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(AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND)

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Το περιοδικό φιλοξενεί άρθρα στα Αγγλικά και τα Ελληνικά αναφερόμενα σε όλες τις απόψεις των Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών (στη γενικότητά τους). Υποψήφιοι συνεργάτες θα πρέπει να υποβάλλουν κατά προτίμηση τις μελέτες των σε δισκέτα και σε έντυπη μορφή. Όλες οι συνεργασίες από πανεπιστημιακούς έχουν υποβληθεί στην κριτική των εκδοτών και επιλέκτων πανεπιστημιακών συναδέλφων.

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Steve Georgakis and Richard Light

The University of Sydney

THE ATHENS OF THE SOUTH:
SPORT IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Australia's fourth place behind the USA, China and Russia on the medal tally at the Athens Olympics is an outstanding achievement for any nation let alone one with a population of only 20 million. On a medal per 100,000 people basis Australia came second. It is, however, not a one off achievement as it followed on from fourth place in the 2000 Sydney Olympics and continues a proud and impressive record in the summer Olympics for over a century (Gordon, 2000). Australia and Greece were hosts of the last two Olympic Games and are the only two countries that have taken part in all the modern Olympics. 'Australia' even competed in the first modern Olympics before it was actually an independent nation. The impressive sporting achievements of Australia at an international extend beyond the Olympics and across a range of sports and particularly in team games where, for example, Australia is the only country to win two Rugby Union World Cups and is the dominant nation in cricket.

Much of this success in international sport can be attributed to the well-organized national development program structured around the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) that was introduced after Australia's poor performance in the 1976 Montreal Olympics. However, Australians have been winning events in the Olympics for a century. In a country obsessed with sport it is the place of sport in Australian culture that we see as making the biggest contribution to international excellence. Richard Cashman (1995) called Australia 'a paradise of sport', a utopia for sporting participation and spectatorship. All over the country at any given weekend men and women, boys and girls, are playing team games like rugby league, soccer, cricket, netball, Australian football, surfing,

engaging in surf life saving, playing informal touch football and beach cricket, throwing and kicking balls, walking or jogging (Stoddart, 1984). They are also involved as spectators and consumers of sport. Sport permeates the language of Australians and forms a dominant part of social discourse. Keith Dunstan (1973) one of the first academics to pay serious attention to sport noted four decades ago:

Sport is the ultimate Australian super-religion, the one thing every Australian believes in passionately. Sport is wholesome. It can do no wrong. It builds stronger Australian men and women, and, best of all, it spreads the fame of Australians overseas. It helps to unify Australia as a nation (p. 3).

Few countries in the world, if any, are so enamored with sport but not just with one sport such as soccer. This article briefly explores the position of sport in Australia and the reasons for its prominence. The first part of the article deals with the reasons why sport became so institutionalized in the make-up of Australian society. The second part of the paper looks at the changing face of Australian sport in the last forty years within the context of globalization and the commodification of sport.

THE PLACE OF SPORT IN AUSTRALIA

Since the inauguration of the 'Australian of the Year' award in 1960, athletes have received the award on twelve different occasions: swimmer Dawn Frazer in 1964; racing car driver Jack Brabham in 1966; boxer Lionel Rose in 1968; tennis player Evonne Goolagong in 1971; swimmer Shane Gould in 1972; marathon runner Robert De Castella in 1983; solo yachtsman Kay Cottee in 1988; cricketer Allen Border in 1989; runner Cathy Freeman in 1998; cricketer Mark Taylor in 1999; tennis player Patrick Rafter in 2002 and cricketer Steve Waugh in 2004. This is the place that has been afforded to sport. The first Australian film on record was an account of the 1896 horse race the Melbourne Cup, a spectacle that has been filmed every year since then. It is 'the race that stops a nation' and is important enough for the state of Victoria, where it is held, to declare a public holiday. American writer, Mark Twain, traveling in Australia at the time was astounded that the Melbourne Cup had such an appeal that it could bring the entire nation to a standstill (Twain, 1897). In fact this was the first in a plethora of films dealing with Australian athletes, their exploits and sporting themes including films such as *Dawn!* (1979), *Phar Lap* (1983) and *The Club* (1980) to name a few. *Gallipoli* (1981) the most acclaimed film dealing with the fatal landing at Gallipoli uses sport to build the

profile of the two main protagonists. National sporting events have even figured in moments of great national contention and include boxer Les Darcy who died in mysterious circumstances in the United States in 1916; the 1932-33 Bodyline cricket series; the Springbok Rugby Union tour of Australia in 1971; and Trevor Chappell's underarm delivery in the 1981 Cricket match against New Zealand. People still argue about these matters because they are important to Australians

Australia's involvement in the modern Olympic movement provides a good example of the importance of sport in Australia and its excellence at international level. Since the re-establishment of the modern Olympic Games in 1896, Australians have a proud and unique involvement. Australia hosted the Olympic Games on two occasions, Melbourne in 1956 and Sydney in 2000, and along with Greece are the only two countries to have represented at all Olympic Games. Edwin Flack won two gold medals at the first modern Olympics in 1896 Games while the first women to represent were Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie, who respectively won gold and silver at the 1912 Stockholm Games and ever since Australian athletes have excelled at the Olympics (Gordon, 1994). The Sydney Olympic Games were unanimously acclaimed as the best games ever.

Sport in Australia is associated with politics and political leaders gain stature from their association with sport and sporting personalities. Former labour leader and prime-minister Bob Hawke pleaded with all Australian employers to give their employees a day off work to celebrate after Australia won the America's Cup Yacht Race in 1983. Australia's current Prime Minister, liberal John Howard called cricketer Donald Bradman, the greatest Australian that ever lived; though some people were inclined to find this judgment intemperate. In fact any attempt to nominate the most important aspects of Australian identity must give sport a prominent place.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT IN AUSTRALIA

Since the first fleet arrived in Australia in 1788 there have been waves of immigrants to Australia, at first from Great Britain, followed after World War II by a flood of Europeans and in the last two decades settlers from Asia and the Middle East. Today Australia is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, with ethnic groups that arrived two centuries ago living alongside ethnic groups that arrived in recent years (Sherington, 1988). Australia is made up by a number of different ethnic groups. It was only natural for the various ethnic groups to bring their own cultural baggage, which of course included sporting traditions. Mosely and Cashman (1997) traced the sporting activity of the pioneering ethnic groups and noted for example that Germans introduced gymnastics;

North Americans built numerous bowling alleys, the most famous one at Eureka; while Norwegians introduced skiing in the Snowy Mountains in 1860. This is one of the reasons while there are wide and varied sports in Australia.

Although it was the British in the nineteenth century that were the most numerous and Australia, as an offshoot of British nineteenth century society, did not escape the mother country's new obsession with sport. That is, the modern games revolution began in England and many of the world's modern sports had their rules codified in Britain. Holt (1990) deals with the history of British sport since 1800 and illustrates how sports changed and what they meant to ordinary people in that period. Scholars such as Mangan (1981 & 1986) went further and demonstrated how these sports were transplanted around the English-speaking world. Australian scholars such as Vampley and Adair (1997) and Cashman (1995) illustrate how these sports grew in the Australian context. An expansion of the development of the colony occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century at a time when the English faith in the capacity of sport to teach valuable social and moral lessons. The overwhelming majority of settlers to Australia were British so it is not surprising that these settlers brought with them their sports and their faith in sport. At a time of concern the effects of a threatening environment and the convict origins of the population sport rose to prominence as a means of helping develop a civil, and strong society. Early colonial newspapers give clear evidence of the robust Australian sporting tradition that was being established and there are detailed descriptions of horseracing, boxing, pedestrianism and pub sports associated with gambling. Although much of it was borrowed the different physical environment and society gave rise to a distinctive Australian way of sport. While Australian sport may not be unique (apart from Australian football and polo cross), as many Australians believe, there was clearly an identifiable Australian way of sport in colonial times that emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Organized sport was an integral part of the Australian social landscape during the decades from the gold rushes in the 1850s to World War I. It was also central to the development of national identity in the lead up to Federation in 1901. This was the time when settlements grew and in particular educational institutions were being accepted. Many of Australia's leaders in wide and varied fields such as politicians, entrepreneurs, businessmen, clergymen and educators believed sport had an important role to play in Australian culture. Australia developed as a colony, rather than a prison, and sport became increasingly important in the construction of positive image of white Australians. They patronized sport and they encouraged the establishment of sporting traditions. Sport became one of the strongest cultural ties with Britain, and Australia measured much of its social progress by its success in games. This was particularly so with cricket.

Despite the dominance of sport in social and cultural life there have, from the beginning of settlement in Sydney, been critics of Australians' 'obsession' with sport. This was particularly marked with intellectuals such as writer Henry Lawson who suggested in 1893 that:

The average Australian boy was a cheeky brat with no ambition beyond the cricket and football field; the average Australian youth a weedy individual ... with a cramped mind devoted to sport'; and he suggested he thinks more about Carbine than one-man-one vote (Lawson, 1971, p. 167).

Lawson in fact like so many other luminaries believed Australians were so obsessed with sport that it subsumed all other cultural pursuits and he cast doubts of sport's central and prominent identity in Australia. Lawson further noted:

In a land where sport is sacred
Where the labourer is God,
You must pander to the people
Make a hero of a cod (Dunstan, 1973, p. 2)

Critics have continued to find fault with Australia's obsession with sport up to and including the present. In 1980s Patrick White vented his frustration with the place of sport in Australia:

...today, the sight of thugs writhing in the mud and bashing the hell out of one another in the name of sport has perhaps become part of our national 'coltcher'... A great number of Australians always seem to be running to or from somewhere – city-to-surf in my native city... This passion for perpetual motion: it is perhaps for fear that we may have to sit down and face reality if we don't keep moving?

This ongoing criticism of an obsession with sport has had little impact upon most Australians. Brian Fitzpatrick (1956) half a century ago noted that: 'The Australian people made heroes of none, and raised no other idols, except perhaps Ned Kelly, an outlaw, and Carbine, a horse' (p. 209). With comparatively little military, political or economic influence on the world stage sport was, and is, the one thing that Australians could compete successfully with the rest of the world.

SPORT AS EDUCATION

Schools and other educational institutions such as universities played a central and crucial role in the promotion of sport. The growth in the idea of sport as a vehicle for education was most noticeable in the Public school system. The Public school emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century in England where sport became an essential part of the education of societies future leaders. Independent schools in Australia emulated the English school with sport being introduced from the 1880s. Australian schools recruited heavily from the English public schools and the old established Universities such as Oxford and Cambridge where a games cult was already in full swing. Mangan (1981) and Sherington (1986) clearly demonstrate how this ideal was diffused through the Australian independent schools in the later half of the nineteenth century. Cricket, rowing, rugby and athletics became an important part of the school curriculum and in the role of the formation of a boy's character. Educational ideals such as 'athleticism' and 'muscular Christianity' became a major part of the ethos of these schools. Schools built playing fields and interschool sporting competitions were established in a number of sports. The establishment of associations to manage competition between the schools followed this. The leading boys' schools such as Melbourne Grammar, Scotch College in Melbourne; Sydney Grammar School and Newington College in Sydney; and Brisbane and Ipswich Grammar Schools were great promoters of sports. For a number of years they functioned as a nursery for players in sports such as Rugby Union, Rowing, Australian Rules football and Cricket. Sport in the elite independent schools was also very clearly linked with the amateur ideal and guided by a view that sport imparted valuable social and moral lessons.

Rugby and rowing in the GPS (Greater Public Schools) schools of Brisbane and Sydney have along history as prime mechanisms for educating the sons of the ruling classes and of turning boys into particular types of men (Light & Kirk, 2000, 2001). Sport in these schools has long been seen as a means of developing the types of attitudes and morals needed for the future leaders of society. Catholic schools also adopted this sporting ethos and after the establishment of the Australian Marist Order in 1872 sport was elevated even higher (Connellan, 1986). In the three decades after 1852, when mass compulsory schooling was adopted there was also a need to introduce physical education and sport to students in government schools. While the non-government schools advocated the playing of team sports, in government schools gymnastic regimented type instruction was introduced, as government schools did not have the infrastructure or money to mirror what was happening in the corporate school system (Kirk, 1998). But the Australian state schools are distinctive for having sports afternoons as distinct from gymnasium hours in the European way. Sport was played in some government schools

from the 1920s and became universal practice in government schools following the end of World War II.

Universities played an important role in the growth of sport in Australia. University staff and students were great advocates of sport. For example, the University of Sydney which was established in 1852, formed the first Rugby Union football club in Australia in 1865 and was a key player in making this sport the most dominant winter code in Sydney until World War I. What is important to note is that sport was encouraged through widespread participation because through playing the game, rather than watching it, important moral training would occur. Sport was an important part of this socialization. By the time the Sydney University Sports Union was established in 1890 there was already a robust sporting tradition which operated at intervarsity, intercollegiate and interfaculty levels, even though students only numbered a few hundred. While there is an enormous amount of literature on sport and the history of sport, there is surprisingly little of its educational dimensions.

CRICKET AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

While it is well documented that sport has been an important aspect of Australian society since early settlement, and as Australian society has changes so has the sport that is played. It is debatable whether the indigenous people to Australia had their own sporting traditions (Tatz, 1987; Whimpress, 1998). What is documented is that the first international cricket touring Australian team was an Aboriginal side in 1867-8. The London newspaper, *Sporting Life*, (16 May 1868) noted:

They are the first Australian natives who have visited this country on such a novel expedition, but it must not be inferred that they are savages... They are perfectly civilized, having brought up in the bush to agricultural pursuits as assistants to Europeans (p. 2).

Cricket was the first team sport played in Australia and is considered the only true nation-wide Australian sport. Cricket was the most British of British games and appealed to an Anglo-Celtic society, which largely drew its cultural and political inspiration from Britain. Unlike the situation in England, the game cut across class boundaries. Newspaper reports note that cricket was played as early as 1803, although the first club was established in 1826 – the Australian Cricket Club. In the following decades other clubs were established across Australia and due to improved transportation and communica-

tions it became the first inter-colonial sport when Victoria played Tasmania in 1851. While the national English cricket team toured in 1861-62 and 1963-64 the first team to tour England was composed entirely of Aborigines in 1868, and played 47 matches. In that year convict transportation to Australia ceased and the tour took place ten years earlier than the first white Australian cricket tour. During this period it was acceptable for Indigenous and white players to play cricket but increasing belief in the capacity for sport to maintain and develop a civil society did not fit well with views at the time of Aborigines as a race degraded by the environment. By the 1880s Aborigines were wiped out of cricket (Whimpress, 1998).

As many historians have suggested, Australian cricket matches against the mother country England (called Tests) help stimulate and forge an Australian identity (for example see Stoddart, 1988). The colony expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century when the British faith in sport's capacity to build character and engender positive social learning was very strong. At a time of anxiety over the future of the colony in what was received as a threatening physical environment and the convict origins of the new settlers sport emerged as a means of ensuring a civil society. Perhaps the first notable example was when Australia won their first match against England on English soil with the majority of the team comprised of Australian-born including one of the first sporting stars Fred Spofforth (Cashman, 1990). Sporting success has been one of the most enduring symbols of Australian progress and in this way has contributed directly to the maintenance of Australian sentiment. In the 1920s and 1930s cricket reached its zenith due to three reasons: The first was the emergence of Donald Bradman, secondly the bodyline series of 1932-33 and thirdly radio broadcasting (Sissons & Stoddart, 1984). As a summer sport cricket was never rivaled at either participation or spectatorship level. It is still the only real national sport and Australian teams have been dominant for over a decade.

THE FOOTBALL CODES

One of the most peculiar aspects of sport in Australia is that there are four different football codes played, each with its own history. On a Saturday afternoon, in places such as Wagga Wagga, a town situated between Sydney and Melbourne, it would be quite common to see all these four codes operating within viewing distance of each other. Although the only code played that can be truly called an Australian sport is Australian Rules Football, which was, had its rules codified in 1859 and in 1877 the Victorian Football Association (VFA) was formed in order to control the game in the state of Victoria (Blainey, 1990). In 1897 the Victorian Football League (VFL) was formed by

eight of the leading clubs in order to make it more viable and appealing to spectators. Australian football has not grown beyond its home country but is easily the dominant game in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. It is the most popular football code in Australia (Hess & Stewart, 1998). In this particular game the oval shaped ball can be kicked and punched but not passed as in either of the Rugby codes.

Rugby Union football was imported from Britain in the 1860s and became the major code in both Queensland and New South Wales. Because of the public school and university links rugby union football was always a class-based sport, which tried to uphold its amateur status. In 1874 the Southern Rugby Football Union was established to govern the game and set the rules in Australia (Derriman, 2003). The first intercolonial game was played in 1882 between New South Wales and Queensland and a district style competition was introduced in 1900. In the early 1900s the middle-classes tried to keep firm control over the management of the sport, even though the working classes exerted considerable effort to allow greater representation in decision making (Pollard, 1984).

This eventually led to a split in 1907. This was a decade after the same class-based split between the north and south of England into rugby union and, eventually, rugby league. In Australia the professional code of rugby league was patronized by the working classes and focused on making the game an entertaining spectacle while rugby union continued a focus on sport as a means of developing preferred social and moral attributes. Initially rugby league struggled to survive but eventually became the most popular winter code in both New South Wales and Queensland. With an eye to making the game more appealing to spectators rule changes were developed. Two such changes included making the code less technical and keeping the ball in play more. In 1908, the national rugby league team, the Kangaroos, toured Great Britain and this helped the game flourish. The code became popular in working class cities such as Wollongong and Newcastle (Whiticker, 2004). Interestingly, the Rugby League competitions continued during World War I, whereas the rugby union suspended its competitions. Rugby union retreated to the schools of the socially privileged until 1995 when a push from the Australian, New Zealand and South African unions led to the professionalization of the game. Since then rugby union has flourished as a valuable global media product. This is most noticeable in the Super Fourteen provincial competition between teams from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa funded by Australian media magnate Rupert Murdoch.

The fourth code, soccer football was imported from Britain and the first game played was in 1880 in Sydney between the Kings School and a team called the Wanderers. Historically the sport has been associated with immigrants and working class culture. The New South Wales English Football Association was created in 1882 and was responsible for Australia's first intercolonial match, with New South Wales playing Victoria in 1882.

Soccer remained a blue-collar workers game throughout its history in Australia and was always considered a foreigner's game (Mosely, 1987 & 1995).

SPORT AND THE AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT

Many factors have contributed to the prominence of sport in Australia such as the settlement and expansion of the colony during a time of the games ethic in Britain and the gender imbalance in the early days of the colony with far more men than women. The unique Australian landscape and its climate also played a significant part. The generally hot climate encouraged outdoor pursuits such as sport. In this way Australia is more like Greece than Britain or northern Europe. There is no part of Australia, at least no urban centre that effectively closes down in the winter. Snow does not fall on the cities except occasionally Hobart. In North Queensland it gets very hot, but that has not prevented sports from being played, any more than heat has prevented sport in Rio de Janeiro. There was, and still is, a generous supply of open flat land available for playing sport. Even some poor planning with through Sydney's growth is seeing a lack of playing fields available for junior sport, Australians generally have open access to sporting fields and facilities and the climate allows all sport to be played year-round.

Australia vies with its much bigger rival, the USA, for the title of best competitive swimming nation in the world. 20 million versus almost 300 million does not sound like a fair match but the prominence of swimming in Australia has produced a long line of world and Olympic swimming champions. All children are expected to be able to swim and all schools have to ensure that their students can swim and Australians have had a close attachment to the water for 200 years (Light & Rockwell, 2005). With more than 10,500 beaches and surrounded by water, the environment has encouraged an attachment to water from 1788 (Light & Rockwell, 2005). In 1838, the NSW government prohibited bathing in waters exposed to public view from six am to eight pm. Moralists argued that daylight bathing was a threat to public decency. In 1902 William Goucher, an editor of a local newspaper, *The Manly Daily*, advertised the intention to defy the law and bathed during daylight hours on three occasions with a crowd of over a thousand watching his last swim. He was arrested but not charged and this led to the repeal of this very unpopular law in 1903. The subsequent surge of bathers saw a rise in drownings and this led to the establishment of the Surf Life Saving Association (SLSA) in 1907 and the subsequent growth of surf clubs throughout Australia. (Booth, 2001) Almost a century later there are over 100,000 members of surf clubs in Australia with 25,000 volunteers patrolling over 400 beaches and 70,000 children enrolled in the nippers (junior surf life

saving activities). The SLSA is a unique aspect of Australian Culture (Light, 2006). Significantly, the image of the bronzed surf Lifesaver featured in the closing ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.

The surf life saving movement celebrates a 100 years since the first surf clubs were established in 1907 (Bondi, Bronte and North Steyne) and it is a truly unique aspect of Australian sporting culture. In addition to the unique nature of surf clubs and their performances in competitive swimming Australians also have an outstanding record in competitive surfing. Unlike Greece, Australia's 25,760 kilometres of coast is all pounded by surf from different oceans and there are over 10, 500 beaches. Eighty five percent of Australians live within 90 minutes' drive of the beach and all of the major cities lie on the coast. It is therefore, no surprise that surfing is a very popular pastime in Australia.

In the 1880s Polynesians taught Australians in Sydney how to body surf and at the turn of the century a few intrepid individuals were attempting to surf using massive solid timber boards. It was, however, not until 1915 when Duke Kahanamoku provided a surfing exhibition at Freshwater beach that it became popular. The Duke was also an Olympic champion swimmer and had been invited to Australia to show his technique. At the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm he was late for the final of the 100 metre freestyle race and was only allowed to compete on the insistence of world champion, Cecil Healy, from Sydney. The Duke defeated Healy to win the gold and they became good friends. The Duke wanted to pay Healy back by showing his people how to surf.

During the 1956 Melbourne Olympics an international surf life saving carnival was held at Torquay, near Melbourne. Some of the US team from California provided an exhibition of 'hot dog' surfing on their 9-foot fiberglass boards at Torquay and at Avalon in Sydney. The boards were technologically way ahead of what Australians had been surfing and enthused many young Australians. One of them who watched the exhibition at Avalon, 'Midget' Farrelly, began surfing the next year and went on to win the first World Championships at Manly Beach in 1964. Since then Sydney has produced more world champions than any other city in the world. Surfer, Layne Beachly, from Manly beach recently won an incredible six women's world championships in a row.

WOMEN IN SPORT

Unlike other nations where women did not have a voice in sport, Australian women were represented in sport and their contribution for the most part has been acknowledged and documented (Weaver, 1991). Although latecomers compared to male sporting traditions, women began to involve themselves in croquet, golf, tennis and fencing by the end of the

nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century their presence was being felt in team sports such as cricket and hockey and corporate schools did make substantial provisions for sport (Stell, 1991). Netball, which for almost a century has been the most played sport in Australia was a game designed by women for women. Netball was developed, as a modified version of basketball and up until the 1970s was known as women's basketball. Middle-class women in Australia and Britain developed rules and styles of play suited for women, which encouraged feminine attributes, and the game was less robust than basketball. The All Australian Women's Basket Ball Association (AAWBBA) was established in 1927 to administer the sport and it quickly became the most popular winter sport for females. In 1937 the first international match was played against a New Zealand team. State and national leagues have also existed for a number of years. The high participant player numbers never translated into paying spectators, and the sport never received much attention in the media. (Stell, 2004).

CHANGES IN THE MEANING AND PRACTICE OF AUSTRALIAN SPORT

Processes of globalisation over the past forty years accompanied by the commodification and commercialization of sport have seen much change in the practice and cultural meanings attached to sport in Australia. The traditional model of sport as a means of developing positive social and moral learning exists in tension with the model of sport as a valuable national and global media product (Light, 2001). Tied in with accompanying demographic change this is reshaping sport in Australia. Prior to the First World War, almost 60 per cent of all Australians lived in the major cities on the eastern seaboard (Frost, 1990, pp.15-17). By the twenty-first century this figure had grown to 90 per cent. Unlike cramped, modern and densely populated cities in Europe and Asia, Australian cities boasted space and lots of green areas. Adelaide boasted the grand Adelaide Oval by the time the first English cricket team arrived. The conditions in Australia were also quite favourable for the establishment of robust sporting traditions. It is a vast and flat continent, and many of the cities and towns build with sporting facilities and leisure areas in mind. The tendency for most of Australia's history has been for the working day and the working week to be short, so that plenty of time has been available for leisure activities including sport. This period is coming to an end now, as legal changes require workers to put in longer and longer hours. At the same time the wealth in Australia was quite equitably spread, so that the poorer could still enjoy something of the lifestyle of the richer. This situation is also coming to an end; and the distribution of wealth undoubtedly now favours the rich.

In the last forty years the meaning and practice of sport has moved away from an emphasis on moral value toward the provision of entertainment. Rugby Union was the last major sport to turn professional in 1995 and it has rapidly adapted to become a valuable media product with a television audience of 2 billion for the 2003 Rugby World Cup held in Australia. Proponents of amateur sports had always argued that the mixing of sport and money would corrupt the educational and moral values of sport. While this is open to debate there is no doubt that sport has changed. After the retirement of the legendary Don Bradman cricket had declined in popularity by the 1970s. The owner of channel nine, the late Kerry Packer, made a bid for the broadcast rights to the cricket that was five times that of the government channel, the ABC. The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) declined the offer so Packer set up an international organization in competition, World Series Cricket (WSC). This involved the introduction of matches played over one day instead of five days, coloured uniforms instead of white and a range of changes all designed to make the game more entertaining. The ACB eventually sought a truce and sold the broadcast rights to Packer but cricket had already changed forever.

Under threat by poaching of its best players by the professional rugby code, rugby league, the Australian Rugby Union along with the unions of New Zealand and South Africa approached media magnate, Rupert Murdoch to finance professional rugby and in 1996 the southern hemisphere professional, provincial competition, the super twelve, was launched. It has been very successful and has involved a range of rule changes and a very professional approach to its promotion and marketing. Rugby has also changed forever in Australia and now threatened rugby league in NSW and Qld. Ironically it is now rugby union that is poaching the best rugby league players such as Wendell Sailor, Lote Tuqiri and Mat Rogers.

Television ensures that the codes are not dependent for their revenue upon a large audience at the game itself. The games have also been adapted to enhance the entertainment value and games have been modified to make it more entertaining. In sports such as basketball time-outs needed to be taken to coincide with commercial breaks reflecting the influence of the US model of sport as entertainment. The entertainment also includes: cheerleaders, pre game and half time entertainment, music and big screens. In the old order, players were expected to play and serve their local club although players now are traded from team to team and sometimes from code to code.

Australia's success in hosting the Olympic Games in 2000 was assumed to bring financial spin-offs such as heavy investment and increase in tourism to the nation. So the political response was to pour more and more money into sport. Although this political investment has increasingly been directed at the high performers, rather than at mass

participation. This is a logical imperative and if sport is no longer about moral training, then mass participation in sports activity is no longer hugely significant. But if sport is about television audiences then attracting spectators through the performances of the elite few are a necessity. There is therefore no longer need to institutionalize universal participation in school sport. Rather money and effort goes into the elite athletes and elite competitions. Since spectatorship, not mass participation, is the goal, it is hardly surprising that the incidence of obesity and physical inactivity are very high. Australia although having some of the great sportsmen in the world has in fact the second highest incidence of obesity in the world. Moral health is no longer the motivation.

There are of course differences in the media appeal of sports with those such as horse-racing, cricket and football, and tennis and swimming most popular. Netball is the most popular participant with females but has been relegated to the least popular timeslots of the ABC on Saturdays and gets far less coverage in the print media than the football codes or cricket. Then there are other sports, even Olympic sports, at which Australians perform respectably, even excellently, but are scarcely reported by the media: pistol-shooting, sculling, equestrianism. Then there are sports which are disapproved of by the media, such as boxing and wrestling and, at the bottom are drag racing and martial arts. These get only occasional coverage and the reporting is usually derogatory, even when the athlete is world champion. The strangest anomaly is the almost total disregard of track-and-field events: there has been almost no interest in these unless the athlete is a female runner such as Cathy Freeman or Jana Pittman. The core sports in the Olympic Games, as we might call them, are sadly neglected. While swimming has always been very popular as a spectator sport track and field has never really grabbed the attention of the sporting public apart from good performances at the Olympic Games or the Commonwealth Games.

This hierarchy of sports privileges traditional Anglo games. Soccer, once a respectable game for the Anglos, though a minority game, was shunted downwards when the Europeans established their clubs post-World War II (Mosely, 1995; Georgakis, 2000). It became the place for lectures on fanatical and violent ethnicity, especially after the English hooligans ruined a number of sporting occasions overseas, the most notable being the 1984 European Soccer Club Championship Final at Heysel Stadium in Brussels. But apart from soccer, the old English games, especially those played by schoolboys and fondly remembered by the generations that were young before 1970, are the ones that have the kudos.

CONCLUSION

Sport has always been the stuff of conversation between men, and increasingly now between women. It is a far richer topic than the weather. New visitors to Melbourne are warned that before taking a taxi they should be informed of the weekend's AFL results and have some team to name when the taxi driver asks who they barrack for: a prudent choice is Collingwood. The importance of sport in Australia insensibly shapes people's consciousness and affects their behavior. An early instance of this appears in the account of the Chinese Empire Reform Association's picnic in Melbourne on February 7, 1905. The Association had its rooms in Russell street and counted some 300 members, many of them having cut off their pigtailed. According to the *Leader*, at the picnic held at Aspendale: 'Sports of all kinds were engaged in, including foot racing, shooting and tug-of-war, in which the young Chinese showed great enthusiasm'. The foot race for the ladies was won by Miss Cheong. Very little of this was traditional in China, and the novelties may be accredited to Australia's sporting culture. And so it has always been, sport the great leveler, sport the nexus between people. Within living memory, young Australians were instructed by their elders never to talk about politics, religion, and sex. But sport was a safe and never controversial topic, at least until 1971 and the Springbok tour.

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