

# THE YORKER

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Rules of the Melbourne  
Football Club  
May, 1859

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## COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

"A CODE OF OUR OWN" CELEBRATING 150 YEARS  
OF THE RULES OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

BY GILLIAN HIBBINS AND TREVOR RUDDALL

## THIS ISSUE

This is our first football season issue of the Yorker since 2002 and what better time to revive it than to celebrate the 150th anniversaries of the drafting of the rules of Australian football and the first football match on the current Melbourne Cricket Ground. We feature research articles commemorating the events of 150 years ago by Gillian Hibbins and Trevor Ruddell. You can explore more of the 1859 story of Australian Football in the feature displays on level 1 and 3 of the Pavilion.

These are supported by Ross Perry's remembrance of the great Australian cyclist and dual Olympic champion Russell Mockridge and an examination of football board games by Eric Panther.

## VALE STANLEY BANNISTER

It is with sadness that we record the passing on April 7 of MCC Library volunteer Stanley Bannister at the age of 80. Stan joined the Melbourne Cricket Club in January 1981. A frequent attendee of events and a regular visitor to the Library on match days, Stan would come in early to meet friends or have a read and do some research.



He'd always have a chat to the library staff on duty and it was through this contact that Ross Peacock, my predecessor as MCC librarian, invited Stan to put his name on the Library volunteers waiting list. It wasn't too long before his number came up and in early 1995 Stan commenced what he called his "Tuesday duties" with the volunteer corps.

Stan was willing to have a go at most tasks – accessioning new items into the collection, reviewing books for our journal *The Yorker*\*, assisting with research

for speeches or helping re-shelve books or lateral file items. However, his favourite task was research and he thoroughly enjoyed his work on the library match-day fact sheets.

Stan had an outstanding knowledge of sporting events at the MCG, gathered from his decades of regular attendance. He was a volunteer who was fascinated by statistics and interesting anecdotes and was a perfect candidate to assist with the fact sheets. He would work with Tom Wanliss, alternating the rounds in the AFL competition, drafting some interesting stories about past matches between the teams or a memorable incident or player achievement.

Stan and Tom's work helped establish the fact sheet as a "must have" for members on a match day, with people visiting the library after they'd found their seat so they could collect their sheet and settle in with a greater understanding of the history behind the day's contest. As a mark of respect we dedicated the fact sheets to Stan for the AFL round after his passing.

He was a hard worker who gave so freely of his time, efforts and knowledge, but Stan really enjoyed the chance to gather with his

colleagues. He loved bringing his wife Phyl along to the annual Volunteers' Luncheon, and he was especially proud the year that he was presented with his 10 years of volunteer service plaque.

You've never seen such a happy smile as when the President of the MCC shook his hand, passed over the award and said "Well done, Stanley!" Of course Stan was wearing his beloved club volunteers' blazer. On "blazer days" as he would call them, he would whisper to me as he strolled past: "Tummy in, chest out with pride."

Of course he was wearing the blazer on his proudest day as a volunteer, March 15, 2006. Stan was selected as the Library volunteers' representative to help welcome the VIPs to the MCG for the opening of the Commonwealth Games.

I was responsible for meeting Stan, gathering the three others chosen from the MCG volunteer tour guides and helping them into the stadium to the right location and touch base with the organisers (then hide behind a few pillars and wait and try to watch the proceedings!).

All went very well, Stan was proud as punch and very pleased having welcomed HM The Queen, TRH the Duke of Edinburgh and Earl of Wessex as well as the PM, the Premier and a host of visiting dignitaries.

He was resplendent in blazer, naturally, and it was the volunteers' blazers that caught the attention of the royal couple and they asked Stan about its origins and what tasks the volunteers performed. After the formalities were over I had to weave the volunteers through the crowd to their seats to watch the opening. It was a magical afternoon and evening and I know how proud Stan was to do this task on behalf of his colleagues in the library.

The funeral service for Stan was held at St James Uniting Church in Box Hill South on Tuesday April 14. It was attended by more than 300 to support Phyl and family, with strong representation from Bennetswood Bowling Club, Elsternwick Cricket Club, the Australian Club, neighbours from his retirement village and the Melbourne Cricket Club.

I know there will be many times when we will chat about Stan during our work, especially over a morning cuppa. Indeed, rounding everyone up for morning tea would have been Stan's favourite volunteer duty. He'd politely catch everyone's attention and then announce in a very official voice... "Morning tea will be held today... in the library".

Yes, I can just picture the volunteers and staff passing the iced vovos and raising our cups in his honour. Vale Stan, may you have eternal rest.

**DAVID STUDHAM**

Melbourne Cricket Club Librarian

\*Note, Stan's final book review is printed on the back page of this issue



# “A CODE OF OUR OWN”

“Football, as played in Victoria, is now fit to run because we seem to have agreed to a code of our own...” James Thompson, *Victorian Cricketer's Guide for 1859-1860*

“Football seems to be coming into fashion in Melbourne, and, as it is a manly and amusing game, we hope that it may continue to grow in favour until it becomes as popular as cricket. To lookers-on a well contested football match is as interesting a sight as can be conceived; the chances, changes and ludicrous contretemps are so frequent, and the whole affair so animated and inspiring.”

*The Herald* August 16, 1858

**Football came to Melbourne not long after its settlement in 1836.** Early historian Edmund Finn (Garryowen) suggested that the earliest account of a football game was an impromptu match (after a Hurling game between Irish immigrants representing “Clare” and “Tipperary”) at Batman's Hill on July 12, 1844.

“The hurlers had a glorious day's fun, and footballing was (for the first time) introduced after a piece.”

Garryowen however did not regard the 1844 game as the first football match. He wrote, “Occasional private football matches used to come off, but no regularly advertised trial of “footing” was known until the 26th August 1850, when there was a numerous convention of “kickers” at Emerald Hill” [South Melbourne].<sup>1</sup>

This game was organised by Dal Campbell and Frank Stephens who captained and selected the sides. There are features of this match that seem representative of the period. The teams of an equal number were scratched by the captains – first pick determined by the toss of a coin and two sides of 11 chosen from the 200 that presented. In this case the players were required to pay a ten shilling entrance fee and the winners shared the prize money of £11.

Often such games were played on public holidays or as celebrations such as the sporting festival of five days to celebrate Port Phillip's separation from New South Wales as the colony of Victoria.

On November 16, 1850, the Separation Sports and Games were held at what is now Southbank, made easy to reach by the new Princes Bridge opened the day before. The football match was the final event. The twelve a-side players paid 2/6 to enter and the winner's prize was £15. It was held on the Melbourne Cricket Ground on the south bank of the Yarra where the Ground was located between 1846 and the move to its present site in 1854.<sup>2</sup>

Melbourne's papers advertised such sports near taverns using sport to encourage patronage. “An Old English Sports” event opposite the White Horse Hotel [Bourke Street] on Boxing Day 1850, advertised the sixth event, A Grand Foot Ball Match, with the line “kick who can for a barrel of ale”.



*The Argus* November 19, 1850

The football match was scheduled after greasy pole climbing, racing in sacks, and pig racing. It must have been a profitable day's work for the proprietor for another similar event took place the following Easter Monday.

In the early 1850s a number of football conventions seem to be widely recognised by the participants. Games were generally contested between two teams of equal number and goals were used to determine the winner. They were similar to those games being played in England or Scotland.

**English and Scottish emigrants brought football with them in their cultural baggage.** In the history of English football, historians first concentrated on the English public (private) schools which had developed individual football games suited to the size, shape and space of the grounds they had available.

It is only in the last few years that the research of revisionist English historian, Adrian Harvey, has identified at least 80 teams playing football matches in England in the 1840s and 1850s which were not from public schools.<sup>3</sup>

It would seem that Melbourne imported both types, public school games and those from more ordinary places. In particular the latter are important in the context

of the start of Australian Rules if one speculates that most of the young gold-miners swamping the 1850s colonial population probably had earlier either seen or played in a football match in England or Scotland.

1 Garryowen, *Chronicles of Early Melbourne* vol 11, pp. 677, 747-8  
2 A. Batchelder. *The Yorker*, no. 30 Spring 2001

3 A. Harvey, *Football, the first one hundred years: the untold story*, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 58

Recent evidence from Castlemaine in 1855 supports the long-held view that the gold-diggers probably played football. Doubtless more research will go into investigating football in the gold fields.

FOOT-BALL – On Saturday last a match at foot-ball came off on the Camp Reserve, between Lieut. Paul, Mr. Naylor, and twelve soldiers of the 12th. and 40th. Regiments and an equal number of diggers. Owing to the extremely wet state of the ground, their running was very precarious and no end of upsets ensued, some of them of a rather forcible nature.

After kicking some two hours with no advantage on either side, the ball burst, and so the match terminated. The return "kick" comes off on the same ground tomorrow, and we cannot refrain from expressing our satisfaction at the good feeling evidently subsisting on this goldfield between two parties lately so antagonistic on others, [the Eureka battle].

During the afternoon we did not hear one hasty or angry word on either side, and a parting glass "all round" testified the continuation of the evidently predominating feeling.

*The Mount Alexander Mail* Castlemaine September 28, 1855

Harvey has identified Yorkshire, and Lancashire, as having 55% of the teams most active in the 1840s and Hampshire, the border counties, or London, as well as Yorkshire, as those areas in which football was primarily often played in the 1850s.

Most teams were based on local pubs, some formed in occupations and a small number had developed out of existing sporting clubs.<sup>4</sup> They celebrated an occasion, or were arranged near a hotel to allow a publican to sell his drinks, or just contested for enjoyment or prizes.

These irregular team games were often organised in advance with an agreed stake and basic rules such as even-numbered sides, a specified number of goals required for victory, (usually best of three), a time limit, imaginary lines as boundaries and no offside rule. Some teams had specific field positions and some would practise beforehand.

The games that we know of in Melbourne had similar features. Research will now focus on the backgrounds of some of our early footballers to ascertain if they may have had knowledge or experience of such games. An example is Tom Butterworth who was from Rochdale in Lancashire which Harvey cites as having a football team.<sup>5</sup> Butterworth was elected to the Melbourne Football Club committee in 1859 and captained some early matches.

So was Alex Bruce who came from Glasgow although we know little about early football in Glasgow. It is known that the students at Glasgow University played "a rough and tumble game" of football in 1855;<sup>6</sup> it had existed since 1851. In this context it is no wonder that football games in 1858 found a favourable response in Melbourne.

There were also men who played football who came from the English public schools. It seems they provided players for the South Yarra and St. Kilda "clubs" which played in 1858. Two such footballers were Thomas Fellows and Reginald Bright who had been to Eton College and played in the wilds of South Yarra near what is now Fawkner Park.

**'An ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory' said James Mark (Jerry) Bryant**, advertising that he would produce a football for young men welcome to play one Saturday afternoon in July 1858 in what was then known as the Richmond Paddock, just north of the Melbourne Cricket Ground and south of his Parade Hotel which still exists as the MCG Hotel next to the Hilton in Wellington Parade.



**Hotel in Wellington Parade once known as the Parade Hotel**  
*Courtesy of the East Melbourne Library*

Bryant was probably following the common English custom of a publican promoting sport near his hotel to encourage hot and thirsty cricketers, athletes or footballers to refresh themselves, not to mention the spectators.

However it was more than just astute marketing. Born in England, Bryant had been a professional Surrey cricketer and, as a result, may well have joined the very early Surrey Football Club organised by the Surrey Cricket Club Secretary, William Denison. It was one of the earliest English football clubs to have printed rules. Bryant was certainly a captain of many of the scratch matches organised in 1858 after his offer of a football was enthusiastically accepted.

**The English now began to contemplate establishing a national code.** The English public (private) schools had long had their own football and once railways arrived in England, it became possible to have inter-school games and inter-university games and a common code was necessary. The trouble was the schools would not give up their own sacred rules.

In the December and January of 1858 a debate was aired in letters to the sporting paper, *Bell's Life in London*. These excerpts supply some of its flavour.

*Juvenis*: "All the large grammar schools of our country which ought to serve as models for the rest, play with peculiar laws of its own. Smaller schools choose their own rules in the same manner... Now why should not football be regulated by fixed laws as well as any other game?"

*The editor* suggested Eton rules should be adopted and provoked much response in which all agreed on the desirability of universal rules of football but had reservations.

*From Floreat Rugboea*: "Rugby rules are printed and, as I am sure that Rugbeans would never agree to take their rules from any other school, why could not Rugby rules be played everywhere."

<sup>4</sup> A. Harvey, op. cit. chapter 3

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> J. Hutchinson, *Sport, Education and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century Edinburgh: the Emergence of Modern Forms of Football*, Sport in History, vol. 28, December 2008



*An Old Wykehamist*: "I cannot but regard any attempt that may be made to give the Rugby rules a wider field of action as at once an ill-advised measure and a step in the wrong direction."

*A Wykehamist*: "The game called football was played at a school called Winchester which I believe was in existence several centuries before those of the schools which your correspondent has named [Eton, Rugby, Harrow and Marlborough], and was also the model for Eton."

*Red Jersey*: "The Rugby rules are such that a goal is seldom kicked, and the result, if they were adopted, would be that almost all the matches played would be drawn."

*Floreat Etona*: "I am sure Eton would conform to no other rules than its own, which are now adopted at the universities and by the officers of several regiments. There are matches now between Oxford and Cambridge, Oxford and Eton, etc. which conform to the Eton Rules."

*The editor* concluded: "We should have seen with pleasure some proposition for a generalisation of the rules, but there seems no disposition to concession on any side." Abusive letters led him to close the correspondence.

Of this debate, *Bell's Life in Victoria* in March 1859 noted under its Report from England: "An attempt is being made to assimilate the law governing the [football] game in the different public schools so as to admit of matches being played, but it does not appear likely to be successful."<sup>7</sup>

Melbourne had not the same concentration of public school footballers as could be provoked in England and here was a fine example from the mother country for the colonials to follow. Seven weeks later in May they did just that.

It took the English another round of pugnacious public school letters in 1863, this time in *The Field*, *The Farm and the Garden*, before the other English football clubs ignored the schools and agreed on the Association (soccer) code. By then, Victorian Football rules were well established. If the English had not divided into Association and Rugby, would they have agreed on a code similar to the Australian one?

**Tom Brown's School Days** by Thomas Hughes was set at Rugby School which Hughes had attended and was first published in 1857. Its strong story and Christian message that athletics encouraged spiritual strength as well as physical strength, was well received. The novel sold several editions quickly and was exported to Australia in 1858.

Early in July 1858 Melbourne Grammar's Headmaster, the Rev. Dr. John Bromby, read Tom Brown's School Days and was impressed. He shed a tear and confessed to his diary it was "a noble work and very pathetic withal".<sup>8</sup>

Wrote *The Argus* in August of 1858: "Let those who fancy there is little in the game, read the account of one of the Rugby matches which is detailed in that most readable work *Tom Brown's School Days* and they will speedily alter their opinion."

Of a game played in the Richmond Paddock, the *Herald* in August 1858 reported: "Whether it is from a natural love of the game, or admiration of Tom Brown's description of a football match in the inimitable *School Days*, we certainly have not witnessed for a long time so much enthusiasm and real enjoyment in an outdoor game, as was shown on this occasion."<sup>9</sup>



Tom Brown's first foray into football, illustration from the first edition of *Tom Brown's School Days*.

**How did the Rules come about?** Scratch games between young men, took place in August and September in 1858, with discussion, compromise and experimentation between those who thought you could hold and kick the ball and those who contended that it should not be handled.

By the end of September talk of starting some clubs was around but cricket intervened. Possibly during the last months of 1858 or the first months of 1859 the Melbourne Football Club came unofficially into being, or at least into common parlance.

On May 16, 1859 *The Herald* reported: "A preliminary meeting of gentlemen interested in the game was held at the Parade Hotel, with the object of forming a 'Football Club', so the first official Melbourne Football Club meeting would seem to be that of May 14, 1859.<sup>10</sup> The young men elected, ten months after the scratch matches of 1858, a committee "to draw up a code of rules", considered "necessary as exceptions were taken last year to some of the Rugby [School] regulations".

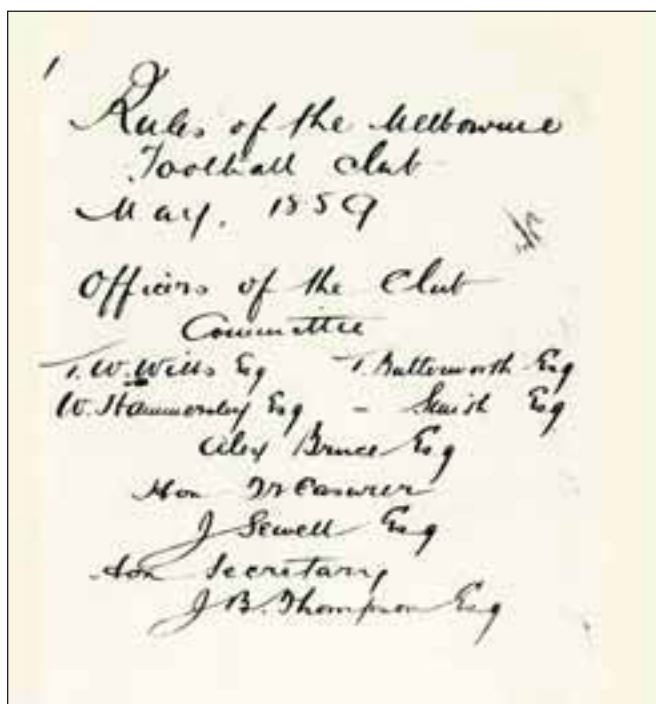
That code was formulated after discussion at the Parade Hotel on May 17, 1859 and written by James Thompson, the Secretary of the Club, on paper as the Melbourne Football Club Rules. A facsimile decorates the roof of the atrium of the Olympic Stand and can be seen as you come up the escalator from Entrance 3.

7 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, March 26, 1859

8 *Journal of the Rev. J.E. Bromby*, July 6, 1858, typescript held by MCEGS

9 *Argus*, August 16 1858 p.7; *Herald*, August 30, 1858

10 *Argus*, May 9, May 21, 1859; *Herald*, May 16, 1859



First page of the Rules of the Melbourne Football Club

This code is the forerunner of the Australian Football Rules. The men had with them the rules of four English schools but seem to have chosen what they thought would be best from their own experience to suit colonial conditions.<sup>11</sup> The Rules are detailed in the next article "The Evolution of the Rules from 1859 to 1866" by Trevor Ruddell.

Apart from the quartet who drafted the rules, three other Melbourne Club committee men signed the Rules – Alex Bruce, Tom Butterworth and J. Sewell but they do not seem to have attended the sub-committee rules meeting. Bruce and Butterworth were two well-known Melbourne Club cricketers. Despite extensive research, J. Sewell is a complete mystery man.

**Thomas Henry Smith** (1830-1885) was born and educated in Ireland, the only Irishman of the four men who drafted the 1859 Laws of the Melbourne Football Club.

Born at Carrickmacross, County Monaghan in 1830, Smith graduated from Trinity College/University of Dublin, in 1850. Gaelic folk sports, including traditional football games declined from the 1840s in the wake of famine and mass emigration. If he played football at university in Ireland it was likely to have been a variation of the Rugby School game. Pupils from Rugby School and Cheltenham College (which also played a variant of the Rugby game) formed a football club at Dublin University in 1854.

Smith had arrived in Melbourne by 1858 where he was employed as the classics master at Scotch College. The Rugby School game seems to have dominated football at Scotch in the late 1850s. The assistant classics master, Robert Hervey, apparently imported six balls from England and taught the Rugby School football game in the yard. Smith played for Scotch College against Melbourne Grammar in 1858, and also joined a number of enthusiasts playing football in Richmond Paddock (now Yarra Park).

He was soon given the nickname, "Football" Smith, as one of the colony's leading and most enthusiastic players but he was also referred to as "Red" Smith due to his ginger hair. He was

described as "a rattling fine player and a splendid kick but of a very peppery temper".<sup>12</sup>

At a time when captains were appointed prior to each match, Smith was a captain for the Melbourne Football Club's first ever scratch match on May 14, 1859. Jerry Bryant was the other captain. Bryant managed the Parade Hotel at which Smith and three other men then met to draw up a few, simple, easily understandable code of rules three days later.

Smith captained Melbourne often until the end of the 1862 season and retired as a Melbourne footballer in 1864. During his time with Melbourne, Smith also played with University in 1860 as there were no regulations restricting players to particular clubs until the mid 1860s.

He captained Melbourne in the game at the Caledonian Games in December 1861 on the Melbourne Cricket Ground only three days before the All England Eleven played the first international match in Australia.

His profession as an inspector of schools ended in disgrace, possibly due to his notorious temper, and in the 1870s, he was living in Adelaide where it is thought he tutored. It seems he died there in 1885.<sup>13</sup>

**William Josiah Sumner Hammersley** (1826-1886) was a Cambridge University and county cricketer in England and it may have been his time at University that influenced his ideas regarding football codification.



Born at Ash, Surrey in 1826, Hammersley was boarded at Aldenham Grammar School in Hertfordshire from 1836 where he was introduced to cricket and claimed to play football. In 1845 he was accepted into Cambridge University at a time when public school students each wanted to continue football at university. However, there was no universally agreed Cambridge University code by which to play football games at that time.

A football club formed at Cambridge in 1846 was beset with rule disputes. However, in 1848 a code was agreed by students from diverse football backgrounds like Eton, Harrow, Winchester, and Rugby for the newly formed "University Foot Ball Club". Whether or not Hammersley was involved, he could have been well aware of many of the debates and the ideas that informed it, for the University Foot Ball Club's compromise code was reached at Trinity College, to which he belonged.

A similar problem arose in Melbourne a little over one decade later. Young men arrived from a variety of football backgrounds at a relatively isolated community, desiring rules for a uniform, safe and easily understood form of football. Therefore Melbourne's footballers, like those at Cambridge University, opted to compromise.

In 1856 Hammersley came to Melbourne with a formidable cricket reputation. He was one of the colony's leading cricketers and captained Victoria in 1856/57. Gold-digging claimed him in 1858 but he was in Melbourne in May 1859, elected to the Melbourne Football Club committee and met to discuss putting together some rules.

11 G. M. Hibbins, *Sport and Racing in Colonial Melbourne*, Lynedoch, Melbourne, 2007, chapter 8

12 W.J. Hammersley, *Sydney Mail* August 25, 1883, p. 363

13 G. M. Hibbins, *Sport and Racing in Colonial Melbourne*, chapters 7, 8 and index

**William Hammersley remembered in 1883:** "Once after a severe fight in the old Richmond paddock when blood had been drawn freely, and some smart raps exchanged, and a leg broken, it occurred to some of us that if we had rules to play under it would be better. Tom Wills suggested the Rugby [School] Rules but nobody understood them except himself and the usual result was adjourn to the Parade Hotel close by and think the matter over. This we did, with the following result: several drinks and the formation of a committee consisting of Tom Wills, myself, J.B. Thompson and Football Smith as he was termed... We decided to draw up as simple a code of rules and as few as possible so that any one could quickly understand. We did so and the result was the rules then drawn up form the basis of the present code under which the game is played universally in Victoria and most other parts of Australia."

In 1859 and 1860 he was chosen as one of the early captains of the Melbourne Football Club, being the first to captain Melbourne against another club. In this match, the first football match on the MCG at its present site, Melbourne defeated South Yarra three goals to nil over two Saturdays on 9 July and 23 July 1859. (Matches in this era were often determined by the best of a set number of goals).

Hammersley with 5 goals was the leading goal-kicker for Melbourne of the 1860 season and continued to represent Melbourne until the end of the 1865 season, but was also selected for the Richmond Football Club in 1860 and 1861.

He was able to assist the promotion and maintenance of the rules through his position on the Athletic Sports Committee (ASC) from 1865. That season the ASC offered a football trophy for competition with a stipulation that all matches were to be played according to the rules of the Melbourne Football Club.

As editor of the sporting pages of *The Australasian* from 1865 to 1883, his encouragement of cricket, football, rowing, athletics, shooting, hunting, and horse racing was both beneficial and far reaching. He died in 1886 and is buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery.<sup>14</sup>

**James Bogue Thompson** (1829-1877), was a Cambridge educated journalist whose role in publishing and promoting the Melbourne Football Club's rules was vital to the code's survival in its early years.



Thompson was christened at York in April 1829 and educated at the local minor public school of St. Peter's School. He was accepted into Trinity College, Cambridge during October 1845 and last recorded at the University in 1850. Like Hammersley, he was possibly aware of the movement among his fellow students to agree to a uniform football university code.

Thompson arrived in Australia during the gold rush and after a short time in the goldfields, he returned to Melbourne where he became a journalist briefly with *The Morning Herald* and

then with *The Argus*. He was clearly aware of the necessity to enthuse about football and to encourage participation.<sup>15</sup>

Thompson, a keen rower and cricketer, played football in Richmond Paddock (Yarra Park) in 1858 and publicised some scratch matches of that year in *The Herald*. Thompson was the Melbourne Football Club's first secretary in 1859 and until 1861 he used *The Argus* to promote and document football matches, to discuss the rules, and to give his views on the game. He was probably responsible for having the new code printed and circulated.

He captained Melbourne for the first time in 1860 (captains were chosen on the match day during this era), but Thompson's importance to the dissemination and promotion of the Melbourne code was made evident after he headed to Bendigo in 1861, where he was the inaugural secretary and captain of the Sandhurst Football Club. It seems that much of the public profile and enthusiasm for the sport departed with him.

Possibly Thompson's most significant role in sustaining the code in the years after it was drafted, was as the publisher of the 1859 and 1860 *Victorian Cricketer's Guides*. These annuals derided the Eton and Rugby School football codes while they disseminated and extolled the virtues of the Laws of the Melbourne Football Club as easily understood and safe. Had it not been for Thompson's promotion of the "Laws" they may well have been superseded by a version of football codified in England.

In 1866 the code was changed to allow footballers to bounce the ball every few yards while running and Thompson thought that by 1870 the game had become too violent as a result. Preferring the 1859 rules, he was never a supporter of players carrying the ball and believed that the 1866 code encouraged body tackling. James Thompson died in July 1877.

**Thomas Wentworth Wills** (1835-1880) was the youngest of the four men on Melbourne's rules committee, the only one born in Australia, the only one educated at an English public school,



and the only one who in 1859 was not an active member of the Melbourne Cricket Club.

Tom Wills was born in New South Wales in 1835 and went to the prestigious Rugby School in England from 1850 to 1855. There he was recognised as an extraordinary cricketer, and learnt to play football as then played at the School. Football had a long tradition at Rugby and the game was first codified by students in

1845. At Rugby Wills played a football game that used written rules, although it was buttressed by convention and allowed for experimentation.

Back in Melbourne, he was first appointed captain of the Victorian cricket team in 1857/58 and publically suggested a football club and the establishment of a football code of laws. Elected to the Melbourne Football Club in May in 1859, he suggested the Rugby School rules but these were rejected as too complicated and unsuitable for dry Australian conditions.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. A full biography of Hammersley.

<sup>15</sup> J. Weston (ed.) *The Australian Game of Football since 1858*, Geoff Slattery Publishing, Melbourne, 2008, p. 45



In 1860 Wills was the first secretary and captain of an early Richmond Football Club and occasionally captained Melbourne in 1859 and 1860.

In 1861 he went with his father to establish a new pastoral station in Queensland where most of the party were killed by Aborigines. Returning, he played for Melbourne in 1864 and 1865 and with the Geelong Football Club from 1864 to 1868 and from 1872 to 1874. It is unlikely that he had anything to do with Geelong's foundation in 1859. It is suggested that, unhindered by offside rules, he was responsible for introducing a more free flowing style of play and tactical placing of his footballers.

Tom's drinking habits, which began as a child and were exacerbated following the massacre in Queensland, doubtless contributed to his 1880 suicide aged 44 in Heidelberg. Ironically Wills' success and popularity with the public lay mainly in his outstanding cricket career, captaining Victoria eleven times and producing exceptional bowling and batting figures. His fame as a footballer lies in the letter he wrote in 1858 advocating football be played, to which is usually attributed the start of Australian football, and his contribution in developing the skills of the game.<sup>16</sup>

**Jerry Bryant** was not elected to the Rules Committee, probably because he was a professional cricketer and therefore quite not regarded a "gentleman". However it is



**Jerry Bryant (left) and Tom Wills**

not hard to imagine him hovering in the background and having his say when the Rules Committee met at his Parade Hotel to discuss and form the rules, especially as he may have been a member of the Surrey Football Club in England which had printed rules. In later years he went to a Sale Hotel and began a football club there in the same way he had provoked the formation of the Melbourne Football Club.

**An Irish influence on codification has long been claimed.** Because of similarities between Gaelic football and Australian Rules football, it was easy to conclude that the Irish influenced the formulation of the Victorian code. International Test matches between Australian and Irish football teams playing

an easily acceptable composite code with no offside have taken place since 1984 after successful tours by Australian football teams playing Gaelic football since 1967.

It is suggested that two in ten of the population in the 1850s came from Ireland, yet there is no mention of a colonial version of Gaelic Football, and no positive evidence that one existed. Tom Smith was the only Irishman on the Rules Committee and he had most likely played his football at the University of Dublin where the later football club owed much to Rugby School football.

If Theophilus Marshall can be believed when he wrote forty years later of those Irishmen who turned up to kick the ball offered by Bryant in the Richmond Paddock, they were "yelling and punting the ball straight as a die heavenwards."<sup>17</sup>

Irish football would appear to have been fierce as Melbourne footballers found when they played the men of the 14th and 40th regiments returning from the New Zealand wars and stationed in Melbourne between 1867 and 1869.

Melbourne captain Harrison ruefully wrote: "They played with their trousers tucked into their heavy boots, and with coloured handkerchiefs tied round their heads. They were mostly big, heavy men, and their appearance was pretty awe inspiring! They had a playful way too, of kicking an opponent in the shins to make him drop the ball. As captain, I once protested that such tactics were against the rules, but the only satisfaction I got was the forceful reply, "To H- with your rules! We're playing the - Irish rules." I have bruises on my shin to this day, received in these encounters."<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps these Irish soldiers took the more free-flowing, open game of the Melbourne footballers back to Ireland when they departed! Gaelic football had no written rules at the time and, although football flourished intermittently, the Gaelic code is only first written in 1885 in Dublin in a nationalistic endeavour to encourage Irish pride. In Melbourne it seems likely that the influence of the Irish was seen later as the game expanded into the 1880s.

**An indigenous influence on codification is claimed** as Aboriginal football had been played well before the Europeans arrived in Melbourne in 1836 and there are numerous descriptions of the different games. In the 1980s and 1990s assertions grew that Tom Wills had played football with Aboriginal children near the Wills' pastoral station called Lexington (near Moyston today and the Grampians) and therefore this must have been in Wills' mind when discussing the possible rules in 1859, thus influencing their choice.<sup>19</sup>

This scenario was fictionalised in journalist Martin Flanagan's book, *The Call*, published in 1998, and dramatised at the Malthouse Theatre Company in 2004 with scenes of indigenous dancing.<sup>20</sup> The Moyston community claimed the town as the 'Birthplace of Australian Rules Football'.

The Australian Football League, wishing to acknowledge the more recent contributions of the growing numbers of indigenous players to sport, and to celebrate this in football, deemed the annual contest between Essendon and Sydney teams, the "Marn-grook" (indigenous football) fixture.

The lack of any written evidence for a link between indigenous football, Wills, and codification, was asserted in the AFL official history<sup>21</sup> and was hotly disputed in the newspapers, radio, television and computer blogs in June 2008.

16 G. de Moore, *Tom Wills: His Spectacular Rise and Tragic Fall*, Allen & Unwin, 2008; G. M. Hibbins, *Sport and Racing in Colonial Melbourne*. op cit.

17 T.S. Marshall, *The Rise and Progress of the Australian Game of Football*, April 24 1896, photocopy, M.C.C. Library.

18 A. Mancini & G. M. Hibbins, *Running with the Ball*, Lynedoch, Melbourne, 1987, p. 125

19 J. Poulter, 'Marn-grook: the Original Aussie Rules', 1985, m.s. MCC Library; *Inside Football*, August 2006, updated Sept. 25, 2007

20 M. Flanagan, *The Call*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998; M. Flanagan & B. Myles, *The Call; a realisation for the stage*, Strawberry Hills, NSW, Currency Press, 2004.

21 J. Weston (ed.), *The Australian Game of Football since 1858*, Geoff Slattery Publishing, Melbourne, 2008



Advocates of the indigenous input into the 1859 Rules through Wills seek some oral indigenous narrative to support their case and judgment awaits subjecting the outcomes of their research to historical assessment. Most historians have moved on to detail the undoubted significance of indigenous footballers in the game's evolution since 1859 and in the latter half of the twentieth century, particularly in combating racial prejudice, not only in football, but in the community generally.

**Scotch College boys played Melbourne Grammar boys football** on August 7, 1858. It was the first day of a three-day football match spread over four weeks and played near the Melbourne Cricket Ground. This famous match in August and September 1858 has long been regarded as "the first Australian Game of Football" and this has often been implied or written as Australian Rules Football, an assertion difficult to support when the rules were non-existent at this time. The compromise, "the first recorded match of Australian football", is misleading, considering there were earlier matches all "recorded" in newspapers, even if only in advertisements. Melbourne Grammar had initially played St. Kilda Grammar two months earlier on June 5, 1858. Melbourne Grammar won and St. Kilda Grammar closed some time later.<sup>22</sup>

The boys were probably playing a modified version of the crude English Rugby School rules. According to *The Herald* of August 23, 1858, "Hitherto a modification of the Rugby rules has been adopted..." Whether this applied to the school matches and/or the other scratch games being played is not known.

To their considerable credit, these Melbourne schools seem to have sensibly accepted this, and their history teachers use it as an illustration of the way in which history can change as different evidence is discovered. The press continues to repeat time-honoured but incorrect lore that Australian football was first played by Melbourne Grammar and Scotch College. As pointed out earlier football had been played in Victoria well before 1858.

Remarkably the match is now played annually between the two schools, having missed only five years in the 1860s of the 150 years since 1858. It then provided a prestigious focus to the increasing attention football as a respectable game was gaining in the public mind.



Melbourne Grammar School football team in 1873

"**The Great Football Game**" the Rev Dr John Bromby called the schools' match. Our information about this 1858 game comes from the diary of Dr Bromby, the headmaster of Melbourne Grammar School and from *The Melbourne Morning Herald* of the time.<sup>23</sup>

*Dr Bromby* wrote: "August 7, Sat. Football match with Scotch college, 40 a side. It is the oldest educational institution in the colony; they number 187, we only 113. They had four masters in the field, we only three. The match was to be 2 games out of 3. The first game was fiercely contested for 3 hours, when the Scotch won it."

*The Herald* disagreed about the number of goals: "Both masters and boys appeared to reach the acme of enjoyment and most jubilant were the cheers that rang out among the gum trees and she-oaks of the park when Scotch obtained a goal. This event occupied nearly three hours in accomplishment. The compliment was shortly reciprocated by the opposition who made one grand effort to do the deed."

*Dr Bromby*: "August 21. Sat. Continuation of the great football match with the Scotch College; after a hard struggle of 3 hours, the game was adjourned for a fortnight. The boys were so exhausted, they were obliged to go to bed an hour earlier than usual."

*The Herald* observed on the Monday: "As on the former occasion a great number of visitors were there, some amateurs of the game, and others attracted by the novelty of the sport... The game of football promises, as it deserves to be, one of the popular amusements of the ingenuous youth of Victoria. Hitherto, a modification of the Rugby rules has been adopted, which, in the opinion of some, might be altered for the better. But as the cricketing season is so close at hand, it is, perhaps hardly worthwhile to discuss the matter seriously."

*Dr Bromby*: September 4 Sat. "The great football match was contested with great vehemence, but was ultimately drawn [one goal each in the first match] when the sun went down, the last of the season. It is a feather in our cap, that so young a school could maintain its ground against the oldest and most numerous in the colony."

*Herald* opined two days later it would be "too hot soon for such a violent pastime as football. Two young gentlemen were wounded we understand, though not seriously."

**The Melbourne Football Club** is the oldest continuing football club in Victoria and was officially founded on Saturday May 14, 1859 following a scratch match in Yarra Park. It is reasonable to assume that the nucleus of the new football club was formed from the men who met to play scratch games in Yarra Park during the winter of 1858.

It has been suggested that the Melbourne Football Club was formed by the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) but not all of its members and officials were associated with the MCC. The football club at this initial stage was independent of the MCC. (However, it was absorbed within the MCC from 1890 to 1980, a relationship re-established in 2009).

By 1860 it viewed itself as the "parent" club and successive Melbourne administrations took it upon themselves to defend its rules and foster the game in the 1860s and 1870s. Although it played a few matches on the Melbourne Cricket Ground during this period, most of its matches took place in parkland north of the MCG which became colloquially referred to as the Melbourne Football Ground.

<sup>22</sup> *Journal of the Rev. J.E. Bromby*, op. cit., June 5 1858

<sup>23</sup> *Journal of the Rev. J.E. Bromby* op. cit.; *Herald*, August 9, August 23, September 6

Known as the “invincible whites” in 1860, after the cricket trousers most wore, the Club was strong in the early days of colonial football but not always pre-eminent. Throughout the 1860s the club’s administration was largely comprised of players and it was its on-field strength that gave it clout when negotiating fixtures and rules.

**The Geelong Football Club** remains the second oldest continuous club in Victoria. *The Daily News* informed its readers on July 19, 1859: “Pursuant to advertisement, a meeting was held at the Victoria Hotel last evening for the purpose of forming a Foot-ball Club, and the Geelong athletes may now congratulate themselves on having an opportunity for healthy exercise during the winter months.”

The following resolutions were put and carried: “That a Foot-ball Club be formed in Geelong under the style of the Geelong Foot-ball Club. That the subscription be stated at 2s 6d per member, subject to alteration. That the rules of the Club be the same as those of the Melbourne Foot-ball Club. That Mr. Mason be appointed honorary Secretary and Treasurer. That the first meeting be held at the Portarlington Hotel, on Saturday next, sharp two o’clock, when a ball and boundaries will be provided and that a meeting be then held to consolidate the Club.”

The match took place on July 23 in the open space between the Corio Cricket Ground and the Portarlington Hotel. “The

attendance of members was very fair. About twenty taking part in the play”, reported the *Daily News* of July 25, 1859 which followed that with the description of two games. The members adjourned to the Portarlington Hotel for the purpose of appointing a committee of play, for the admission of new members, and for receiving subscriptions.

“It was decided and carried that respectable and well-behaved persons be eligible for admission without reference to social position.” The Secretary was instructed to write to Melbourne for copies of the rules of the Melbourne Football Club; also for new balls etc and the meeting broke up, evidently delighted with the prospect of whiling away the interval before the cricket season with such healthful and invigorating exercise.

The Geelong Football Club played intra-club matches then in July and August. It did not always take happily to playing by the Melbourne Football Club rules and there were disputes about running with the ball in the next two football seasons. In September 1861 Richmond defeated Melbourne, but Geelong, having defeated Richmond on August 31 as well Melbourne and South Yarra previously, would fairly claim to be the ‘crack club of Victoria.’<sup>24</sup> *The Geelong Advertiser* had prophesied: “The Geelong Football Club will ripen into an institution and fully answer the purpose for which it has been formed.”<sup>25</sup>



1866 Map of the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the Richmond Cricket Ground and the St. Kilda Cricket Ground as seen and drawn from the air. Bryant’s Parade Hotel can also be located in the foreground.

<sup>24</sup> *The Geelong Advertiser*, September 2, 1861

<sup>25</sup> *The Geelong Advertiser*, July 25, 1859



**The St. Kilda Football Club** is alleged to have already begun in April 1858.<sup>26</sup> St. Kilda at the time boasted the villas of the élite and, as a locality, was usually favoured with the adjectives 'patrician', 'fashionable' or 'aristocratic'. It seems likely their football partook of the same quality - the Eton dribbling type rather than Rugby carrying. Certainly the Melbourne Grammar boys played them on 31 July, 1858 when their behaviour was less than gentlemanly. The headmaster wrote, "A Football match against the St. Kilda Club (a man's club) came to an untimely end; the grown men, irritated that after an hour and half's struggle they were unable to kick (a goal), began to fisticuff, and it was thought better to close the game."<sup>27</sup>

Information on St. Kilda's games is sparse. We do know that a year later on May 28, 1859, St. Kilda defeated University by 2 goals. On June 11 St. Kilda played a nil-all draw against South Yarra and was unable to change the score a fortnight later at their own ground.

St. Kilda called a meeting of delegates from the various clubs in May 1860 to review the rules, setting strict limits on gaining possession of the ball and outlawing running with it under all circumstances which suggests that the Club favoured the Eton style of football. The St. Kilda Club played on until it disbanded in 1863.

**The South Yarra Football Club had its own rules** and a game between 27 "gentlemen resident at South Yarra" and 27 "gentlemen connected chiefly with the Melbourne cricket club" on September 25, 1858, was played under "South Yarra rules". Spectators in carriages, horsemen and 'a profusion of ladies' turned out to watch. The match began at 2.30 p.m. and went for three hours with a short intermission. The Richmond paddock was a little swampy and muddy and the slight rise at each end of the ground tested the wind of the players and brought about a number of spills. The Melbourne side won after it managed a goal.<sup>28</sup>

The Grammar headmaster wrote, "The game is so fashionable just now, that several grave senators and public characters are always to be seen kicking with all their might" which suggests the quality of the participants. His view is supported by *The Argus* which wrote: "Among the antagonists on either side were several well-known public characters whose presence tended not a little to enhance the vivacity of the game while it certainly increased the curiosity and amusement of the spectators." Many were, or were later, members of the Melbourne Club.<sup>29</sup>

As for the rules, "owing to the different laws to which the players had been accustomed in their school days, and the long-forgotten excitement of the sport, they were 'more honoured in the breach than in the observance'", remarked the *Herald* reporter who went on to suggest that if another match was to be played "a few trifling alterations in the South Yarra catalogue of rules would not go amiss".<sup>30</sup>

Nine months later the Melbourne Football Club Rules had been printed and *The Argus* pointed out: "The Rules under which the South Yarra gentlemen play differ materially from those of the Melbourne Club, so that unless some concession is made on one side or both, there is not a chance of a match between the two clubs this season."

**The Melbourne Punch for September 30 1858 devoted a whole page to the Melbourne/South Yarra game captained by Tom Wills and William Fellows.**

It concluded:

When Wills, the Melbourne chief,  
With picked-out men of lively shin,  
Banded to make a rush and win,  
And bring the blues to grief.  
The rush was made, with boots embued,  
In mud, the motley men pursued  
The nimble-bounding ball.  
South Yarra's fortune there and then  
Hung trembling on the merest hair,  
A fate that might appal.  
The stoutest heart - 'twas touch and go -  
"A Fellows to the rescue ho".  
And lots of fellows rushed.  
Perspiring in cerulean shirt,  
And trousers dashed with trophied dirt,  
They struggled, fought, and crushed.  
But men on whom South Yarra pinned  
Their faith, proved rather short of wind.  
And, not to tell the truth by halves,  
Some blue men ticked each other's calves;  
Which muscular employ, of course,  
Was wasteful exercise of force.  
However, as the story ends,  
The Melbourne mob outkicked their friends,  
And fair within the fatal stick,  
With one triumphant, joyous kick  
And mad delight, still waxing madder,  
They sent the India-rubber bladder.  
The goal was passed, the day was won  
South Yarra was completely done;  
And each blue-coated player wins  
A brave repute and plastered shins,  
And every motley-coloured kicker  
Betook him to a special liquor.

While verse is no longer the usual medium of record, not much else has changed!

South Yarra played Melbourne on July 9, and agreed to play by the recently revised Melbourne rules for which they were praised. "It is worthy of notice that the game was conducted throughout with the most perfect good feeling on both sides, and that in each case of acknowledged infringement of the Melbourne rules, a "free kick" was conceded without a murmur."<sup>31</sup>

The South Yarra Club played over sixteen years until 1873.

<sup>26</sup> *Bell's Life in Victoria* June 4, 1859

<sup>27</sup> *Bell's Life in Victoria* July 31, 1858

<sup>28</sup> *Argus*, September 30, 1859

<sup>29</sup> *Journal of the Rev. J.E. Bromby* op. cit., September 25, 1858; *Argus*, September 25, 1858; P. de Serville, *Rolf Boldrewood: A Life*, M.U.P. 2000, pp. 95, 328

<sup>30</sup> *Herald*, September 27, 1858; *Argus*, September 27, 1858; *Bell's Life in Victoria*, September 25, 1858

<sup>31</sup> *Argus*, June 16, July 11, 1859.

**The University of Melbourne Football Club** contested its first game of football against an opponent in 1859, four years after the foundation of the University of Melbourne in 1855. Its initial forays were not very successful. A long awaited match came off between fifteen-a-side University and St Kilda on May 28, 1859 at St Kilda. St Kilda won but the University captain “merited applause” and the spectators included “a goodly sprinkling of the fair sex.”

On May 26, 1860, University played Melbourne on the ground outside the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Once again University lost. Both “sides wore all the colours of the rainbow,” but to be identified University wore a small bit of pink ribbon on the arm.” However the novel idea proved insufficient, “in knowing friend or foe.”<sup>32</sup>

A dispute on July 28, 1860, resulted in the match between Richmond and University being abandoned. University secretary G.C. Purcell claimed, “not one of the Richmond men appeared.” Tom Wills, at different times Richmond captain, secretary and player, took the contrary view and wrote that the University players, “must have been dodging behind gum trees, for they were not visible.”

The Caledonian Society donated a “handsome silver cup” for the winner of a football match, the first Football Cup of the time. Melbourne and University took on the challenge on December 28, 1861 at the MCG during the three day Caledonian Games. The match was considered unfinished as University kicked the only goal but it was allowed to ‘hold’ the Cup until successfully challenged. On the two occasions Melbourne did challenge in 1862, University could not muster a full team or did not turn up.

The establishment of a medical school in 1863 was to lift the football’s team’s fortunes. Not surprisingly, considering that the Club was dependent on a stream of students for its players, it was not continuous, falling in and out of existence during the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

**The Richmond Football Club** survived for just the two seasons, 1860 and 1861. Although it is often claimed to have begun in 1858, period documents consistently suggest an 1860 beginning. It was founded at the Royal Hotel on April 25, 1860, and initially had thirty members.<sup>34</sup>

Richmond’s first game was on May 12, 1860 against Melbourne on the MCG. Despite being less than three weeks old the club was quite organised. The players were instructed to ‘MEET for PRACTICE’ the evening prior to the game by the club’s secretary, Tom Wills who also advised the team of their colours.<sup>35</sup> The players were provided with ‘a broad red riband’ by the Club and it was worn ‘over the left shoulder of their ordinary white [cricket clothes].’

Despite being lighter, and four players undermanned, Richmond managed to tie its first match, each team kicking a goal. It is uncertain where in Yarra Park this and most other Richmond games were played, but it graced the Richmond Cricket Ground at least once in 1860, when on August 18 it inflicted Melbourne’s first ever defeat, three goals to nil.<sup>36</sup>

Initially regarded as an offshoot of the “parent” Melbourne Club, the Richmond Football Club took its inaugural officials from the Richmond Cricket Club members and their players were largely drawn from the cricket club as well. Of the twenty five players selected to play football for Richmond on August 18, 1860, twenty listed were Richmond Cricket Club members.<sup>37</sup>

At the close of the season *The Cricketer’s Guide for 1859-60* would rank Richmond, with South Yarra behind Melbourne. It was one of nine metropolitan clubs that sent delegates to the May 29, 1860 meeting which generally ratified Melbourne’s rules, and re-named them ‘The Victorian Football Rules’.<sup>38</sup>

Richmond maintained a close relationship with “parental’ Melbourne, and as there was no rule barring a footballer from being a playing member of two or more clubs, many players represented both Melbourne and Richmond during the season. Having a few playing members of Melbourne could at times be detrimental to Richmond, but it was convenient for the players in an era when active footballers were not numerous. The two clubs also combined to play scratch matches amongst themselves at the Richmond Cricket Ground on August 25 and September 8, 1861. An amalgamation of the clubs was mooted in April 1861 but Melbourne opted not to merge.<sup>39</sup>

Richmond began the 1861 season with a one goal to nil win over Melbourne on the Richmond Cricket Ground. The free interchange of players between clubs continued in 1861. Richmond it seems did not reappear for the 1862 season yet many of its players continued with Melbourne. The first Richmond Football Club would have no direct influence on its latter namesakes.

**Henry Colden Antill Harrison**, (known as Colden or Coley), was born in 1836 in NSW and came to Melbourne soon after. He had played probably little football before 1859 but he took to it with great speed, courage and vigour. By 1876 he had a substantial reputation, having been the captain of the Melbourne Football Club for eleven years and for drafting an updated set of rules in 1866, so much so that *The Footballer* of 1876 affirmed that Harrison may be justly called the “Father of Victorian Football”.<sup>40</sup>

When the Victorian Football League celebrated football’s “jubilee” in 1908, Harrison was proclaimed “the father of football” repetitively in the newspapers. He was a convenient choice as an Australian athlete of huge repute, having been the outstanding colonial sprint and hurdle champion, as well as a legendary footballer.



Portrait of H.C. A. Harrison by Wm. Longstaff

32 *Herald*, July 31, 1860, August 1, 1860

33 M. Pennings, *Compendium of football in Victoria, 1858-96*, forthcoming late 2009; J. Corder, D. Allen, R. Grow, J. Senyard, P. Daffey, *Black and Blue: the story of football at the University of Melbourne*, M.U.F.C., 2007, pp. 6, 7.

34 *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, April 28, 1860; J. B. Thompson (ed.), *Victorian Cricketer’s Guide for 1859-60*, Melbourne, 1860. p. 110.

35 *Herald*, May 11, 1860

36 *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, May 19, August 25, 1860. *Herald*, May 11, 1860

37 *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, June 23, 1860; J. B. Thompson’s, *Victorian Cricketer’s Guide for 1859-60*, Melbourne, 1860. p.78

38 *Argus*, May 29, 1860

39 *Herald*, April 29, 1861.

40 T. Power (ed.), *The Footballer: An Annual Record of Football in Victoria*, vol. 2, Melbourne, 1876 p. 15.



Holding the prestigious positions of Registrar General and Registrar of Titles for twelve years and Vice President of the Melbourne Cricket Club for sixteen years, Harrison was nevertheless absorbed by football and by the Melbourne Football Club whose matches he regularly attended.

In his 1924 autobiography, *The Story of an Athlete: A Picture of the Past*, Harrison did head one of his chapters, "Father of Football", as he wrote on some of the early matches and his elevation to that honour, while modestly not precisely claiming the title.<sup>41</sup>

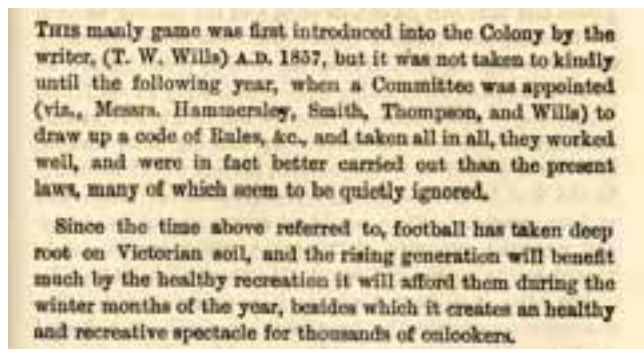
In 1926 the Melbourne Cricket Club paid £315 for the famous artist, William Longstaff, to paint his portrait. It was hung in the National Gallery until the new open stand at the western end of the ground was completed in 1927.<sup>42</sup> For many years it hung in the old Long Room, and in the new Long Room his portrait now hangs beside the Long Room bar.

Both the Harrison Stand in the Outer Ground at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and the first headquarters of the Victorian Football League in 1930 named Harrison House acknowledged the deep respect he was generally accorded.

**Incorrect information constantly repeated over the last century**, when it came to the date at which Australian Rules football began, became a hallowed and uncriticised tradition beyond the centenary celebrations of 1958. The latest manifestation occurred last year when 150 years of Australian football was widely celebrated in Victoria.

In 1871 James Thompson wrote to Tom Wills' *Cricketers' Guide*: "You may remember when you, Mr Hammersley, Mr T. Smith and myself framed the first code of rules for Victorian use. The Rugby, Eton, Harrow and Winchester Rules at that time, (I think in 1859), came under our consideration."<sup>43</sup>

Three years later Tom Wills claimed the date was 1858 when the Committee wrote the rules.



But it is abundantly apparent from reading the newspapers, that *The Argus* and *The Herald* both clearly record the four-man committee met in May 1859. Wills was a year too early, not surprising when you appreciate that he was writing about an event some 17 years earlier.

Such was Wills' prominence that when a new paper, *The Footballer*, came out a year later, that is in 1875, it immediately adopted Wills' date and everybody has done the same thing since. *The Footballer* did not last long but was reinvigorated ten years later when it repeated the same inaccuracy in almost identical words.

Theophilus Marshall, as Secretary of the Victorian Football Association from 1885 to 1896, spoke and wrote of the history of football in Victoria. He, too, took up the date of 1858 favoured by *The Footballer*.<sup>44</sup>

So it was that in 1908 the Victorian Football League celebrated its jubilee with a celebratory and competitive carnival in Melbourne between interstate teams and New Zealand. Prime Minister Alfred Deakin spoke at the dinner. 'Observer' got it partly right when he wrote in *The Argus* that it was the jubilee because 'in the year 1858, T. W. Wills had suggested to his cousin Mr H.C.A. Harrison that they should form a football club in Melbourne...' Certainly Wills had suggested that, but possibly not to his cousin but rather in a publically printed letter in July 1858. It took, however, some time over ten months and its cricketing summer before this actually took place and the Rules were finally written, in time for the new football season.

Why can't we accept Wills' letter as the start of Australian Rules Football? First, it seems sensible to fall in with generally accepted practice. If you accept the year of codification as the date at which a game begins, as do both Association (soccer) and Rugby Union in dating their beginnings from the codification of their rules in 1863 and 1871 respectively, 1859 could be recognised as the basis for Australian Rules Football although there is a view that 1866 established the most definite and widely agreed code of rules.

What misdirected future historians about the date was H.C.A. Harrison's assertion in his 1924 autobiography, *The Story of an Athlete: A Picture of the Past*, that there had been no football in the colony until Wills 'arrived from England, fresh from Rugby school, full of enthusiasm for all kinds of sport [and] suggested that we make a start with it.'<sup>45</sup> As students of early football in Victoria well know, the idea that there was no football in the colony before Wills' arrival on December 23, 1856 is not right.

It has been objected there were Melbourne games in 1858, experimental games which preceded the framing of the rules in 1859. Certainly there were such embryonic games, and these scratch matches were important precedents but they were by no means the only football played in Melbourne before 1859. Similarly with soccer which had numerous clubs playing a type of football long before they compromised to form the Association code. Those who disagreed with that code went their own way and these other clubs established their Rugby Union code in 1871. But, for them, it is possible to go as far back to the crude game played at Rugby School with rules in 1845.

Despite the controversy and different opinions, it is still true that Australian Rules Football remains one of the oldest continuous football codes in the world.

#### GILLIAN HIBBINS

Gillian Hibbins is the author of *Sport and Racing in Colonial Melbourne* and her particular interest is in the start of football in Victoria.

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# THE EVOLUTION OF THE RULES FROM 1859 TO 1866

The purpose of this article is to create a reference guide on the origins, changes and evolution of the 1859 Rules of the Melbourne Football Club and its descendants to 1866. Therefore, six codes spanning this period have been transcribed and all rule changes colour coded. A written commentary is also provided to discuss the events and resources that shaped the laws. It is not an early history of football games in Melbourne. However, playing trends that were emerging in football during this period, the impact of local tournaments and the organisation of the game in England are discussed in terms of their relationship to the evolving code.

## The *Yorker's* key to the early alterations to football's rules.

**Red ink** indicates text in the code has been substantially altered. It therefore indicates a rule change. I have also used **red ink** to indicate laws that are disputed regularly and are not commonly agreed by Victoria clubs – such as Rule 8 from 1859 to 1865.

**Red ink** in the commentary sections is used to indicate portions of old rules that are being debated and proposed alterations to the rules.

**Blue ink** indicates rules (or phrases within rules) that have been incorporated into another law, or if their location has changed – such as the first two phrases in Rule 1 of the 1866 Victorian Rules of Football. These phrases reproduce much of the old Rule 4 that had been used continuously and without disputation since 1859. It is a change in the law's location but it is not a new rule.

**Purple ink** in the commentary sections indicates cup competition/tournament rules that impact on the laws of the game.

**Green ink** in the commentary sections indicates rules that were used in other football codes.

## RULES OF THE MELBOURNE FOOTBALL CLUB [MAY 1859]

[Determined by committee members of the Melbourne Football Club at the Parade Hotel on May 17, 1859].

- I. The distance between the Goals and the Goal Posts shall be decided upon by the Captains of the sides playing.
- II. The Captains on each side shall toss for choice of goal; the side losing the toss has the kick off from the centre point between the goals.
- III. A Goal must be kicked fairly between the posts, without touching either of them, or a portion of the person of any player on either side.
- IV. The game shall be played within a space of not more than 200 yards wide, the same to be measured equally on each side of a line drawn through the centres of the two Goals; and two posts to be called the "kick off" posts shall be erected at a distance of 20 yards on each side of the Goal posts at both ends, and in a straight line with them.
- V. In case the Ball is kicked behind Goal, any one of the side behind whose Goal it is kicked may bring it 20 yards in front of any portion of the space between the "kick off" posts, and shall kick it as nearly possible in a line with the opposite Goal.
- VI. Any player catching the Ball directly from the foot may call "mark". He then has a free kick; no player from the opposite side being allowed to come inside the spot marked.
- VII. Tripping and pushing are both allowed (but no hacking) when any player is in rapid motion or in possession of the Ball, except in the case provided for in Rule VI.
- VIII. The Ball may be taken in hand only when caught from the foot, or on the hop. In no case shall it be lifted from the ground.
- IX. When a Ball goes out of bounds (the same being indicated by a row of posts) it shall be brought back to the point where it crossed the boundary-line, and thrown in at right angles with that line.
- X. The Ball, while in play, may under no circumstances be thrown.

**Commentary:** The Melbourne Football Club's first match on May 14, 1859, was described as, "... more a scratch match than a strict match owing to their being no fixed rules of play..."<sup>1</sup> The Melbourne Football Club was formed immediately following the game and its first code was drafted three days later by its secretary, James Thompson, and committee men William Hammersley, Thomas "Football" Smith and Tom Wills.

There was no commonly agreed football code in the British Isles at the time so they were forced to use the football laws of English public schools and their practical experience to guide them.

The men were primarily motivated by two objectives. First, they wanted to make the code simple to understand and remember. Many English public school codes were complex, with strange terminology, and tailored to a particular school's geography. The Melbournians wanted a code that was easy for novices and people from a variety of football backgrounds to comprehend.

Secondly they sought to ensure that it was safe for adults to play. Many businessmen and employees had professional and family responsibilities and could not risk injury, particularly on the drier and harder Australian grounds. The existing English



public school and university codes, drafted by students for students were inappropriately rough.

However, newly formed football clubs in England faced the same dilemmas and in 1857 the Sheffield Football Club created a code very similar to Melbourne's. It reads:

1. The kick off from the middle must be place kick.
2. Kick Out must not be from more than 25 yards out from goal.
3. Fair Catch is a catch from any player provided the ball has not touched the ground or has not been thrown from touch and is entitled to a free kick.
4. Charging is fair in case of a place kick (with the exception of a kick off as soon as the player offers to kick) but he may always draw back unless he has actually touched the ball with his foot.
5. Pushing with the hands is allowed but no hacking or tripping up is fair under any circumstances whatever.
6. No player may be held or pulled over.
7. It is not lawful to take the ball off the ground (except in touch) for any purpose whatever.
8. The ball may be pushed on or hit with the hand, but holding the ball except in touch is all together disallowed.
9. A goal must be kicked but not from touch nor by a free kick from a catch.
10. A ball in touch is dead, consequently the side that touches it down must bring it to the edge of the touch and throw it straight out from touch.
11. Each player must provide himself with a red and cark blue flannel cap, one colour to be worn by each side.

The Sheffield and Melbourne games both recognised the fair catch/mark. Both have similar ways to start play (a kick off from the centre) and to restart play (a kick out after a behind, or a throw in when the ball goes out of bounds/into touch). Both outlawed picking up the ball from the ground. Both outlawed hacking (kicking shins) and permitted pushing. Both only recognised goals that had been kicked, not forced through. They are also similar in what they ignored as neither have any reference to what is *on side* or *off side*.

It is likely that the Sheffield rules were not widely known in Melbourne; they were less available than the Eton College and Rugby School codes that had been published in local and English cricket guides. However, the fact that two communities on opposite sides of the globe, faced with similar dilemmas and resources, constructed very similar codes, suggests that the idea of what constitutes a football match and the features that may be included in rules was commonly known throughout Britain and by its colonists. There is not one original feature in the Rules of the Melbourne Football Club of 1859. They are all entirely of British origin.

Thompson and William Hammersley were both at Cambridge in 1848 when the University Football Club was established. They may have been aware of a movement within this

University Club to reconcile the games of football played at various public schools in a compromise code. This resolution was reached at their college, Trinity.

As happened at Cambridge in 1848, accounts of Melbourne's May 17 rules meeting from Hammersley, Thompson and Wills suggest that they consulted the rules and games of English public schools to construct an agreed football code.

Tom Wills apparently suggested Rugby School rules.<sup>2</sup> In 1859 these numbered 33 and included idiosyncratic terms and situations that stemmed from the environs of the school.

Many of the colonists would not understand the Rugby School or Eton College codes, not having been, "... fortunate enough to have been 'fagged' " at Eton or Rugby School, as James Thompson sarcastically described himself.<sup>3</sup> The Sheffield codifiers had the same problem in understanding, and apparently read some public school rules before discarding them.

However precedents for each one of Melbourne's rules can be found in the codes, terms and practices of football games played in England during 1859. Examples include the Rugby School's Rule 3 that defines a fair catch as "a catch direct from the foot"<sup>4</sup> and Rugby's term "mark" was used in Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days* of 1857 when a player indicated with his heel on the ground where he was going to kick from after a fair catch. Eton's Rule 15 outlaws throwing the ball while the generic football term "behind" appears eight times in Eton's 25 rules. The term was also incorporated and defined in the Cambridge University rules of the era, below,

5. The ball is "behind" when it has passed the goal on either side of it.
6. When the ball is behind, it shall be brought forward at the place where it left the ground not more than ten paces, and kicked off.<sup>5</sup>

There are many more precedents, but to outline them all may overcomplicate the thought processes of Thompson, Hammersley, Smith and Wills. The terms and concepts in Melbourne's rules were commonly understood. Thompson thought the only terms that may need explaining are "hacking" and "free kick".<sup>6</sup>

The subcommittee wanted a simple and safe code, and it was very simple. Rules No. 1 to No. 5 and No. 9 basically outline the formalities of the game, what constitutes a playing ground, the role of the captains, how each match is started or restarted (after a behind or goal, or if the ball goes out of bounds), and how goals and behinds are determined. Only four rules, Rules 6 to 8 and 10 govern what is or is not prohibited or warrants a free kick.

However, this code, designed by just four men on behalf of one Club, would only be used within the Club. In order for it to be used by other clubs throughout Melbourne, let alone Victoria's provincial centres, the Melbourne footballers would have to negotiate and compromise with other teams. Even a number of Melbourne players saw a need to revise their code within hours of it being first used in a match, on May 21, 1859.

1 Bell's Life in Victoria, May 26, 1859.

2 Sydney Mail, August 25, 1883.

3 Thompson, J. B. (ed.), *Victorian Cricketers' Guide for 1859*, Melbourne, 1859

4 The Rugby School rule in its entirety reads, "3. Fair catch is a catch direct from the foot, or a knock on from the hand of the opposite side." Given that there is no on or off side in the Melbourne rules the second phrase in the Rugby rule was irrelevant to the Melbourne Football Club rules.

5 Young, Percy. M.. *A History of British Football*. Stanley Paul, London, 1968. p.75.

This extract is from a copy of the Cambridge University rules, purportedly written between 1854 and 1858 that survived in the Library of the Shrewsbury School.

6 Thompson, J. B. (ed.), *Victorian Cricketers' Guide for 1859*, Melbourne, 1859

## THE LAWS OF FOOTBALL [JULY 1859]

The Laws of Football, as played by the Melbourne Club, and most others in Victoria.  
[Victorian Cricketer's Guide... 1859. Compiled and edited by J.B. Thompson].

1. The distance between the goals and the goal posts shall be decided upon by the captains of the sides playing.
2. The captains on each side shall toss for choice of goal; the side losing the toss has the kick off from the centre point between the goals.
3. A goal must be kicked fairly between the posts without touching either of them, or any portion of the person of one of the opposite side. **In case of the ball being forced between the goal posts in a scrimmage, a goal shall be awarded.**
4. The game shall be played within a space of not more than 200 yards wide, the same to be measured equally on each side of a line drawn through the centres of the two goals; and two posts, to be called the "kick-off" posts shall be erected at a distance of 20 yards on each side of the goal posts at both ends, and in a straight line with them.
5. In case the ball is kicked behind goal, any one of the side behind whose goal it is kicked may bring it 20 yards in front of any portion of the space between the "kick-off" posts, and shall kick it as nearly as possible in a line with the opposite goal.
6. Any player catching the ball *directly* from the foot may call "mark." He then has a free kick; no player from the opposite side being allowed to come *inside* the spot marked.
7. **Tripping, holding, and hacking are strictly prohibited.** Pushing with the hands or body is allowed when any player is in rapid motion, or in possession of the ball, except in the case provided for in Rule 6.
8. **The ball may at any time be taken in hand, but not carried further than is necessary for a kick.**
9. When a ball goes out of bounds (the same being indicated by a row of posts) it shall be brought back to the point where it crossed the boundary-line, and thrown in at right angles with that line.
10. The ball, while *in play*, may under no circumstances be thrown.
11. **In case of deliberate infringement of any of the above rules by either side, the captain of the opposite side may claim that any one of his party may have a free kick from the place where the breach of rule was made; the two captains in all cases, save where umpires are appointed, to be the sole judges of infringements.**

**Commentary:** Melbourne had created a set of rules in May and had played a number of internal matches by them, but it was not until July that they played another football club. The match took place against the South Yarra Football Club on the MCG over two Saturdays July 9 and July 23, and was a result of Melbourne revising their May 17 code.

South Yarra's players had rules as early as 1858. Whether South Yarra had developed a formal code like Melbourne in 1859 is unclear but it was noted in *The Argus* on June 13 that,

"The Rules under which the South Yarra gentlemen play differ materially from those of the Melbourne Club, so that unless some concession is made on one side or both, there is not a chance of a match between the two clubs this season."<sup>1</sup>

South Yarra had already played against the St. Kilda Football Club on June 11. St. Kilda had objected to Melbourne's Rule 7 that allows tripping but not hacking, "whether over the ball or not".<sup>2</sup> Melbourne footballers had already expressed similar concerns about their own tripping law. *The Argus* noted that in Melbourne's first game under its inaugural code the "vague wording" of the rule regarding tripping, "VII. **Tripping and pushing are both allowed (but no hacking) when any player is in rapid motion or in possession of the Ball, except in the case provided for in Rule VI.**", had made the practice "an institution". The Club's committee responded directly after the match by re-examining the rules and also "added some new ones".<sup>3</sup>

By July 4 *The Argus* commented that, "Melbourne's new rule against tripping and the other alterations in the MFC football code worked wonderfully well."<sup>4</sup> Such changes allowed Melbourne to play a match according to its code against South Yarra on the MCG that very Saturday on July 9. Two days later *The Argus* reported,

"The rules of the Melbourne Football Club, as lately revised, were agreed to be played by, ... It is worthy of notice that the game was conducted throughout with the most perfect good feeling on both sides, and that in each case of acknowledged infringement of the Melbourne rules, a "free kick" was conceded without a murmur."<sup>5</sup>

The compromises allowed for goals to be carried through in a scrimmage (Rule 3), a generic football term that had been associated with the Rugby School game and included in its rules as "scrummage". Tripping and holding as well as hacking were prohibited (Rule 7).

Rule 8 was altered and would prevent the ball, once taken in hand being, "**carried further than is necessary for a kick.**". This phrase echoes the Cambridge University law, also listed as Rule 8 that states, "8. **When a player catches the ball directly from the foot, he may kick it as he can without running with it. In no other case may the ball be touched with the hands except to stop it.**"

However, unlike the Cambridge rule Melbourne's law also allowed the ball to be picked up at "**at any time**". This is more liberal than most English school codes of the period. The Rugby School code of 1859 for example, restricted gathering stating, "17. **Running In** is allowed to any player on his side, provided he does *not take the ball off the ground, or through touch [out of bounds]*" and complemented the school's Rule 14, "It is not lawful to take up the ball when *rolling, as distinguished from bounding.*"<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the reference to onside, the Rugby School's rules seem much more in the spirit of the Melbourne's old version of Rule 8, "**The Ball may be taken in hand *only* when caught from the foot, or on the hop. In no case shall it be *lifted* from the ground.**" It is Melbourne's Rule 8 that will cause most disputes between footballers in coming years, as clubs and players negotiated the substance and application of the rule.



Umpires are also referred to for the first time (Rule 11) but it is not stipulated that they must be appointed. The captains were, “**save where umpires are appointed**” the arbiters of rules, and would remain so until 1866. The use of the term “umpire” in football was not new. It was used at Eton College, England and reproduced in Lillywhite’s 1859 *Guide to Cricketers*, “**3. Two umpires must be chosen, one by each party: their position is to be at the goals of their respective parties.**”<sup>7</sup> The term umpire may stem from this or other football games, and although the positions of the umpires are not specified in the Victorian code, umpires were generally located at the goalposts until the 1870s.

This code would be circulated widely through two competing cricketer’s guides. William Fairfax in his *Australian Cricketers’ Guide* of 1858-59 titled it, “The Laws of the Melbourne Football Club: as played in Richmond Paddock, 1859.” However, the transcript is from James Thompson’s *Victorian Cricketer’s Guide* of 1859. The two versions are nearly identical except the Fairfax version is prone to unnecessary capitalisation, and had misnumbered Rule 11 as Rule 12.<sup>8</sup> Thompson was the secretary of the Melbourne Football Club and, a comparison of handwriting suggests, he was the scribe of the May 1859 rules currently on display in the National Sports Museum. His is possibly the more the accurate publication.

1 *The Argus*, June 13, 1859

2 *Bell’s Life in Victoria*, June 25, 1859.

3 Mancini, A. and Hibbins, G. M., *Running with the Ball*, Lyndoch, Melbourne, 1987. p.34. *The Argus*, May 23, 1859.

4 Mancini, A. and Hibbins, G. M., *Running with the Ball*, Lyndoch, Melbourne, 1987. p.34.

5 *The Argus*, July 11, 1859.

6 Lillywhite, F. (ed.), *Lillywhite’s Guide to Cricketers...1859*, London, 1859. pp.30-31. The Rugby School football’s Rule 17 is almost indistinguishable from the oldest version of the Rugby School code coincidentally labeled Rule 8 that dates to 1845.

7 Lillywhite, F. (ed.), *Lillywhite’s Guide to Cricketers...1859*, London, 1859. pp.30-31.

8 The markers (unnecessary capitalisation and the misnumbered Rule 11) mentioned in the Fairfax version may identify the source of some later transcriptions/versions of the rules, such as the “Ballarat Foot Ball Club Rules” of 1862.



*The Melbourne Post* 1866, State Library of Victoria Collection.

Many football games in 1860s Melbourne were played amongst gums and spectators in the parkland north of the MCG. It is likely that the image was sketched from behind the eastern goal as a flagged post appears in the foreground. The Melbourne Cricket Ground and its first pavilion are visible in the background as are another four flagged posts. These are probably the goal and kick off posts (the forerunners of today’s behind/point posts) specified by Rule 4 in Victoria.



## LAWS OF FOOTBALL [1860]

**Laws of Football.** as agreed to at a meeting of the Melbourne and other clubs held May, 1860.  
[*Victorian Cricketer's Guide for 1859-60*. Compiled and edited by J.B. Thompson].

1. The distance between the goals and the goal posts shall be decided upon by the captains of the sides playing.
2. The captains on each side shall toss for choice of goal; the side losing the toss has the kick off from the centre point between the goals.
3. A goal must be kicked fairly between the posts without touching either of them, or any portion of the person of one of the opposite side. In case of the ball being forced between the goal posts in a scrimmage, a goal shall be awarded.
4. The game shall be played within a space of not more than 200 yards wide, the same to be measured equally on each side of a line drawn through the centres of the two goals; and two posts, to be called the "kick-off" posts shall be erected at a distance of 20 yards on each side of the goal posts at both ends, and in a straight line with them.
5. In case the ball is kicked behind goal, any one of the side behind whose goal it is kicked may bring it 20 yards in front of any portion of the space between the "kick-off" posts, and shall kick it as nearly as possible in a line with the opposite goal.
6. Any player catching the ball *directly* from the foot may call "mark." He then has a free kick; no player from the opposite side being allowed to come *inside* the spot marked.
7. Tripping, holding, and hacking are strictly prohibited. Pushing with the hands or body is allowed when any player is in rapid motion, or in possession of the ball, except in the case provided for in Rule 6.
8. **The ball may not be lifted from the ground under any circumstances, or taken in hand, except as provided for in Rule 6 (catch from the foot), or when on the first hop. It shall not be run with in any case.**
9. When a ball goes out of bounds (the same being indicated by a row of posts) it shall be brought back to the point where it crossed the boundary-line, and thrown in at right angles with that line.
10. The ball, while *in play*, may under no circumstances be thrown.
11. In case of deliberate infringement of any of the above rules by either side, the captain of the opposite side may claim that any one of his party may have a free kick from the place where the breach of rule was made; the two captains in all cases, save where umpires are appointed, to be the sole judges of infringements.

**Commentary:** The manuscript of this 1860 code, on display in the National Sports Museum is titled, "Melbourne Rules of Football agreed to at a meeting of clubs held May 28, 1860". It was the result of a meeting called by the St. Kilda Football Club and attracted players from nine metropolitan clubs to discuss a uniform code. All but one of the Melbourne Football Club rules was accepted in their entirety that day. *The Argus* account of the meeting labelled the code "The Victorian Football Rules" and this title would seem to reflect the document's intent accurately.

Footballers from the Melbourne, St. Kilda, South Yarra, Richmond, Scotch College, University, Williamstown, Collingwood and Boroondara clubs gathered at The Argus Hotel on May 28, 1860, in response to an advertisement from St. Kilda's Hon. Secretary F.E. Harley who sought to organise the general rules of play. Once convened with South Yarra's John Steavenson in the chair, the agenda was read and the Melbourne Rules were used as the basis for discussion.

The first rule to be questioned was Rule No. 3 but the suggestion that a goal be awarded under any circumstance, whether or not it touched a post or opponent was not accepted.

James Anderson and W. J. Grieg of St. Kilda wished to have an amendment to Rule 7 to prohibit pushing with the hands when a player is in rapid motion or in possession of the ball. This amendment was also lost but the vote was much tighter and a division had to be called.

Much of the afternoon's discussion centred on Melbourne's Rule 8: **"The ball may at any time be taken in hand, but not carried further than is necessary for a kick."** *The Argus* correspondent commented that this rule,

"...was almost unanimously condemned, the practice of running with the ball having become so frequent of late. It is true that the player who runs with the ball subjects himself to divers pains and penalties – such as being hacked, tripped, or held; but at the same time it is found that transgressors are usually so fleet of foot, or sinuous in their movements, as generally to escape scot-free."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore the old rule was expunged and exchanged for a new Rule 8 proposed by Melbourne's Thomas "Football" Smith. The new rule was similar to that written in May 1859. It set strict limits on gaining possession of the ball and outlawed running with it under all circumstances. Players were forbidden from picking up a rolling ball, and could only handle the ball when caught on the full (and call "mark") or on the first bounce (not the second or third "hop", etc.). Even then the player is limited to a standing punt or drop kick before he is "pushed".<sup>2</sup>

The laws of football played at Eton College and Rugby School were produced and read, but according to *Bell's Life in Victoria* they were interpreted as having no provision for handling the ball except for a free kick.

*The Argus* columnist reported that the remainder of the rules were unaltered, and the final actions of the day concerned the distribution of the code.

Grieg's proposition that "300 copies of the rules to be called 'The Victorian Football Rules' be printed and distributed amongst the various clubs" was passed. It was also determined to send a copy of the rules to the Geelong Football Club "for their approval".<sup>3</sup> However, the new code with its strict ball handling rule had some trouble finding acceptance in metropolitan Melbourne, let alone the provinces.

1 *The Argus*, May 29, 1860.

2 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, June 2, 1860.

3 *The Argus*, May 29, 1860.

## RULES OF THE BALLAARAT FOOT BALL CLUB [1862]

[Copy held at State Library of Victoria]

- I. The distance between the Goals and the Goal Posts shall be decided upon by the Captains of the sides Playing.
- II. The Captains on each side shall toss for choice of Goal; the side losing the toss has the kick-off from the centre point between the Goals.
- III. A Goal must be kicked fairly between the posts without touching either of them, or any portion of the person of one of the opposite side. In case the Ball being forced between the Goal Posts in a scrimmage, a Goal shall be awarded.
- IV. The Game shall be Played within a space of not more than 200 yards wide, the same to be measured equally on each side of a line drawn through the centres of the two Goals; and two posts, to be called the "kick-off" posts, shall be erected at a distance of 20 yards on each side of the Goal Posts at both ends, and in a straight line with them.
- V. In case the Ball is kicked behind Goal, any one of the side behind whose Goal it is kicked may bring it 20 yards in front of any portion of the space between the "kick-off" posts, and shall kick it as nearly as possible in a line with the opposite Goal.
- VI. Any Player catching the Ball *directly* from the foot may call "mark". He then has a free kick; no Player from the opposite side being allowed to come *inside* the spot marked.
- VII. Tripping, holding, and hacking are strictly prohibited. Pushing with the hands or body is allowed when any Player is in rapid motion, or in possession of the Ball, except in the case provided for in Rule VI.
- VIII. The Ball may at any time be taken in hand, but not carried further than is necessary for a kick.
- IX. When a Ball goes out of bounds (the same being indicated by a row of posts,) it shall be brought back to the point where it crossed the boundary-line, and thrown in at right angles with that line.
- X. The Ball, while *in Play*, may under no circumstances be thrown.
- XI. In case of deliberate infringement of any of the above Rules by either side, the Captain of the opposite side may claim that any one of his party may have a free kick from the place where the breach of Rules was made; the two Captains in all cases, save where Umpires are appointed, to be the sole Judges of infringements.

**Commentary:** The early codes were carried to Victoria's provincial centres soon after they were written and published. As early as August 1859, *The Argus* reported that, "...in Geelong football had been taken up enthusiastically and we learn the Geelong Football Club [founded July 18, 1859] propose playing by the rules of the Melbourne Club."<sup>1</sup> Geelong's importance in establishing a uniform code was recognized early. The club was not at the May 1860 rule meeting but it was resolved to send a copy of the revised code to the Pivot "for their approval". It is likely that gold field towns also used the Melbourne code as a basis for their own rules.

The Sandhurst Football Club was formed in Bendigo in 1861 and its first secretary and captain, James Thompson, was a primary architect and promoter of Melbourne's code. The "Ballaarat Foot Ball Club" determined their rules at Lester's Hotel, on July 24, 1862 and used Melbourne's code as the basis of discussion, one week after its first game against Geelong.<sup>2</sup>

However, clubs in Victoria were not compelled to use every rule of Melbourne's code. The short-lived Essendon and Flemington Football Club of 1862 decided to adopt Melbourne's rules, but not before questioning a prohibition on tripping in Rule 7.<sup>3</sup>

But, the major source of disagreement between clubs and footballers in the early 1860s was the application of Melbourne's Rule 8. Some clubs, such as Ballaarat, chose to use the rules from July 1859, with its liberal Rule 8, that permitted handling the ball at any time and running with it, rather than the 1860 code that set considerable limits on ball handling.

In 1861 Geelong played all but one match against metropolitan clubs according to their own Geelong rules. Like Ballaarat's, these allowed footballers to handle the ball at any time and carry it. Its one match against Melbourne under the Melbourne code was apparently riddled with disputes.<sup>4</sup> In 1862 matters came to a head when Melbourne decided to play according to the 1860 Rule 8 against Geelong on May 24. This fixture was abandoned and acrimonious letters on the issue of the

rules were exchanged in the press until August 30. That day Melbourne beat the Pivotonians two goals to nil, but in order for the match to come off, Melbourne conceded to Geelong on the handling and running rule.<sup>5</sup>

Although there was an attempt by some to strictly enforce Melbourne's Rule 8 in 1862 it was widely ignored. Clubs and footballers interpreted and applied the rules with flexibility. Geelong's captain, Henry Colden Antil Harrison, was one of Australia's most gifted sprinters and a major beneficiary of Geelong's liberal handling and running rule. In a June letter to *Bell's Life in Victoria* that year he found it curious that if,

"...the Melbournites have become suddenly so fond of this old rule of theirs and really wish to adhere strictly to it in all their matches with other clubs this year, that they have not attempted to "practise what they preach" in the scratch games that they have already played?"<sup>6</sup>

St. Kilda's president, James Anderson, wrote a letter against the practice of carrying the ball to *Bell's Life in Victoria* in August, 1862. It detailed how some players justified carrying despite contravening the code,

"...it seems absurd that a man should deliberately pick up the ball, and to avoid its being taken from him, sway himself about and writhe in contortions as if he had an attack of cholera, until it is wrested from his grasp by main force; and then if you complain you are immediately told, "Oh, it is quite fair; for you can trip, hold or knock down anyone who holds the ball." That may all be very well but tripping, holding and knocking down being contrary to the rules of the game, it is only a breach of some other rule that can justify a resort to those expedients; consequently, if the holding of the ball suspends certain rules of play or justifies their breach, then the holding itself becomes illegal and the more to be deprecated, as it causes a double transgression..."<sup>7</sup>

Despite Anderson's appeal to reason and logic, for the next few seasons the 1860 Rule 8 was not strictly enforced in favour of a popular but more liberal interpretation which became the convention.

1 *The Argus*, August 1, 1859.

2 *Ballaarat Star*, July 25, 1862.

3 *The Argus*, May 9, 1862.

4 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, May 24, 1862.

5 *The Argus*, September 1, 1862.

6 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, June 7, 1862.

7 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, August 2, 1862.



## RULES OF THE MELBOURNE FOOTBALL CLUB [1865]

[Agreed to at a meeting of the club held at the Royal Hotel, Richmond, May 1865.]

1. The distance between the goals and the goal posts shall be decided upon by the captains of the sides playing.
2. The captains on each side shall toss for choice of goal; the side losing the toss, **[or a goal,]** has the kick-off from the centre point between the goals.
3. A goal must be kicked fairly between the posts without touching either of them, or any portion of the person of one of the opposite side. in case of the ball being forced between the goal posts in a scrimmage, a goal shall be awarded.
4. The game shall be played within a space of not more than 200 yards wide, the same to be measured equally on each side of a line drawn through the centres of the two goals; and two posts, to be called the "kick off" posts, shall be erected at a distance of 20 yards on each side of the goal posts at both ends, and in a straight line with them.
5. In case the ball is kicked behind goal, any one of the side behind whose goal it is kicked may bring it 20 yards in front of any portion of the space between the "kick off" posts, and shall kick it as nearly as possible in a line with the opposite goal.
6. Any player catching the ball *directly* from the foot may call "mark". He then has a free kick; no player from the opposite side being allowed to come *inside* the spot marked.
7. Tripping, holding, and hacking are strictly prohibited. Pushing with the hands or body is allowed when any player is in rapid motion, or in possession of the ball, except in the case provided for in Rule 6.
8. **The ball may not be lifted from the ground under any circumstances, or taken in hand except as provided for in Rule 6 (catch from the foot) or when on the first hop. It shall not be run with in any case.**
9. When a ball goes out of bounds (the same being indicated by a row of posts) it shall be brought back to the point where it crossed the boundary-line, and thrown in at right angles with that line.
10. The ball, while *in play*, may under no circumstances be thrown.
11. In case of deliberate infringement of any of the above rules by either side, the captain of the opposite side may claim that any one of his party may have a free kick from the place where the breach of rules was made; the two captains in all cases, save where umpires are appointed, to be the sole judges of infringements.

**Commentary:** Two events influenced the development of Melbourne's code when it was altered in 1865. That year the newly formed Melbourne Amateur Athletic Sports Committee (ASC) created a football competition that stipulated only Melbourne's rules were to be used. The other event occurred in England when the laws of the Football Association (FA) were drafted in 1863.

In 1864 Athletic Sports Committee (ASC) was founded by James Thompson, Dick Wardill, Colden Harrison, William Hammersley and Matthew Evanson O'Brien to organise and foster athletic events and sports such as football. All five were members of the Melbourne Football Club and in the first week of May 1865 the ASC decided to sponsor a football challenge cup competition.<sup>1</sup> On June 10 the ASC published ten rules regarding the competition and its first rule stipulated: "1. **The cup shall be played for under the rules of the Melbourne Football Club.**"<sup>2</sup> Melbourne's rules were therefore recognized as the obligatory code for the ASC Cup which was the most prestigious competition for football clubs throughout Victoria in 1865 and 1866.

On May 11 the Melbourne Football Club held its annual meeting at the Royal Hotel, Richmond, and at least four of the five ASC members attended.<sup>3</sup> The meeting was relatively small but it was decided to discuss alterations to the rules with the casting vote devolving on the chairman George Shoosmith.

Matthew O'Brien proposed that Rule 1 be altered so, "... the maximum length of the course should be 200 yards and the breadth 100."<sup>4</sup> O'Brien's motion was defeated, but, it is interesting it was suggested that Rule 1 be altered, as maximum dimensions in Melbourne had been dealt with in

Rule 4 since 1859. However, the proposition reflects the first law of the English Football Association in its language and its position. Its first rule begins, "1. **The maximum length of the ground shall be 200 yards and maximum breadth shall be 100 yards...**" The FA was founded in London in October 1863 to co-ordinate and design a set of universally agreed football rules in England (as was happening with the variety of Rule meetings in Victoria), and is now recognised as the originator of soccer. It immediately set about creating a consensus code and on December 1<sup>st</sup> had determined its inaugural 13 laws.

However, a successful proposal that Rule 2 of the Victorian game be amended to entitle the side that had conceded a goal to kick-off, also had a precedent in the 1863 English FA code (Rule 3). It would seem that in May 1865 two of the English FA rules were proposed for Melbourne's game and one was introduced.<sup>5</sup>

The 1863 FA code had many similarities to the Victorian code. Its Rule 1 concludes with, "... **and the goal shall be defined by two upright posts, eight yards apart, without any tape or bar across them.**" The English FA also forbade players running with the ball (Rule 9), throwing the ball (Rule 11) and taking the ball from the ground with their hands (Rule 12). Its first laws also legalised marking, as its Rule 8 states, "If **any player makes a fair catch, he shall be entitled to a free kick, providing he claims it by making a mark with his heel at once...**" This rule was a Rugby School remnant that was included although many adherents to the Rugby game had left the FA because it had outlawed hacking. Therefore, it does not necessarily suggest that the English borrowed directly from, or were aware of the Victorian laws. Only that both codes independently drew on established English football laws and

conventions to frame a compromise set of rules. As late as 1865, there is nothing unique or original in Melbourne's code.

There was one more proposed change in 1865 but this drew directly from Rugby School football. O'Brien, educated at Trinity College/Dublin University where the Rugby School game had been played since the 1850s, and the Rugby School-educated Tom Wills, "strongly advocated" a crossbar be added to the goals, "...8ft. from the ground, and nothing considered a goal unless kicked over it without touching any of the timber." However, the vote was tied and the chairman George Shoosmith defeated the motion with the casting vote. It seems

Shoosmith believed, "... scrimmages at the goal-posts were the most exciting part of the match."<sup>6</sup>

Ironically, an own goal forced through in scrimmage featuring O'Brien cost Melbourne the ASC Cup on August 5, 1865. Its game against University was tied one goal a piece and late in the afternoon a decider was needed for victory. O'Brien, Melbourne's goalkeeper gained possession of the ball, "...in front of goal, being as might naturally be expected, [he was] forced through the posts in the scrimmage [sic.] that ensued."<sup>7</sup>

1 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, May 6, 1865.

2 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, June 10, 1865.

3 Of the nine people named in newspaper reports of Melbourne's 1865 annual meeting, James Thompson is the only member of the ASC not named. However, this does not mean he did not attend.

4 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, May 13, 1865.

5 Young, Percy. M.. *A History of British football*. Stanley Paul, London, 1968. pp.93-94.

6 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, May 13, 1865.

7 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, August 12, 1865.



This image, purportedly taken of Carlton in 1868 is one of the earliest surviving photographs of a Victorian football team. Football in the 1860s was played primarily on unenclosed parkland often encumbered by trees and usually with spherical balls. Players wore flannel shirts and trousers, and a team uniform could, in the case of Carlton be as minimal as a blue ribbon tied about an orange cap. It was in this environment that the first Rules of the Melbourne Football Club sprouted.

## VICTORIAN RULES OF FOOTBALL [1866]

Agreed to at a meeting delegates of clubs, held at the Freemasons' Hotel, Melbourne 8th May, 1866.

1. The distance between the goals shall not be more than 200 yards; and the width of the playing space, to be measured equally on each side of a line drawn through the centre of the goals, not more than 150 yards. The goal posts shall be seven yards apart of unlimited height.
2. The captains on each side shall toss for choice of goal; the side losing the toss, or a goal, has a kick off from the centre point between the goals. After a goal is kicked the sides shall change ends.
3. A goal must be kicked fairly between the posts without touching either of them, or any portion of the person of one of the opposite side. In case of the ball being forced (except with hands or arms) between the goal posts in a scrummage, a goal shall be awarded.
4. Two posts to be called the "kick-off" posts, shall be erected at a distance of 20 yards on each side of the goal posts, and in a straight line with them.
5. In case the ball is kicked behind goal, any one of the side behind whose goal it is kicked may bring it 20 yards in front of any portion of the space between the "kick-off" posts, and shall kick it towards the opposite goal.
6. Any player catching the ball directly from the foot or leg may call "Mark"; he then has a free kick from any spot in a line with his mark and the centre of his opponents' goal posts; no player being allowed to come inside the spot marked, or within five yards in any other direction.
7. Tripping and hacking are strictly prohibited. Pushing with the hands or body is allowed when any player is in rapid motion. Holding is only allowed while a player has the ball in hand, except in the case provided in Rule 6.
8. The ball may be taken in hand at any time, but not carried further than is necessary for a kick, and no player shall run with the ball unless he strikes it against the ground in every five or six yards.
9. When a ball goes out of bounds (the same being indicated by a row of posts), it shall be brought back to the point where it crossed the boundary-line and thrown in at right angles with that line.
10. The ball, while in play, may, under no circumstances, be thrown.
11. In case of deliberate infringement of any of the above rules the captain of the opposite side may claim that any one of his party may have a free-kick from the place where the breach of rule was made.
12. Before the commencement of a match each side shall appoint an umpire, and they shall be the sole judges of goals and breaches of rules. The nearest umpire shall be appealed to in every case of dispute.

### Definitions:

1. A Drop Kick or Drop is made by letting the Ball drop from your hands on to the ground, and kicking it the very instant it rises.
2. A Place Kick or Place is kicking the ball after it has been placed on the ground.
3. A Punt consists in letting the ball fall from your hands, and kicking it before it touches the ground.
4. A Scrummage commences when the ball is on the ground, and all who have closed round on their respective sides begin kicking at it.

**Commentary:** In 1866 a resolution to end the controversy that surrounded picking up and running with the ball (Rule 8), created the first original aspect of the Victorian code and led to the distinctively Victorian rule that encouraged bouncing the ball often when carrying it.

It had been suggested that a catalyst for the revision of the rules occurred on July 15, 1865 at Richmond Paddock. Melbourne and Royal Park were playing for the ASC Cup when Royal Park's Jim "Sprinter" Clarke "ran a goal". *Bell's Life in Victoria* described a,

"...flukey kick [that] sent the ball ... into the hands of Clarke, who caught it under his arm and skedaddled at railway speed for his opponents' goal, the only resisting force he met ... were of no avail to stop the rush, and so Clarke quietly dropped the ball between the posts, and the umpire awarded first goal to Royal Park amidst tremendous cheering. This was clearly a breach of the rules, as it is distinctly set down that no player shall run with the ball under penalty of a free kick, but several of the Melbourne men had been playing a similar game ... of course the Melbourne Captain [Dick Wardill] could not object in the face of the umpire's decision."<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not the incident caused a resolution of the carrying issue, it was not a new Royal Park practice. A letter by "Orange and Blue" appeared in that very issue of *Bell's Life in Victoria* and complained of Royal Park's, "running with the ball" against the club of "Orange and Blue", Carlton, which was "pooh-poohed" and told it "did not know the game".<sup>2</sup> In a plea

to minimise disputes often blamed on ball carrying another letter under the same pseudonym was published in *Bell's Life in Victoria* on March 3, 1866. It requested,

"... the various suburban clubs to send a delegation to the Melbourne to frame a code of rules for the regulation of football in Victoria... It's all very well to state that there were established rules of the Melbourne club last year; but when certain clubs (who ought to know better) did just as they pleased, it is no wonder there should have been some unpleasantness created."<sup>3</sup>

Some of the persistent infringers of the rules were also the code's enforcers. Under Rule 10 of the ASC cup in 1865, "The Sports Committee shall be the sole judges of any disputes that may arise." Four of the five ASC members were officials and players for the Melbourne Football Club (Dick Wardill was the secretary both of the Club and of the ASC), who breached or ignored Rule 8. One of them, Colden Harrison was later described as "nearly a 40 yards man himself".<sup>4</sup>

To resolve the issue two delegates from each metropolitan club and the Geelong and Ballarat clubs were invited to meet at the Freemasons' Hotel on May 8, 1866 to revise the rules. Colden Harrison and Dick Wardill were appointed Melbourne's delegates and six decades later Harrison remembered,

"Before the meeting some of the delegates asked me to draft a set of rules as they considered that I knew more about the game than any of them, which I willingly did."<sup>5</sup>



At the meeting Wardill and Harrison, were joined by Thomas Power and Ben James (of Carlton); George O'Mullane and Hugh Murray (South Yarra); and Jim Clarke and Harry Chadwick (Royal Park). Harrison was elected chairman and having read his rules they were, "approved and accepted unanimously without alteration by the meeting."<sup>6</sup>

The 1866 code introduced a new phrase to Rule 8, "... no player shall run with the ball unless he strikes it against the ground in every five or six yards." It was the first novel rule in the Victorian game and was unrecorded in any British laws. However, it may have been used informally in Melbourne to avoid the prohibition on running with the ball and allowed footballers to carry it, "... further than is necessary for a kick".

The revised Rule 8 may be seen as an act of generosity by Harrison. He was the type of player that this law would limit the most, but it would still let him exploit his athletic and physical gifts. The terminology "strikes against ground in every five or six yards", led to bouncing the ball regularly in matches, a feature English migrants and visitors noted as early as May 1869. "An Old Etonian" revelled in it, writing "... the players handle the ball, bouncing it the whole time, and passing through numbers of their opponents, to the great amusement of the spectators."<sup>7</sup>

Although the 1866 code was drafted by one man, it transcribes a large percentage of the old Melbourne rules, and documents existing practices of the game that had not been previously legislated in the code, such as umpires (Rule 12). The forerunners of goal umpires had been used irregularly since 1859 and the earlier codes allowed captains to adjudicate rule breaches if umpires were not appointed. In 1865 the ASC cup for the first time required the appointment of umpires for each side "In all matches for the cup". In the 1866 rules, captains were to be excluded from the decision making process that was left solely to the umpires.

As with the 1865 code, one may detect some possibly coincidental resemblances to the English FA rules. Much of the content and scope of the new Victorian Rule 1 is similar to the English FA Rule 1, and for the first time it restricted goalposts to a particular dimension, "seven yards apart of unlimited height."

Seemingly copying the idea from the English FA, a list of definitions was also produced and printed on the back of the Victorian Rules of Football booklet. However, only the place

kick appears in the English and Victorian definitions. The latter is more likely a repetition of the Rugby School football list of definitions. The Rugby School football definitions were recorded in an 1862 rule book that read,

A Drop Kick or Drop is accomplished by letting the ball drop from your hands on to the ground, and kicking it on the very instant it rises.

A Place Kick is kicking a ball after it has been placed on the ground in a small nick, made by the heel of the placer.

A Punt is a kick straight off the toe, without letting the ball touch the ground.

A Scrummage is that event previously described, after the ball is down.<sup>8</sup>

Rugby School terms are identical, and the definitions only differ slightly from those listed in the Victorian rules booklet. It is unclear how the definitions informed the Victorian code, for with the exception of "scrummage" the terms are not used in the rules. It is interesting that the Rugby School term "scrummage" is used in the rules for the first time, rather than "scrimmage" that had been used previously.

Melbourne's rules were no longer a unilateral code determined by the Melbourne Football Club, or an ad hoc arrangement between clubs. The ASC altered the rules of their competition in 1866 to state it will be played under the "Victorian Rules of Football". The Geelong Football Club was not represented at the rules meeting but at its annual meeting on May 19 the Victorian Rules of Football "...were read and carried as the rules of the Geelong Football Club".<sup>9</sup> The rules had been built on the platform created by the Melbourne Football Club but now enjoyed a general consensus from the major clubs in Victoria. Nevertheless not all past and present footballers would continue to approve of the 1866 rules.

The next issue of *The Yorker* will describe the changes to the code in the 1870s, a decade that would see Victorian football rules adopted by neighbouring Australasian colonies.

**TREVOR RUDELL**

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- 1 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, July 22, 1865. Clarke's goal was the only one scored that afternoon but the match was declared a draw, despite the play ending with Royal Park having a one goal to nil advantage, as it was the convention that the first team to score two goals wins the match.
- 2 *Bell's Life in Victoria*, July 22, 1865.
- 3 *Bells Life in Victoria*, March 3, 1866.

- 4 Marshall, T.S. *The Rise and Progress of the Australian Game of Football*, 1896, [photocopy, M.C.C. Library].
- 5 Mancini, A. and Hibbins, G. M., *Running with the Ball*, Lyndoch, Melbourne, 1987. p.119.
- 6 Mancini, A. and Hibbins, G. M., *ibid.*, *Bells Life in Victoria*, May 12, 1866.
- 7 *The Australasian*, May 1, 1869.

- 8 Macrory, Jennifer, *Running with the Ball: the Birth of Rugby Football*, Harper Willow, London, 1991. pp. 96-101. According to Macrory the Rugby School code was redrafted in 1862 to allow people unfamiliar to the customs of the school to understand their version of football. Hence the need for definitions of terms that appeared regularly in the Rules.
- 9 *Bells Life in Victoria*, May 26, 1866.

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# RUSSELL MOCKRIDGE: A CHAMPION REMEMBERED



It is now over 50 years since Russell Mockridge one of Australia's greatest cyclists died on the road. On September 13, 1958, merely a few minutes after the start of the Tour of Gippsland road race, Mockridge was tragically killed in an accident with a bus at Oakleigh in the suburbs of Melbourne. He was aged 30 and left behind a young wife and child. A stellar cycling career was prematurely ended.

Edward Russell Mockridge was born on July 18, 1928 in South Melbourne, the second son of Robert and Aileen. In 1931 the family moved from Laverton to Geelong. He attended the prestigious Geelong College and, after gaining his Leaving Certificate, left school and joined the *Geelong Advertiser* as a cadet journalist. A desire for exercise led him to take up cycling with the Geelong Amateur Cycling Club in 1946. This undoubtedly was one of the most significant decisions of his short but memorable life.

He won the first event he contested. It was a road race run by the Geelong club he had joined. Much to the astonishment of club officials, he rode an old roadster with his glasses taped to his face. He then progressed rapidly and within weeks became a scratch marker. His accent and background were the subject of jibes but his performances were commanding attention. He was coming up through the ranks and would soon compete with and against another rising star of Australian cycling, Sid Patterson.

He continued to win events and a close third in the Melbourne to Castlemaine and return road race (125 miles) in mid 1947 earned him a place in the Victorian team for the 125-mile Australian road championship in Sydney. He won in a thrilling finish after being aggressively checked near the finishing line and his selection in the Australian team for the 1948 London Olympics was assured.

The Olympic meet was not a happy one for Mockridge. He punctured twice in the men's individual road race and finished 26th in a field of 101. In the 4000m team pursuit on the track, the Australian team (including Mockridge and Patterson) was eliminated in the quarterfinals. After the Olympics Mockridge competed in the world championships in Holland. He finished well back in the field and realised that if he was to reach the level of the strong European riders he would need to live and compete with them.

Mockridge returned home unsure about his future. He left journalism, joined a cycle firm and began studying for his matriculation certificate. He also began to wonder about devoting himself to religion. Cycling was, however, in his blood and he decided to concentrate more on track racing. He performed outstandingly in the 1950 Australian championships, winning five track events, and was among the first cycling team selections for the Auckland Empire Games. At the Games he won gold in the 1000m sprint and 1000m time trial (defeating Sid Patterson on both occasions) and silver in the 4000m individual pursuit.

Back in Australia after the Games, Mockridge was still in a state of unrest in relation to his future. He announced his retirement from cycling and left his job to do manual work. He further considered a life in the ministry but decided against this option. He did, however, complete matriculation and was accepted into arts at the University of Melbourne. His retirement was short-lived and he returned to competitive racing in 1951 and reached the final of the sprint at the world championships in Italy. He had, however, not devoted sufficient time to his studies during the year and did not pass his exams.

In early 1952 Mockridge was selected in the Victorian team for the Australian championships in Adelaide and he again performed superbly – winning five titles as he had done in 1950. He knew that this would ensure his place in the Australian team for





the Helsinki Olympics later that year. There was, however, a developing administrative impediment to him competing in the Games. The Australian Olympic Federation would require every member of the national team to sign a \$1500 bond which would bind him or her to stay amateur for a two-year period after the Olympics. Mockridge considered his position and refused to sign as he intended to turn professional after the Olympics if his good form continued.

He left Australia soon after the Adelaide event and journeyed to Europe. On the way he met and fell in love with Irene Pritchard, the girl he would marry two years later. Inspired by his good fortune he won both the amateur and open sprints of the Grand Prix of Paris. It was the first time that an amateur had performed the feat.

While away he was officially dropped from the Australian Olympic team as a result of his continuing refusal to sign the bond. However, further negotiations between officials and the mayor of Geelong, Cr Purnell, resulted in a compromise being reached and Mockridge's entry into the team was assured when he signed a one-year bond. In Helsinki Mockridge won two gold medals – one in the 2000m tandem sprint and the other in the 1000m individual time trial. It was an amazing performance. Both his gold medals came on the same day and he became Australia's first dual gold medal-winning cyclist. In the tandem race he teamed with Sydney sprinter Lionel Cox. Mockridge had only competitively ridden a tandem once before when he teamed with Hec Sutherland at the Australian Championships earlier that year!

He again won the amateur Grand Prix of Paris in 1953 but there was no repeat of the clean sweep of the previous campaign. Initially Mockridge's returns in his professional capacity were only modest. One highlight of his year, however, was his marriage to Irene in London and their subsequent move to live in Europe.

The year 1954 was a difficult one for Mockridge and his young wife. He had had spasmodic success but could not decide which way his career should proceed – was it to be track or road racing? In December that year his daughter, Melinda, was born.

Mockridge started 1955 without a contract but things were to change. In February he was awarded a contract for the Paris six-day event which his team won, defeating the French favourites. He then won his first big road race in Europe, the 257 km Tour du Vaucluse. Soon after, despite a pre-race injury, he was one of only 60 out of 150 starters to finish in the Tour de France in his only appearance in the race.

He returned to Australia and, during the final three years of his life gave a commanding performance on the professional circuit. He triumphed over locals as well as top riders from overseas. In 1956 he won the 125-mile Australian road championship in Tasmania and, off scratch, rode a record time which stood for nearly 25 years to be Blue Riband winner of the Warrnambool to Melbourne classic. In 1957 he again had fastest time in the Warrnambool race, won his second successive Australian road championship and the 1000-mile Sun Tour. At the Austral meeting, before a full house, he won a five-mile championship beating his long-term rival Sid Patterson. In 1958 he dominated the Australian professional championships – winning the sprint, retaining his five-mile title and again being a member of the winning pursuit team. Shortly after he won his third successive road title.

Mockridge was an enigma. Here was a college-educated, shortsighted, quietly spoken and politely natured gentleman who journeyed to greatness in what was considered at the time, a working-class sport. He was a man of ethics and applied them to his sport. More than once he queried decisions given in his favour if he thought them wrong, even in front of home crowds. His quality performances at the highest



level in both track and road cycling made him exceptional. In a tribute, Herald Sun journalist Ron Reed wrote that Mockridge's friend and competitor Jim Taylor had compared only the present day Stuart O'Grady to him. O'Grady is an Olympic gold medallist on the track, has won on the road in Europe and has a decade of top performances in the Tour de France.

Mockridge was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame in 1985. In 2007 he was named among the 50 greatest Olympians by the official Australian Olympic Committee historian Harry Gordon. In the same year he was one of the first 14 athletes to have a memorial unveiled at Geelong's Legends Plaza at Kardinia Park. His life and deeds are commemorated in the collections of the National Sports Museum and the MCC Library. Items include a riding jersey from the Mercury Tour of Tasmania 1957, peaked caps, cloth identification panels and patches, a bicycle frame, books, periodicals and photographs.

Of all those Australians who graced the tracks and roads of the cycling world in the decades immediately following the Second World War, few would have left behind richer memories than Russell Mockridge. He was one of Australia's greatest all-round cyclists and his deeds should not be forgotten.

**ROSS PERRY**



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**Images Sourced:**

Australian Gallery of Sport & Olympic Museum Collection

# TREASURES OF THE NATIONAL SPORTS MUSEUM

## CHAMPION FOOTBALL CUP OF 1865-66

A simple reference enquiry uncovered one of Australian football's lost treasures, the

Melbourne Amateur Athletic Sports Committee's "Champion Football Cup" of 1865-66.

In November 2007 the Melbourne Cricket Club received an email from Richard Harvey of Bristol, England who wished to know more about "an ornate silver cup about 20cm high" that he had inherited. On it was inscribed "Champion Football Cup. Presented by the Athletic Sports Committee Melbourne 1865".

Mr Harvey wondered: "How on earth a cup which was presumably won by a very early Australian Rules football team could have found its way back to England is hard to imagine."

The email was an exciting revelation for an historian researching 19th century football. The cup had not been heard of since a report in *The Australasian* of May 8, 1869 when it was presented to John Steavenson at the South Yarra Football Club's annual meeting. It was presumed lost, or possibly destroyed.

The trophy was the prize for the most prestigious football competition in Melbourne in 1865 and 1866 and was donated by the Melbourne Amateur Athletic Sports Committee (ASC), which had been established in the summer of 1864 to co-ordinate and foster athletic events and games such as football.



The Geelong Football Club had won and retired the first challenge cup donated by the Caledonian Society. Therefore the ASC donated a new trophy for competition. The committee included prominent Melbourne Football Club officials and players, and it stipulated that all cup games were to be played by Melbourne's rules.

These matches were often controversial, and even South Yarra's claim to eventual ownership of the trophy was contested. It was stated in the competition rules that "any club winning the cup three consecutive times shall become the proprietors". South Yarra claimed the cup because it had won three matches without sustaining a defeat, despite five matches being drawn during that period.

To resolve the issue, on May 5, 1869 South Yarra decided to establish a new challenge cup competition (competed for in 1870 and 1871). *The Australasian* reported that the ASC cup was presented to the club's president, John Steavenson, "as a mark of esteem and of appreciation of the great interest he felt in the club, and the active part he had taken in promoting its interests..."

The cup is one of the few surviving relics of South Yarra Football Club, one of the earliest clubs in Melbourne that was defunct by 1873.

Richard Harvey and his brother inherited the cup through their grandmother Ella Violet Steavenson and very kindly allowed it to be sent to Australia to be displayed on long term loan in the National Sports Museum.

TREVOR RUDELL

### Athletic Sports Committee Football Challenge Cup (1865-1866): Match by match\*

Match	Date	Venue	Holder	Challenger	Result
#1 1865	May 24	MCG	Melbourne	2 Geelong	1 Melbourne
#2 1865	June 17	Rich. Paddock	Melbourne	0 South Yarra	1 Draw
#3 1865	July 15	Rich. Paddock	Melbourne	0 Royal Park	1 Draw
#4 1865	July 22 & July 24	Rich. Paddock	Melbourne	1 South Yarra	1 Draw
#5 1865	Aug 5	Rich. Paddock	Melbourne	1 University	2 University
#6 1865	Aug 19 & Aug 26	Rich. Paddock	University	0 South Yarra	2 South Yarra
#7 1865	Sept 2	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	1 Royal Park	0 Draw
#8 1865	Sept 9	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	2 Carlton	0 South Yarra
#9 1865	Sept 16	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	0 Melbourne	2 Melbourne
#1 1866	June 2	Rich. Paddock	Melbourne	0 South Yarra	2 South Yarra
#2 1866	June 9	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	0 Carlton	0 Draw
#3 1866	July 14	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	0 Melbourne	1 Draw
#4 1866	Aug 4	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	0 Carlton	1 Draw
#5 1866	Aug 25	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	1 Melbourne	1 Draw
#6 1866	Sept 1	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	1 Carlton	1 Draw
#7 1866	Sept 8	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	2 Royal Park	1 South Yarra
#8 1866	Sept 15	Fawkner Park	South Yarra	2 Melbourne	0 South Yarra

\*Statistical information courtesy of Mark Pennings.

Please note: It was a convention of football matches in 1860s Victoria to be decided by the best of three games, each game ending when a goal is scored. Hence matches could last more than the one afternoon (played over two or more days) and a score line of one goal to nil could still be regarded as an incomplete/drawn match.



# THE FOOTY BOARD GAME

## A LONG AND PROUD HISTORY



In this era of computers and video games it is refreshing to remember the old board games, those usually played with a dice and coloured counters.

The range of board games was so wide as to be almost endless, but what captured the imagination of the boys of the era were the sporting games – Aussie Rules football, cricket, golf, cycling (Tour de France), yachting, car, horse and even aeroplane racing (Sir Ross Smith Aeroplane Race c1919).

The boards themselves were often little works of art, usually brightly coloured and, in many instances, with stunning lithographic illustrations. The games came either housed completely in a board-sized labelled box or just the board with a small box housing the dice and counters.

The rules generally were simple. Throw the dice (or spin the teetotum – the six-sided piece of cardboard with a spindle poked through it), move your counter the relevant numbers of spaces, hoping to land on those that were positive and improved your situation rather than the negative spaces which sent you backwards, all with the aim of being first to the end.

This was the case with the race games such as cycling, yachting and horse racing. Throwing a “6” was usually rewarded with another throw. However, in the case of football and cricket the rules were more complicated and offered the player more of a challenge. Even now, trying to understand some of the rules is a bit of a challenge.

In the days before television, board games were the entertainment for the kids but, in most cases, the game would end up in an all-in brawl when the loser's frustrations boiled over. On many occasions tears were shed and rarely were they tears of joy.

The most prolific manufacturer of early Australian board games was Ballarat's W. (William?) Owen whose National Game Company produced a very wide range of games from the late 1890s to the 1930s. Sporting themes, including Aussie Rules footy, were quite prominent.

As many of these games were produced during the First World War, military themes were popular. One game, Dugouts and Trenches, depicted a kangaroo in the centre and dugouts with patriotic names like Kangaroo Avenue, Anzac Grove and Australia Street. It was a typical example.

Perhaps National's earliest game was the Boer War game, Called to Arms, circa 1900. The games were very patriotic and the Australian flag and the Union Jack often figured prominently on the boards. Games featuring Boy Scouts also typified the Australian kids' love of the outdoors.

A “W. Owen” conducted a tobacconist/sports depot business in Ballarat as early as 1885, and I have read that “he was manufacturing his own footballs...” in that era. It is highly probable that this man and the board game manufacturer are one and the same.

But back to the Aussie Rules board games. One of the earliest, most interesting and evocative games is The National Football Game – For 2, 3, or 4 Players. The highly coloured board is separated into four triangles, the uppermost being devoted to the title with the other three triangles featuring playing scenes.

The teams involved appear to be Collingwood v Fitzroy, Melbourne v Geelong and South Melbourne v (probably) Essendon. Interestingly, I have seen two versions of this early game with the main difference being the addition of a white-clad umpire, which is missing from the earlier version.





The players' guernseys don't carry numbers, so we can date the issue of the game as pre-1912 when the first *The Football Record* was issued and guernsey numbers were introduced. The players are all wearing long applecatcher or knickerbocker style pants and many are sporting caps.

The board has a centre circle labelled "Ball" with four sets of 10 small numbered circles radiating out to each corner of the board to a "Goal". Circle 5 is a "Free kick" and circle 8 is marked "Behind. Another kick". Obviously, landing on the corner marked "Goal" meant the player scored a goal. Visually this board is quite stunning.

The Australian Football Game differs dramatically from the previous game as the board is set out as a football oval with grandstands and the outer packed with barrackers. Goal and behind posts are at each end of the field. The green oval itself is marked with fifteen yellow circles with the traditional positions – centre full forward, wing, half back and so on. Each circle has a player from each of the two teams standing near it.

Around the larger centre yellow circle the ruck and centre players are assembled with an umpire, holding the footy and with a whistle to his lips, who appears to be ready to get the game under way. A boundary umpire patrols each side of the field.

The era of this game is the 1920s, the teams represented are Geelong and South Melbourne and the Bloods/Swans are wearing their white guernsey with the red sash, which was replaced with the more recognizable red "V" circa 1931.

As with many of these old board games, I don't have access to the rules so I am at a loss to know how the game progressed, nor whether counters or miniature "players" were used. There is nothing shown on the board to indicate who manufactured the game, only the words "Copyright" and "Printed in Australia".

Another National production, *Our Great Game*, also features a footy oval, again with a densely packed crowd. This time, however, there are 36 small white circles on the playing area, each circle is numbered and has a player standing in it. They are again in the traditional positions, although this time not actually labelled as such. There are also six other numbered circles around the perimeter of the field, just outside the boundary line and labelled "Free" (2), "Throw in" (3) and "Free kick" (1).

The guernseys are not recognisable and do not match any known teams. Again, without the rules how this game is played is a mystery. Fortunately we are able to date it as the youngster who owned it conveniently stamped the back of the board several times with the date 28 Nov 1935.

He also noted in pen and ink: "Clive would have won by 1,000,000 points to nill (sic) if he was given 1,000,000 lead." I wonder where Clive is today, but I am sure he was a passionate footy follower and enjoyed many hours playing this game all those many years ago. This is one of the games that came with a small labelled box.

Perhaps the most attractive Aussie footy board game is *The "Jock McHale" Table Football game*. It is housed in a box with an illustration of a footballer in a kicking action. On the breast of his greenish guernsey is a large map of Australia with the words "Australian Football".

The player is superimposed over a yellow backdrop, which features a playing field with a set of goal posts, a grandstand, a scoreboard and a crowded outer. In an oval, at the top right-hand corner of the box lid, is a head and shoulders photograph of Jock McHale in his Collingwood guernsey.

The image of McHale would indicate that the game was manufactured sometime in the 1930s. According to a blurb on



the box this is "an interesting, thrilling, simple game for 1. 2. 4. 6. or more players corresponding in every detail to a Grand Final Football Match - Directions and Score Lists."

If the rules are anything like those in the other games the word "simple" may not be correct in this instance. An example of this game is housed in the Jock McHale Legends display in the National Sports Museum at the MCG. As these four games did not feature an "end" or "home", it is assumed that the games were played within an agreed time.

The games described above were all pre-war and since then countless footy games have been marketed. They, too, came in many guises such as those cut from the back panel of Kellogg's Corn Flakes packets in the 1970s.

Australian Rules Footy Fun '74 and Australian Rules Footy Fun '75 were rather simple dice games with small oval-shaped and consecutively numbered spaces interspersed by a number of squares marked: "Injured miss two goes", "Fighting. Start again", "Mark. Go to 55", "Effective handball. Go to 64", "Goal. Go to 29", "Behind. Go to 60", and so on.

In the background, action figures of players from Footscray, Richmond, North Melbourne and Essendon can be seen. As an added bonus for the kids, in each packet was a sticker featuring a leading VFL player drawn by prominent Melbourne cartoonist, John Rogers.

In 1956 *The Argus* newspaper came up with "Fireside Football". This game consisted of a board featuring an oval-shaped field and squares numbered up to 90. Along with the board there was a cardboard team sheet for each of the 12 VFL clubs. Each sheet had head and shoulder portraits of 24 players. A scoreboard and a slightly confusing set of rules completed the package.

It was obtainable from the newspaper office via coupons and payment. The portraits of the players, when cut from the original sheet, are now considered footy cards and, as such, are quite collectable. In many instances it is in this series that a player's image appears for the only time on a card. He may have only played one game but as he was a member of the playing squad he is featured, whereas in the traditional footy card field generally only the more prominent players were depicted.

Tarax, the Melbourne based soft-drink manufacturers, launched Polly Farmer's Footy Game during the 1960s. It consisted of a football ground, scoreboard and scoreboard numbers, 22 numbered player cards, 48 "umpy" cards, a dice and a "token" football. Needless to say, the rules seem too complicated for even a genius to understand, but I am sure the kids were able to master them.

It appears the kids playing the game were called on to say out loud "Top man" or "umpy", so the game had a verbal aspect to it as well as just dice throwing. Interestingly, in 1980 the Up There Cazaly footy game was issued and the rules read suspiciously like the Polly Farmer game. I suspect it is a reissue of the former game utilising a different and very famous football name.

The foregoing covers just some of the Aussie Rules Football games produced over the last 100 years and I am sure that, with the passion footy raises in the barrackers' breasts and providing our great game isn't altered too much, there will many more games devised, albeit of the computer or video type. Kids will always be kids who love to play games.

**ERIC PANTHER**

**Acknowledgements:**

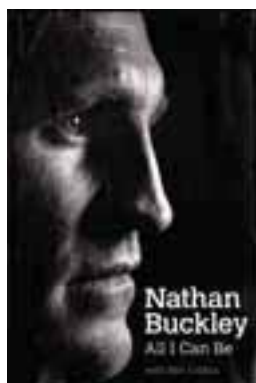
David Allen.

Patricia Downs.

Michael Roberts/*Football Record* [*Argus - Fireside Football*].



# BOOK REVIEWS



Nathan Buckley with Ben Collins  
**All I Can Be**  
Melbourne : Penguin Australia, 2008  
ISBN 9780718105020

Nathan Buckley is the best Collingwood player I have seen during my time supporting the famous club for almost 80 years. From my point of view he is narrowly ahead of Bob Rose, with Albert Collier also well in the picture. My preference for Buckley is that he maintained a standard of consistent brilliance over a 14-season period and was an inspiration to his club throughout.

At the end of his glittering playing career, Buckley, in conjunction with Ben Collins, has written an engrossing book in which he candidly and honestly discusses every aspect of his life and career.

One of the themes which occurs throughout the book is Buckley's love/hate relationship with his father Ray, who had been a useful footballer with Woodville in the South Australian National Football League and later a coach with several clubs around Australia. Ray was a loving father but Nathan's severest critic and not particularly gifted as a player.

At Salesian College in Melbourne, where Nathan boarded, he was often an interchange player. But when he joined Port Adelaide in the SANFL he grew in height and stature and quickly developed into an outstanding player. In 1992 he played in a premiership side and won the Magarey Medal.

Immediately every Melbourne club became interested in securing his services and the efforts taken to sign him takes up a large section of the book. Gubby Allen, Collingwood's football secretary, was relentless and, after a bewildering sequence of events which involved the North Melbourne, Collingwood and Brisbane clubs, Brisbane secured his services for one year on the understanding that he transfer to Collingwood in 1994.

Buckley desperately wanted to play in an AFL premiership side and it is ironic that Collingwood did not win a premiership during his career with them while Brisbane won three, North Melbourne two and Port Adelaide one.

Early in his career, the nickname FIGJAM (F... I'm Good, Just Ask Me) was given to him. Buckley hated this and was determined to prove it wrong and throughout his Collingwood period he was fanatical at demonstrating that he was a team player and not an individualist.

He admits that in his early days he was more of a receiver than a ball-getter but as his career developed he became a fierce attacker on the ball and one of the strongest tacklers in a hard-tackling team. Sadly, his fanatical drive for physical fitness led to him having a long history of hamstring problems. This first occurred in 2000 and recurred for the remainder of his career.

As captain of the club for nine seasons – a record at Collingwood – he strove to become the perfect team-man. Most would consider that he achieved that aim and his unfair nickname largely disappeared from view.

Buckley talks at length about the 2002 and 2003 seasons when Collingwood played in grand finals against the outstanding Brisbane club. In 2002 Collingwood almost pulled off the biggest turn-over since 1958 when they lost by nine points after some controversial decisions in the last quarter.

Buckley won the Norm Smith Medal for best on ground, a rarity for a player from the losing side. In 2003 the Magpies failed badly, losing by a large margin and Buckley still remembers this game with anguish.

In his last game, the preliminary final of 2007, Buckley played despite being unavailable for most of the season with hamstring injuries. He was one of Collingwood's best in this game whilst the team lost by five points against the hot favourites Geelong. Buckley injured his hamstring again in the final minutes of the game and announced his retirement soon after.

This is a very honest book about a great footballer and a highly intelligent individual.

**TOM WANLISS**



David MacIsaac  
**Angus MacIsaac: A Country and City Player Mooroopna Football Club and Richmond Football Club.**  
Hawthorn: David MacIsaac 2008  
ISBN: 9780646482866 (Pbk.)

Some footballers have had an important impact on the structure of the game and yet they are outside the popular imagination. One such player is Angus MacIsaac, whose football career spanned a period beyond the memory of most of us.

Recruited from Assumption College, Kilmore, MacIsaac played 59 games for Richmond between 1922 and 1927. Although a very accomplished player, he was more famous for being disqualified at the pleasure of the VFL's Permits and Umpire Committee for playing in a mid-week country league Grand Final following the 1924 season.

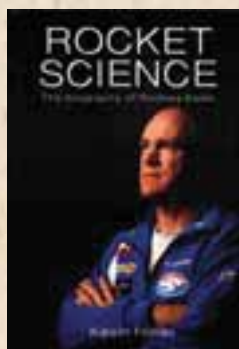
The beauty of this book is its scope. It is restricted to the athletic career of Angus MacIsaac, and therefore relies on primary documents to tell his story. Relevant accounts from minute books are faithfully reproduced, as are newspaper reports supported by detailed statistics. It is well-illustrated with contemporary photographs and cartoons of MacIsaac and his clubs.

Given Angus's obscurity, it was left to a grandson, David MacIsaac to collect and collate as much information on Angus and his football career that was publicly available.

The result is a meticulously researched book in the same mould as its inspiration, Simon Huggard's "Frank Huggard: the Untamed Tiger", and like that biography the author gives the reader as much insight into football in 1920s Victoria as his grandfather. It's a must-read for anybody interested in a similar genealogical project or 1920s football in Victoria.

Unfortunately the book was not mass produced. However, the MCC Library was fortunate to receive a copy and it is available for use by researchers.

**TREVOR RUDELL**



Kevin Hillier

***Rocket Science : the Biography of Rodney Eade.***

Sydney : Pan Macmillan Australia, 2008  
ISBN 978 1 4050 3866 9 (pbk)

When my wife, Phyl, observed that I was reading a book entitled "Rocket Science" she was somewhat perplexed. However, when I told her that it was a biography of Rodney (Rocket) Eade, the present coach of the Western Bulldogs, she thought what a clever title it was.

In his foreword to the book, Robert Walls writes: "Rodney Eade has always dared to be different. That's why I liked him as a player and now as a coach. He questioned conventional ways. He has also been bold and brave enough to implement new strategies and systems into the team..."

"He is a man's man who can ruffle feathers with a caustic tongue and yet instal excitement and confidence into young footballers with tactics and ideas that would never have been heard of before." The quote so aptly describes the subject of this book, Rodney Eade.

The author is Kevin Hillier, a member of the "Coodabeen Champions", a football buff and a man of keen humour and observation. He has written this book in an interesting style. As the story develops he introduces meaningful contributions from those who know Eade best – David Parkin, Dermot Brereton, Allan Jeans, Jason Dunstall, Paul Kelly, Brad Johnson and Rod's wife Wendy, to name a few.



***La Grande Boucle  
The History of the Tour de France***

Murray Books (Australia)  
ISBN 978-0-9757455-8-8

In July each year all sporting roads lead to France. The world awaits the prestigious Tour de France once again. It's a cycling endurance test of 21 days riding through the Alps and the Pyrenees and through valleys and villages while combating heat, wind and rain before the famous dash down the Champs-Elysees.

*La Grande Boucle* is one of a series by Murray Books and displays a very modernistic approach. The book itself is in the shape of a wheel and the photographs are outstanding, bringing into focus the glory, pain, hardship, exhilaration and sheer hard work that is the Tour de France.

Rodney was born in Hobart in 1957, the elder son of Marge and Brian Eade. His father dedicated 41 years of his life to Tasmanian football as a player, coach, umpire and administrator and was inducted into the Tasmanian Football Hall of Fame in 2006. The eulogy delivered at his funeral (fully quoted in the book) reflects the esteem in which he was held in the island State.

Rodney joined Hawthorn in 1976 from Tasmanian club Glenorchy. He played more than 200 games for the Hawks and was part of four premierships teams. Wearing Peter Hudson's famous No.26, he was an extremely talented wingman. He moved to the Brisbane Bears in 1988 but was troubled with injuries. He then took over coaching the seconds, taking them to the premiership in 1991, Brisbane's first-ever flag.

Eade then transferred to North Melbourne and spent three years as assistant coach. In 1996 he took on coaching the Sydney Swans, taking them to the Grand Final in his first year. The club played in the finals in four of the next five seasons. He resigned in 2002. After a couple of years' rest he was appointed coach of the Western Bulldogs and has been instrumental in the club's revival.

His "Dream Team" is limited to players who Rodney had as association with as a coach or as a teammate. Statistically, at the start of this season the chosen players had played 7686 games, kicked 11,318 goals, won six Brownlow Medals and 63 Premiership Medals.

This story is about one of football's real characters. I found it most interesting and highly recommend it.

**STAN BANNISTER**

The race was first run in 1903 and still entices many thousands to watch and cheer along the route, no matter the numerous episodes of drug taking that have tainted the event in recent years.

The different coloured jerseys, the stages and the pronunciation of various terms such as Peloton, Domestiques, Prologue and more are explained for those of us not well-versed in the vernacular of the tour.

The history tells of many triumphs and tragedies along the way. We hear of a man who is synonymous with European cycling – the great Eddy Merckx, who won on five occasions and still holds the record of 34 stage wins.

All the champions are featured – Jens Voigt, Andreas Kloden, Greg LeMond, Alexander Vinokourov, Erik Zabel, Michael Rasmussen, Thor Hushovd, Vladimir Karpets, Tom Boonen and Alberto Contador.

Among those names you'll find Australians Stuart O'Grady (hopefully our first winner), Cadel Evans and will-o'-the-wisp Robbie McEwen. Let's not forget the "leader of all", seven-time winner Lance Armstrong. Lance in the yellow jersey is a wonderful sight.

The book is recommended reading, perhaps just prior to the Tour de France as an excellent lead-up to a race that has it all.

**PETA PHILLIPS**



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