

KEVIN SHEEDY AND DAVID PARKIN

FOOTBALL GREATS

Moderated by Tim Watson and Sam Newman
10 May 2001 Windsor Hotel



TIM WATSON (TW): What I would like to do first before I hand over to this other gentleman is to talk a little about 'boring', 'brutal' and 'brilliant' and those three words. As I look around the room I could describe a lot of people here today – not just you, Sam. Brutal is the subject that I'd like to deal with first. For me, brutal goes back to a young boy growing up in the country, a wheat-belt town by the name of Dimboola, which is about half way between Melbourne and Adelaide. And I'd just like to relay this story from those days. As a 13-year-old boy I played my first game for the senior team of Dimboola – one-handed. And the reason I played one-handed was because prior to the game I actually watched all the seasoned veterans of the side apply liberally this great quantity of oil to their hands. Then they would wrap this thing – which I later learnt was rosin. They would wrap the oil and then they would rub their hands together with the rosin and what it actually did is, it caked on this thickness of sticky substance to your hands, which made it easier for you to grab hold of the ball. And so, being a young 13-year-old in the change rooms of the seniors for the first time, I decided to copy the ritual. And thinking that if a little bit was good; I decided to apply a lot to my hands. And then the other ritual that takes place before a game of football is a thing called 'the nervous one', just prior to the game...and hence I played my first game one-handed.

Now the game is also brutal in other ways and we only have to think of Damian Drum at this time to understand that. Now Drummy rang me last week for some advice and I told him to start learning how to read the autocue...

Look, boring? I don't find footy boring. Yeah, I find the theatre boring at times. I have never known anybody to fall asleep at a game of football, but I have not ever been to a theatre where I haven't sat down and heard someone snoring in the next row or the seat next to me. I don't find footy boring but I do find parts of the game boring. I find it boring that coaches like to quote world leaders and great world thinkers and, yeah, we have Mick Malthouse getting his Machiavelli and his Michelangelo mixed up. And in the same weekend we had Denis Pagan getting his Calvin and his Rita Coolidge mixed up. Actually, I'm a little bit bored with John Elliott's weekly surprise appearances on the Collingwood fan show on Channel Eddie. And while we're on

the subject, I'm bored with Eddie's denials about a conflict of interest. But I must say, I do applaud him for getting behind TIPSTAR so that he can put something back into grassroots footy. It's working. Juvenile gambling has gone up 35% in the last two months.

I'm a little bit bored about all this talk about the Bulldogs' best and fairest fixing and I think a letter in yesterday's 50/50 column in the Herald Sun probably best sums it up. It said, "What's all the fuss about?" Signed S. Malik, Lahore, Pakistan". And I don't know if it's just me, but I'm finding Wayne (Wayne Jackson) a bit boring too. You know I thought Collo (Ian Collins) was brilliant. When he spoke, everybody listened and took down notes and you never got the impression with Collo that he was reading from a prepared group of notes that some PR consultant had passed him across the desk.

What I'm finding boring, is the fact that we can no longer play a game for four points. It's not big enough for us to play the game for four points anymore. We have to play a game for a cup. There are more cups now in the AFL than you can see in a Benny Hill special. And I'm bored with all this talk about clubs folding. Ironic, isn't it, that players are getting paid on average \$125,000 a year, and some clubs are reportedly going to the wall? I say – and this would be a radical idea – but let's put the players on weekly performance-based contracts. I guarantee had we done that at St Kilda last year, the club would have declared a record profit for that season.

Brilliance. I do find the players, the main players in the game today, brilliant. The Hirds, the Buckleys, the MacLeods, the Jarmans, the Smiths, the Sheahans, the Connellys, the Maguires, the Hutchisons, the Newmans, the Bonds, the Poulterers, the Timms – sensational players the lot of them. Now it's time for us to hear from one of the sensational players of the game, a man that you could not describe as boring. You could not describe him as brilliant, but (I was coached by him for 14 years) you could describe him as brutal. Would you please put your hands together for Kevin Sheedy.

KEVIN SHEEDY (KS) Thanks, Tim. First of all, Ladies and Gentlemen, thanks very much for the invitation today. Tim, probably when you're looking at the game that he played, he

KEVIN SHEEDY AND DAVID PARKIN FOOTBALL GREATS

Moderated by Tim Watson and Sam Newman
10 May 2001 Windsor Hotel

always played an exciting game and of course many people went to watch him play. Not every player played the sort of games that Tim Watson was capable of playing. In my first year of coach, I remember in the night competition, which was pre-season and mid-season in those days, when we were allowed to play a few of those. Of course, Tim's jumped over a Carlton player, straight over the top of him, kicked the goal and won the game. Essendon finally won a final, the first final possibly in about 15 years. It's all right for Tim, not everybody is brilliant. Of course when I look at some of the things which I've read recently... and for me I always try to keep boring people out of Essendon and try to get rid of them out of football...for me when I see that word 'boring' it becomes an insult to our game and I think that in some areas, it has moved into that area.

I've definitely seen some boring articles by the press. I've seen some boring coaching and I've seen some boring players and I very rarely try to get involved in that side because you're not going to sell tickets to a game at the MCG or Colonial which is very, very difficult. One of the biggest decisions Essendon has ever made was in 1992 to take the average crowd of 17,000 to the MCG – the average crowd of 17,000 at Windy Hill and we're going to go to the MCG to start life again. Could you imagine what it would be like with 17,000 at the MCG? We've never, ever tried to attempt to bring anything but excitement. Sometimes we get it wrong, there's no doubt about that. But very, very difficult to try to get 70,000 to 95,000 every time you go to play at the MCG, particularly at that stage. One of the difficulties that our management has taken on was that we were going there with great players, in the 1991-1992 era, finishing their careers. So we found it very, very difficult to say that we're going to lose Madden, Daniher, Watson, Van der Haar and Foulds, Duckworth, Williams. Anderson went back to Adelaide etc. and all of these 2000 games experience walked out of, say, our club and all of sudden you had to try and start your team again. That was a challenge and a very, very exciting challenge because that's when we really had to work drafting and of course a lot of people in this room don't have to work drafting...anybody out there writing, you can write the article of your choice and go for it. Same as Channel 9 or Channel 7, Channel 10, Foxtel, whoever. So, boring players – out. Boring people – try and work around them. I see them at the end of the freeway locked up at about 8.30 every morning. I look over and I think Jesus, you poor bugger. Going to work for another boring day of their life. Immediately, I do a right hand turn at the cemetery.

But anyway, boring rules – we can eradicate them. Actually there's no problem with that. We only have to get the right people in the rules area and we'll make the game more exciting possibly. But, brutal? I'm not quite sure whether the game's brutal in regard to the way it used to be. As far as I'm concerned, brutality to football today I think is the injury. We can see too many players with the injuries that we have and of course just recently hamstrings have taken more players out of the game than perhaps hits. Let's get it right. You see a player go down with a knee, that's more brutal than a person getting a whack, because the whack might be

one week, maybe two. Very rarely more than two, but the knee or the hamstring or tendon is more brutal in footy. So I think sometimes we should look at that area more than perhaps the hits. I am very concerned that we've not. We're not really sure in the end what is brutal in our game and I tend to think that the medical area is perhaps the area that I think hurts us the most in the game.

Exciting? Well, I wrote down a list and I know that David sort of mentioned the word boring, apparently recently the other day.

DAVID PARKIN (DP) I wish I hadn't.

KS: Well these are the sort of guys that happened to sort of be around with David. David and I being in the very similar position we played on...gee thank God I've retired. Long Wanganeen's down forward in the forward pocket. How'd you go on Wanganeen? Ronnie Burns, Platten, Burgoyne, Moorcroft, Rioli, Harvey, young Holland, Peter Matera or Phil Matera. I don't think a player like myself would last on any of those sort of players for too long. I would never have had the career that possibly I was fortunate to have, in all honesty.

The most exciting part of footy has being generated in the last decades, since the AFL started, basically in 1990. We have 60 approximately exciting, native Australian Aboriginal players that have really made us look up and say, "Gee whiz, why didn't we have them here for the previous 90 years?" And I think it's one of the most exciting steps we've ever taken and I hope to see that we keep developing that area. So much so, that I'd like to say that probably in the future, the most exciting step we could ever do is to now go to America and start recruiting in America; something that we've never attempted to do. So for an exciting point of view, if you want football to grow like it's growing, then I'll be going definitely to the colleges in America and do a lot of recruiting out of there in the next dimension. Thank you very much.

TW: To translate on behalf of everybody here – Sam Newman.

SAM NEWMAN: Well, just some preliminary comments firstly. There's the door prize, two tickets to the Footy Show. My luck to win that. I'm the only bloke I know that paid full price for a Persian rug a couple of weeks ago. Knocked out David more times? I think I can beat you on that. Mind you, I might have been after I finished playing. Now, Kevin of course, he's a star. And just incidentally...special comments. I'm not sure what they mean. I give very special comments. Dermott gives special comments on the station that I work for at Triple M but of course no one's listening because I think you told me didn't you, 3AW cleaned up or something like that? Anyhow I got my talent, if you can call it that, from special comments from Ron Barassi. I used to sit next to Ron and that he was – very, very special comments Ron. I got off on the wrong foot with Ron. I asked him at a dinner party once, what did he think of the Israeli Arab position. He said, well, he didn't mind it but his wife put her back out. After that I thought, "Well this could be my go – the media". Because you don't need a lot of intelligence obviously to be in it, and this man here of course, Kevin Sheedy, promotes the theory that to be

KEVIN SHEEDY AND DAVID PARKIN FOOTBALL GREATS

Moderated by Tim Watson and Sam Newman
10 May 2001 Windsor Hotel

uneducated, unintelligent and inarticulate is a virtue and does it beautifully. Delusions of adequacy he has. Delusions of adequacy. There's less of this man than meets the eye and don't worry about it. You're going down to Geelong and you've stopped at Laverton and they saw a rocket ship that had landed and a bloke got out of it with a couple of horns in his head and they said, 'That's Kevin Sheedy'. You wouldn't bat an eyelid. This man is a space cadet but he's a marvellous man. Looked up the dictionary... in the dictionary the other day it said you're holding it, you fuck wit. A very, very great man. Couldn't say it's boring though, football, David. I understand. I hear what you say when you comment on the fact that you could use a different word, but because this room wouldn't be full if you used a different word. Boring has captured everyone's imagination. And of course Kevin, you do it well, but I'm interested to hear of some of your analytical...mind you, Kevin's analytical skills come from mainly having his video cassette recorder hooked up to Play School. And I remember out at Windy Hill you said 17,000. You'd taken to 70,000 at MCG...that's because Windy Hill only held 17,000. So you could only go up. But you are a great man and great to hear the testimonial about yourself you've just delivered here today, about how great you've been and the very fact is that we can't argue with you. You are great. You're a very colourful and confident member of this great institution called Australian Rules Football and there should be more of you. Mind you, I think it would be hard to argue that in this day and age...

KS: Do you think the Footy Show is getting boring?

SN: I don't know. As Neil said, we don't worry about the ratings – we just wait until that man over there gives us the sack. We're only, all of us in this room, just filling in time 'til we get sacked and that is a fact and don't ever worry about that not being a fact. That is a fact. So you're a lateral man. You're obscure. You're a little diverse and that's what I think the footballing public actually love about you. And I think all of the coaches coaching today are a breath of fresh air David. And you could be included in this because you've come across now after pretending to coach last year. You've actually come across this year and decided you're actually not coaching. So all of them have a great capacity to deal with the media and of course deal with the critics. And you know what critics are, don't you? They're like eunuchs in a harem. They're there every night. They see it done every night. They see how it should be done every night. But they can't do it themselves. So we don't have anything...

KS: Thanks for the lunch, Ladies and Gentlemen. It's fantastic and I'm really excited...

SN: So, it's great to hear you speak about the game and all the people you've brought into it and you were leading the cheer for the sorry apology later on and that's great and very nice to have you here. So we'll hear if David Parkin can speak in the affirmative or is it the negative to what you said? Thank you very much.

TW: Thanks, Sam. Well David Parkin is one of the great men of football. He's a premiership player at Hawthorn, a

premiership coach at Carlton and Hawthorn and he's widely regarded as one of the great teachers of the game. Please put your hands together for David Parkin.

DAVID PARKIN (DP): I'm not brave enough to start after hearing that. Look, I understand we wouldn't be here unless I'd inadvertently, at a luncheon about 2 months ago I think, used the word 'boring', instead of, I think, 'predictable' or 'less certain' or something. So I apologise for having brought you out on that. You've all been used up something shockingly. The fact is, I was invited to a luncheon, which I didn't know I was a guest speaker at, so I thought I'd better say something which might interest people.

Look, the whole episode, and I won't go into the issues, and some people were at that lunch and I see them on the sidelines here...but having gone through the Olympic Games at the end of last year in Sydney and being interested, I think, in the full gamut of sport, not just Australian footy but the other territorial team games which exist and were played at the Sydney Olympics. I was fascinated to watch soccer and to watch basketball, to watch European handball and to watch water polo and hockey. Got tickets and went along to see the best in the world playing their trade. After two weeks of watching, I was absolutely convinced that Australian Football had reached the same stage that all those other international games have reached. Some difference, in the sense that the ball was slightly larger or smaller, oblong or round, but mostly they played with a round ball which makes it predictable. When you drop the things they bounce back up again. But the method, or the tactical ploys of all of those games were almost identical. Why basketball? They said it's a great game. You start at 100 points each and play 5 minutes, it's a great game. It's the most boring game I've ever met. And why Americans think they've got a great game and even trust the people who lose the ball to give it back again. They take all those blokes off who lost the ball and bring another mob on to win it back. And when they'd won it back they don't let them play with it. They take them off and bring the original team back to play.

So I mean, and we have something, what I'm trying to say, we have something unique in the sense that Australian Football is without doubt the best game in the world. I have no problem with that. I heard Peter Schwab saying it the other day. We have the best game in the world. Or we had it. We still have the best game in the world and one of the reasons why, is the continuum of uncertainty and certainty Australian Rules Football was at that end. Totally uncertain – 36 players playing on a large ground with an oblong-shaped ball used in their hands and foot to propel it around the ground, up and down the ground, gave it the highest level of uncertainty. If that doesn't raise the arousal of interest levels higher than any other game which works back down the continuum in a certain way then I "m a Dutchman's uncle. And I am so concerned and I really have and I've been arguing it and some people have jumped on and some people have jumped off. I love the game. I want to continue to love the game and for my children and my children's children because we have a uniqueness in our football that no other sport in the world.

KEVIN SHEEDY AND DAVID PARKIN FOOTBALL GREATS

Moderated by Tim Watson and Sam Newman
10 May 2001 Windsor Hotel

I believe even the Irish who play Hurling – it's a bit like our game of the same size. They give you a stick...well, the Irish can play that. I don't think we should be playing that. But other than that, we do have this magnificent game which was made up of contest after contest and because we had contest and we had players playing on each other all over that ground, the ball changed hands regularly. You might say, well that's boring too, in itself, because we didn't see any certainty in where we were going. But for us, it created an interest which is dying because we now have, and the facts prove it, that the amount even five years ago, the amount of uncontested possession both at ground level and aerial (in the air) in our game was minimal. I think I can read out the facts for you, if you want it. And at the other end now, we have massive, massive amounts and I gave an example a few weeks ago at a game that I was associated with in 1996, where there were, on that day, 19 uncontested marks. Nineteen uncontested marks, with St Kilda v Carlton at Waverley. And I saw the game – which Kevin probably wouldn't have enjoyed too much, as probably everybody else in Australia who wasn't an Essendon supporter did – when the Western Bullies who were the most inferior group of players, produced a game played on the day that was able to sneak home a win against a much superior opponent. When there were over 200 uncontested marks in that game. It had gone from around 30 to 200 uncontested marks. Now certainly if the game or the nature of the game is not changing, then I think I better do something. I don't know what I do at Hawthorn anyway, but I'd better put up my hand and I did actually see the photograph in the paper – that nasty person who put up cleaning the windows at MCG on that wet day and said, "We now know what David Parkin does at the Hawthorn Footy Club". Which is very embarrassing for me.

You know you can talk about the brutality and I don't want to lose the physicality in the game either. That's a very fine line between what we allow in the game, because that does interest. And that's another unique part of Australian Football. But when we're trying to sell it to parents and kids, we've got to be very careful what we do there. It's not just a black and white answer to that one. And it is brilliant. It means we see some of, I think, the most skillful athletes in the world but unfortunately they are becoming athletes because that's the other nature of the game. But if you're a very good athlete these days, we hope we might be able to teach you to play footy at the same time, or we're looking for footballers who are athletes. And when I see the rotations in the middle and when I seen the players that are going on the weekend raising their hands – how's this for a change – raising their hand saying, "Take me off! Take me off the ground", they're saying. In our day, they had to drag you off screaming and kicking if you wanted to go off the ground, but they're saying, "Take me off". Because they're now saying they cannot run at the capacity or with the intensity that is needed to do this midfield job any more. "Get me off. Let me have a rest". In fact, take a blood sample to see where the lactose (levels) are and then keep those for the next three minutes or four minutes so I know when I'm ready to go back again. There's a substantial

change and that's become a real athletic contest so we've got some things that are changing and not for the better. There are a lot of blokes kicking footballs around the park here in Melbourne and around Victoria and around the rest of Australia, who will never ever, ever get a look-in at league level. Beautiful footballers: smart thinkers about the game, tremendous manipulators of hand and foot and they're not going to see the light of day on the MCG and they cannot run out of sight on a dark night. And we've got guys who are playing now, we've recruited a couple who are brilliant young athletes, brilliant young athletes, the best in the country and can run up and down from point post to point post all day long. Young Timmy Clark's one of those who are not, in my opinion, natural footballers in the sense, but we're hoping we can build them into being players of substance, and time will tell whether we have been successful in doing that. Because we understand that the athletic power of playing the game is one of the most crucial and significant factors, particularly if, when you lose possession, you've got to hike back down the ground. Like they do in basketball, like they do in soccer, like they do in hockey, like they do in water polo, like they do in European handball, with a block up the back half so that they can't score. If you are going to do that in an Australian football ground, for goodness sake we'll be frank now, you've got to be very fit young men. So that's sort of boring. Maybe it was a bad choice of words. And I'm glad I've got you all here for lunch today, but the reality is, it's become a hell of a lot more predictable. And predictable means the uncertainty is going and we just might lose the real essence of what has made our game unique and the greatest game in the world. Thank you.

TW: Thank you David. Hard to imagine that you are the coach. Sam, a response please.

SN: You know, we probably thought that when he stopped coaching, we'd never seen the vein stand out on his neck. But there it was in full flight and practically got a new one, it's come on your forehead. One came out of your neck. Looks and sounds not unlike Hitler, but without the charm. Bit of humour there, mate. Absolutely said what we all think and I know Kevin thinks this as well because you're two of the great successful men of all time as far as coaching goes and just fantastic. But, um...David, of course the thing with all this is what you say is absolutely spot on, how do we remedy some of these things and how do we stop it? I mean your side last year, I remember watching it. In terms of you, you weren't there, but Hawthorn, I remember, started to waste time and chip the ball to run down the clock when they were leading by five goals with two minutes to go and percentage was a factor at that stage. Could never understand the deployment of that particular tactic. And, of course, Kevin here, renowned for the 50 metre penalty coming in because he used to use 15 metre penalties in the old days just as sort of diversionary tactics and time wasting affairs. But of course, (it) just depends how all these rules are implemented. And the first thing – and this is my opinion about all this – the first thing, and I don't know why we tamper too much with the rules, but the first

KEVIN SHEEDY AND DAVID PARKIN FOOTBALL GREATS

Moderated by Tim Watson and Sam Newman
10 May 2001 Windsor Hotel

two things we could do to make the game a little more interesting in my opinion, would be – write this down mate, you could use this – would be firstly to increase the length of that illegitimate free kick or mark, legitimate mark that is to 20 metres. You can kick it shorter if you like but you won't be paid the mark. And I've been going on about this for about six or seven years, which is possibly why no one's ever looked into it, is that if you just let the four people from each side contest the ball in the centre square and no one was allowed into it until those four players from each side got the thing out, that would create a degree where everyone would move away from where the field of action was and make some positions so that you had to bolster up your particular line rather than everyone rushing in as soon as the ball was bounced so we have 30 players immediately on the ball. Now I know Kevin that wouldn't be, that would be foreign to what... (mobile phone rings in the audience)...let me get that will you?. Bring that down here.

TW: It's Wayne. It's Wayne that's ringing.

SN: Is it? Anyway, so it is very interesting and no one could say the game is boring and I couldn't agree with you more. In fact I have those things written down here. How many dinner engagements during the Olympics did we forego sweets for to get back to watch the small ball pistol finals, archery, trampolining, tae kwon do? In your right mind would you ever actually go and sit and watch that in front of the television never except when the Olympics are on? So talk about that being boring. But football is a sensational exhibition of what sport is about: the physical, the mental, the spiritual even. And played on the biggest arena of any group sport, any team sport, and played longer than any other team sport in the world, and per capita to the population, attracts more people to the sport than any other sport going round per capita. So we're probably all here because we are in agreement, Tim, that we think the game is fantastic but for the little fine-tuning. That it can be brought back to what it once was, which doesn't mean to say it was played better then, just means it might be set out a little differently in these days. And therefore, makes people sometimes disenchanted. And the first rule we would bring in, if I could address to this table here, maybe not this table, would be that it is a reportable offence for umpires to overreact and that would get the...ah... or we should be able to take civil action. Someone should make a citizen's arrest for stupidity regarding umpires and that would get the game back on track.

TW: Actually, just on that point... do you feel in some way that you haven't become a little bit obsessed with the white man and the gun?

SN: Well I have, Tim, because I get infuriated by people who have an agenda. And their agenda is not to make this game great and played in the spirit. It is to bolster up a small fraternity of people who think they are as big as the game. And the number of decisions or non-decisions... no, it's not the kicks you don't pay, it's the kicks they do pay that just affect neither the flow of the game or its result or the welfare or the health of its participants, just to the chagrin of the

crowd and the people that follow sport anyhow is staggering. And someone has to do something about it or they will completely erode the whole fabric of what it's about.

TW: Thank you Sam. Just before Neil comes back up to the stage to actually ask a couple of questions of the panel here, just one question to you David, as Neil makes his way up. The Fremantle coaching position... at the moment obviously there's a lot of conjecture over there. What would your advice be to Damien Drum at this particular point in time?

DP: Virtually, I say to the Fremantle Football Club: I've been down that track, I think four times. I don't think there's any advice, well Tim you're probably better... ah...

TW: It's still a bit painful for me.

DP: Yeah, I still find it pretty painful except the bloke who sacked me kept re-employing me, which is quite unusual in this business. Look, I think it's a pretty tough time for coaches as you well know. I just have a feeling it's not a sensible thing to do and we had a good argument up here before. Is that what you've been perpetuating in your discussion is it?

TW: Down there?

DP: I thought you've been absolutely vitriolic. I just don't think it's a good thing. I made the point that when Peter Schwab took over from Ken Judge it was a massive change in approach. I worked with Judgey and he's as far right as you can go. It doesn't matter how good the score, as long as they score less and I'm working now with a coach who basically says it doesn't matter how much the score as long as we score more. You might think that's a pretty simple change of philosophy. I can tell you that's a hell of a deviation in game plan and the players take a massive time to learn and become habitual in the things that are required to play one way compared with the other. If you put an interim coach in, and I don't think anybody would be stupid enough to take the job for a short period of time unless they were given long tenure. And my advice... it's out of his hands I think, Damien, but my advice would be to stay with the coach until the end of his tenure and take some time to make sure you select the right coach for whoever's going to take over. Because in between you'll just confuse the players more unless there is a natural flow in the sense of where this coach was taking them and where they need to go. It might be a wrong view but that's what I would... I don't think changing coaches mid-season has any massive good impact on clubs, full stop.

NEIL MITCHELL (NM): David Parkin thank you. Now, Ladies and Gentlemen if you could please raise your hands if you have a question. We have a roving mic that will travel the room for Tim or John or David or Kevin. I must just start by asking Kevin to respond to Sam's idea or two ideas. One was 20-metre minimum for a mark, a kick, and the second was the centre square idea. What do you think? I saw you shaking your head in horror.

KS: Well, the centre square is one that I was a little bit concerned about. I don't mind if you only want the four in,

KEVIN SHEEDY AND DAVID PARKIN FOOTBALL GREATS

Moderated by Tim Watson and Sam Newman
10 May 2001 Windsor Hotel

and no one else to move into it until they kick the ball or get the ball out. But gee whiz, the two wingmen will either just go and start the flood straight away. If you're a negative coach, which is what David's speaking about... if you're a positive coach, you'd probably have one wingman in the forward 50 and another in the back 50. So...

SN: Which automatically stymies the tactics of the game. Right there, that's when tactics.

KS: Well, they start actually the siren the week before, when the siren goes the week before. I mean that's what the game's about. I mean, to be quite honest, a hell of a lot of taxes is coming into the game. I mean what's happening in this game is we've got 16 clubs with about five coaches, there's 80 coaches coaching against other. We never had that 10 years ago. We never had that 10 years ago. And there's a lot of smart assistant coaches out there assisting, working. If you don't have a really good list of players, then you have a really good list of tactics and that's what a lot of people are missing.

And you've never coached Sam, so be very careful what you say.

SN: No, I've never been to the moon either but I know it's there.

QUESTIONS

Question for Tim Watson: (Partly inaudible). Would Channel 7 sell Colonial Stadium to Channel 9 now that football rights are switching to the Nine Network?

TW: I don't know, I really don't know. There'll (be an) enormous number of changes that'll take place in football over the next weeks 12 months, obviously, and it would be interesting to see how it all unfolds.

SN: Be a pretty cheap price wouldn't it? It's not going too well is it? Losing \$30 million this year, is it? Perhaps, we might be able to buy it next year.

NM: Another question on the left.

Question for Kevin Sheedy: Is AFL football as successful as it is today because of or in spite of the AFL hierarchy?

NM: No fines acquired in this room.

KS: It's a bomb shelter is it?

TW: When the light's on the camera, that actually means it's working.

KS: I honestly think that the game carries itself fairly well and I think that, I think that, it's an area where definitely the game's improved. I mean I look at... I've got the last 20 years of videos at home. I can look at a game and say gee whiz, this game has improved. I know that the ground rationalisation has improved the game immensely. My major concern is the eastern suburbs of Melbourne in the next 20 years – whether we're going to lose that group of people. I'd have to say there's got to be another plan there if and when Waverley is gone or sold. It's a real concern and I think that we're going to run out there on this weekend and we're

going to have two kids playing from Gosford or Woy Woy which is, you know, a pretty good effort from improving in football. We've got our...you look at that, you've got a boy at Richmond...you've got a kid from Essendon, McVeigh. So you know you never thought you'd be recruiting from Wyong five years ago. So there are some areas where the game is improving and getting through and doing well. The first two draft choices last year were from New South Wales and Surfers Paradise. But we never thought that was going to happen in 1990 so I think...look, in answer to whether its been administered correctly, I think it's done a pretty good job and I would have thought four years ago no one in this room would have thought that football would have been offered a half a billion dollars. The real question is next time how can you get a billion dollar offer?

NM: Just a supplementary question to that. Do you think that the current crop of football club presidents have a high enough profile?

KS: Sam can answer that.

SN: Why can I answer that?

KS: Because you answer everything else.

SN: No, not at all. No. That's probably a bit of a worry that the presidents and the people actually don't make the game directly go around, like the umpires, and the presidents, slowly taking over the monopoly of the game but it's all colourful, it's all good. I mean this is not the Geneva War Trials. This...this is football. It doesn't matter. It's a bit of light-hearted, a bit of levity, a bit of revelry and merriment in the game and it all makes good copy and the whole thing goes round and round and round, its cyclical and ah...

DP: Could you come and talk to our board about that, the levity of it? You know, the bit of fun?

SN: That's what makes it fun 'cause they're both so serious about it. That's what makes it humorous.

Question for David Parkin: You said that young Tim Clark was a natural athlete, but not a natural footballer. Personally, I don't think I've seen a more impressive 17/18 year-old at Hawthorn for a fair while. What are his deficiencies as a footballer?

DP: I don't know if I should be putting those around publicly should I? A Hawthorn supporter, he is? Oh, well, I'll talk to you in the foyer afterwards. Because they've got no deficiencies at all. He's a superb athlete, both feet, but I think his great attribute is his mental strength. For those who saw him run on the final day of the APS athletics a couple of years ago when he had to run a long way from behind to win the 800 and then won the 1500 and 3000 after that...you know you've got a very special young man. There's no limit. I was talking to Tim this morning at University and both on and off the field, this is a bloke who knows where he's going and there will be no limit. He will learn and continue to learn and end up being a fine AFL footballer. I have no doubt about it because of the makeup of the guy. But essentially without a great football background

you couldn't make it into the A league programs for squads on the way. Somebody saw him in something special, thank goodness, and I think he's got almost an assured future.

NM: Can't kick, can't mark?

KS: I think with athletes, what you do is you tackle them and you throw them on the ground and you hit them. Okay. That's what people just forget about and that's what the game's got to be careful of. It doesn't get too sterilised. But if your footballers are out there that can play football, know how to get the ball then every runner that I've ever known, every coach I've ever heard, is you tackle hard and you tackle harder, when you're tackling the athletes.

SN: Yes, but that's what this forum is about, Kevin.

KS: And when you see a six-foot, soft, fair-haired ruckman at Geelong, you hit them. You really put them under pressure and that's how you play lovely athletes like Sam.

SN: But that's what this forum's about Kevin.

KS: Exactly.

SN: We know all that, but David's saying it's so predictable because people like you shift the thing round and kick it backwards and don't let anyone tackle any one.

KS: We're a long-kicking side Sam, you know that.

SN: You are now because you've ...

KS: Ever since the marshmallows we got better.

NM: Glen Ridge got a question?

Question: No, it's me Neil. I grew up in the UK and used to play rugby and Neil Mitchell took me to my first game of football and I asked him, "What do you do in footy?" "Well, just yell out 'idiot' or 'holding the ball' or 'in the back'". So I just copied what Neil did. I'm thinking of going to the footy next Saturday. What do I now yell out nowadays to get into the spirit?

KS: "Bombers forever!"

NM: OK, We can take one more question before we wrap up. Yes? Ms Wilson?

Caroline Wilson: One for David. David, in your opinion should Denis Pagan have left North Melbourne at the end of last year?

KS: Good luck, mate.

DP: It's a leading question. I've never ever thought about it. It never entered my head until you asked the question. I wouldn't have a clue.

KS: All the lionesses back in their cages, thank you. You are unbelievable. You are ruthless, young lady. You are so ruthless at times.

DP: Only because I've been through what Denis Pagan's going through and the best coaches stay.

Question: David, you've been sounded out about Freo. If

Freo came to you in the next 24 hours would you be keen?

DP: Look can I just set... this is the Press Club is it? Is this the Press Club? Can I say something? I saw the worst article in Tasmania, syndicated into a Tasmanian paper that said , I think Denham is his name – I hope I got that right – who wrote about me being interviewed within the last four or five weeks for that job and I knocked it back for the second time. That is the greatest lot of crap I have ever heard since I've been in football. I'm absolutely offended by people who continue to write that. I was interviewed by them once back in the previous year and they were very kind and put a very professional offer to me, as did Sydney. I declined both of those as they were good jobs for 40-year-olds, not for near 60-year-old people who have got tired eyes. And they have never been back to me in any shape or form. We have not even talked about the issue of coaching since that day at the Fremantle Football Club. So get it right, Press people. Don't write incorrect, undermining facts. And ring up people and ask them so at least they can deny it before you write the wrong things. I'm sick of it. I'm glad I'm out of it. Good luck, Kevin, I'm glad you've got to deal with them.

KS: I love you. I think you're all beautiful people and I can't wait to get to my next Press conference, I really mean it.

SN: Can I just say one thing? You can pack your cameras up now. You've got your quote for the news tonight. We've found another new vein. Just out of his earlobe. Looking at him during that. Straight out of his earlobe. That's three we've found today.

NM: I'd just like to thank the panel here today. We have some gifts for them. There are actually some photographs which we've had framed as mementos to go on the walls of these people. They've got a lot of things in their offices and home offices, obviously, but the first one is to Kevin Sheedy and it's a signed photograph, "With kind regards, Robert Walls".

KS: Ah, my favourite coach. You are a dandy. I think you should take the gloves off don't you think?

NM: To David Parkin there is also a signed photograph. "David, pity you didn't let me have a say occasionally". John Elliott.

KS: Beautiful.

NM: 'To Tim Watson, hope you're managing on your new salary cap', regards Malcolm Blight.

KS: Yeah...year off and he gets a hundred grand more.

NM: And finally, very adoring photograph and lovingly signed, "To Sam Newman, love your work", signed Sam Newman.

NM: Goodbye and thank you very much.