**Ideas and Society, 14 April 2014**

**Sport and Life**

John Scott Meeting House, La Trobe University. 12.30pm

**Robert Manne**

Thank you all very much for coming. The Ideas and Society today is dealing with a topic that has interested me from the age of three – sport. I’m going to, in a moment … the idea of having a serious forum on the question of what sport does for individual and community life was suggested by a post-graduate student at La Trobe, who’s also a water polo player, Simon Armstrong, and he’s going to introduce the speakers in a minute. I’m very grateful for the suggestion to do this and grateful for all of the speakers who’ve come.

Let me just … I wanted to quote a couple of things to get us thinking. Very brief quotes, from two of what I regard as the secular science of the twentieth century. One is from one of my favourite authors, George Orwell who wrote an essay called *The Sporting Spirit*, quite a long essay but I’ll just quote a couple of sentences. He says, I’m always amazed when I hear people saying that sport creates goodwill. As soon as the question of prestige arises, as soon as you feel that you and some larger unit will be disgraced if you lose – this could have been written for Mick – the most savage combative instincts are aroused. On the other hand, a more familiar quote is from Nelson Mandela, just a little bit of something he once wrote. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.

So, what we are going to try and work out today in this forum is the role that sport can play for good or for ill in the life of individuals and society and to introduce the speakers, I’ll ask Simon … what we’re going to have today is a couple of talks from two of the speakers and then a panel discussion and then there’ll be time for questions and I hope there’ll be lively questions about the role of sport in life. Simon, if you’d like to do the intros.

**Simon Armstrong**

Good afternoon. Today’s topic, Sport has the Power to Change the World, which some of you may recognise as a line from Nelson Mandela’s famous speech at the Laureus World Sports Awards, is quite fitting for Melbourne, being the nation’s sporting capital, and for La Trobe, which aspires to be Australia’s leading university in sports related teaching and research.

The idea for this event came about after reading an article in *The Guardian* on the reality of social development through sport in late August last year. Around that time, the United Nations General Assembly had just proclaimed the 6th of April as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, which occurred for the first time on the Sunday before last. It was hailed at the time as an historic step in recognising the power of sport, not only to raise cultural barriers, but to also mobilise people around the world.

But it need not be on an international scale to have an immense impact, for here at La Trobe, we are actively supporting student sport and engaging with the local community and schools, the use of our sporting facilities and services.

Our first speaker for this afternoon who I pitched today’s topic to, back in September, is Professor Russell Hoye, Director for Sport and Social Impact at La Trobe University. Our second speaker is former premiership-winning Australian Rules footballer, and current AFL coach at Carlton Football Club, Mick Malthouse, who is currently second on the all-time list for most games as coach. Our final panellist is described as a lawyer by profession, an oarswoman by sporting background, and a sports administrator by way of light relief. Margot Foster has been in private practice as a lawyer whilst competing in the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, winning bronze and gold medals in 1984 and 1986, and continues to have numerous roles in many sports and other bodies. Can you please welcome them all to today’s discussion.

[applause]

I remind you that you can follow the conversation on Twitter by using the hashtag ideasandsociety and follow La Trobe @latrobenews. Ladies and gentlemen, Professor Russell Hoye.

[applause]

**Russell Hoye**

That could be premature.

If you ask the question of what sport plays in contemporary Australian society to an economist, they might cite some recent ABS statistics. The sports sector directly employs 75,000 Australians, or about 1% of the total workforce. Every year Australian households spend about 8.4 billion dollars on sporting services and products. The sports sector grew by three and a half per cent over the last five years and the value of media rights for the sports code is increasing, driven by the desire of pay TV subscribers to access sporting events, and the popularity of free-to-air broadcast of sport amongst consumers and advertisers alike.

They might conclude that sport clearly attracts a considerable proportion of people’s discretionary spend, although I did notice Mick, that a few Carlton members were re-thinking their investment late Saturday afternoon, and that sport is a significant driver of economic activity. If you asked a sociologist what role sport plays in contemporary Australian society, they might point to the fact that in 2010, sport and physical recreation organisations attracted 2.3 million volunteers, equivalent to 37% of the volunteer population. So almost a third of all volunteer effort in Australia is associated with sport, as coaches, officials, team managers, canteen volunteers, fund-raisers and administrators.

While participation rates have stagnated or declined for some traditional sports, those sports are still delivering services to many Australians by the very nature of their voluntary structure and they’re making a substantial contribution to fostering connections amongst people involved in sport.

So the sociologist might conclude that sport clearly attracts a significant portion of people’s volunteer time and effort by choice, and that sport continues to be a focal point for many people’s engagement in their respective local communities.

If you ask the public health researcher, they might say Australia is the second most obese nation on the planet. Three in five Australian adults and one in four children are overweight or obese and that the physical activity levels of most Australians are not sufficient to meet the national physical activity guidelines. They might conclude that sport is perhaps not delivering the required physical activity level for many Australians, particularly adults, and maybe sport should be doing more to tackle issues such as increased rates of obesity and addressing the decline in physical activity levels in Australians.

If you asked a politician from any of the mainstream parties what role sport plays in contemporary Australian society, they would likely say that sport is a great source of national pride for key events. You might remember things like winning the America’s Cup, losing and then winning back the Ashes, great moments of Australian success at Olympic Games, the ANZAC Day match at the MCG, or through individuals like Adam Scott, winning the Masters last year but sadly not this year. They might conclude that sport is well worth funding as a social institution, but perhaps it’s easier if, at least at the federal level, we direct our funding towards national team and athletes’ success in major events that are easily measurable and we can track our return on taxpayers’ funds.

If you asked a sports psychologist, they might say that sport is a unique workplace for elite athletes, who earn their living performing in the crucible of the highest levels of competition, under the most intense scrutiny from mainstream media, sponsors, the general public and their peers.

Athletes either learn to cope with the stresses that sport brings, or they perform below their best, or they leave altogether. As important to some people as family and work, retiring from sport at either an elite or community level, can be one of the most stressful events in someone’s life. The environment that sport provides to people in shaping their personal identity is unique, and when that finishes, many athletes struggle to find something as powerful as sport to define themselves.

So the sports psychologist might conclude that sport offers many opportunities for people to learn about themselves. The question is, how well do sport coaches, leaders and clubs and peers, do that and at all sports environment, positive?

If you ask the CEO of a sport association, or a club president, or a community club coach, they might say their sport is a fantastic environment, to learn leadership skills as a captain or a coach, to gain self-confidence and enhance self-esteem, through achievements of skill acquisition, or success in sporting contests, to provide personal support to people in times of crisis, like serious injury, loss of work, loss of a partner, ill-health. Who can forget the key role that sport clubs have played in leading the community recovery from the 2009 bushfire disasters in townships like Kinglake. They would typically conclude that sport is a positive environment for personal and community development.

And let’s look at some official statements on the value of sport. We’ve heard from Nelson Mandela. The International Olympic Committee says, by using sport as a tool, the IOC and its partners implement various activities across the globe in fields such as humanitarian assistance, peace-building, education, gender equality, the environment and the fight against HIV-Aids, hence contributing to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development goals.

VicSport of which Margot is the Chair of, says, with over 170 member groups, 20,000 clubs and associations, and 1.8 million participants, workers and volunteers, the community sport and recreation sector makes a significant contribution to the social, physical, mental and economic wellbeing of our communities. And VicHealth, Margot also sits on VicHealth Sport, engagement in sport improves cardio-vascular health, reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes and some cancers, contributes to skeletal development and prevents stress, anxiety and depression. In addition to these physiological developments, sports participation can also improve cognitive and educational performance and provide valuable development experiences.

Research has found that sport can be a means of overcoming discrimination, can build social connections and can attract young people to out-of-school educational programs which can achieve substantial improvements in literacy and numeracy.

This all seems positive from the economist, the sociologist, the politician and the community sport member, with just the public health researcher and the sport psychologist raising their eyebrows. Everyone else says sport can essentially save the world.

So, as a researcher, what does the science tell us about whether sport is good for us? While there have been many sport programs designed and delivered in recent decades to deliver wellbeing outcomes for individuals and communities, what we don’t quite know enough about is the value of belonging to a sport club has for mental wellbeing or the unique processes at work within sport environments that deliver these outcomes for individuals.

There are a number of studies that have reinforced the notion that sport clubs operate as a significant social hub for some communities. We’ve done some recent work here at La Trobe around the value of race clubs in country towns and found that they’re very important meeting points for not just racing clubs, but other community groups, and that race clubs both fostered and relied on the social connections in the community to be successful. And the bulk of studies have usually looked at people in particular populations – people in prison, nursing home residents, individuals with specific medical conditions that says that utilising structured exercise prescription regimes to assess the health impacts rather than organised or community sport settings. All people have used national data to determine correlations between involvement in sport and wellbeing outcomes.

Robust evidence of the long term impacts of involvement in sport on the mental health status of people in adulthood is not clear. So the evidence is out.

One of the most prominent researchers in this field, a retired gentleman by the name of Fred Coulter, makes the important point that it is not simple participation in sport that delivers such outcomes, but sports plus. It is not sport that achieves many of these outcomes, but sporting organisations. It is not sport that produces and sustains social capital, entered into partnerships and mobilises sporting and non-sporting resources, but certain types of social organisation. In other words, sport-based programs need far more complex program designs in order to facilitate the types of individual and social outcomes related to social capital for communities. So while we assume that sport provides an ideal environment for the creation of positive social norms and values and the reinforcement and development, there is a surprising lack of robust evidence that illustrates how this happens within sport.

Now I’m conscious of the time, so I’m going to fly through to the end.

So I think on balance, the evidence out there says that there are undoubted individual effects that sport can provide for people, things that I hope Mick and Margot are clearly going to mention, given their backgrounds. So, things like skill development, self-esteem, confidence, leadership capacity, personal growth and understanding, determination, access to employment, all those things we think intuitively we know and understand, and the evidence supports that.

I think it’s important to note that importantly it’s in some contexts, not all that sport can help some people and not all.

In some contexts, sport can be used by development and health agencies to deliver broader social and health outcomes by using sport as the promotional vehicle for messages as a kind of flypaper to at least start the education processes for some people to lead to greater social outcomes.

Thank you very much.

[applause]

**Mick Malthouse**

Good afternoon. Thank you very much Russ. Now I don’t often refer to notes, in fact I’m only going to refer to the first one here that says I’ve got ten minutes to talk about 42 years of professional sport, but Robert’s informed me that I can actually spend a bit more time, so thank you.

Right, well, professional sport. How has it impacted on me? Well, I’ll go back to a period that is not professional sport and say that I think sometimes we look at things and think, how did we end up getting here? I’m sixty years of age and I’m still involved in professional sport and have been involved in professional sport for, as I said, twelve years as a player and thirty years as a coach, and if you like to put one year in there as a gap year, in the media, which was a real eye-opener. You know, then you differentiate between what sport and a sporting club means, and when you have not got a sporting club with you.

So I’ll go back to when I first started playing football, and the impact of exactly what Russell was talking about, how a community is involved and gets absorbed by a thing called sport. I come from … born and bred in and around Wendouree West, a commission home area up in Ballarat and all my memories of that place were totally and utterly running around madly with my mates in a football environment. We didn’t play cricket, other sports weren’t heard of in those days. They certainly existed, but they weren’t up in the bush. The girls played netball and the boys played football.

But when I contemplate now what took place, and the impact it had not only on myself but other kids around, and no doubt, this would have been duplicated many times right throughout Victoria, and in Australia. There was no football club. I was eight. I barracked for a local Ballarat team, because my father played for them, my grandfather played football prior to that, so I was indoctrinated into the world of football. Loved it, played it, went to bed with it, just absorbed, just totally obsessed with it. And I know I’m going to sort of swing around here as far as the thing goes, but two weeks ago, I took my grandson, or I didn’t take my grandson, my daughter took my grandson to the football for the first time – a five-year-old. Wore his Carlton guernsey with great delight and we were belted by Essendon. And he come into the rooms, kicking his football, and I had just finished with the player group and he walked over to me and he said, g’day pa, how you going? Who won? I told a fib. I said, we did mate.

But, when I go back to eight years of age, and I’ll make a little bit up but I’ve got a little bit of leeway here, but there was a knock on the door, and a group of young men said, we’re trying to build up a football side from this area. Can we get Mick to play? And my mum said, but it’s under 14, and he’s eight. And they said to me, son, you’re good enough. They said to my mum, we haven’t got enough numbers, if we don’t have him we can’t get a side together. So, as an 8-year-old, I played under 14s football. But the very first part of that was, community. The next part of it was, it taught me how to win and lose. Let me tell you, our first year we didn’t have a home ground, because the ground hadn’t been built. The council … we were shoved away I’ve got to say, unfortunately, this little area was shoved away, but we ended up training, and I can’t remember where we trained. We must have just kicked the football in some paddock somewhere. And twelve months later, turning nine, going into my second year of under 4 football, we had one victory. We had no victories the first year, and we had one victory. And I made a mistake about this one victory, representing La Trobe and Mildura, with some kids sitting in front of me, talking about junior football and what it meant to me. And the mistake I made was, that these kids were a little bit more sensitive than I anticipated because when I said it was one of the greatest joys of my life to win my first game of football – we’d lost a whole year. It taught me how to lose but I wanted to learn how to win. And in front of me all these kids, year 12, 11, 12, ready to go to uni. We’re trying to convince them that university’s the place to be, and the question quickly came to me – who did you beat? And I said, look, this is fantastic. I still remember the day and the celebrations because we belted the absolute hell out of the orphanage. And this kid said to me, are you proud of that? Well, no, I’m not. I was at the time but the whole game disintegrated from there in. None the less, again, just getting back to those early days, I knew how to lose and you had to take it. Then we learnt how to win. And from there on in I was blessed because I was then absorbed into a community of football people, and what it did, it opened up a new world to me. New friends, I learnt that it wasn’t just the quick kid, or the kid that had the talent, could play, it was the tall kid, it was the fat kid. It was the kid that had no idea. And as we grew older, and we went from team to team, and the kids fell out because of talent, they stuck. One became the orange boy, one was the goal umpire, one took up umpiring, one became an assistant coach. So again, it was just a community, a community all around the local football side.

And again I was blessed even further because along the way I got taught by some of the great people in my community, which was a bloke called Tom Hafey, not many people know him, but he’s a … sorry, Tommy Simpson, who played at Richmond, but was my first senior coach in Ballarat, and he taught me again, right from wrong. He taught me how to … and it was a good football side, Ballarat, and he taught me to be very, very humble in victory and gracious in defeat, just make sure, vice versa. Make sure that you understand that you pump up your opposition. You give them the credit they’re due.

And further advancement was a lesson in life, my daughter wrote a book about the Malthouse football story, last year, and these little things that you forget, and I certainly had forgotten by this stage. She said, dad, tell me a little bit about your first time at St Kilda. And I said, oh well, I just played for St Kilda. Mind you, I’ve played for a lot of clubs and coaches a lot – I’ve been at six clubs, so I’ve got an idea of the rights and wrongs of how clubs are totally different, but all the same. And I said, well, I ended up playing, but she said, but you went back to Ballarat before you played a league game, and I realised that my three practice matches I played in, I thought I did pretty well, and when the football manager came up to me and said, oh Mick, we think you should go back to Ballarat and really enjoy your football, you know, have some fun with football because you’re not going to make it. I’d forgotten that I’d been sacked before I’d even started.

But it taught me a lesson. Because I didn’t have something, I didn’t miss something. I looked at all those footballers as demi-gods because the year before St Kilda played Hawthorn in the grand final, so I’m coming down and seeing all the super heroes of my time. It might have been, what, thirty minutes was it on the ABC that you watch football, and maybe read a little bit about them, but that’s all you knew about them, but they were demi-gods. And whatever they did, you tried to do. All my grandson does now is little snap shots. I don’t know who he’s followed but he doesn’t kick the ball straight, it’s a snap shot, snap shot, snap shot, and he sells me the candy. And I say what’s candy, and he says I don’t know, but I’m selling it to you and for those who don’t know, sell the candy, out you go.

So we have got such a responsibility, because people follow, and the more I looked at my next stage of my life, I had the great, late Allan Jeans, as my coach, who taught me discipline, and taught me defence. Then I went to Richmond and I got taught by another great coach, who taught me offensive play, and between those two blokes, they taught me something else. As a coach, that you don’t always have to do it the one way. Allan Jeans’ philosophy was, hold them to six, you’ll kick seven and win. Tommy’s was, kick 30, they’ll never kick 31.

So, all along, in this great sport and I’m talking here football, of course, there is more than one way of playing it. There’s more than one way of doing it. With professional sport, it’s all about winning. But the more I look back, nothing’s changed, and yet everything’s changed. We have responsibilities in this sporting field, to our next coaches down, who in turn have a responsibility to their players. We should never forget, and I’ll never forget, that some little towns rely so heavily on the football, netball, association, in that town. It keeps them alive. There are teams that have gone from Tempy, Gorya, Patchewollock, Tempy, Gorya, Patchewollock, Speed – five towns, all wrapped in one. Because it’s kept them alive. Now I don’t know what’s happened since, I knew that back when I was playing with Richmond. That’s about three centuries ago, but anyway.

The football now, we look at it and think, it’s … when I first started, there were, there was the ABC, and they covered it. By the time I’d finished, going into coaching, my first time, there was more stations covering it. There was, I think, thirty-odd newsprint, news people, who had been assigned to Australian Rules football and accredited. Now there’s something like thirteen hundred people accredited to cover Australian Rules football. So you can see the massive input on looking at sportsmen, sports people, it loads up … I was interested to hear what Russell said about sport’s supposed to relieve tension and stress. I’ve got news for you Russ – it’s the direct opposite. Because these players are under massive pressure to perform. And we’re under pressure to get the best out of them. But as I’d said to all of my players, every year that I’ve coached, never forget it’s a sport. Never forget the members. Never forget that you are on the field and responsible for the way you conduct yourself for people are around to look, emulate you the right way. Do things correct. Your emotions will run away from time to time, yes, there’s going to be times when you become undisciplined and so forth, but always remember that first and foremost, you owe it to the supporters. And that’s not without saying that you owe it to your parents and teachers and coaches and administrators at your football club.

Football, where’s it taken me? It’s taken me around the world. Has it taken me out of Wendouree West? Perhaps. Perhaps. I’m not about to go back through a rear vision mirror to find out what would have happened if I hadn’t ‘ve played football, but I know it’s opened up my eyes to the complexities of the sport as you get from a amateur to a professional. To the expectations, to delivery. And I understand the game. It is a great leveller. And I’ll repeat. I have been in the game for thirty years as a coach but probably a lifetime as a player and coach, but as a coach, over that thirty years, like Carlton’s 150 years, this is the 150th year, the highs and lows, like anything else in life, you’ve got to accept, get up off the ground, and fight again. And that’s what makes great sportsmen, and we’ve got them here, great. The ability to rebound when things don’t go right.

And if I can give anyone, a student, to a parent, to a sportsman, one simple lesson in life. If it all ran smoothly and you all finished on top, we’d all be jumping on board. But it’s the ability to rebound, it’s the ability that when things don’t go right, that you stand up and you keep getting up, and you make it work for you.

I’ve seen too many kids at this level, that’s students, when it gets a bit hard, we retreat. Don’t be scared to stand up. I’ve seen too many businesses fall because they accept what’s been served up. You don’t have to. You’ve got to get up. I’ve seen a lot of sportsmen cop criticism, can’t respond. Can’t rebound. The great thing about life is being able to get up, off the canvas, no matter how many times you get knocked down, you keep getting up. You may not win them all but the one thing that sport’s taught me is that there’s going to be highs, there’s going to be lows, friends will stick, acquaintances will come and go. But as long as you are prepared to be very, very proud of your organisation, and work to it, like I am with La Trobe, I’m so delighted to be part of La Trobe, because it gives people a chance, and that’s all you want.

Thank you.

[applause]

**Lisa Hasker**

I’ll just see whether … are you online Rob? My name is Lisa Hasker. I have the pleasure of working with Russell Hoye in our La Trobe sport unit. And we’re going to open it up a bit with Margot. Margot has very kindly helped us out today because we had someone else who was on our program and who couldn’t be here. Margot is Chair of VicSport, who look after all the Victorian sporting organisations. She’s on the Board of VicHealth. She has been on the Board of the Sports Commission, and works in her law practice often on sporting topics, some tricky, that she’s been dealing with today. I want to bring it back to the personal first, to ask Margot first and then Mick. Margot, in your former life as an Olympic rower, in all the training that you did for that level, at the very top of your sport, and all the years that went into that, from being a schoolgirl rower, right through to Olympic teams, what was … following up on some of Mick’s comments, what was the greatest lesson you learnt, out of that involvement in sport?

**Margot Foster**

I actually didn’t start rowing until I went to university so I have a different experience from most of the women who row today, who did have an opportunity when they were at school. I suppose, one of the biggest lessons I learnt, that came home very clearly, that I was thinking about when Mick was speaking, was I’m actually an exceptionally bad loser. And this came out in fine form … let me say, I manage it. I manage it, but … when we crossed the line in 1984 in Los Angeles, we were told we’d come fourth at the Olympic Games and I can’t tell you how furious I was, that we had put in all this effort, spent so much time, and all we’d come was fourth. Then in the end, an official in a speed boat came round and told us we’d come third, all of a sudden it was all worthwhile. And I was imbued with Olympic spirit, which had previously deserted me. So I learnt then that I’m a bad loser. I’m prepared to ‘fess up to it, but as I said, I do know how to manage it, and I think that was a great lesson.

**Lisa Hasker**

And do you think that lesson from sport, has helped you in your business and Board life? Has it come across to help you, in that next stage?

**Margot Foster**

Yes, I think so. I think being an elite sportsman, you are a perfectionist. You do need to learn to tolerate things that don’t quite go your way and I think that the lessons in sport, and particularly in rowing, which is the ultimate team sport, where you really have to have two or four or eight people in a boat, doing the same thing, at the same time, turning up in the morning, turning up in the afternoon, really does teach you how to manage time and people, and to get along with people as best you can, especially when you’re stuck in a boat together for all those hours.

**Lisa Hasker**

Mick, apart from that rebounding and that resilience that you learnt through sport, is there any other lesson that you learnt in your playing days that you draw on every day when you’re coaching?

**Mick Malthouse**

I think there’s … well, absolutely. One of the interesting things about a team sport is that we don’t always see eye to eye with the team mates. We are fundamentally different in almost all cases, rarely do you see twenty … in our case, twenty-two players who have the same interests, the same size, have the same principles, basically you’re looking at twenty-two individuals that have got only one thing in common – they come to the football club and they get thrown a jumper, and said, you’re playing for this. The most interesting thing about all that, if I have a training session where I’ll say, okay, divide up between country boys and city boys, and we’re going to have a game of soccer. It is on for young and old. Then I’ll change it to under 23s to over 23s, and they swap around and all of a sudden they go to it, but they would have been team mates, now they’re opposite. It’s the thing that you learn most of all is, that it pulls you together under that one banner. And whilst you may not have been … you’re not the same age and you may not come from the same state, and you may not have the same interests, outside, if you get … the successful teams are the ones that can bind together and become brothers in arms if you like, and I’m not going to use gender here, but we have seen netballers the same. I’ve seen country netballers and footballers in the same team, but I think the most important thing is, when you play the game, I go along with that, that you can be a pretty narky loser, but as a coach, particularly in AFL football, the greatest coaches may have had a 55 to … I look at Ron Barassi as being one of my favourite people, and I’ll round this figure off because I’m not 100% sure what it is, but let’s say, I think he had a 54% win-loss ratio. Now that means he’s lost 46% of his games. It’s how he’s taken that, and what he’s done with his team the next week, or the next month, or the next year. That’s what you learn from. Because what it does, it teaches you the ability to rebound. And John Kennedy’s figures might be better, it mightn’t be better, I’m not too sure but again I’ve got a great deal of time for a bloke like John Kennedy, because again, his sides … when you look at his sides, you come away thinking straight away that he’s … they’ve won every game, he’s never lost a game of football because of his principles of life. But that didn’t happen. I don’t know any premierships John Kennedy coached, but none the less, it’s the image that he rebounded, and I think that life’s so testing that we are convinced, we almost convince ourselves that we can’t go forward and one of the things that I’ve learnt from people, by either coaches or playing, there are some people who are mentally stronger than others. And those people I’m going to lean on, because … and I’m only assuming this, but I don’t think any boat with a crew of four is identical strength or identical mental strength, but one only needs the other, just to get the best out of one another, and it might be that the mentally strong person just needs … that person might need a bit of confidence with a pat on the back.

So, the great thing about sport, it is such, not only an evener, it’s such a great opportunity to be involved, to see the best come out of yourself, because you can lean on each other, and a perfect example of this is, that when you …I hear people say this regularly. They walk into a room, they’ve been part of that team, they’re out injury, or out suspended, they walk in after a great victory and they always say the same thing to me – I didn’t feel part of it. Because the other twenty-two have bled, they’ve sweated their sweat, their bones break, their muscles are screaming, their lungs are after oxygen, they’ve done it, even though the others have been part of twenty games and missed that one game, they don’t understand what it’s like. And they’re excluded. And that team bond, if you could ever emulate, if you really want to feel a presence, you want to feel that you’ve got a great friendship, regardless of age, size and that sort of stuff, be part of that team. And if you’ve been through some hardships, hard times, and you do cap it off with a victory, it’s monumental, and it’s almost like everyone then has bled for that one cause. And I’ll go back to John Kennedy, because I know that their first premiership was in ’61 and the Hawthorn Football Club, up to that time, did struggle. The Hawthorn Football Club now, almost merged with Melbourne, and yet now we rate it as one of the greatest sides, one of the great clubs. So things can turn very quickly, but it’s all about internally, it’s all about getting the best out of yourself. And I say that about Wendouree West. I was 8, playing under 14 football. I never felt that the 14-year-old was more deserving than me. I wanted to be there. And we learnt so much from one another.

**Robert Manne**

You’ve talked a lot about your young days. I just wonder … you may have answered this in the media and I missed it, but what you think about this push to have young people playing without scoring and without winning and I suppose there’s a big question about how much is the winning element of sport for young people critical and how much is it something else? In a team, enjoying yourself …

**Mick Malthouse**

Well, it’s interesting because my daughters and sons have all come through, playing sport and they did have that situation, particularly football – the two sons with football. Played, without scores. And they’d come home, would know everything, they would know the scores kicked, and it wouldn’t be made up. They’d be saying, I know that we kicked 2-5 and they kicked 1-7 so we actually won the game. But I’d say, there was no scores. Yes, there was. So, I think the more competitive kids, they need it. For stimulation. But to keep kids involved in the sport, perhaps winning and losing shouldn’t be made so dramatic. And I’m a great advocate of telling the more junior coaches, who should be some sort of accreditation … if you’ve got a club of 40 players, don’t play all your best ones in one side and all the others … and don’t play all your best players in the middle, because you’ll lose those kids. It’s got to be integrated so that everyone has to feel as if they’re part of the team. I’m a great believer in team – team first, team second and team third. And as we get older, when it starts to mean more, okay, throw in the score line, throw in the tackling and stuff, but when does that take place? I think there’s probably … I’m not against no scores up to 7 or 8, but I do think from then on, kids know the score. They know it at 5. But maybe we keep kids more involved in sport when we get a little bit older, but the harsh reality of life is, that you get measured pretty quickly into life. You’re good enough to do this, or you’re not good enough to do that.

**Robert Manne**

So it’s unrealistic to keep that out of it?

**Mick Malthouse**

Yes, for a certain length of time. I’m not opposed to it early days, but I just think, as you get a bit older, life is very, very competitive, so you’ve got to know where you sit.

**Robert Manne**

Can I ask Margot a question? What role does team play in rowing? It’s occasionally … you know, there’s been incidents where somebody has fallen out with others. I won’t mention what they are. But how important is the spirit of the eight or whatever, or nine, in a rowing team?

**Margot Foster**

Oh, it’s essential, Rob. You have two, four or eight people, all in the same place at the same time. As I said before, all working together. And I know that I’ve been in a couple of crews, over the years, where there has been some internal disagreement, and the crew does not perform as well as it could, or should. And it’s just little things, just little personality issues. There’s a lot of responsibility on a rowing coach to keep everybody happy and together and to feel that they’re all sitting in the right seat in the boat, that they’re properly recognised for their efforts, and that can create tensions, but it’s a management exercise of major proportions for the coach and it’s essential that everybody gets on as well as they possibly can, and most of the trouble occurs I suppose before crews are selected and I guess that’s the same in any team and where you all compete against each other for a place in the boat, and then once you’re all in the boat, you’re all happy. And then you can move on from there.

**Russell Hoye**

I’d just like to ask Mick a related question. When it comes to list management discussions at the end of the season, and you’ve got to move players on for various reasons, where they go on to perhaps retire completely or to go and play at another club, what’s the nature of those discussions and what are the positive things that come out of those things, and the negatives?

**Mick Malthouse**

Well, the player probably sees a lot of negatives. That’s without a doubt the hardest job that I ever do, is at the end of the year, the requirement from the AFL is that the minimum number of players to be cut from a list is three. We had twelve I think last year, and when I say we, Carlton. It is so difficult because one of the things that you want to be is a dream-maker and give them opportunity and to give kids that chance of his first game. We had one first gamer on Saturday. Then you become a dream-breaker, but the way I handle it, and I think I’ve kept this pretty much in vogue in the last fifteen, maybe twenty years, is that I will go out of my way to make sure that that player never leaves my office without his dignity intact. It is so important that he’s not judged on anything else but his football abilities, so therefore he walks out and I make a point of making sure to say that he’s been a great contributor, he’s a great kid, we’ll get him to wherever he wants to go, but all we are doing now is having a difference of opinion about your ability to play for our football side. So therefore it becomes his ability versus mine, my opinion versus his, my position is senior, I’m a senior coach, he’s a player, so that’s what we’ve thought of, so he doesn’t go out with anything but a difference of opinion in regard to, can he play with a particular club? And I think it’s so essential that that person walks out, because there’s enough disappointment in sport. At elite sport it is even more so because it could be a player who’s just recently married, who’s got a child, got a mortgage on the house, hasn’t … has wrapped his whole life up in football, albeit that we try to make players more aware of coming to unis and so forth, and he walks out at 27, 28, and he’s got nowhere else to go. So it’s a big kick. It’s something that I do not take lightly and it is easily the worst part of my football … my job, and I can almost remember nearly every player that I’ve had to move on. I never call sacked, I never say cut, I say moved on. You always hope that there’s going to be …I always give an allowance of twelve months, because in that twelve months people have got high emotions, reckon you’re wrong, don’t particularly like you or the club or anyone else. In twelve months’ time they’ve had a chance to re-evaluate their life, maybe think, I think he might have got it right, or thanks for the move, but the judgment to me is that when you meet that player twelve months down the track, that he actually will come out of his way to talk to you.

And I take great delight in that, and pride, because I think that I’ve handled it better than some, because I just believe that I never let him go out of the place feeling inferior.

**Lisa Hasker**

Robert, I just want to pick up on a point that Russ made earlier, that it’s not necessarily the sport that’s making the positive contribution, whether it be to my world or to the whole world, it’s the sport organisation. So Russ, in your research, what are some of the key things that we’re missing, and then I’ll come back to Margot about some of the focuses that her Boards, Boards around her have made. What are the things that we’re not doing in our sports organisation. We’re sending students out into those organisations day on day, what are some of the key issues that we need to tackle, those sports organisations need to tackle in the next ten years?

**Russell Hoye**

I think most sports organisation have got it roughly right in terms of the instrumental activities they’re putting their team or getting their club activities on the park, doing the fundraising, getting the coaching and officiating right. I think the other things that they are being increasingly asked to do by organisations like VicHealth and funding bodies giving funding to sporting groups is to become places for health promotion messages, to become more inclusive of people from different backgrounds and different areas of lifestyle, if you like, and I think sport organisations sometimes struggle with that because they’re moving from a space of just running coaching footy, or teaching people to row, to becoming something quite sophisticated and I don’t think they’re given enough kudos or support by government for those actions that they’ve been asked to undertake. So governments are increasingly asking sporting groups to do more and more to support people in building social connections, taking on board people from disadvantaged backgrounds, those type of things, and sometimes sporting organisations are not that skilled, or you’ve got people in those organisations who don’t have the attitude or the empathy for those types of people, and I think part of that is cultural awareness, some of it’s education, and some of it’s direct support to those groups to get better at doing those things.

**Lisa Hasker**

And Margot, just following up from … you’re sitting as Chair of VicSport, so you’re supporting all the sporting organisations to try to get them to do that, and also on VicHealth which is supporting that health side of things and previously the Sports Commission, as a Board, how do you sit and decide what are the most important issues you’re going to help people with? Do you do that? How do you kind of reconcile that in what you focus on?

**Margot Foster**

I think one of the great challenges for sport at the moment is governance and it is the watch word and sports need to have good governance of companies, ASX companies need to have good governance, footy clubs, in a world of their own, need to have good governance, and I think that the challenge for all sport is to have the right people on the Board, who can make the right decisions, and I know that’s a fairly trite statement, but it’s important to have well-trained Board members from wherever they come, whether they come from within the sport or without the sport, and that they have the capacity to look to the future and to see where the trends are. One of the trends at the moment, as many of you will be aware, is the pay to play, so it’s not about going along and joining your local swimming club or tennis club, it’s about training in your own little group, and doing a Beach Road ride or a triathlon or a fun swim or a fun run at some stage, so it’s meeting the trend, because I think if we value organised sport, which does provide the pathway for our Olympic athletes, then we need to keep these organisations viable, intact, functioning, with the right amount of funding, to then be able to make the right decisions to keep that model together while still at the same time embracing the need to recognise participation for participation’s sake, as being equally valuable.

**Lisa Hasker**

Very true. Rob?

**Robert Manne**

I’m going to ask Mick an impossible question. You said in your talk that your whole life in a way has been tied up with football. So the question I’d like you to answer is this. What’s the best change over that time you’ve noticed, and the worst?

**Mick Malthouse**

Okay. The best is going national. There’s no question about that, because it is a indigenous game that we started over a hundred years ago, 150 years ago, and the uniqueness of it is that … and the strength of it is numbers, and certainly the ability for most Australians to identify … most, this is not knocking other sports, I love other sports, but to give them a chance – the kid in Alice Springs can be drafted by a club in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales or Queensland, and have every right to think he’s going to be part of a successful club and play at the highest level. It was … you know, the VFL was dead. It was dying, as were other codes, the code in … I think there was only one viable club in Western Australia, financially, whereas the national competition has picked it up, and there’s still big money strain, but it gives those kids the opportunity to see a national comp that I think the kids would have had a choice of going okay, if I play soccer I can play anywhere in the world. They still can. Rugby Union is played predominantly in three or four, or Europe and three or four southern … Africa, Australia and Argentina. So we needed something, and that to me was a brave move by the administration at that time to expand the VFL into an AFL competition.

**Robert Manne**

Was there one person more responsible than others in that?

**Mick Malthouse**

Well, I’d like to think that Alan Schwab had a great say in that, and maybe I’ve got it wrong, but I know Alan, he recruited me to Richmond, and the Schwab family have been part of football for a long time, but Alan in particular, for me, was a bloke that said, we need to see other Victorian clubs win a premiership to make it a bona fide national football competition. So, he would have been part of that, because the clubs themselves had to give up a fair bit, to have a Commission for a start off, so that took away a lot of their rights. And then the Commission made that move to say, well, listen, we need to expand this game.

It’s hard to look at a worst thing, because football means so much to me. If I looked at a worst thing, it would be very trivial. Say, one decision by an umpire at a certain time might have cost us a goal but that’s very trivial, isn’t it? So I think if you look at all the positive, we’ve got people from different nationalities play the game, all different sizes, all different strengths, a premiership Canadian, we’ve got a superstar Fijian, we have, and I’ve got at Carlton, three Irish players. We’ve seen one of them, not one of them, but one win a Brownlow. So it says a lot about our game, that we are very open to great sportspeople can come in a make a massive difference to our sport. So, the negativity to it all, if I was to say anything it would just be the pressures that people are put under, particularly players, that they’ve got … and it’s like any sport. It’s not an AFL thing – it’s a general thing of sport that the expectations sometimes exceed the player’s capability of handling it, and we put … we’ve seen too many players retire from great sport, from any sport, and they’re greats, and that gap between finishing and we’ve got a lot of good sportspeople through here. I can see a few sportspeople through here, and the next phase of their life is a worry to me, because we’ve seen too many destroyed by drugs and alcohol, and that loss, it’s the loss of the competition and that loss of team-manship that they’ve left in a void, and we as an industry, a football industry, and perhaps other sports, haven’t quite found the formula for ensuring that those people are not … let’s forget about them playing, but don’t forget them as people, and I’d say that’s fundamental to all sports.

**Lisa Hasker**

Margot, just from a wider sporting perspective, other sports that you’ve been involved in, particularly when you sat on the Sports Commission Board, when you were looking after all sports, what do you see as the biggest positive and probably the challenge, and maybe just take up that issue of transition that we touched on before, that stopping your sport, losing your job … and where you go next.

**Margot Foster**

I was very lucky. I was able to start my Law degree and finish it before I hit the big time in sport, but I managed to combine the two, and it’s always concerned me since that football players and many others in the professional codes, have to do it full time. And that they’re training in the morning, they live at the club, they train in the afternoon and then they go home and they don’t ever really get away from it. They don’t really ever have a life, and the exigencies of the requirements of the public and the media for them to perform almost at all cost, I think is verging to me on the unacceptable. And I think that there ought to be more balance in people’s lives. For most of my rowing career I trained twice a day, so twelve sessions a week, but I also worked between sessions. I’d row in the morning at half past six, seven o’clock, and then again at sort of five thirty, six in the afternoon, evening, and I was always able to keep the balance. And there was one brief moment when I had to train three times a day and it absolutely drove me insane because I never got away from it. And that’s what concerns me about the professional players who just live at their clubs. They don’t have time to do courses and I know that La Trobe is making efforts with Heart and whatever that they have the players engage in other activities, but I think that that’s probably one of the greatest impediments to then being able to make a transition to a normal life. And with footy players, the attrition rate is so high that a lot of these young guys, enormous expectations, that they’re going to have a career as a player, make lots of money, and then go into the media, and it’s not realistic.

**Lisa Hasker**

Maybe not. And I think that the huge breakthrough that the AFLPA in particular have made in getting a day and a half off for the AFL players means that they can pursue other kind of work for that day, or work experience, they can pursue some study, they can go off and do those other things that they wouldn’t get a chance to do if they’re all day every day at the club. But other sports, like the rowers, like the Paralympians, they still have … they don’t have that mandated balance.

**Margot Foster**

No, because no one … equally no one’s going to pay them to train all day, and I think that’s part of the difference as well. You might be a supported athlete with a daily allowance through the Sports Commission, but you’re still going to have to earn your keep some other way, otherwise, and find a job and a helpful employer to fill in the middle of your days.

**Lisa Hasker**

That’s right. Another question that I had is, the footballers have an environment where they’re paid and they have the support from their coach and daily support from the people who help them with their welfare and their education, and the physios. A lot of other sportspeople don’t get that, they might get the odd bit of support from the VIS or their sporting club and as you say, they have to go out and pursue that themselves. Is there any way that we can kind of even up that support, whether it be monetary or just support with physio and that type of thing, for the best of the best, regardless of the code, because you’ve got people who are multiple gold medallists who are paying to be in their sport rather than being paid to be in the sport. Do you think that there’s an answer to that? Or is it just going to be …

**Margot Foster**

I think the degrees of inequality will continue to remain and it’s a question of trying to minimise them I suppose, and provide as much support as possible, but sport, other than the professional codes, doesn’t have a lot of money, relies on a lot of government support and then whatever they can raise out of memberships and other fundraising activities. So the opportunities to defray the costs and provide that extra support is limited. You can’t go to the nearest tobacco company any more for a bit of a handout, and the pool of potential sponsors and entities that are prepared to support sport is not growing.

**Russell Hoye**

I just want to ask Mick another question about the relationship with the media, not your own personal relationship, which is generally fantastic with the media, but in terms of the … like, footballers and other professional codes have grown as a result of media exposure and advertising through TV and that’s what sustains the payments to players and the ability to get individual Olympic athletes to get sponsorship and go overseas and defray some of those costs of participating. Do you think that that’s come at a cost though, for those who are the athletes who are subject to such scrutiny that they give up a fair chunk of their private life in order to receive those benefits. Is that one of the conundrums in professional sport?

**Mick Malthouse**

Well, I think this is the chicken v the egg. At the end of the day, the reason why AFL footballers will average roughly $300,000 next year is because people watch the game. They love the game, they watch the game. By watching the game, they pay to go to the game, x amount of dollars, they watch it on TV, the pay x amount of dollars, the advertiser looks at the numbers on the TV and says, well, there’s a million people watching the game therefore I’ll advertise, so there’s more money … the media. So it comes around to that single dollar. And that’s what governs the ability to be professional or just a hard working amateur who’s probably just as good but plays a sport that is not watched by as many people and therefore can’t generate the money. That’s a simple fact of life, that’s the way when the ABC had cricket compared to Channel 9,he was prepared to stack it up, that’s Packer and colour it up and do all sorts of things which introduced more money through the advertising which gave the players more money, therefore more players were attracted to it and the better players stayed, whereas others were … if you didn’t attract it, they’d filter out. It’s as simple as that. Players understand totally that they are at the mercy of expectations, so they know that when they first arrive at the football club they go through a whole process and they are told by the AFL … we lose our players for a three-day period when they go to the AFL and every young kid gets told these things about … outside of the drugs and the alcohol and all the bits and pieces, about their conduct and what they’re representing and this is what you’re expected to do, so they’re under no illusions whatsoever that there is a price – until it happens. And when it happens – when they are in the highlight … in the big light, in the big picture for a moment, for a particular reason, they don’t like it.

And not many people do, but sometimes it’s a fact of life that you just have to train yourself up and it’s our job to train them up, to say, look, this is what … if you’re gonna play this game, then you’re gonna come under massive scrutiny. And the more money you get, the more scrutiny. And the bigger the club, the more scrutiny, and the bigger the stage, the more scrutiny. So when I … as I said to you, in 1983 or ’84, when I first started coaching, I think there were 37, thereabouts, accredited people in the media. Now there’s 1,300. So everyone looks for a front page, back page highlight, or something that’s going to show them up as a great journo, whatever, at the expense of, sometimes, muddling with a player’s mind. But the price is, if you want to stay in the game, that these are some of the things that are going to be … you have to put up with, that you have to get professional help at the football club to be able to cope with, go forward with.

We know, and I know, and I daresay you guys would know, that some haven’t been able to cope with it and it’s had a massive effect on their performance, to the point where some players just go, that’s it, I’ve had enough. That’s generally late in their career. Young kids, they love it because it’s all glory, but when the pressure starts to go on them as consistent performers, some can and some can’t go on with their performances, plateauing because they can’t take that stuff. It’s part of the game. It’s almost like … and I’d be the last to knock it, our game exists the way it is, to be able to get players there, because supporters, media, club, players, that’s the way it works. If you don’t have supporters, no money. If you don’t have media, no coverage. If you don’t have good players, the game deteriorates. It is a cycle that is wrapped around … to get the best boxers to fight, you’ve got to have a good purse. If you’re going to pay them nothing, they couldn’t be bothered. If you want to attract the best golfers to Australia, you give them the big purse. The pressure goes on them for their performance but at the end of the day, that dollar rules everything.

**Lisa Hasker**

Just one last question to Margot, to follow on from Mick’s comments. Margot, you rowed at the Olympics, millions of people watched it. You’re the star and people are turning on and paying the money, do you think that athletes that compete at the Games, should get a cut of TV money, sponsorship dollars? Have you ever, as an Olympian, thought about that, because you are … only once every four years, but you’re on that stage and attracting that attention and that money.

**Margot Foster**

Heavens, it’s never even occurred to me. You don’t go to the Olympics for the reward beyond the reward of going, representing your country, doing the best you can. If there are consequential benefits attached to it then that’s great, and if you win a gold medal, well, certainly you get all the accolades and rewards. Whether you start divvying up television money based on performance, I think that might be a step too far.

**Lisa Hasker**

I’ve always wondered what the athletes think.

**Robert Manne**

I think we should …

**Lisa Hasker**

Question?

**Robert Manne**

… give some time for questions, so I think there’s a roving mike, and John Carroll will start us off.

*Yeah, I want to introduce the spectator. If we’re talking about the extraordinary significance of sport in a Western country like Australia today, that overwhelmingly refers to the spectators, not to the players. And the big question is, I think … I’m a sociologist … what’s behind this? Because it hasn’t always been like this. Far, far from it. I think the main reason is not to do with community, because most spectators aren’t caught up in the experience that the players themselves have. I think it’s mainly caught up with questions of how we find meaning in our lives today, in a world in which hardly anyone still goes to church, only 7% of Australians go to church regularly. Where do we find models and ideals of what the good life is? And I think in all Western countries, not just in Australia, we’ve inherited something from the ancient Greeks, which was a sort of belief that it’s possible for us individuals, whether as individuals or in teams, but basically as individuals, to surpass or transcend our normal human capacities in excellence, whether it’s sport or dance or whatever. There are moments of extraordinary inspiring performance. The Greeks called it beautiful, talked about beautiful rhythm. When you see an individual at the Olympic Games, or you see a team that’s in form, in the zone, whatever it is, there’s something uplifting about this and it’s a signal, it’s a signal to us that it’s actually possible to be more than your ordinary everyday, your ordinary everyday self. And sport has risen to this extraordinary significance in our society, to a very significant degree I think because of … it sort of inspires us in a particular way and the odd thing is that the spectators of course are not actually participating in that way, but in their own activities there are probably parallels to that. So sort of, I suppose that this is a comment, that if we’re talking about the very surprising centrality of sport in the way we live in a country like Australia today. I think we have to ask the question, why is it? What’s going on here?*

**Lisa Hasker**

Russ, do you think in your research it’s part of that wanting to be part of something bigger? And as a spectator, in that community, as a member of a club, or just turning up to a game, that you become part of that community, because you’re barracking, because …

**Russell Hoye**

I think John’s right in his perception that there’s more people watching sport than playing sport, regularly in Australia. And I think the watching component is purely driven by the fact that we’ve been on a cycle of improving athletic performance in Australia for the last fifty, sixty years, so … and this has been replicated around the world, so people will consciously go and buy a ticket to the Olympic Games just to go and watch the 100 metres men’s dash because it’s an absolutely fantastic event, historical event, to witness. There’s still people out there watching Legends Football League if you’ve ever seen that on cable TV. There’s some absolute rubbish out there, the covering of sport. And people watch, you know, satellite tournaments of the US PGA, people you don’t even know the names of. There’s people watching it on cable TV because … oh, it’s sport. Because people inherently are genuinely interested in performance, people being challenged, people overcoming adversity. It’s life, but there on the big screen and I think that’s the attraction for sport. And that’s why I go to watch football. That’s why I like it. It’s something far removed from your worklife, it’s something exceptional, you can witness great moments. And that’s why I think sport is so attractive to people, to go and watch.

**Lisa Hasker**

Margot, have you got any comments?

**Margot Foster**

Well, I was just interested in the comment that this is a new phenomenon or a newer phenomenon, and yet if you were to visit some of the boatsheds down on the Yarra, you’d see photographs of thousands of people lining the river bank, back in the end of the 1900s, early 20th century, watching rowing races. I mean, it’s Moomba gone ballistic, really, to see the number of people around the river. So maybe it’s more documented now. But certainly I know as a spectator I enjoy going to the Olympic Games and being part of an experience, watching athletes as Russ said.

**Lisa Hasker**

It’s a bit the same in track and field that, you know, people used to go and watch the weekly run, interclub, the rowing regattas on the Yarra and maybe that was because there wasn’t as much else on offer. Maybe because there wasn’t the professional sports that we’re pushed to and marketed to, to join and come and be a part of it. And maybe it’s just a cycle.

*Russ, you mentioned very early in the peace that we’ve got a third of our volunteer base is related to sport, and Mick you mentioned the role of fans and the responsibility that players have to fans. I’m just wondering, what happens when the social glue of sport comes undone with fan behaviour, or spectator behaviour? And what responsibility you think clubs or sporting bodies have in the management of that? I’m thinking like soccer violence and things like that.*

**Russell Hoye**

If you’re talking about spectator behaviour at a local community level, I think sporting clubs have a complete responsibility to look after the behaviour of the members and to protect the people who are playing sport on the field, who are officiating, who are coaching, they have the absolute right to be going about their sporting business in a safe environment. There’s no need for that sort of behaviour and sporting clubs are directly responsible for that, so at a community level, sporting clubs have to be able to fulfil those duties. They’ve got to have the right people, the right attitudes as I said before.

At a major event level, people who are going to the MCG to watch a game on the weekend, that sort of behaviour is sheeted home to the host of the game, so it becomes the venue management’s responsibility. But it comes down to people in the crowd as well, behaving. And I think most sporting venues now have the, you know, texting poor behaviour is a fantastic way of monitoring that behaviour.

For the level of crowd incidents in the size and scale of Australian sporting venues compared to worldwide, we have very little incidence of crowd misbehaviour in Australia, and I think that’s because of the way that people look at sport and why they go. The fact that AFL crowds can sit side by side, compared to going to an EPL game in a home venue in the UK, it’s completely different.

**Robert Manne**

Why is that?

**Russell Hoye**

Well, they’re whingeing Poms for one thing. It’s also the tribal following that clubs have been engendering. So it’s been … some of those teams that have come out of quite disadvantaged areas in England has seen the rise of that hooliganism behaviour. But that is so far, much better policed than say, twenty years ago. So I think there’s been a huge education campaign around that. And I think it’s far safer to go and watch an EPL game now than twenty years ago, for sure. And venues have changed as well. The actual sitting together in a venue, rather than standing, creates a completely different environment. And it just … all those little things add up around how crowds are managed.

**Robert Manne**

Can I ask a tiny question? I’m really amazed at the end of a football match where the players seem so well-disposed towards each other. They often look forlorn if they’ve lost or elated if they’ve won, but the relationship between the two teams strikes me as astonishingly positive. Is that …

**Mick Malthouse**

Yes, it’s genuine. It’s a brotherhood, because they … at the Players’ Association you’ll see that take place, you’ll probably see that take place in so many team sports around the world. You know, one of the things I know I advocate is that the white line separates the war from the peace, and you get out there and you … when that siren starts, you play your heart out for your club, but when it finishes, have the respect, get the respect of your opponent by showing a genuine concern, or a congratulatory performance, and you don’t want to gloat, so therefore be careful how you handle yourself. I just think it’s respect, first and foremost. It keeps it in the vein of sport, too. And players, I think it would be fair to say Rob, that when you look at players over the last fifteen years, and this is happening quite … it has happened quite a lot through sport … there is a lot of changing faces in teams, because we’ve introduced different rules that allow players to change clubs, and they keep that … you know, there’s … one of my players this morning came in and said, can I address the player group? And I said, certainly, what’s happened? And he said, one of our former team mate’s dad has died. And I need to inform them. To me that is just one, respect, but two, a fundamental human reaction to a former friend’s grief, and I think that’s what you’re seeing permeate through it. That we encourage players to embrace the referees for a start off, and then the opposition at the end of the game. I think it’s a great look, personally, for our sport.

**Lisa Hasker**

Rob, we have another question ...

*Thanks very much Mick. Obviously you’ve spoken about how high the amount of pressure is for some of the younger players coming through the ranks. We’ve seen instances where it has been, the pressure has been too great for some of them, obviously Dale Garlett this year and I think there seems to be some sort of a trend towards indigenous players, we talked about Liam Jarrah striking trouble, Liam Patrick from the Gold Coast retiring early. Do you think football clubs manage the individuals and I guess the giant change in environment well enough in this day and age, or do you think that’s an area that maybe could be worked at, at football clubs?*

**Mick Malthouse**

Oh, it’s a very good question. I would say that, like the game itself, like what Russell just said, twenty years ago you’d be really scratching to get yourself at an EPL game. Now, when I go to England, if I have the opportunity I will certainly take up games and don’t have any fear. Don’t try doing it in Moscow by the way, but certainly in London or in England you can get away with it. I think we’ve come such a long way in addressing all those issues you’re talking about where player welfare is first and foremost. We have welfare officers. We are educated, or management is educated in regard to demands, and just seeing sometimes a trend in a player that’s maybe deteriorating. Medical staff are certainly educated in it. And so we try to pick up things before they become a major trouble item. And the players you mentioned, yes, for the indigenous lads who have found it harder because the demands are greater, there is a happy balance there as well. It’s a recognition of 50,000 years of genetic engineering that you’ve got to consider and I think that, as a senior coach, and being in the game long enough, you have to take steps … put it this way, consistency is over-rated. If I was totally consistent with every player, I’d be making huge blues with some, and get it right for 80%. Consistency being over-rated, then you’ve got to get it right. And if you’re going to get it right, then you’ve got to know the people you’re dealing with. And by getting to know the people you’re dealing with, you understand that there’s cultural and other variances that you have to consider and make sure you get it right. So, but the Garlett one, I would never in my wildest dreams blame Hawthorn for that, because they are a club that is setting very, very high standards in that area.

There are other players that perhaps in the past have drifted out but believe me, clubs are making massive inroads into ensuring … our greatest asset is our player group. So it’s your job to make sure your assets work for you. So you can’t think that everyone is the same.

*What about Harry O’Brien who’s seen so much success? How did you I guess manage him from the outset, because he’s obviously gone on to become such a great player?*

**Mick Malthouse**

Heritier is a very much an individual type of person who needs, like other people, not constant care but needs to be recognised for what they stand for. And the best possible way there is to show interest and be aware that there is some differences. You’re not going to get on with every player. The idea is to be respected for the way that you handle those players. And I think that he has come such a long way from being a rookie to where he is today. And he’s self-made but he’s had a great deal of help along the way by the Collingwood Football Club.

**Lisa Hasker**

I’ve got another question Rob. Across the other side of the room.

**Robert Manne**

This had better be the last question because we have to end at two.

*I’ll make it a good one then. So Mick mentioned about the twenty minutes you saw on ABC making demi-gods of professional players. You have a lot more coverage now. Does that mean that there’s more demi-gods or is it being diluted through the professional system. And a second part, probably a question for Russell, do you see that there’s a flow-down effect into amateur sport? This idolisation, and how does that affect society?*

**Mick Malthouse**

Well, I’m not going to answer for Russ but it’s almost … the way I answered it I’m sure that Russell is going … The responsibility for us is that I keep saying to any player or anyone attached to the football club, you get it right, people will follow it down, you get it wrong, people will follow it down. They will automatically gravitate to what you do because they think it’s right. Whether my grandson kicking around corners for shots on goal is right, from Steve Johnson or whether it’s straight in front like Peter Hudson, I don’t know. But there’s a flow-on effect if you ever want a flow-on effect. They want to emulate their heroes and the responsibility, as much as some players are very reluctant heroes, their conduct gets passed down, through the media today because the game is saturated, so there’s no hiding. So you just want players to be model citizens if you like. Very sporting in the way they approach the game, and remember all their actions are looked at by our next generation.

**Russell Hoye**

What he said.

**Robert Manne**

It has reached two. I’d like to thank you all very much for coming. It’s great to see so many students in the audience here. We’ve got two more sessions this semester. In a fortnight or three weeks, Tim Soutphommasane who is the Human Rights Commissioner is going to be talking about whether or not we need to reform the racial Discrimination Act and more generally about racism in Australia. Two weeks after that our Chancellor and Robin Williams of the ABC and others will be coming along to discuss communicating science to the general public, so I would like to see some of these faces again in future sessions.

Can I just say, thank Lisa, Margot, Mick, Russ, for what I think has been a great and deep discussion. I’ve enjoyed it thoroughly.

Thank you very much.

[applause]