

# ABORIGINES IN SPORT



**colin tatz**

**COVER:** GRAHAM 'POLLY' FARMER  
One of the immortals of Australian Rules Football

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**Colin Tatz**

The Australian Society For Sports History  
The ASSH Studies in Sport - Number 3

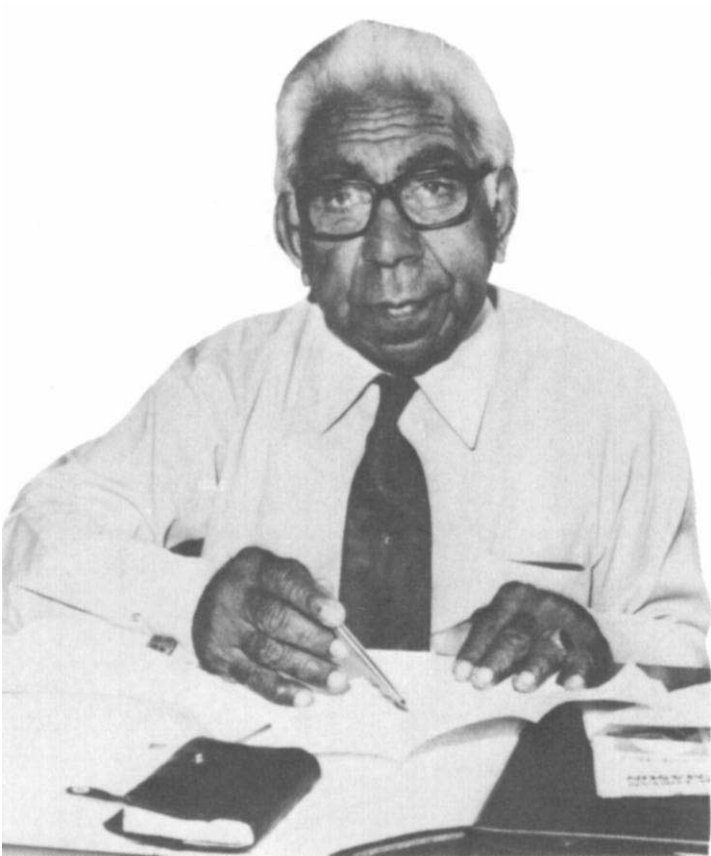
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For

PASTOR DOUG



(Pastor Sir Douglas Ralph Nicholls, K.C.V.O., O.B.E., K.St.J.)

The Australian Society for Sports History was formed in 1984 to promote the study of sport in society. Articles in its official journal, *Sporting Traditions*, deal with the economic, political, social, legal, and philosophic significance of sporting activity, with specific reference to Australia. Enquiries as to membership should be sent to Dr Wray Vamplew, Economic History Discipline, Flinders University, Bedford Park, South Australia, 5042.

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PLACE NAMES IN THE TEXT

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## FOREWORD

Aboriginal people have played an important part in the history of Australian sport. They are very much a part of Australia's sporting heritage. Most sports played in this country have fielded an Aborigine who has achieved excellence.

All Australians have feted sporting heroes like Evonne Goolagong-Cawley in tennis, Lionel Rose in boxing, Graham 'Polly' Farmer in Australian Rules, and Eddie Gilbert in cricket.

Aborigines have achieved success even though racism exists both on and off the field, and has been one of many obstacles they have had to overcome. Despite this, many succeed. Some triumph not only in Australia but in the sports arenas of the world.

Some who achieve success in sport carry it over into prominence in private and public life. Others experience a brief moment of glory, only to fall by the wayside, embittered and exploited because they are neither accepted within the sports they play nor within Australian society generally.

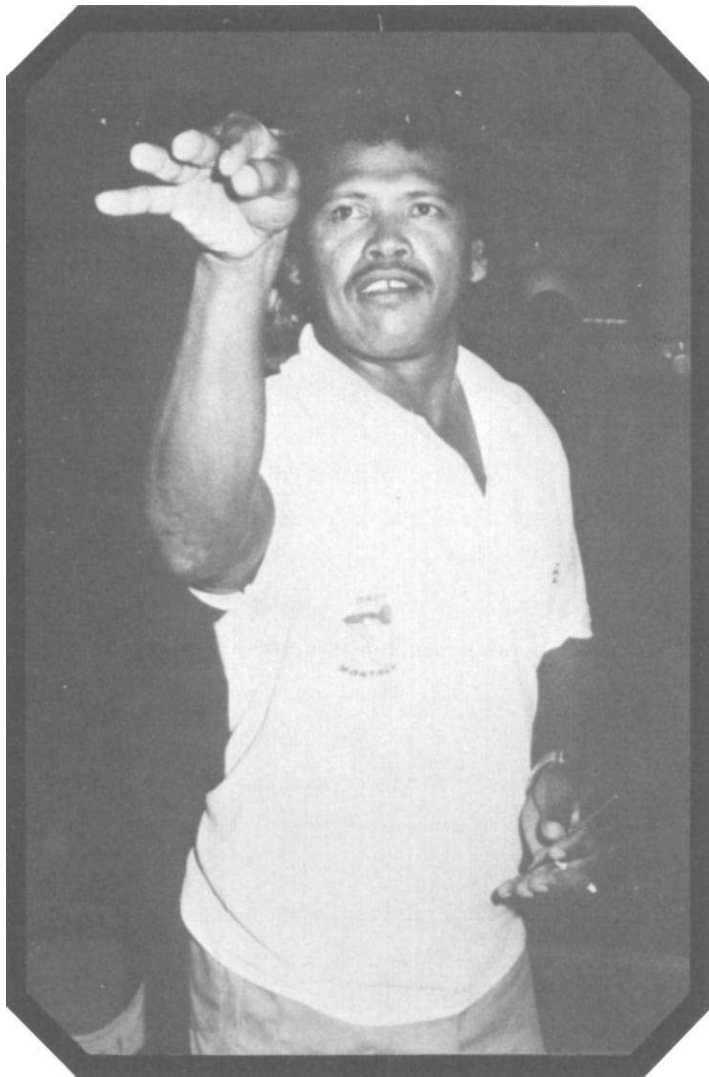
Many of the stories in this book will sadden. Some readers will be outraged at many of the individual histories. Others will question the inhumanity of those who exploit and vilify their fellow man.

In 'Aborigines in Sport' Colin Tatz has written about some 230 Aboriginal sports men and women. He does so objectively and with compassion.

I am honoured not only to introduce this book but to have been included amongst those whose stories have been selected for record. I commend the book to you, in the hope that it may lead to a more tolerant Australia.

Charles Perkins,  
Canberra 1987

## 1. A DIFFERENT FOCUS



**HORRIE SEDEN**

The first to defeat a fully-fledged English professional in a world-ranked darts tournament.

Writing on racism and sport has begun. The pity is that almost all of it is American based - and in spite of some recent excellent histories and biographies, much of that material is conceived and written in a constipated 'sociologese'. The detail on sports apartheid in South Africa is 'rich' indeed. But it has been described rather than analysed - possibly because the shock of the facts requires, firstly, belief, then digestion, let alone a moment for thought. The Nazi Olympics is now being re-visited and re-researched. In short, this small body of writing lacks an outwardness, a breadth and a perspective.

American David Wiggins contends that we need 'to compare and contrast the plight of the black athlete in America with those in . . . England, Australia, and the West Indies'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed we do. This short case study may assist, though direct comparison is not - at this stage - my intention. The purpose of this work is, rather, to tell us more, or something different, about the nature and extent of racism in our society - and about the Aboriginal experience within the confines of that closed and artificial world of fair play we call sport.

Until the 1960s most of the writing on Aborigines was anthropological. Volumes recreated an idealized species of people, physically and culturally very different indeed. Rituals were sometimes quaint, occasionally positive, usually curious, often 'barbaric'. Other academics began their studies. Two political scientists assessed Aboriginal administration; a few historians viewed the black experience on 'the other side of the frontier'; medical people moved away from a not so magnificent obsession with skulls to a look at the socio-economic causes of Aboriginal ill-health; and serious work started on Aborigines in

the economy. Lawyers and educationists emerged as analysts and critics.

This past quarter century has seen an explosion in Aboriginal studies. Two features stand out: firstly, a shift in stance from 'scientific' curiosity about interesting 'objects' to some sense of care about the dignity and autonomy of Aborigines as people; secondly, a change from white sovereignty over all that is studied and broadcast about them to an era in which Aborigines have begun to write their own history. But while almost every discipline has examined Aborigines in society, one topic has been badly neglected by everyone: Aborigines in sport.

That focus may tell us something fresh about their experience with white Australia. If nothing else, the sporting life may 'humanize' Aborigines. Few works portray them as persons: they are almost always plural, an impersonal collective regarded as tribe, clan, or as fringe-dwellers. Real people are presented more as symbol than as human: Bennelong, King Billy, Truganini. Even in sport Ron Richards is seen not as the great and sad Ron Richards but as the representative of a 'race' of boxers who can make it but never sustain it in the mainstream society.

Sport is not separate from life. Where there is racism in political, social, legal, and economic life, so there is racism in the sporting one - diluted sometimes, tempered perhaps, when medals and prizes are being won. Black sport - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sport - is all-too-commonly presented as the triumph of half a dozen boxers, a tennis player, and three rugby brothers. But it is so much more than that, in fact and in principle. Beyond the long list of achievements there are questions - perhaps even answers - of substance.

Australian society is racist. It also worships sport. What happens when these two values intersect? Aborigines have succeeded in sport. Does this mean that the prevailing racism bypassed the champions? Perhaps they emerged despite the policies and practices which sought to exclude them? Sport is said to be an avenue of social mobility, a way out of discrimination, a road to equality. Has this been the case? Why don't Aborigines participate in some sports and why are they over-represented in others? Do Aboriginal players have the same motives as other Australians? Do they play in the same way? Are Aborigines so physically superior that 'one can get any Aborigine off the street and he'll go four rounds'? Has sport afforded Aborigines an arena for political action? Has sport been used as an 'aid' to their assimilation - or been used consciously to excite and sustain Aboriginality?

Some answers emerge as we look at Aboriginal participation in fourteen sports: athletics, Australian Rules football, basketball, boxing, cricket, cycling, darts, horseracing, rugby league, rugby union, soccer, tennis, volleyball, and wrestling. The figure fourteen is indicative: these sports - together with netball - represent virtually all major Aboriginal achievement. There is no participation in archery, bowls, equestrian sport, fencing, golf, gymnastics, motor sports, polo, rowing, swimming, or yachting. This banal American explanation could well serve the Aboriginal situation: 'Few blacks are competitive skiers for the obvious reason that most blacks live far removed from snow and mountains and because skiing is very expensive.'<sup>2</sup> The question 'why football?' to Doug Nicholls brought this answer: 'cheaper than cricket - no pads, or white trousers'.<sup>3</sup>

Within the fourteen, Aboriginal success is most uneven. There are two representatives of note in men's basketball, only one in each of horseracing, cycling, and tennis, two in darts, one in wrestling, and four in volleyball. The cricket story really belongs to the nineteenth century and to the start of this one. The golden black era of professional athletics, called *pedestrianism*, was between 1880 and 1930. There have been three soccer stars and four rugby union internationals.

It is in boxing, Aussie Rules, and rugby league that we find not only the greatest number of top-level sportsmen but also an over-representation, proportionately, of Aborigines. There are several reasons for these choices of sport: the attraction of money as professionals; the easier access to 'stadium' sports as opposed to entry into private cycling or tennis clubs; the lesser class requirements involved than in cricket and rowing; the relative ease of starting a career - a football (however grim the ground), a pair of gloves (even without a ring), a stint in Jimmy Sharman's boxing tents; the increasing number of Aboriginal participants as role models; the mass following of these three (ostensibly) 'working-class' sports and the often giddy swiftness of stardom, popularity, and 'whitening' involved ('Ladies and Gentlemen, introducing Lionel Rose, a great Australian!'); finally, the framework of a different racism: not exclusion because of blackness (as with Queensland's Aborigines from amateur athletics because they were black), but inclusion as a special black breed of gladiators and entertainers. Perhaps Aborigines feel greater social comfort in team or brotherhood games; possibly they prefer 'mainstream' activities and 'mainstream' sports.

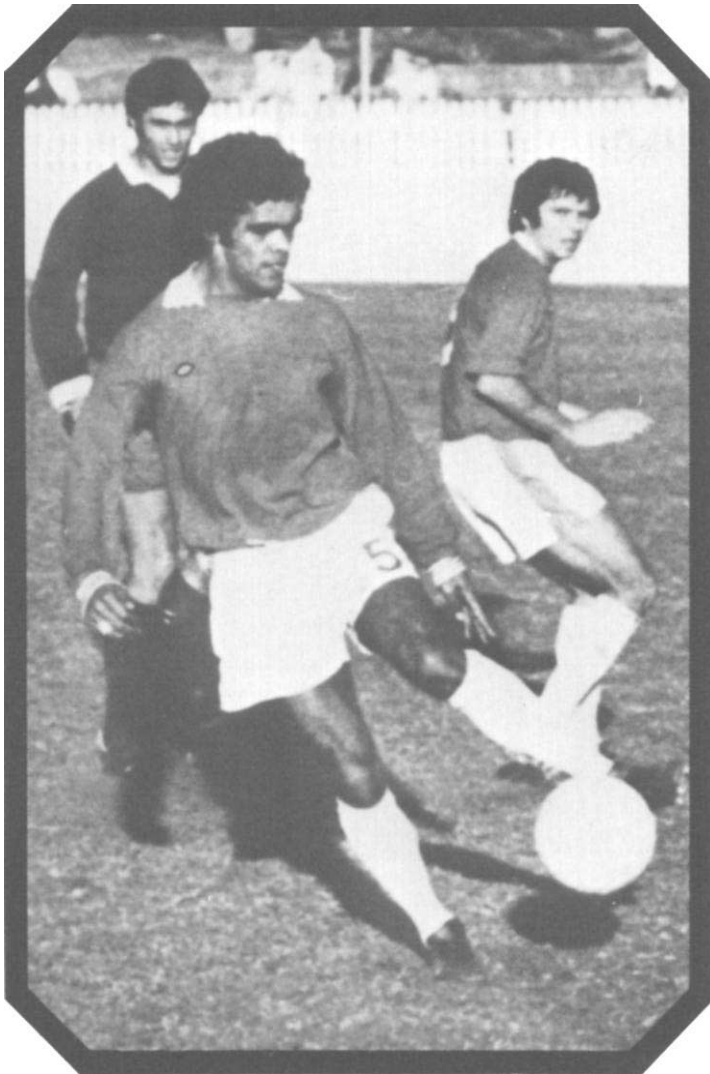


Recently several Aboriginal sportspeople have emerged in the so-called minor sports of women's basketball, netball, volleyball, softball, and darts. Their achievements are discussed - briefly, because this is not intended as an anthology of all Aborigines in all sports at all levels. To assess the sport-racism relationship, emphasis must be on the sports selected and on the men and women who have achieved at international, national, state, or 'first division' levels.

Aborigine means anyone who identifies as such - irrespective of non-Aboriginal perceptions. Throughout the research there was gratuitous (and well-meant) information that 'Joey Smith is only an eighth', 'Molly Brown a half', 'Harry Jones a "not really"'. For the majority, colour alone is still the only criterion of Aboriginality. The 'scientific' equation was, till recently: the fuller the 'blood', the darker the skin, the closer one is to barbarism, savagery, and heathenness; the lighter the skin, the nearer one stands to civility, civilization, and enlightenment. White society defined degrees of 'fullness', of mixture, and of alleged 'impurity' *on the sole criterion of what our eyes told us was full or half or quarter or eighth blood*. Since science and government together could produce such a civilization scale based on the arithmetic of colour, why should everyone else now see it any differently?

Of all black minorities, Aborigines have suffered most from definition by others. Self-definition is clearly the only sane and moral approach to the question. To the best of my knowledge, I have not included people who do not identify - though reference is made to those who denied Aboriginality at some stage but admitted to it later. Omitted are those who some Aborigines claim as their own but who themselves deny Aboriginality.

## 2. A FEELING OF DIGNITY



**HARRY WILLIAMS**

'His flying feet, his ability to outpace his opponents, made him one of the personalities of Australian soccer.'

— Keith Gilmour, *Australian Soccer Weekly*

Australia's migration program has led to a multicultural book industry, one which has the ugly habit of lumping Aborigines alongside all other ethnic groups: a conjunction that may well be the ultimate insult to the 40,000 year old indigenous people. In that literature there is no serious analysis of Aboriginal-migrant relations. What little there is suggests that European migrants are not generally or necessarily more tolerant than the white natives.

Soccer in Australia is hardly a reservoir or repository of ethnic tolerance. But given the positive personal experience of three Aboriginal stars, it comes as a surprise that soccer has not attracted Aborigines in the manner of other football codes.

Charles Perkins was born on the table at the old Alice Springs telegraph station. From that stark beginning, and after difficult early years, he moved to Adelaide as a teenager. It was as a junior player with Adelaide's Port Thistle that he found a place where he 'could be somebody'.<sup>4</sup> At age 21 he was one of the highest paid players in South Australia; in the leading team, Budapest, he won the best and fairest award in the state.

An invitation to join Liverpool's famous Everton FC ended in disaster. Perkins then joined the renowned amateur team, Bishop Auckland. A Bishop match against Oxford was to change his life - 'that day it started to go through my mind that I would like to go to university...'.<sup>4</sup>

Back in Australia he captained Croatia in South Australia. He represented his state on many occasions. As a star he learned, with bitterness, what happens to Aboriginal sportsmen and women: 'They are apologized out of existence. Sporting fame gains them acceptance, not as Aborigines or even as people, but merely as sports stars - everyone's heroes.' The English were also 'decent

people who gave one a fair go': 'they treated me better than I was ever treated in Australia'.

In Sydney he enjoyed success with Pan-Hellenic. Again it was Greek warmth and acceptance that was so positive. Migrants, he wrote, 'give a person a feeling of dignity and self-respect'. Football gave him the money to study, it kept him fit, and it was the vehicle to 'mix socially' and enjoy himself. 'With my new status and the financial rewards it brought, I was now in a position to pursue my immediate objective of a university career, and beyond that, I hoped, a revolution in race relations in Australia.' The rest is history: the first Aboriginal arts graduate, the leader of the politically significant 1960s Freedom Rides in NSW, the politicking days of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the early troubled years in the federal public service, the (now) first Aboriginal permanent head of a federal department, the continuing outspokenness on Aboriginal conditions, the driving force in promoting Aboriginal sport.

John Moriarty graduated (from Flinders University) a few years after cousin Charles Perkins. Now Director of the Office of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia, he has been a senior public servant since 1970.

Like Perkins, he began his soccer with Port Thistle, moving on to Port Adelaide, Croatia, International United and, from 1961, to six seasons with Juventus - in which time the club won six premierships. He represented South Australia seventeen times. In 1961 he won national recognition when chosen to play for Australia on an Asian tour. Unhappily, Australia was that year banned from internationals by the Federation Internationale du

Football Association (FIFA) and John was denied his glory and his due.

Recommended to three English clubs, he travelled to England in 1963, 'looked at soccer, looked at the world' and concluded that football 'was but a passing phase'.<sup>5</sup> The editor of *Australian Soccer Weekly* calls him cool and elegant, and above all, 'a cultured player'.<sup>6</sup>

Moriarty describes soccer as 'a great social eye-opener and equalizer'. He was treated not as Aboriginal but as equal, as a person, particularly by European migrants. Asked why soccer has not attracted more Aborigines - given his and Perkins's careers as role models - he suggests that 'Aborigines have always striven to be mainstreamers, and soccer is not in the mainstream'. There is much less discrimination in soccer than in Aussie Rules - the glamour game, he concedes, but one still 'a colonial bastion with colonial attitudes'. He sees Aboriginal people treated somewhat shabbily in other football codes.

Harry Williams was the first Aborigine to actually play for Australia. Born in 1950, he began soccer life at nine with the St George Police Boys Club. A third-grader with Western Suburbs, he rose through the ranks with St George Budapest in 1970. In that year he moved from their reserve team into the national side that toured the world.

His performances at left back were brilliant. He had tremendous acceleration - so much so that he was still running professionally in the mid-80s. Local pundits felt he would have been a sensation in European soccer, at home among them as people and at home with their style of play.

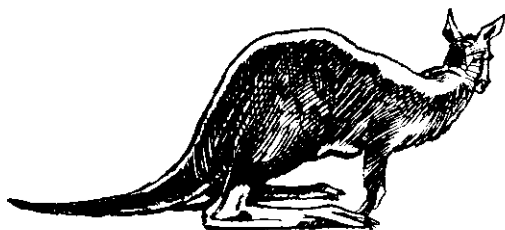
Despite a serious illness he went on to a career of seventeen full internationals and 26 other representative games

for Australia. In 1977 he played six World Cup games. Injuries hampered him and in 1978 he transferred to Canberra City club. He now holds a senior position with the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Charles Perkins became Vice-President of the Australian Soccer Federation in 1987. Soon after, in June of that year, he repeated to SBS television's *Vox Populi* program what he'd written in 1975: that he was not 'welcomed by Australian society' but was 'more welcomed by ethnic groups'. He found the Aboriginal-ethnic relationship in soccer to be a good one, something that was psychologically satisfying. Three men hardly provide the basis for a theory in inter-ethnic relations, but perhaps one can argue that their experience reveals a special empathy among 'aliens'? As to Aboriginal non-participation in the sport, perhaps Moriarty's 'mainstream' explanation is sufficient.

Perkins's book - *A Bastard Like Me* - is vital. It is one of only seven works on Aborigines in sport (the Evonne Goolagong and the Lionel Rose as-told-to books, a biography of Pastor Doug, Ray Mitchell's *The Fighting Sands*, the important Mulvaney works on the 1860s cricketers, and the Brett Harris tribute, *Ella Ella Ella*.) Only Perkins treats the whole racist dimension - in strong, harsh, and often bitter terms. It is assuredly his book, and his black perspective.

### 3. BLACK DIAMONDS



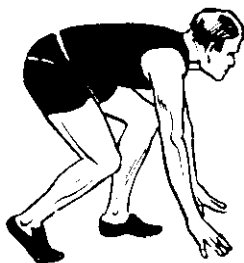
No. 1.—A hare's crouch started whilst feeding, and about to spring forward



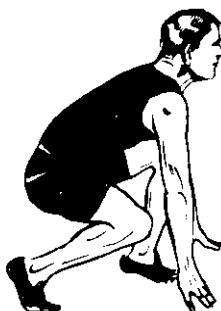
No. 2.—The "wild" blackfellow squatting and ready to be "up and away" quickly



No. 3.—Bobby Macdonald's crouch start.



No. 4.—The "improved crouch" he adopted by Lewis Hope.



No. 5.—A further improvement on the "six-four" set.

### BOBBY McDONALD

The 'crouch' start began with this man from Cumeragunga in 1887 — many years before Lewis Hope 'invented' it

Running for money became a private sport in Britain in the late eighteenth century. The absence of official rules and governing bodies for pedestrianism (professional athletics) led to cheating, heavy gambling, and the fixing of races. The sport fell into disrepute in England but flourished in Australia, especially in the years 1870 to 1912. The famous Stawell Gift, first run in 1878, lives on as the world's oldest and most prestigious race. (The first Bay Sheffield in South Australia was run in 1887; the Burnie and Bendigo Gifts in Victoria began in the 1940s, and several others were established in the 1980s.)

In the earlier years Aborigines were prominent and controversial - because they were good and because they were black.

But black pedestrianism, cricket, and boxing must be seen in the context of Aboriginal policy and practice in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While Australian racism transcends state boundaries, there is justification for singling out Queensland : for its particularly long history of race hatred and violence, for its special legislation that demeaned and discriminated, for its negation of human rights as generally understood. The sporting experience sustains the picture.

Between 1824 and 1908 some 10,000 Aborigines were killed by white settlers. One writer to the *Queenslander* in 1880 expressed a commonly held view: 'You say we treat them like wild animals: Well to a certain extent their attributes are the same, and must be met in the same manner... It would be almost as useless for whites to try and make animals moral as [make] the Queensland Aborigines...' <sup>7</sup>

In 1883 the British High Commissioner wrote privately to the



Prime Minister, William Gladstone:<sup>8</sup>

The habit of regarding natives as vermin, to be cleared off the face of the earth, has given to the average Queenslander a tone of brutality and cruelty in dealing with 'blacks' which it is very difficult for anyone who does not know it, as I do, to realize. I have heard men of culture and refinement, of the greatest humanity and kindness to their fellow whites... talk, not only of the wholesale butchery... but of the individual murder of natives, exactly as they would talk of a day's sport, or of having to kill some troublesome animal.

The blood-letting had to be stopped and in 1897 the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* was passed. In essence and essentials it remained in force until the mid-1980s. The spirit of the Act was to be protective - but the protections in practice at once became discriminations. Stopping white grog, sexual, or opium predators from coming near Aboriginal communities resulted in their incarceration, for life, even generations, on the most remote and inaccessible reserves like Yarrabah, Palm Island, Cherbourg (Barambah), Bamaga, Woorabinda. Protection of Aboriginal morality came to mean censorship of their movement, labour, marriages, leisure, religious and cultural rituals. Protection of their income came to mean officials controlling their wages, withdrawals from compulsory savings bank accounts, their rights to enter into contracts of labour. Teaching Aborigines 'good order and discipline' became imprisoning them for acts neither actionable nor criminal in the open society, or punishing them on missions and settlements when they should have been tried in ordinary courts. Similar 'protections' operated in each colony and state - yet harsh as they were, they didn't match the grim quality of Queensland's 'control' provisions.

Genny Blades's thesis<sup>9</sup> presents the issues in this sport:

amateur athletic 'respectability' versus pedestrian 'vice': grim exploitation of black peds by their stable bosses; the 'running stiff' to secure a lesser yardage handicap for future events: Aborigines seen as 'lower class' yet excluded from some races because whites feared their likely victories; the Aboriginal Protector's attempts to keep them in strict isolation, away from society, from tracks, from the 'influences' which made some Aborigines cheeky enough to question the 'protection' system created in 1897.

The Queensland Amateur Athletic Association's behaviour illustrated the Aboriginal experience: it sought to disbar all Aborigines from athletics, first, because they lacked moral character, then because they had insufficient intelligence, then because they couldn't resist white vice. Unable to sustain these 'reasons', in 1903 the Association simply deemed them all permanent professionals!<sup>10</sup> (The secretary of the Australian Amateur Athletics Union, however, felt it was contrary to the ideas of the amateur athletics world to disbar a man 'merely because he was an aboriginal'.)

On programs Aborigines had an '(a)' after their names, half-castes an '(h.c.)': 'without these distinguishing marks... the public are misled'. Distinguished they were: Combardlo Billy (who ran 150 yards in 15 seconds in 1882), George Combo, Tom Thumb, E Hubert, Patrick Bowman, Tommy Smith, Evans ('the Balmain nigger ped'), Jacky from Queensland, Paddy Doyle ('an honest trier'), Harry Murray ('a straight ped'), A Watts, Charlie Mitchell.

The earliest account of an Aboriginal runner is of Manuello in Victoria: in February 1851 he beat Tom McLeod, regarded as the fastest man in Australia, over 100 yards (91m); he also beat the

NSW champion, Freddie Furnell, over 100 and 150 yards (137m).<sup>11</sup> Bobby Kinnear, born and raised on the Antwerp Mission near Dimboola in Victoria, won the big one, the Stawell Gift, in 1883 - with three yards to spare! A memorial has been erected to him in the Antwerp cemetery. An Aborigine, J Dancey, won the Stawell in 1910. Another Aboriginal sprinter, A Loughlin, was clear favourite to win the 1918 Stawell after the heats. But on the day he went walkabout and was never seen again. A fine runner, Fred Kingsmill, was described as 'the coloured Adonis whom nature created and then threw away the mould'.

The early sports writers had some nice turns of phrase. Of 'Bowman the Aborigine', the *Referee* said: " 'He is rather a peculiar made sprinter, having little or no calf and a tremendous thigh at the top of the leg. It is the most peculiar shaped leg I have ever seen on a runner...'; but shapely or not, he won this Carrington Handicap (in 1887) 'and I am told that the party reaped a harvest of something like 500 pounds for the win'.

Larry Marsh ('one of the greatest runners in Sydney in 1894'), won a great deal of money. From Cumeragunga on the Murray River came Alf Morgen, Billy Russell, and the legendary Bobby McDonald, creator of the 'crouch start' in 1887 - many years before Lewis Hope 'invented it'.<sup>13</sup> The photograph on p 12 is of interest, especially in the way it tries to show the relationship between Aborigines and 'nature'. Later, 'Cummera' produced Eddy Briggs, Doug Nicholls, brother Dowie Nicholls, and perhaps the greatest of them all, Lynch Cooper.

In 1929 Doug Nicholls won the Nyah Gift and then the Warracknabeal, second only to Stawell in importance. He was a finalist in the Melbourne Thousand, then the world's richest event. On that particular day, in April 1929, Lynch Cooper won

the World Sprint Championship from Austin Robertson over 75 yards, 100, 130, and 220 yards (68m, 91m, 118m, and 201m). In 1928 he won the Stawell Gift, at his third attempt. Having failed in 1926 and 1927, and with only twenty pounds left, his fishing boat sold and then unemployed, he risked all on himself at 60 to 1. He had a long and rewarding career, sustaining himself and his family through the Depression years. In 1961 Ken Hampton won the famous Bay Sheffield race in Glenelg; he also won the Broken Hill and Murray Bridge Gifts. In 1971 Wally Bux of Victoria came second in the Stawell; in 1977 he won the VFA Centenary Gift worth \$2,000.

Doug Nicholls had careers in boxing, running, Aussie Rules. Jack Marsh and Albert Henry were excellent peds as well as cricketers. In 1896 the *Referee* said of Jack Marsh that 'no man in Australia can beat him at the present time in a 75 yard run'. He won at least five major handicap events. Much later Wally Macarthur, the Australian under-19 100m sprint champion, was in line for Olympic selection but 'was denied a place in the South Australian Athletic Squad because he was an Aboriginal'.<sup>14</sup> As the 'Black Flash', he went on to a sensational rugby league career with Rochdale and Salford in the United Kingdom in the 1950s.

The exclusions were ugly. The Queensland Home Secretary wrote (in 1897) that 'the whites complained of the superior capabilities of the blacks at Fraser Island, and asked me to stop them competing with the whites...'. Fortunately this prejudice and behaviour was not universal.

Not every ped was seduced by civilization; not every athlete wound up on the skids; and not all white runners were prejudiced against the black stars. One 'sable party' from north Queensland

rejected all lures of 'money, baccy and grog'; alas, cried the press, for 'there's a gold mine in this black diamond'. Many like Nicholls and Harry Williams, went on to solid careers; and in Nicholls's case, from 'Black Streak' and 'Flying Abo' to a knighthood and the Governorship of South Australia.

The recognised prince of black runners was Charlie Samuels, a stock rider from Dalby in Queensland. In 1894 the Referee wrote:

Thus it is that I am about to claim for an aboriginal runner what an overwhelming majority of foot racing critics will concede is his due - the Championship of Australia. It might be more pleasant reflection to Australians, perhaps, if a white man... could be quoted as champion; but as we are sizing up the sprint runners on the 'all-in' principle, a black aboriginal has to be accorded the laurel crown... Samuels has, in a long course of consistent and brilliant running, established his claim, not only to be the Australian champion, but also to have been one of the best exponents of sprint running the world has ever seen.

In 1886 he ran 136 yards (124m) in 13 1/5 seconds, 'the best yet done in Australia'. He is credited with a 300 yard (274m) race in 30 seconds, equalled only by Englishman Harold Hutchens, officially rated the greatest sprinter of the nineteenth century, amateur or professional.<sup>15</sup> Charlie's greatest yet generally unbelieved achievement was his running of a 9.1 hundred yards - nine yards inside even time - at Botany, Sydney in 1888! (The clocks were probably correct: possibly the track lengths were shorter - to heighten the dramatic times.)

'One of the most intelligent men of his race', he trained on 'a box of cigars, pipe and tobacco, and plenty of sherry'. Despite this, he began a successful mastery of Hutchens in 1897. Samuels won the series to the extent that no one, claimed *Australian Town and Country*, could 'dispute Samuels' claim to the

title of champion sprinter of the world'. The Hutchens camp did not see it that way. Claiming lack of a trainer and his poor condition, Hutchens called the series 'an exhibition', thus denying Samuels that title. Another celebrated victory was over Tom Malone, the Irish champion.

Many peds, said a critic, 'fall to pieces under pressure... Samuels was not one of these.' But in many respects he couldn't cope with the system: severe handicapping, running stiff to get a few yards back, dubious managers. running to exhaustion, winning 90,000 pounds for his backers against Ted Lazarus in 1887 but paid only the prize money, 'assault upon an artillery man over a lady', drunk and disorderly at the Centennial Park 'black's camp'.

After a comeback he went to live at La Perouse in Sydney. Somewhat predictably he was seen as a 'troublemaker' and sent by the police to Callan Park Lunatic Asylum for 'intemperance to drink'. Three months later he went back to Queensland. The Referee:

Poor old Charlie was one of the most marvellous sprint runners the world has ever seen, and his name will go down to posterity as the Deerfoot of Australia. He made fortunes . . . but he is likely to die in the gunyahs of his own people, dependent on the protection of charity of the Queensland Government of which he is a native.

He died in 1912 at 49 - not in a *gunyah* but in one of those abysmal penal-type government settlements, Barambah, to which he had been 'removed on the Minister's order'. The fates of Albert Henry, Jerry Jerome, and Ron Richards were to be pathetically similar.



a. WALLY McARTHUR



b. LYNCH COOPER



P. BOWMAN, WINNER OF SECOND CARRINGTON HANDIAP.

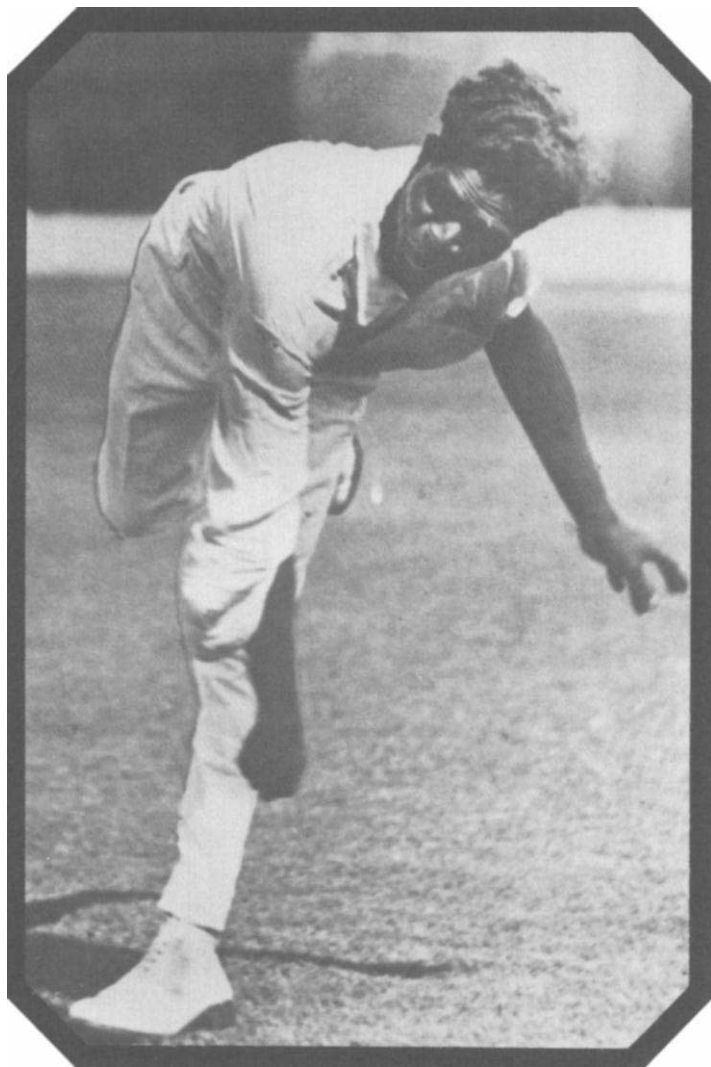
a. PATRICK BOWMAN



b. DOUG NICHOLLS - winner of the Warracknabeal Gift, 1929



## 4. THE FAST BLACK MEN



**EDDIE GILBERT**

'... faster than anything seen from Larwood or anyone else. . .'

— Sir Donald Bradman

Aboriginal statistics in cricket are quite dismal - yet the history of the twenty or so men in the game is fascinating. The figures tell us nothing of the racism, the harshness of cricket for men of colour and 'lower class', of the tragedy, the pathos, and even the humour involved for the few. Simply, of 7076 Australian first-class cricketers between 1850 and 1987, only six have been Aboriginal: Johnny Mullagh, Twopenny, Albert Henry, Jack Marsh, Eddie Gilbert, and Ian King.

The first Aborigine in Australian cricket, Shiney, made three ducks in a row in Hobart Town in 1835.<sup>16</sup> But things did improve: in 1872 Billy the Blackboy from Charleville (Q) threw a ball 140 yards - a controversial record which appeared in *Wisden*; and in 1869 Johnny Taylor from the Canberra region scored 35 off a four-ball over - at a time when all hits were run! Cricket became popular with South Australian Aborigines in the 1870s. An Aboriginal team from New Norcia - encouraged by the missionaries to engage in this 'civilizing' process - became a leading team in the West. But by 1905 the inexorable and by then universal segregation-protection policies saw them play their last match.

Taught by the sons of pastoralists, Aborigines in the Lake Wallace district of western Victoria became the nucleus of the famous black tour of England in 1868 - exactly a decade before the first white team went abroad.

The full story of the men from the Edenhope area is well told by John Mulvaney (1967),<sup>17</sup> and in a much expanded version by Mulvaney and Rex Harcourt (1988). Much briefer versions are those of MacDonald (1917)<sup>18</sup> and Pollard (1987).<sup>19</sup> Mulvaney has pointed to the significant issues: settler attitudes to, and their sense of 'ownership' of, blacks on their properties; 'dying race',

fossil culture, and surviving remnant theories: governmental protection of Aborigines from predators, and actual exploitation of their skills and their naivety; concerns about Aboriginal ill-health, and the reality that so many of these cricketers died young, and alcoholic.

Briefly, the story is that William Hayman of Edenhope sent pictures of 'his' Aborigines to Rowley and Bryant, owners of the Melbourne Cricket Ground refreshment tent, suggesting a match. With the 'sympathies of the whole of the population of Melbourne behind them', and before 10,000 spectators at the MCG on Boxing Day 1866, 'these children of the forest' - as the *Age* called them<sup>20</sup> - lost by nine wickets. Three weeks later Bullocky and Cuzens played for the Victorian XI against a Tasmanian XVI, won by the latter because Mullagh was absent, ill, according to the *Age*.<sup>21</sup> (Weaker teams were allowed up to four or five more batsmen, hence XVs, XVIIs and even XVIIIIs).

Thereafter things fell apart. Suggestions about a black tour to England were bedevilled by some financial skullduggery, concerns about Aborigines being in ill-health, anxiety by the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines that they might be deserted while abroad. 'There was a feeling' - wrote MacDonald - 'that it might prove a better thing for the promoters than for the blacks'. Sugar had died before the first MCC match; his replacement, Watty, died on the way home from Sydney matches; Jellico and Paddy died of pneumonia soon after; Tarpot and Dick-a-Dick were seriously ill. Watty's inquest revealed constant drinking and a general inability of these Aborigines to cope with what went on in city life.

Charles Lawrence, Sydney hotelier and coach, was persuaded to captain a resurrected team that would play in England. They

toured Victoria and NSW in fund-raising matches and devastated the Army and Navy team in Sydney before 5,000 spectators, with a Cuzens double of 86 and 8 wickets for 23. The touring team of thirteen, plus Lawrence, arrived on 13 May 1868. 'Nothing of interest comes from Australia except gold nuggets and black cricketers'. said the *Daily Telegraph*. Indeed, the line-up of tribal names and *sobriquets* was of interest:

Dick-a-Dick	Jungunjinanuke
Peter	Arrahmunijarrimun
Johnny Mullagh	Unaarrimin
Cuzens	Zellanach
Sundown	Ballrinjarrimin
King Cole	Brippokei
Tiger	Bonmbarngheet
Red Cap	Brimbunyah
Bullocky	Bullchanach
Mosquito	Grougarrong
Jim Crow	Jallachmurrimin
Twopenny	Murrumgunarriman
Charley Dumas	Pripumuarraman

This first ever Australian team abroad and its record of 47 matches, nineteen draws, fourteen losses and fourteen wins is now part of sporting history. Of interest here is what the quaint, sometimes generous, sometimes carping British press<sup>22</sup> made of the 'exploits of an impossible coffee-coloured team'.<sup>23</sup>

The black physique fascinated them. 'They seem'. wrote the *Rochdale Observer*, 'generally stalwart men'.<sup>24</sup> The *Sporting Gazette* found them 'sturdy-limbed too, notwithstanding their slight peculiarity of build, deep in the chest, and with an

almost English width across the shoulder'.<sup>25</sup> The *Times* highlighted their hair and beards as long and wiry, their skins as varied shades of blackness.<sup>26</sup> The *Sporting Gazette* predicted surprise for those who expected broad noses, thick lips and the 'wool' Of the Negro: 'The Australians were handsome, good-tempered looking fellows' - 'quite the race one would expect Macaulay's New Zealander to spring from'.<sup>27</sup> Indeed!

'It must not be inferred', warned *Sporting Life*, 'that they are savages'.<sup>28</sup> The *Times* had the first and last word: 'They are perfectly civilized, and are quite familiar with the English language'.<sup>29</sup>

The public relations men did a fine job. Said *Sporting Life*: 'since the ingenious George Martin brought Deerfoot from America to contend against English pedestrians no arrival has been anticipated with so much curiosity and interest'.<sup>30</sup> 'Certainly the cricket event of the age',<sup>31</sup> wrote *Sporting Gazette*, as a record critical assemblage of spectators - between 7,000 and 9,000 - came to see the 'Eleven Gentlemen of Surrey versus Eleven Aboriginal Black Australians' at the Oval in May 1868.

The *Times*, of course, was critical.<sup>32</sup> They had little chance 'against the cultivated team' from Surrey. Bowling was second-rate, fielding not precise. 'Batting, save that of Mullagh, is sadly wanting in power', with deficiencies in defence, and running between wickets 'much at fault'. In the Marylebone game, the Aborigines collapsed in their second innings and Bullocky 'was absent without a satisfactory reason being assigned'. The result, snorted The *Times*, 'may be called a travestie upon cricketing at Lords'.

The sports papers saw their batting as 'steady' and 'their wrist-play good'. 'To the *cognoscenti*, their fielding is quite a

treat', wrote *Sporting Gazette*, their catching amazing and 'they throw in very well indeed, making the ball whizz along at a great pace'. Mullagh was the star, 'a cricketer unmistakably'.<sup>33</sup> The *Gazette* raved about his 73 in 80 minutes against Surrey - 'a clever performance, and worthy of any batsman, no matter what his country or colour'.<sup>34</sup> 'An innings', wrote MacDonald, 'described as being worth at least a hundred, for they at once noticed Johnny's aversion to hard running'.<sup>35</sup> 'Mullagh and Cuzens', he concluded, 'were in all-round capacity not only the backbone of the side, but some of the ribs as well'.<sup>36</sup>

Each game was followed by 'Australian' and 'native sports' - thrilling to spectators and sportswriters. The *Rochdale Observer* went overboard in eulogy of the boomerang and spear-throwing, dodging the barrage of cricket balls, Dick-a-Dick's throw of 107 yards, and his victory in the 100 yards backwards dash.<sup>37</sup> *Sporting Life* summarized the 'doings of the Darkies': 'No eleven has in one season ever played so many matches... so successfully - never playing less than two matches in each week, and frequently three, bearing an amount of fatigue that now seems incredible...' <sup>38</sup> Indeed: King Cole had died of tuberculosis in mid-tour and illnesses forced Sundown and Jim Crow to be sent home in August. The remaining eleven were much fatigued. The final honour was the *Sportsman's* publication of the full tour statistics, of which only part is shown in Table 1 on page 28.

On return the players dispersed, many dying prematurely and in obscurity. Only Johnny Mullagh achieved fame. 'The Black "W.G." of the team, [he] was a superior man in many ways. He had all-round capacity in cricket, with something of a personality to back it', wrote MacDonald.<sup>39</sup> Great praise comes from critic David

Frith. In *The Fast Men* he describes Mullagh as 'a kind of early Sobers, who batted "elegantly", sometimes kept wicket, and with his fastish bowling took 245 wickets at ten runs apiece'.<sup>40</sup> He played for Victoria against Lord Harris's touring English team. He remained a member of the Harrow Club, playing in the Murray

**TABLE 1**  
**ABORIGINAL BATTING AND BOWLING AVERAGES**

**Batting Averages**

	Matches	Inns.	Runs	Most in an inns.	Most in a match	Times not out	Aver.
Mullagh .....	43	74	1679	94	129	4	22.51
Lawrence .....	41	57	1191	63	96	14	20.51
Cuzens .....	46	72	1364	87	87	6	18.68
Bullocky .....	42	60	566	64*	72	3	9.26
Redcap .....	47	73	628	56	56	5	8.44
Twopenny .....	47	67	574	35*	40	8	8.38
King Cole .....	8	10	75	18	21	2	7.5
Tiger .....	47	69	421	32	32	4	6.7
Peter .....	44	59	286	30	31	7	4.50
Dick-a-Dick ...	47	66	304	27	30	4	4.40
Mosquito .....	35	23	82	8*	8*	26	3.13
Dumas .....	45	77	218	17*	17*	6	2.64
Jim Crow .....	13	14	37	10	12	4	2.9

\* Not out

**Bowling Averages**

	Inns.	Overs	Runs	wkts.	Aver.
Lawrence .....	68	1595	3041	255	3.51
Mullagh .....	74	1841	2128	237	3.15
Cuzens .....	46	864	1287	113	2.21
Redcap bowled in 28 innings and took 54 wickets					
Twopenny "	13	"	"	34	"
Dick-a-Dick "	9	"	"	5	"
Bullocky "	5	"	"	4	"
King Cole "	2	"	"	1	"

In the first innings against Rochdale and the second innings against North Shields no bowling analysis was kept, but Lawrence took seven and Mullagh twelve wickets.

- NOTE:** 1) Batting averages do not take account of Times Not Out, and bowling averages are for wickets per innings: in both cases, decimal points are incorrect.
- 2) These statistics and averages differ, marginally, from those published in *Sporting Life* on the same date and which appear in Mulvaney's *Cricket Walkabout*. I have no argument for the correctness of one set over the other.

Cup until 1890. Sensitive to racial slurs, Mullagh stood up to indignity, on one occasion spending the night in the open rather than accepting a room across the yard next to the stables which the inn-keeper judged good enough for 'the nigger'. He died in 1891. 'The Western district', wrote the *Sydney Mail*, 'will regret his death'.<sup>41</sup> A memorial was erected to this 'virtuous, exemplary' man on the local ground, later named Mullagh Oval. One side of his headstone is inscribed with his English tour average (23.65), the other with his Murray Cup performance (45.70).

There is a sense of inevitability about the careers and fates of three great Aboriginal fast men this century: Jack Marsh, Albert ('Alec') Henry, and Eddie Gilbert. Talented, erratic, 'unreliable', 'chuckers', all fared and died badly.

A 'fiery, unpredictable' fast bowler, 'a genuine character, subject to moodiness',<sup>42</sup> Henry (1880-1909) played seven first-class games for Queensland in 1901-2 and 1904-05. He averaged 6.0 for batting and took 26 wickets at 32.04 runs each.

In a 1904 club match he was constantly no-balled for doubtful action by well-known umpire A L Crossart. Henry's (immortal) reaction was reported to the Queensland Cricket Association thus: <sup>43</sup>

Mr Henry, when the over was completed, deliberately went over to Umpire Crossart and said words to this effect, viz.: 'YOU bastard! You no-ball my good balls and the ones I did throw, you never! You know nothing about cricket!' - at the same time shaking his hand in Umpire Crossart's face.

Henry achieved fantastic figures in grade cricket. In April 1902 he was selected to play against NSW, that side including the other 'black diamond', Jack Marsh. Henry took 2 for 63 and 1 for 38, Marsh 2 for 64 and 3 for 67. At the season's end Henry won



the best average trophy for his 5.15 per wicket. The Englishmen who faced him during the 1903-04 tour thought him just about the fastest bowler they had ever seen, 'even the fastest trundler in the world', though his action was 'not above suspicion'. And despite earlier difficulties he was selected for the state again in 1905.

Involved in cricket and running, like so many, he was also, like so many, enmeshed in the rigid authoritarianism of the protection era. He was removed to Barambah (now Cherbourg) and imprisoned for a month 'for loafing, malingering and defying authority'. From there he was isolated further afield, to inaccessible Yarrabah, to die of tuberculosis at 29 - defiant at the system, yet certain victim of it.

Jack Marsh (1874-1916) was a controversial right-arm fast bowler for NSW.<sup>44</sup> A 'full-blood' from the Clarence River district, he came to cricket when the campaign to eliminate chucking was near hysterical. At a state trial match in Sydney in November 1900, he clean bowled the great Victor Trumper for one. This led not to acclaim but to trouble. Umpire W Curran said he would no-ball Marsh at play next day. The *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote:<sup>45</sup>

Marsh, who was no-balled . . . feels so confident that his delivery is fair, that he is prepared to have his arm so bandaged as to render it impossible to bend or jerk the elbow - which is generally accepted constituting a throw. As a matter of fact, he has already demonstrated to some of the principal members of the Sydney Cricket Club that his delivery is absolutely fair. He caused a piece of wood to be tightly fixed along the arm, and bowled as fast as ever. Orders have been given for a splint for the arm, which will keep it absolutely rigid, and, if completed in time, will be worn for the balance of the eleven's innings... If the splint be not ready something equally effective will be used.

This, reported the paper, 'was unsatisfactory to the umpire and he decided to retire from the match.' All believed the throwing stigma would end at this point - but this was not to be.

In a match against Victoria, Umpire Crockett no-balled Marsh three times. In the return game, according to Jack Pollard, Victoria 'had brought with them their own umpire, the controversial Bob Crockett - [who] proceeded to no-ball Marsh nineteen times for throwing'.<sup>46</sup> The crowd believed Marsh was victimized: Crockett called only his slower ball, whereas Curran and others only his faster one.

No one in Sydney cricket objected to his action. In 1902 he took 58 wickets at less than ten apiece. He was described as having 'gifts no other man in Australia - and probably no other bowler in the world - possesses: he curves the ball, he bowls a peculiar dropping ball, and his break back on a perfect wicket is phenomenal for a bowler of his pace'.<sup>47</sup> Marsh, wrote J C Davis in 1916, 'could make the ball do stranger things in the air than any other bowler I ever saw'.<sup>48</sup>

His first-class batting average was only 5.00 but he took 34 wickets at 21.47 each. In 1903-04 the triumphant English team played a Bathurst XV. Marsh took 5 for 55, after which the *Sydney Mail* quoted an unnamed senior English player as saying that his action was perfectly legal and that 'Marsh was the best bowler in the world' - this, despite the English captain's objection to Marsh's presence in the match.<sup>49</sup>

M A Noble, then selector of NSW teams, felt he was a chucker - nor did he 'have class enough' for representative matches: 'his bowling was erratic and could not be relied upon'.<sup>50</sup> In 1905 there were suggestions he should make the tour to England 'because of his clever manipulation of the ball'. The noted

English cricketer, L O S Poidevin, commented that this wouldn't happen 'probably because the absurd White Australia policy has touched or tainted the hearts of the rulers of cricket, as it has the political rulers'.<sup>51</sup> Davis, in the *Referee*, said it all: 'That Jack Marsh would have been one of the world's greatest bowlers if he had been a white man I have always believed... his bowling would have established a fresh standard of hard-wicket excellence and created a new type, differing altogether from anything ever known before.'<sup>52</sup> Warren Bardsley, the great left-hander, said in his recollections 'that the reason they kept him out of big cricket was his color'.

Phil Derriman's article 'Death in Orange' in 1985 pointed to Marsh's tragic end.<sup>53</sup> His skull had probably been fractured by 'the toe of a boot' in 1916. Judge Bevan opined that 'so far as the kicking [of Marsh as he lay on the ground] was concerned, Marsh might have deserved it'! His two assailants were charged not with murder but manslaughter and acquitted without the jury leaving the box. Marsh has the quality of legend about him. Some 70 years after his sordid end, people still talk about him. His life is now celebrated in a 70 minute SBS television documentary produced by Robert Kitts.

Eddie Gilbert<sup>54</sup> (1908-1978) was 'a dynamic Aboriginal fast bowler who at his prime ranked second only to Bradman among Queensland fans'.<sup>55</sup> Off only four or five paces, he bowled at sizzling speed. With long arms, 'he achieved his pace with a right arm that swung in such a blur it was difficult to assess claims that he threw'.

In first-class matches he scored a mere 224 runs at 7.22; however, his 87 wickets cost 28.97 each. In December 1931 he

bowled Bradman for a duck - after a five-ball spell of which Sir Don wrote: 'he sent down in that period the fastest "bowling" I can remember . . . one delivery knocked the bat out of my hand and I unhesitatingly class this short burst faster than anything seen from Larwood or anyone else'.<sup>56</sup> The NSW team claimed his bowling was a blot on the game. Bradman wrote later that his bowling looked fair from the pavilion but was 'suspect'.

In his first state match against South Australia he took 2 for 22 and 2 for 76. In a spectacular match against the West Indies he took 5 for 65 and 2 for 26. Hit for a mighty six by Learie Constantine, he replied in kind off the great man's bowling. Perhaps his best performance was in the Bradman 'duck' game: then the famous Stan McCabe played one of his greatest innings ever - 229 not out. Against that feat Gilbert finished with 4 for 74 off 21 overs.

In 1931 Umpire Barlow no-balled him eleven times in three overs in Melbourne. Yet in the next game against South Australia, bodyline umpire George Hele didn't call him. Injuries plagued him but in 1934-35 he took a total of 9 for 178 against NSW and 5 for 77 against Victoria. For those matches, the Aboriginal Protector would not pay his expenses but 'gave his permission' for Gilbert to play.

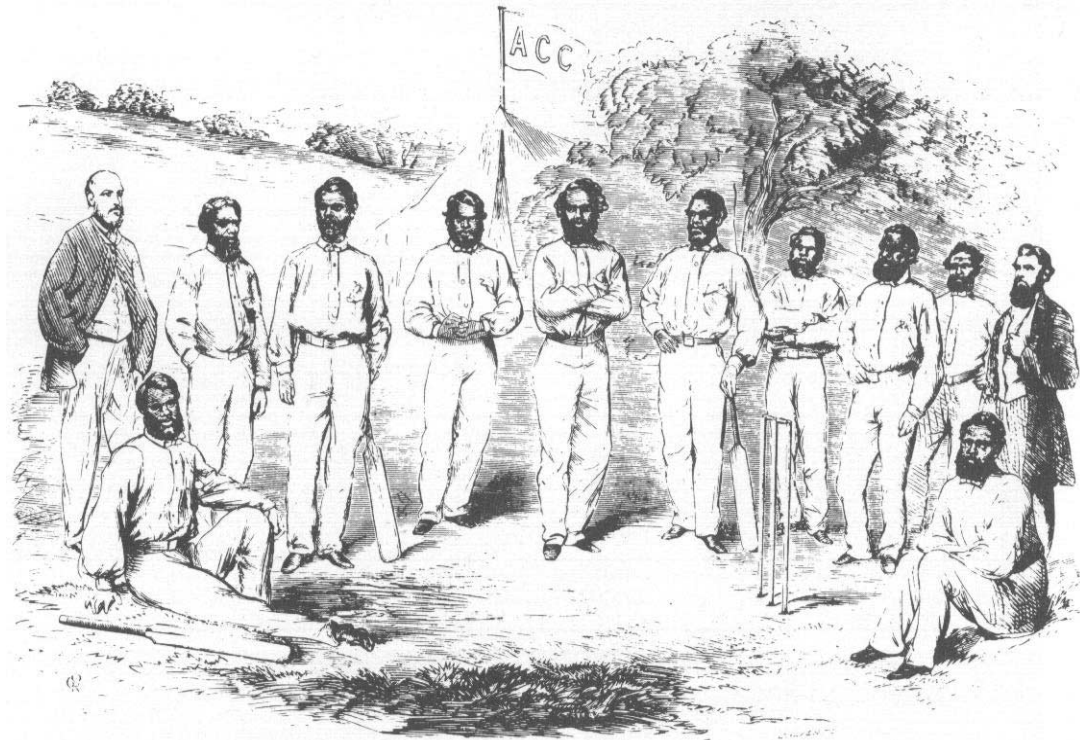
Frith says that for four or five overs he was 'exceedingly fast'. 'He lacked stamina, he was black, and he came from the Cinderella State. Otherwise he might have become Australia's first and so far only Aborigine Test player.'<sup>57</sup> David Forrest's short story, *That Barambah Mob*, tells of a Gilbert souvenir one player took to his grave: '...nufactured in Austra...' stamped in reverse on his head, an imprint from a Gilbert bumper!<sup>58</sup>

In 1972 Frith confirmed that he was in a state mental institution in Queensland, having spent 23 years there, incapable of speech.<sup>59</sup> Be died there in 1978 - not at Cherbourg as so many accounts have it.<sup>60</sup>

Ian King, 'an exuberant right-arm fast bowler', came into the Queensland side in 1969-70 after only four seasons of grade cricket.<sup>61</sup> Unlike his predecessors, 'his action was as smooth as silk though he was the fastest bowler to play for Queensland since Wes Hall'. A non-conformist, his elegant clothing in his boxing days earned him the nickname 'Rainbow', later changed to 'Sammy' because of his uncanny resemblance to Sammy Davis Junior. Be also played hockey and basketball.

King's grade figures were excellent. In only eight first-class matches he made 65 runs at 8.12 and took 30 wickets at 28.36. After 'troubles in Brisbane' he settled in Perth and continued with grade cricket. Despite his short career, says Pollard, 'he gave glimpses of rare talent, exceptional pace and splendid fielding ability'.

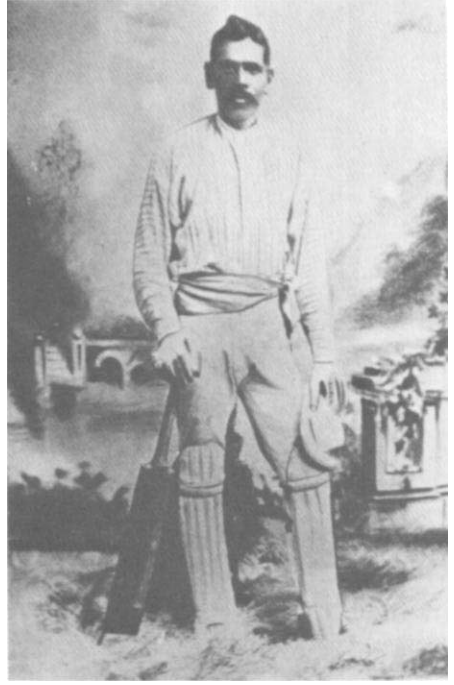
In 1986 Charles Perkins resolved to send an Aboriginal team to England (in 1988) to retrace the 1868 itinerary. The Australian Aboriginal Cricket Association was founded, with Ian King appointed organiser of the venture. Czech novelist Milan Kundera says the idea of eternal return is a mysterious one, but a nice one if the memory is pleasant. Despite its troubles, the 1868 tour is one of the better Aboriginal memories. Some argue it is better left that way: others support a re-enactment. Whatever the outcome - for now, and for the perspective to come - simply to evoke discussion about 1868 is of significance for the Aboriginal vision of their history.



ABORIGINAL TEAM v MELBOURNE CRICKET CLUB XI, BOXING DAY 1866  
(L to R) Mr Hayman, Captain, Sugar, Jellico, Cuzens, Needy, Mullagh, Bullocky,  
Tarpot, Sundown, Tom Wills (umpire), Officer and Peter seated in front



a. CUZENS

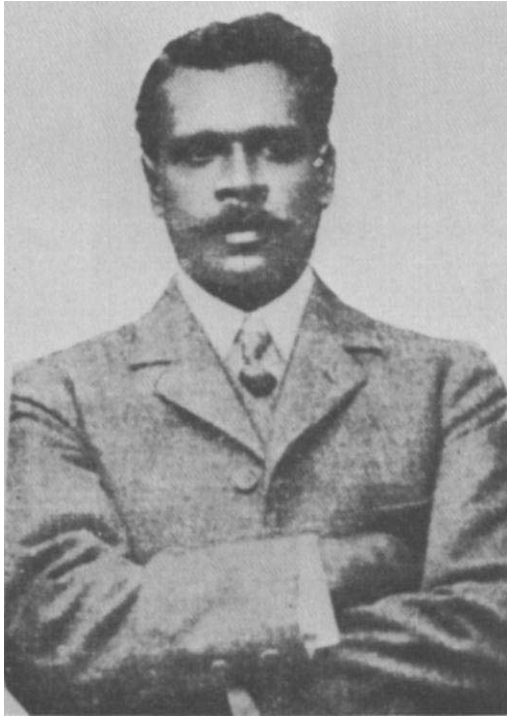


b. JOHNNY MULLAGH

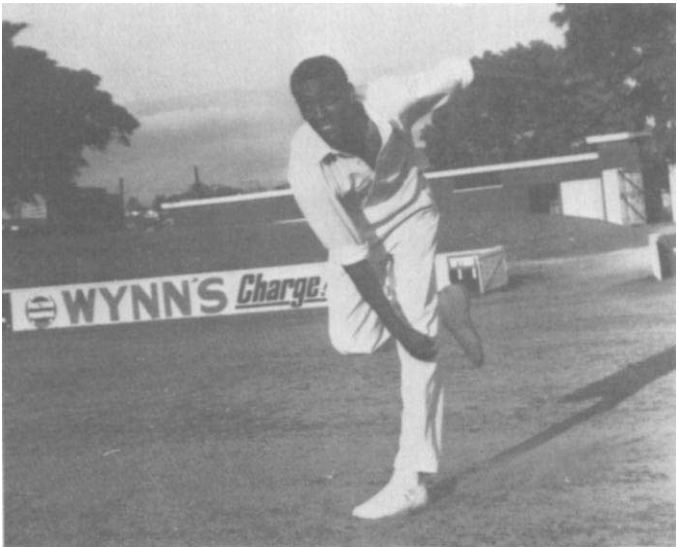
'were in all-round capacity not only the backbone of the side,  
but some of the ribs as well'



C. ALBERT (ALEC) HENRY



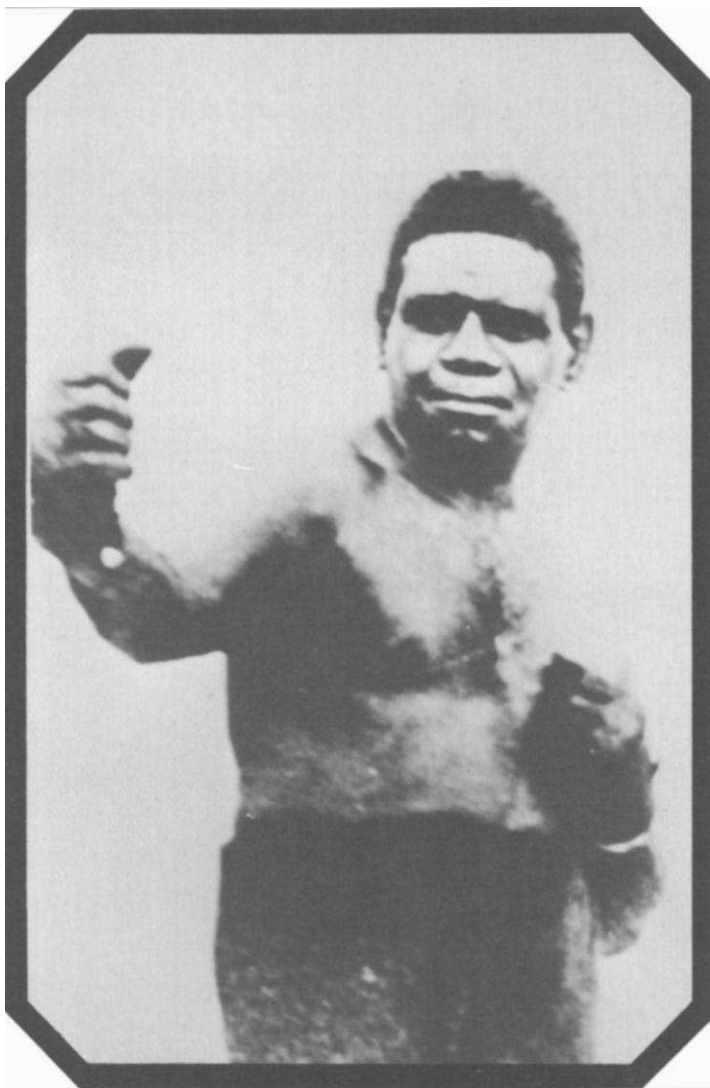
a. JACK MARSH - 'he dresses well, if gaudily, and is quite good-looking, whilst he might be Japanese in the matter of his intelligence...' - LOS Poidevin



b. IAN KING



## 5. THE GLORY SPORT



### **JERRY JEROME**

The first Aboriginal titleholder, this 'weirdly constructed native' won the middleweight championship in 1913.

Fascinating, says British novelist Brian Glanville about boxing - albeit a sport 'blemished by its essential brutality, its exploitation of the poor and simple'.<sup>62</sup> In so many ways boxing is close to the bone. Under harsh lights two men engage in undisguised aggression, with courage, skill, resilience, and power. They represent - in Glanville's sense - a social ('poor'), mental ('simple'), and physical ('brutal') class: which is very close indeed to the inevitable (white) portrait of the 'racial' type.

But there is another dimension to black boxing: a political one. Ever since Jack Johnson won the world heavyweight championship in Sydney Town in 1908, the holder of that title has been seen as the symbolic physical master of the world. The lower weights are but lesser, paler versions of that theme.

And so the way out of poverty and racism for some minorities has been boxing, the glory sport. Certainly this is true for American blacks and for African fighters. Yet it has achieved less for Aborigines. In fact, says historian Richard Broome, boxing has 'done more to reinforce the basic oppression of Aborigines than to overcome it'.<sup>63</sup>

Why? At first blush the ring was a route to money, upward mobility, a break in the caste barrier, to a temporary (but often sweet) victory over chronic powerlessness. It offered a chance of self-identity, some dignity, certainly a collective pride and a heightening of Aboriginal-consciousness for the city and riverbank people as they barracked for their heroes.

The statistics are impressive, the conclusions and outcomes less so. In 1980 Broome reported that while only one per cent of the population, Aborigines had produced 30 of the 225 champions (or fifteen per cent) in eight boxing divisions. To date 32

Aborigines have won 51 professional titles (Table 2 on p 41). They have held six British Commonwealth titles and the world bantamweight championship. Three fought unsuccessfully for world titles. They have won at least 100 state titles. The boxing authority Ray Mitchell says there are more Aboriginal boxers per their head of population than among any other group in the world.<sup>64</sup>

Most writers have diminished Aboriginal achievement somewhat by presenting the 'standard' list - Richards, Sands, Bennett, Hassen, Bracken, Rose, Thompson, and Mundine - as if it was the total list. The 'forgotten' ones don't deserve forgetting: Tables 2 and 3 indicate the dimension of black fighting.

Statistics notwithstanding, the odds have always been too tough: entrapment in Australia's inherent and often vicious racism; unending stereotyping: the almost universal exploitation of the typical black boxer. There were crippling percentages off the top by managers, and sometimes the full per cent by the Aboriginal Protector, especially in Queensland. Aborigines were a separate legal class of persons. The lifestyle was one of 'immediate consumption' and 'kinship obligations'.<sup>65</sup> Perceived as a separate biology - always as quick, reflexive, strong, tough, enduring - they were seen as especially 'explosive' and 'exciting', hence as a special breed of gladiator and entertainer. The famous West Indian writer, C L R James, always deplored Caribbean cricketers being called 'spontaneous': it suggested they were an instinctive people, incapable of thought. In similar vein, Aborigines were 'naturally' exciting fighters, always a 'credit to their race'; they were never individuals - they were always (in Paul Coe's words) bodies, never brains.<sup>66</sup>

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TABLE 2

ABORIGINAL WINNERS OF AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL TITLES

**HEAVYWEIGHT:**

Tony MUNDINE  
Ron RICHARDS  
Dave SANDS

**CRUISERWEIGHT:**

Tony MUNDINE

**LIGHTHEAVYWEIGHT:**

Wally CARR  
Tony MUNDINE  
Ron RICHARDS  
Dave SANDS

**JUNIOR LIGHTHEAVYWEIGHT:**

Doug SAM

**MIDDLEWEIGHT:**

Dick BLAIR  
Wally CARR  
Jerry JEROME  
Tony MUNDINE  
Ron RICHARDS  
Dave SANDS

**JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT:**

Wally CARR  
Trevor CHRISTIAN

**WELTERWEIGHT:**

Lawrence Baby Cassius AUSTIN  
Gary COWBURN  
Steve DENNIS  
Harry GROGAN  
Alden HOVEN  
George KAPEEN  
Russell SANDS Jr.

**JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT:**

Lawrence Baby Cassius AUSTIN  
Gary COWBURN  
Norm Kid LANGFORD  
Pat LEGLISE  
Hector THOMPSON

**LIGHTWEIGHT**

Lawrence Baby Cassius AUSTIN  
George BRACKEN  
Jack HASSEN  
Hector THOMPSON

**JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT:**

Big Jim WEST

**FEATHERWEIGHT:**

Elley BENNETT  
Merv BLANDON  
Brian ROBERTS  
Russell SANDS  
Bobby SINN  
Gary WILLIAMS

**JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT:**

Brian ROBERTS

**BANTAMWEIGHT:**

Elley BENNETT  
Merv BLANDON  
Johnny JARRETT  
Brian ROBERTS  
Lionel ROSE  
Bobby SINN

**FLYWEIGHT**

Harry HAYES  
Bindi JACK  
Big Jim WEST

**JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT:**

Junior THOMPSON

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TABLE 3

## RECORDS OF LEADING ABORIGINAL BOXERS

(To July 1987)	TB	WKO	WP	WF	D	LP	LF	LKO	NC
AUSTIN, Lawrence Baby Cassius*	48	13	21	-	2	12	-	-	-
BENNETT, Elley	59	40	4	-	1	11	-	2	1
BLAIR, Dick	85	12	34	-	5	26	-	5	3
BLANDON, Merv	66	13	36	-	9	7	-	-	1
BRACKEN, George	59	25	17	-	2	9	-	6	-
CARR, Wally	100	27	26	-	9	27	3	8	-
CHRISTIAN, Trevor	25	6	10	-	2	2	-	5	-
COWBURN, Gary	41	13	10	1	2	8	-	7	-
DENNIS, Steve	47	27	9	-	2	5	-	4	-
GROGAN, Harry	24	15	-	-	-	6	-	3	-
HASSEN, Jack	36	23	6	-	-	2	-	5	-
HAYES, Harry	41	10	15	-	2	11	-	3	-
JACK, Bindi	34	7	9	-	3	9	-	5	1
JARRETT, Johnny	46	25	5	-	1	7	-	8	-
JEROME, Jerry	56	31	4	2	-	4	2	13	-
KAPEEN, George	91	53	17	4	7	4	1	15	-
LANGFORD, Norm Kid	58	13	16	-	3	15	2	9	-
LEGLISE, Pat*	34	16	13	-	1	-	-	4	-
MUNDINE, Tony	96	65	15	-	1	5	-	10	-
RICHARDS, Ron	146	65	34	7	11	18	1	9	1
ROBERTS, Brian*	70	7	31	-	7	17	-	8	-
ROSE, Lionel	53	12	30	-	-	6	-	5	-
SAM, Doug*	23	17	3	-	-	1	-	2	-
SANDS, Alfie	148	63	23	1	12	36	3	8	2

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(To July 1987)	TB	WKO	WP	WF	D	LP	LF	LKO	NC
SANDS, Clem	100	36	8	1	4	41	1	8	
SANDS, Dave	110	62	35	-	1	8	-	2	
SANDS, George	100	43	10	1	10	19	1	16	
SANDS, Ritchie	90	36	6	3	7	11	6	20	
SANDS, Russell	57	9	24	1	4	7	-	12	
SANDS, Russell Jr.*	33	9	13	-	2	9	-	-	
SINN, Bobby	59	22	15	-	4	16	-	2	
THOMPSON, Hector	87	27	46	-	2	5	-	7	
THOMPSON, Junior*	20	5	4	-	-	6	-	5	
WEST, Big Jim	81	19	25	-	7	26	1	3	
WILLIAMS, Gary	40	13	19	-	-	4	-	4	

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**CODE:** TB - total bouts; WKO - won on knockout; WP - won on points; WF - won on foul; D - drew; LP - lost on points; LF - lost on foul; LKO - lost on knockout; NC - no contest.

\* Still active in 1987.

**NOTE:** Table compiled and supplied by Ray Mitchell.

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Like Charlie Samuels, Jerry Jerome (1874-1950) was born at Jimbour Station, Dalby. Given an exemption certificate by his employer, he was free to run, rifle shoot, and to box. The first major fight of the 'weirdly constructed native' was at 33, and in 1913 this southpaw won the Australian middleweight title. Popular with the crowds, this 'unmanageable, unpredictable' man won big purses, and lost them quickly. Disliking training, he fought in poor condition, often 'hog fat'. Deemed a 'pernicious influence'

at Taroom Aboriginal Settlement - for 'inciting all others to refuse to work unless paid cash for it' - Chief Protector J W Bleakley claimed that this 'moneyed gentleman' took a 'mean advantage' to 'obstruct discipline and defy authority'.<sup>67</sup> Jerome never took a drink in his life. He died, squalidly, at Cherbourg in 1950, his earnings 'poached' (according to *Australian Ring Digest*) by the Native Affairs Department and the 'hangers-on'.<sup>68</sup>

In 1933 Merv 'Darkie' Blandon won the Australian bantam-weight championship. One-eighth Aboriginal, he considered himself white, yet the fans insisted on the dark label. He is recorded as an Aboriginal boxer. In the 1950s Jack Ryan called himself Greek in Sharman's boxing tents - yet his son is proud of his father's Aboriginal heritage. Being forever defined by others has been a constant theme in the Aboriginal experience.

In many respects, Randell William (Ron) Richards - born at Ipswich in 1910 - was the greatest of them all: the national champion in three divisions, the Empire middleweight champion, victor over Gus Lesnevitch (later world lighth heavyweight champion for eight years), twice loser on points to that great legend, American Archie Moore. Had the chance come his way, said Ray Mitchell, he would have been a world champion. 'But his hardest battle', according to Peter Corris, 'was for full, dignified human status within a prejudiced community'.<sup>69</sup> He won it, for a moment, then lost, badly and sadly.

Richards fought often, too often. He lost fights he should have won. He fought too many of the same men: Ambrose Palmer four times, Fred Hennenbery ten! Attempts to get to England failed. Yet here he earned the highest acclaim from champion Vic Patrick: the best fighter he ever saw. Fast, a renowned counter-puncher, a strong hitter, resilient, he was a competent boxer.

His life was a disaster. The early death of his Aboriginal wife, the victim of poor management, of police harassment, involved in a few fight scandals, alcohol, he wound up in Darlinghurst pubs where customers would beat him for the glory of saying 'I ko'd Ron Richards'. Arrested for vagrancy, he was taken to remote Woorabinda Settlement, near Rockhampton, for three years. After arrest in Sydney came the final humiliation: gardener and vegetable man at penal Palm Island (where I met him in 1962). Richards died penniless in 1967. Singer and writer Ted Egan has captured the reality of the Aboriginal experience in boxing in his ballad, *The Hungry Fighter* (see Appendix 1 for the text). The name is missing but the tribute is to Richards.

Much of black sporting success rests on hero-worship: Elley Bennett revered Ron Richards and Lionel Rose idolized George Bracken. Born at Barambah in 1924, Bennett won the Australian bantam title in 1948 and the featherweight crown in 1951. Rated 'the hardest hitting man of his weight in the world', he won many fifteen-rounders by sensational knockouts in the dying seconds of fights he was losing. World ranking came when he beat the world's number two, Cecil Schoonmaker, but he could not achieve a challenge against Champion Ortiz.

'Boxing's Greatest Sportsman' was *Ring Digest's* opinion of him, but he was often in trouble against good boxers. Bennett, Hassen, Sands all took heavy punishment in their winning fights. Exploited, says Corris, they were never properly trained. In 1953 the magazines were saying Elley had 'looked after his money' - some 16,000 pounds in purses - and 'if he still wants that fishing vessel, he can now buy it'. This was not to be: in 1955 he began a long battle with booze. Later he became a member of



the Aboriginal Sports Foundation and put something back into Aboriginal sport. He died in Queensland in 1981.

Boxing may have been Jack Hassen's 'chance for money and security' but the outcome was never happy. Born in Cloncurry in 1926, he began his 'brawling career' in Jimmy Sharman's tents - and ended it there, fighting for a pittance. The boy who didn't want fame and fancy lights but only a dairy farm ended up losing some 20,000 pounds earned in three years. The highlight of his 36 fights was the win over Pierre Montaine that gave him world ranking. In 1949 he won the Australian lightweight championship from Archie Kemp. The beaten man died the next day: Hassen never recovered his confidence or his will to hit hard.<sup>70</sup> He fought well against future world champion, Joey Brown, and all-conquering Freddie Dawson, but his career was at an end. He lost his title to Mickey Tollis in a great fight in 1951. Despite a newspaper's claim that 'he hates being referred to as an Aborigine',<sup>71</sup> he was the lionised king of the Newtown kids and today he is part of the La Perouse community.

One man who looked for a time 'to be verging on world greatness'<sup>72</sup> was George Bracken. Born at Palm Island in 1935, he was a dynamic puncher and a classy boxer. He won the Australian lightweight title in 1955, lost it in 1958 and reclaimed the vacant title in 1959. Popular Bracken, hampered by undiagnosed hepatitis, fought some tremendous battles with other Aborigines, notably Russell Sands and Gary Cowburn. (There is a pervasive myth that Aborigines don't fight well against each other.)

In December 1957 he was arrested on a fake charge by the Innisfail (Q) police: there he was pummelled for an hour.<sup>73</sup> As one detective said: 'I've seen you fight in Brisbane and you couldn't fight for nuts!' The successful black, it seems, had to

be brought low. This 'interrogation' cost him two scheduled fights and 2,000 pounds in earnings.

Bracken spoke out against settlement life, the indignity of missionary paternalism, race prejudice, lack of Aboriginal education and welfare. He was a keen advocate of an insurance scheme for black athletes, especially fighters: Aboriginal boxers, he said, were 'exploited and mismanaged' and finished up 'with impaired health and no money'. He was able to avoid those pitfalls.

The Ritchie brothers - renamed Sands for boxing purposes - came from Burnt Ridge, near Kempsey, NSW. Statistically they were every kind of a record: between them, 605 fights, 249 knockout wins, one Commonwealth (Empire) title, one Australasian, four Australian, and three state titles.

In mid-1941 Ritchie Sands was regarded as possibly 'another Les Darcy'.<sup>74</sup> In mid-1966, after a career ruined by crass mismanagement and then seventeen years of tent fighting, this totally damaged 48 year-old was sentenced to three years for indecent assault. Russell, born in 1937, with a badly withered leg from aged two, was still good enough to take the Australian featherweight title. Clem (born 1919) and George (born 1924) were both competent welterweights. Alfie (born 1929) had an incredible 148 fights: but, as Ray Mitchell points out, he was permitted, even encouraged, to go on binges after fights the sooner to work through his money and be ready to fight again.<sup>75</sup> (His son, Russell Sands Jr., was later Australian welterweight champion.)

The best of them was Dave, born in 1926 and dead, by accident, 26 years later. 'Everyone loved him and admired his character', wrote Mitchell in eulogy.<sup>76</sup> He was fast, a quick

thinker, keen to defend himself against punishment and cuts.

In 1946 he won the Australian middleweight and lighth heavyweight titles, in 1950 the heavyweight crown, in 1949 the Empire middleweight championship, and in 1952 the somewhat meaningless Australasian lighth heavyweight title. In England he fought badly, hampered by allergic reactions to inoculations, overawed by the expectations of him. The *Daily Telegraph* claimed his reputation was 'the veriest, flimsiest bubble'.<sup>77</sup> But his first round knockout of Dick Turpin to win the Empire title redeemed him.

Watching the Randolph Turpin versus Sugar Ray Robinson world title bout, Sands - a shy, sensitive, generous man - said he believed he could beat them both. Freddie Dawson had no doubts: 'He is the greatest fighter I have ever seen - he is the uncrowned world champion.'

Back in Australia moves began for him to fight Randolph Turpin and Sugar Ray. But a timber truck accident in 1952 resulted in his death. A frugal man, he gave generously to his mother, friends, relatives, to the extent that money had to be subscribed for his funeral. Mitchell's final words say much: 'World boxing has lost a great fighter; Australian boxing has lost its mainstay; society has lost a gentleman.'<sup>78</sup>

Late 1960 was a better time for Aborigines. The 1967 Referendum on Aborigines - in a sense falsely promoted to the public as a 'new deal' for this minority - resulted in a record 90 per cent vote in favour (see note 137). A sense of both guilt and atonement was abroad, with the major newspapers and, in particular, ABC radio and television presenting a case for radical change of attitude and behaviour. Into this climate and arena stepped Lionel Rose, certainly one of Australia's best all-

round boxers.

Rose won the Australian bantamweight title in 1966, the world title (at twenty) from Fighting Harada in Tokyo in 1968, defended it twice, and lost it to Ruben Olivares in Los Angeles in 1969. He lost on points for the world junior lightweight title in 1970.

Much has been made of the one-out-of-nine children rise from total obscurity in Drouin, Gippsland to international fame, to 'a glimpse of Valhalla from the valley of squalor'. We know of the careful management by Jack and Shirley Rennie, the investments in units, insurance and the sandwich shop, of Lionel's acute awareness of the fates of Richards, Sands. Bennett. This 'uncommonly sensible young man' seemed destined to show the world it could all be different.

The Harada fight was acclaimed world wide. *The Times*,<sup>79</sup> no less, produced this gem: 'He is also only the second aboriginal to be successful in top class boxing.' Commenting on this item to Australian journalist Murray Hedgcock in London in 1985, I asked him who he thought the prestigious paper might have had in mind as the first: Sands? Richards? The answer lay in the first edition of the paper. It carried this immortal phrase after the words 'top class boxing,' : 'the previous one being Albert Namatjira.' Hedgcock had quickly phoned the duty editor of *The Times* - who haughtily omitted the howler from the main editions (found in libraries).

The contest was not televised. But, wrote *American Sports Illustrated*, 'all across Australia that night people clung to radios as if the ringside announcer were Winston Churchill'.<sup>80</sup> The continent did indeed go wild: 'women wept over Lionel Rose

and men shouted'. There was national elation but for all Aborigines 'Lionel Rose was Hercules, Charles Lindbergh and the Messiah all rolled into one'. From the Todd River in Alice to Redfern in Sydney he represented a hope 'that their own futures might rise beyond futility'.

Melbourne gave him an unprecedented homecoming - from the airport to Town Hall some 250,000 tumultuous people massed, shouting 'Good on ya, Lionel! You beaut little Aussie!' Not even the Beatles pulled such crowds. I think that there was a strong sense of guilt about Aboriginal treatment at work and at large that day.

Rose retired in 1970. Comebacks in 1975 and 1976 were not a success. Rather, there was a downhill slide to a life 'littered with indiscretions and transgressions'. In mid-1987, at 39, he suffered a serious heart attack. Rose won more money than any other Australian fighter. He also spent, in his words, '\$100,000 in one year on wine, women, and song'.<sup>81</sup> He gave Aborigines a moment of glory, perhaps the greatest boost they have ever had.

Good enough to fight for world titles, Hector Thompson and Tony Mundine were never quite going to make it.<sup>82</sup> Thompson was talented: a good puncher, resistant, persistent. Yet he was bedevilled by bad luck and injuries. Mundine had his sensational moments and an extraordinary record but was not the class of Richards or Rose.

Thompson was born in Kempsey in 1949. He twice challenged for a world title: losing in eight rounds to the awesome Roberto Duran for the lightweight title in Panama City in 1973, and having to retire with cut eyes against Antonio Cervantes for the junior welterweight crown in the same Canal city in 1978. Holder of the Australian lightweight championship, the national and

Commonwealth junior welterweight titles, he was often injured. He also had the misfortune to watch two men die after he fought them: Roko Spanja in 1970 and American Chuck Wilburn in 1976. He retired in 1978, made the inevitable comeback and suffered the inevitable knockouts in 1980.

Mundine was born at Baryulgil, near Grafton, NSW in 1951 and began life looking for a rugby league career. In 1970 he took the national middleweight crown, followed by the Australian heavyweight and the Commonwealth middleweight titles in 1972. A triumph was his outpointing of former champion Emile Griffith in Paris. Then came the world middleweight title bout against Carlos Monzon in 1974: Tony was out of his class, losing in the seventh. He retired in 1975, came back, and took the Australian and Commonwealth lighthheavy championships.

Sensational in some fights yet mediocre in others, he went on until 1984. He earned world ratings in three divisions: he is the only Australian to have won two Commonwealth titles; he held eight titles all told; he scored 65 knockouts, more than any other Australian ever. Mundine, at least, has saved something from it all: he has some property and he is now active in Aboriginal sport and community affairs.

There are many others, not shown in the tables above: Alby Roberts in the 1930s, whose 'obscurity is undeserved'; Henry Collins, Banjo Clarke, Buster Weir, Bobby Buttons, Michael Karponey, Graham Dicker.

The amateurs were outstanding. Table 4 shows that thirteen men have won 26 national titles. Joe Donovan won no less than six championships; Jeff Dynevor won four, and the bantam gold for Australia at the 1962 Commonwealth Games. It is interesting that

neither turned pro: both said they loved the *sport* of amateur boxing. Donovan, like Trevor Christian (former junior middle-weight champion), went into refereeing and coaching.

Boxing has doubtless been a vehicle of discrimination and exploitation. But the ring as such has been one of the few sources of collective pride, and the one venue in which to vanquish the oppressor. In a life in which all things black are declared inferior to all things white, winning in the ring is a matter of great moment. Many must have felt as Henry Collins did: 'I felt good when I knocked white blokes out... I knew I was boss in the boxing ring. I showed my superiority... but they showed it outside...' <sup>83</sup>

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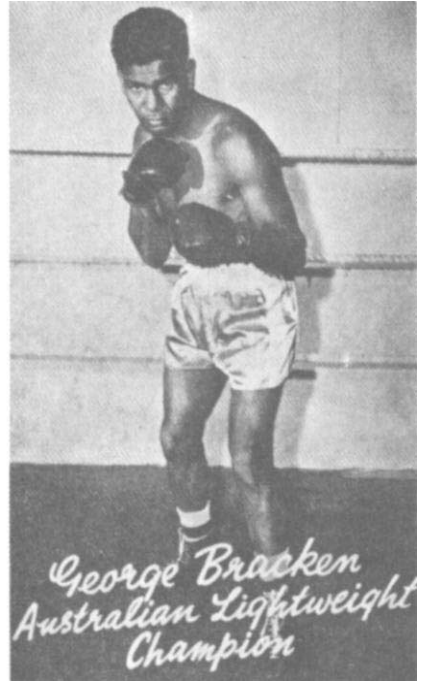
**TABLE 4**

**ABORIGINES HOLDING AUSTRALIAN AMATEUR TITLES**

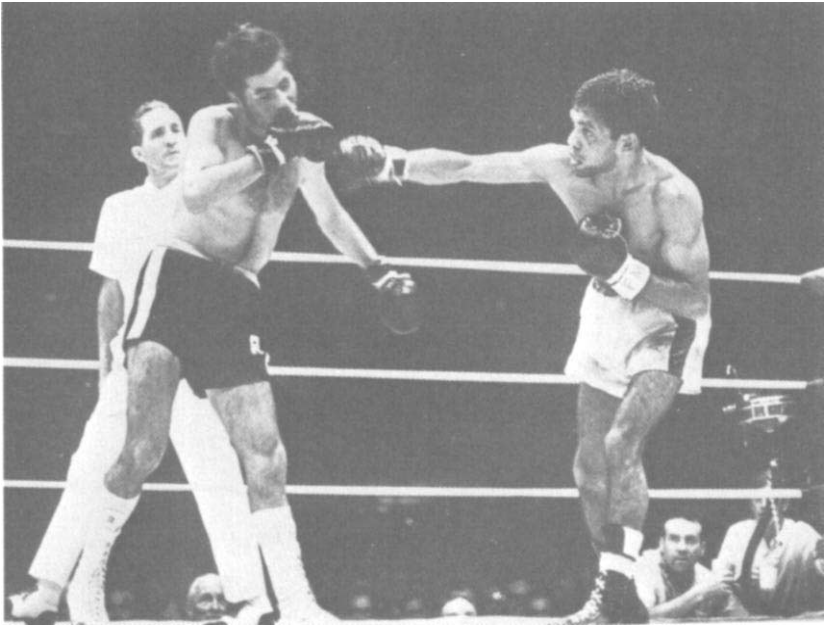
<b>NAME</b>	<b>WEIGHT AND NUMBER OF TITLES</b>
Eddie BARNEY	flyweight (1) (Eddie Gilbert's son]
Adrian BLAIR	featherweight (1), lightweight (2)
Graeme BROOKE	featherweight (1)
Robert CARNEY	flyweight (1)
Gary COWBURN	featherweight (1)
Joe DONOVAN	light-flyweight (1), flyweight (2) bantamweight (3)
Jeff DYNEVOR	flyweight (1), bantamweight (3)
Adrian JONES	lightweight (1)
Pat LEGLISE	welterweight (1)
Lionel ROSE	flyweight (1)
Doug SAM	light-middleweight (1), middleweight (1)
Bobby WILLIAMS	featherweight (1)
Gary WILLIAMS	bantamweight (1), featherweight (2)



a. ELLEY BENNETT

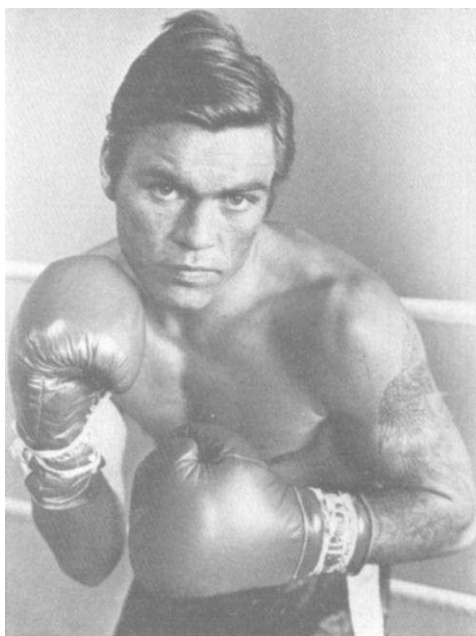


b. GEORGE BRACKEN



c. LIONEL ROSE v ROCKY GATELLARI

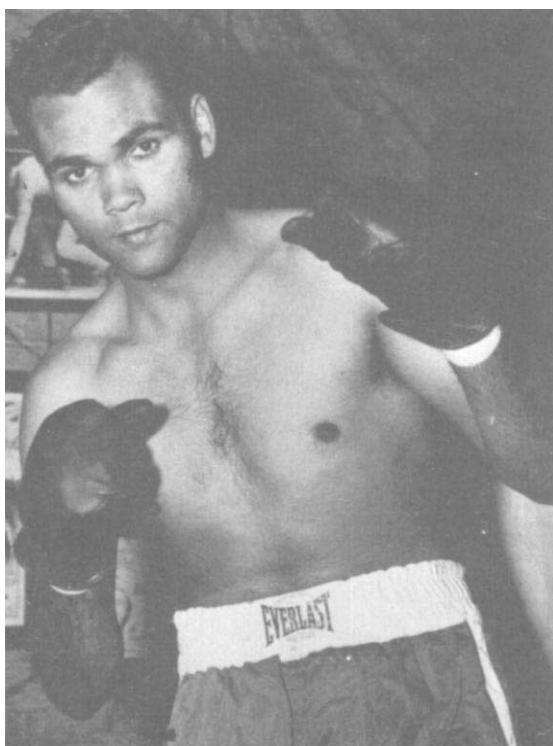




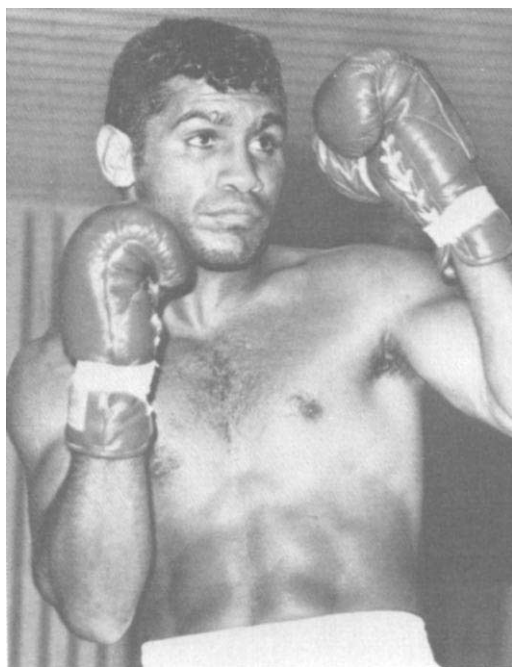
**a. RUSSELL SANDS**



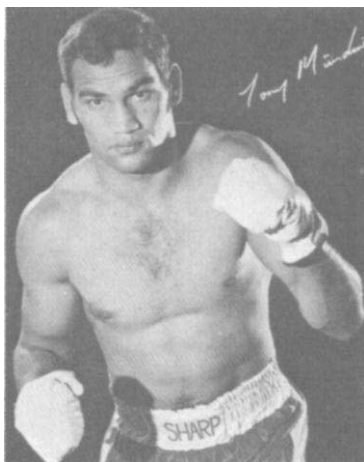
**b. RUSSELL SANDS JR**



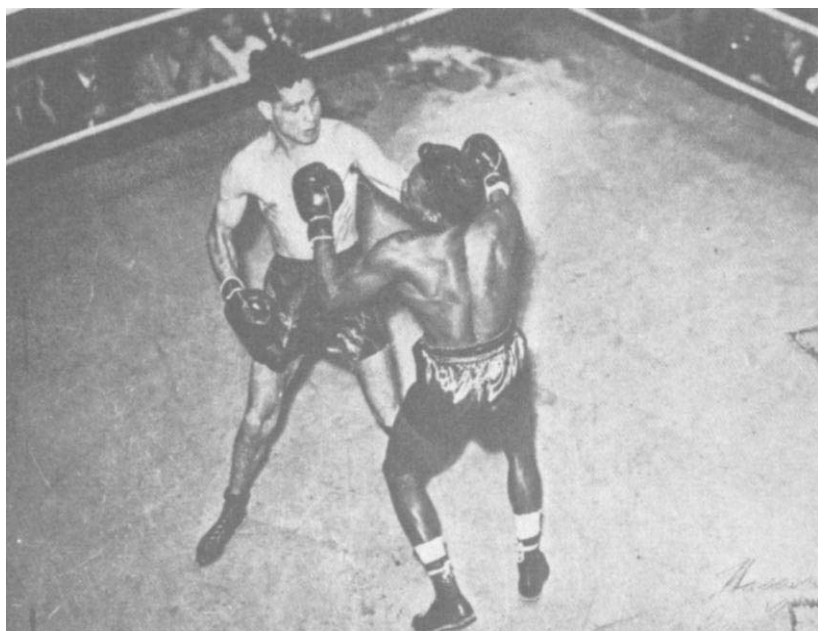
**c. DAVE SANDS**



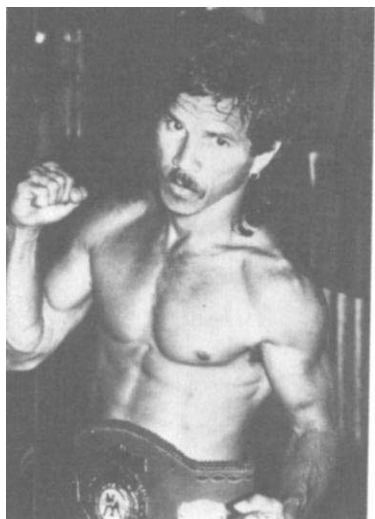
a. HECTOR THOMPSON



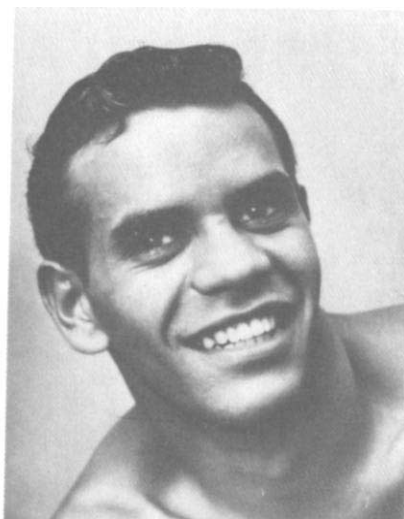
b. TONY MUNDINE



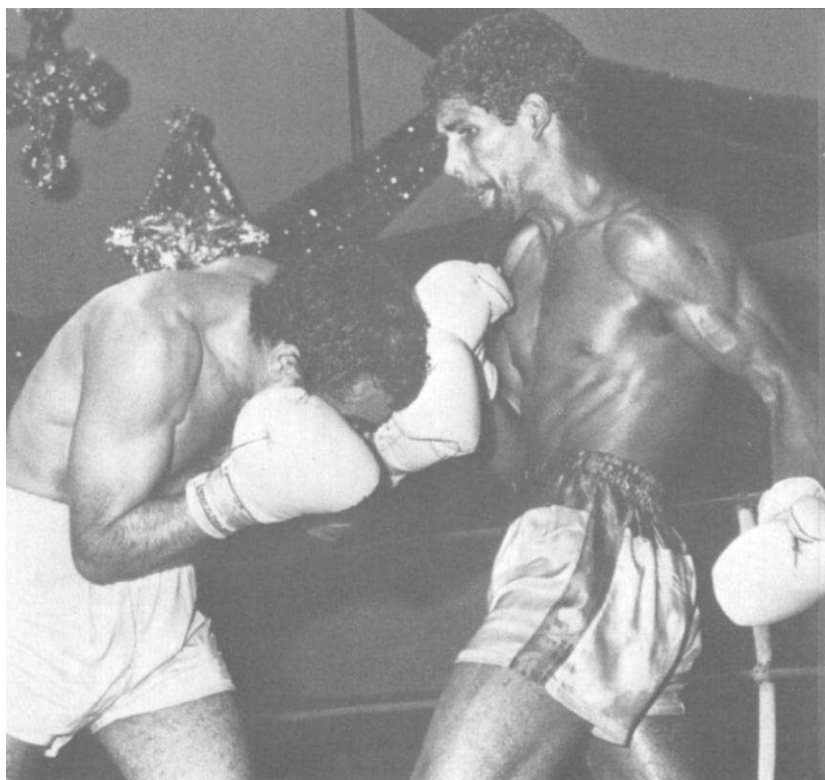
c. JACK HASSEN (left) v FREDDIE DAWSON



a. JUNIOR THOMPSON

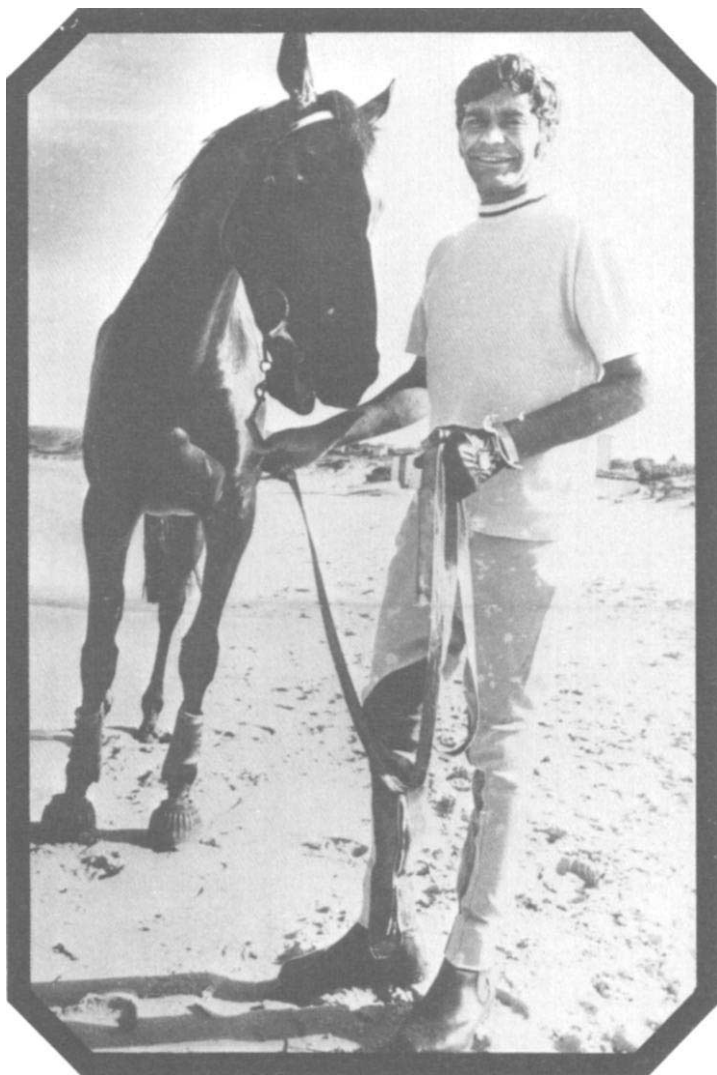


b. JOE DONOVAN



c. PAT LEGLISE

## 6. A DIFFERENT TRADITION



**DARBY McCARTHY**

'A marvellous pair of hands . . . a genius rider'  
— Bert Lillye

Horseracing, basketball, cycling, darts, volleyball, wrestling, and tennis: seven sports with no Aboriginal tradition, no participation until 25 years ago, no heroes to emulate, no mutual support or camaraderie. In racing, certainly, there was prejudice to overcome.

In the early days Aborigines were allowed to ride - and many still are among the bush fraternity at Birdsville and Brunette. But organised racing was different: there were 'undoubted barriers which kept coloured riders out of senior Australian racing in post-war years'.<sup>84</sup> The outstanding 'aberration' was Richard Lawrence (Darby) McCarthy, born in 1952, the son of a Cunamulla (Q) stockman.

A newspaper reader once complained of a reporter's reference to his Aboriginality. The then 17 year-old Darby replied:<sup>85</sup>

I think the man is sincere and trying to be fair, but he misses the whole point. If any newspaperman wants to do me a favour he can call me an Aborigine as often as he mentions my name - because that is what I am, and if I'm going to be a success it is important that I be known as an Aboriginal success.

The highlights of his 22-year career were winning the Newcastle Gold Cup (1962), three Stradbroke Handicaps (1963, 1964, 1966), the Brisbane Cup (1966), the Doomben One Hundred Thousand (1968) and, a remarkable feat, the AJC Derby and AJC Epsom in successive races at Randwick in 1969.

The critics are full of praise for him.<sup>86</sup> Tom Brassel says: 'he is one of the finest jockeys I have ever seen - he was consistently good: a quiet man, he was a thorough gentleman'. 'A very gifted rider', is the opinion of trainer Pat Murray. Bert Lillye describes McCarthy as 'a genius rider'; 'no jockey was riding better in 1968 and 1969'. He had a 'natural talent': 'he never worked at his riding as did George Moore - the great

champion who once described Darby as "a freak"'.

The lowlights of his career were several disqualifications, suspensions, injuries, bouts of ill-health, and something of a drink problem. In late 1978 he made a comeback in New Caledonia. Darby rode extensively in Ireland, France, and Germany. In recent years he has been coaching young riders. In 1987 he stood as the Australian Democrat candidate for the seat of Maranoa in the general election.

McCarthy deserves study - along the lines of Wiggins's portrait of Isaac Murphy, possibly America's best jockey in the late nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> The author laments that his narrative lacks material on the famous black jockey's motives, desires, fears, on what sport and racing meant to him. And whereas Wiggins had to rely on newspaper and secondary sources, someone could interview McCarthy and explore with him what it was to be a black jockey in a racist society and in a prejudiced racing fraternity.

On the contemporary scene two young Aborigines are riding: Lyall Appo in Queensland and Glen Pickwick in Sydney. Competent, neither is considered in McCarthy's class.

In terms of registered players, basketball is our eighth largest sport. Despite its accessible, inexpensive, and 'class-less' approach, only two Aborigines of national note have emerged: Michael Ahmatt and Danny Morseau.

One explanation for lack of Aboriginal participation is that basketball as a sport is seriously under-manned in the Northern Territory. the home of Michael Ahmatt and Joe Clarke (who played for South Australia). But this problem is unlikely to be true of the states: for me, Aboriginal 'under-participation' still

remains something of a surprise.

Ahmatt was the outstanding player in the 1964 Olympic team. His slick and tricky ball handling and passing - admired by all who saw him - was a key factor in our ninth placing in the event. He represented Australia again in Mexico in 1968, but this time Australia failed to make the finals section. Chris White, now national coaching director, revered Ahmatt. His youthful view of the man remains: 'a fantastic basketballer, a real whizz kid, a great ball-handler, a man who excited the crowds and was idolized by the kids'.<sup>88</sup> Ahmatt was an enthusiastic member of the Aboriginal Sports Foundation, created in 1969 to encourage and finance Aboriginal sport. Born in Darwin in 1943, he played a record 588 games for South Adelaide. He represented South Australia for ten years, retiring in 1979. A brewery technician, he died in 1983, at 40, of a heart attack. (His daughter, Kirsty, has played under-16 basketball for South Australia, and is considered a major prospect.)

Danny Morseau, a more robust and solid type of player than 'flashy' Michael Ahmatt, represented Australia at least 27 times. A Thursday Islander, Danny played for St Kilda in the tough Melbourne competition, and later in ten World Cup games in the Philippines, seven games in the 1980 Moscow Olympics, and eight in the LA Games in 1984.

Cycling is one of the 'unlikely' Aboriginal sports. And to date only one rider of note has emerged: Brian Mansell of Tasmania. A top-class road and track rider in the late 1960s, he was state champion, champion of champions, and winner of two silver and two bronze medals in both sprint and road events in each of the 1967, 1968, and 1969 national championships.

Darts has some 52,000 registered, serious players. Ease of

access no doubt explains in part the high Aboriginal participation in the sport. But Horrie Seden and Ivy Hampton are the other half of the explanation: it is their outstanding success that has stimulated others to play.

Seden, a Darwin-based Thursday Islander, played for Australia in World Cup V in Brisbane in 1985 and in World Cup VI in Denmark in 1987. He has also represented Australia in the Winmau World Masters. He has been winner of, and runner up in, the Australian Singles and in the Australian Grand Masters. 'A gentleman's gentleman, a fantastic little fellow', is the opinion of Peter McMenamin, president of the Australian Darts Federation.

Ivy Hampton is discussed in Chapter 10. Barry Rowan, a lad from the Territory, was runner up in the World Youth Cup in 1986. It would seem that Aborigines, especially in the north, are more 'over-represented' in this than in any other sport.

Volleyball is a relatively new international sport, included in the Olympics only since 1964. Our first national men's championship dates from 1962. With 30,000 registered competition players, the game is growing quite dramatically.

Cyclone Tracy brought the remarkable Tutton family from the Territory to Adelaide. Steve played in Australia's national team from 1980 to 1985, and captained the side from 1983 to 1985. Brother Reg was an Australian junior in 1982, and a national side senior in 1983. Brother Mark was a junior in 1980-82, and in the national team from 1983 to 1985. In short, the trio played in the same Australian team in the Asian Championships in 1983. Given that there are six players in a side, this was quite an achievement! Tony Naar, the national coaching director, calls Steve 'an excellent athlete': 'he is the ultimate nice person -



a good representative for his sport and a great role model'.

Wrestling, once the major event in ancient Games, is now (undeservedly) a Cinderella sport. John Kinsella's achievement is outstanding. National flyweight champion three times (1968, 1972, and 1975). he wrestled for Australia in the Mexico and in the Munich Games. Wrestling is lucky if it gets three places - out of ten weight divisions - in the national contingent. To make the three is a badge of great distinction. He was fifth selection for Montreal in 1976 - and so didn't get there. In 1974 he participated in the world championships in Turkey. The year 1968 was his big one: the national title, the Mexico Olympics, and a personal presentation by the Duke of Edinburgh of his Gold Award in the Boy Scouts. John served in Vietnam, had two years all told in the army, and is now owner-driver of a courier service vehicle in Sydney.

Evonne Goolagong is the dream story. What makes her the most successful, most revered, most acclaimed Aboriginal sporting figure? Several factors, in combination perhaps: daughter of a sheep-shearer: first tennis dresses made by mother out of sheets; no discrimination in dusty Barellan, NSW; only two racist episodes in her life; the early Vic Edwards coaching and 'adoption'; the very handsome person and personality; the somewhat temporary 'age of atonement' feeling at the time and, paradoxically, her abstinence from Aboriginal affairs and politics; the good marriage to wealth and conservation of her substantial winnings; the quite magical talent; the famous victories: the quiet determination to win everything, to overcome that vexed 'walkabout' in concentration label, a term she gave to the press; the joy she gave to the tennis world.

Some consider her record 'light' for her talent. But, as

Table 5 on p 65 shows, she did it all, with the exception of the American singles. World champion at nineteen - on grass at Wimbledon, on clay in Paris - she was at the top again nine years later, injuries, motherhood, Chris Evert Lloyd, and some critics notwithstanding.

Evonne was accorded national and world-wide acclaim. '\$1.5 million in prize money, and a place in the heart of every Australian sports lover' is our press verdict.<sup>89</sup> Rex Bellamy of *The Times*: 'wonderfully gifted... with a swift grace of balanced movement, an instinctive tactical brain, a flexible repertoire of strokes, and an equable temperament';<sup>90</sup> 'inspired, imaginative', her tennis 'was so beautiful that at times it chilled the blood'.<sup>91</sup> In their book on Wimbledon women, Little and Tingay entitle their Evonne chapter 'The Joy Maker': 'she radiated fun, reminded one of the real values of lawn tennis'; a 'genius', 'she almost gave the impression that she was too nice to win'.<sup>92</sup>

So popular yet so unspoilt, wrote Max Robertson, of this 'happy grace, as instinctive and natural as a gazelle'.<sup>93</sup> Generous praise from Virginia Wade: 'Evonne played with a kind of giddy pleasure... she had no drive for money or power or stardom. She played because she loved it.' 'She's still in people's minds', 'memorable', someone you always wanted to win: 'there was not a single false thing about her . . . people just loved her'.<sup>94</sup>

The Americans were somewhat tougher. They probed for comments on her visits to South Africa, on that country's visa refusal to Arthur Ashe, on Charles Perkins's swipe at her that she should be using her prestige on behalf of Aborigines. There were two reasons, she told the *New York Times*, for not talking out: busyness with tennis and the fact that she had endured only

isolated racist incidents.<sup>95</sup> A Sydney woman she had beaten called her 'nigger'. and an Australian Premier had said he hoped that in the 1980 Wimbledon final she 'wouldn't go walkabout like some old boong'. However, she promoted a book on Aboriginal oral history 'because I'm just sort of proud that I am Aboriginal, and this is the first book I've seen that has Aborigines speaking out for themselves...'. The last word is hers: 'all tennis players lose concentration, but since I'm an Aborigine it's brought up constantly - except when I'm winning'!

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TABLE 5

MAJOR TITLES OF EVONNE GOOLAGONG-CAWLEY

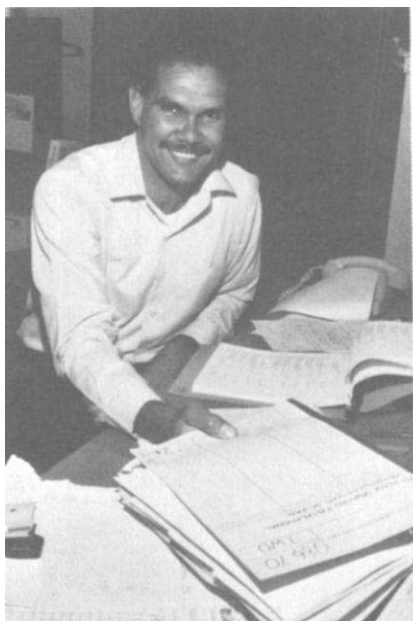
1. **STATE SINGLES:**
    - NSW : 1971-72, 1974, 1975, 1977
    - VICTORIA : 1971, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1978
    - QUEENSLAND : 1970, 1971, 1972, 1974
    - SOUTH AUSTRALIA : 1971-72, 1972-73
    - WEST AUSTRALIA : 1972, 1974
  2. **AUSTRALIAN HARDCOURT CHAMPIONSHIPS:**
    - Singles winner : 1970, 1971, 1972
  3. **AUSTRALIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS:**
    - Singles runner-up: 1971, 1972, 1973
    - Singles winner:
      - 1974: bt Chris Evert 7/6, 4/6, 6/0
      - 1975: bt Martina Navratilova 6/3, 6/2
      - 1976: bt R Tomanova 6/2, 6/2
      - 1978: bt Helen Cawley 6/3, 6/0
    - Women's Doubles:
      - 1974, 1975: won with P Michel; 1976: won with H Gourlay
  4. **WIMBLEDON CHAMPIONSHIPS:**
    - Singles runner up:
      - 1972, 1975: to Billie Jean King; 1976: to Chris Evert
    - Singles winner:
      - 1971: bt Margaret Court 6/4, 6/1
      - 1980: bt Chris Lloyd 6/1, 7/6
    - Women's Doubles:
      - 1971: runner up; 1974: won with M Michel
  5. **FRENCH CHAMPIONSHIPS:**
    - Singles runner up: 1972 to Billie Jean King
    - Singles winner: 1971 bt Helen Gourlay 6/3, 7/5
  6. **U.S. CHAMPIONSHIPS:**
    - Singles runner up:
      - 1973: to Margaret Court; 1974: to Billie Jean King
      - 1975 : to Chris Evert; 1976: to Chris Evert
  7. **AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION CUP MEMBER:**
    - In 24 ties, Evonne won 33 of 38 rubbers played.
  8. **OTHER MAJOR TITLES:**
    - Italian Championships: 1973: singles winner
    - South African Championships: 1977: singles winner
    - 1971, 1972: doubles winner
    - Virginia Slims: 1973, 1974, 1976: singles winner
-



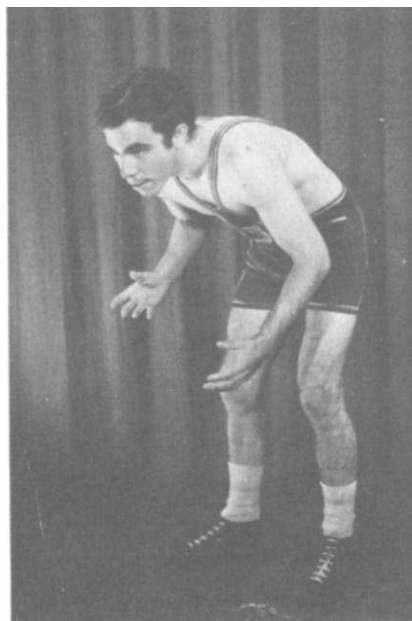
a. STEVE TUTTON



b. MICHAEL AHMATT

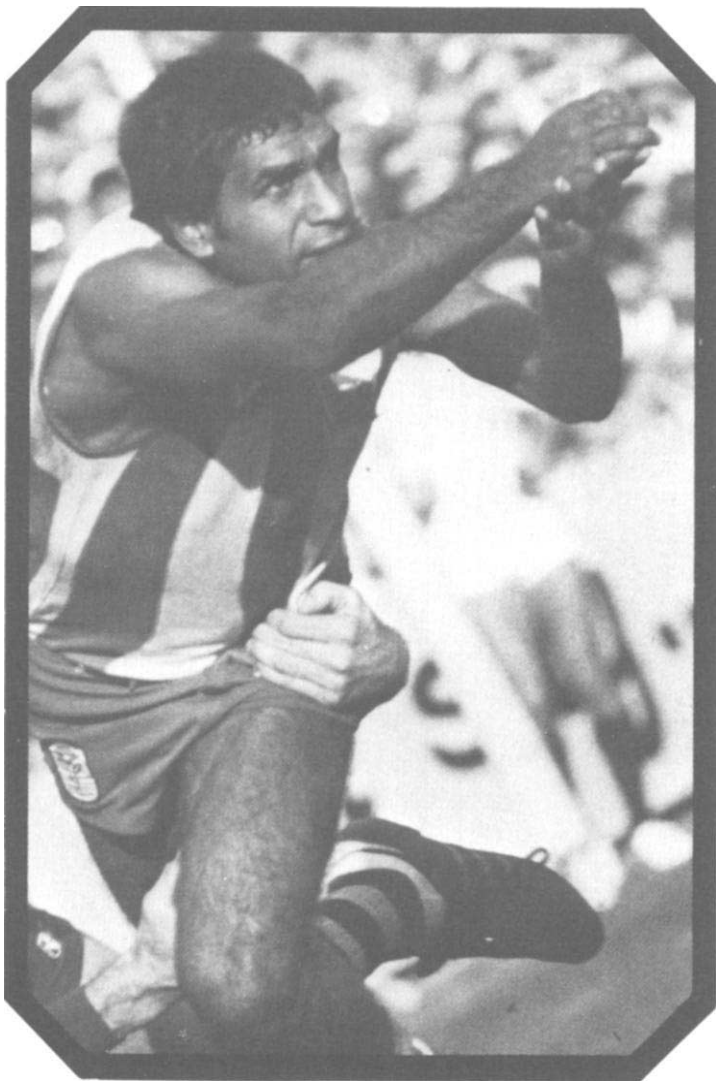


c. DANNY MORSEAU



d. JOHN KINSELLA

## 7. THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC



**JIM KRAKOUER**

'You learn to live with the insults and the racial stuff - if you know what you want, it can't hurt you'

Aussie Rules fans, says Keith Dunstan, are as sure of themselves as nuns in a convent. Indeed, and many followers still acclaim, with reverence, 'that old black magic' of the Aboriginal stars, the 'men of explosive pace, great ball control, great courage, determination to do well'. The achievements are impressive:

**TABLE 6**  
**ABORIGINAL PLAYERS IN THE VICTORIAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE<sup>96</sup>**

Player	Club	Years	Club		C, BF, CO,GF**
			Games	Goals	
Les BAMBLETT'	Footscray	83 on	45	71	
Phil EGAN*	Richmond	82 on	99	69	
Polly FARMER	Geelong	62-67	101	65	C 1965-67 BF 1963,1964 CO 1973-75,GF 1963
Syd JACKSON	Carlton	69-76	136	164	GF 1969,1970,1972
Eddie JACKSON	Melbourne	47-52	82	8	GF 48
Bert JOHNSON	N Melb.	65-68	31	5	
Jim KRAKOUER*	N Melb.	82 on	104	185	BF 1986
Phil KRAKOUER*	N Melb.	82 on	113	187	
Chris LEWIS	W C Eagles	87 on	19	29	
Wally LOVETT	Richmond	82-86	28	17	
Norm McDONALD	Essendon	47-53	128	3	GF 1949 GF 1950
Phil NARKLE*	St Kilda	84 on	57	45	
Doug NICHOLLS	Fitzroy	32-37	54	2	
Brian PEAKE	Geelong	81-84	66	49	C 1982
Derek PEARDON	Richmond	68-71	20	0	
Elkin REILLY	S Melb.	62-66	51	2	
Maurice RIOLI*	Richmond	82 on	118	80	BF 1982,1983 & N Smith's BF 1982
Nicky WINMAR*	St Kilda	87 on	20	37	

\* To end of 1987 season.

\*\* CODE: C=captain; CO=coach; BF=club's best and fairest;  
GF=grand final appearance.

What the Table doesn't show is that most of the VFL men are not Victorians. The West has been the great reservoir: Polly Farmer, Syd Jackson, the Krakouer brothers, Phil Narkle, Nicky Winmar, and Brian Peake are 'Sandgropers'. In 1986 and 1987 Peake and Stephen Michael (playing in Perth) were rated as the two best footballers in Australia.

The honours list is outstanding. Between them they have won seven Sandover Medals (for the best and fairest in the season's League matches): Farmer (1956, 1960), Ted ('Square') Kilmurray (1958), Brian Peake (1977), Stephen Michael (1980, 1981), Phil Narkle (1982). It should have been eight. In 1987 Claremont's Derek Kickett won the Medal by a record voting margin, only to lose it on the ground that he had been suspended for a match for slapping an opponent. It was the first time a Medal has been 'lost' in this way since inception in 1921. They have won ten Simpson Medals (for the best player in a grand final or interstate match): Farmer (1956, 1958, 1959, 1969), the legendary Bill Dempsey (1969), Maurice Rioli (1980, 1981, 1983), Stephen Michael (1983), and Jim Krakouer (1981). Possibly the highest accolade of all is the Tassie Medal - for the best player in any Australian National Football League Championship. Farmer (1956), Peake (1979), and Michael (1983) have been such illustrious winners. Irwin Lewis played for Claremont in the WAFL from 1958 to the end of the 1964-65 season and was in the 1964 premiership side. Son Chris Lewis began a career with the new-born West Coast Eagles in the expanded VFL competition in 1987. This strong tradition will certainly continue: today, in fact, some ten per cent of players in the WAFL are Aboriginal!

South Australia has had some very distinguished black men: Roger Rigney, with 212 games for Sturt, including the team's five



consecutive premierships from 1966 to 1970; Sony Morey, with 215 games for Central Districts and runner-up in 1972 for the Magery Medal (for the fairest and most brilliant player in the League); Michael Graham, runner-up for the Magery in 1973, with 282 games for Sturt and eleven for South Australia. There are at least ten players in the current League - and more in district football.

The Northern Territory is an interesting nursery. As discussed later, the facilities to nurture players were either non-existent or pathetic. Yet three great players emerged, and went south and west. Bill Dempsey was a Retta Dixon 'boy' - a Darwin institution for orphaned, abandoned, or illicit 'half-caste' children. Starting out with St Mary's team in Darwin, he came to West Perth and there played an incredible 343 League games. The late David Kantilla, a Tiwi man from Bathurst Island, went south: he played 113 games for South Adelaide, won their best and fairest in 1961 and 1962, and represented South Australia in 1964. Maurice Rioli, the Richmond star, is also a Top Ender - coming to VFL via South Fremantle and West Perth.

Early on Doug Nicholls discovered a principle: the only way to crack the white world was to do something better than the white man.<sup>97</sup> Trying out for Carlton, he experienced their rejection: because of his colour, they said, he smelled. For five years he played Association Rules football for Northcote, in that time twice winning their best and fairest and playing in the first ever Association versus League match.

'Brilliant', 'polished', 'spectacular', 'scrupulously fair' were typical newspaper comments. Astonishingly, he left football for a stint in Sharman's tents, running in Gifts between bouts. He signed a three-year contract with Sharman, at a far higher

wage than football paid. After seven months Tom Coles, Fitzroy's secretary, sought Nicholls's release. Sharman insisted that he be offered something more secure: Coles obliged, giving him a ground curator's job in addition to playing fees. In 1932 he began a great career on the wing with Fitzroy, playing alongside the legendary Haydn Bunton and Chicken Smallhorn. These men, and others, so respected Doug that they took part in the 'football church parades' he organized. Never reported, he was long remembered.

In the mid-1960s the Victorian government's Aborigines Welfare Board - of which I was a member as the representative of the Aborigines Advancement League - was hell-bent on closing beautiful Lake Tyers (Aboriginal) settlement and selling the prize acreage to the tourist industry. During the 'Save Lake Tyers Campaign' Doug endured some very nasty comments in the Victorian parliament - but even the likes of the Premier, Sir Henry Bolte, and the late Sir Arthur Rylah, Chief Secretary, felt obliged to listen to the Aboriginal view as presented by Pastor Doug. His sporting fame undoubtedly gave credence to his political stance. Written before the knighthood and the Governorship, Ted Egan composed and sang a fine tribute to this remarkable man (see Appendix 2).

The 'Steel Cat', Polly Farmer, ranks as one of the greatest players of all time. Peter McKenna, John Nicholls, and many other great players include him in their 'All Star' teams. Dozens of books refer to him as 'one of the immortals' - a brilliant ruckman and kicker, the man who revolutionized modern footy with his accurate long- and short-distance hand passing.

He was the key man in Geelong's defeat of Hawthorn in the 1963 grand final: 'Farmer Inspires in Great Win' was the common

headline. Born in Perth in 1935, he was one of the best of the truly big men. Farmer played an incredible 392 senior games: 176 with East Perth, 79 with West Perth, 101 with Geelong, and 36 state games (31 for WA). He began life in what was to become Perth's 'assimilation factory', Sister Kate's Orphanage. (Any Aborigine with any 'white blood' was deemed salvageable for life in mainstream society and shipped to the good Sister's place.) Awarded an MBE in 1971, he finished his career without ever receiving a suspension.

Unlike Nicholls, Syd Jackson was often reported. Enigmatic, volatile, he could turn a game in just one quarter of explosive football. Winner of two Hayward Medals for South Bunbury, in 1961 and 1962, he moved to East Perth, and then on to Carlton for eight seasons. He starred in the Blues' grand final loss to Richmond in 1969 and was in the winning Carlton team in 1970 and 1972. His clashes with coach Ron Barrassi were legion. In the 1970 second semi-final against Collingwood he was reported for striking Lee Adamson. He pleaded guilty but claimed the provocation of racist insults. He was outstanding in the next two games, including the grand final. His comments on these games are given in the last chapter.

The Krakouer brothers have achieved some fine things for North Melbourne since 1982. From Mt Barker in the south-west of WA, it took some time for them to ignore racial taunts and keep their tempers: in fact, by 1981 they were winner and runner up in premier Claremont's best and fairest awards. Maurice Rioli, a Melville Islander, went to South Fremantle at seventeen. One of the best players to come from the West, his career has been marred somewhat by contract problems between the Swans and

Richmond. In 1985 he captained the powerful 'All-Australian Aborigines' against Premier Cain's 'All Stars' at the MCG, a match now part of National Aborigines Week.

All is not sweetness and light in Aussie Rules. In 1985 an Aboriginal Rules player in the West struck two umpires during a match. One of his relatives then contributed by abusing a boundary umpire. Quite accordingly, Rodney Cox was suspended for life by the WA Football Association, and nephew Ronnie for a season. But then their Eastern Districts Club revoked the playing permits of nine Aboriginal family members. Odd? The Cox's thoughtso - and took their case to the Human Rights Commission.

In 1986 Aborigines in Victoria went to the Equal Opportunity Board seeking admission of their team into the Kyabram and District League (KDL). Ten teams in the League was enough, claimed KDL: racism, claimed the people from Rumbalara settlement. In 1987 the Fitzroy All-Stars in Melbourne, winners of several minor league premierships, claimed they couldn't get into a more senior league.

Glenn James became the first black 'Man in White'. He achieved a notable double, umpiring the 1982 and 1984 grand finals. He also handled three night grand finals and two interstate games. Now an 'adviser' to VFL cadet squad umpires, he reached a sporting pinnacle. But he was often subjected to gross racist vilification from fans. In 1978 lawyer Greg Lyons posed the serious question as to whether the abuse of James - specifically, spectator yells that he was 'a useless fucking boong' - amounted to a criminal offence.<sup>98</sup> He pointed to the particularly racist aspects of the abuse and the obscenities: 'he is [considered] a boong and a Sambo long before he is an umpire': 'One has the feeling that James will have to excel as an umpire -

that he will have to be better than most white umpires - before he can hope to win acceptance as a football umpire who just happens to be an Aborigine.' Excel he did. 'Killing the umpire' may well be part of this sporting tradition: but 'killing the black umpire' showed James as the victim of that extraordinary racist-sportsloving ambivalence so prevalent in Australia.

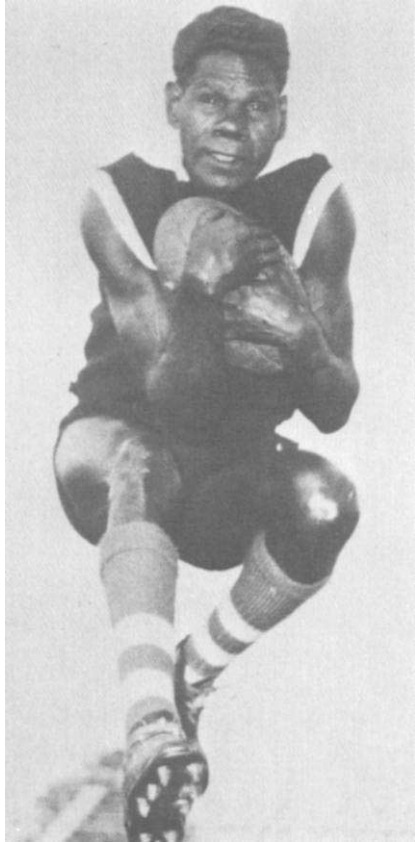
'There used to be racism in sport, but not any more' is a common-enough platitude, especially among good-thinking liberal democrats. In 1982 Michael Gawenda of the *Age* reported that every time Jim Krakouer went near the boundary line he could clearly hear the chorus of voices singing out: 'you black bastard'. The taunts came not only from fans - players were as guilty.<sup>99</sup> Five years later the *Age's* Martin Flanagan described how the MCG crowds 'bayed for the blood' of Jim Krakouer, how nice young men in the Members' Stand went pink from the exertion of yelling 'hit him' whenever the black man came near.<sup>100</sup> John Moriarty's opinion of the game as 'a colonial bastion with colonial attitudes' seems warranted in some respects.



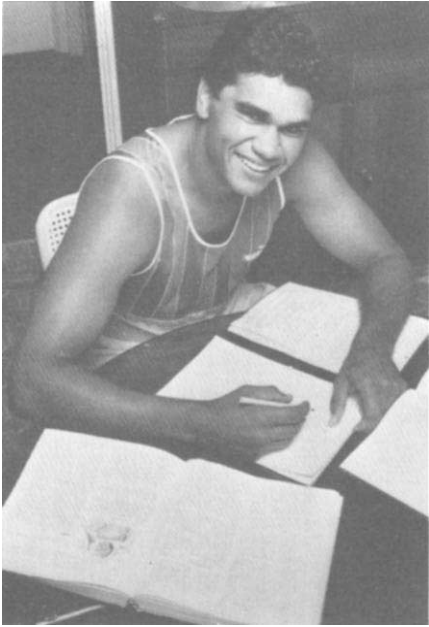
a. BILL DEMPSEY



b. MAURICE RIOLI



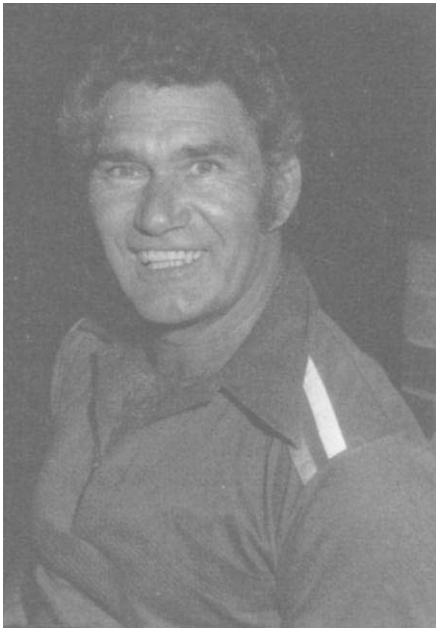
c. DAVID KANTILLA



a. CHRIS LEWIS



b. STEPHEN MICHAEL



c. TED (SQUARE) KILMURRAY



d. BRIAN PEAKE

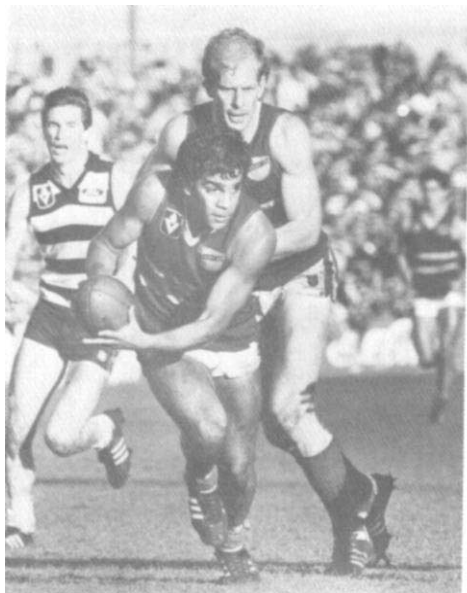


a. ROGER RIGNEY



b. BERT JOHNSON

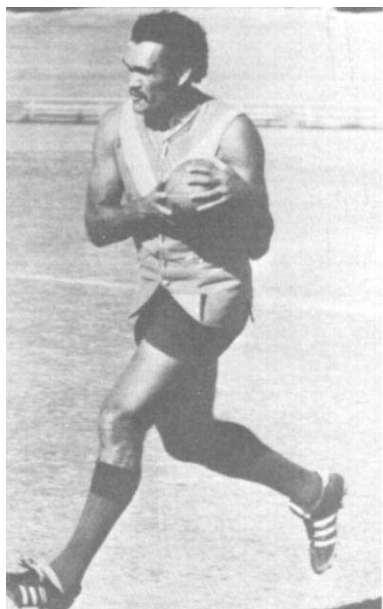




a. LES BAMBLETT



b. GLENN JAMES

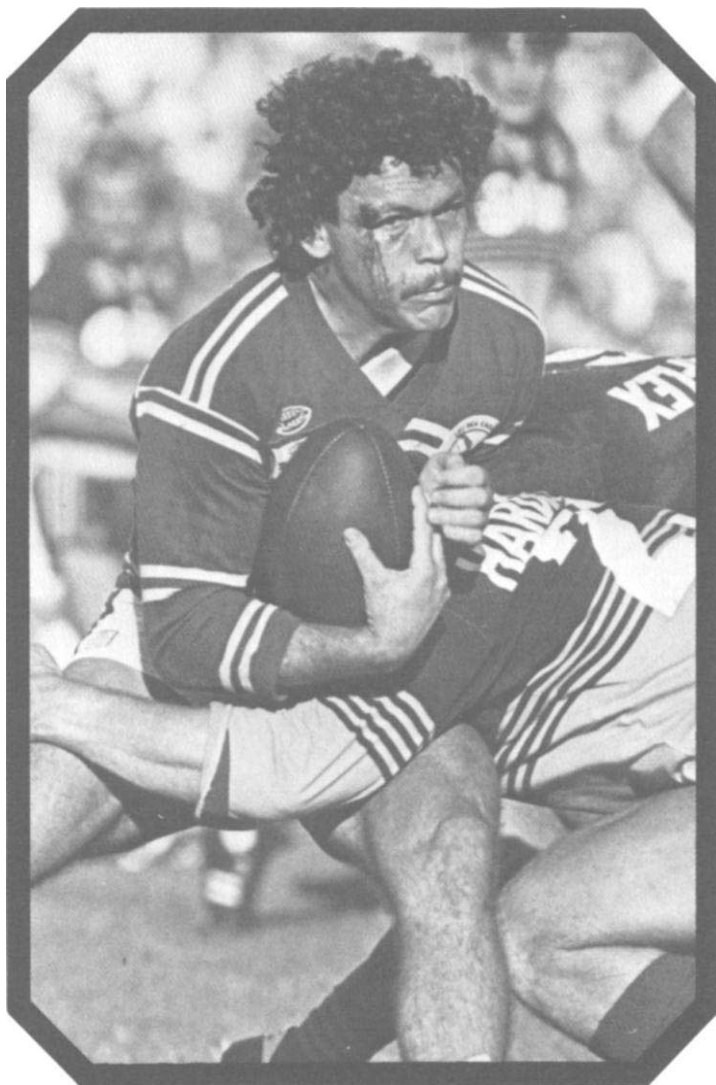


c. SONY MOREY



d. PHIL KRAKOUER

## 8. MEN OF FLAIR



**CLIFF LYONS**

'... with his skills of deception and change of pace, the best five-eighth in the game'.

— Thomas Keneally

Rugby league: a tougher, more spectacular, more intellectually satisfying sport than rugby union - or so its fervid supporters claim. Not always working-class, it is certainly less class-conscious than other codes. League, perhaps, has been more generous to Aborigines: it has provided easier access, readier acceptance, better facilities, and more encouragement by way of junior coaching camps.

Pre-World War II there was prejudice. Certainly the number of Aboriginal players increased sharply after the 1950s: for example, 45 of 49 players on the South Sydney books played from 1960 onwards.<sup>101</sup> Several reasons come to mind: the greater mobility from country to city, improved health and living conditions, a greater sense of self-assurance, and a newly-found determination to assert Aboriginal identity.

No less than twelve Aborigines have represented Australia (see Table 7 on page 81). There can be no doubt about the best of them. Born in Roma (Q) in 1945, Arthur (Artie) Beetson came to Sydney football in 1966 - and in that first year played the first of his 28 Australian games. Described then as 'the laziest forward in senior football',<sup>102</sup> he played sixteen of the nineteen matches on the 1973 English tour - hardly the picture of a man said to last only half a game. The English called him the greatest forward in the world. In retrospect, Max Krilich - former captain of the 'best rugby team in the world', the Fifteenth Kangaroos of 1982 - considers him one of the best footballers he has ever seen.<sup>103</sup> Now the successful coach of Eastern Suburbs - he won the best coach award for 1987 - this giant has been a profound influence on the game, and on Aborigines who play it and watch it.

TABLE 7

ABORIGINAL RUGBY LEAGUE PLAYERS CAPPED FOR AUSTRALIA<sup>104</sup>

Player	Years	Clubs	Club Matches	Tours	Tests	World cups
George AMBRUM	1956-74	N Sydney	157			2
Arthur BEETSON	1966-80	Balmain	74	1973	14	
		E Suburbs Parramatta	133 17			
Larry COROWA	1978-83	Balmain	94	1978		2
Steve ELLA	1981-86'	Parramatta	134	1981 1985		3
John FERGUSON	1981-86*	Newtown	73	1985	3	
		E Suburbs	32			
		Canberra	19			
Mal MENINGA	1979-86*	S Suburbs(Q) Canberra	140 20	1982 1985 1986		18
Lionel MORGAN	1959-68	Wynnum- Manly (Q)	106			2
Ron SADDLER	1963-71	E Suburbs	118	1967		
Colin SCOTT	1980-86*	Wynnum Manly (Q)	131			1
Dale SHEARER	1986-87	Manly	60	1986		6
Eric SIMMS	1965-75	S Sydney	206			
Lionel WILLIAMSON	1969-74	Newtown	88	1971	5	
				1973		

\* Till end of 1986 season, and still playing mid-1987.

Eric Simms, the South Sydney fullback, played World Cup but no Test matches. He retains an indelible place in football history. In 1969 he scored 265 points in 24 premiership games :

131 goals, including nineteen field goals (then worth two points) and a try. This record eventually fell to Mick Cronin in 1978. Lionel Morgan, the Queensland winger, was the first Aborigine capped for Australia: he played two Tests and a World Cup match in 1960. Larry Corowa was certainly one of the most exciting wingers in Sydney competition. In his first season he headed the try-scoring list. (A fine athlete, he beat the 1978 Stawell Gift winner, Steve Proudlock, in a special match race.) Lionel Williamson and Mal Meninga have indeed been the men of flair, the crowd-pleasers who give 100 per cent of their effort and talent. Meninga scored 155 points from thirteen tour matches in 1982, and 50 from thirteen matches in the 1986 trip abroad.

The talent is widespread. Stars included Eastern Suburbs's Bruce 'Larpa' Stewart, Newtown's Bruce Olive, Balmain's Percy Knight and Kevin Yowyeh, Penrith's Terry Wickey, North Sydney's Eric Pitt, South's Kevin Longbottom, Eric Robinson, Eric Ferguson.

As part of the 1987 National Aborigines Week, an all-Aboriginal NSW 'honour' side was chosen - a kind of 'origin of the species' side based on the models used for state of origin and place of origin teams. Selection was by the Aboriginal community, in association with Paul Broughton of the NSW Rugby League Board, with endorsement by that state body. The team was proudly announced at the Sydney Cricket Ground prior to the 1987 semi-final: Dale Shearer (Manly), David Liddiard (Penrith, and Paramatta in 1988), Tony Currie (Canterbury), Mal Meninga (Canberra), John Ferguson (Canberra), Steve Ella (Paramatta, captain), Scott Gale (Balmain), Cliff Lyons (Manly, winner of the Clive Churchill Medal for the man of the match in the 1987 premiership grand final), Jeff Hardy (Illawarra), Ron Gibbs

(Manly), Sam Backo (Canberra), Mal Cochrane (Manly, and winner of the Rothman's Medal in 1986), Paul Roberts (South Sydney). Reserves: Rick Walford (St George), and Craig Salvatore (Easts) . Coach, Arthur Beetson; manager, Cecil Robinson; trainer, Bruce 'Larpa' Stewart.

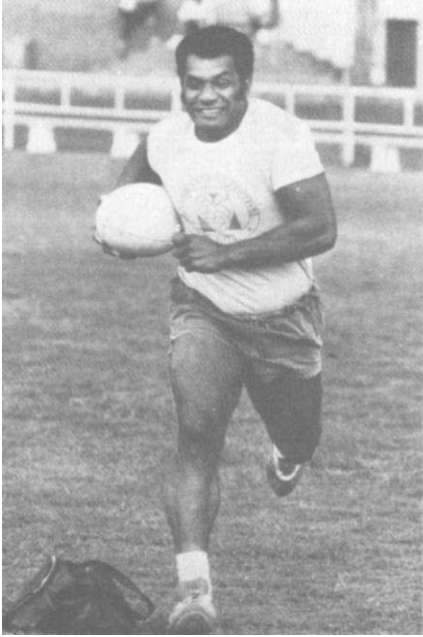
There is much other talent in the competition: St George's Bert Gordon and Wilfred Williams; South's Lester Biles, Graham Lyons, and Brad Webb; Manly's Paul Shaw; West's Ian Naden, Brett Davis, Brett Gale, Phil Duke, and Dennis Kinchella; Illawarra's Malcolm Kelly; East's Michael Lyons; and Cronulla's Phil Dotti.

In 1987 there were between 29 and 32 Aborigines in the senior Sydney premierships competition. That figure is remarkable: between one and two per cent of the NSW population, they constitute close on nine per cent of the players in thirteen premier and reserve grade sides in Sydney. It is simply astonishing that there were seven Aborigines on the grand final field for the 1987 Sydney premierships: five for victorious Manly and two for Canberra! There are between ten and fifteen Aborigines in Brisbane's premierships competition. The Aboriginal over-representation is more pronounced in Queensland and NSW Country leagues, particularly so in North Queensland. There is a large and talented Aboriginal presence, in 'general' teams and in black teams: Woorabinda (Q) in the Callide Valley competition, Cherbourg (Q) in the South Burnett division; the Wilcannia Tigers and Wilcannia Boomerangs in NSW Group 12; the famous Moree Boomerangs in Group 4; Armidale's champion team, Narwan, in Group 19.

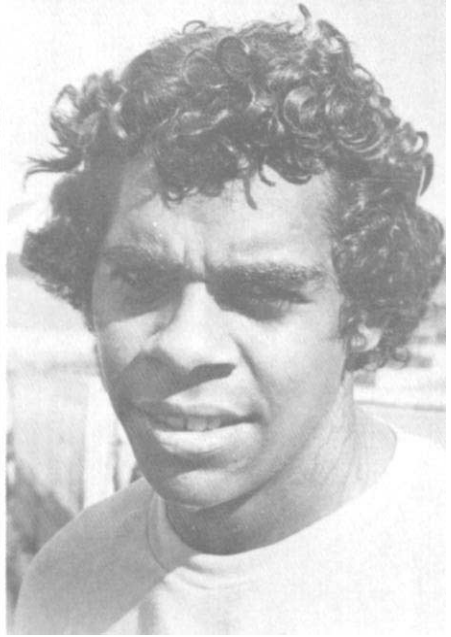
Narwan is perhaps the most interesting of the all-Aboriginal league teams. In the mid 1970s. a number of Aboriginal players

sat on the benches for the Armidale team in Group 5, not getting games and feeling unwanted: 'we weren't getting a fair go' was the expression. Three of them - Mitchell Morris, Colin Ahoy and Lance Moran, and a Catholic priest, David Perrett - decided to form an Aboriginal team in 1977, even if only to play in the town's second division competition. After winning the Caltex Shield and then country league's most prestigious event, the Clayton's Cup, Narwan joined the new Group 19 after 1980 - and proceeded to win five consecutive premierships. The assertion of their Aboriginality wasn't easy. This enlightened university town showed much opposition to Narwan: playing for white teams, or sitting on their reserve benches, was considered in their better interests.

League offers Aboriginal men a means of group identification. Whether as Aborigines, or 'Rabbitohs', or whatever, the sport provides what are called 'bonds of similitude', of similarity - in short, a place of some security for people who otherwise have few chances of mobility. It is not surprising that in the 1960s Aboriginal parents saw the ring and the league arena as better avenues for their sons than the classroom. Eric Simms and company held out greater promise than the (then) two graduates, Charles Perkins and Margaret Valadian. But even with 800 Aborigines in tertiary studies in the late 1980s, it seems that league, at any rate, is still a major (even if temporary) way out of futility.



a. GEORGE AMBRUM



b. LARRY COROWA



c. LIONEL MORGAN



d. LIONEL WILLIAMSON





a. BRUCE (LARPA) STEWART



b. ARTHUR (ARTIE) BEETSON



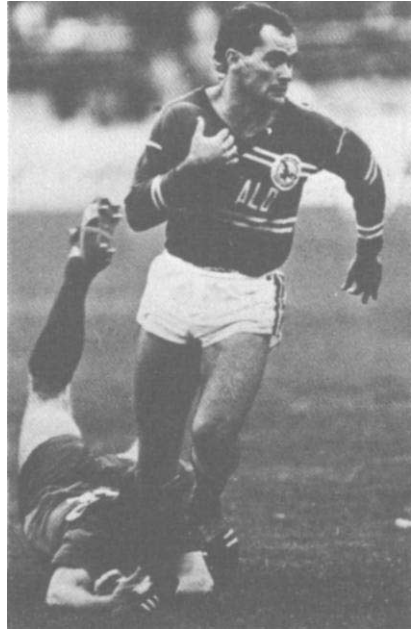
c. ERIC SIMMS



d. RON SADDLER



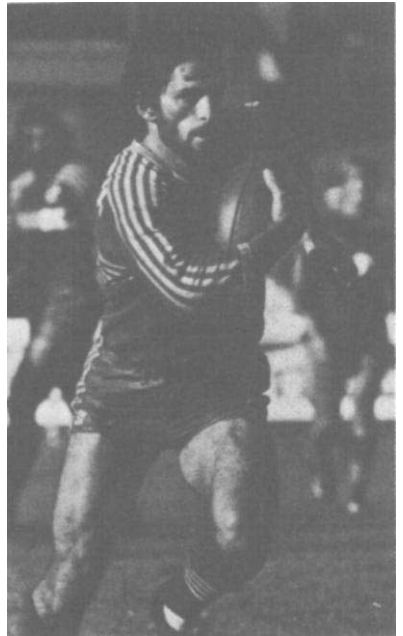
a. COLIN SCOTT



b. DALE SHEARER



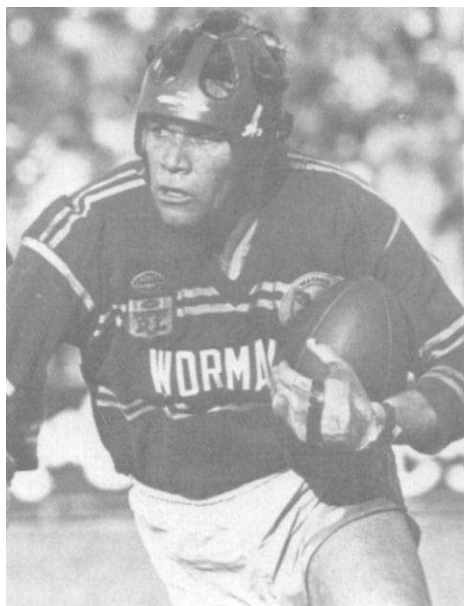
c. MAL MENINGA



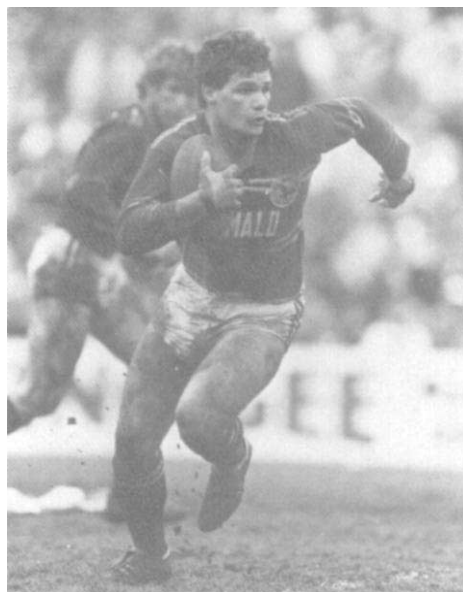
d. STEVE ELLA



a. RICK WALFORD



b. RON GIBBS

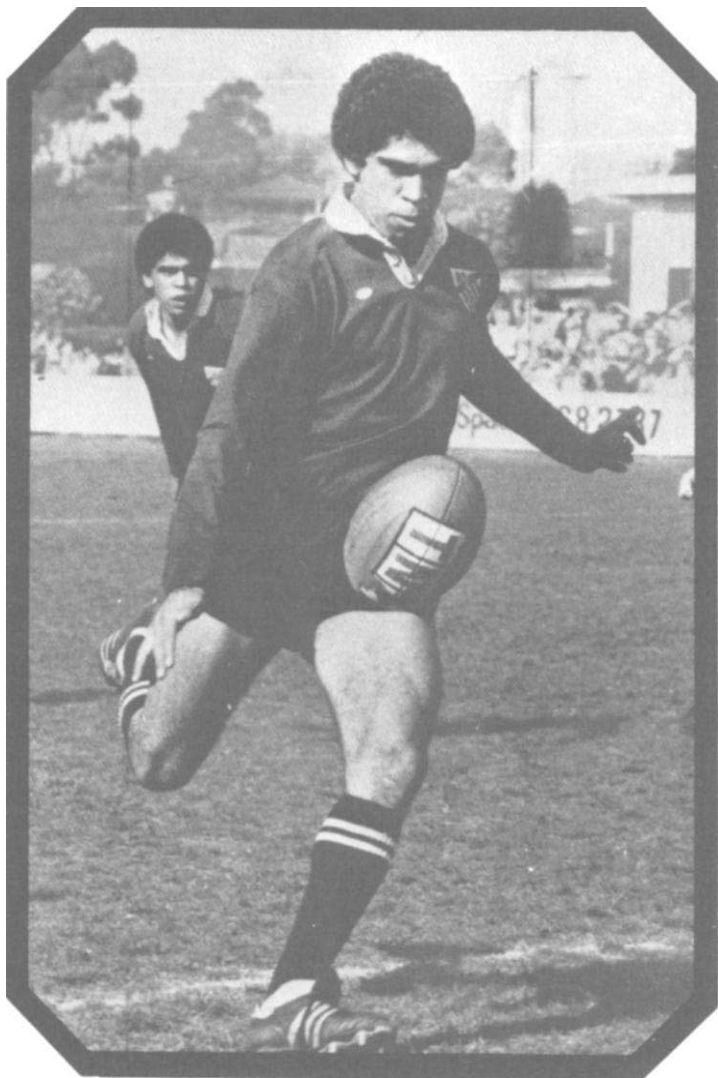


c. MAL COCHRANE



d. JOHN FERGUSON

## 9. SUPERNATURALABILITY



**GLEN ELLA**

‘It’s bloody unfair that one team should have all three of them’

— Norman Tasker, coach of a losing Gordon side

Peter Bowers of the *Sydney Morning Herald* has turned his sharp pen to sport. At the French Open Tennis in June 1987, he wrote: 'When Yannick Noah wins he is the No 1 French player. When he loses he is the No 1 Cameroon player.'<sup>105</sup> In the same vein, they're Australians when they're winning but Aborigines at all other times - an attitude that stirs Perkins, and others, to anger. *Rugby World* illustrates the point: 'the simple fact is that the Ellas are Australian, truly revered in every sense of the word'.<sup>106</sup> But it is complex, not simple. The talent was revered; but the extra dimension, the added admiration, was for asserting their Aboriginality, for claiming it and contending with it as they wrought victory for Australian Schoolboys, Randwick, Sydney, New South Wales, and for Australia.

An unnoticed but important predecessor was Lloyd Clive McDermott, born near Eidsvold (Q) in 1939. A well-built athlete, he was an even-time 100 yards sprint champion at his Greater Public School college. His father battled to give him an education, and scholarships took him to Church of England Grammar and to Queensland University to study law. In 1962 he played on the wing for Queensland and for the Wallabies in two Tests against New Zealand. That season was a little clouded by his being sent off in the University versus Souths grand final. To finance a house, he played league for a year. Called to the NSW Bar in 1972, he is a barrister involved in company and Aboriginal Legal Aid matters.

The Ella story has passed into sporting and Australian folklore: the courage of parents May and Gordon, the twelve children in the tumbledown shack in Sydney's La Perouse, the fame and adulation that rugby brought. Sir Nicholas Shehadie's heady emotion says it all: 'This family has proven to all that given

the opportunity, Aboriginal people can aspire and achieve to the highest'<sup>107</sup> The truth is, rather, that despite the lack of opportunity, despite the prejudice and the obstacles, Aborigines do aspire and do achieve even in this amateur game, played in private schools by a class of 'gentlemen', an activity normally outside the reach of La Perouse black boys.

For the Ellas, everyone reached for new superlatives: 'thrilling footballers', 'creators of the most spectacular tries in Australian rugby', 'an indefinable something that urges crowds through the gate', 'a supernatural ability to anticipate each other'. 'Bloody unfair that one team should have all three of them', said Gordon's coach on their 41-3 loss to Randwick in 1980.<sup>108</sup> Former national coach Bob Dwyer concluded that 'the influence of the Ella brothers on Australian rugby has been absolutely immeasurable'. Jack Pollard offers this summary: 'The simple truth is, the Ellas have injected excitement into Australian rugby. given endless pleasure to thousands, and attracted such a big following that they have become victims of the old Australian anti-hero syndrome.'<sup>109</sup> Perhaps: but several years after their retirement they are, like Evonne Cawley, embedded in the mind.

Gary, born in 1960, was an outside centre. An efficient tackler, he had superb footwork and 'smart hands'. He toured with the Wallabies three times, but played only four Test matches. Injury was responsible for this small number. Only after some devastating injuries, said brother Mark, did better sense make him quit the game in 1984. He works for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Bourke, NSW.

Glen, Mark's twin brother, was born in 1959. At fullback or

inside centre, he was a sound kicker and a fine handler of the ball. Bob Dwyer calls him 'a freak'. As with his brothers, he starred in the rampant Australian Schoolboys tour of 1977-78. Glen played in four Tests, still represented NSW in 1987, and retired after his Randwick team won the 1987 premiership.

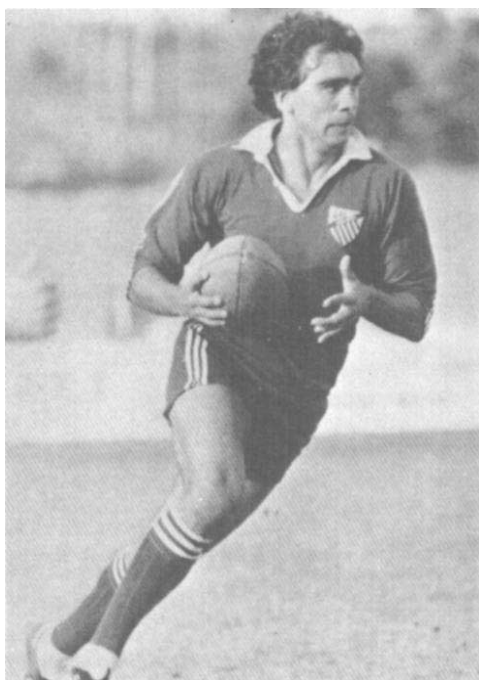
His retirement prompted writers to recall 'the disgraceful episode' at Ballymore in Brisbane in July 1982. Chosen, with Mark, for the Test against Scotland, the Brisbane crowd booed and abused their every move: because they'd been chosen ahead of Queenslanders Roger Gould and Paul McLean. This verbal violence made the Ellas feel they were playing Queensland, not Scotland. While this is talked about as a classic case of state chauvinism, there is no doubt the Ellas black presence figured in the crowd's emotions. Mark writes of only one or two disappointments in the Ella careers: one was this Ballymore 'debacle', when he and Glen were 'greeted with the same abuse that generally occurs in South Africa'.<sup>110</sup>

Mark, the man of marvellous hands and anticipation, captained Australia in nine Tests, winning four, losing four, drawing one. There has been much rumour and speculation as to why he lost the captaincy. Spiro Zavos, reviewing the Terry Smith-Mark Ella book *Path to Victory*, says that Smith 'does not go deeply into why Alan Jones, almost in his first act as coach, took the Wallaby captaincy away from Mark Ella'.<sup>111</sup> Other rugby scribes assure me that it was not Jones who deposed him but the other two selectors. Ella, in the *Path to Victory* book, says very little indeed, six short sentences in fact: 'It still hurts that I lost the Australian captaincy. I thought I'd done a good job for Australia. Still, I can't be too hard on Alan Jones. A new coach has different ideas . . . I just didn't fit in'. And 'the

lead-up to that [dismissal] was very distasteful. It left me feeling bitter for a long time.' <sup>112</sup> Smith continues: 'Although this is now a closed chapter, perhaps Ella would have stayed in the game longer if Bob Dwyer hadn't lost the Australian coaching job.' So who did drop Ella? There is a general view that his nature - reserved and retiring - was not the quality required for a captain. Zavos, however, says Ella was 'confident of his gifts, a natural leader'. Nevertheless, it is most unusual for an appointed captain (in any sport) to have that office taken away from him: it is usually surrendered voluntarily, if at all. It would seem that his Aboriginality was in no way connected with this issue.

He played in 26 Tests - against New Zealand, France, Scotland, England, USA, Argentina, Italy, Fiji, Ireland, and Wales. The statistics do not convey his artistry: 'he must', says Pollard, 'rank as one of the most naturally talented exponents of Rugby Australia has ever seen'. Jim Webster's tribute to 'Markella' on his retirement, at 26, is probably the most flattering given to any figure in our sporting history. <sup>113</sup> A prodigy, with God-given gifts seen only in Russell Fairfax and Ken Catchpole, he had a brain moving at shutter speed 'quicker than anyone else in the game'. Finally, Webster's view of Ella at play: 'It was like watching Bradman. Or Torvill and Dean. Or Carl Lewis. Or listening to Sutherland... You just know there is greatness about them.' Ella did what few Aboriginal sportsmen have been able to do: retire at the top. In so doing, he will remain in the memory while passing into history.



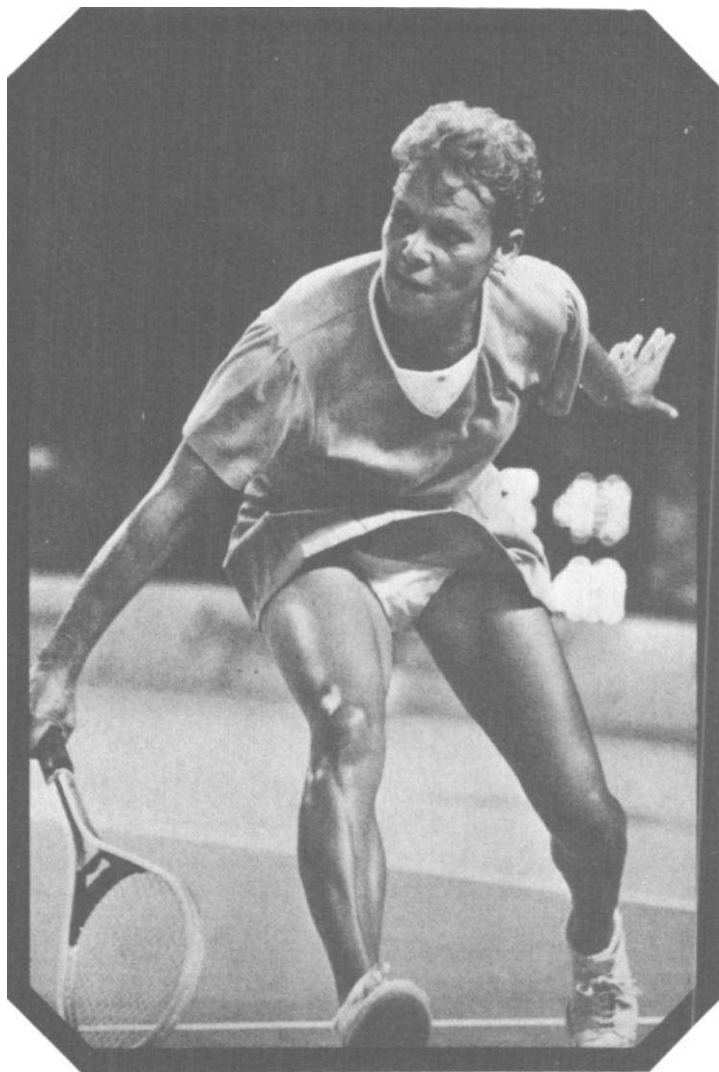


b. MARK ELLA



c. LLOYD McDERMOTT

## 10. BLACK WOMEN



**EVONNE GOOLAGONG-CAWLEY**

'Her tennis was so beautiful that at times it chilled the blood'  
— Rex Bellamy

Sexism in sport is harder to write about than racism in sport. Racist sexism is even harder. Women in sport is not the subject of this study, but one aspect of it is: black women in sport. The crucial question is whether their participation in sport is hampered more because they are black than because they are women: or, put another way, do black women have a tougher time of it than white women?

There are several problems, layers of problems perhaps. Firstly, there is Brian Stoddart's question: have sportswomen connived, or acquiesced, in the restricted view of themselves? Did men simply say: 'our sport is meaningful and yours is, at best, an adjunct?' He believes that male sporting dominance was - and for the most part still is - something both genders agree with.<sup>114</sup>

Secondly, the sisters in the women's movement - whatever their ideological differences - have one thing in common: they haven't considered sport a feminist issue. Thirdly, we don't have anything like *Title IX* (of the 1972 Educational Amendments) which insists on equal access, resources, pay, facilities, and so on for American women athletes. As of 1986 we have only a Task Force on Women in Sport, with a long, steep haul ahead of it.

Fourthly, the feminist interest in sport has taken two unfruitful paths: the strategy of seeking better opportunities rather than challenging the causes of women's continued status in sport; and focusing on the 'biologic' approach, the search for equal physiologies and anatomies and a narrowing of the performance gaps.

Women, says Susan Birrell, have three choices: conservatism, liberalism, and radicalism.<sup>115</sup> Conservatism is what we have: a

view that sport is still the 'natural' domain of men and women shouldn't 'masculinize' themselves. Liberal feminism wants evolution, gradualism, a seeking of equal access, equal rights, equal rewards. In short, they want what the philosopher John Rawls calls the 'liberty principle': that no one person or group - whether majority or minority, black or white, male or female - is inherently entitled to more liberty (opportunity) than anyone else.<sup>116</sup> Title IX is a good liberal solution. Radicalism, however, challenges the whole system: men and women are different, and therefore the uniqueness of women should be celebrated.

This brings us to the crucial question in this context: does the future of women (and of Aborigines) in sport lie in integration or separation? Where are their best interests served? The liberals favour integration; the conservatives and radicals want segregated/separated sport, albeit for very different reasons.

I don't know the answers. The 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* case in America declared that 'separate but equal' could never mean equal for blacks. That decision is a mighty yardstick for the liberals. But, argues Susan Birrell so very powerfully, 'human dignity is a matter of social permission' - and so within integrated sport 'women are who men allow us to be'.

In that very sentence and sentiment lies the essence of the Aboriginal sporting experience: black sportspeople are indeed only who whites - both male and female - allow them to be. What, then, of the black sportswomen? They are, simply, what white chauvinist men, what white racist men, and what white racist women perceive them as being.

Angela Davis, Bell Hooks, Cherrie Moraga and many others -

including Aboriginal Dr Roberta Sykes - have blasted the women's movement for failing to see that black woman's problem in life is that she is black first, woman second. What needs to be said very sharply here is that what black Australian woman has endured, no white woman - native or migrant - has ever endured, or come close to enduring. The gradations of discrimination, the scales and dimensions of injustice, are enormous: and it is just not possible to 'equalize' the problems that confront black and white women, on and off the sportsfield. In sporting terms, if white women are having difficulty getting to first or second base in sport, then by comparison their black sisters are not coming within cooee of the ballpark.

A long preamble, perhaps, but needed if we are to understand why Aboriginal women have not been as prominent as their men in sport. The Goolagong story - for the reasons suggested earlier - is a grand exception. The great majority of her sisters didn't grow up in kindly Barellan.

Faith (Couthard) Thomas was an outstanding cricketer, representing South Australia and Australia against England and New Zealand. When nursing in Alice Springs, she played hockey for the Territory. Later she became a key member of the Aboriginal Sports Foundation.

Rowena Randall has played softball for West Australia and been a member of the national squad: Joanne Lesiputty played for Australia in the South Pacific Games (in Melbourne in 1986) and in that year was voted Australia's most valuable player during the World Youth Series in America. Since 1987 she has represented Australia in the senior national side. The Northern Territory's amazing Rose Damaso has also played representative

softball.

Louisa Collins, Phynea Clarke, and Rose Damaso have played brilliant hockey for the Territory. Rose has also represented the NT in netball and basketball - which adds up to the astonishing record of one athlete representing her state 36 times across four different sports!

In netball several players of note have played state matches: Andrea Mason for South Australia, Beverley (Bobbie) Dillon and Erica Bartlett for Tasmania, and Marcia Ella for NSW. Marcia, sister of the rugby brothers, has achieved her own fame: she played netball for Australia in 1986 on a tour to England; then followed the tri-Test series with New Zealand and Jamaica, held here in 1986: capped by her place in the national side which played in the World Tournament in Glasgow in 1987.

Laura Agius (SA), Leonie Dickson, and Bobbie Dillon (Tasmania) have played state basketball. Other quality players are Andrea Collins and Priscilla West (Q), Rose Damaso, and Louisa Collins in the Territory.

Dalma Smith has been one of Australia's best volleyball players since the mid-1980s. In the World Under 21 championships in Italy in 1984-85, she was voted Australia's best player. Later that year Dalma was selected for the senior national side, and then played in the World Championships qualifying tournament in Melbourne.

Ivy Hampton of Alice Springs first represented her country when she won the first Pacific Cup darts singles in Newcastle (NSW) in 1980. In England she represented Australia several times when competing in the Winmau World Ladies Masters tournaments. In the first national Aboriginal darts championship in 1987, so strong was the competition that Ivy was only first

reserve for the Territory. In that year, her sister, Eileen Wilson was selected for Australia to play in the first major US competition for 'soft darts' - a new form of the game.

In 1986 Treaahna Hamm of Victoria was awarded junior sportswoman of the year at the first National Aboriginal Sports Awards. Winner of 49 firsts in her first ten years of judo competitions, Treaahna was Australian junior champion in 1978, 1980, and 1981.

West Australia's May Chalker has achieved perhaps the most difficult of feats: in 1982 she won the state women's golf championship and in that year she captained the state side. In 1984 she was appointed non-playing captain. Born in Wagin, one of ten children, she took up golf at 23 'because there was no other sport for women in the Wialki district' - a wheatbelt area. May represented WA six times. In 1980 daughter Marion played in the state junior side. In 1979 May won the WA mixed fourball championship with son Mark, now Australia's first black professional.

Much of the 'sport' for Aboriginal women in remote Australia has been a joke: it either didn't exist, till recently, or it was a caricature of nineteenth century modestly-dressed, modestly-performed calisthenics. Many sporting activities go unrecognized, unfunded, and unpublicized. Of all such Cinderellas, black women's sport has the strongest case for encouragement, change, and a fair go.



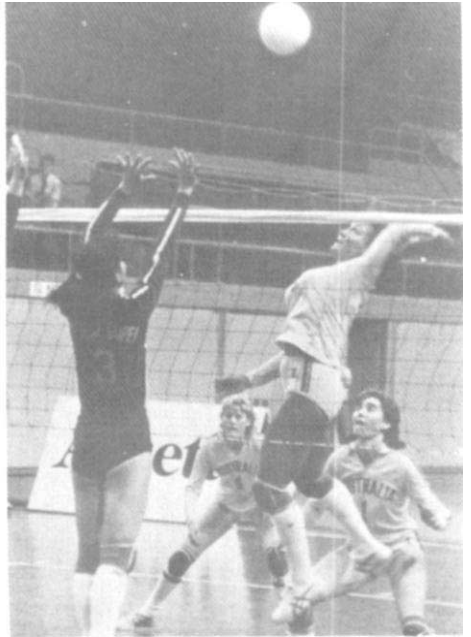
a. ANDREA MASON



b. ANDREA COLLINS



c. JOANNE LESIPUTTY



d. DALMA SMITH





a. FAITH (COUTHARD) THOMAS



b. MAY CHALKER

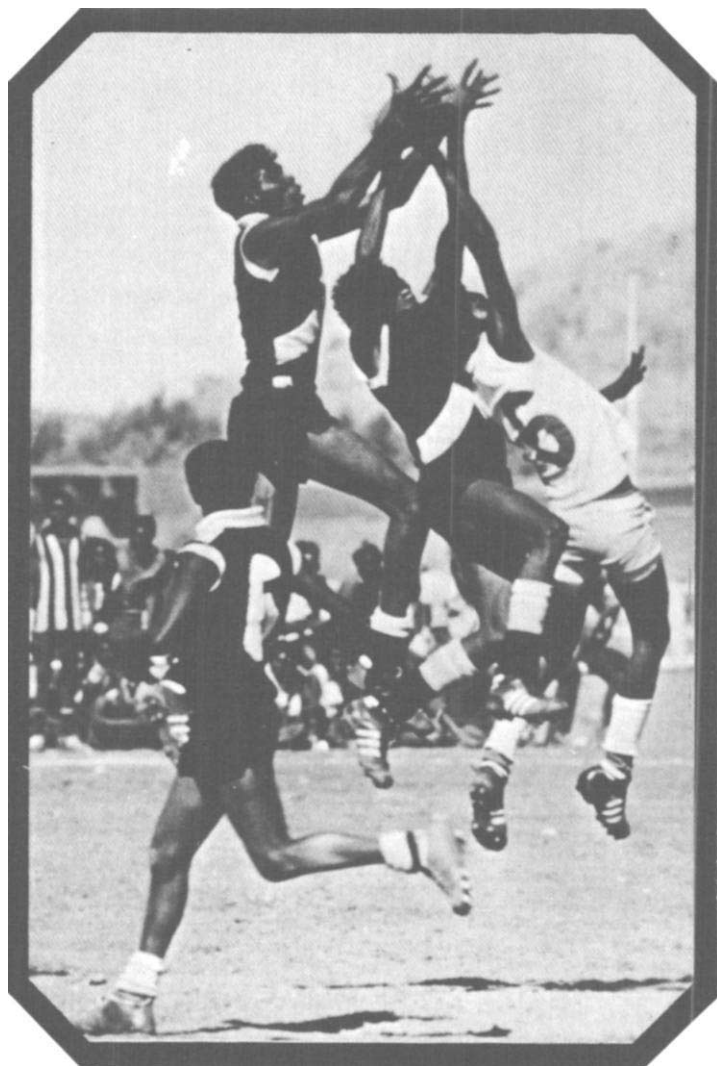


c. IVY HAMPTON



d. MARCIA ELLA

## 11. THE BLACK OLYMPICS



### YUENDUMU

Australian Rules football, a game that parallels the corroboree - 'the elements of flight and grace, the emphasis on ritual'

— Martin Flanagan

In August 1984 Channel 9 in Sydney commissioned and presented a short and sympathetic feature on the Yuendumu Games under the affectionate title 'The Black Olympics'. This was an important tribute to a unique event in Aboriginal life.

Since 1962 this annual sports and cultural festival has been held on the remote settlement some 300 km north-west of Alice Springs. Crowds of between 3,000 and 5,000 travel enormous distances - even from South and West Australia - to join the Walpiri people for the four-day celebration. The major sports are Aussie Rules, softball, basketball, and athletics. Events usually include spear- and boomerang-throwing. The cultural centrepiece is a corroboree, followed by bush band, rock 'n' roll, country, western, and gospel concerts. The carnival atmosphere doesn't take the edge off the seriousness of the sporting competition.

Organized and run by Aborigines for Aborigines, Yuendumu is several triumphs in one: a major sporting event in the continuing absence of any real sports facilities; the creation of a sporting tradition out of literally nothing; the insistence on a carnival of, and for, Aboriginality in an era (the 1960s) which insisted on their being turned into white folks; the ability to stage, without fuss, what *they* value in their traditions alongside what they like in modern life.

Martin Flanagan, reporting on the 1987 'Aboriginal Olympics' for the Age, has perceived the essence of this event.<sup>117</sup> It is a focus of contemporary Aboriginal culture, a time for initiation and 'tribal business', an occasion where Rules football parallels the corroboree - 'the elements of flight and grace, an emphasis on ritual'. It is an event which involves the community's elected leader, Albert Wilson - a man whose living father

witnessed the punitive police raids in the Conniston massacre in 1928, a man taken away to Melville Island at seven and returned at 33, a man who doubts 'whether this rump of the traditional Aboriginal nation can withstand another 20 years' exposure to Western society'.

Flanagan's reactions are of interest. Three days at Yuendumu caused 'the glass tower' of his preconceptions to shatter. What were they?, I asked him. He wants to support these people but there is 'no place for urban sentimentality'; there is no place for 'rigid Western values'; this area of land is their country, not ours; and it is all so much more complicated than he imagined. What he sees is the truth of the matter - that this carnival is as much about survival as it is about sport.

David Wiggins points to the importance of looking at black sportspeople who emerged from within, or even without, the institution of plantation slavery. There is no exact Aboriginal equivalent. But there is, indeed, a system not too far removed from it: the remote, segregated, closed Aboriginal settlements and missions.

Until only a decade ago settlements and missions in northern Australia fully warranted the label Erving Goffman once gave to asylums: 'total institutions', that is, places of residence and work where 'like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life'.<sup>118</sup>

Inmates they certainly were, compulsory (or compelled) residents who were a separate legal, economic, political, and social class of persons. They needed permission to come and go;

they earned 'pocket money' and rations, not wages; they ate not as family groups but as gender-segregated boarders in matron-run communal kitchens; they drank water or lemonade, on penalty of fine or imprisonment, or both, for anything stronger; they saw only sanitized films and received only politically-approved visitors; they obeyed orders from hierarchies of superintendents, managers, matrons, head teachers, hygiene officers; they went to church Sundays, in default of which they forsook rights to shop in the canteen - and so on, and on.

Sometimes they played sport - amid the dearth of facilities, on the occasional dusty, red 'oval'. Sometimes a couple of slender saplings served as a semblance of goal posts (see p 110). Here and there a school had a pair of baskets.

Physically, Yuendumu was (and is) a disaster. But a resilient Walpiri people did meet with a few, rare, talented staff. Ted Egan was superintendent there from 1958 to 1962. He bucked orders to 'socially engineer' people by forcing them into impossible aluminium 'transition' huts, into communal feeding programs, and into rote-learning exercises of dubious value (like T is for Train and S is for Skyscraper, when neither existed in their lives).

Be sought, rather, an association of worlds through song, language, and sport. A dedicated St Mary's (Darwin) Rules player. he coached and encouraged the game in the choking bulldust. By 1961 he had regular competitions running between Yuendumu, nearby Papunya, and distant Warrabri (now Ali Curung) settlement (see photo on page 110). He was followed by a head teacher, George McClure, who turned the original football carnival for three communities into what is now a major vehicle of Aboriginal identity for some 30 communities.

Yuendumu is unique in respect of this particular tradition, but the poverty of sport and facilities is well-nigh universal. To redress this, federal governments have since 1969 made efforts to develop sport and recreation programs. In that year the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, W C Wentworth, agreed to establish an Aboriginal Sports Foundation to encourage Aborigines in sport, to gain for Aborigines more open access to sport, to arrange tours and competition, and to reward distinguished performances. Prime movers behind the scheme were Ted Egan - then a special project officer with Dr 'Nugget' Coombs's Office of Aboriginal Affairs, and Charles Perkins, then senior research officer with that Office. Both had a vision of something better than a 'milking cow'. As Egan wrote in a memo: 'The presentation of a couple of footballs at Maningrida by Polly Farmer would probably have more positive effect than the "let's give them a couple of thousand" approach, where there is a risk of the money being spent on fleecy lined jock straps and Adidas boots all round'.

But the Foundation did have to adopt a handout approach. Of the \$50,000 total budget then available, bits and pieces (from \$300 to \$3,000) went, for example, to Numbulwar for a basketball court, to a women's hockey club in SA, to Warrabri for a grass oval, to Amoonguna football club for jerseys and insurance, to the Redfern All Blacks for a visit to New Zealand. Looking at the early applications caused me to scrawl in the margins: 'Where the hell are the Aboriginal Affairs Departments?' - the bodies charged with promoting the physical and social advancement of Aborigines. Given their almost total abdication in this field, given the appalling state of Aboriginal health and nutrition,

given that male life expectancy is still below 50 years of age, one can only marvel at Aboriginal sporting achievement in the 1970s and 80s - let alone in the 1870s and 80s!

The original Foundation members were : Doug Nicholls (chairman), Michael Ahmatt, Elley Bennett, George Bracken, Bill Dempsey, Evonne Goolagong, Syd Jackson, David Kantilla, Ian King, Wally McArthur, Darby McCarthy, Charles Perkins, Reg Saunders (of military fame), Eric Simms, Faith Thomas, and - in association - Lionel Rose.

The National Aboriginal Sports Council (NASC) replaced the Foundation: it represents 32 sporting communities in Australia. Between them these two bodies have now allocated several million dollars to Aboriginal sport. In 1986-87, \$3.65m was given for sport and recreation programs - which includes \$800,000 for sports grants. In the same year NASC recommended that four national championships be funded - in darts, netball, indoor soccer, and golf. The National Aboriginal Golf Association was created in 1987 and in October that year a twelve man - four woman team went on a tournament visit to Hawaii. In 1987 ten amateur boxers, accompanied by Trevor Christian and Tony Mundine, were assisted in a visit to the US Olympic Training Centre - with a view to preparation for places in the 1988 Olympic team. An all-Aboriginal indoor soccer team went to Canada on tour. Rugby league, basketball, netball and athletic carnivals were underwritten. Further, fourteen young Aboriginal sports stars have been assisted to compete overseas, some at world championship level. At this time of writing, athlete cousins Lynton Johnson and Jason Terare are Ipswich Grammar School boys: both are considered Olympic prospects for 1992. Tony Briggs, a nephew of Pastor Doug, is a hurdler of promise, the first black

athlete to win a scholarship to the Australian Institute of Sport. Kyle van der Kuyp is a 100m hurdler of promise. These are the youngsters receiving both educational and sporting support.

In 1986 the first National Aboriginal Sports Awards night was held in Adelaide. Televised by SBS, the program showed just how far Aboriginal sport has come in the past quarter of a century. Australia, said Charles Perkins, 'hasn't recognized the Aboriginal contribution to the sporting sphere'. But that night, in part due to Perkins's fine efforts over the years, a new Aboriginal confidence and respect was revealed. Lionel Rose, Polly Farmer and Evonne Cawley posed for the cameras: a threesome now inducted into Australia's Hall of Fame. The immortal Herb Elliott made a discovery: 'I had never given much thought to the Aboriginal contribution to sport - but, by Jove, what a powerful message it's been tonight!'

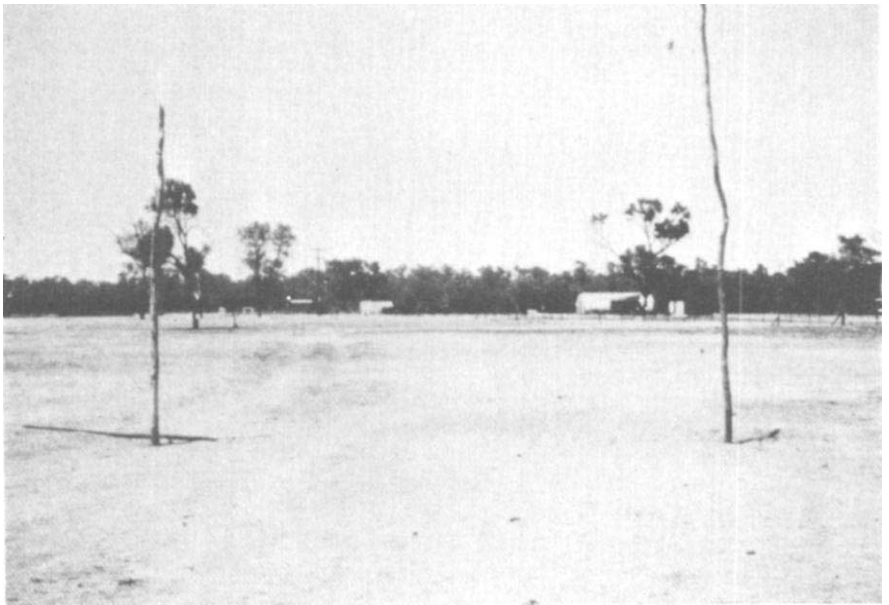




YUENDUMU TEAM (v WARRABRI) 1962

Back (l to r): George Jangala, Mosquito Jungarai,  
 Charlie Jagamara, Paddy Jagamara, Peter Jangala,  
 Roy Jangala, Colin Potter Jagamara, Bob Jabaljari,  
 Tim Jabanardi, David Juburula, Teddy Jangala, Ted Egan

Front (l to r): George Jabangardi, Frankie Jagamara,  
 Charlie Jangala, Johnny Jungarai, Harry Nelson Jagamara  
 Billy Jamjinba, Sandy Jabaljari, Michael Jagamara



b. THE WARRABRI 'OVAL', 1960s

## 12. THE POLITICAL ARENA



### **CHARLES PERKINS**

The troubleshooter: a great driving force in soccer, in black sport, and in the politics of Aboriginal affairs

Sport is a vehicle for many things: for nationalism, ideology, for demonstrating attitudes (such as a dislike of apartheid), for scoring political points in a dramatic way. The 'revolt of the black athletes' in America began with the 1968 Mexico Olympics. Their argument was that they brought fame abroad to a nation that spurned them at home; their feelings erupted with the now legendary Tommy Smith-John Carlos black power salute on the 200m sprint victory platform.

The Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in 1982 had two political items on the agenda: African displeasure at New Zealand's South African rugby connections; and Aboriginal anger over land rights and their treatment in Queensland generally.

The Organization of African Unity was determined to show what it thought of the Lions tour in 1980, and particularly what it felt about that most disastrous and most violent tour in sports history, the Springbok visit to New Zealand in 1981. Rumour was rife that Africans would boycott Brisbane if New Zealand took part.

Aborigines had pleaded all along that Africans should boycott Brisbane because of *their* condition, not because of the South Africa-New Zealand rugby affair. Political action had been sparse, and scarce: that stratagem of genius, the Tent Embassy on Canberra's Parliamentary lawns in distant 1972; and the visit to Geneva in 1980 to tell the world about the *West Australian v Noonkanbah* oil-drilling-on-sacred-sites dispute. <sup>119</sup>

In 1981 two Aboriginal delegations visited Africa. The first - led by Les Melezer and Bob Weatherall, members of the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action - sought an African boycott of the Brisbane Games while on visits to Ethiopia, Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Kenya. They failed to

persuade these states. Later, Ossie Cruse and Michael Anderson visited Africa, Geneva and Vienna, with Gough Whitlam as their political adviser. They didn't seek boycott as such - that, said the ex-Prime Minister, would be 'counter-productive to the Aboriginal cause'.<sup>120</sup> (What, one wonders, is productive to, or for, the Aboriginal cause?)

Aboriginal groups saw the Games as the means of presenting their case to, and through, the world's cameras. The Black Protest Committee made a video, 'The Whole World is Watching', aimed at redressing what it claimed was government propaganda, namely, that there were 'black training camps in Libya' and 'guerilla armies in North Queensland'. They feared police harassment and violence. Steve Mam told ABC radio: 'We must grab this media chance, this international gaze, to make Queensland's racism known to the world'.<sup>121</sup>

In 1980 Premier Bjelke-Petersen said he would repeal the discriminatory *Aborigines Act* - not because it was bad law but because he feared rioting and international backlash at the Games. That Act, he said, was what Aborigines wanted: 'we care for them, look after them. In Queensland we're all Queenslanders, we're all equal, we're all the same'.<sup>122</sup> (He didn't repeal that particular statute until 1984 - and then he enacted another piece of legislation, hardly radical, and still little different in its spirit and tenor of control over Aborigines.)

For a host of curious and devious reasons - which don't need discussion here - the rugby issue and the New Zealand presence did not result in African boycott. Abraham Ordia, president of the Supreme Council of Sport in Africa, came to Australia in

1981. While here he visited Cherbourg settlement, possibly the best of all places to show visitors. His first response was to confuse Queensland with Australia: 'Well', he said, 'we trust the Australian government, they have a good image, a good stance on apartheid'.<sup>123</sup> In the end, the African presence was our reward, or rather (then Prime Minister) Malcolm Fraser's reward, for his stance on South Africa generally.

This left the way open for Aborigines to march, speak out, and appear daily on the world's media. There was, indeed, a 'Black Shadow over the Games', as the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported.<sup>124</sup> In 1981 Charles Perkins said he'd have to stand up and be counted on the Queensland land rights issue - and if this meant violence, so be it. It is just possible that government reacted to the spectre of this one-man army: whatever the reason, Queensland thereupon enacted the most draconian law in Australia's peace-time history, the *Commonwealth Games Act 1982*.

In the manner of Russia clearing Moscow of all Jews and dissidents for the 1980 Olympics, this statute 'cleaned up' Brisbane's Aborigines. It allowed the police rather than government to declare 'a state of emergency'; it allowed the seizure of persons and of property by police and by non-police sworn in as 'authorized persons'; it introduced the finger-, palm-, foot-, toe- and voice-printing of suspected persons; the designation of notified areas where other than accredited persons could not be; the seizure of any 'thing', animate or inanimate, that an arresting person believed could lead to an offence against the Act: and the imposition of sentences of \$2,000 or two years or both for 'offences' under the Act.

The 1980s began with the conservative *Sydney Bulletin* denouncing Aborigines going abroad: there was 'a considerable

danger' in these 'ratbags getting an overseas audience' because they could affect the Games - worse, they could 'damage Australia's good name abroad'.<sup>125</sup> In the end, even the conservative Queensland press showed some sympathy. The cartoons of Alan Moir, Paul Zanetti, and Mac Vines on p 118 were not untypical.

Newsweek was not alone in depicting an 'Aborigines versus Queensland' conflict.<sup>126</sup> Others saw things differently. The general manager of the Commonwealth Games Federation declared the protest 'a non-event'.<sup>127</sup> Phil Derriman concluded that Brisbane would 'be remembered as the Games which Australia's athletes won - but which its Aborigines lost.'<sup>128</sup> Under the pretentious heading, 'Triumph of the Human Spirit', the Australian intoned 'that the Games provided neither the time nor the cause to press a domestic issue'. The protesters 'did nothing to advance the Aboriginal cause'.<sup>129</sup> Nothing that Aborigines do, it seems, is ever considered as advancing their cause.

As an observer and recorder of these events, I have another view. Aborigines did not stop the Games, or even disrupt them. No matter - since neither purpose was ever intended. From the start they insisted on peaceful demonstrations, and they maintained that stance. The police handled matters well - apart from two senior officers, one of whom insisted throughout that the protests and the illegal marches (a few such were held in addition to the authorized ones) were caused by 'drunken and disorderly southern black trouble makers'.<sup>130</sup>

Aborigines won a little something from the public, from the street spectators at the marches. A number of people in the

buses and on the streets felt 'there has to be some right about their cause, somewhere'. This was particularly evident following a brilliant ABC *Four Corners* program on land rights, screened amid the marches.

The Queensland Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Ken Tomkins, lost his portfolio at this time - largely because he chose the Games period to announce that Aborigines weren't advanced enough to be granted freehold land: they didn't know what a mortgage was!<sup>131</sup> They also drank a lot, ate birds, goannas, and fish.<sup>132</sup>

The internationalization of the Aboriginal political and legal struggle began in earnest in Brisbane, with the Games as venue and vehicle. It was perhaps fitting that the ABC television anchorman, Peter Mears, was responsible for one memorable sentence in the event. As the *Four Corners* program ended - during the evening dinner break in the coverage - and as the telecasts resumed, he said: 'Ladies and Gentlemen, you've now seen another side of the coin. Perhaps these Friendly Games can help the Commonwealth and Queensland break down the barriers between them and the Aborigines'. Neither the peaceful Aborigines nor Peter Mears were the 'triumphant human spirits' the *Australian* editorial had in mind.

In one short, sharp, poetic speech Bruce Dawe has captured the essence of it all:<sup>133</sup>

#### WATCHING THE '82 GAMES

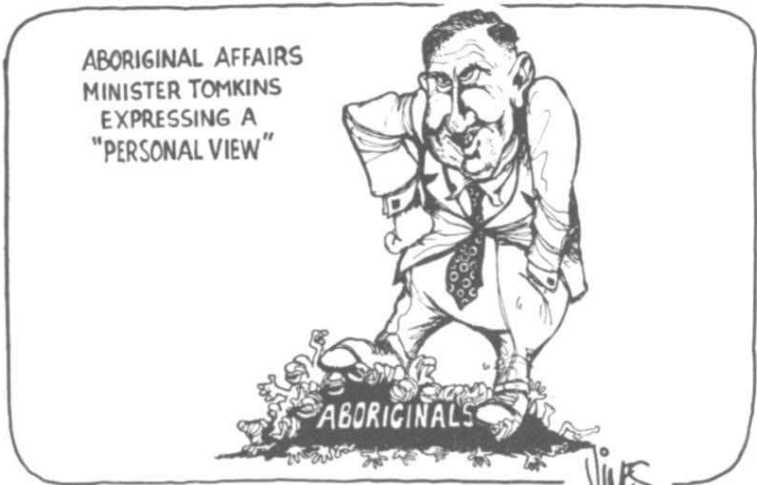
Funny . . . I couldn't concentrate upon  
the athletes, white and black, within the gates,  
for those with fewer friends who sat outside.  
I cheered, of course (Michelle, Tracey, Lisa,  
and Raelene capping her career with gold),  
was proud (who wasn't?), kept count of the tally  
- the Poms were trailing . . . or so one *might* have said,  
had not conscience urged suppression of  
such dangerous thoughts - these were 'the Friendly Games'!

And yet those others, come from Musgrave Park,  
who wound up in police-vans, had they been  
from Swaziland or Kenya would have got  
a better hearing and a longer stay.

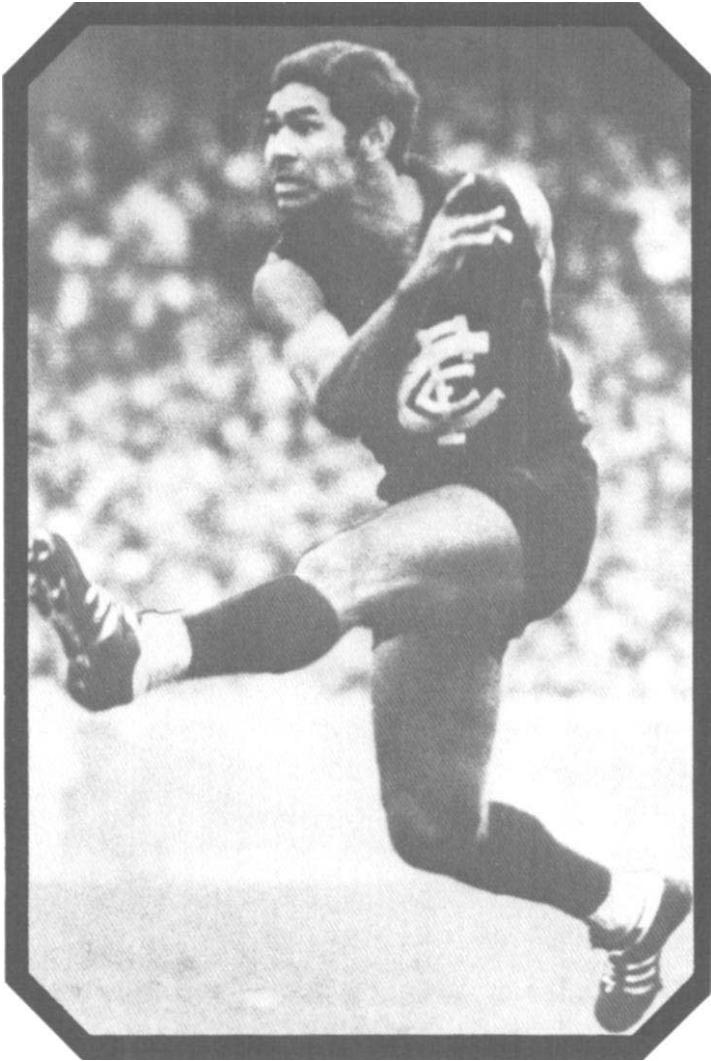
But, clad  
in land-rights colours (red, gold, black), they ran  
a different race around an inward track,  
cleared the cross-bar, pirouetted, hurled  
discus and javelin, swam record laps  
-if the measure of a contest is the extent  
to which a people's consciousness and will  
are raised . . .

Forget the tallies. These were anonymous,  
no electronic score-board blinked their times,  
no anthems played,  
their dais was the street and the loud wagon.  
Suffice to say: they featured in the perennial  
alternative Games, and fought on for the lonelier  
gold that comes later, the red and black of history.





## 13. A DIFFERENT ETHOS



**SYD JACKSON**

Conscious of a feeling that all 121,696 spectators at the 1970 grand final were aware of his Aboriginality.

There is a lot we now know about Aborigines in sport. As Herb Elliott said, we have a 'powerful message' as to their achievements. There is much we need to know - about their lives as athletes, their circumstances, frustrations, their experiences on the way to the top. There is much we will never know - in particular, about the thousands who never had the opportunity to get to the starting line. In 1986 Alma Thorpe, receiving a special award for her services to black sport, said it so succinctly: 'I've never played sport - it wasn't available in my life'.

There are many gaps. We need to know what Aborigines feel about sport - as sport, as a way out of poverty, as a moment of social acceptance and equality. The only serious address of these issues comes from Perkins, and in a handful of all-too-brief quotes from a few others.

The Isaac Murphy model in America has been suggested. Of immense value, and excitement, would be a set of detailed portraits of the lives and times of these important figures: Johnny Mullagh in the 1860s and 70s, Charlie Samuels in the 1880s and 90s, Jack Marsh in the 1900s, Jerry Jerome in the 1910s, Lynch Cooper in the 1920s, Doug Nicholls in the 1930s, Ron Richards in the 40s, Charles Perkins in the 1950s, Lionel Rose - Polly Farmer - Evonne Goolagong in the 60s. Artie Beetson in the 70s, and Mark Ella in the 1980s. Despite the difficulty of reaching back in time, it is worth trying to capture the black perspective on sport, their attitudes and hopes, their stories and tragedies. Such portraits could also tell us how Aboriginal policy and administration affected the day-to-day lives of these individuals.

We need a serious study of settlement and mission 'sporting

life' - such as it was, and is. We know something about these places as institutions but next to nothing about their recreational life. Why did so many cricket, football, and athletic stars emerge from tiny 'Cummera' mission on the Murray? Why so many footballers from among the Tiwi people at Bathurst and at Melville Islands?

The St Mary's story needs researching, and telling. In their first Rules season, 1950-1951, there were only two white men in the team. One was Ted Egan, their captain and coach for many years to come. The rest were Tiwi. With the development of the Nguilla League on the two islands, St Mary's places were filled by the former residents of Garden Point - an enclave on Melville across the narrow strait from Bathurst. This was where the 'mixed race' kids, taken from their mothers, were sent for 'rearing'. Anastasius Vigona - see the photo on page 130 - was the father of Benny Vigona, who plays for Swan District and West Australia. Cyril Rioli, Maurice's father, was also a Garden Pointer. Billy Roe, also in the photo, is a remarkable sportsman. He played in six grand finals for St Mary's, winning the best player award in four of them. He took the first all-Aboriginal Rules team overseas - to Papua New Guinea in 1972. He played basketball for the Territory, and played it professionally in Perth. Father Witty at Bathurst may have been a key in Top End football - Ted Egan certainly was.

On the face of it, it seems that those who were 'emancipated' - those who were not controlled by special legislation, who didn't live an institutional life - participated in sport, and that those who were incarcerated didn't, or didn't for the most part. This division between the 'urban'/'free'

blacks and the 'plantation'/'reserve' blacks needs careful exploring. There is evidence to show that sport was not just an avenue to something better, but was, literally, a ticket out of the institution. Certainly it was for men like Jerry Jerome, Elley Bennett, Eddie Gilbert, Doug Nicholls.

What happened to the boys at those other, rather special institutions - Kinchella Boys Home in NSW, Retta Dixon and Garden Point and Croker Island in the Territory, at Sister Kate's in Perth? Some stars had their origins in these places: why? how? were there others? What happened to, and with, girls in such institutions? Jimmy Sharman's mobile, tent-booth business needs study. What he did to, and for, Aborigines is important. Certainly he played a significant role in Doug Nicholls's life.

A major issue in Aboriginal sport is why so many communities have given birth to separate, all-black teams. Narwan's origins seem plain enough. But what of the Redfern All Blacks and La Perouse United? We need a study not only of the aims, motives, and values of these teams but of their function and place in the lives of the communities. Is it simply a matter of pride, or an outlet for frustration? Is it that such teams foster, and sustain, an Aboriginal togetherness? Is it reaction to their exclusion or unwantedness, or is it something Aborigines have worked out for their social solidarity, for their 'bonds of similitude'?

Aborigines play sport in a white world: white games, venues, rules, directors, officials, selectors. Always players or performers, they are never partners in the sports enterprise. It is possible that the birth and growth of black teams has been to enable them to make their own decisions and selections; to be winners, for a change; to provoke - if possible, to evoke - a

sense of respect for them as a people.

Separate or integrated, why is it that practically all black athletes are seen and described as 'exciting', 'scintillating', 'natural', 'explosive', 'brilliant'? What lies behind the playing styles of Aborigines? This is a different question from the matter of so-called physical superiority, discussed later.

Thomas Kochman, in his recent *Black and White: Styles in Conflict*, suggests that black Americans go beyond the purely mechanical and technical aspects of play.<sup>134</sup> They improvise, they engage in personal manoeuvres and moves that are very distinctive and individual. Whites, he says, play cohesively, they play efficiently in set patterns in order to win, never to lose. No one has approached the question of why Aborigines play the way they do. Mark Ella says 'the secret of our success was the *total enjoyment* we received out of rugby ...'. Do Aborigines play sport for different reasons, for different motives? Someone should ask them.

What we do know about Aborigines in sport is both positive and negative. The achievements are extraordinary. The titles, championships, the medals are a matter of record - at state, national, and international level. There is no need to inflate stories or embroider the successes. There is no need to claim as Aboriginal those who don't wish to be so, even though a few of the non-identifiers are in the 'Hall of Fame' class. But there is a need to insist that not one single Aboriginal champion was born - to use an appropriate pun - on the right side of the track, sporting or social.

The essence of sport is that competition, opportunity, and resources must be fair and equal for all. But a different ethos

has applied to black Australians. In our society there has been exclusion from competition, discrimination within it, and at times gross inequality of chances, choices, and facilities.

Denial of competition takes two forms. One is structural denial, where because of their place in the political, legal, economic, and social system Aborigines simply cannot and do not get to the ski lodges and A-grade golf courses (with very few and very recent exceptions). The other is institutional denial, that is, within their domains and lifestyles the facilities simply do not exist. Where most Aborigines have lived - on settlements and missions - there has been, literally, no grass. Pools, gyms, courts, tracks, ranges, nets, coaches, physios, scholarships have not been part of their vocabulary or experience.

Sport has hardly been fair. There has been discrimination in motive, in behaviour, in conscious and non-conscious attitude, even among those considered enlightened and well-disposed. The list is long - and dismal: most of the 1868 cricketers, save Mullagh (possibly); the railroading of Charlie Samuels into a Sydney asylum: the striking out of Jack Marsh's name from the list of first grade cricketers to be admitted to the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1905, thus ending his career: the hounding of Jerry Jerome as a 'moneyed troublemaker': the Carlton rejection of Doug Nicholls: the exploitation of Ron Richards; the vicious insults to Syd Jackson, Glenn James and, nowadays, the Krakouer brothers.

In boxing and in some football codes Aborigines were seen as a special race of performers, with separate sporting and physical attributes. Often 'a credit to their race', they did well - 'for their race'. Often they were 'not Aborigines' when at their peak, but 'Aborigines now', afterwards: 'once they fade', argues

Perkins, 'they're history'.

For all minority groups there is a truism: one has to be doubly good in order to rate equal. Aborigines have had to struggle against this discrimination, to struggle to compete, to gain a guernsey, to keep wearing it. Many of their performances have been of world standard, as the international press has acknowledged. To get there, to get to the top, is one set of problems. To stay in the memory. to pass into history, with respect, is another. A handful have done so: Doug Nicholls, Evonne Goolagong-Cawley, Lionel Rose, Artie Beetson, Mark Ella. Why? Simply because they were that good!

Racism is not a simple matter of exclusion or avoidance because of skin colour. There are many forms, some obvious, some subtle indeed. The Aboriginal athlete has always had to contend not only with sports competitors but with a racist society that places a negative value on all things black. This produces what one of the founding fathers of American black power, W E du Bois, called 'double consciousness', that is, the very uncomfortable sense in which one is *forever* aware that one is black and *forever* aware that the white man is aware that one is black.

Syd Jackson has explained it well. At a sports history conference at the MCG in May 1987, he related what being black means.<sup>135</sup> For a start, he was taken, aged two, from his parents in Leonora and sent to Roelands Native Mission (near Bunbury) 'to be saved'. He was reunited with his mother in 1981, some 37 years later! The West Australian racism, he said, was no better than the Queensland variety. After a fine career with South Bunbury, he wanted to join the team with the same red and white colours, South Fremantle: they rejected him because he was



black. He used sport 'as a stepping stone, as a door opener, as a means to an end' - but he was always made aware of his Aboriginality. When dropped for a game by Carlton, was it because of prejudice or his form? Prejudice, he believed. When he came onto the sacred turf at the MCG in the 1970 grand final, his feeling was that all 121,696 spectators were aware of his blackness: the 60,000 Collingwood fans made that awareness only too plain; the Carlton-lovers showed him the required Carlton loyalty. The Collingwood bar wouldn't serve him after the match. Only at the Yuendumu Games, he concludes, is there the satisfaction of coming together, being together, of not having to bother about this double awareness.

Jackson - as organiser and promoter of Aboriginal sport - believes that the 'system' must be confronted, tackled, fought. Lionel Rose told the same conference that despite sporting achievements, 'the racism won't diminish': 'we are what we are', he said, with a sense of fatalism rather than with despair.

An important aspect of racism is stereotyping. Aborigines have to contend with it daily, not only in general life but in sport as well. For example, one boxing writer said to me: 'One can get any Abo off the street and he'll go four rounds - they have tremendous natural talent'. The comment was meant positively, but it comes close to the common assertion that blacks generally are physically superior to whites in sport.

Martin Kane of *Sports Illustrated*, among others, has long argued that racial genes explain black superiority in some sports.<sup>136</sup> With black sociologist Harry Edwards, I reject this nonsense that we are what we are, and always will be, because of our 'racial' genes. In 1986 a pair of British doctors claimed that West Indian fast bowlers were unfairly advantaged: they had

an anatomy and a musculature that others didn't have. Former English cricket captain, Ted Dexter, made this sharp reply: there are thousands of black kids out there busting to bowl fast for their country, he said, and there are thousands of British kids out there too soft and too lazy to bowl fast for their's. In short, blacks excel where and when they are hungry and in need: when they have role models (whether Griffiths, Hall or Holding, Viv or Ron Richards, Bracken or Rose); and when they have access to a particular sport and its facilities.

Aborigines are over-represented in boxing, in Aussie Rules in West Australia, in rugby league, in most spectator sports in the Northern Territory. Why these high percentages? The essential answers lie in having access to these sports; in these sports providing some group identification; in having role models before them, heroes to emulate; in seeing these sports as the means of escaping from futility. But there is more to it: in addition, there is a hunger - a physical, emotional, and psychological hunger; there is a will to win, to prove some points, to achieve a vindication of themselves, even to achieve a sense of sweet revenge on the system.

Has sport 'broken down the barriers', has it been a breakthrough mechanism in Australian race relations? There are no neat one-line conclusions about sport as a transport to a better world, as a vehicle of tolerance and understanding. For the few - for the Ellas, Evonne Cawley, perhaps two boxers, and a handful of footballers in soccer, league and Rules - there can be no doubt that sport has been a 'door opener'. Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls is the beacon and the benchmark: he came up from further down, and against greater odds, than most. For many -

the Sands brothers, Richards, Bennett, the cricketers - sport was an all-too-brief high, followed by crashing and crushing disaster.

In the long term, however, what matters most is that Aboriginal sporting success, no matter how brief or tragic, has given Aborigines more uplift, more collective pride, more kudos, than any other single activity.

This sporting uplift is crucial. As this is written, there are two birthdays: 200 years since white settlement and 20 years since the 1967 Referendum on a supposed 'new deal' for Aborigines.<sup>137</sup> Yet the Aboriginal world is something of a nightmare - and not just in 1987. It so happens that that particular year saw the lucky country - with all its resources, brains, technology, and commitment to a social welfare philosophy - appoint a Royal Commission into the (proportionately) astronomic number of black deaths in police custody (44 since 1980);<sup>138</sup> it listened as a federal court judge of the Human Rights Commission described the Toomelah Reserve in NSW as 'a concentration camp, both psychological and physical';<sup>139</sup> it heard the NSW Director of the Bureau of Crime and Statistics portray 'a culture harassed and beaten down for decades', a 'wholesale destruction of their entire social fabric' akin to Germany after the war in 1945!<sup>140</sup> It read that the Director of the (British) Anti-Slavery Society was 'particularly disturbed by allegations of police brutality against Aboriginal children', and perturbed enough to tell the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Vancouver that 'Australia's good reputation abroad is undeserved'.<sup>141</sup> It heard the NSW Ombudsman describe the Police Department as having an attitude bankrupt of commonsense and good faith in its procedures when dealing with Aborigines.<sup>142</sup>

Australia watched the eruption of frustration into riot at Brewarrina.<sup>143</sup>

In the same year SBS television presented pictures of Aboriginal sporting achievements, a black tie and gown affair in splendid colour. What it signifies (for me, at least) is this: that such respect as Australians accord Aborigines - however little it is, however grudgingly it is given - comes from their sporting prowess, not from their social organization, survival skills, music, art, lore, law, culture, their civility and civilization. Perhaps that tells us something fresh, or something else, about white Australia - and the Aboriginal experience within it.



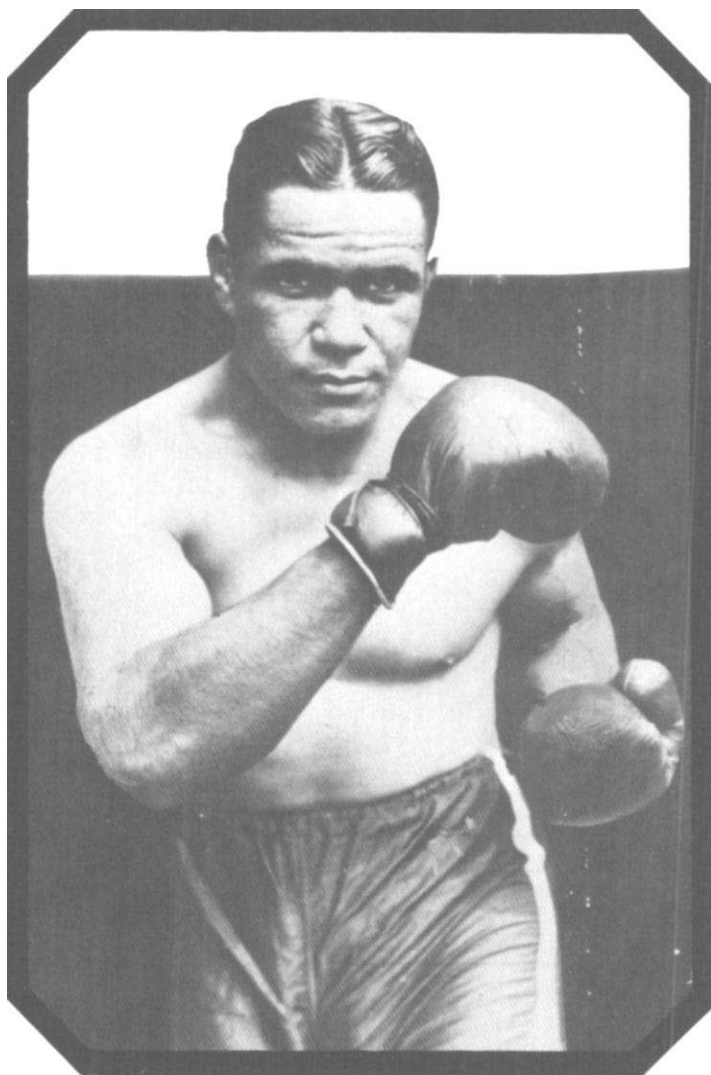
**ST MARY'S, DARWIN: FIRST PREMIERSHIP TEAM 1954-55**

Back: H Sherlock (coach), Benny Cubillo, Arthur Smith, Terry Lewfatt, Ken Bowman, Billy Roe, Terry Connolly, Brian Pobjoy, Gordon Roe, Anastasius Vigona; Centre: Edmund Johnson, Urban Tipiloura, Phillip Babui, Ted Egan (captain), Saturninus Kantilla, Jerome Kerinaua, Raphael Aputimi; Front: Jacob Pautjimi, Bertram Kantilla, Dermot Tipungwuti, Paul Kerinaua



b. BILLY ROE

**APPENDIX 1**  
**THE HUNGRY FIGHTER**



**RON RICHARDS**

'His hardest battle was for full, dignified, human status within a prejudiced community.'

— Peter Corris

He stood in the dusty showground  
Of every country town you've ever known  
He'd come in from the Mission  
Sixteen years of age, but fully grown  
He had a shilling to spend so he bought a pie  
It was then that he caught the showman's eye  
At the boxing tent on his platform high -  
And another hungry fighter was on his way  
Yes another hungry fighter was on his way

Hear the big bass drum, see the yokels come  
'Will you take a glove?' - that's what the showman said.  
'You might make a quid, wadda ya say there kid?  
You'll fight THE KILLER! Have you got rocks in your head?  
Don't you know THE KILLER'S a professional, son,  
And you say you're not insured  
But step on up, you're a likely lad  
And THE KILLER will knock your block off, rest assured  
Yes THE KILLER will knock your block off, rest assured.'

'Roll up! Roll up! Tickets for the big boxing show.  
This young darkie has dared to challenge THE KILLER.  
We have the ambulance standing by... Roll up. Roll up.  
Tickets at the ticket box... Show starting now...  
The young darkie versus the champ. Roll up. Roll up.'  
(BASS DRUM)

THE KILLER was a tired old has-been  
And even though the referee tried his best,  
THE KID soon flattened the old bloke  
Two left hooks and a right cross did the rest  
They signed him up and he joined the show,  
Three fights a day, what a way to go,  
Better than school, he was earning dough,  
And another hungry fighter was on his way,  
Yes another hungry fighter was on his way.

They took him down to the city  
And pretty soon he was fighting main events,  
Fancy suits and taxi cabs  
He'd come a long way since he left the boxing tents.  
And was he good? Best in the land  
With a knock-out punch in either hand  
And a walk-up style that they couldn't withstand,  
And the hungry fighter was really on his way  
Yes the hungry fighter was really on his way.

He won the national title  
So his managers brought in stars from overseas,  
Tough stuff but he was gutsy  
And one by one he demolished all of these.  
But he took such punishment in each fight  
It scrambled his brains, impaired his sight

His managers said: 'Kid, you'll be right',  
But the hungry fighter was on the way downhill  
Yes the hungry fighter was on the way downhill.

And then he lost his title  
But still they matched him time and time again  
And soon he gave up training  
Found a couple of drinks would kind of ease the pain  
His managers all stayed rich and fat  
They bought him a guitar and a cowboy hat  
And then a second-rater knocked him flat  
And the doctor said: 'Son. give the game away,  
Hungry fighter, give the game away.'

Hear the big bass drum, see the yokels come  
'Will you take a glove?'-that's what the showman said.  
'Now here's a jackeroo. And your name, son? Blue?  
You'll fight THE CHAMP. Have you got rocks in your head?  
Don't you know THE CHAMP ko'd that Yank  
Present world title holder?  
But step on up you're a likely lad  
I've probably never, ever seen one bolder  
Yes, I've probably never ever seen one bolder.'

'Roll up. Roll up. Tickets for the big boxing show.  
This here young jackeroo named Blue has dared to challenge  
THE CHAMP, the greatest Aboriginal fighter  
This country has ever seen.  
Blue, are you determined to go through with this?  
It's called suicide.... And he hasn't made out his will....  
Yes roll up for the big boxing show....  
Tickets at the ticket box... Show starting now!'  
(BASS DRUM)

He shuffled through the Sydney markets  
Puffed-up face, no shoes upon his feet  
Checked out all the rubbish bins  
And then a kind old lady gave him a bite to eat  
He'd been bashed last night in Redfern Park  
By a gang of thugs lurking in the dark  
And one of these was heard to remark  
'That old boong was once a fighter so they say  
That old boong was once a fighter so they say.'  
So the hungry fighter faces another day,  
The hungry fighter faces another day.

Words and Music by  
TED EGAN



APPENDIX 2  
**PASTOR DOUG**



**DOUG NICHOLLS**

'He thrilled the Melbourne crowd  
With the big white Vee upon his chest . . .'

There's a man in Melbourne Town named Pastor Doug,  
And his skin is brown and he's a gentle man.  
His ancestors have roamed all over this Australian land  
For countless centuries.  
He was born in a little place in New South Wales  
Called Cumeragunga:  
He had it tough when he was a kid,  
And he learned to do as the other kids did -  
To fight, use the knuckle.

Pastor Doug, you've had it tough,  
Used the knuckle when things were rough,  
Hit the bottle but you called 'enough',  
And then you read the Bible and that's good stuff.

This man went down to Melbourne town,  
His skin was brown and his name it was Doug Nicholls.  
It was the time of the Razor Gang,  
Squizzy Taylor and Red Malone -  
Tough place, Fitzroy.  
There was no place down in Melbourne town  
For an Aboriginal boy in Gangsterland down at Fitzroy -  
Or so they said.  
But he'd had it tough when he was a kid,  
And he learned to do as the other kids did -  
To fight, for his rights!

Pastor Doug, you've had it tough,  
Used the knuckle when things were rough,  
Hit the bottle but you called 'enough',  
And then you read the Bible -  
And that's good stuff.

This tiny Cumeragunga lad went down to the Fitzroy Club  
To try for a football.  
He thrilled the Melbourne crowd  
With the big white Vee upon his chest -  
Became a champion.  
He fought in the stadium at Fitzroy,  
And in the boxing tents, this brown-skinned boy,  
For Jimmy Sharman.  
He was the fastest thing on legs in the State,  
He loved to run and the money was great -  
Professional - win the contest.

Pastor Doug, you've had it tough,  
Used the knuckle when things were rough,  
Hit the bottle but you called 'enough',  
And then you read the Bible -  
And that's good stuff.

For a little while he lost himself,  
And he had a go at the pub's top shelf,  
It was a battle - with the bottle,  
But then the fightin' spirit came shinin' through,  
Because he knew he had a job to do  
For his people.  
He read the Bible and he read it well,  
Then he went to his people and began to tell  
How to fight.  
Because he'd had it tough and he's played it rough,  
But he's made of the best Australian stuff,  
Is PASTOR DOUG! he's a man among men.

Words and music by TED EGAN  
(words transcribed from Ted Egan's record  
PASTOR DOUG, RCA Victor, 102016, APKM-0876)

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16. See Jack Pollard's *The Formative Years of Australian Cricket 1803-93* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1987), pp 88-89, 143-147, and the Chapter 'Boomerangs at Lords - The Aboriginal Tour of England 1868', pp 148-161.
17. John Mulvaney, *Cricket Walkabout: The Australian Aboriginal Cricketers on Tour 1867-8* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967).

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21. Quoted in Pollard, *Formative Years*, p 150.
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28. 16 May 1868.
29. 26 May 1868.
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32. 27 May 1868.
33. 30 May 1868.
34. 27 May 1868.
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37. 11 July 1868.
38. 28 October 1868.
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40. David Frith, *The Fast Men* (Sydney: Horwitz Grahame, 1981), p 48.
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43. *op cit*, Blades, p 83.
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53. 'Good Weekend', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 January 1985.
54. For discussion of Gilbert, see Pollard, *Australian Cricket*, pp 433-435; Don Bradman, *Farewell to Cricket* (London: Theodore Brun, 1950), pp 48, 96, 208, 288; Frith, *op cit.*, 48, 49, 105, 115; Frith, 'The Oblivion of Eddie Gilbert' in *Bat and Pad*, *op cit.*, pp 213-215; David Forrest, 'That Barambah Mob' in *Bat and Pad*, pp 91-99.
55. Pollard, *op cit.*, p 433.
56. Bradman, *op cit.*, p 48 and p 288.
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136. See, for example, Harry Edwards, 'The Myth of the Racially Superior Athlete' in George H Sage, *Sport and American Society: Selected Readings* (Massachusetts: Adison-Wesley, 1980). pp 317-322; 'Race and Sport', chapter in Donald Chu *Dimensions of Sports Studies* (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1982), pp 182-211.
137. The 1967 Referendum was promoted as, but in fact wasn't, a 'new deal'. The Referendum resulted in an overwhelming 'yes' vote to two questions: whether the federal government should have power to make laws for Aborigines in the states (concurrently with such states), and whether Aborigines should be counted in the national census (from which count they were excluded in 1901).
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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Some of the sports discussed here are little known in North America, and in parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia. These games, and/or some of their special terms, are briefly defined.

### ATHLETICS

*Pedestrianism:* professional athletics, raced over any distance, from 60 yards to 60 hours of running. In Australia races have tended to range from 75 to 130 to 150 yards, with 300 yard races run in the last century. Virtually all Gift races are run over 130 yards, changed to 120 metres in the early 1970s.

*Handicaps:* early on it was decided to have a system of handicaps because this led to more 'sporting' contests than scratch races. Yards start were allocated on known form. and many ruses were used to gain extra yardage. In 110 years of the Stawell Gift to date, only one man has won the race from scratch.

### AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL

Also known as Aussie Rules, Rules, or 'the footy' - as if it was the only game of football. The term VFL (for Victorian Football League) is a misnomer: while the game had its origin and epicentre in Victoria, it is played strongly in South Australia, West Australia, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory. It is played with much less calibre, audience, and fuss in NSW and Queensland.

Virtually unknown outside Australia, it is watched with fanatical dedication. Described as a team game played by eighteen individuals, as a game for super-athletes, as 'aerial ping pong', as 'ballet with blood', it has enormous crowd appeal. No less than 121,696 people came to the famous Melbourne Cricket Ground for the 1970 grand final.

Devised by H C A Harrison and T W Wills in 1858, the game is played with eighteen a-side on the largest field of them all: an oval between 120 and 170 yards (110 and 155m) wide, and between 150 and 200 yards (135 and 185m) long. High marking, long kicking and hand-passing from man to man characterise the game. A goal, worth six points, is scored when the ball passes through the two centre goal posts; one point, a 'behind', is scored when the ball passes outside the centre posts and between the centre post and an adjacent behind post.

*Best and Fairest:* a prize much sought after: awarded on the votes of (usually) sports journalists, the award goes, as the name suggests, to the season's player adjudged best and fairest.

*Medals:* greatly prized, hotly contested, and awarded with solemn ritual each season. The most famous is the Brownlow Medal, the VFL award to the season's best and fairest player; in South Australia it is the Magarey, but this time for the fairest and most brilliant player; in West Australia, the Sandover is awarded on umpires' votes, and the Simpson to the best player in an inter-state or grand final match.

## BOXING

Albert Namatjira was one of Australia's most famous Aboriginal painters, a renowned and brilliant water colours artist from Hermannsburg Mission in Central Australia.

## CRICKET

There is no need to explain the objects of this strange but compelling game, this marvellous legacy of British imperialism. Some of the terms need explanation:

*Batting and Bowling Averages:* as important in cricket as in baseball, 'averages' are the inexorable measure of mankind's reverence for lists, for the rank ordering of success by numbers. Batting is measured by a player's number of matches, number of innings completed, number of times not out, highest score, total number of runs. Thus, for example, the Test batting averages of Sir Donald Bradman and a contemporary player, David Hookes:

	Matches	Innings	Not Out	Highest Score	Runs	Average
Bradman	52	80	10	334	6996	99.94
Hookes	53	91	4	193	4108	47.22

Bradman was dismissed 70 times: his 6996 runs divided by 70 gives the average Of 99.94. In other words, Bradman's average each time he batted in a Test was just short of an incredible 100; Hookes has a good average, just short of the half century.

Bowling averages are presented as the number of matches, number of balls bowled, number of runs scored off the bowling, and number of wickets taken. Thus the record of Test player, the late Ken McKay: 37 matches, 5792 balls bowled, 1721 runs, and 50 wickets - for an average of 34.42 (1721 divided by 50). Remarkably, his analysis also shows that only one run was scored off every three balls he bowled: he was, indeed, an economic bowler.

*Chucking, Throwing:* Law 26 states that 'for a delivery to be fair the ball must be bowled, not thrown or jerked' and that if the umpire 'be not entirely satisfied of the absolute fairness of a delivery in this respect, he shall call and signal "no ball" instantly upon delivery'. Baseball pitchers and fielders throw rather than bowl. Being 'no-balled' in this context means that that ball has to be bowled again: in the case of throwing, an umpire's constant no-balling virtually means the bowler can't go on, and he retires - sometimes for life.

*Duck:* to not score, to score 0.

*First-class matches:* to qualify for this label, the game must be of at least three days' duration and have eleven a-side.

WG: the initials of the nineteenth century's most celebrated cricketer, Dr W G Grace, 1848 - 1915, the hero of Victorian

England.

*Sobers*: refers to Sir Garfield (Gary) Sobers, former West Indies captain, probably the best all round (batting, bowling, fielding) cricketer of all time.

*Trundler*: a nineteenth century term for a bowler.

#### **RUGBY LEAGUE**

This is a major sport in England, France, Australia and New Zealand - far fewer nations than play the game from which it derives, rugby union. It can be called 'a war game' in that its aim is to break the 'enemy line' and to halt his advance. Somewhat akin to gridiron, it is a game of grinding advance, possession, and defence. It is spectacular, fast, bruising, gladiatorial, a running game of passing and kicking. A try counts for four points, a conversion kick two and a field or drop kick over the posts, one point. It differs from rugby union in several respects: thirteen not fifteen a-side, six not eight players in a scrum, and a tackled player can retain possession for up to six tackles. It is also professional and, importantly, ostensibly working class. The quality play is confined to NSW and Queensland.

*Rothman's Medal*: awarded (since 1968) to the NSW league season's best and fairest player.

#### **RUGBY UNION**

This strictly amateur game is much more widely known and played internationally. In Australia it tends to be played in non-government, that is, private schools; it is also virtually confined to NSW, the Capital Territory and Queensland.

#### **SOCCER**

A somewhat Cinderella sport in Australia, it has a much greater migrant than native following. Croatia, Budapest, Pan-Hellenic, Juventus, etc are ethnic-based city teams.

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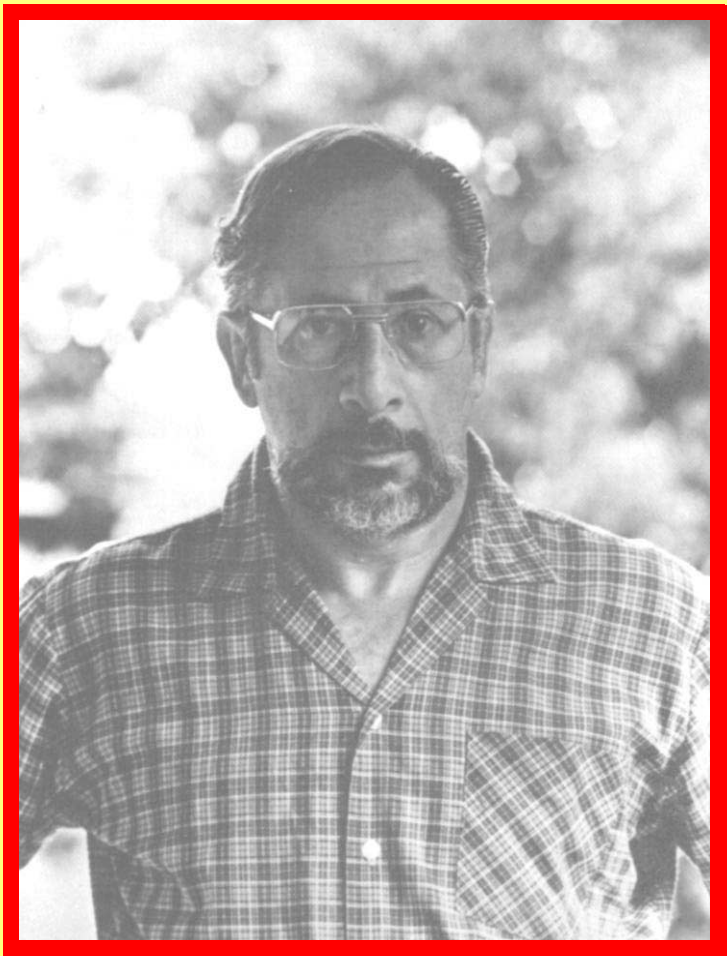
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Born and educated in South Africa, Colin Tatz came to Australia in 1961. In 1964, after receiving his PhD from the Australian National University, he founded and directed the Aboriginal Research Centre at Monash University, Melbourne. From 1971 to 1982 he was foundation professor of politics at the University of New England, Armidale, NSW; and in 1982 he took the chair of politics at Macquarie University, Sydney. He has written *Shadow and Substance in South Africa* (1962), *Race Politics in Australia* (1979), and *Aborigines and Uranium and Other Essays* (1982). He edited *Black Viewpoints* (1975) and was author in, and co-editor of, *Aborigines in the Economy* (1966), *Aborigines and Education* (1969), and *Aborigines and Uranium* (1984). Sports monographs include *Race, Politics and Sport*, *The Corruption of Sport*, and *Sport in South Africa*. As sports critic, he writes feature articles for several national newspapers. From 1985 to 1987 he was president of the Australian Society for Sports History.