

Getting the Balance Right: Professionalism, Performance, Prudentialism and Playstations in the Life of AFL Footballers.

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Acknowledgements

The limited size of our research sample, in terms of organisations and Clubs, and of officials, members of various executives (AFL, AFL-PA), and players, requires that we vigorously pursue the process of anonymising our informants. As a result we cannot acknowledge the contributions of individual participants in this research.

However, we are indebted to all of these participants, who gave freely of their time, and of their various, and often considerable, experiences and insights into the sports entertainment industry that is the AFL. The research would not have been possible without these contributions, and we hope that we have faithfully represented their contributions – although it is our task to analyse these contributions, and individuals, if they recognise themselves in this report, might very well not agree with the analysis we develop.

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Executive Summary and Introduction

This report presents the findings of a research project funded by the Australian Football League (AFL) titled: *Getting the Balance Right: Professionalism, Performance, Prudentialism and Playstations in the Life of AFL Footballers*. The research was conducted during 2004. The research explored the following issues: the emergence and evolution of a 'professional identity' for AFL footballers – an identity that has many facets including the emerging ideas that a professional leads a balanced life, and has a prudent orientation to the future, to life after football: the idea that this 'professional identity' isn't *natural*, and must be developed through a range of 'professional development' activities (a common link to *all* other 'professions').

What it means to be a 'professional footballer' is a product of the negotiations between different individuals and groups about why players should adopt this identity, and the forms of work necessary to produce this identity. Identity is multi faceted. In this research two, closely related, aspects of a professional identity are important.

Being professional: Preparing for life after football

Contemporary ideas about 'professional development' for AFL footballers include an encouragement to develop a prudent orientation or disposition to the future - in an occupation that can 'cut you off at the knees' (or the groin, or ankle, or back...) at any time without warning. An ability to adopt a prudent, risk aware relationship to present and future circumstances is a particular issue for AFL footballers who - at an age when other young professionals might imagine a career that stretches 40 years into the future - have to develop a future oriented disposition to a career that might span 10 years. In this context the AFL and AFL-Players Association invest over \$1.5 million p.a. in various education and training activities undertaken by players (AFL-PA 2004).

Being professional: Doing something to fill your day

AFL footballers are increasingly encouraged to develop *balance* in their life – a balance that would enhance their effectiveness and performance, and thus contribute to their club/team performance. Footballers are being encouraged to develop an orientation to themselves, and their team/club, that requires them to undertake some form of training or education, get a job, do community based activities - almost anything to counter the 'Playstation Syndrome' that witnesses players struggling to fill their days with activities other than training and video games (Oakes 2003). It is claimed that developing this 'duty of care', as an aspect of what it means to be a professional footballer, would then contribute to improvements in individual, team and club performance.

The research we report on was designed to incorporate the perspectives of participants across three different, but interacting, layers of involvement in the AFL. The first layer comprised representatives from those involved in the *management and regulation of the industry*; the second layer examined the perspectives of *club level coaching and football department staff*; while the third layer involved *the players themselves*. Within these layers, we sampled a cross section of perspectives and

opinions about what it means to be a professional AFL player and how this identity is best managed. It is from interviews with these groups and individuals that the following discussion and analysis is drawn.

The research indicates a number of things, but primarily it suggests that tensions exist between, and within, these different levels of the industry about what it means to be a professional footballer at the start of the 21st century. These tensions produce further tensions about how this identity might best be developed, and the responsibilities that different individuals, groups and organisations have for facilitating player professional development. These and other issues will be examined following a brief account of the research methodology. The analysis will be presented within the following framework:

- **Section 1: Early, Mid and Late Career: Distinct Phases in an AFL Playing Career**
- **Section 2: Education, Training and Player Professional Development: Trying to Avoid the Shane Warne Syndrome**
- **Section 3: List Management, Player Management, Risk Management: Some Important Issues for Player Professional Development**
- **Section 4: Practices and Processes at the Club and Industry Level: Making a Concrete Commitment to Player Professional Development**

Coaching, management and development in the pursuit of performance will always be things that are debated. So too will be ideas about what it means to be a professional footballer, and how this identity can be developed. These debates indicate the difficulties of establishing direct, unequivocal, cause and effect relationships between the many variables that impact on performance. The report will argue that the many complex issues that shape player performance and development (on and off the field) can best be understood by focusing on the relationships between a player's Body, Mind and Soul. The report is structured by the view that the individuals who want to play football at the elite level, who want to develop an identity as a professional footballer, need to be understood, developed and coached as a complete package, as young men who are more than the sum of the parts of their Body, their Mind and their Soul

Work-Life Balance, Performance and the Body, Mind and Soul of the AFL Footballer

The research was informed by the view that to develop an identity as an AFL footballer means bringing together, or developing different elements of the person. The concept of Body, Mind and Soul attempts to name the separate, but intimately connected elements that constitute the person that is a professional AFL footballer. This desire to find a means to talk about the different elements of the person reflects the ways participants in the research talked about different attributes or characteristics of players - their bodies, their abilities, their smarts, their brains, their coachability, their character, their values, their ethics, their courage.

There is no particular type of person who can be identified as a professional AFL footballer. While footballers share many things in common, they are also all individuals who are different in a variety of ways, and require different orientations to their development and coaching.

Given these similarities and differences we think that it is useful to organise our report via the concept of Body, Mind and Soul. What this concept does is focus our attention on various aspects of the person at the same time as it forces us to consider how these elements contribute to a more *complete* understanding of the young men who strive to develop an identity as a professional AFL footballer.

If we understand the person in this way then we can consider how these different elements can be managed, developed and coached in the pursuit of elite performance in a high profile, sports entertainment industry.

The Body presents itself, and what it can do, as something that can be objectively and scientifically defined, described and developed. It can be made stronger, repaired, trained, cared for, understood by the individual and by others whose job it is to get it out on the field each week.

The Mind also presents itself as something that may be described, measured and understood in these sorts of scientific frameworks. It presents itself, or is described in terms such as 'coach-ability' or 'teach-ability', or 'football brain'. It can be developed and moulded by concerns for decision making, accountability and discipline – both on and off the field.

The Soul, in the way we are talking about it, should not just be thought of in 'spiritual terms'. It presents itself as something that is obvious, but hard to describe. Words such as character, attitude, work ethic, courage, and moral judgement indicate what we are describing here. The Soul is an intangible concept that presents great problems for scientific measurement and definition.

At the same time as the players, coaches, Club officials and industry figures we interviewed talked about the relationships between these individual elements, they were attempting to put these elements back together. This process of rebuilding was

related to developing a sense of what constitutes a complete AFL footballer, or someone with the potential to become a complete footballer, *a complete package*.

What emerged in these discussions was that all of these elements are important in making up the person capable of becoming a professional AFL footballer. However, each of these elements can look different in different individuals. Each of these elements must be developed differently in different individuals. Importantly, the rate, or stage of development, of each of these elements can be *in*, or *out of synch* in the individual. These elements may not be so much *in* or *out of synch* as in different *states* – fit, injured, tired, young, mature, motivated, unmotivated, stale, switched on, at its peak, in its prime, on the ball, hard at it, strong, balanced, focused, confident, *or not*.

The research suggests that if we accept the usefulness of this concept then there is a need for different approaches to the development of these elements, and the *complete package*, at different stages in an AFL footballer's career. This issue will be revisited throughout this report.

There are a range of ideas from various fields that we can draw on to expand or explain our interest in this concept of the Body, Mind and Soul. In many organisations, including AFL clubs, we can witness various experts claiming some authority to classify, to measure, to diagnose and to predict in relation to these dimensions of the person. This need to diagnose and predict is increasingly linked to concerns to maximise the performance of individuals so that the performance of organisations is maximised.

In management and organisation studies discussions about Performance Management increasingly focus on such things as occupational health and fitness, performance recovery, professional development and ideas about work life balance. Interestingly, many of these discussions draw on observations of performance by elite athletes, and the possibility of applying these observations in non sporting contexts.

The Corporate Athlete

In a corporate environment that is changing at warp speed, performing consistently at high levels is more difficult and more necessary than ever. Narrow interventions simply aren't sufficient anymore. Companies can't afford to address their employees' cognitive capacities while ignoring their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. On the playing field or in the boardroom, high performance depends on how much people renew and recover energy as on how they expend it, on how they manage their lives as much as on how they manage their work. When people feel strong and resilient – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually – they perform better, with more passion, for longer. They win, their families win, and the corporations that employ them win.

Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz (2001) *The Making of a Corporate Athlete*, *Harvard Business Review*, Vol 79, No 1, pp120-128

Expertise and authority in this context rests on the capacity to identify particular elements in the puzzle of performance management and development. In some instances this tendency to break down performance into a variety of discrete elements that can be coached, strengthened, managed or developed shifts attention from the complete package. Performance elements can become the province of specialists who do not necessarily understand, or consider, these elements as existing in a complex, evolving system of many elements – a person.

It is possible to see this tendency to specialism in performance management and development in AFL Clubs. Most obviously these experts include medical staff, strength and conditioning staff, and staff responsible for managing diet, recovery, etc. The Body is the focus here. Football skills, and the Mind of players, are largely the province of the coaching group, who are concerned with the coachability, or teachability of players.

In the quest for increased performance behaviours, values and emotions have become objects to be examined and analysed to understand motivations, satisfaction and performance. In this view the management or coaching of these aspects of the person becomes a central task for many organisations intent on improving performance. An additional area of interest from this point of view is related to the types of knowledge that are used to understand the inner life of individuals. We can identify this broad body of knowledge as an *expertise of the soul*. What Nikolas Rose has called *engineers of the soul* – psychologists, consultants, counsellors - are increasingly influential in many organisations, including AFL clubs.

Nikolas Rose (1990) *Governing the Soul*, Routledge, London

This way of thinking about the package that is the professional AFL footballer also enables us to connect to ideas that education, training, management and coaching – as pursuits and processes that have much in common – all involve a '*struggle for the soul*'.

Thomas Popkewitz (1998) *Struggling for the Soul*, Teachers College Press

These processes involve an ongoing struggle to *know* the person being coached, or trained, or managed, or educated, and to use this knowledge to better develop this person. In the context of an elite, competitive, physical, *work environment* such as the AFL, this struggle is also one for the Body and the Mind. It is a struggle for different parts of a whole. A whole that is, in the end, much more than just the sum of these parts.

This struggle exists at a number of levels. At one level it is about finding the ways to encourage or lead the individual or the group to where you want them to be. This struggle is dependent on the parties involved, and their capacity to communicate and work effectively together – *to be on the same page*.

At another level it is a struggle characterised by the search for new ways of thinking that promise to provide the insights and the means to produce better outcomes, to increase or maintain performance, to deliver some sort of competitive edge.

Finally, it is a struggle in the sense that not all people in the Club, in the industry, or in the media that commentates continuously on different aspects of the industry, agree about the elements that are most critical to performance or to gaining competitive advantage. Not only that, they don't necessarily agree on what constitutes the best means to develop or manage these elements in the pursuit of high performance.

These struggles will not go away. They are on-going. They are part and parcel of the game and the industry. In the intense, mass media environment of the sports entertainment industry that is the AFL, these struggles are very public ones, ones that are judged on a week to week basis. Indeed, careers – particularly at the Club level – are made or broken on the capacity of individuals and groups to manage these struggles.

In this environment questions of balance in players' lives – between different areas of their lives, between their Body, Mind and Soul – constitute an emerging and significant arena of struggle in the pursuit of performance. This report makes a significant, but largely preliminary, contribution to identifying, analysing and understanding these issues.

Section 1: Early, Mid and Late Career: Distinct Phases in an AFL Playing Career

This section of the report will present findings from the research that suggests it can be useful to talk about different phases in an AFL player's career. Preliminary, pre-research discussions with the AFL-PA were important in developing our categorisations of these career phases. From these discussions we determined that it was appropriate to describe these phases in the following ways:

- Early Career players – zero to four years as an AFL player (some players we interviewed were in their 1st pre-season after drafting)
- Mid Career players – 4 to 8 years as an AFL player
- Late Career players – 8 plus years as an AFL player

Players at Clubs involved in the research were sampled by these categories. These phases provide a framework for thinking about how one to four year players, for example, may have different ambitions, hopes, needs and motivations, to players who have been AFL footballers for eight or nine years.

In many respects this might be stating the pretty obvious. Coaches, officials, players and administrators often work with these understanding anyway. Training, conditioning and recovery sessions look different for different players at different stages of their careers. People management and welfare practices also look different, in general, for early and late career players.

However, the report argues that a more formal recognition of these sorts of distinctions about different phases in a career can be incorporated into ongoing, and future discussions about player professional development practices. Particularly if these discussions explicitly acknowledge that development during a career should make reference to the *Body*, *Mind* and *Soul* of AFL footballers. Future discussions should also be framed by a recognition that just as the *Body* of players needs to be understood differently at different times of a career so too does the *Mind* and *Soul* of players.

This section of the report will discuss a variety of issues under each of the following headings:

- **Early Career Players: Is it possible to put an old head on young shoulders?**
- **Mid Career Players: Is my football career safe, or should I be renovating some houses, or doing a Certificate II in Horse Handling?**
- **Late Career Players: Should I stay, or should I go now? Do I have a choice?**

Section 2: Education, Training and Player Professional Development: Trying to Avoid the Shane Warne Syndrome

In this section of the report we discuss a number of issues to do with the involvement of AFL players in a variety of education and training processes. These processes:

- fall under a number of broad categories of activity;
- have a number of different motivating forces
- have different levels of involvement by different groups of players
- have different types and levels of industry support and involvement, and;
- have different degrees of investment by individuals and groups in the industry connected to perceptions of the relationship of these activities to the core business of football - *Its not that important!*

Education and Training, in this context, can be related to individual player enrolment in a TAFE short course or Certificate course. An enrolment that is driven by interest in the subject area, or by a sense that current industry expectations of players suggest they should be looking to do something to set themselves up for a life after football, or to give them some balance in their life. This also applies to player enrolment in a University course (degree or diploma) - though this sort of involvement tends to be a longer term commitment, and be restricted to more academically oriented individuals.

Education and Training can also refer to the sorts of workshops and seminars that the industry has put in place to *educate* players about issues that the industry sees as important.

In all of these categories of Educational and Training activity there is a common theme that is of interest to this report. All of these activities can be seen as targeting the Mind of AFL players – even if the object of these activities might be the Body or Soul of the individual and the group.

Many of the questions that are raised and discussed in this section confront educators, trainers and adult educators in various educational settings:

- How do you engage people in learning, rather than just having bums on seats?
- What constitutes a good professional development activity?
- Is the right information enough to change values, beliefs, attitudes?
- How do you get 21 or 31 year old males who aren't that motivated to turn up to and get involved in lectures/workshops/seminars?
- How do you evaluate success, or otherwise, in relation to many of these different Education and Training activities?

What is of particular interest in this section are the ways in which two of this report's key organising concepts can be considered together to inform a more sophisticated discussion and analysis of education and training activities for AFL players. The connection here is between the following ideas:

1 An AFL career has different phases – Early, Mid, and Late

2 *The Body, Mind and Soul of AFL players, as different parts of a complete package, need different approaches to management, coaching and development at different times*

The report argues that discussions about Education and Training should concern themselves with identifying and using the relationships between these key concepts to better target, develop and deliver appropriate and effective professional development activities for players

In this section these issues and questions will be discussed under the following headings:

- **Work-life balance and the influence of Education and Training on performance: Core business or a distraction?**
- **Education and Training and different phases in a football career: What am I ready for now?**
- **Professional development in preparing to be a footballer: It's more than the game**

Section 3: List Management, Player Management, Risk Management: Some Important Issues for Player Professional Development

This section of the report will provide an analysis of the forms of risk management that clubs recognise as being important in the processes of list and player management that they have to engage in as a consequence of current AFL regulations.

It is evident from the research that the risk management issues associated with list and player management involve explicit discussions, and evaluations, that are related to the Body, Mind and Soul of players who might be recruited to a Club, and who must then be managed once they are on a list.

The research produced evidence of tensions between the paternalistic, profiling and reporting elements of various risk management practices at the Club level– in an environment where what it means to be a professional footballer is taking on new forms. The AFL sports entertainment business is more than a game, and the key participants in this business are more than athletes. They are professionals whose contemporary job descriptions have widened beyond the physical and character attributes necessary to the tasks of running, jumping, tackling and kicking. Character traits indicating capacities to handle celebrity, relative wealth, free time, demands from sponsors, clubs and the industry, assume more prominence in deciding who to recruit, who to keep on the list, who to spend time, energy and resources on developing.

In turn, these capacities, or the character traits that indicate the potential to develop these capacities via a variety of professional development (PD) activities, become important elements of risk management discussions in recruitment and development processes in clubs. Development of a professional identity, of a capacity to adopt a prudent disposition to life after football, and of a capacity to achieve balance between different aspects of your life, proceeds through a career that has its origins in these discussions and processes.

The analysis in this section indicates that Clubs are increasingly concerned with managing a variety of risks associated with recruitment (via the draft and trading) in an environment that is structured by restrictions on the size of the playing list, the salary cap, and the ways in which playing lists can be changed over time. If it is more difficult within these regulations to recruit, retain and manage a successful mix of the right people, how do you identify and manage the risks associated with recruiting and retaining individual players?

This part of the report will discuss a number of issues related to these concerns under the following headings:

- **Talent Identification: An Inexact Science**
- **Player Development Managers and Player Profiles: PDM expertise and issues of privacy and responsibility**
- **An elite competition or a competition for elites?**

Section 4: Practices and Processes at the Club and Industry Level: Making a Concrete Commitment to Player Professional Development

The final section of the report moves from a focus on individuals or groups of players, towards a focus on the ways in which Clubs and industry groups (such as the AFL-PA) structure various processes and practices that impact on player professional development.

This impact can be positive and/or negative. Various practices and processes can facilitate or hinder aspects of player professional development.

Our reason for examining these practices and processes is that at the Clubs we conducted research in Football Departments did things differently in relation to a number of activities that had a direct bearing on the support of professional development activities.

These processes at the Club level are driven by the pursuit of performance at the team level, and the different understandings that coaches, other Football Department officials and players have about how to achieve this performance – in the short, medium and long term.

For some coaches the focus is on core football business. Other non football aspects of professional development are not as important, so are not supported with Club practices. For other coaches balance in a player's life and non football development are important and actually considered to be intimately connected to core business – players are said to perform better if off field behaviours and activities provide a balanced lifestyle. Senior Coaches are significant, often the most important, influences on shaping Club practices and attitudes to player professional development.

This section of the report will argue that these team level interests and pressures are fundamental to shaping the environment in which players prioritise and make decisions about their professional development: about the development of their *Body*, *Mind* and *Soul* as a professional footballer. In this section these issues will be discussed under the following headings:

- **The AFL-PA: Education and Training Grants, Career Counselling and Next Goal programs**
- **Club Level Processes: Player Development Managers (PDMs) and their roles**
- **Club Level Processes: Leadership, Mentoring and Learning the Culture of the Club**
- **Club Level Processes: Weekly timetables – My time, Club time**

List of Recommendations

Conducting the Research

The qualitative approach we have taken in this project has provided powerful insights into the issues that we set out to identify and analyse. Underpinning our approach to research design was a desire to look below the surface of what is observable to explore the perceptions and attitudes that support it. Here, we sought to generate *rich* detail about various relationships, processes and practices shaping player development – the tensions, contradictions and possibilities that emerge in various settings and which influence player development and the possibilities this development has for enhancing work-life balance and performance.

The primary means of data collection in this research involved face to face interviews with some of the key stakeholders involved in the development of professional identities for AFL players. In accordance with the ethical research guidelines monitored by Deakin University, all interview participants were voluntary, and agreed to be involved upon full disclosure of the nature and implications of their participation. Core to the contract of participation was our commitment to preserving the anonymity of individuals. All interviews were tape-recorded and subject to full, or selective transcription.

At the heart of the qualitative methodology is an invitation to understand the lived experiences of others through their own perspectives. Taking an industry perspective we constructed our investigations to incorporate the perspectives of AFL participants across three different, but interacting, layers of involvement. The first layer comprised representatives from those involved in the *management and regulation of the industry*, the second layer took in the perspectives of *club level coaching and football department staff*, while the third layer involved *the players* themselves (see Table One over page). From within these layers, we sought a cross section of perspectives and opinions about what it means to be a professional AFL player and how this identity is best managed.

Table One: Total number of participants interviewed

<i>Industry Level</i>	<i>Sample Description</i>	<i>Total Interviewees</i>
Management & Regulation	AFL Executive	3
	AFL-PA Executive, Education & Welfare	5
Football & Coaching Departments (at three clubs)	Coaches	15
	Football Department Managers	3
	Player Development Managers,	3
	Recruiting Managers	3
Players (at three clubs)	Early career	11
	Mid career	13
	Late career	12

Interviews with coaching and football department staff were conducted at three Clubs (with representation from two States). One to one interviews were conducted with General Managers of Football Departments, Recruiting Managers and Player Development Managers (PDMs) while group and individual interviews were conducted with Coaching Staff, and player leadership groups. All of these participants were invited to discuss their perspectives on a range of issues and processes related to the delivery of professional development for AFL players, across the different phases of their careers. One on one interviews were conducted with a representative group of players from across the three Clubs. These interviews focussed on their desires, needs, expectations, experience and understandings of what it means to be a professional player, and how their professional identity is developed - or hindered.

The qualitative data we gathered provided new insights into the issues that we identify. In this type of project this data is as scientifically valid as quantitative measures that might seek some sort of multi-variate, statistical validity in establishing certain cause and effect relationships across a large sample size. Our data is different and seeks to establish different things through its ability to generate richer detail about various relationships, processes and practices shaping player development – the tensions, contradictions and possibilities that emerge in various settings and which influence player development and the possibilities this development has for enhancing work-life balance and performance.

This type of analysis can be presented in a number of ways. We have chosen to identify a number of key themes or issues that have emerged from the research. Using these themes as headings we have grouped together a number of sub themes or issues that are related to the larger themes.

- **Section 1: Early, Mid and Late Career: Distinct Phases in an AFL Playing Career**

- **Section 2: Education, Training and Player Professional Development: Trying to Avoid the Shane Warne Syndrome**
- **Section 3: List Management, Player Management, Risk Management: Some Important Issues for Player Professional Development**
- **Section 4: Practices and Processes at the Club and Industry Level: Making a Concrete Commitment to Player Professional Development**

These themes emerged from pre-fieldwork discussions with representatives of the AFL-PA and the Clubs who supported the research; from the fieldwork interviews; and from discussions and interviews as the fieldwork developed and we were able to reflect on the data that was being gathered.

We hope to establish through this report that this is an appropriate and powerful means to identify and discuss some of the key issues related to the professional development of AFL players in what is an increasingly high profile sports entertainment industry.

This way of presenting the data also enables us to maintain the anonymity of participants. We are able to take excerpts from the research interviews to illustrate the theme without identifying the individual or the Club.

Research Note:

The research instruments developed for this research and used to structure the various interviews that were conducted during the fieldwork phase are included as Appendices in this section of the report.

Appendix 1:

**Schedule of Questions: Player Development
Managers, Coaching Group, Football Department
Managers, Player's Leadership Group.**

Issues Influencing Player Performance

In December 2003 Greg Baum wrote an article in *The Age* (Saturday Dec 13, Sport p.2) titled: *A rising star until his world turned, and few saw him falling*. A sub-heading read: *He was young and hopeful, a football star in the making. A few years later, he was still young but broken. When did the game stop being a game?*

The article is a fictional account of the progress of what Baum calls the *average career* of a professional player in the AFL sports industry. Baum traces this career from schoolboy dreams to the lead up to the draft:

One by one, the big clubs came to him with their pampering and their propaganda and their new boots. They told him what they could do for him, and what he could do for them. They asked him questions, ticked off answers. After a while, they all began to sound the same. Next player, next club. Next, please.

At the draft, he was not a name, but a number. This was new, and did not feel so much like a game...He was drafted across the country, away from his family, away from his friends, to a club he had loathed when footy was just a game, but now had to learn to love...Think of it as an industry he was told. You've graduated, and now you have your first posting. But if it was an industry, he thought, it couldn't be a game.

At the start of his career Baum's fictional professional has injury problems, trouble settling in a new city – He played some games, but without confidence and not well. Questions were asked, but no answers ticked off now...He tried to study but could not concentrate. He felt lonely, and sometimes homesick

Over the next few years he struggled to 30 games without ever feeling after one that he was certain to get another. He heard his name mentioned in trade speculation, saw his reputation torn to shreds on websites...At length, he was traded. A year later, he was traded again. At each new club he was Humbled to be there, proud to don the colours, looking forward to the challenge, but it sounded more hollow than ever. He was not even a number now, just a second-hand name in an unforgiving game...Sometimes, he felt as if he was not living from year to year, but draft to draft. Sometimes he felt as if he was not a person, but a nomination

In the end the business of moving clubs and cities was wearying, and he always felt like an outsider anyway...he retired, still young, but broken. He read somewhere that this was a typical career...one day it occurred to him that it had been a long, long time since footy was just a game.

1. Rank, from Most Important (1) to Least Important (6), what you think are the main positive influences on *player performance*.

- Football ability
- Being involved in something other than playing or training – such as media work, education/training, business ventures, voluntary or community work, etc
- Attitude or character (commitment)
- Relationships with coaches
- Relationships with team-mates
- Relationships with partner or spouse, and dependents
- Family background

2. Rank, from Most Important (1) to Least Important (6), what you think are the most important factors (leaving aside injury) in determining whether a player has the average 30 game career or one that spans 10 plus years?

- Football ability
- Being involved in something other than playing or training – such as media work, education/training, business ventures, voluntary or community work, etc
- Attitude or character (commitment)
- Relationships with coaches
- Relationships with team-mates
- Relationships with partner or spouse, and dependents
- Family background

List 3-5 of the most important player management issues for each of the following groups of players

Early Career (1-4 years)

Mid Career (4-8 years)

Late Career (8+ years)

Indigenous

Players who Relocate

Players with High Media Profile

Judging/Predicting/Measuring/ Player Performance

List up to (5) Key Performance Indicators for each of the following cells

	Team	Individual
On Field	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Off Field	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Schwab strengthens his focus (Jake Niall. The Age 19/072003)

*Schwab thinks he's a better coach, "much better", actually, than 15 weeks ago, partly as a consequence of the tumult that he, **Hank Bulger** and Hawthorn have endured in a strange, heavily scrutinised season.*

Schwab's campaign for premiership glory (Mark Robinson Herald Sun 6/12/2003)

***M.R:** I can't remember a coach, a club and a captain under so much pressure in one season. Can you?*

*P.S: No. It was the most scrutiny I've come under in my coaching and Shane (Crawford) would've felt that as well, with all the **Hank Bulger** stuff. But the expectations were higher than what they've been.*

***M.R:** Crawford said recently that during all the **Hank Bulger** stuff, he went to you and asked if you wanted him to stop acting.*

P.S: I can't remember him asking, but if he did, I would've said, 'No, it's irrelevant'.

If you were on the coaching staff at Hawthorn, and at round 10 your team was 3 –7, and your Captain was under the pump for his on screen activities and their negative influence on his on-field performance, what would you do?

Responsibilities Associated with Player Development and Welfare

Leigh Matthews wrote an article in the Brisbane *Courier Mail* on Saturday August 16, 2003 titled *If a player mucks up don't blame the footy club or AFL system*

In the article he wrote about the issues that came up if a player *mucks up* off the field. *It might be a bit too much to drink, driving a bit fast, or gambling excessive amounts. Nothing that would be newsworthy if not for the accompanying "AFL player" tag...when the odd player does muck up two things always seem to happen. It is highly publicised. And his club will be held accountable as if everything a player does becomes the club's responsibility'.*

and *'the AFL industry comes under the media and public microscope as if the sport is somehow to blame for the occasional footballer who does the wrong thing'.*

In the article he said that most young men who are not AFL players have to rely on family and friends for support while *'the average AFL player, has a personal manager, his club's welfare department, and the AFL Players' Association to be there for him in his time of need'. Three separate sources of support available to every AFL player...Maybe that's a problem in itself. A combination of club, manager and AFLPA provides a support network that can inadvertently stop some players growing up and learning how to stand on their own two feet. Some, at times, can become too dependent on those around them and when they emerge from the football system a small minority are not quite ready for the "real" world.*

He finished his article by suggesting that *'next time a player mucks up -- and it will happen occasionally and no club is immune -- don't automatically blame the club or the AFL system. Maybe we should go straight to the parents. Or the players' personal manager. Or, even better, the player himself...Don't use the fame and fortune that comes from being an AFL player as a convenient scapegoat for dysfunctional behaviour.*

Rank in order from Most Important (1) to Least Important (8) who is responsible for managing or dealing with these sorts of player welfare/development issues.

The AFL

The AFLPA

The Club

The Football department at the Club

Player Agent/Manager

Team mates

Player's family or partner or friends

The Player

Appendix 2

Schedule of Questions: Early, Mid and Late Career Players

