ADAM GOODES

Adam Goodes is the prototype for the modern footballer. Indeed, his ability to play all over the ground has seen him named All-Australian in four different positions (2003, ruck; 2006, wing; 2009, interchange and 2011, forward pocket). On the field, his impact on the game has been enormous, which his two Brownlow Medals (2003, 2006), three Bob Skilton Medals (2003, 2006, 2011), two premierships (2005, 2012), and the Swans' games-played record (372) will attest. He was also named centre half-back in the Indigenous Team of the Century. In 2014, Goodes was named Australian of the Year. But perhaps, through his work with Indigenous footballers, and for being a flag-bearer in the continual fight to stamp out racism, his greatest legacy may well be off the ground.

COPYRIGHT
SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP (SMG)

CAREER

BORN: January 8, 1980.

SYDNEY SWANS 1999-2015: 372 games (South Melbourne/Sydney record), 464 goals.

HONOURS: Indigenous Team of the Century (centre half-back); Bob Skilton Medal 2003, 2006, 2011; 3rd best and fairest 2002; Brownlow Medal 2003 (equal), 2006; All-Australian 2003, 2006, 2009, 2011; International Rules Series 2001, 2010 (captain); Swans leading goal-kicker 2009-11; AFL Rising Star 1999; AFLCA Player of the Year 2006 (equal); premiership player 2005, 2012; Swans co-captain 2009-12; Australian of the Year 2014.

I was a 17-year-old kid who was pretty lazy. I thought I was fit when I arrived at the Sydney Swans (having been taken at pick 43 in the 1997 AFL draft, from North Ballarat), but I was nowhere near fit enough to be a professional athlete. Pre-seasons for me were a very hard time because I got really worked over during that period. There was a real question mark over my hardness and my mental toughness. There's no doubt that guys like my first captain Paul Kelly, who was a ridiculously hard trainer, really helped me and challenged me to improve. I could play footy, but I really had to work on the small things that make you a really good footballer—I took that on board as something I needed to be fanatical about, in order to succeed. All the small things matter, and there's no doubt that after four or five pre-seasons I had become manic about those small things. And that's not only helped me to stay at the top, but it's been able to help me produce back-to-back seasons where I play lots of high-quality games and play my role for the team.[1]

Growing up, I knew I was different. But I didn't know what it meant to be Aboriginal. I just knew that I had a really big, extended family. I was taught nothing about who we were or where we came from. When I was old enough to start asking those questions, my mum, Lisa, told me that we were Adnyamathanha, which is a Flinders Ranges mob that means 'rock people'.[2] In high school people would call me names, but it didn't really mean anything to me—it was water off a duck's back—because I didn't know what it meant to be Aboriginal. It wasn't until I moved to Sydney and I went to my first Indigenous camp in Melbourne where we started talking about our mobs that I realised I had no idea about mine, so that really got my juices bubbling to find out more.

1 Despite claiming he wasn't fit enough in the early years of his career, Goodes was awarded the 1999 AFL Rising Star Award.

2 The Flinders Ranges region in South Australia is located north of Adelaide and north-east of Port Augusta.



VERSATILE: In his prime, Adam Goodes was the most dominant player in the game. His ability to play in any number of positions made him an extremely difficult match-up for opposition players.



DUAL WINNER: With two Brownlow Medals to his name (2003 tied, 2006), Goodes cemented his place in football history as one of Sydney's, and the game's, finest ever players.

I started asking a lot more questions and I realised I needed to go on my own journey. I enrolled to do a TAFE course on Indigenous Studies, and over the next two-and-a-half years of my course I learned so much about my people and my culture in a broader sense. It made me so proud of my Aboriginality and our history in this country, which dates back over 40,000 years. I then went on *Who Do You Think You Are?* (on television channel SBS)[3] and was able to discover a new part of my ancestry and where both myself and my mum were actually born: the Point Pearce Aboriginal Station at Narungga in the Spencer Gulf.[4] Our culture is still living and breathing, and I look forward to sharing that with the rest of my family.

The negative and derogatory remarks started being used against me when I got into high school. The majority of my friends were actually white and the only Aboriginal people I associated with were my family members, so I never felt like I was different and my friends never treated me differently. In fact, we all remain friends to this day. People didn't know what they were teasing me about so it didn't bother me too much before high school. By then I was very proud of who I was, so when they started calling me different names that was when it started to cut pretty deep.

I didn't like footy at all growing up. I didn't play it; I played soccer instead. I went to Forbes primary school in South Australia, which was a big soccer-loving school. I loved my soccer and still enjoy playing it to this day. My path to footy was like destiny. We moved to Victoria when I was 14 and we went to sign up with a local soccer team but they only had seniors—no juniors—and it was a very spiteful game, so Mum didn't want me running around out there. At the same time, there was an Aussie Rules game being played across the road with the Merbein Under-14s and so Mum suggested I play AFL.[5] It appeared I was a lot taller than everybody else, so I felt I would be safe out there and decided to try it out. That first year worked out well and I won the best and fairest, and I can remember looking at the trophy and thinking how 10 years before I won it Matthew Knights, who was Richmond's captain by that stage, had also won it. So that was when I thought that footy was worth continuing.

Mum always said I was a kid who went off and did my own thing. While it was challenging to move away to chase my AFL dream, I was going to be moving away anyway at some stage, so I was prepared to leave home. I was playing with the Swans' reserves side during 1998 and every second week we were playing in Melbourne, so that made it a little easier to be away from home. But I definitely wasn't ready for the training commitment: I wasn't preparing to be a professional athlete. When we came to Melbourne I would stay down until the Sunday night and visit family and friends before flying back to Sydney. It took me until the end of 2002 to say that Sydney was where I wanted to be.

It's definitely harder for Aboriginal players to relocate to the city than it is for non-Aboriginal players. Just having that family support network makes it a lot easier, so, in my case, having Michael O'Loughlin at Sydney

3 Adam Goodes' appearance on *Who Do You Think You Are?* was in episode six of season six.

4 Formerly known as the Point Pearce Mission Station, it was established 60 kilometres south of Wallaroo, South Australia, in 1868.

5 The Merbein Magpies Junior Football Club plays in the Sunraysia Football and Netball League in north-western Victoria.

COPYRIGHT
SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP (SMG)

for most of my journey just helped me so much.[6] And I have no doubt that Lewis Jetta (who moved to the Eagles in 2015) will say that about me. Just having that brother there to lean on for support, who understands the struggles you go through as an Aboriginal player is so important. Football clubs are getting better and player development managers are getting better. But to have that senior figure there to help and support you really makes a difference.

In 2002 we had the retirements of great players like Andrew Dunkley and Paul Kelly. For us, there were a lot of questions marks as to who was going to be our next leader. A lot of people outside the club felt that we would finish on the bottom because we didn't have the next tier of leaders coming through to replace those guys. What was really great about Paul Roos coming in as coach (replacing Rodney Eade, who resigned after a loss to Geelong in round 12 of 2002) was that he empowered the players to take the next step and to lead the football club. He was more like a facilitator and we had to live and die by a set of behaviours: we needed to challenge each other. After a couple of months of doing business that way we had our leadership vote, and of our leaders it was Stuart Maxfield who stood out above the rest. He wasn't our best player, but he lived and died by that set of behaviours. The way he challenged and supported players really set the standard for others to follow. It also gave the middle tier and younger players a fresh start, where, no matter what happened in the years gone by, there was a road map laid out in front of you and you got to choose whether you wanted to be a part of it or not.

I think players coming into our club really respect our open and honest culture. From the first day that they come in they get a road map with a set of behaviours, and they probably haven't had that at the other clubs they've been at. We say to the guys, 'Here's this set of behaviours. If you live and die by these then you'll be at this club for a very long time.' So, automatically they have this buy-in and they say to themselves, 'Wow, this is pretty simple. If I do this, this and this I can call myself a 'Blood' and I'll get respect from the players and I can play in a successful team.' There's no doubt that's why we have been able to bring guys into our club from other teams and they've been able to flourish—they've been able to buy into the system.

At the end of 2002, our new leadership group was picked. There were 11 people in that group, but even though I had finished third in the 2002 best and fairest[7] —which was a breakout year for me—I was left out. We had a set of behaviours, and that was how we were critiqued, and so when I wasn't selected in the leadership group I approached Roosey and John Longmire, who was my line coach at the time, and I asked them directly, 'Why aren't I in the leadership group?' and, 'What do I need to work on?' They said that my consistency and playing my role week in, week out were the areas I needed to work on. Yes, I'd had a good year in 2002, but it was one good one out of my first four, so I had to get more consistent. Then they told me I had to step up my leadership. They said, 'We want to hear your voice in meetings and we want to hear you support and challenge boys on the training track.' So for me, it was really clear what I had to work on in 2003, because I really wanted to be in that leadership group and I wanted to be one of those guys who had a say and who lived and died by that set of behaviours.

I was ready to make that commitment. So that made it a very easy thing for me to do. In 2003 we had a very good year. We made it as far as a home preliminary final, which we lost to Brisbane. I won the best and fairest[8] and the Brownlow Medal, and so the next pre-season I was voted into the leadership group and remained a part of it until my retirement.

As a leader you have to be yourself. I was very lucky to have fantastic leaders before me in Paul Kelly, Leo Barry, Brett Kirk, Craig Bolton, Mick O'Loughlin and Stuart Maxfield, and all of those players led in completely different ways. That's what you have to understand: that everyone's different. In our current leadership group we have eight guys who all lead differently from each other but they all complement each other. You need to understand how you lead, and in my case it is through my actions and the way I bring others into the game and also how I am able to form relationships. I am somebody who can earn people's trust, and that's crucial to how I try to lead the team. It's really rewarding to be in that leadership role and help drive our culture.

6 Michael O'Loughlin played a then record 303 games for Sydney (1995-2009) and kicked 521 goals. He won the Swans' best and fairest in 1998 and was an All-Australian in 1997 and 2000. O'Loughlin played alongside Goodes in the Swans' 2005 premiership win as well as their 2006 Grand Final loss. His games-played record at the club was later passed by Goodes. Both men are members of the Indigenous Team of the Century; O'Loughlin at full-forward and Goodes at centre half-back.

7 Goodes polled 330 votes in the Swans' system, finishing behind Paul Williams (412) and Daryn Cresswell (384).

8 Goodes gained 416 votes to beat Brett Kirk (387) and Jude Bolton (331).

COPYRIGHT
SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP (SMG)

At the end of 2002 I walked the Kokoda Track. There were eight of us who made the trek, which was all about developing mental toughness through carrying your own backpack, cooking your food at night and powerwalking 20-plus kilometres per day: that really helped to set my year up for 2003. When I started playing good games back-to-back in '03, and I won the best and fairest and the Brownlow Medal, that's when I really knew that being a leader was something that I wanted to be. It was the first time that I ever led any of the teams I'd been in, and it was something that I not only enjoyed but wanted, badly.

In 2001-02 I was really good in the first half of games but then I would fade in the second half. That was purely based on my fitness level. By 2003 I had six pre-seasons under my belt, so I finally had a fitness base behind me that allowed me to cover the ground a lot easier. By getting myself so fit, I gained a far greater understanding of how far I could push myself during a game, and there's no doubt that when you can push those limits and reap the benefits as a team you just want to keep doing what makes you successful. It's a great feeling to know that no one can keep up with you, and that was the place I found myself during the peak years of my career.

Paul Roos was an awesome facilitator and teacher to me. My personal relationship with both him and Tami, his wife, is one that will continue into the future. Roosey unleashed the shackles for me in 2003 and let me play footy. I certainly needed to learn the discipline from Rodney Eade, but I needed to learn to be harder and fitter and test myself mentally. Roosey forced me to focus on the small things, and without having that discipline that had been instilled in me by Rodney who knows which way my career would have gone? But Roosey came in and took those restrictions off me and allowed me to back myself because he knew I would make the best decisions out there for the team. It was a massive stepping stone for me to know that the coaching staff was backing me in, and it gave me the confidence to back myself, and from there I went to the next level.

I was continually brought back into line because no one is perfect. I needed to make the mistakes so that I could learn from them. A big part of our system at Sydney is that we give feedback through peer assessments. I would have to sit out the front of the group and every player would have to come up with three words that would describe me. Then they would tell me what they wanted me to stop doing, keep doing or start doing, and they would give examples of each. So after that session I was very clear on what it was I needed to improve, what I was doing really well and what they wanted me to keep doing. It's quite intimidating sitting out the front and hearing your mates being honest with you, but there's no sarcasm in the meetings and there's no joking. It's all about giving good, honest feedback so that you're very clear on what it is you need to improve. Then, if I went away and worked on them, it not only helped me, but it helped the group. If you respect someone enough then you should be able to give such honest feedback, because it's going to help both the individual and the team become better, and to get there more quickly.

I never thought I would win a Brownlow Medal. In 2003, Jude Bolton and I had been invited to the medal count and we had our mothers on the backburner to be our dates because we fully intended to be playing in the Grand Final. After we lost the preliminary final to Brisbane we went along to the function with our mums, planning on having a good night. I was happy that I started polling some votes, and the later the count went on I started to get a bit nervous because there was no way that I ever thought that I would win a Brownlow. To win it in a three-way tie with Nathan Buckley—my idol growing up—and Mark Ricciuto was fantastic.[9] Bucks was 31 and Mark was 28 and they were captains of their footy clubs, so it was quite surreal for me to be standing up there on stage with them as a 23-year-old. It made me really grateful for the commitment I had made to our team at the start of that season. I was really proud of myself.

I never got to enjoy the 2006 Brownlow Medal. That night it wasn't about the Brownlow for me, because we were preparing for the Grand Final against the West Coast Eagles that week, so it was more of a distraction than in 2003. We stayed up in Sydney and had our own event, which was a really great night, but I didn't get to celebrate it like I had in 2003. We lost that Grand Final a few days later. I knew what Nathan Buckley would've felt like in 2003 when he won the Brownlow then lost the Grand Final a few days later.

9 In 2003 Goodes, Buckley and Ricciuto all polled 22 votes (it was a vintage year, with previous winners Shane Crawford, Gavin Wanganeen and Ben Cousins next on 21 votes) in the first official three-way tie since 1930, when Harry Collier, Allan Hopkins and Stan Judkins all polled four votes but Judkins was controversially awarded the medal. The VFL then changed the voting from one vote per game to a 3-2-1 system. Hopkins and Collier were finally awarded retrospective Brownlow Medals in 1989. There had been a three-way tie in 1996 between James Hird, Michael Voss and Corey McKernan (21 votes each), but McKernan was ineligible to win the Brownlow Medal because of suspension.

COPYRIGHT
SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP (SMG)

The best thing that came from injuring my knee in 2004 was that I never played in the ruck again. There had been a number of blokes injure their knees at the centre bounce, so that brought about a rule change at the end of that year where they put a bigger circle around the little circle in the centre, which helped to reduce the impact on the ruckmen. What it also did for me was I learned how to play through injury. I had ruptured my posterior cruciate ligament (PCL) but could still run in straight lines, so I went down back and stayed there for much of that year. I showed my teammates that year that I didn't need to be 100 per cent fit to still be able to play a role for the team and I think they all respected me for that. I was told I couldn't injure the knee any worse than I had so I figured that there was no point in resting it. That was my commitment to the team and to my role within it.

By the time game day comes around I know I've done everything to be ready for the contest. Sometimes I let my mind run and it can go to crazy places during that first hour when it's still a pretty relaxed environment. But once I get strapped and I put on my warm-up gear I automatically switch into preparation mode. I don't wear headphones. We have music playing in the rooms, which Rhyce Shaw always looks after. That last hour is all about getting myself into that mental state as to what my role is for that day. I start asking myself, 'How am I going to help the group?' and I tell myself, 'I've got a good opportunity to help others around me.' I also get a good feel for what my teammates are feeling like. Some days you can feel that they're really nervous, so I get around to them and try to help settle their nerves. It's all around getting into that mental space to be able to fulfill your individual role.

I used to be somebody who needed an early possession in a game for my own confidence. But my role has changed as I've gotten older to where I play predominantly as a roving half-forward, so I know I am only going to get anywhere from 12 to 20 touches in a match. So now I focus on maximising my effort when I do have the ball, and playing my role in our team structure. I might only get three opportunities in the first quarter to touch the ball, but if in two of those opportunities I've made a tackle and stopped the opposition from rebounding the ball from our forward line then I've done my job. It's not so much about making an impact like it used to be; it's more about playing a particular role. If everybody breaks it down like that, it makes it so much easier for your team to get the result it's after.



PREMIERSHIP STAR: Goodes was a key member of two premierships with the Swans (2005, 2012). In the 2012 triumph over Hawthorn, and having suffered a knee injury during the game, Goodes went forward and kicked a crucial goal in the last quarter to help get his team over the line.

Five years ago I needed to do every aspect of our training at maximum effort. That's when I would play at my best and that's when I knew I had done everything I could to prepare for each game and for the season. But into my 30s I needed to train smarter, so it was about understanding that less is more sometimes. I needed to work out how best to reap the benefits from altering my training approach. I trained Monday and Friday in the pre-season, and I'd really go flat out for those sessions, then I recover in between that. During the season I'd have a really big Thursday session and play on the weekend, then recover in between. I found that routine really worked for me, and I approached every session with the aim to improve. I can always get better. If you have that mindset then you're willing to make the sacrifices required. You're always willing to do that bit extra. You should always have it in your mind to strive harder and work harder because when you have that philosophy and 40 other blokes have that philosophy it lifts the intensity and standard of training. You end up telling yourself that you don't want to be the one to bring that standard down.

During our great rivalry with the Eagles I had the opportunity to play against one of the AFL's best players, Chris Judd. We had some fantastic battles in

COPYRIGHT SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP (SMG)

that time, and it was great to share such a rivalry with one of the best in the competition. The Eagles and Swans both played similar brands of football—one-on-one and contested—and so when I look back on the 2005 and 2006 Grand Final results I think it was fair that we each won a premiership.[10]

Our 2005 side was more talented than most people realised. Whether we got the plaudits for how talented we were or not, I'm not sure, but internally we certainly did. But our culture wasn't based on ego; it was based on individuals playing their role for the team. So when we broke it down like that, no one wanted the accolades or to be singled out because it was never about individuals in our group, it was always about how the team went.

The recent rivalry with Greater Western Sydney is something that they build themselves up for. They had their first victory against us in 2014 (by 32 points in round one) and I'll happily put my hand up and say I wasn't playing that day. The rivalry is definitely there, and for us it's about being the older brother and making sure that we keep our younger brother in line. But younger brothers fight a bit harder and they look up to their older brothers and say, 'We're going to beat you one day!' and we know that that's what their striving to do and we always have to be on our guard when we play them.

COPYRIGHT
SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP (SMG)

John 'Horse' Longmire taught me my craft. 'Horse' coaches differently from Roosey, and he guided me for many years as the midfield coach before taking on the senior role, in 2011. He taught me to understand what my strengths were. His mantra was to continue to work on areas that need improving, but know what you're good at and bring that to the contest. You just need to focus on that every time you run out. 'Horse' also taught me how to continually give back to the playing group through my leadership role. I need to not only be challenging our leaders, but I also need to support them in taking the next step in their careers.

The biggest thing about the 2012 premiership was it helped to heal the disappointment from losing in 2006.[11] If I had not won another premiership I would have always had a bad taste in my mouth from narrowly losing that Grand Final to West Coast. In 2012 there were three of my teammates who hadn't played in the 2005 win but had played in the 2006 loss—Jarrad McVeigh, Nick Malceski and Ted Richards—so I was just so happy to be able to share one with them. Then there were the four of us who had played in the 2005 flag—Lewis Roberts-Thomson, Jude Bolton, Ryan O'Keefe and me—so it was pretty special to win another one with them, too.

That 2012 season was a really great year for our group. We had John Longmire coaching us, but the Bloods' culture was just the same as it was under Roosey. We were the underdogs—Hawthorn were the favourites—but I wasn't going to let anything get in the way of us winning that game. I injured my knee during the game but my only thought was to strap it up and get back out there. It was an injury that I had done before, my PCL, so I knew what I could and couldn't do. I needed to play a role, and the group needed to play their roles all day. We did that, and we still only won by 10 points.

It's ironic in some ways, but free agency has helped my game. For many years I had to play one-out in the forward line with a couple of young guys next to me, but in 2013 and 2014 I have had Kurt Tippett (from Adelaide) and Lance 'Buddy' Franklin (Hawthorn) come to my footy club. It's nice to be able to shred a bit of extra weight now that I'm not the key forward and to be able to run around the forward line a bit more with some freedom. You're always going to make some big noise if you sign a nine-year contract and leave a football club where you've just won a premiership like Lance did at the end of 2013. But for us, we see Buddy as a second-year player entering 2015 because he's come in and has had to learn our culture. To play by our set of behaviours has been a learning curve for him and his commitment in that time has been fantastic. I see him having a very long career at the Swans, and you can already tell by the support we are getting for the Swans from new fans who come to see him play that the move has been beneficial not only for us but also for the game in Sydney.

It was extremely hard to come back after a bad start in the 2014 Grand Final. In 2006 we were always in the game, but in the first quarter of 2014 the Hawks got the momentum and we couldn't strangle it back from them. It almost seemed like the harder we tried the further we got from what we wanted

10 Sydney defeated West Coast by four points in the 2005 Grand Final: 8.10 (58) to 7.12 (54). Chris Judd was awarded the Norm Smith Medal in a losing side. Goodes had 12 kicks, eight handballs, seven marks and kicked one goal. In 2006, West Coast won by a point, 12.13 (85) to 12.12 (84), the narrowest Grand Final margin since 1947 (excluding the drawn Grand Finals of 1948 and 1977). Goodes had 17 kicks, five handballs, five marks, six tackles, eight inside-50s and kicked one goal.

11 Sydney defeated Hawthorn by 10 points in the 2012 Grand Final: 14.7 (91) to 11.15 (81). Ryan O'Keefe was awarded the Norm Smith Medal. Goodes, who entered the game under an injury cloud, had seven kicks, seven handballs, two marks, six tackles and kicked one goal.

to do. It was super disappointing. For me, that year was all based around getting back to play at a good, consistent level. I played 20 games and the 20th was a losing Grand Final, so it was a really disappointing ending. We defeated North Melbourne by 71 points in the preliminary final, so we had every right to go into the Grand Final super confident. But Hawthorn came out and challenged us in that first quarter which set the tone for the rest of the game.[12] It certainly taught us a really big lesson about focus and working as a team.

Promoting the game is a big part of our business at the Sydney Swans. Fairly or unfairly, it's a massive part of our role to grow the game in NSW, and I think the club's done a fantastic job over the past 20 years. Playing finals for the past 10 years has had a huge impact on the growth of the game in the state. From a personal note, it's been great fun helping to grow the game in Sydney and to see participation rates grow. We have the most corporate sponsor partnerships in the AFL because people really want to buy into our brand because of what we stand for. It is a huge challenge for us, year in and year out, to stay up the top because it's like anything: you need to be successful to create those opportunities. Brisbane is a good example of that. They won three premierships in a row, but once they started losing again support dropped away, on and off the field, very quickly.

The real issue for the AFL game in the future is the market in Sydney. Yes, soccer is nipping at our heels, but there are so many other teams trying to gain a foothold up here: there are two AFL teams, three major soccer teams (Sydney FC, the Western Sydney Wanderers and the Central Coast Mariners), two basketball teams (Sydney Kings and Illawarra Hawks), nine NRL teams (Canterbury Bulldogs, Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks, Manly-Warringah Sea Eagles, Parramatta Eels, Penrith Panthers, St George Illawarra Dragons, Sydney Roosters, South Sydney Rabbitohs and Wests Tigers) and one Super Rugby Union team (NSW Waratahs). There are so many opportunities for people to support different codes. If you're not successful it will definitely bite you in the butt, and as soon as that happens to the AFL teams up here, that's when the game will suffer. So the challenge is to stay at the top and be super competitive.

12 Hawthorn defeated Sydney by 63 points: 21.11 (137) to 11.8 (74), after leading by 20 points at quarter-time and 42 at half-time. Luke Hodge won the Norm Smith Medal. Goodes had eight kicks, five handballs, seven marks, six inside-50s and kicked two goals.

There's lots of fun to be had playing footy at the top level. Right up to my last game I still had fun when we ran out there and would win games and I still got enjoyment out of kicking a goal or seeing a young player kick their first goal. At junior levels, I think that kids should be coached to just go out and have fun. Unfortunately, parents really want to see their kids get the best opportunity by playing so well on the weekends, so between parents and coaches they can sometimes make it too serious for kids. My footy didn't get serious until I got drafted to the Swans. You should, as a kid, be able to run out with your mates and, whether you win, lose or draw, enjoy it, have fun and be trying things that you saw the champions do on television the night before on Friday night footy.

My brother, Brett, had to work even harder than I did to realise his AFL dream. North Melbourne had said they would take him in a rookie draft, which didn't eventuate, so he thought that he had missed his opportunity. He had just won back-to-back premierships at North Ballarat (2008-09) and he was starting to think about life after football. He took a job up at Northern Territory Thunder working for the AFL with their Indigenous programs, and while he was there he was headhunted by the Western Bulldogs to be their player development manager. He saw that as his chance to work with an AFL club so he came back down to Melbourne and had another good year at VFL level with Williamstown. Then Bulldogs' coach Brendan McCartney asked him to try out with their senior list during the 2013 pre-season. I was just so proud of him to finally get his opportunity at AFL level.[13] He is a lot fitter than I am aerobically; I'm better suited to the short, sharp running and high intensity efforts. We've had four opportunities to play against each other and each time one (or both) of us has been injured, so it didn't happened.

Racism remains an ongoing issue in sport. To think that it is more than 20 years since Nicky Winmar's famous stand against racism and, yet, it is still going on in our game is disappointing.[14] We've

13 Brett Goodes made his AFL debut against the Brisbane Lions in round one of 2013, and in his first two seasons played 15 games. In his first match, Brett had 14 kicks, 10 handballs, seven marks and six rebound-50s. In Adam's first AFL game, against Port Adelaide in round one of 1999, he had 11 kicks, no handballs, four marks and kicked one goal. Brett Goodes was delisted at the end of 2014, but gained a place as a Rookie in 2015. Goodes was delisted again at the end of the 2015 season

14 The photo of Nicky Winmar raising his guernsey and pointing to his skin is one of football's most famous and most enduring images. It took place after St Kilda had beaten Collingwood at Victoria Park in round four, 1993, a match in which Winmar and his Indigenous teammate Gilbert McAdam had been consistently abused by segments of the crowd.

COPYRIGHT
SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP (SMG)

come a long way in that time, no doubt about it, but unfortunately there are still incidents happening, which is why we need to keep educating people that it's wrong to racially discriminate against anyone. We also need to support players out there when it does happen. I have said thank you to Nicky—as well as to Michael Long, who stood up against Damian Monkhorst in 1995—for their brave stances, because it has made the industry and the environment a lot easier for Aboriginal kids coming through in the years since they played. It has also made us strong enough to stand up just like they did. Without people making those stands for what's right, it makes it very hard for the next person faced with the same challenge to have the courage to do it.

I play my best when I play with instinct. To do that I have to have a clear mind, understand what my role is and understand what my strengths are; when I get those things right, that's when special things can happen. All the things that I'd learned about standing up for who I was, what I was and what I represented meant that when I heard the young girl abuse me over the fence that night (against Collingwood at the MCG in 2013) it was an instinctive reaction to say something. I heard it, pointed her out, got her evicted, and then tried going back into the game. John Longmire pulled me from the ground shortly after that, and I remember Darren Jolly asking me if I was all right and I told him, 'Yeah, I think I'm OK.' But when I got to the bench it all hit me and it took me back to that place where, eight years before, somebody had vilified me, and I remembered things that had happened in high school. It caught me so off guard because there I was, strong, fit and playing a great game and one word from somebody really cut me deeply and took me back to such a dark place. It's forever there in your mind, unfortunately. Anyone who's been abused for the way they look, dress, their religion, sexuality or race will remember every one of those instances and the face or name of the person who did it. It was a really bad night, even though I played well and we won.

I'm the chairman of the advisory body for the Indigenous boys at the AFL Players' Association. One of our priorities over the next three to five years is to have Aboriginal liaison officers at every football club. At the moment there are two who are full-time. That's something that we intend to rectify. It would be perfect if these roles could be filled by former Indigenous players who can help with that transition, as I had Mick (O'Loughlin) there to mentor me.

Mick O'Loughlin and I started up the Go Foundation in 2009. We wanted to create a way for us to give back to the community in Sydney. We provide Indigenous scholarships for young boys and girls (11 were awarded in 2014) and we really want to guide that next batch of Indigenous role models. Who is going to take over from us? These scholarships are all academic—there's no footy focus behind it—it's all about these guys being the next doctors and lawyers. It's for those people to go and get their education and then go back to their communities once they're qualified and really help drive others to go and do great things like we did.[15]

I needed a strong plan when I was named the Australian of the Year in 2014. The first month after I became the recipient of the award we had 180 requests to appear at various events and give talks, so I needed to sit down with my manager, Lucy Mills, and work out a plan. I was already involved as an ambassador with White Ribbon, the Recognise Campaign and the Racism Stops With Me campaign, so I felt we needed to focus on those three pillars. They became the priorities for me that year because I wanted people to be really clear, once my tenure as Australian of the Year ended, that I stood for specific things. I think we really nailed that. We were really clear on what we were trying to achieve and the awareness that we were able to raise across those three platforms was pretty good. But it doesn't stop for me now my tenure is over. The great thing about being Australian of the Year is that you get this wonderful platform to try to make a difference by standing up for what you are passionate about. There's no doubt the things I have done off the field over the past couple of years have allowed me to use football as my outlet, and I've been able to find some great balance between all that.

Football has shaped my life. There is no doubt that it has shaped who I am. Being at the Sydney Swans has helped me to become a leader and to be proud of who I am and where I come from. My commitment to the game has been very high and I wouldn't have it any other way. Football has given my family and me an opportunity to break the welfare-dependant cycle, and I was able to help other families to see and believe that we can have better lives than we have had in the past.

GAME-CHANGERS: Class personified, Goodes, along with West Coast and Carlton champion Chris Judd (pictured), were both unstoppable during the 2000s. They would share numerous battles over the years, and would both, fittingly, retire in 2015.

15 For more information about the Go Foundation, visit: http://www.go-foundation.org/

COPYRIGHT
SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP (SMG)


ISC
AFL
QBE
AFL
ISC
AFL
HYUNDAI