholson, Smith and Westerbeek, *Better By Design? The Evolution
of Australian Sport Policy*.

91 1.889 million tickets were sold to the 2003 Rugby World Cup. The
tournament generated $221.473 million in revenue and a net surplus of
$33 million for the Australian Rugby Union; see Australian Rugby Union
Limited, *Annual Report*, ARU Ltd, Sydney, 2003, p. 73.

92 O'Neill.

93 Arthurson, *Arko: My Game*, p. 86.

94 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Sports Attendance, Australia, 2002; 2005–06*
(catalogue no. 4174.0), ABS, Canberra, 2002, 2006.

95 'Interest' is a composite index based upon participation, attendance,
watching the sport on television and listening to the sport on radio. See
Martin Hirons, 'Rugby Codes Prosper as Soccer's Quest for Supremacy
Comes to a Halt', media release, http://www.sweeneyresearch.com.au, 10
June 2004; Hirons, 'Soccer Continuing to Challenge Other Football Codes',
media release, http://www.sweeneyresearch.com.au, 3 August 2006.

96 Ibid.

97 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Migration, Australia, 2004–05* (catalogue no.
3412.0), ABS, Canberra, 2005.

98 Ian Turner has suggested that Australia is divided in two by the 'Barassi
Line', which stretches between Canberra, Broken Hill, Birdsville and
Arnhem Land. Rugby territory lies to the east of the Barassi Line and the
rest of the nation is Australian football territory. See Robert Pascoe, *The
Winter Game: The Complete History of Australian Football*, p. xi.

99 Australian Sports Commission, *Participation in Exercise, Recreation and
Sport*, ASC, Canberra, 2001–05.

100 O'Neill.

101 Australian Football League, *Next Generation: Securing The Future of
Australian Football2007–11 – Presentation for Media*, Melbourne, 2006, p. 16.

102 Lovett, p. 806.

103 Australian Football League, *National Census of Australian Football
Participation and Players*, AFL, Melbourne, 2004, p. 7.

104 National Rugby League, *ARL's Annual Participation Report*, NRL, http://
www.nrl.com/News/Latest/NewsArticle/tabid/76/NewsId/3845/Default.

aspx, 23 January 2007, accessed 13 February 2007.

[105] Australian Rugby League Foundation, *National Development Plan*, p. 3; Stewart, Nicholson, Smith and Westerbeek, p. 135.

[106] Australian Rugby Union Limited, *Annual Reports*, 2001, 2005.

[107] Australian Rugby Union Limited, *True Vision: A Plan for Australian Rugby After Rugby World Cup*, ARU Ltd, Sydney, 2003, p. 3.

[108] Stewart, Nicholson, Smith and Westerbeek, p. 127. See pp. 125–36 for an overview of the junior football programs of the early 1990s.

[109] For specific details of each program see Australian Institute of Sport website, www.ais.org.au/sports.asp

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[111] Nine has achieved the highest annual ratings share of all FTA broadcasters for every year of recorded ratings (1983–2005) except 2000, when Seven broadcast the Sydney Olympics; see Australian Film Commission (AFC), *What Australians are Watching: Free-To-Air TV*. Foxtel has a near-monopoly in the provision of metropolitan cable pay television services; see AFC, *What Australians are Watching: Pay TV*.

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programming represent 249 of 5040 (4.9%) of the programs ranking in these weekly top twenty reports.

[146] The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) was created following the merging of the Australian Broadcasting Authority and Australian Communications Authority in 2005. ACMA maintains and regulates the anti-siphoning list pursuant to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), s.115.

[147] Australian Film Commission, *What Australians are Watching: Free-To-Air TV*, p. 23.

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[149] The original anti-siphoning list was amended in May 2004 and most recently on 1 January 2006.

[150] Williamson, 'Bunch of TV Spoil Sports – Official: These are the Events You Missed Out On'.

[151] Pay TV broadcasters may acquire the rights to events on the anti-siphoning list if the broadcast rights are held by commercial broadcasters – Seven, Nine, Ten and the regional networks – if they have the right to televise the event to more than 50 per cent of the Australian population, or by one of the national public broadcasters – the ABC and the SBS. Pay TV broadcasters also have an unencumbered opportunity to acquire the rights to listed events when they are removed from the anti-siphoning list. Events are automatically removed from the list 2016 hours (twelve weeks) prior to the event and 168 hours (one week) after the event if the relevant Federal Minister has not declared that the event should stay on the anti-siphoning list in accordance with the requirements outlined in s.115 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth). The Federal Minister also has discretion to remove events from the list. The *Act* also includes 'anti-hoarding' provisions to prevent FTA broadcasters from purchasing but not broadcasting listed events live in part or full by providing for events to be offered to the ABC and SBS for a nominal fee if the FTA broadcaster holding the rights does not intend to broadcast events live in part or full: *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) Part 10A. From 1 January 2007, FTA broadcasters have been subject to more stringent guidelines, requiring them to broadcast at least 50 per cent of a listed sports event live or on a maximum of one hour delay to at least 50 per cent of the population. Events not shown within the requirements of the new guidelines may be considered for removal from the anti-siphoning list. See Senator Coonan, *'Use it or Lose it'. Guidelines Released for Anti-Siphoning Sport.*

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9

Crystal-ball Gazing
The Future of Football

Geoff Dickson and Bob Stewart

A Stab in the Dark

Predicting the future of the football codes in Australia is a perilous task, and is something akin to anticipating the bounce of a non-spherical ball. In order to ensure a semblance of rationality in our subsequent discussion, our predictions in this chapter are underpinned by the trajectory of a number of trends already occurring in the wider Australian community. These include first, the impact of globalisation, and second, demographic changes associated with an increased Asian population as well as an Australian population that is becoming older, more coastal, more urban, and increasingly living in Queensland. After outlining these trends, Aaron Smith and Hans Westerbeek's[1] dimensions of professional-sports-league structure will be utilised to guide additional predictions for the future of football through to 2050. These dimensions cover format, hierarchy, multiplicity, membership, governance, labour and finance, distribution, integration and professionalism.

The Global/Local Dilemma

Soccer is truly international and sets the globalisation benchmark to which other sports aspire. The other football codes are to varying degrees international, but none can lay claim to the widespread global popularity enjoyed by soccer. This, however, is a double-edged sword for soccer's future progress in Australia. On one hand, as Theodore Levitt has argued, 'The world's needs and desires have been irrevocably homogenised. This makes the multinational corporation obsolete and the global corporation absolute'.[2] Levitt's seminal comments offered corporations a vision of a global world characterised by converging consumer tastes and preferences, and encouraged them to make their products, distribution and marketing consistent across countries. In this way, globalisation offered corporations the advantages of scale economies, efficiency, and higher profitability. On the other hand, as domestic competition and the power of local markets grew, it became imperative for these organisations to respond to local markets by adapting their products and marketing strategies to each market they served. Consequently, organisations involved in the global marketplace must now cope with the intertwined logics of globalisation and localisation.

The balance between globalisation and localisation gives rise to a number of scenarios for the football codes. At one level, globalisation suggests that soccer is best placed among the football codes in Australia to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the internationalisation of markets and dominance of a few global sports brands. If there was to be a single code of football to rule them all, then soccer would surely be the one. It also suggests that Australian football, clearly the least international of the other codes, would be most vulnerable to a homogenisation of the world's football interests. However, this simple logic does not apply in such a linear way. Australian football, where the name of the game reflects its domestic advantage, is well placed to resist the process of homogenisation since it is a uniquely local game and has no equivalent competition or rival anywhere else in the world. Rugby union and rugby league are located somewhere in-between, a place that organisational strategists often argue is a place best avoided.[3] In contrast, Australian soccer has many international rivals and its great challenge for the future is to encourage interest in domestic soccer–the A-League–as opposed

to international versions such as the Italian Serie A and the English Premier League. Soccer in Australia is an inferior competition when compared to leagues in Europe, and fans may respond accordingly by spending more time and money consuming the foreign product.

Consequently, it is one thing to say that soccer might dominate the global football equation, but it is quite another to say that the Australian contribution to the global-soccer equation will be significant. Soccer in Australia runs a risk of being dominated by offshore versions of the game rather than the domestic version. While the success of the Australian soccer team at the 2006 World Cup augurs well for the next ten years or so, the increasing power of European clubs over both Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and UEFA suggest that European club football, not local national leagues, will dominate the global soccer landscape in the future. If European club football numbers dominate the soccer equation at the expense of our national teams and leagues, then this will mitigate the positive contributions brought on by the success of the Australian men's soccer team.

Asian Tigers Uncaged

Australia has been torn by its European identity (once dominated by British influence but increasingly European since World War II), its geographic location spanning Asia and the Pacific, and its relatively small population in an otherwise enormous landmass. In current times Australians are debating less about their identity with Asia and spending more time identifying their role in Asia.[4] If the Australian population has not yet made this mental shift, then Australian business has already done so.[5]

The Asian influence on football in Australia exists on two levels. The first deals with Asian migration to Australia. The abolition of the White Australia Policy in the 1970s resulted in substantial increases in Asian immigration, particularly from Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, China, India and Hong Kong.[6] Between 1981 and 2000 the Asian-born population of Australia grew steadily, from 276 000 to over a million, and at the turn of the century comprised 6 per cent of Australia's people.[7] The emergent market is not just with Asian migrants, but also with the Australian-born descendants of these migrants. Given the connection between those that participate in the

sport and the spectator interest that underpins the economic model of professional football, there are advantages to those football codes that can successfully recruit Asian-Australians into their ranks. Soccer is well placed to do in at least two respects. First, soccer is played throughout Asia, and second, soccer's non-body-contact nature is more suited to the smaller body mass of most Asians.

The second influence is the economic emergence of Asia—China and India in particular—which represents a major shift in the centre of global economic activity. On this basis, Australia can expect a more economically and politically influential Asia to emerge.[8] Again, soccer is clearly the best placed to capitalise on the closer Australia–Asia relationships likely to emerge in the future. Only Japan offers any sort of opportunity for rugby union in either the short or medium term, whereas rugby league and Australian football have few elite-football opportunities in Asia.

The Football Federation of Australia (FFA) is already making efforts to capitalise on the proximity to Asia – the defection of Australia from the Oceania Football Confederation into the Asian Confederation in 2006 was not just about providing Australia with direct access to the World Cup or to play Asian teams on a more regular basis. The FFA's alignment with Asia was also underpinned by the off-field economic opportunities that coincide with the on-field matches. Soccer in Australia will become increasingly interactive with Asia, and the A-League will coexist alongside a thriving Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League in much the same way that European domestic leagues coexist with the UEFA Champions League. Over the next ten to twenty years the distinctions between Australian soccer and Asian soccer will become increasingly blurred as Australian clubs become more integrated into the Asian soccer system.

The Local Demographic Shift

Closer to home, the Australia of 2050 will be demographically different from the Australia of today. Not only is the Australian population ageing, and moving to urban and coastal communities, it is also heading north.[9] The internal migration to Queensland has already been identified as a 'strategic imperative' facing Australian football. Matthew Nicholson observed that the Australian Football League (AFL) currently has 63 per cent of its teams located in a state with only

25 per cent of Australia's population. This demographic imbalance will become even more serious for the AFL over the next twenty years, as evidenced by the Queensland Government's projections which predict that Queensland's population will surpass Victoria in 2037, with south-east Queensland rivalling Melbourne's population by 2051.[10] Given the 2051 population projections, an even distribution of teams based on population of the states would require New South Wales and Queensland to provide more than half of the teams in the competition, which is a massive structural adjustment. Nicholson notes that the challenge for the AFL is to 'transform its structure and composition so that it reflects Australia's future demographic profile, while maintaining the strong supporter base in the so-called heart-land football states of Australia. Strategically, Queensland will be the key battleground for the football codes over the next twenty years, and by virtue of its key role in all of the football codes, will take over from Melbourne as the epicentre of football in Australia by 2040 at the latest.

Format

The existing competition structures for all leagues are framed by a home-and-away format culminating in a finals series. Apart from a possible increase in games played, no significant changes to this format are anticipated. Soccer will regularly review the possibility of reverting away from a finals series and adopting a league-table model as is the norm in many European soccer leagues. It will also question its closed-league status whereby, like all other Australian football leagues at the moment, there is no system of relegation and promotion between premier and lower leagues. This will be part of an ongoing identity crisis for soccer as it seeks to balance the Australian and international ways of doing things.

The most likely change will be the development, or more accurately, the return of a modified pre-season and midweek series. Both rugby league and Australian football introduced these made-for-TV competitions in the late 1970s, but they were progressively phased out by the end of the 1980s. These modified leagues will be based upon hybrid versions of the game that are characterised by reduced numbers of players and a shorter playing time along the lines of rugby 7s. This will generate leveraging opportunities for the codes, whereby

the 'AFL 9s', for instance, will provide the AFL with a marketing tool that will legitimise 'recfooty', the recreational version of Australian football that it is seeking to develop. An 'AFL 9s tournament' will be included as part of a revised pre-season series of matches and structured and promoted similar to the more successful International Rugby Board (IRB) Rugby 7s tournaments that are characterised by a festival atmosphere involving loud music, spectators dressing in costume, and plenty of peripheral entertainment.

These midweek hybrid competitions would involve all clubs and franchises, and be up and running by 2015. A single venue will host a series of matches amongst six to eight of the franchises in a single event. Teams will play more than one match in a night, and the season will be contested over a number of rounds culminating in its own finals series, which will be played in a single night rather than over a multi-week timeframe. While the leagues run the risk of cannibalising the mainstream game, they will be able to protect it (just as cricket has done with test match cricket) by having clubs develop two different playing lists, which will in effect prohibit the games' elite players from playing in the midweek league. Rugby 7s has achieved great popularity in the absence of the game's elite fifteen-a-side players not being regular participants in their tournaments. The other codes will have similar successes. Alternatively, the clubs may choose to select two teams (mainstream and hybrid) from their playing list on a weekly basis, where the hybrid game will provide opportunities for younger players to gain elite experience before being exposed to a mainstream version of the game. Players returning from injury will also benefit by some match practice before returning to the mainstream game. Rugby union, Australian football and rugby league are both well placed for this type of competition. Rugby union has the added advantage that Rugby 7s is already a legitimate version of the game. For the Australian Rugby Union (ARU), the issue will be whether this hybrid competition incorporates its SANZAR partners or whether it becomes a purely domestic competition. The ability of Fiji and Samoa to compete against the more established nations in Rugby 7s also suggests that these nations will be involved in such a competition.

Hierarchy

Hierarchy refers to relationships between rival leagues, and leagues of lower and higher quality. The football codes in Australia are not characterised by hierarchies in the way that, for example, the English Football Association (with ten levels) and the USA's Major League Baseball (with five levels) are structured. State sporting organisations and their elite competitions, most of which are capital city-based or at least capital city-dominated, provide the feeder leagues to Australia's football codes. It is theoretically possible that the national governing bodies for each of the codes may take control of the premier state-based leagues, with the net effect being the creation of a two-tier hierarchy of leagues governed by the national body. But in the absence of evidence that this would actually provide any developmental benefits to the national governing bodies, a restructuring of this type is highly unlikely. In fact, it would be impossible to achieve without a major crisis, because of entrenched ways of doing things and the parochial nature of the Australian people (including sports managers) who identify as strongly with their state as they do their nationality.

No matter what the pattern of feeder-league control and ownership is, they will become an ever-important part of the national league system. While Smith and Westerbeek posit that emerging elite players are likely to bypass lower level leagues, this will be more of a problem for soccer than the other codes. At the elite level, Australian football, rugby league and rugby union require a strength, power and body-mass dimension not normally associated with athletes in their late-teenage years. Athletes in these codes therefore require more time to incubate and these feeder leagues are ideal in this respect. In contrast, soccer players are more physically capable of playing at the elite level at a slightly younger age and, when combined with the poaching of Australian soccer players by rich European clubs, will work against soccer's local progress. While rugby league and rugby union must also withstand recruitment initiatives from overseas clubs, the difference is that Australian soccer players are recruited at the beginning of their elite careers rather than at the end of their careers and may bypass the A-League altogether.

Multiplicity

Multiplicity refers to the situation where rival leagues compete against other at the same level of the sport hierarchy—for example, Super League and the Australian Rugby League (ARL) both sought to operate elite rugby league competitions in 1997—or when leagues conduct two or more different competitions within a calendar year. It is unlikely that any of the incumbent leagues will have their monopoly status challenged. The collateral damage surrounding Super League has sent a message to all concerned—a message loud enough to be heard for the next fifty years at least—that rival national leagues in the same code will not be supported by sufficient numbers of the Australian public to make them financially viable.

However, the multiplicity problem takes on new meaning when the gender issue is added to the national league mix. 'The future of [soccer] is feminine.' That was the message of FIFA President Joseph Blatter back in 1995. For many years soccer has been referred to as the sleeping giant. Our observation is that the sleeping giant has a female companion, and women's soccer will come of age in the first half of the twenty-first century. Already boasting a significant female participation base as part of an estimated 30 million female players worldwide, soccer will be the only football code to develop such a base in Australia. While the other codes will continue to develop their female participation levels, they will not come close to rivalling the number of female soccer participants in Australia. Soccer has the added advantage of providing their female (as well as male) athletes with a pathway to the Olympics.[11] On this basis, it is inevitable that a semi-professional national women's soccer league will emerge by 2020. This league will not rival any of the men's leagues in terms of popularity and profile, but will nonetheless be able to acquire sufficient media and corporate support to ensure financial remuneration to its players.[12] We also predict that in order to create both synergies and efficiencies, the FFA will require their A-League franchises to establish a women's team as a condition of their licence.

Membership

As noted in an earlier part of this chapter, all of the football codes operate closed leagues at the elite level. This is in contrast to the open leagues that are characterised by promotion and relegation between

divisions. Despite repetitive agonising about this matter by the FFA over the next ten years, closed leagues will remain intact for Australian football, rugby league and soccer. However, by 2020 South Africa-New Zealand-Australia Rugby (SANZAR) will invite the winner of an annual second-tier rugby-nation competition involving teams from Japan, the Pacific islands (either individually or in composite form[13]) and Argentina to join one of the SANZAR competitions. This league structure would no longer be completely closed, but falls short of a true open system because South African, Australian or New Zealand teams—either at the national or provincial level—will be permanent members of the competition.

Governance

With respect to governance, the ongoing tension in all of the football codes will be the usually complimentary but sometimes conflicting roles of the state sporting organisations (SSOs, for example the Queensland Rugby League), national sport organisations (NSOs, for example the National Rugby League) and the professional franchises (such as the Brisbane Broncos). These governance tensions are underpinned by the difficulties in ensuring synergies between the grassroots development and the elite, professional and commercial aspects of the codes. In the AFL, for example, the power to appoint the directors of the national body rests with the sixteen AFL clubs. The state Australian football organisations such as AFL Queensland and the Western Australian Football League (WAFL) are not able to appoint the AFL commissioners, despite the Commission's role as keeper of the code. The AFL's governance will evolve in such a way that although the AFL clubs will always retain the dominant position in the appointments process, state organisations will also be incorporated into the commissioner-appointment process. The AFL will also come under increasing pressure to incorporate other national Australian football organisations outside Australia (for example, the NZAFL or USAFL), most likely through the IAFC, into its commissioner-appointment process. Other codes will also have their governance systems challenged as the organisations in the NSO/SSO/professional-franchise triumvirate jockey for positions of increased influence.

Governance within rugby union will be challenged on a number of different fronts. Currently the Australian Super 14 teams are owned

and operated as a department or business unit of the host rugby union. In a move recognising that professional and non-professional rugby have different priorities and needs, the Queensland Rugby Union (QRU) created the Queensland Reds business unit in 2007. The Reds business unit operates independently of the other activities of the QRU. This structure will become the norm rather than the exception and will progress towards the creation of wholly owned subsidiaries, each characterised by their own board and CEO. Under these conditions, the traditional state-based voting structure of the ARU will need to incorporate the interests of the Super Rugby franchises, although it is feasible that their interest will be represented by the respective state body.

SANZAR in its present form has a limited life span. The South African Rugby Union will, at the very least, threaten to align itself with the northern-hemisphere nations. If the threat is carried out, it will have a devastating effect on the ARU and New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU). In all likelihood, it may prove the catalyst for the southern-hemisphere and northern-hemisphere competitions to merge. Even if South Africa remains within the SANZAR alliance, SANZAR will incorporate the Pacific island nations, Japan and Argentina into its competitions.[14]

Given the similarities between rugby league and rugby union, there has long been speculation about a possible merger between the two codes. Two scenarios will need to occur for this merger to happen. Scenario one is an agreement between the International Rugby Board (IRB) and the International Rugby League (IRL) that these organisations should merge. Scenario two is that the ARL and the ARU agree to fall in line with this directive. Our position on this is clear – there will be no merging of the two codes. A merger will not occur because there are simply too many autonomous organisations that would need to agree for the merger arrangements to be successful. A merger of the codes would in practice require the amalgamation of literally hundreds of organisations – state sporting organisations, regional sporting organisations and clubs. This would become a strategic nightmare in which myopic self-interest would rule the day.

With respect to rugby league's future governance, the involvement of News Limited in the governance of the National Rugby League

(NRL) will continue to be questioned. The ARL is desirous of a return to a situation where, like the other codes, they manage both the elite competition and the grassroots development of the game. At the same time News Limited possesses an opportunity to influence a sport like no other media organisation and it will not relinquish this source of competitive advantage. No change to the ownership structure of the NRL is expected, and while the marriage between the ARL and News Limited will be tempestuous, it will endure.

Labour and Finance

Previous chapters have outlined the emergence of an Australian model of professional sports league that, among other features, is characterised by highly controlled labour markets that use draft and salary caps, and strictly managed financial markets that adopt revenue-sharing schemes. In view of the successful outcomes associated with the AFL's highly regulated league-management processes, all of the codes will gravitate to the cartel-disciple model of national-league management examined by Braham Dabscheck in Chapter 7. No significant changes for rugby union and Australian football are expected on the premise that the majority of the participating organisations are utility maximisers with a not-for-profit orientation. In the other codes, where a wealth-maximisation orientation is more prevalent, given the greater private ownership of teams, a drift towards an unregulated finance market, where revenue streams are retained by the clubs that generate them, is likely to occur. However, this drift will be dampened by the growing realisation that closed sport leagues are only as good as their worst-performing teams.

Distribution

Most fixturing is still tied to the weekends, but this begs the question as to whether midweek fixturing (i.e. Monday through Thursday) will become commonplace. Certainly soccer has the luxury of being able to play more often than the weekly cycle that characterises the other football codes, where anything less than a six-day break between matches is associated with a decline in performance. On that basis, soccer will continue to differentiate itself by being not only a summer football activity, but also a midweek activity. Fixtures involving the Australian men's (and women's) team, as well as matches in the Asian

Club Championships, will also provide a basis for midweek events. Moreover, the creation of a competition for hybrid versions of the codes will require midweek fixturing.

Developments in technology will continue to influence the ways in which sport is distributed to audiences beyond the sport stadium. Advances in digital technology will result in a consolidation of the once-distinct telecommunications, computer, broadcasting, publishing and advertising industries.[15]

Integration and Ownership

One of the more substantive changes to the governance of football will be a proliferation of horizontal integration, with the most visible being cross-ownership at team level. Both the Melbourne and Collingwood AFL clubs developed memorandums of understanding with netball franchises in 2006.[16] These memorandums of understanding will evolve into a joint venture, whereby an AFL club and a netball team will be managed by a single enterprise. Basketball teams will also be incorporated into the 'sport conglomerate'. In terms of football cross-ownership, we anticipate that at least two organisations will own both a rugby league and a soccer franchise by 2020.

At the same time there will be an extension of the corporate ownership of clubs, especially in rugby league. This will take the form of a public company which is now commonplace in the English Premier League, or a private company, which is the preferred model in the USA. While the member-based club has the advantage of keeping fans in a close relationship with players and officials, it denies the club access to the sorts of funds (both debt and equity) that would arise under some sort of company structure. Private ownership is already a noteworthy feature of teams competing in the FFA and the NRL competitions. Private ownership is conspicuous by its absence in rugby union and Australian football. As already noted, the AFL's experiment with private ownership was not successful, and the institutional constraints surrounding rugby union make it unlikely that either code will embark on a planned strategy towards private ownership of its elite sports teams.

Professionalism

The history of professional sport suggests the salaries of footballers, like many other professional athletes, will continue to rise. There are

a number of interesting questions that can be posed about salaries between now and 2020. First, will salary growth in the professional football codes outstrip that in the rest of the labour market? Second, will salary growth be consistent across the four codes, and third, how will individual and total team salaries be determined? And, with respect to this final issue, will salary growth be more closely tied to the ability of the players to generate revenue, or more intriguingly, the profitability of the teams?

It is anticipated that footballers' incomes will increase at a rate greater than that of the rest of the labour market. In the first instance, players will earn this additional income by playing more often, which will in turn generate an increase in gate admissions, increase broadcast rights income, and produce a growth in corporate sponsorship. Second, the collective bargaining agreements negotiated by the respective players' associations will provide for increased ability to pursue their own commercial interests away from their clubs. It is important to note that this second income stream will not be considered as revenue for salary cap purposes.

Salary growth will not be consistent across the four codes. Soccer has the lowest starting point for salaries among the four codes and is therefore well placed for the greatest growth, both in absolute and proportional terms. While player salaries in the A-League will increase rapidly from this lower base, they will not rival those in the AFL, rugby league or rugby union so long as its match attendance and broadcast rights fees fall below the others. By 2020 we expect that at least 10 per cent of the players in each code will be earning more that $1 million a year from the game.

As far as deciding how much each player is worth, advances in player tracking technology will permit the marginal contribution of individual players to team performance to be calculated. Michael Lewis' 'Moneyball' management practices will become increasingly popular. Moneyball is based on Sabermetrics or the use of objective evidence or player performance to determine a player's true contribution to a team's performance.[17] Even though the ability to evaluate the marginal worth of a player in any of the four codes will be more difficult than will be the case in some of the dominant American sports where 'Moneyball' management practices are gaining

momentum, these practices will be increasingly applied to the Australian football codes.[18]

In addition to changes to how their performance and contribution to the team is calculated, player salaries will become more dependent on franchise profitability. This will especially be the case in soccer and rugby league where private ownership and a for-profit orientation will dominate. This evolution will not go unchallenged by the respective player associations and some landmark court cases can be expected before 2020.

The Future—Revolution or Evolution?

Less substantive or transformational change will occur within the four codes in the next forty years compared with what has occurred in the last forty years. Our view is based on Connie Gersick's Punctuated Equilibrium Model (PEM) of organisational change. The key tenet of the PEM is that rather than incremental and asynchronous changes, organisational change is more likely to be characterised by brief, discontinuous and simultaneous changes in all spheres of the organisation's operations. In the PEM, equilibrium periods are characterised by a consistency of structures and activity patterns – small incremental adjustments do occur but do not affect the 'deep structure' of the organisation. In contrast, transformational changes occur in response to significant changes in the environment that lead to wholesale upheaval where a system's deep structure comes apart, leaving it in disarray until the period ends and choices are made around which a new structure forms. As chapters 4–7 show, each of the codes underwent major change for most of the last twenty years, particularly as they corporatised their operations. The changes outlined in this section represent significant evolutions but fall short of the revolutionary changes observed in the last twenty-five years. The post-corporate world of football in Australia will not be all that different from its corporate antecedent.

Principles for Future Prosperity

Professional football in the post-corporate era is expected to be business-like and profitable, yet, unlike businesspeople, the managers of these sport organisations are likely to be once again criticised for

losing touch with long-established traditions and values. Onerous demands are created by these emotional and symbolic attachments that fans have with their football clubs and teams, but they remain the essential difference between business proper and the business of sport, even when the league is, for all intents and purposes, comprehensively corporatised. In short, all the football codes need to guard against simply becoming a money-making exercise for the corporate sector, particularly television station proprietors.

It is unlikely that one of the four codes will get it wrong and make the sort of strategic decision that will result in the code losing significant ground from its contemporaries – nor will any other type of football (for example, Gaelic or American football) emerge to challenge the four incumbent codes.[19] Having said this, Australian football and soccer have the most optimistic of futures, since the first is uniquely local and the second is overwhelmingly global. Success will continue for all codes as long as they maintain an effective connection between the elite and non-elite levels of their sport, and between the clubs and the fans. Elite clubs, players and fans must strike a balance between their own self-interest and their collective roots. The football codes also need to provide opportunities for women to be involved in all aspects of the game, and not be simplistically seen as a fashionable target market by which to squeeze out some incremental revenue. Finally, the codes should always seek to preserve the connections between the sport of the day with the games' myths and history, and as Desmond Morris noted more than twenty-five years ago, provide space for fans' tribal ties, rituals and traditions to thrive.

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[1] Aaron Smith and Hans Westerbeek, *The Sport Business Future*, Palgrave, London, 2004.

[2] Theodore Levitt, 'The Globalization of Markets', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 61, May/June 1983, pp. 92–102.

[3] See Michael Porter,. *Competitive Advantage*, The Free Press, New York, 1985.

[4] These sentiments were expressed in a speech by Alexander Downer; see Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer, 'Australia, Asia and Global Drivers for Change', speech at Future Summit, Brisbane, 12 May 2006, http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2006/060512_future_summit_2006.html.

5   According to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), trade with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) accounted for 11 per cent of Australia's total merchandise exports in 2005; see http://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/fta/asean/aust-trade.html

6   See Graeme Hugo, 'Knocking at the Door: Asian Immigration to Australia', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1992, pp. 100–44.

7   See Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Social Trends* (catalogue no. 4102.0), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2001.

8   See Hugo White, 'The Limits to Optimism: Australia and the Rise of China', *Australian Journal of International Affairs,* vol. 59, no. 4, 2005, pp. 469–80.

9   See Bernard Salt, *The Big Shift: Welcome to the Third Australian Culture*, Hardie Grant Books, Melbourne, 2001.

10 See Office of Economic and Statistical Research, *Queensland Government Population Projections to 2051*, 2nd edn, Queensland and Statistical Divisions, Queensland Government, Brisbane, 2005.

11 Women's soccer was added to the Olympic program in 1996. The inclusion of women's soccer (but not men's) at the Commonwealth Games should also be factored into future developments.

12 Corporate support for the women's league will be enthusiastic because of its strong female demographic.

13 For an analysis of the unsuccessful attempts to include a Pacific islands team in SANZAR competitions during 2004–05, see G Dickson, D O'Brien and L Cousens, 'Warming the Bench: Pacific Island Rugby and Entry into an Expanded SANZAR Competition', in R Hess, B Stewart and M Nicholson (eds), *Football Fever: Crossing boundaries*, Maribyrnong Press, Melbourne, 2006, pp. 63–71.

14 Ibid.

15 For an analysis of media convergence in Australia, see the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, *Convergence Review Issues Paper*, Commonwealth Government, Canberra, 2000; and Trevor Barr, *newmedia.com.au: The Changing Face of Australia's Media and Communications*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2000. See also Scott Donaton, *Madison & Vine: Why the Entertainment and Advertising Industries Must Converge to Survive*, McGraw Hill, New York, 2005, for a discussion of the possible convergence of the advertising and entertainment industries.

16 The AFL club and netball franchise alliance follows the AFL's alliance with Netball Australia and Cricket Australia to introduce a national health and wellbeing program for children. These three NSOs are suited to such collaborative ventures because they represent a women's sport, a male summer sport and a male winter sport. On this basis, there is no immediate competition between the NSOs.

17 Sabermetrics is a term derived from the acronym SABR, which stands for the Society for American Baseball Research.

18 See Dan Mason, 'Moneyball as a Supervening Necessity for the Adoption of Player Tracking Technology in Professional Hockey', *International Journal of Sport Marketing and Sponsorship*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2006, pp. 47–61.

Contributors

Ross Booth is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Economics at Monash University in Melbourne, specialising in Sports Economics. His PhD examined the labour market, revenue sharing and competitive balance in the AFL, and he has since authored articles in Economic Papers and Sport Management Review and chapters in International Sports Economics Comparisons, edited by Rodney Fort and John Fizel, and published by Praegar, and the Handbook on the Economics of Sport. Ross is also a football commentator with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in Melbourne.

Braham Dabscheck is a Senior Fellow in the Faculty of Law at Melbourne University. He was the first Australia scholar to undertake research into commercial and economic aspects of professional team sports. He also has an extensive publication record and is Australia's leading researcher in the field of sport and industrial relations. He has appeared as an expert witness in a number of employment-rule cases and has been a consultant to various professional player associations in Australia and overseas.

Geoff Dickson grew up in Brisbane, where he played Australian football for Coorparoo, soccer at primary school, a season of high-school rugby, and a few games of rugby league for Griffith University. Geoff completed a PhD on football development and resource dependency. He is now Research Director of sport studies at the Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand.

Allan Edwards teaches sport studies at Griffith University in Brisbane/Gold Coast, and has a special research interest in post-modernity and professional sport. Allan has written on the globalisation of sport, and has previously been involved in the management of professional rugby league clubs in Queensland.

Rob Hess is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance at Victoria University in Melbourne, and is affiliated with the Centre for Ageing, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport at that institution. He is an executive member of the International Society of Football Scholars, and the co-editor of More Than a Game: The Real Story of Australian Rules Football, published by Melbourne University Press. Rob's most recent football projects include a trio of co-edited books published by Maribyrnong Press, and a co-edited special issue of the Football Studies journal, devoted to women and Australian Rules football.

Peter Horton is an academic at James Cook University in Townsville. His on-ground experience and insights into rugby union were gained from playing for New South Wales and Queensland, and the Wallabies at international level. He has also been a coach and administrator, which has driven much of his research into the socio-cultural analysis of sport.

Robert D Macdonald is the Managing Director of Premiership Strategies, a sports management consultancy in Melbourne. Robert is also a research assistant in the Economics Department at the University of Melbourne, where he is completing his PhD on football economics. Robert has published widely on the topic of professional team sport, with an emphasis on sport league structures, player drafts and competitive balance. Robert has recently contributed a chapter to International Sports Economics Comparisons, edited by Rodney Fort and John Fizel and published by Praegar.

Matthew Nicholson is a senior lecturer in sport management within the School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management at La Trobe University in Melbourne. Matthew's PhD examined the media-football nexus. He is the editor or co-editor of several football books, including Football Fever: Moving the Goalposts (published by Maribyrnong Press) and Fanfare: Australian Football Fan Culture (published by the Australian Society for Sports History). Matthew has also played rugby league and touch at the elite level.

James Skinner teaches sport studies at Griffith University in Brisbane/Gold Coast, and is Deputy Head of the School of Education. He completed his PhD on the topic of organisational change in Queensland rugby union, and has a special research interest in the relationship between football culture and professionalisation.

Bob Stewart is Associate Professor of sport management in the School of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance at Victoria University in Melbourne. He is also an associate of the Centre for Ageing, Rehabilitation, Exercise and Sport at that institution. Bob has taught in the field of sport policy and management for the last twenty years, and is the co-editor of More Than a Game: The Real Story of Australian Rules Football, published by Melbourne University Press.

Dwight Zakus teaches sport management at Griffith University in Brisbane/Gold Coast, where he is Senior Lecturer. He has played, coached, administered, and governed a variety of football clubs, and served four years as the Executive and Technical Director of the Alberta Rugby Union in Canada. Dwight has written extensively on the political economy of global sport.

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