

Before and After:

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1

Ok, footy starts tonight with Carlton and Richmond. The season begins and we are so ready to get away from scandals and injuries and misbehaving footballers and agents, just get back to the games we actually want to hear, see and read about.

So the day before our first match against Geelong, at the MCG, I've decided to make a celebration of it. My partner and I are heading to town for the Almanac lunch to launch the season of writing with fellow footy nuts. Then we are staying overnight in the city and going to the MCG that night for the footy. Making a good Aussie weekend out of the beginning of 2011. Even with the annoying buzzing of the race cars at Albert Park for the weekend, we will be aptly diverted by preparations for the games that matter most to so many.

I am almost prepared. We pick up hats and scarves from the stands outside the MCG, wondering why ours don't get sent out like the Doggies. I've got my Ticketek tickets because it's an away game. I've got my rain gear because every time I go to the "G" I get wet. I am considering my snow jacket in case it's freezing, my other "G" experience.

2

Now I am going to make a diversion in this story: I've been thinking a lot about the Players Association's Ambit claim to get more of the footy pie especially to put money aside for the health and welfare of players in their futures. I am in total agreement with that. As I see my and other teams boys get crunched, crushed, bumped, strained and broken, I worry about what their bodies will feel like when they hit their 40's and onwards. As a 55 year old, I know that we begin to fade and have health issues, and that's without all the stresses and strains that a footballer has to face on a weekly basis. I also talked to my chiropractor, and he sees an awful lot of retired footy players who have been "dumped", once they stopped playing, they no longer get the medical and psychological support for their injuries that are incurred when they are too young to think of long term bodily deterioration and ramifications. So this is a very good move by the Association to try and put something in place for their charges, and they will need every penny of it. I would also suggest that maybe players need to contribute from their huge salaries as they play as well, like superannuation contributions. Put it away while you have it because you WILL need it in the future. It's an interesting topic that we never hear much about, we hear when we lose a footballer to age or illness, but not about the deterioration of their bodies prematurely.

3

It's Sunday and I have the following to say about Friday night's game: WHAT IS MOST UNFORGIVABLE ABOUT FRIDAY NIGHT IS THAT I LONGED TO WATCH COLLINGWOOD PLAY. I, amongst many others at the MCG, hated the spectacle of the game, the low scoring, the poor

kicking, the bouncing between defence and defence. I hated the crowds of players everywhere except their positions. I hated all the points being kicked because we'll win nothing with so many points. I hated seeing the poor Cat Joel Selwood go down in front of us with a sickening crunch, refer to point two above. I heard on the radio Saturday morning that Farren Ray's was very upset and concerned about Joel and understandably, it effected the rest of his game. I hate seeing three opposition players around Riewoldt, and no spare St.Kilda players taking advantage of that and sneaking through good goals. Any goals would have been good goals on Friday night.

So first we sit through the most boring football I think I have ever witnessed, and then the second half Geelong comes back into the game and blows away our piddling lead, and then the rest of the night is excruciating as I see the game turned to mush and am left completely deflated.

They were talking about the awful game on SEN later on Saturday morning, and I actually rung in for the first time to add my voice. I said I have watched St.Kilda lose three grandfinals in two years, and was looking for a sign in the first game that we are still in there as a challenger, that we can push one more year out as a top side. I didn't see it. I know it's the first game and I know they have to find their legs and their fitness and it's not my feeble body on the line, but as a supporter, I am very disillusioned. It's been a horror off season, even the "Challenge" documentary doesn't heal the hurt, but made me a little hopeful (always a bad thing as a Saints supporter). I needed to see them come out with something, a win at minimum, to begin the healing but it doesn't come. Same old players, same old mistakes. No youth. Ross Lyon says on SEN that they have 7 new players they wanted to play, but through injury or colds or not quite there yet, not one of the seven were available. It is so disheartening to be a Saints fan. And it's only the bloody first game!

So, I have watched and listened to the other games to divert me, listened to ½ game of Collingwood to see them continue strength to strength, watched Hawthorn lose from 30 up and well done Adelaide. At least these games were good to watch. I am now going to listen to the Western Bulldogs and Essendon, again, hoping for a better game than the one I witnessed.

Shame!

4. I did have a blast at the Almanac's first luncheon of the year, it was good seeing the faces of the blokes I met at last years Grand Final lunch, and listening to the funny stories of those interviewed. Food was yummy too.

Well done John Harms and co. , you throw a good party.

Yvette Wroby