

Making a stand for Adam Goodes

By Martin Flanagan - The Age - August 7, 2015

Nelson Mandela said sport has more power than governments when it comes to changing attitudes and no one in sport speaks louder than the players. This is doubly so in a war game like men's football.

The statements of politicians and AFL executives on whopping salaries can only shift the public mood so far before they are accused of pandering to political correctness. Players have something akin to street credibility since they have to publicly live the values they espouse.

And so, for me, the fightback against the booing of Adam Goodes began in this newspaper when Bulldogs captain Bob Murphy wrote one of his lightly painted but deeply centred pieces in which he described the boos directed at Goodes as "hits to the soul" and called on other players to stand with him.

By last weekend, AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan had stated a position but, Gil, please stop talking about the football "industry". The Phil Walsh tragedy triggered a highly public outpouring of mass grief. When did you last see a highly public outpouring of mass grief after a corporate executive died? In fairness to Gil, I also heard Adam Goodes use the word. Can I say this to you, Adam - never in the history of industrial Australia has there been a national wave of personal support like the one that caught up with you last weekend.

There are still people saying they don't like the way Adam Goodes plays. There were people who didn't like the way Leigh Matthews played but he was judged player of the century. I've got a friend called Cath who is straight talking and good of heart. Of Adam Goodes, she says: *"You don't have to like him. But you do have to respect him."*

Shane Warne was within his rights to defend booing as part of our sporting tradition. He was wrong to say the booing of Goodes has nothing to do with race. The public pronouncements of Miranda Devine, Alan Jones and Andrew Bolt are ample proof of the racial element in the hostility being directed towards Goodes.

Malcolm Knox's forthcoming biography of Adam Goodes is keenly awaited. As I understand Goodes' story, his mother, being a member of the Stolen Generation, was cut off from her culture, leaving her son doubly displaced. At school, he copped it from white kids who saw him as Aboriginal and he copped it from Aboriginal kids who saw him as not being Aboriginal enough.

My impression is that the older Indigenous players at the Swans when he arrived played a big part in shaping him. And Goodes bought into the Bloods' ethos, becoming one of its exemplars. At his best, he was a missile of a footballer - tall, strong, quick and highly skilful. He's a fair way from his best now but, what he can do, he still does well. His defects have been cruelly exaggerated.

The Swans' supporters turned up for him last weekend. Going into the ground, a woman supporter, maybe in her 60s, said she was hurting because Adam Goodes was hurting. That's why the next AFL official who talks about AFL supporters as "consumers" should be banished to a call centre for the rest of his or her life. Footy's a place where feelings are shared. It's not a family but it sort of is - particularly, as I have encountered it, at the Swans.

The Tigers wore their Indigenous guernsey in round 18 out of respect for Goodes. Richmond, it should be noted, has the Korin Gamadji Institute, an Aboriginal institution with a strong cultural presence, at its Punt

Road headquarters. Last Saturday, I went to the MCG to see Melbourne v Collingwood. Travis Varcoe flew past, Aboriginal flag on each bandaged shoulder. Varcoe revealed a depth of passion I hadn't seen in him before and he was embroiled in a melee just before half-time that I feared might get out of hand. Fortunately, it didn't.

The classiest player in that match was Melbourne captain Nathan Jones. In the third term, he kicked a big goal, lifted both arms in the air, indicated the Aboriginal tri-colour around his right wrist and pointed to the sky, saluting Adam Goodes.

I happen to know Nathan Jones. I've heard the feeling in his voice when he talks about the tragedy that overwhelmed his former Aboriginal teammate, Liam Jurrah, and what it meant to be invited into the Tiwi ceremonies at the funeral of the father of another former teammate Austin Wonaeamirri. Not for the first time I shouted, "*Nathan Jones, you are a champion!*"

Then I noticed all the Melbourne players were wearing wristbands with the Aboriginal colours. Seems the team said to its two Indigenous members, Jeff Garlett and Neville Jetta: "*We want to support you – what do you want us to do?*"

Before Port Adelaide played St Kilda, three of the greatest Indigenous players of recent time – Saint Nicky Winmar, Port's Gavin Wanganeen and Byron Pickett – participated in the pre-match ceremonies. It was a display in how respect is given and taken.

My weekend of footy ended with the Dogs v Essendon. Adam Goodes' brother Brett plays with the Dogs and they were wearing their Indigenous round jumper as a gesture of support. And there was Bob Murphy, out in the middle of Etihad Stadium taking the toss in a Bulldogs guernsey with Adam Goodes' No. 37 on the back. Boo him, he was saying, and you're booing me.

Source: <https://www.theage.com.au/sport/afl/making-a-stand-for-goodes-20150806-git9zv.html>

Booing Adam Goodes – racism is in the stitching of the AFL

By Keith D. Parry - The Conversation - July 29, 2015

Adam Goodes was again booed by Australian football fans at the weekend. While some misguided commentators have written this behaviour off as not being racially motivated, others are convinced that such abuse is a result of the Sydney Swans player's outspoken views on Aboriginal issues.

I would argue that racist behaviour and assumptions are woven into the fabric of Australian football, alongside historical assumptions about what constitutes "Australianness".

In 2005, Goodes was announced as a member of the Indigenous Team of the Century, a selection of Indigenous Australians that have proudly represented Australian Football League (AFL) teams. He is a two-time Brownlow Medalist (awarded to the Fairest and Best player of the season), a dual AFL premiership winner and was Australian of the Year in 2014. Only eight players have played more career AFL games than Goodes' current tally of 365. This is someone who should be regarded as one of the AFL's greatest players.

In recent months, some supporters have booed Goodes whenever he touches a ball. As a direct result of this abuse, a fatigued Goodes is taking time away from the sport and may not play in the Swans' upcoming fixtures.

While Swans' chairman Andrew Pridham has labelled the booing of Goodes as "100% racist", AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan has so far avoided describing the "sheep-like behaviour" of booing fans as racism.

A history of abuse

In 2013, a 13-year old girl, unaware that "ape" was a racist slur, abused Goodes during a match against Collingwood. He was also booed in the 2014 Grand Final against Hawthorn.

Another notable incident played out in 1993. The St Kilda player Nicky Winmar responded to racism from the stands by raising his shirt and pointing at his chest. Allegedly, the crowd had been "reminding" Winmar that, as an Indigenous footballer, "he was one of them rather than one of us". Faced with a sea of hostile "whiteness", Winmar effectively and eloquently displayed his pride in his skin colour.

Sadly, AFL supporters have a history of emphasising notions of "difference" by abusing Indigenous players. Yet it is only when Indigenous players refuse to accept such abuse and take a stand against it that the issue becomes highlighted and the players are criticised.

Although the AFL became the first major Australian sporting code to outlaw on-field racial sledging in 1995, there continues to be too many shameful incidents of racial vilification by fans towards Indigenous AFL players. That Goodes has now been consistently booed by a variety of opposition fans for a sustained period of time suggests racial abuse may be an endemic problem.

Australia's game

Australian rules football is feted as Australia's only Indigenous sporting code. In terms of Indigenous players, there is actually an over-representation in the AFL (10% of players are Indigenous, compared to 2% of the population).

That's partly because Indigenous Australian footballers have been portrayed as possessing "innate" ability or being "born to play" sport. In reality, such ability and skills are the result of overcoming unfavourable political and socioeconomic conditions, rather than some biological or mystical ability.

In addition, Indigenous players can often be marginalised and excluded from positions of influence on the pitch. Indigenous athletes are assigned positions that require speed and agility rather than leadership and intelligence. In this way, control over the game is retained by white athletes. Such marginalisation also indicates deeper racial ideologies that are based on social and historical events.

Australia has a sad history of systemic, widespread discrimination towards those from visible ethnic minority groups. This discrimination was embedded within national legislation up to the 1970s (when the Racial Discrimination Act was established) and was embodied by the White Australia policy.

This policy was an overtly apparent form of racism and can be dubbed "old racism", in which incompatibility between groups was believed to be based on biological differences. This old racism has more recently been replaced by a "new racism" or a "cultural racism" that serves to highlight cultural differences.

AFL (along with cricket and rugby league) has historically been identified as an "Australian" sport. According to academics Chris Hallinan and Barry Judd, the Victorian Football League (the precursor of the AFL) was viewed as a signpost of Australian national (white) identity.

Australian football was championed by early-20th-century politicians, such as former Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, who believed that the sport could be used to maintain national values:

The game is Australian in its origin, Australian in its principle, and, I venture to say, essentially of Australian development.

Australia's problem

Sport is one of those rare constructs that causes some people to stop and consider their Australianness. But the notion of Australianness is deeply rooted in historical, often mythical, visions of Australia. The core culture remains an Anglo-Celtic one, based on British settler history and archetypal figures such as the bushman.

Athletes that most resemble these historical figures continue to be more easily accepted by fans of Australian football. Those that do not match this vision of Australianness may be ostracised or abused.

In 2003, politics professor Colin Tatz stated that fair and equal competition and opportunities in sport have not existed for Australia's Indigenous people, and argued that "racial equality in Australian sport remains disturbingly out of reach". Nonetheless, Australian sport remains one of the only avenues for Indigenous athletes to speak out about their off-field experiences in Australian society.

Adam Goodes was part of a 2013 TV campaign, run by the Australian Human Rights Commission, which stated that racism has no place in sport.

Source: <https://theconversation.com/booing-adam-goodes-racism-is-in-the-stitching-of-the-afl-45316>

Whether it's racist or not, it's time to stop booing Adam Goodes. This is why

By Anthony Sharwood - News.com.au - July 28, 2015

It's time to stop the booing. Whether you think it's racist or not, it's just time to stop.

Maybe you agree with the professional athletes who've argued this week that being booed is part of the game, and that Adam Goodes should just suck it up.

Maybe, like AFL legend Dermott Brereton, you believe Goodes has brought this on himself and "would do well to look at what he's done ... and work out what he can do to change that".

Maybe, like countless fans who watch an awful lot of AFL footy, you genuinely believe Goodes is a dirty player who milks free kicks, and you boo him for that reason and that reason alone.

And maybe, like many other people, you boo Goodes because you don't much like that moment two years ago when he pointed his finger over the fence at a 13-year-old girl.

All of these views have at least some merit. But here's the problem.

We also know that some people are booing Goodes in a racist way. The West Coast Eagles acknowledged this in a statement, which in part read: "There are some boundaries that need to be observed. We cannot and will not condone racist behaviour."

Racism is always a hard thing to define. A black man can use the "N" word to another black man, but a white man can't. Where are the boundaries?

A bloke was ejected from the ground at Perth on the weekend for yelling "get back to the zoo" in the Adam Goodes direction.

The man told The West Australian: "The whole world has gone too politically correct ... There was swearing in the crowd that was much more offensive than what I said."

So where's the line? Why was the zoo comment worse than calling a player a dickhead or a prick or a wanker?

The line is more or less here: that any comment painting one particular race as a lesser form of human is clearly racist. The Nazis employed propagandists to prove that the black man was an inferior "species".

You tell a black man to go back to the zoo, or if you call him an ape or a monkey, you are buying into that. It is vile, dehumanising and - yes - completely racist. Just ask Andrew Symonds. Or Adam Goodes.

When Goodes pointed over the fence two years ago on that fateful night, he wasn't picking on a teenager, as many have twisted the tale.

He was pointing not at the girl herself, but at the dark heart of racism. It was a symbolic act, as pregnant with meaning as the famous image of Nicky Winmar pointing proudly at his skin.

Many argue that by pointing at the crowd, Goodes broke a code. Theatre types call it the fourth wall. It's the imaginary barrier between actors and audience. That wall exists in sport too. And you don't cross it, as all those ex-footy legends have reminded us this week.

What happens on the field stays on the field, they tell us. What happens in the crowd stays in the crowd.

And yeah, absolutely, no one begrudges sporting crowds the right to a little colourful language. People work hard and footy tickets aren't cheap. We all deserve the right to bellow at umps and players in a world where our emotional outlets are increasingly stifled.

Ninety-nine times out of 100, that logic is spot on. But this is that other one per cent of the time.

We know without question that a small section of people booing Goodes are racist. If you're booing alongside them - for whatever reason, racist or benign - then sadly, by association, you are condoning the racist views. It effectively makes you racist, too.

That's not fair. It's not even half fair. But neither is racism.

Source: <https://www.cairnspost.com.au/news/whether-its-racist-or-not-its-time-to-stop-booing-adam-goodes-this-is-why/news-story/f1112571f89a148584c34d1e517c83d8>

Only Adam Goodes can stop the booing

Miranda Devine - The Daily Telegraph - July 29, 2015

Do the geniuses who run AFL actually think they can command a crowd not to boo Adam Goodes? Next they'll try walking on water. No, nothing can be done to force people to like Goodes. Only he can change people's perceptions of him. A good start would be for the Swans star to apologise to the 13-year-old girl he singled out for rough treatment during a Collingwood game two years ago, after she shouted: "You're an ape". Goodes understandably was upset at what he took as a racist slur. But as soon as he got close to the girl he should have seen she was a child and let it go. The Collingwood fan was barely 13 - the daughter of a single mother on a disability pension, from a hard-scrabble town in Gippsland. She told me later through her mother she didn't even know "ape" was racist. She was just sledging the opposition.

Despite her youth, Goodes was determined to make an example of her. He kept pointing until stadium officials took her away. The crying girl was paraded through the jeering crowd, and detained by stadium police past midnight, while her worried grandmother and little sisters were told to stay in their seats. When she finally was released, Nana had to drive three hours home, with no offer of help. "Racism had a face - and it was a 13-year-old girl," Goodes said. He had the grace later to accept her written apology, but the damage had been done.

He should have apologised to her a long time ago, but better late than never. At least he would show that he now understands what he did was wrong, unfair, and did nothing to combat racism. He was a rich, powerful, 33-year-old elite sportsman; she was a defenseless, underprivileged child. And the AFL, if it cared about him, would have told him so, rather than pandering to his misplaced sense of victimhood. Instead Goodes was hailed a hero for "calling out" racism, and made Australian of the Year where he kept telling Australians they are racist.

This is the root of the crowd antipathy to Goodes. It has nothing to do with the colour of his skin. It comes down to his "dobbing and sooking" after a little girl called him a rude name, as former player Karl Langdon put it this week.

Short of banning the fans, there's not much the AFL can do about this vicious cycle, other than to counsel Goodes to remake his image. Enlisting other players to incite the crowd on his behalf will only make things worse.

Goodes is upset by the heckling and says he would be "really disappointed" if his career ended on a negative note. Well, that's in your hands, Adam. Apologise to the girl, and recognise that Australians don't take kindly to being accused of being racists when they are not. Then the crowd might fall back in love with you.

Source: <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/blogs/miranda-devine/only-adam-goodes-can-stop-the-booing/news-story/139503a3c2c64cf3cffce731de44d216>

If Goodes was booed by racists, why was Rioli cheered?

Andrew Bolt - Herald Sun - May 26, 2015

Patrick Smith plays the racism card in a very strange column:

Sydney champion Adam Goodes, one of the country's greatest AFL players, runs around the MCG on Saturday night and is relentlessly and loudly booed by a large part of the Hawthorn crowd... Because he is indigenous.

Really? If that were so, why was the much-loved Cyril Rioli, also on the ground, not booed, too? Why not Lewis Jetta? Buddy Franklin? Why no boos over in Adelaide for the great Eddie Betts? If we were all the racists that Smith, himself so pure, imagines us to be, why no boos for those players? (Well, OK, Franklin got a bit from Hawks fans for quitting Hawthorn.) The bizarre thing is that Smith in his very own column lists a number of perfectly obvious reasons why a crowd might boo Goodes, and each goes to not his "race" but his behaviour:

The people who boo Goodes say they do it because he stages for free kicks and can be illegally tough. Typical is the tweet yesterday that said: "My take on Adam Goodes. Sliding into a player's legs is dangerous. He was a serial offender ..." Goodes may, at times, overplay his hand... Goodes has been suspended, too. Twice in 2012 he received one-match bans for sliding feet first into opponents' legs... ... in 2013 he called to account a 13-year-old girl in the crowd who called him an ape... Miranda Devine wrote in The Daily Telegraph: "Adam Goodes is a terrible choice as Australian of the Year. A respected sports celebrity, he is being rewarded for victimising a powerless 13-year-old girl from a disadvantaged background." Andrew Bolt in the Herald Sun replied to a Goodes column in the Fairfax papers: "Adam Goodes has let us down as Australian of the Year, using his soapbox to vilify our past and preach division. The Swans captain this week denounced 'our very dark past, a brutal history of dispossession, theft and slaughter ... Europeans, and the governments that have run our country, have raped, killed and stolen'."

Moreover, missing from Smith's column was any attempt to explain why the booing of Goodes was worst at a Hawthorn game. Are Hawthorn supporters, then, simply more racist than the rest of us? In fact, the Herald Sun explains:

Some Hawthorn fans suggested on social media on Monday that the booing of Goodes related to an incident in 2013 when Goodes appeared to trip Hawk Josh Gibson with his foot, emphatically denying racism played any part.

That tripping, and the staging for free kicks that got called out even by an umpire this year, already seem explanation enough. But there's more. Goodes also chose to be divisive, and some people don't like it. He abused the country as fundamentally racist, led at times by rapists, and some people feel offended at the unjustified slur. He humiliated a 13-year-old girl before the eyes of millions, and some people think that unfair and a bit mean. Those are actions that would have had any player of any colour booed, too. That Goodes has Aboriginal ancestors should not excuse him from criticism, and especially not after being so critical himself. I don't like the booing of Goodes one little bit. But I also don't like Smith inventing racists where none exist.

Source: <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/blogs/andrew-bolt/if-goodes-was-booed-by-racists-why-was-rioli-cheered/news-story/f387e18352f88aaf184eb088e61ddcb6>