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Sport and the Australian War Effort during the First World War: Concord and Conflict

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Abstract

This thesis investigates sport and its relationship with the Australian war effort between 1914 and 1918. As a significant cultural element within Australian society since the settlement of European colonists, many envisioned sport as holding a higher purpose outside mere leisure or entertainment. With concerns surrounding national security emerging from 1900 onward, ideas surrounding the playing of sport as a preparation for warfare became common.

The outbreak of war in 1914 oversaw the variable explosion of this connection between playing and battlefields. Through propaganda, recruitment, fund-rising, sporting competitions, education and gender relations, patriots sought to hone sports influence in order to aid in the defence of Empire. Australia therefore celebrated sport, for it encouraged its citizens to 'Play the Greater Game!'

Yet sport possessed the ability to divide with as great a strength as it did to unite, becoming embroiled in the social turmoil that engulfed the nation after 1915. Bitter public debates surrounding the appropriateness of games and the eventual government intervention against sport in 1917 speak to this conflict. Even more than this, violent altercations between recruiters and war-weary crowds and the suspension of increasingly violent school games indicate the dangerous levels with which sport was fuelling social discord. With this division in mind, the nation also began to reconsider for the first time the place and role of sport in its society.

When viewing these paralleling developments, we can decipher that sport had an altogether paradoxical and complicated relationship with Australia's war. The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to remind audiences that, in spite of what several contemporary governments and sporting codes tell us, the celebrated place of sport in our memory of the war is one to be questioned. By doing so, we can hopefully re-evaluate the manner in which we remember the Great War itself, not exclusively as a nation-making exercise, but perhaps as something far more complex.

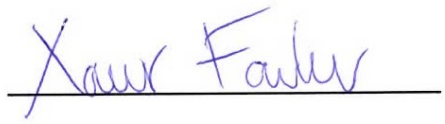
Declaration

This is to certify that:

i. This thesis compromises only my original work towards the PhD.

ii. Due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used.

iii. This thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of the bibliography.

Signed: 

Xavier James Fowler

Date: 6th of March, 2018

Preface

The decision to investigate the role of sport in the Australian war experience was decided upon in late 2013 with the completion of my honours thesis, after encouragement from my then supervisor Bart Ziino. However, my interest in the subject goes back much further. Specifically, it formulated during my teenage years when viewing the annual Anzac day football clash, where the AFL and government regularly celebrated the game's contribution to Australia's proud military history. Becoming aware of the horror associated with previous conflicts and the nationalistic element encroaching on that commemorative day, I began to question the appropriateness of the connection.

My decision to take up a PhD candidacy at the University of Melbourne gave me an excuse to slate my curiosity on the issue. At first I wished to examine the amalgamation between Australian sport and militarism throughout the 20th century. But after reading Michael McKernan's "Sport, War and Society: Australia 1914-1918", I was surprised to find the level of animosity that existed between patriots and sections of the sporting community. After several discussions with my supervisor Joy Damousi, a decision was made in late 2014 to focus on the impact of sport on the Australian home front during the First World War.

Acknowledgements

My first thanks must be extended to the supervisor of this project, Joy Damousi. I first walked into Joy's office in July, 2014, slightly awed by a historian who had made such an impression on me as an honours student. Yet her insightful and constructive advice has only been surpassed by the warmth and enthusiasm she has exuded during our working relationship. I'm forever indebted to Joy, as well as the project's co-supervisor Sean Scalmer, for this.

I wish to acknowledge the academic and administrative staffs within the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne for their support, as well as my fellow PhD students, who have been a bright presence throughout the oftentimes isolating slog that researching and writing a thesis can often become. Special shout out to St Mary's College.

There have been numerous intuitions and individuals that have helped in the locating the mountain of evidence needed to construct a piece of work this size, all of which I'm eternally indebted to. Special thanks to Paul Mishura from Scotch College for helping me start all this, as well as Janice Keynton and Prudence Davie for their valuable advice.

Finally, I would like to thank those in my personal life. To my friends for providing me with a life outside this thesis, cheers lads! To my sister Brittany and my brother Ben thank you. And last of all thank you to my mother and father, Sally and Terrence, for your endless support. I would have never been able to do this without you.

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List of Abbreviations

APS	Associated Public Schools of Victoria
AAGPS	Athletic Association of the Great Public Schools of New South Wales
ABC	Australian Cricket Board of Control
AFL	Australian Football League
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ALP	Australian Labour Party
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
AWNL	Australian Women's National League
MCC	Melbourne Cricket Club
MCG	Melbourne Cricket Ground
MAFA	Metropolitan Amateur Football Association
NCW	National Council of Women
NSW	New South Wales
NSWCA	New South Wales Cricket Association
NSWSRC	New South Wales Sportsmen Recruiting Committee
NSWSWU	New South Wales Sports Women's Union
PFA	Patriotic Football Association

QWRC	Queensland Women's Recruiting Committee
VCA	Victorian Cricket Association
VFA	Victorian Football Association
VFL	Victorian Football League
VSRC	Victorian Sportsmen Recruiting Committee
WAFA	Western Australian Football League

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INTRODUCTION: The Sport and War Paradigm

Whilst trekking across the deserts of Western Australia in 1915, two young Australian sprinters, Archie Hamilton and Frank Dunne, found themselves at loggerheads over an issue which would rapidly engulf the nation over the next three years. Archie, an ineligible desperate to enlist in the newly formed Australian Imperial Force (AIF), had become frustrated as to why Frank, a former railway labourer with strong Irish roots, was resistant to taking part in the war raging abroad. Archie, presumably echoing some recruiting speech or poster, informed Frank 'But you gotta be in it'. Frank, unperturbed, responded matter-of-factly, 'No, I don't. It's a free country, or haven't you heard?'

As they continued to make their way across the desert, Archie probed his companion yet again. Amidst the to-ing and fro-ing of the argument, with Archie thrusting by questioning Frank's courage, and Frank parrying back with the belief in the war's imperial nature that had nothing to do with Australia and by extension himself, Archie made a thought-provoking observation on Frank's suitability in combating the German menace:

> Archie Hamilton: You of all people should be going.
>
> Frank Dunne: Why me of all people?
>
> Archie Hamilton: 'Cause you're an athlete.
>
> Frank Dunne: What's that got to do with it?

Many contemporary readers would have to agree with Frank's bemusement at Archie's rationalisation. Why would Frank's slightly above average ability to run faster or jump higher have anything to do with his ability to influence a war of mass-mechanised slaughter?

The reader is surely aware by now that the conversation between the two men is not of historical record. It is in fact dialogue from Peter Weir's 1981 Australian classic film *Gallipoli*.[1] Nevertheless, this sort of conversation is not entirely a piece of historical fabrication used by Weir to emphasise

[1] *Gallipoli*, directed by Peter Weir (Australia: Village Roadshow, 1981), DVD.

Archie's, and symbolically Australia's, naivety about the horrors of modern warfare. Indeed, a closer examination of wartime Australia illuminates a formidable connection perceived between the realms of sport and warfare.

Historiography and Literature Review

Thanks to the extraordinary explosion in public interest of all things Anzac and its governmental use as an exponent for popular nationalism, we have witnessed an incredible upsurge in military publications during the last few decades. Books published about Australians at war have increased from fewer than 60 in the 1970s to over 150 in the 1980s and 360 in the 1990s; a figure one presumes would have continued its upward trajectory as we complete the 100th anniversary of the Great War.[2] Resultantly, almost every aspect of the nation's involvement on the battlefields of the conflict has been examined and re-examined extensively, sometimes exhaustively. Though not to the same extent as strict military history, the effects of the war's impact on the Australian home front has similarly received considerable investigation by historians during this period.

The identification of any relationship existing between sport and the Great War would presumably be scattered within this area, simply a minor reference point in the much larger field of historical study of the war itself. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that such a specific focal point could never possess the subject matter necessary to legitimate significant historiographical analysis. Such an assumption, however, would be a misguided one. The underestimation of the importance of sport in the Australian war experience perhaps rests in what sociologist Lindsey J. Meân perceives as the traditional disregard of sport as a respectable site of scholarly analysis. 'The study of sport,' Meân argues, 'has

[2] M. Lake, "How do schoolchildren learn about the spirit of Anzac," in *What's Wrong With Anzac? The Militarization of Australian History*, eds. Marylin Lake and Henry Reynolds (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010), 134.

so often been dismissed as "just sport" and merely "entertainment" without recognition of how pervasive, influential and embedded sport is across multiple levels of culture and society.'[3]

Despite this traditional scepticism, recognition of the relationship between sport and warfare in Australia has become quite popular.[4] Much of this owes to the rise in popularity of both military and sporting subdivisions of historical study since the 1980s. As historians continued to search for new ways to contribute to these fields, a form of cross-field examination hardly comes as surprising, particularly given their imperious status in Australian culture, identity and history. Accordingly, numerous publications and academic articles in recent times have delved specifically into the relationship between sport and war and it is its manifestation during the First World War, more than the Second World War or any other conflict for that matter, which has inspired special interest amongst historians.

Sport's role on the home front had been briefly mentioned in other studies before the 1980s; namely Ernest Scott's investigation of the Australian home front within *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* and Lloyd Robson's *The First A.I.F.: A Study of its Recruitment, 1914-1918*.[5] The first focused study on the subject, however, came with Michael McKernan's chapter in the 1979 publication *Sport in History* titled, 'Sport, War and Society: Australia 1914-1918'. Based on his doctoral research, McKernan's investigation focused on Australian class division that was consequently agitated in wartime, playing itself out in the spiteful debate surrounding the continuation of sport during this period of national crisis.[6] Not only was 'Sport, War and Society' the first academic analysis on the relationship between sport and the war, it also helped to inspire similar historiographical interest into this previously untouched field of research. Almost all subsequent

[3] L. Meân, "Forward" in *The discourse of sport: analyses from social linguistics*, eds. David Caldwell, John Walsh, Elaine W. Vine and Jon Jureidini (New York: Routledge, 2017), ix.
[4] Thierry Terret, "Prologue: Making Men, Destroying Bodies: Sport. Masculinity and the Great War Experience," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28 (2011): 323.
[5] Earnest Scott, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume XI: Australia During the War*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1936); Lloyd Robson, *The First A.I.F.: A Study of its Recruitment 1914-1918* (Kingsgrove: Melbourne University Press, 1970).
[6] M. McKernan, "Sport, War and Society: Australia 1914-1918," in *Sport in History*, eds. Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979).

academic investigations on this topic have borrowed from McKernan's original contentions with little in the way of contestation.

Admittedly, the inflammation of the sport and war field was not immediate. In fact, it was not until the 1990s that broad historiographical analysis truly began to take shape. It first resurfaced within a few paragraphs in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport* in 1992.[7] From here, several contemporary historians helped to consolidate the groundwork laid down by McKernan in the decades before. By the mid-1990s attention to sport and war studies began to escalate dramatically through an array of diversely focused publications and academic articles, not always restricted to the debate surrounding the continuation of sport during the war.

Murray Phillips has been discernibly prominent in this movement. Drawing on McKernan's conclusions, Phillips, along with Katherine Moore, co-authored an article in 1994 on the persecution of Irish-Australian boxing champion Les Darcy during the war.[8] Phillips would soon work on expanding the field outside the sport in war debate begun by McKernan. In 1996 he published the article 'The Unsporting German and the Athletic Anzac: Sport, Propaganda, and the First World War', examining the role Australian propaganda played in idealising Australian soldiers and deriding their German counterparts through sporting themes.[9] Phillips would also explore the relationship between sport, recruitment and gender in his 1997 article, 'Sport, war and gender images: the Australian sportsmen's battalions and the First World War'.[10]

The attention on this bourgeoning field made further ground after the turn of the century. In 2000, Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz devoted an entire chapter of their publication *One-Eyed: a View of Australian Sport* to the relationship between sport and Australia's war. Though relying heavily on the research undertaken by McKernan and Phillips the chapter was indicative of the growing recognition

[7] W. Vamplew, et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 372-275.
[8] Murray Phillips and Katherine Moore, "The champion boxer Les Darcy: a victim of class conflict and sectarian bitterness in Australia during the First World War," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 11 (1994).
[9] Murray Phillips, "The Unsporting German and the Athletic Anzac: Sport, Propaganda, and the First World War," *Sports History Review* 27 (1996).
[10] Murray Phillips, "Sport, war and gender images: the Australian sportsmen's battalions and the First World War," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 14 (1997).

of the profound impact sport had on one of the most formative periods in Australian history.[11] This ultimately led to further expansion of what sport could tell historians about Australian society between 1914 and 1918. An example of this was the continued incorporation of gender studies into the field, prominently Phillip's 'Sport, war and gender images' and Daryl Adair, John Nauright and Phillip's, 'Sporting Manhood in Australia: Test Cricket, Rugby Football, and the Imperial Connection, 1878-1918'.[12] Martin Crotty's examination of middle-class masculinity also observed a strong connection between sport, militarism and masculinity within the Great Australian Public schools both before and during the war.[13] The work of Peter Burke and Rob Hess refocused attention towards the female side of gender studies, determining that the war provided the first opportunity of women to partake in the traditionally masculine sporting activity that is Australian Rules football.[14]

Of course, much of the historiography still relates to surveying the war's impact on sporting codes, leagues and clubs respectively. The official histories of sporting bodies contain specific chapters dealing with the war years, usually attempting to portray their organisations' actions in a positive light. However, impartial historians soon began to look at the deeper issues at play. Some of the best work has come from Dale Blair, who focused on the debate's primary victim, Australian Rules football.[15] Rodney Noonan (rugby league) and Ian Syson (soccer) have also conducted strong examinations.[16]

Documentation of the intersection of sport and the First World War continues today. In 2016, two new publications emerged on the subject. Nick Richardson's *The Game of Their Lives* and Kevin Blackburn's *War, Sport and the ANZAC Tradition* both investigate various components of the sport

[11] Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, *One-Eyed: a View of Australian Sport*, (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 2000).
[12] D. Adair, M. Phillips and J. Nauright, "Sporting Manhood in Australia: Test Cricket, Rugby Football, and the Imperial Connection, 1878-1918," *Sport History Review* 28 (1997).
[13] Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity, 1870-1920* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001).
[14] Peter Burke, "Patriot Games: Women's Football during the First World War in Australia," *Football Studies* 8 (2005); Rob Hess, "Playing with 'Patriotic Fire': Women and Football in the Antipodes during the Great War," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28 (2011).
[15] D. Blair, "War and Peace, 1915-1924," in *More Than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football*, eds. Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1998).
[16] Rodney Noonan, "Offside: Rugby League, the Great War and Australian Patriotism," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26 (2009); Ian Syson, "Fronting Up: Australian Soccer and the First World War," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31 (2014).

and war connection, the latter of which traces its continued existence through the twentieth century and even today.[17] First established by McKernan after years of oversight by Australia's best military, sport and cultural historians, the field has become a secure and burgeoning topic on the Australian historical landscape. And yet, Thierry Terret reminds us that while the topic is no longer neglected, little is actually known about the role and place of sport during the First World War.[18] This is not necessarily a negative thing. If anything, it is an exciting prospect for historians. Studying the intricate and complicated relationship between Australian sport and its involvement in the First World War undoubtedly provides the historiographical community with yet another fascinating chapter in this nation's ever-evolving understanding of itself: a chapter which, in the words of Terret, 'offers promising new questions on which to ponder…'[19]

One path for further investigation resides in acknowledging the place of sport in the everyday lives of soldiers. There are many celebrated examples of sport intersecting with the battlefields of the First World War. Several soccer matches between British and German soldiers during the Christmas Truce of 1914 are foremost amongst them, as is the kicking of footballs to signal the advance of British units during the Somme offensive.[20] In an Australian context, the famous photograph of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) soldiers at Gallipoli partaking in a cricket match on Shell Green before the evacuation stands out, supposedly exemplifying the coolness of its troops under deadly shellfire.[21]

There is also little recognition of the reverence with which the armed forces held sport to behind the lines, seen in its prolific organisation by higher military authorities throughout the war. Sport was considered crucial in the maintenance of physical fitness and the building of *esprit de corps* among units, as well providing an outlet for the pent-up tension of combatants caused by prolonged exposure

[17] Nick Richardson, *The Game of their Lives* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2016); Kevin Blackburn, *War, Sport and the ANZAC Tradition* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[18] Terret, "Making Men, Destroying Bodies," 324.
[19] Ibid., 323.
[20] Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme, 1st July 1916* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), 124.
[21] C.E.W. Bean, GO1289, 17 December, 1915, Photograph, Australian War Memorial (AWM); The term ANZAC in its upper case form will refer to the official military unit that served in Gallipoli. The word Anzac in its lower case form refers to the conceptualised understanding of Australian military culture, identity, history, spirit and legend that has developed since the landing itself.

to the frontline. Blackburn has called this 'integral' to the AIF, particularly after the horrors of 1916, and the letters of soldiers express the importance of sport in their daily lives.[22] Not an athlete himself, AIF Commander General John Monash acknowledged sports contribution to the AIFs 'efficiency as a fighting force.'[23] Despite some fascinating research undertaken by several historians more work remains to be done in acknowledging the significant impact sport played in the lives of men on the frontline during the First World War.

Departure Point of this Thesis and Sources

This thesis, however, is not concerned with such developments. Though recognition of the break down in comparisons between the playing field and battlefield among soldiers will be addressed in Chapter 3, this thesis is primarily concerned with understanding the overall impact sport had on the Australian war effort on the home front. Though historians have answered this question in a partial sense, they have viewed sport's involvement in wartime roles in isolation from one another. Of the dozens of examinations cited above, none constitutes, nor claim to constitute, a broad analysis of the relationship between sport and the war effort in Australia.

This thesis will attempt to link these distinct yet interconnected manifestations of sport's impact along a semi-chronological framework, observing how the changing nature of the conflict influenced the understanding of the intimate relationship between sport and the war. This thesis, however, will not merely piece together the findings of other historians. In the hope of gaining a broader understanding of their combined significance, an observation of the numerous sources that in any way reflected sport's existence between 1914 and 1918 has been undertaken. Though secondary source material is essential in helping to provide a framework for this thesis, its essence is undoubtedly composed of primary source documents from the events in question.

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[22] Blackburn, *War, Sport and the Anzac Tradition*, 41-44; For a discussion of sport within the British Army see Tony Mason, ""Leather" and the Fighting Spirit: Sport in the British Army in World War I," *Canadian Journal of History* 41 (2006).

[23] George Cuttriss, *Over the Top with the Third Australian Division* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1918), 108.

It is somewhat surprising the amount of primary source material that remains readily available to modern historians regarding the relationship between sport and the war, given the obscure nature of the topic and the time elapsed since their creation. Yet the domineering influence of sport over Australian culture during these years resulted in its infiltration into several forums directly concerned with Australia's war effort.

One of the most important sources in attempting to trace this connection was one of the most easily accessible: newspaper clippings. Thanks to the National Library's online database Trove, a wealth of knowledge of the connection is discernable during the years leading into and during the First World War. In many ways, the plethora of newspaper articles provides a backbone of the material in this thesis, providing context, filling various historical gaps on ambiguous moments, and assisting in the establishment of a linear version of events. However, this source is also useful in a more directly analytical sense when investigating sport's existence within propaganda, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

A raiding of the archives of the nation's Public schools has also been undertaken.[24] These schools occupy an integral position within this thesis, for they were among the first and foremost purveyors' of the conceptualised relationship between sport and warfare. The most valuable source from these archives comes in the form of over 500 school magazines and journals, which historian Weston Bate has described as 'the organ of the whole school community, past and present'.[25] The magazines printed school addresses, letters from current and former students, poems, songs, photography and illustrations. These archives also contain the correspondence and minutes meetings of Headmasters, central figures within the school community, as well as literature, which describe the cultural idiosyncrasies of Public school life, wherein sport and its relationship with war were common.

Sources pertaining to the workings of sporting organisations are also an important component of this investigation, for they include annual reports, minutes of meetings, correspondence and other material

[24] Not to be confused with current notions of public school education, 'Public schools' during this period were private institutions that catered for the social elite, as will be discussed in Chapter 1.
[25] Weston Bate, *Light Blue Down Under: The History of Geelong Grammar School* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990), 165.

from some of the nation's most powerful sporting bodies who lived daily under the influence of the war. Meanwhile, official government files comprise a particularly enlightening and plentiful source of information. They include Defence Department authorised posters, films, rallies, speeches, recruiting manuals, the workings of the Victorian and New South Wales Sportsmen Recruiting Committees (VSRC and NSWSRC), excerpts from State and Federal Parliamentary debates and files from the Prime Minister's Department. These and other official government sources indicate the level to which sport was impacting the war effort, infiltrating above the musings of sporting administrators and social commentators right to the upper echelons of Australia's war-time decision makers.

Finally, there is a swathe of private and miscellaneous documents, including photographs, illustrations, literature, correspondence and diaries produced by soldiers, war journalists, politicians and civilians. These sources, all with a proclivity to sporting matters affecting the war, have been collected and analysed extensively.

From them, this thesis contends that sport had an altogether complicated and paradoxical impact on the Australian war effort. It argues that sport played a monumental role in the Great War experience of Australia, notably its usage as a tool to prop up the flagging war effort after 1915. This justified itself principally on the belief that sport and warfare were intricately linked. The emergence of organised sport within the colonies had led to theoretical discussions over a perceived relationship between sport and combat during the pre-war decades, much in the same way it did in Britain. Sport, usually team-sport of a contact nature, with its opposing sides of men competing directly against one another, provided a conceivable parable between itself and the trials of combat. Such games required high degrees of courage, determination, physical reliance, selflessness and aggression, all qualities considered to have similar value to soldiers on the battlefield. Consequently, various social commentators envisioned sport as the ideal preparation for producing model soldiers, leading to its regular designation as 'mimic-warfare'. Conversely, war itself also known as 'King Sport' or the 'greater' or 'greatest game.'

General European war oversaw the veritable explosion of this connection, as sport seeped into numerous aspects of the Australian war effort. Propaganda, recruitment, fund-raising, education and gender relations were all directed to strengthen Australia's support of Great Britain and sport was utilised as a means to amplify their impact. A celebration of sports greatness therefore arose around the nation, for it prepared and convinced its citizens to 'Play the Greater Game!'

Yet sport possessed the ability to divide with as great strength as it did to unite. The pressures of total warfare led not only to disillusionment with the comparison, it also acted to fuel social conflict on the Australian home front. Patriots questioned sport's distracting and corrupting influence on the population from accepting their higher duty to the defence of Empire. Bitter public debates and even violence emanated in its wake, with sport acting as a lightening rode for social unrest. The former ideological bedfellows of sport and war, when put into practice, consequently came into a sharp conflict of their own. Historian Murray Phillips has recognised this development, just as McKernan had before him: 'the perceived similarity of endeavour of the battlefield and the games field did not provide any real problems during peace. During the war, however, problems arose'.[26] Yet Phillips relates this development purely to the debate and conflict surrounding the continuation of sporting fixtures on the home front. While this issue reflects the clash between sport and the war, it was not its sole manifestation, as this thesis will prove.

In this way, the amalgamation often ended in the kind of conflict that typified the social turmoil that engulfed the nation during the war years. Sport therefore emerged as a window into the nation's slow and painful comprehension of what was and was not considered appropriate and necessary during a time of total war. Just like the debate about sporting fixtures, the entire relationship between sport and the war effort was representative of what McKernan describes as a nation 'divided by the fundamental question of the priority Australians should give to the defence of Empire.'[27] Resultantly, the conflict associated with sport's usage in the Australian war effort constituted a revision of its own national culture and identity, as well as sport's place within it.

[26] Phillips, "Sport, War and Gender Images," 84-85.
[27] McKernan, "Sport, War and Society," 1.

Terminology

It is important to clarify the terminology of the two themes in question before attempting to explain their veritable impact on Australia's war. The term 'sport' has provided much confusion and debate amongst historians, sociologists and the public in general. This is because the word 'sport' is known to express a vast array of meanings and usages within the English language. Per the *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* the verb 'to sport' is to 'frolic', 'make merry' or 'amuse', as well as to 'wear' and 'exhibit'; and as a noun denotes 'mirth', 'jest' and 'dalliance.'[28] The more popular identification of the term resides in its relations to leisure activities of an athletic or physical nature. A clear definition of this is found in the Council of Europe's Sports Charter, which defines 'sport' as 'all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels'.[29]

However, usage of the term 'sport' within this thesis, while incorporating this definition, requires a far broader understanding of the word. When individuals combined the realms of sport and warfare both before and during the Great War they did not exclusively refer to the sport or games themselves, but rather the wider cultural lessons, meanings and purposes associated with them. A broader definition is therefore required. One is found in Richard Giulianotti's adaption of McPherson, Curtin and Loy's definition. Sport, they claimed, can be understood in relation to five properties:

1. *Structured*, by rules and codes of conduct, spatial and temporal frameworks (playing fields and time limits on games), and institutions of government;
2. *Goal-orientated*, as sport is aimed at achieving particular objectives – e.g. scoring goals, winning contests, increasing averages – thus winners and losers are identifiable;
3. *Competitive*, as rivals are defeated, records are broken;
4. *Ludic*, enabling playful experiences, which germinate excitements;

[28] Richard Giulianotti, *Sport: A Critical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2016), xii.
[29] "Council of Europe Revised European Sports Charter, Article 2: Definition and Scope of Charter," Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe, accessed 16th May, 2001, https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016804c9dbb.

5. *Culturally situated*, in that points 1-4 are intertwined with the value systems and power relations within the host society.

While criteria 1-4 enable us to distinguish sports such as football and rugby from other practices such as walking or exercising that lack a competitive framework, criterion 5 enables us to recognise that any transformation of the social context in which sport is played may well lead to the transformation of the sport *per se*. Hence, to enable its sociological understanding, we need to examine sport with reference to its historical and cultural contexts; its underlying power relations, social structures and cultural values; and the diverse meanings, practices and identities associated with sport by different social groups.[30] Criteria 5 is therefore crucial to understanding the amalgamation of sport with wider social occurrences, in this particular instance warfare. As such, Guilianotti's definition should be kept in mind when confronted with the term 'sport' throughout this thesis.

'War' is also a contested term, one stretching back to the days of Ancient Greece. While the *Oxford English Dictionary* today defines war as a 'hostile contention by means of armed forces carried by nations, states, or rulers', the *New Oxford American Dictionary* interprets war as 'a *state* of armed conflict between different nations and states'. The difference being war as a *condition* and not a *contest*.[31] This thesis will use the word in two of its grammatical definitions. There is, of course, reference to the word in its form as a noun, usually found in its expression as 'the war', the First World War and the Great War. However, 'war' will also refer to its form as a verb. This denotation links the idea of 'war' more closely with martial combat and the act of fighting by and between soldiers during battle. Both its noun and verb form must be considered, as the Great War and the act of combat were referred to as the preeminent manifestation of sport. The amalgamation of these two terms will henceforth be known as the 'sport and war paradigm', 'comparison' or 'connection'.

[30] Giulianotti, *Sport: A Critical Sociology*, xii.
[31] Alfred Bradford, *War, Antiquity and its Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

Chapter Outline

In attempting to trace the varying ways sport influenced the Australian war experience, this thesis adopts both a chronological and thematic structure. Navigating the emergence of the sport and war paradigm on a chronological path is discernible within the first three chapters of the thesis, though they do contain their own thematic disposition. This timeline can be traced from the 1870s right up until the Gallipoli campaign, which provided a definitive turning point for sport and its wider relationship with Australia's experience of the war. The following five chapters all comprise a thematic approach, existing simultaneously on the same timeframe but focusing on separate manifestations of sport's role in the war effort between 1914 and 1918. Themes covered during the war include propaganda, recruitment, education, gender relations and sport itself, all of which identified the strong relationship between sport and battle in the hope of propping up the Australian war effort, but ultimately culminated in episodes of social turmoil and even violence on the home front.

Chapter 1 seeks to outline the philosophical and ideological theories, or 'building blocks', which legitimised comparisons between sport and combat before and during the war. Covering an admittedly broad period of Australian history, the 1870s through to the early twentieth century, this chapter begins by providing a brief description of who and what constituted Australian middle-class life. A focus on the socially affluent is important, as it was from this community that the sport and war comparison emerged in its most concentrated form. From here a series of ideological theories held and purveyed by this powerful social community will be outlined, all of which were closely associated with middle-class visions of sport and its purpose within society, that being to mould a generation of young men imbued with the tools that would aid them in dealing with the rigours of later life. These ideologies include amateurism (along with its working-class foil professionalism), athleticism, muscular Christianity and social Darwinism, all of which will be deconstructed using strong examples. These philosophies would combine in later years to support the belief that sport entailed useful training for the nation's future soldiers. Chapter 1 is heavy on the discussion of terminology and contextual summary; however, it is essential to create a detailed understanding of

such theories given the frequency with which they appeared in the paradigm both before and during the Great War.

Chapter 2 provides the first conceptualised emergence of direct and indirect comparisons and amalgamations between sport and warfare. It highlights that the paradigm held strong roots within Australian culture long before the outbreak of war, making its appearance after the fact to be an altogether organic process. This connection occurred predominately within the nation's Public school system. A bastion of elite education where the culture and values of middle-class life were formulated and imparted to future generations, this setting provided a concentrated development of comparisons between playing and battlefields based on the 'building blocks' outlined in Chapter 1. Though traces of this can be witnessed during the late nineteenth century, comparisons intensified from 1900 onward amidst the deterioration of international relations and heightening fears surrounding national security in Australia. Once focused on preparing adolescent men for the battle of life, sport's purpose was quickly transformed to readying boys for the defence of nation and Empire, an easy ideological leap given the philosophies expressed in the years beforehand. However, it was also within this forum that soldiers and sportsmen first came into serious conflict, despite the absence of a state of war itself. Social commentators concerned by school boy-obsession with games over the more important priority of military training indicate that the two seemingly ideological bedfellows were at odds wit long before war's outbreak. As well as this, the militarisation of games fuelled discord and even acts of violence between the schools, which culminated during the war itself.

Chapter 3 is the first of six chapters that investigates the sport and war paradigm that exploded in Australia during the First World War. This chapter focuses on its usage for propaganda purposes, particularly during the first year of the war. The Australian press, in a time plagued by notions of war's romanticism and legitimised by the theories outlined previously, made numerous references to the fact that its soldiers were ideally situated to the trials of battle owing to their innate 'sporting instinct'. Their predictions were supposedly confirmed at Gallipoli thanks to the reports of several war correspondents situated there. These include Charles Bean, Phillip Schuler and Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, who labelled the Australian soldiers as a 'race of athletes'. However, the reality of the war

for those who experienced it first-hand proved far removed from the fantasies of journalists at home and the aggrandised descriptions of correspondents on the frontline. Using the words of those in the trenches, this chapter explores the growing realisation of the brutality and trauma of modern warfare, which debunked long-standing theories of the superior martial proficiency of athletes, as well as the notions that sport was 'mimic-warfare', or conversely war was 'King Sport'.

Chapter 4 shifts focus to the existence of the sport and war paradigm within the official recruitment schemes of the Australian government. The focus on recruitment will be divided into two chapters. This has been done not only to incorporate the wealth of material and themes such a topic raises, but also to outline the changing context of Australia's war experience across its middling years that ignited controversy and conflict, for which sport was eventually dragged into. Chapter 4 focuses on the initial attempt to incorporate sport into recruitment efforts during 1915. As the war bogged down into a costly stalemate, Britain called upon the need for every available man Australia could offer. Relying on a purely volunteer system, recruiters began to target not only sportsmen but also their fans. It was during this year that the seeds of social discord were sown, seen in the attempts to recruit sportsmen and sports fans across the country.

Chapter 5 focuses on the intensification of these recruiting efforts during 1917, as well as the turmoil they created. As enlistment figures continued to spiral downward to potentially unsustainable levels, high-ranking officials increased attempts to drain the previously untapped reservoirs of Australian manpower residing in the nation's sporting community. Such was the perceived power of the Australian 'sporting instinct' that numerous efforts were even made to raise military units comprised purely of athletes. However, with social turmoil and divisiveness splitting the country on class and ethnic lines, such tactics ultimately culminated in resentment and conflict, sometimes of a decidedly violent nature.

Chapter 6 addresses the debate over sports continuation on the home front. This chapter is more concerned with the public aspect of the debate than the government's intervention on the issue in 1917. At the heart of the issue lay the differing interpretations of what constituted appropriate social

behaviour and mandatory levels of patriotism during a time of national crisis. Traditional historiography has observed this debate as one between the patriotic, middle-class amateurs, who demanded the abandonment of sport because it distracted the public from its commitment to Empire; against war-weary, working-class professionals, who defended their games' necessity as a relief from the constant contemplation of the pressures and horrors of total war.[32] Though acknowledging the class and ethnic influences on the debate in this and other chapters, this chapter focuses instead on the internal divisions and criticisms of one sport closely aligned with the philosophies of amateurism: cricket. By proving that amateur sports were also at the mercy of the war's divisive impact, the conflict between sport and the war and its devastating impact on society can be truly appreciated.

Chapter 7 takes a different approach, using the sport and war paradigm to focus on issues of gender relations, stereotyping and roleplaying during the war. Though comparisons between sportsmen and soldiers were reserved for Australia's male population, basing themselves on traditional concepts of masculinity and manhood, women managed to find a unique role in supporting the war effort through a sporting framework. Women provided a strong voice within the campaign against sporting leagues, as well as being active participants in the 1917 recruitment drives, where they sought to encourage, entice and even shame sportsmen into enlisting. They also found a means to support the war through the previously unthinkable notion of playing Australian Rules football. In a time when patriots interpreted spectator sport as inappropriate, female games emerged as a legitimate means to raise war funds. Such evidence will reinforce the contention that the sport and war paradigm led to conflict, though one that challenged traditional gender norms in a time of war. Consequently, this chapter will open a re-evaluation of the war which historians believe affirmed the dichotomy of the sexes and re-established and enshrined the inviolability of the traditional sexual stereotypes,[33] questioning in fact whether women gained, albeit modestly, a semblance of emancipation on the home front.

[32] McKernan, "Sport, War and Society," 2.
[33] C. Shute, "Heroines and heroes: Sexual mythology in Australia 1914-18," Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the twentieth century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 23.

Chapter 8 brings the thesis full circle, returning to the place where the connection ultimately began, the Great Australian Public schools. The final chapter will explore the manner in which the comparison between sport and war was utilised by the schools to support the war effort, but also to legitimise decades of obsession with school sports. As the campaign against sport escalated from 1915 onwards, Public school administrators held the purity and righteousness of their games against the depravity and apathy of professional sports. However, such assertions proved as unfair as they were hypocritical. Public school sport during the war was rife with bitterness, discord, sectarianism and violence in a time where unity was necessary. Though supposedly pure and patriotic, the turmoil that afflicted school sport became so endemic that the Victorian Headmasters were forced to suspend interschool-play, in the hopes of dissuading the 'hate' that had exploded between them.[34]

These eight chapters, each with their own distinct focus, will act together to substantiate the claim that sport was integral to understanding Australia's Great War effort and experience, in all its triumph, tragedy and turmoil.

[34] *Wesley College Chronicle*, December 1917, 8-9.

CHAPTER 1

Sport, Class Conflict and the 'Building-Blocks' of the Sport and War Paradigm

Sport played a critical role in the development of Australian society during the nineteenth-century and was fully embedded within its consciousness long before the First World War. Often described as religion of sorts, its popularity was owed to the hundred years of history in which it was practised by migrants in a foreign land, not to mention hundreds of years of British participation that preceded its importation to the colonies. In 1810, at a local ball attended by many of the high-ranking officials within the Sydney settlement, a song was sung that spoke to the emergence of sport in the new world:

> …confin'd to no climate or shores,
> But regions remote shall new patrons secure them,
> Like the orb in the east which all nature adores,
> They have dawn'd on our land, and 'tis ours to mature them![1]

This early adoption of sport as a central pillar in Australia's ever developing cultural foundation soon expanded rapidly out of New South Wales (NSW), spreading North, East, South and West. From the suburban streets and backyards of Melbourne and Sydney to the rural farms and deserts of central Australia, colonials were simply enamoured with athletic competition. This affinity was firmly entrenched by the outbreak of war in 1914, as Australian historian Gordon Inglis expressed two years prior, 'When one writes a book about Australian sport people may say "Oh that is all very well, but it seems to us that this country thinks about nothing else."'[2]

Men and women, English, Irish and Indigenous, Catholic and Protestant, poor and wealthy; without doubt sport dominated the everyday lives of most colonials, regardless of social affiliation. It obtained the love and affection which other cultural pursuits could only envy and became a way in which the peoples from a distant land could readily identify themselves as one. Historians have regularly

[1] *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 20 October, 1810, 2.
[2] Gordon Inglis, *Sport and Pastime in Australia* (London: Methuen & Co., 1912), 1.

debated as to whether the bush, goldfield or the city contributed most to the formation of the Australian identity during this period. But the love of games can comfortably stand beside these more conventional explanations.[3] Renowned American author Mark Twain even labelled the running of the Melbourne Cup 'the Australian National Day' some six years before the colonies were even Federated.[4]

Yet sport possessed the ability to divide with as great a strength as it did to unite. This was never more painfully obvious than during the Great War, when socio-economic and ethnic groups engaged in a heated debate over the appropriateness of sport during a time of national crisis. Even before this highly discordant time, however, sport offered a window into divergences that permeated Australian society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This chapter will investigate the different understandings of and purpose for sporting competition in pre-war Australia. These contrasting visions of sport are categorised into the middle-class allegiance to 'amateurism' and the working-class allegiance to 'professionalism'. Amateurism and professionalism not only juxtaposed one another, they clashed owing to the very nature of their existence. This clash embodied the wider social-economic conflict during the period that had escalating from the 1890's onward, owing to the emerging of the classes themselves. Through the dissection of these classes and their interpretations of sport, light will be shed as to why these social divisions erupted during the First World War, and more importantly how sport became intertwined in the ensuing controversy and conflict on the home front.

The ultimate purpose of this first chapter, however, is to understand the reverence with which the elite classes of Australian society held amateur sport to, as well as the higher meaning they attached to its existence. For it was through amateurism, when combined with social Darwinism, muscular Christianity and athleticism, that the foundations, or conceptual 'building blocks', for comparisons

[3] W. Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," in Trevor Donald Jacques and G. R. Pavia, *Sport in Australia: Selected Readings in Physical Activity* (Sydney: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), 46-47.
[4] Tony Ward, Kicking Goals: *Sport in Australian National Identity* (London: Routledge, 2010), 17.

between the athlete and soldier, sport and warfare, both before and throughout the Great War, were ultimately laid.

Class, Culture and Sport in pre-war Australia

Before investigating the class relationship with sport, we must first determine the nature of class and ethnic division in Australian society during the pre-war period, for without this division the two separate interpretations of sport would never have emerged. Whilst many historians and social theorists have envisioned Australia as an egalitarian paradise void of class barriers, the evidence paints an altogether contrasting picture. The story of a country founded by convicts, blue collar workers and rural bushmen that modern Australia holds so dear ignores the momentous presence of a community of people that Martian Crotty has labelled the 'dominant class' in Australian society.[5] Who was this dominant class? The answer given here, unfortunately, will be brief, not only due to the constraints of a thesis but also because of this historian's inability define a community that remains widely unknown and ignored within Australian historiography. Nevertheless, an attempt will be made.

To start with, the idea of a middle-class is not consistent with how current day Australians understand it to be. They were in fact the leading social community of the period and not subject to a recognised 'upper' class of society, which largely did not exist in Australia, as argued by historian John Richard.[6] A variety of factors helped shape a sense of belonging to the middle-class community. Affluence was a crucial component for sure, but occupation, politics, ethnicity, religion, education, family background and moral values all played their role in connecting those considered, usually amongst themselves, to be higher on the social hierarchy.

It is essential to observe the class-inclined customs, idiosyncrasies and cultural values of the two groups briefly, so as to better understand how the classes ultimately ended up in open conflict. Rowan Ireland and Paul Rule, in their examination of the social construction of the Catholic Church in Australia, with excerpts from Richard Ely, discuss the dual importance of national ancestry and

[5] Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 1.
[6] John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the early Commonwealth, 1890-1910* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976), 305-307.

denomination in the construction of socio-economic consciousness within both these respective communities. On one hand existed the 'Catholic world' that cherished:

> Irish culture and Liberty (variously interpreted), religious-national festivals (such as St Patricks Day), the right to work, to unionise and strike, mateship among workmen… (and) the right of the "people"

Against this lay the 'British-Australian-Protestant world' that awarded sacredness to:

> The British Empire and Britishness, the monarchy, the Bible… self-improvement and work ethic, the rights and duties of property, freedom of contract, civil and religious liberty, the "British Sunday", national development (and) law and order…'[7]

These diametrically opposed 'objects' of identification fuelled real world conflict during the late nineteenth century. A series of labour strikes that erupted during the economic depression of the early 1890's failed to lead to working-class dominance of Australian society. Yet their failure led to the creation of several Labour parties in the colonies before the ultimate formation of the Australian Labour Party (ALP) in May 1901, shortly after Federation. Strong support for the labour movement came from the traditionally impoverished and oppressed Irish-Catholic population, becoming their sole political channel for representation.[8] To counter this, the more Protestant-inclined Free Trade and Protectionist Parties amalgamated to form the Commonwealth Liberal Party in 1909, obtaining strong support from the middle-classes.

Not only did these two communities butt heads on some of the most important economic and political issues of the time, they also failed to come to terms on one of their common cultural loves, sport. Sport's existence and purpose was understood in vastly alternate ways by the middle and working-classes during the decades that preceded the Great War. On one hand, there was the middle-class vision of sport as a means of teaching, particularly the youth, lessons that may be useful for the trials

[7] R. Ireland and P. Rule, "The social construction of the Catholic Church in Australia society," in Alan W. Black *Religion in Australia: Sociological Perspectives* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991) 25, with exerpts from Richard Ely "Secularisation and the Sacred in Australian History," *Historical Studies* 19 (1981): 563-564.
[8] Rickard, *Class and Politics*, 23-24, 65, 160.

of 'life'. Sport imparted qualities of courage, determination, selflessness, teamwork, chivalry, loyalty and resilience, as well as physical prowess, onto those who played it. Sport was therefore an ennobling pursuit that went beyond mere leisure. Monetary involvement only acted to taint this purity, for it encouraged gambling and corruption, and was thus cautioned against at all costs, an easy principle to live by given the general wealth of its supporters. This understanding of sport was known widely as the 'amateur' vision of sport.

For the working classes sport retained far less philosophical value. Games were played merely for enjoyment and recreation, a distraction from the drudgery and monotony of a life of labour. Therefore, they saw no evil in placing a meagre bet on the outcome of contests to enhance a game's excitement, or financial compensation for participants to offset the hours of work lost. This concept was identified as the 'professional' vision of sport.[9] The theoretical conflicting nature of these views ultimately led to confrontation, as they grappled for control of the emerging Australian sporting landscape. This, in turn, led to further class segregation and conflict. Though the amateur versus professional debate varied from one sport to another, historian Richard Cashman has identified the clash of the classes as its primary instigator.[10]

Conflict between the ideologies usually emerged in the form of amateur denunciation of the professional players and leagues. Australian sport up to the mid-nineteenth century had been heavily associated with gambling and the public house. As the middle-class came to prominence in the wake of the Gold Rush, they began to recognise that sport could attain a higher purpose, one devoid of its former debasement and depravity. In attempting to promote the inherent value of their theology, exponents of amateurism worked to expose, undercut and marginalise those who held that money and sport could mix freely.[11] John Blackman, the *Sydney Mail's* rowing correspondent, spoke to the moral superiority of the amateur over the professional, one that reflected a clear class bias. 'The ideal amateur', Blackman stated, 'is a person of education, refinement, leisure and means. He does not

[9] McKernan, "Sport, War and Society", 1.
[10] Richard Cashman, *Paradise of Sport: The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 54.
[11] Ibid., 54.

count the cost, nor does he question the gain.' Against this lay the 'manual man' and his close relationship with professional decadence:

> Would he 'take a bit' to go down or row his heart out to win a cap? In my opinion… he would not prefer the better race with the small reward. His model is not the ideal amateur… no, it is the world-famed professional…[12]

These ideological divergences could lead to more serious incidences of division and ultimately conflict. According to Cashman the major Australian football codes in Melbourne and Sydney split into amateur and professional wings. Victorian Football Association (VFA) secretary Thomas Marshall was one of the staunchest advocates of amateurism during the 1880's and 1890's, issuing several tirades against the variable evils of monetary involvement with sport. Eventually eight of the stronger clubs broke away from Marshall and the VFA in 1897 to form the more professional and commercially viable Victorian Football League (VFL). Football historian Rob Hess reminds us that larger issues outside amateur-professional conflict were at play in the decision to split from the VFA. However, the VFL's decision to finally make payment of players legal and official in 1911 certainly indicated a stronger movement toward professionalism than its rival body.[13]

The split in Sydney's rugby fraternity was far more dramatic and acrimonious, amounting to a full-scale 'rugby war' based solely on amateur-professional and class feuds.[14] Rugby Union travelled within the hearts of British middle-class migrants and became the popular winter code in NSW and Queensland during the nineteenth century. It was therefore administered and played by the socially affluent. Before long, however, the game attracted the attention of the working classes, both as spectators and players, and subsequently generated healthy streams of revenue while remaining a strictly amateur pursuit.

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[12] *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 24 July, 1897, 198.
[13] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, 67; R. Grow, "The Victorian Football Association in Control, 1877-96," in *More than a Game*, 55, 81-83; R. Hess, 'The Victorian Football League Takes Over, 1897-1914' in *More than a Game*, 94, 111.
[14] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, 67.

But working-class players soon began to begrudge the financial 'intransigence of rugby officials', especially when, despite healthy coffers, authorities refused to pay medical bills for injured players. A meeting famously held in at Bateman's Crystal Hotel in 1907 ended in the formation of the rebel New South Wales Rugby Football League, after strong ALP and Catholic backing was assured. The League stopped short of going for 'out and out professionalism' but simply sought to 'make good on out of pocket expenses' for their players. Such a meeting proved controversial from the outset with many of those involved receiving 'intimidation from their employers that they must either forgo their positions or professionalism.' Union's authorities also took a hard line against the rebels, threatening lifetime bans against anyone associated with League. Union held the early edge over the newly formed League until 1909, when the latter successfully enticed the elite Union players to switch codes. The 'great defection' decisively reversed the fortunes of the codes. From here, the rival bodies would attract supporters based largely on socio-economic and geographical lines, before finding themselves in a quasi-state of co-existence.[15] Without doubt, the 'rugby war' epitomised the irreconcilable confrontation between the two ideological understandings of sport in Australia, as well as their strong class and ethnic roots.

The identification with professional and amateur views of sport and their strong socio-economic influences certainly ran deep within the Australian sporting landscape. Though capable of escalating out from theological dispute into open conflict, their clash remained relatively subdued in times of social harmony. However, under the pressure of greater social issues these contrasting interpretations toward sport and its relationship to life would result in their most spiteful confrontation yet, one that would see anyone not totally committed to the defence of Empire subjected to a wave of spiteful denunciation.

[15] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 August, 1907 cited in Ward, *Kicking Goals*, 112; see also M. Phillips, "Football, Class and War: The Rugby Codes in New South Wales, 1907-1918," in *Making Men: Rugby Union Masculine Identity*, eds. John Nauright and Timothy J.L Chandler (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 158-180.

The Australian Public Schools and the 'Building Blocks' of the Sport and War Connection

With the division between class, ethnicity and sport outlined we must now shift our focus to how the amalgamation of playing field and battlefield emerged. Though many Australians perceived similarities between the two, the advocates of amateurism envisioned sport's ability to prepare young men for war in a far more concerted manner. This belief based itself in amateurism's deeper understanding of the underlying purpose of sport. As has been outlined above amateur sport was cherished for its ability to endow young men with the essential qualities necessary to prepare them for the trials and tribulations of later life. The nationalistic and imperial sentiments that comprised a crucial component of middle-class cultural values led amateur enthusiasts to take this thought further, linking the virtuousness of the individual with the greatness of the nation and the Empire. Given the relatively stable nature of international relations during the emergence of Australian amateurism between the 1860's and 1900, the connections between sport and national security were not yet fully realised, though not altogether absent either. Therefore, advocates of amateurism usually defended their obsession under other nationalistic concerns. In their attempts to do so, we will find the 'building blocks' for the ideological amalgamation of sport and warfare, that would alter the motivations for playing sport in more troubled times.

Efforts to utilise sport as a developmental tool were adopted with vigour by one of the fundamental institutions of middle-class society, the Great Australian Public schools. Viewed as breeding grounds for producing the country's social elite, the Public schools based themselves upon the longstanding British Public school model. Run almost exclusively by English administrators trained in the British system, the schools catered exclusively to those of means or of respectable standing within society, largely because of their high fees and the habit of thinking of education in terms of social class.[16] This desire was further aided by their removal from other major branches of education in Australia, including the State and Catholic sectors. Emerging from the 1850s, the likes of the Melbourne Grammar School, Scotch College, Xavier College, Wesley College, Geelong Grammar, Geelong

[16] Eric French, "The Australian Tradition in Secondary Education 1814-1900," in *Comparative Education* 1 (1965): 91.

College (Victoria), St. Peters College (South Australia), Sydney Grammar, Sydney Church of England Grammar School (also known as Shore), St. Joseph's College, Newington College, the King's School (New South Wales) and Brisbane Grammar School, along with many others, were recognised as a Public school. Most were of Protestant inclination owing to the denomination's strong position within middle-class society. To be sure Public schools of Catholic denomination existed, Xavier College and St. Josephs College to name a few, but these schools tended to adopt the educational ideals of their Protestant brethren.[17]

Many Australians took solace from the establishment of these schools, considering them as essential to the betterment of the colonies as they moved forward into a somewhat uncertain future. It was here that a new generation of the nation's upper and middle classes would be, per *Fraser's Magazine*, 'adequately prepared.'[18] The schools certainly adhered to a belief in their own importance, envisioning themselves as imperative not only to the development of the intellectual, but also the spiritual, physical and moral education of impressionable young men. Cultivating proper adolescent development within these institutions remained essential to the maintenance of middle-class supremacy within a developing Australian nation, which required sound leadership as it found its place within world affairs. The Governor of NSW, Sir Hercules Robinson, in a speech to the boys of Sydney Grammar School in 1878, spoke to the future of the pupils and linked this with the fate of the colony, 'the next generation (who) will leave their mark upon the page – are all boys like you.[19]

To secure this future a form of educational procedure known popularly as 'athleticism' was widely adopted within the schools. The term athleticism has been defined in a variety of ways, from the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary's* rather neutral view as, 'the practise of, and devotion to, athletic exercises,' to its more negative connotations understood by Smith, 'the exaltation and disproportionate regard for games which often resulted in the denigration of academic work and in

[17] Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 32.
[18] *Fraser's Magazine*, June, 1858, 66 cited in Charles Manning Clark, *Select Documents in Australian History* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1955), 542.
[19] *Sydneian*, March, 1878, 2-3.

anti-intellectualism.'[20] In this thesis, the term athleticism comprises the practise of amateur sport and its discussed theological purpose as an educational instrument adopted to turn boys into exceptional young men.

Athleticism was partially inspired by similar developments in the English Public school system. J. A. Mangan's *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* summarises the entrenchment of sport within the English Public schools during this period, 'By the end of the nineteenth century athleticism was to marshal a coherent set of educational arguments for its existence and become the hallmark of an acceptable public school.'[21] Given that the majority of Headmasters in Australia's Public schools cut their teeth in an English Public school system engulfed by athletic culture, it was only natural that athleticism would become a popular educational procedure in the colonies. The schools therefore acted as an environment in which athleticisms purpose could be discussed, formulated, developed, practised, refined and subsequently imparted onto the future generations of the colony's social elite.

One of the major justifications for their obsession, alongside the British precedent, was based on the imperative need to mould young boys into model gentlemen in a country that threatened to erode the greatness of the British race. While the traditional role of these schools had always been the imparting of intellectual and spiritual education, a shifting phenomenon took place from the mid-nineteenth century in which the improvement of moral temperament and physical prowess began to garner the greater attention of educators.[22] Martin Crotty explains, 'Sport, in short, was to ensure that the elites of Australia were worthy of their position, and would be men who would guarantee against decline, both physical and moral, in the colonies.'[23] These dual fears of decline, both physical and moral, which athleticism could successfully remedy according to emerging social theories of muscular Christianity and social Darwinism respectively, are crucial to understanding why sport attained the

[20] James Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: the emergence and consolidation of an educational ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 6-7.
[21] Mangan*, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, 22.
[22] Crotty, 'Chapter 2: From Godliness and Good Learning to Athleticism: Australian Public School Muscularity', *Making the Australian Male*, 31-73.
[23] Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 57.

'higher meaning' amongst the middle-classes and would one day make the theoretical leap from preparing young men for life to national defence.

An important point should be made here. Athletic-based educational training for 'life' focused its relationship with the wider world and thus ostracised the domesticated world of women. Late Victorian era convention largely pigeonholed the genders with specific character traits and consequently roles in society. Where idealised masculinity valued strength, stoicism, courage, resilience and determination, traditional notions of femininity comprised values of gracefulness, gentleness, beauty, fragility and sensitivity. Possession of these qualities would help men excel in the competitive world of business and political life whilst aiding women in their maintenance of the home and the raising of children. These juxtaposed stereotypes facilitated a belief that the latter were unsuited for life outside the domestic setting, precipitating the adherence to specified gender roles within society.

Sport in Australia reflected this perception. Team sports of a contact nature required the kind of qualities traditionally associated with idealised masculinity, making athleticism largely an educational tool adopted for young men. Consequently, the rough-and-tumble world of competitive games became no place for the fragile sex, a belief supported by some of the most respected minds of the time. As scientific and medical opinion gathered heavier weight throughout the nineteenth century, many Western doctors advised against female participation in athletic activity due to concerns of the ill bearing it would have on their health and reproductive capabilities, the most important function of the women in society.[24] Female participation in sport went against everything nature had intended, endangering the very fabric of proper gender function within society. Australian physician Dr Walter Balls-Headley expressed concerns with female involvement in sport because it 'put themselves in competition with men - it de-sexed them.'[25]

The discriminatory movement against women's sport based on repressive stereotypes and sceptical medical opinion was not appreciated by all. One columnist from the *Australian* concluded, 'Unhappily

[24] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, 83; Booth and Tatz, *One-Eyed*, 61.
[25] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, 83.

with our present system of education, we prevent girls from indulging in the same active outdoor life, the same health-giving sports and pastimes which, in our boys, we take as a matter of course.'[26] Key sites for female sporting participation occurred in all places within the few private schools for girls, though these developments were slow and usually came from the students themselves rather than the administrators and educators, with a few notable exceptions.[27] In any case many female athletes ignored the patriarchal opinions of columnists and 'health risks' afforded by the medical fraternity. Cycling, hockey, tennis and swimming were all played by women in significant numbers.

Nevertheless, these sports were only considered acceptable because they were 'ladylike', requiring qualities associated with traditional notions of femininity. They were neither excessively taxing physically nor violent and, given they occurred in a private setting, constituted no threat to female purity amidst prying eyes.[28] When competing in public female athletes were forced to wear attire that hid their skin, much to the detriment of movement that consequently compromised the legitimacy of the contest, a fact which only served to reinforce the belief of the unsuitability of women in sport. Observing the awkward athleticism of female cricketers, one columnist from the *Australasian* was driven to conclude that 'Nature, even in her most thoughtless moments, never intended woman to play cricket, least of all to run...'[29]

Australian sport during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was therefore decidedly male in form and function, as a reflection of wider society. Though many historians consider the war to be an event that reinforced these gender stereotypes and roles, through the prism of sport we will consider if the Great War and the burdens it placed on traditional social norms in fact offered an avenue for women's emancipation.

[26] *Australasian*, 1884.
[27] Booth and Tatz, *One-Eyed*, 63-64.
[28] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, 83.
[29] *Australasian*, 23rd March, 1895.

Athleticism, Moral Development and Muscular Christianity

The first social apprehension athleticism set about curing within the Great Public schools was that of moral degeneration. Among the many responsibilities entrusted to the Headmasters and masters of the elite male Public schools, character development remained central. It was not merely enough to think of oneself as superior against the common masses based on wealth or social status; one had to act the part of the gentleman and exhibit all the qualities cherished as the ideal form of middle-class masculinity. In 1887, the *Wesley College Chronicle* stated, 'For such a school in particular has the responsibility, not only of training the mental and bodily powers, but also of producing and fostering a quality which ought to permeate the conduct both in the form room and the playground a namely gentlemanly feeling.'[30] What exactly comprised the ideal gentlemanly feeling? Historian Mark Girouard provides a brief summation:

> In everyday social life, the chivalrous gentleman was ideally upright, brave, honourable, benevolent, and loyal to Queen and country. He was a natural leader, fearless in war and sport, and yet, when circumstances demanded, he could be gentle… A gentleman led his life in a certain manner.[31]

The British gentry largely traced these values back to the code of chivalry that governed the Knights of Medieval England.[32] Revitalised in Victorian-era Britain, these values made their way to Australia and found a firm footing in the colonial middle-class. In his annual speech to the students Reginald Heber Roe, the long serving headmaster of the Brisbane Grammar School, advised the boys to 'imitate the knights of old in their courtesy, bravery, and generosity.'[33]

Much of the determination to preserve British gentlemanly values stemmed from a fear of society's deteriorating sense of morality. Such apprehensions emanated from the rise of secular education and overall decline of religious influence in society, distance from Britain and most notably the colony's

[30] *Wesley College Chronicle*, April, 1887, 601.
[31] Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the New English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 260.
[32] Robert Hogg, "The Most Manly Class that Exists': British Gentlemen on the Queensland Frontier," *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 13 (2012): 65-67.
[33] *Brisbane Grammar School Magazine*, August, 1904, 9.

convict heritage. This final point prompted fears of moral contamination of middle-class youth by the Irish-Catholic lower classes and their criminal lineage.[34] The true embodiment of working-class immorality was found in the highly discussed and resented figure known disparagingly as the 'Larrikin'. If the colonial gentleman embodied everything that the middle-classes idealised then the Larrikin remained as his direct antithesis. Described by Melissa Bellanta as a part of 'the rough adolescent subculture' and representing the 'poor urban youth', the Larrikin created a moral panic in the 1880's amongst the middle-classes through his drinking, swearing, brawling and otherwise improper social behaviour.[35] The reviling of working-class immorality epitomised in the Larrikin was not lost on the colony's elite Public schools. The *Sydenian* wrote of the Larrikin in 1880 'mischief is the only subject of his experience, the more gratuitous the better…[36]

Avoiding the corrupting impact of degenerative working-class values and the threat of 'mob-rule' became a critical concern for the middle-classes and thus the responsibility of the Public schools. Given that amateur sport was thought to nurture idealised character traits, it was widely believed that through a strong commitment to the educational doctrine of athleticism a cure for moral corruption could be found. The foundational scriptures of British Public school culture during the nineteenth century, Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) and Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1855) both recognised the importance of sport in moulding one's character and quickly became crucial in formulating the moral component of athleticism. *School Days* determined cricket as 'more than a game', but rather a purveyor of good gentlemanly character.[37] Likewise, Kingsley explained sport's ability to impart the kind of strong moral code idealised within British gentry and conservative thought, highlighted in this passage from a later piece of work:

[34] This association of ethnicity and crime found strong support in the statistical evidence of the time. 43 per cent of male bread winning in NSW in correctional facilities were of Catholic faith, as opposed to 42.4 per cent of Anglicans, even though Anglicans almost outnumbered Catholics two to one in the colonies. 1901 Australian Census, Australian Bureau of Statistics.
[35] Melissa Bellanta, *Larrikins: A History* (St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 2012), xvii; Cameron White, "Promenading and Picnicking: The Performance of Middle-Class Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Sydney," *Journal of Australian studies 89 (2006)*: 34.
[36] *Sydenian*, December, 1880, 3.
[37] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days* (United Kingdom: Macmillan & Co, 1857), 299, 354-355.

> Games conduce, not merely to physical, but to moral health; that in the playing-field boys acquire virtues which no book can give them; not merely daring and endurance, but, better still, temper, self-restraint, fairness, honour, unenvious approbation of another's success, and all that 'give and take' of life which stand a man in good stead when he goes forth into the world, and without which, indeed, his success is always maimed and partial.[38]

Such was the standing of these publications in both the British and Australian Public schools they inspired a generation of administrators who carried their message, which before long became known under the title of muscular Christianity.

Emerging during the mid to late Victorian era and focusing on a commitment to piety through the development and maintenance of a healthy body, reasoning that in order to fulfil the instructions of God one must be physically strong, muscular Christianity fused together the seemingly abstract worlds of sport and spirituality. *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport* defines the religious doctrine as:

> [a] complex ideology which also embraced imperial duty, nationalistic pride, and moral character… In effect it added a physical dimension to the moral endeavour by which Christian men should develop their character through sportsmanship, team spirit and obeying a captain's orders…[39]

This infusion of athletic play and spiritualism was legitimised within religious circles thanks to specific passages located within the New Testament, 'What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? or ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.'[40]

The influence of a muscular Christian defined spiritualism was initially important in the emergence of athleticism. Moral development within the schools had of course previously been the domain of the church. The commitment to Christian piety, however, became increasingly distanced from the

[38] Charles Kingsley, *Health and Education* (London: W. Isbister & Co, 1874), 86.
[39] Vamplew et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, 297.
[40] Cor, 6:19-20.

outlooks of young men against the rising prominence of social Darwinism, secularism and the popularity of competitive sports. This final factor was never more apparent than in Scotch's Christian Union having to continually defend itself against accusations of its perceived hostility toward sport and the common opinion that its members consisted merely of 'freaks' and a lack of 'sporting men'.[41] Those within the Church, thus fearing its own irrelevance in an increasingly secular world, or perhaps legitimately consisting of clergymen who held a love of sport and believed in the lessons discussed by Thomas and Kingsley, attached their beliefs to the juggernaut of sporting participation.[42] The Scotch College Christian Union increasingly discussed the linkage of sport and spirituality in the school's magazine, which appears closer to the ideals of amateurism than Christian piety, 'The spirit we encourage is the spirit of unselfishness. Forget about yourself and play, not for your own glory, but for your side, and with a grim determination to win or die.'[43]

Muscular Christianity therefore helped to inspire the moral arm of athleticism. With the schools and Gospels backing, church representatives from both the Protestant and Catholic faiths encouraged the practise of strictly amateur sport and athletic training. The prominent Headmasters of the Australian Public school system would align themselves with the popular idea that sport instilled boys with the moral capabilities for benefit of the individuals, that, when displayed by an entire generation, would secure the future of the nation and Empire. Admittedly, the spiritual aspect of adherence to muscular Christianity was not always at the forefront, particularly with the increasing alienation of religious thought in society. Yet the essence of the ideology, the belief that one could mould a strong moral character through amateur sport, was nevertheless common within the schools during these years.

Headmaster Albert Weigall and his subordinate Edwin Bean at Sydney Grammar, John Wilson and James Cuthbertson at Geelong Grammar and Arthur Way at Wesley all encouraged sport for this reason among others. During his tenure at Scotch (1904-1933) Headmaster Dr William Littlejohn was

[41] *Scotch Collegian*, October, 1906, 77.
[42] The sports and sportsmen with whom schools praised as embodying the noble qualities of the Christian and gentleman were of course always amateur, as the *Scotch Collegian* claimed, 'it cannot be right for any man to earn his living by a game or to take money by it in anyway whatsoever. Sport is a means of recreation, not a profession.' Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

also ‘desirous that every boy who is physically fit should devote some part of his time to athletics, not only because exercise is essential to developing the body, but because the discipline of school games is a most important factor in the forming of character.’[44] However, no Public school educator in this era believed so strongly, or vocalised his faith so frequently and vehemently, in the moral purpose of games, than Lawrence Adamson. Born in Britain and educated at Rugby School and Oxford, Adamson immigrated to the colonies in 1885. He began working under the influence of Way at Wesley College in the 1890’s, where he eventually rose to become Headmaster in 1902. He quickly set about improving the sporting reputation of the College. Described as the ‘knight-errant’ of amateurism,[45] Adamson was unapologetically in favour of sports practise and his enthusiasm for games embodied the middle-class conception of sport not merely for their enjoyment, but as something to be cherished for their deeper intransigent value.

In a paper written by Adamson before his ascension to Headmaster and read before the Victorian Institute of School Masters, entitled “A Plea Rational View of School Games”, he stated: ‘Their real place in an educational system is as a training ground for character, and I say no school which does its duty, and no educationalist worthy of the name, regards them from any other first and final standing point then on this.’ Adamson concluded his speech with the life-affirming impression sport could leave on young men, a fact that benefitted not only the individual and school but invariably the nation, ‘It is here that the boy learns that spirit de corps, that devotion to school, which is one of its most valuable lessons, for that makes good citizens afterwards. The habit of mind which will make sacrifices for a cause, which thinks of the corporation rather than of self, is the quality which makes a great country.’[46]

The desire to imbue young men with virtuous character traits that would serve the greater entities of school, nation and Empire emphasised team sports of traditional British origin. While the likes of athletics were often interlinked with the physical benefits of sport, British team games such as cricket, rugby union and rowing were associated with the gentlemanly virtues of chivalry, determination,

[44] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1905, 38.
[45] Dale Blair, “War and Peace, 1915-1924”, 96.
[46] *Wesley College Chronicle*, June, 1894, 112-113.

courage and of course selflessness and team-work. Cricket, perhaps the oldest, noblest and most popular game throughout the British Empire, was often praised for its ability to develop gentlemanly qualities. An article in the *Brisbane Courier* described the game of cricket as meant, 'for folks who take their innings like the honest Englishmen… who don't care for their own personal success so much as for the victory of the eleven and the glory of the twenty-two.'[47]

Sculling also entailed the capacity to impart the lessons needed to combat the regularly cited 'battle of active life.'[48] St. Peters College encouraged rowing as a contest wherein specific moral virtues were essential attributes for its competitors, including 'the discipline, mental, moral, ethical… the voluntary submission to one master, the self-surrender to one aim, the conversion of self into part of a machine, devoid of free agency, the working and training for weeks and weeks, to uphold the honour of the school, college or university, in the severest test of strength…'[49] The *Wesley Chronicle* also published a poem with reference to this concept after the 1887 Public schools boat race, and spoke to the belief that sports such as rowing were not merely for leisure, but a preparation for later life:

> But brace to do brave work as life shall grow;
> And mem'ries of this rowing hard shall link
> Them still together, and their hearts shall grow,
> With pleasure as they sit awhile, and think of how they pulled for Wesley years ago…[50]

Another British-conceived sport which encouraged customary middle-class virtues was that of rugby union. A game far removed from the likes of cricket and sculling, rugby instilled young men with the determination, courage, chivalry and team-work. However, it was said to also develop physical toughness and resilience in young men, owing to the violent nature of the game. For instance a rugby match played against a touring English side prompted the games reporter to take pride not so much in the team's performance as in its chivalrous attitude to the contest, as befitted a true amateur and gentleman, 'The whole of our school team… may be complimented on having shown a spirit of

[47] *Brisbane Courier*, December, 1864, 3.
[48] *Wesley College Chronicle*, December, 1882, 342.
[49] *St Peters School Magazine*, December, 1885, 9.
[50] *Wesley College Chronicle*, July, 1887, 630.

honour… even under the provocation of rough and unfair play…'[51] Such was the value attached to educating young men on the verge of manhood it prompted the *Sydneian* to determine their linkage with the safe future of the colonies, 'so long as cricket, football (rugby) are held one of the most important objects of school life, so long will that school turn out good men into the world.'[52]

But the team orientated virtues of sport were not relegated to the practise of traditional British sports alone. The rise of Australian Rules football from the mid nineteenth century was particularly strong in Victoria and its coverage dominated Public school attention. Such was the passion that staff and students felt for the colonial game that its practise, just like traditional British sports, was argued to convey familiar moral qualities cherished by the Australian middle-classes. A poem published in the *Scotch Collegian* in 1908 told the story of a young student being advised by an experienced elder after his debut selection within the school team. The guiding voice asserts the need for the young boy to exhibit manly strength and shrewd thinking, but also resilience in the face of both physical violence and hard luck throughout the game, accepting this as merely a part of the contest. As well as this, the poem conveys the importance of understanding that the boy is representing not only himself but the larger entity of the school. In this the author is claiming that the game of football teaches the young values of physical, intellectual but also moral virtues. The poem finishes with the impression that the experience learnt on the football field of his youth are not dissimilar to those he will face in manhood, expressed in the final passage, 'You'll find in life's arena, things pretty much the same…'[53]

Designated popularly under the title of muscular Christianity, the relationship between amateur sport and ideal character helped to formulate the moral component of athleticism preached in the Public schools during the nineteenth century. These qualities would prepare a generation of middle-class men for the trials of life and by extension propel Australian greatness out of its felonious past. What form this greatness took, however, was yet to be fully defined.

[51] *Sydneian*, September, 1888, 12.
[52] Ibid., May, 1882, 7.
[53] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1908, 51.

Athleticism, Physical Development and Social Darwinism

Whilst sport was regularly advocated for its ability to imbue a specific moral temperament, it also was argued as a safeguard against an equally concerning danger to Australian society, particularly its youth. There existed significant anxiety amongst the Australian populace in the mid-nineteenth century regarding the decline of the British race with respect to physical health. The barren deserts and stifling heat of the continent led many to believe settlers were in the process of some kind of genetic degeneration, for which sport remained the only liable cure.

This apprehension played a prominent role in shaping Australian thinking due to the rise of a brand of pseudo-science known as social Darwinism. This sociological concept was largely inspired by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution popularised in his ground-breaking publication *The Origin of Species* (1859). Several scientists, politicians and economists crudely applied Darwin's biological theory of natural selection to an umbrella of other fields of social theory. Most notably, Darwinism was applied to the growing discussion surrounding racial theory, classification and conflict. Herbert Spencer and other notable sociologists interpreted life as a contest of survival between several human races all competing against one another for ultimate supremacy of the globe, summarised in his well-known phrase 'the survival of the fittest'.[54] It was an ideology, as Australian historian Henry Reynolds explains, that carried a message of struggle, competition and ultimately violence.[55]

Darwinism, in all its forms, was enthusiastically debated and discussed in the Australian colonies as locals interpreted and applied 'natural selection' in ways that met their political, social, economic and scientific agendas.[56] The middle-classes, who as the educated class retained far greater exposure to theoretical discussions related to Darwinism, were quick to interpret these ideas per their own interests and apprehensions. Consequently, social Darwinism, with its emphasis on competition and survival, appears to have been used by the middle-classes as evidence for the need to encourage

[54] First coined in Herbert Spencer, *The Principals of Biology* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1864).
[55] Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1981), 129.
[56] Gregory D. Smithers, *Science, Sexuality and Race in the United States and Australia, 1780's – 1890's* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 72.

Australian males, primarily young males, into paying greater attention to their physical condition, in order to prevent the racial decline of the British people in the Antipodes.

Concern was focused on the nation's youth specifically because they were among the first generations born not in England but rather the hostile climate of the Antipodes. The British had always adhered strongly to belief in the superiority of their race and physical prowess, which they often linked to their strong sporting heritage. Robert Knox, in *The Races of Men* (1850), spoke to this when discussing the construction of the Anglo-Saxon humanoid against inferior races, 'In all climes, and under all circumstances, the Saxons are a tall, powerful, athletic race of men; the strongest, as a race, on the face of the earth.'[57] Despite Knox's assurances the immigrants who arrived in Australia found atmospheric conditions considerably more volatile than the mild climate of Britain. Fears began to emerge that such an environment would have a decidedly adverse impact on the health of the white population, culminating in the production of a race of weak and feeble offspring. The *South Australian Chronicle and Weekly Mail* asked in 1875:

> But this heat of Australia, what is to come of it in the long future? Every one of the colonies is interested in the question… Shall we degenerate under the rule of the sun? Will our daughters lose their bloom and beauty, and our sons their pluck and manliness, and a new variety of race be formed, deficient in those high qualities that have made the Englishman what he is?[58]

The question was not merely one posed by newspaper columnists. Many in the scientific and medical communities believed they were witnessing the racial decline of the Anglo-Saxon in front of their very eyes. Samuel Mossman in his paper titled 'On the Constituents of the Atmosphere', read at the British Association relating to Australia in 1864, commented on the atmospheric influence of the Southern Equator. He believed that while arriving at physical maturity faster, European children born within the Antipodes declined at a far more rapid rate than those in the milder climate of the Northern Hemisphere.[59] Infant mortality rates provided further proof of this troubling development. Rev. Mr.

[57] Robert Knox, *the Races of Men* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850), 43.
[58] *South Australian Chronicle and Weekly Mail*, 20 January, 1875, 11.
[59] *Australasian*, 31 December, 1864, 13.

Maughan asserted in 1870 that deaths in Adelaide of children under the age of five were fivefold greater than in England (though this claim was challenged), while many were concerned with Queensland's infant mortality rates, which had soared to 166.8 live births per 1000 in 1878.[60]

While occurring across wider Australian society, it was the middle-classes most of all that recognised the need to develop the physical fitness of their offspring, whom they looked at with increasingly 'anxious eyes'.[61] The ensuing physical decline from the oppressive Australian heat would be catastrophic for the colonies and their futures, particularly if the children of the 'dominant' community were adversely affected. Though the threat of racial degeneration generated substantial concern, it remained, however, largely curable in the eyes of those who cautioned it. If the British race was going to survive in such a hostile climate, then the elder generations needed to impress upon the youth the necessity of maintaining physical strength and the building of muscle. The Public schools of the colonies would serve as the battleground in which the middle-classes would attempt to medicate this pessimistic future of the white race's survival in the Antipodes. The weapon to safeguard the young against such degeneration would come in the form of athleticism.

Apprehensions about the physical state of youth had risen to such a prominence at Sydney Grammar during these years that the expansion of sports was often advocated as a means of rectifying the growing concern. The editor for *The Sydneian* stressed the importance of combating the negative influences of the native climate in the latter months of 1878, writing in August of that year, 'In the warmer climate of this country a similar injunction is the more imperatively necessary in proration to the increased temptation to indolence, and the more serious and permanent nature of its results.' The best measure to counteract this, wrote the magazine's editor in October of the same year, was:

> A certain amount of really vigorous physical exercise daily… it is the absence of this exercise which often causes the pale, tropical, weedy configuration so frequent among Australians and

[60] *South Australian Register*, 21 June, 1870, 6; P. McDonald, L. Ruzicka and P. Pyne, "Marriage, Fertility and Mortality," in Wray Vamplew, *Australians: Historical Statistics* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon, 1987), 55.
[61] Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 10-11.

> likely to be yet much more frequent in generations to come… In this sunny climate the languor of idealness is a real and great danger…[62]

Similar lessons on the benefits of athletic games toward the development of the body were influential on students at Wesley. Kenneth Fischer, writing to the school magazine the *Chronicle* in May 1878, noted the benefits of exercise as numerous, including the development of moral character, assisting in the learning of studies and as a preventative against the weakening of muscles.[63] In fact, the rise of sports within the schools under such justifications had, some argued, not gone far enough. Dr Molony, in a series of lectures under the auspices of the Australian Health Society in Victoria, detailed the irreparable damage being done to students who were 'overeducated'. Molony cautioned against the focus on classroom learning that would consequentially lead to 'a physically degrading race of people.' It was only through 'more exercise' that Australians could hope to 'prevent (the) physical degradation which is undoubtedly going on.'[64]

From the 1880's the Public school focus on promoting athletic activity to further sculpt young boys into strong, muscular men gained significant momentum, despite the easing of fears regarding the deteriorating state of the British Race in the Australian climate.[65] This cooling of apprehensions occurred predominately thanks to the victories of several Australian athletes, such was the reverence with which sports were held at the time. Edward Trickett's victory at the 1876 World Sculling Championship gave Australia its first world champion at any sport and provided evidence of the healthy Australian physique. His victories created not only feelings of 'hearty satisfaction' and universal celebration at home but also, per the *Bulletin*, 'British pride in the physical powers of our race...'[66]

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[62] *Sydneian*, August, 1878, 1.
[63] *Wesley College Chronicle*, May, 1878, 38-39.
[64] *Record and Emerald Hill & Sandridge Advertiser*, 5 December, 1879; *Argus*, 1 December, 1879.
[65] References within the Public schools to concerns of the climates effect on physical development did not cease altogether. See *Scotch Collegian*, December, 1904, 81.
[66] *Bulletin*, 29 May, 1880

The victories of several Australian cricketing teams against England in 1877 and 1882 further eased colonial apprehensions regarding physical and racial decline, as argued by historian Richard Cashman and William Mandle.[67] An article featuring in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1910 spoke to such confidence, 'I think (degenerative fears) quite a thing of the past. Australia of today is not Australia of twenty-five years ago. She has sent into the world statesmen and champions in all departments of athletics. Is that degenerating?'[68] Recognition of this assuredness was found in the Public schools themselves. Wesley Headmaster Arthur Way, who had 'before coming out (from England) heard rather a bad account of the colonial public school boy', reinforced his confidence in the physical assuredness of the British race in Australia, 'it did not need the recent great triumphs of cricket to convince one that the type of young Australian manhood who was no whit inferior to that of England.'[69]

With these victories in mind the schools could happily reason that their reliance on athleticism as an educational doctrine was now thoroughly justified. The *Brisbane Grammar School Magazine* commented in 1901, 'the fine physique shown by many of the lads, and the ruddy, robust health of them all, speaks volumes for the methods of physical development adopted at the Grammar School.'[70] Athleticism had helped to ward off fears of physical degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon in a new land, in a new century. The possession of a physically powerful generation of young men, however, would soon become necessary to combat not the oppressive climate of Australia but rather enemies abroad.

Conclusion

Without doubt, Australian sport was held to a level of importance outside trivial notions of leisure and entertainment throughout the nineteenth century. As certain social apprehensions dogged the thoughts of Australians, the middle-classes turned to their educational doctrine of athleticism to secure the

[67] R. Cashman, "Australia," in Brian Stoddart and Kieth Sandiford, *The Imperial Game: Cricket Culture and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 35; Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century".
[68] *Daily Telegraph*, 17 September, 1910, 4.
[69] *Wesley College Chronicle*, December, 1882, 334.
[70] *Brisbane Grammar School Magazine*, March, 1901, 5.

nation's future. Simply put, sport was the means by which the Australian middle-classes were moulding a strong, spiritual and morally righteous youth that would serve the needs of themselves, the nation and Empire for years to come. As the country and its inhabitants grew more self-assured with the passing of time, fears that prompted concern over British degeneration in the colonies were largely on the wane thanks in no small part to antidote of athletic competition.

But while such fears hardly vanished from Australian and middle-class consciousness, they were slowly being replaced by more tangible threats. 14,000km away from the playing fields of Australia storm clouds were ominously brewing. After a century of more or less peaceful co-existence between the Great Powers of Europe, diplomatic relations had begun to deteriorate. Alliances were being formed, armaments hastily prepared, and as one of, if not the, preeminent powers in the world, Great Britain would struggle to avoid involvement if it came to general European war. Australia, fiercely loyal to the mother country, would be among the first to defend the Empire if called upon. The justification of athleticism as shield against the abstract fears of moral and physical decline indicate just how easily adaptable such ideologies were. Sport's purpose as a preparation for the 'battle of life' could therefore be transformed to meet the fluctuating requirements of whoever dictated them. With a growing sense of national peril pervading, many began to envision a special role for sport and sportsmen in the coming war.

The militarisation of sport was not altogether absent before 1914. The *Bulletin* employed Darwinian theory and language when it decreed that Edward Trickett's victory at the 1876 World Sculling Championship was proof that colonials possessed the British physical prowess which had 'prompted many a glorious martial deed.'[71] Such ideas gained greater traction as the political situation worsened. Alfred Deakin, at 1908 speech at the Australian Football Jamboree, in the midst of attempting to gain support for his proposed compulsory military training scheme, referred to the shifting purpose of football:

[71] Cashman, "Australia," 36.

> not merely the physical training, but the discipline of sport, its effect upon character and courage, its prominence as an educational process were valuable… and when the tocsin sounds the call to arms not the last, but the first, to acknowledge it will be those who have played and played well, the Australian game of football, before they play the Australian game of nation-making and nation-preserving to stand by the old land.[72]

Before long Deakin's assertions began to resonate with many others, particularly the middle-class. 'It is encouraging' wrote Inglis in 1912, 'to find that over the same cable as that announcing another triumph in the sporting arena, comes the reassuring news of the first enrolment of the citizen soldiery.'[73] To them sport's role in training young men for the battle of life was about to become simply the training for battle.

[72] *Argus*, 29 August, 1908, 17.
[73] Inglis, *Sport and Pastime in Australia*, 3.

CHAPTER 2

On the Playing Fields of Australia: Emergence of the Sport and War Paradigm

By the end of the nineteenth century, sport was widely celebrated by the middle-classes for its valuable contribution to the moulding of a physically and morally fit generation of young gentlemen. However, as fears of a forthcoming national or imperial struggle began to replace domestic apprehensions, some began to suggest sport could once again be called upon to save the nation from impending catastrophe. To the followers of amateurism, who by-and-large had little experience on the battlefield, the core components that made up the model athlete, those of physical prowess and strong moral temperament, were easily transferrable to the qualities required of the ideal soldier.

Accordingly, athleticism and amateurism, supported by the now familiar theories of muscular Christianity and social Darwinism, were redirected amidst the growing shadow of war. No longer were games a preparation for the abstract struggles of life. They now had a direct and vitally important purpose, national and imperial defence. Playing field and battlefield quickly became interchangeable settings, in the hope that its young sportsmen, ready and willing, would one day successfully counter any-and-all threats to the new Australian nation and the eternal British Empire.

This chapter will explain how athleticism first aligned with militarism against the backdrop of a world sliding into war. The identification of this as a nominally middle-class development arises from the fact that the nation's elite Public schools were among the first and foremost constructors and purveyors of this amalgamation. Though certainly not alone in identifying this association, the Public school system was undoubtedly its champion, owing to both its acceptance of amateur sporting dogma as well as its fervent commitment to nation and Empire. Historians, led by Martin Crotty, have briefly identified the emergence of this amalgamation within the Public schools.[1] However, this chapter seeks to give due recognition to the comparison, given the variable explosion of the sport and war paradigm

[1] Crotty, *Making the Australian Male,* 86-88.

during the First World War traced much of its being to the connections formulated in the Public schools during the pre-war decades. It will also broaden our understanding of the comparison by outlining not only its causes and manifestations, but also its consequences within the schools, which provided hints of the turmoil sport would incite between 1914 and 1918.

This chapter will begin by explaining the reasons why comparisons between sport and warfare, though noticeable beforehand, came into a far more concerted comparison after 1900. The rise of militarism both within the schools and wider society, the genuine belief in their likeness and the questioning of the distracting influence of games on the more important matter of military training were all crucial motivating factors in the emerging prominence of such connections. From here, a discussion of the manifestation of the connection will take place. This relates to the forms in which the sport and war comparison was impressed upon students within the Public school setting. Examples of this include direct comparisons by Headmasters and other speakers, particularly at sporting festivals and events, as well as within poetry, song and the language of everyday school life.

Finally, this chapter will observe the consequences of the militarisation of school sport. The impact of these glorious comparisons on impressionable young men who dreamed of sporting glory alongside battlefield valour is not hard to quantify. Though acceptance of such comparisons was harmless enough during peacetime, it nevertheless contributed to a significant increase in violence during school sports, which students were told to approach as ‘battles’ to the ‘death’. While condemned in some quarters as un-gentlemanly, this fighting was also condoned and even encouraged within the wider school community, sometimes under the pretext that fighting exemplified the war-ready state of the nation’s future leaders. Boys were therefore exposed to a paradoxical expectations placed upon them, which would come to a head during the war itself. The existence of comparisons between sport and war in the Public school setting are therefore crucial to understanding similar connections that emerged after 1914, as well as their potential for generating controversy, conflict and violence in a time of national crisis.

Rise of Militarism, Theoretical 'Leap' and British Influence

There are several reasons as to why the schools aligned sport's purpose with martial considerations. The most important of these was the rise of militarism and its stranglehold over the Australian society and the Public schools during the early twentieth century. When referring to the term 'militarism' this chapter will adopt the definition outlined by Martin Crotty himself, who in this context defined it as:

> [a]n emphasis on, and an admiration for, the ability to fight for one's country and the qualities of the idealised soldier, such as bravery and fortitude. They imply that fighting for one's country is the peak of personal achievement and the epitome of manliness, but they do not necessarily imply a war-mongering spirit.[2]

Much of this lay in reminding students of their sacred duty to defend the Empire and its epicentre Great Britain. With strong links to middle-class England and Protestantism, the Australian Public schools had always obtained an invested interest in the fate of the motherland. As far back as 1878 Scotch College boys were told, 'Above all, let me say once more that you should never forget that you are not only Australians but Britons—sons and heirs of the British Empire.'[3]

This commitment to Empire, however, became decidedly militaristic after 1900 owing to the destabilising international situation. The Boer War (1899-1902) stands as one of the primary instigators of this. Many Public school boys played an active role in the three-year conflict and their presence and achievements at the front were celebrated in the speeches of masters and within the pages of school journals. Geelong Grammar School displayed a considerable militant spirit during the Boer conflict. The school's official magazine, the *Quarterly*, rejoiced in 1900 at how wonderful it was that, 'war has taken hold of Australia'. Supportive of the nation's commitment to Empire, Grammar also obtained an invested interest in the war. The enlistment of Old Boys, i.e. former students, provided opportunity to prove the worthiness of the Public school boy after decades of supposedly

[2] Ibid., 9.
[3] *Young Victoria*, April, 1878, 63.

superior educational preparation, 'we feel sure the lessons of loyalty and patriotism, of courage and endurance, learned in their old school will not be forgotten.'[4]

The end of the war in 1902 did little to quell the flames of militarisation. In fact, the Australian government's push to ready their nation for future conflict made the Public schools appear as much concerned with the martial training as with the intellectual development of their students. Growing fears of Asian expansion after the 1904/05 Russo-Japanese war and British concerns toward German armament in Europe had telling effect on the Australian government's foreign and domestic outlook. Concern about the Royal Navy's inability to defend Australia if engaged by a European enemy were exacerbated after British denial of Prime Minister Alfred Deakin's 1906 request for the Dominion to create its own fleet. Deakin therefore began to campaign for the introduction of compulsory military service, which was achieved with the passing of the *Defence Act 1909* that came into effect on the 1st of January, 1911. This established compulsory junior cadet training for all boys from twelve to fourteen and senior cadet training for all aged from fourteen to eighteen.[5]

The Public schools, however, did not wait for their hands to be forced. The increasing attention afforded to national security prompted the schools to reinstitute their cadet corps after their abandonment in the 1880's. Headmasters and school magazines encouraged their students to embrace their return, seeing the inherent value in teaching military basics for both physical and character development of the individual. Scotch Headmaster Dr Littlejohn was, 'exceedingly anxious that every boy should have an opportunity of learning the rudiments of military drill and rifle shooting'.[6] The Cadets would swiftly become a compulsory component of Public school life and its lasting importance was regularly acknowledged. The *Scotch Collegian* described its Cadet programme five years before the outbreak of war as 'a splendid training ground for Australia's future defenders.'[7] By the end of the decade Public school militarism was running rampant. The *Sydneian* declared on Empire Day, 1909:

[4] *Geelong Grammar School Quarterly*, April, 1900, 1, 21.
[5] Defence Act 1909, Department of Defence.
[6] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1904, 15.
[7] Ibid., October, 1909, 117.

> The noblest ideal of Empire is but the ideal of every true schoolboy, writ large – single hearted devotion – a purpose steadfast alike in victory and defeat – self-sacrifice even to death – "live in your honour, not on it." In the dark hour that is coming, when the mere glitter of Empire will be blotted out in tears and blood, our hearts will remember with pride this austere tradition of our great School – the tradition that the living soul of Empire is hard work and self-sacrifice, and that these are inadequately suggested by flag waving and holidays.[8]

This form of militarism was of course not exclusive to the nation's elite schools. Historian Rosalie Triolo has argued the Victorian Education Department, who controlled the state's government schools, strongly encouraged militarism among its male students under similar motivations.[9] However, the Public school endorsement of militarism would prove unique due to its own special incorporation of sport. This owed itself both to the dominance of sport in everyday school life as well as militarism's easy ideological assimilation into Public school athleticism and amateurism.

While sport had always been envisioned as a preparation for life, the rise of military priorities altered this purpose toward one of war. This conceptual 'leap' between playing field and battlefield was not a ridiculous one to make in the minds of school Headmasters and amateur sporting enthusiasts. Physical strength was needed to tackle opponents on the rugby field, just as it was to overpower enemy combatants in hand-to-hand combat. Courage was exuded by the cricketer facing the express pace of a fast bowler, just as it was by the soldier who had to charge through a hail of bullets. Most of all loyalty and sacrifice for the team in the pursuit of victory was equated in similar terms to the soldier's duty to the nation and Empire in its hour of need.

This final point resonated strongly with school Headmasters. If we remember that the overwhelming majority of these influential figures were British born and educated, then we cannot understate their enduring affection for the Motherland. The perception that war was approaching offered up no better chance to prove their loyalty and these men determined to have those under them see things in a similar light. If sport truly was a preparation for higher things, than there was nothing higher than the

[8] *Sydneian*, June, 1909, 21.
[9] Rosalie Triolo, *'Our Schools and the War'* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012), 9-10.

call of Empire. Contemporary eyes may view such comparisons as extraordinarily naïve, not to mention contemptibly irresponsible considering they were purveying such delusions to impressionable young minds. Nevertheless, this generation of educators was one largely untouched by the horrors of modern warfare and could never understand the absurdity of their proclamations. Not only this, they held to the common belief that the fate of Australia and Empire were one in the same. To defend British soil was in the best interests of the lives of Australians thousands of miles away. As such, Headmasters and others within the school community made comparisons between soldier and sportsmen from a place of genuine sincerity and not necessarily a desire to manipulate young minds.

The Headmasters of the Australian Public schools would have felt even more justified given similar comparisons were being made in the mother country. Historian Tony Mangan's research into the rise of athleticism in the British Public schools has found a strong acceptance of the relationship between sport and war.[10] Occurring much in the same fashion as they would within the Antipodes, British Public schools imparted to students the concept of the sporting field as a training ground in their forthcoming defence of Empire. Thomas Hughes, in *Tom Brown at Oxford*, understood the purpose of muscular Christianity to enhance one's ability to lead a proper Christian life, which included, 'the protection of the weak and the advancement of all righteous causes.'[11]

This idea gained greater credence after confirmation by certain war heroes themselves. Colonel Robert Baden-Powell's publication *Sport in War* (1900) is an example of a comparison between schoolyard games and warfare by someone who had experienced both first-hand. An officer in the British Army who served in India and Africa, Powell highlighted the innate connection between combat and play in an altogether positive sense, 'the work involved in the military operations was sufficiently sporting in itself to fill up a good measure of enjoyment.'[12] Legitimised by veterans of

[10] Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, 191.
[11] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown at Oxford* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888), 113.
[12] Robert Baden-Powell, *Sport in War* (London: 1900) 17.

previous wars the schools perpetuated the connection through the speeches of Headmasters, school songs and poetry.[13] One Lancing College Master wrote one such poem titled 'Football Player':

> The use on peaceful playing fields,
> Of supple limbs and ever-quickening eye,
> Win for him laurels in a sterner game,
> Giving resource and strength that never yields,
> Making him such that he would rather die,
> Than soil the honour of his country's name.[14]

British born Headmasters now teaching in Australia could use such comparisons as a legitimate precedent to follow. Often prompted by wider political events that threatened or culminated in war, the proponents of athleticism took solace that their games had adequately prepared their nation when the call to arms finally came.

Sport and Militarism in Conflict

While sport and warfare made for easy ideological bedfellows all did not recognise their compatibility. Critics were concerned that young Australia's focus remained on their games rather than with the far more pragmatic defensive initiative of compulsory military training. Preparation for the coming war was to be achieved with rifle and bayonet, not bat and ball. Sport was therefore acting as a direct threat to national security.

Sport's major critics came from nationalistic papers, military personnel and war-minded politicians. The editor of the *Sydneian* had spoken of cricket's distracting influence over the training of cadets as far back as 1888, albeit it in a light-hearted manner, 'One loses one's interest in parade when one sees

[13] James Mangan, "Games Field and Battlefield: A Romantic Alliance in Verse and the Creation of Militaristic Masculinity," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27 (2010): 191-204.
[14] Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, 192.

our famous slogger lay aside his tail coat and take his place at the wicket.'[15] Yet the worsening international situation transformed the implications of the distracting influence of games into a more serious issue of considerably dire consequences. Rudyard Kipling, the renowned patriotic and imperialist writer, prompted by the perceived lack of support for the British forces in the Boer War, wrote disparagingly in his 1902 poem 'The Islanders' of the distracting effects sport had on the British:

> And ye vaunted your fathomless power, and ye flaunted your iron pride,
> Ere-ye fawned on the Younger Nations for the men who could shoot and ride!
> Then ye returned to your trinkets; then ye contended your souls,
> With the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals.'[16]

The need to prepare the nation took on greater meaning for Australia after Japan's victory in the 1904/05 Russo-Japanese War. Long-held fears of invasion from the North were now becoming a real possibility. Yet Australia, much to the chagrin of nationalists, remained a society concerned more by their teams' performance on a Saturday afternoon than by swarms of Asiatic hordes overrunning them. At the annual meeting of the NSW National Defence League in 1907, one speaker stated 'A couple of dozen people attend a meeting like this, and 50,000 people go to a football match! I say, when we see this state of things, "heaven help Australia"'.[17]

Those at the higher levels of Australian politics expressed frustration at this apathy. In November of the same year, an up-and-coming South Australian Senator, George Foster Pearce, supporting Deakin's push for compulsory military service, raised concerns to Parliament of the 'alien' threat lingering to the North. Realising the dire need to 'shut our doors' to this 'foreign' race, Pearce recounted an incident which brought home to him the misdirected priorities the country's youth had now become preoccupied with. Watching from his office window, Pearce had noticed a large crowd, many whom were males aged between fourteen and twenty-five, heading in the direction of a football

[15] *Sydneian*, May, 1888, 3.
[16] Andrew Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999), 340.
[17] John Barrett, *Falling in: Australians and 'Boy Conscription 1911-1915* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), 21.

match. Amidst the stream of the 'flower of our young manhood' walked in the opposite direction 'one solidary youth in Khaki', struggling to make his way to the station to put in his afternoon drill. The young man was 'buffeted from side to side' by the crowd before giving up and moving to the road to complete his journey.

Lamenting the disgraceful manner in which the population had treated one of its future defenders, Pearce's speech was primarily concerned with a broader issue. Sport and more specifically football was not the problem. In fact, Pearce considered it 'manly game'. The problem instead rested with the nation's youth who remained preoccupied by watching a game rather than attending the training that was of the greatest importance to national security. As Pearce bemoaned, 'The man who first said that the battles of England were won on the cricket fields of England never meant that they were won by the cricket "barrackers of England".' Pearce thus called for the forcible removing of adolescent boys from football grounds so that they may partake in a few 'manly exercises on the military field', in the hope that this generation would be able to withstand 'those races who respect only force.'[18]

Instead of correcting the issue, the implantation of compulsory service in 1911 only managed to bring into sharper focus the boy's preference of leisure over duty. The research of historian John Barrett includes numerous examples of boys resenting or openly avoiding compulsory military training to attend sports meets. Pearce again confronted with the issue face-to-face. Labour Party heavyweight and Richmond Football Club President Frank Tudor approached him with various concerns over the newly legalised *Defence Act*. Tudor himself had been approached by several youths, and the father of one of them, who urged him to convey their disenchantment with the government's forced military training of youths because it clashed with the only day in which they could 'enjoy football'. Unperturbed, Pearce stood behind the Act.[19]

[18] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 7 November, 1907, 2nd Session, 3rd Parliament, Vol. 41, 30 October – 22 November, 1907, 5683.
[19] Barrett, *Falling in*, 142-3; 200-202, 224, 245-48, 257.

The problem became increasingly acute in the Public schools whose traditions were ensconced in the importance of games in the education and lives of young men. Speaking at the Wesley Founders dinner in 1909, Major Champion attempted to realign the focus of the school away from its beloved games toward the emerging cadet movement, 'I was glad to see Wesley College win the boat race the other day, but what I want you to believe is that the most important game is the military game.'[20] Such pleas appear to have been ignored, as boys continued to choose their games over the often-tedious nature of military training. The *Bulletin*, with its strong nationalistic focus, published several illustrations across 1911 and 1912 that criticised the Public school boy's obsession with sport over military training.[21] Consternation of course ran both ways. The Athletic Association of the Great Public Schools of New South Wales (AAGPS) complained in 1913 that military competitions threatened to 'destroy' inter-school athletics.[22] However, it was obvious that against a scheme so fervently supported by the government sport would never win out.

Figure 1 "Eyes Right!"[23]

[20] *Wesley College Chronicle*, July, 1909, 21.
[21] "New Year's Resolutions", *Bulletin*, 5th January, 1911, 2; "Eye's Right", *Bulletin*, 31st August, 1911, 11; "The Football Tyranny", *Bulletin*, 20th June, 1912, 1.
[22] Barrett, *Falling in*, 149.
[23] "Eyes Right!", *Bulletin*, 31 August, 1911, 11.

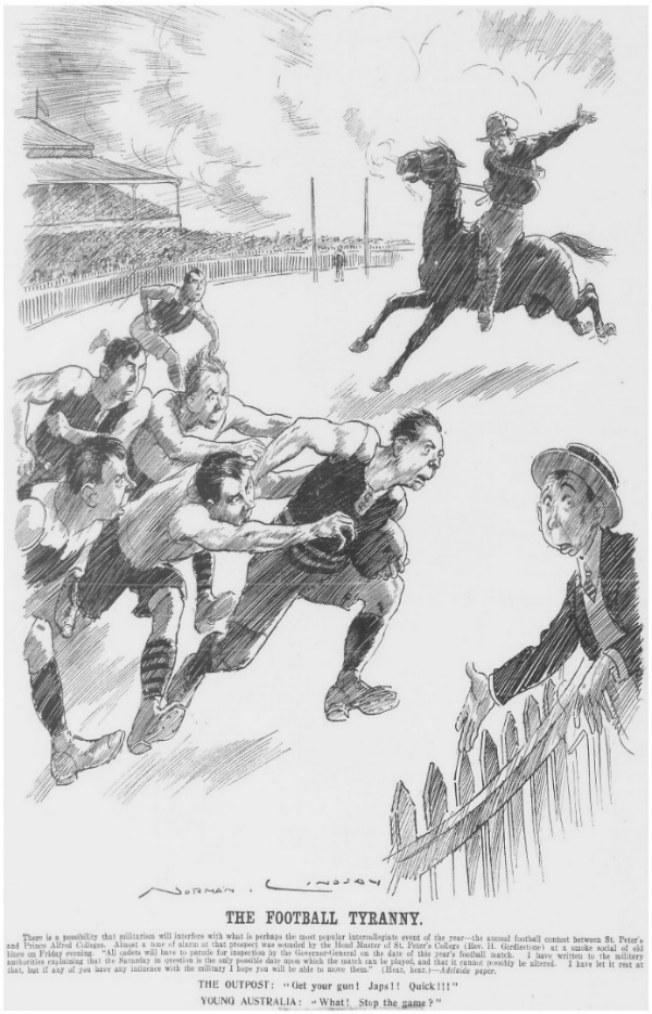

Figure 2 The Football Tyranny [24]

Instead of distilling comparisons, the clash between sport and militarism actually fermented further amalgamations of the two. Faced with a battle they could not win, the proponents of athleticism, according to Crotty, moved to assuage their critics and save their games by framing the playing of sports as a form of military training,[25] as will be seen shortly. What this clash also enlightens us to, however, is the fact that sport and war were already in a state of competition. This conflict was turbulent enough during peacetime, but with the stakes far higher after 1914 the choice between sport

[24] "The Football Tyranny, *Bulletin*, 20th June, 1912, 1.
[25] Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 86.

and war would become an issue embroiled in the kind of hostility that divided the nation as intensely as any other during wartime.

Connection between Playing Field and Battlefield

Under the influences mentioned above the merger of sport and war flourished within the Public schools. Students readily embraced the thoughts passed down to them and regurgitated them with an enthusiasm that matched their proponents. Shooting was one such sport where militaristic and athletic comparisons drew obvious connections. For years shooting had been a popular hobby, both in Public school and wider Australian life. The rise of militarism through the cadet movement prompted those within the Public-school community to encourage and refine its practise, in order to aid the soldierly capacity of students.

Scotch Headmaster Dr Littlejohn was a staunch advocate of rifle shooting and encouraged it in the hope that seniors of the school would accord more support to 'military movements in general.'[26] Others were just as keen to see students partake in the sport. A letter to the editor featuring in the *Scotch Collegian* in 1906, and not long after the withdrawal of the British fleet from the Pacific, strongly argued for the expansion of rifle shooting:

> Dear Sir, the people of Australia are beginning to realise-none too soon-that the question of the defence of this country, and our homes in it, may fall largely upon ourselves… It is therefore extremely disappointing to read in your last issue that training in rifle shooting is neglected for "music lessons, slyde work and home engagements."[27]

Yet the schools also envisioned marital value in games with no obvious military application. Hoping to encourage pupils to realise the importance of their sports, speakers often related the qualities exhibited the river or playing field with those at the battlefront. Dr Watkin, speaking at the 1908 Wesley speech day, commented 'As they strove on the football field or on the river, so it might be that

[26] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1904, 15, 23.
[27] Ibid., December, 1906, 115-116.

in the near future they would have to fight for the motherland, their King and Commonwealth.' Watkin believed the spirit of rivalry engendered in these games would stand them in good stead and the Old Boys of the schools, especially those who had partaken in such games, would stand side by side to uphold the honour of their school and their land.[28]

Direct connections appear to have been strong at Wesley during these years, thanks mostly to the influence of Headmaster Lawrence Adamson, whose advocacy for athleticism was matched only by his love for nation and Empire. Sir John Madden at the 1909 Wesley Speech Day stated to the crowd of boys, 'we have here an education which teaches its boys not only to be capable athletes, but to be honourable athletes. They are taught at the same to be the soldiers of their country… (Today I) saw a perfect arsenal of war…'[29] Such remarks were surely motivated by the announcement of the upcoming implementation of the *Defence Act*, in the hope that boys would recognise where their priorities now rested, while assuring the government that the schools knew themselves.

Athleticism's proponents framed this connection using rhetoric synonymous with British Public school culture. The celebrated remark of the Duke of Wellington, 'the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton' would appear extensively in middle-class and Public school rhetoric in the prelude to the Great War. The quote itself refers to the belief that the decisive battle of the Napoleonic wars, won by the British, owes itself to the superiority of the English officers that had been prepared on the sporting fields of these elite schools. Though doubtful Wellington ever uttered these words, they forever became associated with him and throughout the late Victorian era the quote became an often-used justification for militarised athleticism in the Public schools of Australia.

The quotation had previously been used to relay the importance of athletic carnivals and sports days in the moral development of students, with little mind for its militaristic component. The *Singleton Argus* commented after witnessing Sydney's Public school sports meet in 1897, 'It has been said that the battle of Waterloo was won on the cricket field at Eton, and the truth of the remark is apparent…

[28] *Australasian*, 19 September, 1908, 26.
[29] *Wesley College Chronicle*, April, 1910, 3.

It is the duty of those who have charge of the future fathers and mothers of this country to encourage athletics as it will bring to the front the virtues of courage, activity, discipline and self-control.'[30]

However, the saying increasingly incorporated its military interpretation as war came to occupy Public school consciousness. The *Sydneian* was one school journal that continually included the phrase under the justification of athleticism's ennobling virtues. The quote appeared to have made a direct comparison between sport and war as early as 1882, even though militarism was still some years away from becoming the dominant educational ideology within the school.[31] As the shroud of militarism grew thicker, however, the phrase began to take on greater significance. The *Evening News* took assurances, on the eve of the Boer conflict, that, 'although no page of Australian history is written in blood yet' the impressive sight of young athletes at the 1899 Sydney's Public schools sports gathering stood the country in good stead if 'any such emergency should arise.'[32]

The phrase took on a completely new level of meaning when used in direct reference to the deteriorating international situation, this time in reference to the First Moroccan Crisis of 1905. The *Sydniean* questioned the logic of those who would restrict the things which would help prepare the nation for any quarrel that may come about, 'Militant Imperialism – with an eye on bloodshot Germany – clamours for less play and more work,' the article continues:

> Its Brummagem poet flings a jibe at 'the flannelled fools at the wickets, and the muddied oafs at the goals'. On the other hand our grandmother – or was it the Duke of Wellington? Said that Waterloo was won on the fields of Eton, and perhaps the 'Iron Duke' understood the genius of our race from the playground to the battlefield better than the author (Kipling) of Stalky and Co...[33]

The connection of sport and war was also framed through another popular Public school expression. The Henry Newbolt poem *Vitai Lampada*, (They Pass on the Torch of Life) is one of the best

[30] *Singleton Argus* (NSW), 15 May, 1897.
[31] Perhaps Britain's involvement in the Mahdist war in Sudan may have had something to do with this, though the NSW contingent would not become involved for another three years. *Sydneian*, May, 1882, 7.
[32] *The Evening News* (Sydney), 16 September, 1899.
[33] *Sydneian*, September, 1905, 1.

examples of this amalgamation. A product of the English Public school system himself, Newbolt's poem, written in 1892, told the story of a young Public school boy who learns the virtues of selflessness and duty in the cricket matches of his youth that in turn prepares him for his heroic martial deeds in later life. Its repeated phrase 'Play up! And play the game!' in both reference to the athlete on the playing field and soldier on the battlefield, appeared extensively in middle-class rhetoric to emphasis the character-enhancing effect games had on the young. One remembers the *Scotch Collegian* poem about the tests of football from Chapter 1, which prepares young men for greater things, 'you'll find in life's arena, things pretty much the same… Buck up and play the game.'[34] It was through these usages that athleticisms advocates had for years justified sport's character-enhancing virtuousness for the severity of life, albeit a peaceful one.

With militarism's rise, however, the poem's martial connotations became increasingly relevant. In particular, Newbolt's line 'Play up play the game' became less concerned with the 'battle of life' and more frequently used within a military context. The martial usage of a once sporting term occurred first with relevance to the Boer War, typifying the eagerness and innocence which the Public schools approached the conflict. Within a 'rousing patriotic speech' at the embarking of former Wesley collegians in 1900, H. H. Chapman finished his address with Newbolt's poem, imploring the former students, now soldiers, to 'Play up! Play up! And play the game.'[35] Meanwhile, an article appearing in the *Petersburg Times* in 1901 displayed a similar anticipation of the playground as tuition for the battlefields of the Boer War, epitomised through Newbolt's poem:

> Well trained in all manly sports they have proved equal to the task of beating the Boer at his own game, as well as on his own ground, and though in the opinion of a certain section of the people young Australia has in the past proved too prone to pastimes, it was no doubt the grit and endurance gained on many a hard fought cricket and football field which gave our boys the qualities which in the time of Empires need they found the opportunity to display… the

[34] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1908, 79-80. Similar usage of the phrase appears in various other school magazines, including the *Sydneian*, *Wesley College Chronicle* among others.
[35] *Wesley College Chronicle*, July, 1900, 591.

> Australians have shown themselves to be dominated by the same old fighting spirit which is breathed in Newbolt's well known lines…[36]

Though *Vitai Lampanda* was undoubtedly the benchmark, many within the Australian Public schools tried their hand at utilising poetry and song to link the realms of sport and war. Geelong Grammar master James Cuthbertson's 1879 poem emergef as both the first example of this and one that set the tone for those that followed:

> Might, muscle, bone and courage—all
> Are given to win the race.
> Thus grows the manly vigour,
> And thus the courage high—
> To live for thee, Australia,
> And if need be to die![37]

In fact, it does appear that Geelong Grammar, who embraced militarism of the Boer War with an almost 'war-mongering spirit' at the turn of the century, had foreseen a connection between their games and the defence of nation and Empire. In 1891, it equated rowing and football contests with any future defence of Empire in glorious terms:

> March, March, sons of the river breast—
> Head of the river and head of the field,
> March, March, boys of the bonnie west—
> Steady and resolute, never to yield.
> March, March, bolder and bolder, boys,
> once that the face of the enemy's seen,
> March, March, shoulder to shoulder, boys—
> On for your country, and on for your Queen.[38]

[36] *St Petersburg Times* (South Australia), 12 July, 1901, 2.
[37] *Geelong Grammar School Quarterly*, April, 1879, 32.

If Geelong Grammar had thrown down the gauntlet, then Wesley surely picked it up. Through the language of war, death and its glorious sacrifice, its school magazine regularly published poetry that blurred the line between sporting competition and the military service during the 1890's.[39] However, it was only at the turn of the century that poetry began to utilise the language of militarism with a far greater intensity. A Wesley poem referencing the Cambridge cricket match, titled 'But in the ebbing tide of Battle', appeared in 1899:

> And the cheers that greeted Austral,
> From the Beaten British Foe,
> Send my heart a throbbing widely,
> With Patriotic Glow
> Need I Linger o'ver the battle?
> How the conquering heroes won,
> By ten wickets — crown of glory
> By ten wickets— and one run.[40]

By 1909 *the Quarterly*, more than 30 years after Cuthbertson's poem, published their own poem of this disposition, thereby continuing the precedent that it set among the Public schools:

> Oxford knows, Cambridge knows, that the lads are willing,
> Sparing nought, caring nought, every task fulfilling:
> England knows, and her foes, that her boys from under
> Fare and share, die and dare, in the battle thunder.
>
> So the crews, win or lose, start upon their mission—
> "Come the worst, duty first," is the high tradition!
> So they row, calm or blow, keen to beat the others!

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[38] *Geelong Grammar School Quarterly*, April, 1891, 16.
[39] *Wesley College Chronicle*, July, 1891, 1; Ibid., December, 1892, 972.
[40] Ibid., June, 1899, 501-502.

And Ashore, when 'tis o'er, meet as boating brothers.[41]

By wars outbreak in 1914 it was obvious that the concentrated amalgamation of athleticism and militarism had made its mark. The words of students reflected the successful implantation of the sport and war comparison upon the generations of those who had come through the Public school system. One Scotch student wrote amidst the looming danger, 'If the time for action comes, we trust that our response will show that the lessons learned in the classrooms and on the playing fields have not come for naught.'[42] Likewise, Wesley Old Boy Alan Gross had the following poem published shortly after the outbreak of war:

> Because through many a bloodless field and fray,
> We learned the code which governs war and play;
> Because our hearts were tempered in that fire,
> Whose flames are hot with pride and righteous ire.'[43]

Indeed, historians of Wesley College, who surmised its standing within Public school culture as it stood on the brink of war, recognised the prevalence of the conceptualised relationship between sport and warfare:

> Adamson looked down on a Friday morning assembly, perhaps on the eve of a sporting contest which his school would almost certainly win, he must have been a happy man. Wesley, with its sport and songs, with its strenuousness and sentiment… and with its boys about to fight, had almost become a Rugby (the British Public school) in the Antipodes. He had 'carried an ember from an old altar and relighted it anew'; the test would come in Flanders fields.'[44]

Though such comparisons could easily be interpreted as throw-away remarks, the increasing regularity with which they were used indicate that such thinking had infiltrated even the most casual

[41] *Geelong Grammar School Quarterly*, July, 1909, 20.
[42] *Scotch Collegian*, August, 1914, 69.
[43] *Wesley College Chronicle*, December, 1914, 3.
[44] Geoffrey Blainey, James Morrissey and S.E.K. Hulme, *Wesley College: the first hundred years* (Melbourne: The President and Council of Wesley College in association with Robertson and Mullens, 1967), 122.

of Public school language and life, normalising the idea that sport and warfare shared an intimate connection in the minds of teachers and students alike. That such sayings often emerged during real political crises only grounded the presumption that the nation was adequately prepared if diplomatic tension escalated into a state of war, thanks largely to sporting obsession. Thus, their implications, when war was finally declared, were utterly profound, not only for those who utilised the connection, but also for those who were charged to fulfil it.

Militarisation and Violence in Public School Sport

As the nation steadily moved in the direction of war, the Public schools increasingly cherished their games for their ability to impart on students the physical and moral virtues necessary to excel in battle. Yet this positive understanding of combat, in which soldiers had to exude physical strength and stamina as well as moral courage, determination, resilience, loyalty and selflessness, overlooked one of the central requirements of any effective combat soldier, the ability to kill one's enemy. To emphasize sport's capacity to impart such a quality in young men would not only have been an unacceptable virtue in a moral sense, it is also one without parable in the sporting world of Public school life. To this end, a clear distinction between sport and warfare existed that simply could not be bridged by the advocates of athleticism.

While unable and unwilling to address such a distasteful link, the issue of violence within school sports provided advocates of the sport and war paradigm with a less intense avenue to connect the two worlds. The growing acceptance of militarism led many to justify violence associated with games because of the value it held within Public school life. In some cases, this value linked in with national defence. If boys were willing to display a partiality to violence, in the right circumstances, then perhaps they would be willing to do in the name of king and country. It was a belief that clearly contradicted notions of proper chivalrous behaviour, typified in the notions of fair play and sportsmanship integral to the ethos of amateurism and athleticism. Boys were thus expected to display

an aggressive fierceness against their adversaries all the while maintaining their gentlemanly dignity and sense of Public school unity, a contradiction that would come to a head during the war years.

Martin Crotty's research indicates a strict outlaying of schoolyard violence during the early years of the Australian Public schools. Wesley College's first Headmaster James Corrigan worked diligently to create a culture of strict obedience, wherein boys were not to strike each other under any circumstances. This outlook existed in line with commitment to Christian piety that dominated the educational doctrine of the mid-nineteenth century.[45] Despite this, unsanctioned fighting and other forms of violence in the yard were common in the Public schools from their establishment right on through to the First World War. The *Sydneian* made note in 1888 of the Tennis Court as the arena in which the boys avenged bitter wrongs. It also, as a student run instrument, recommended that such boys, 'whose souls thirst for war', should instead move to a corner of the playground where they can 'fight quietly and be undisturbed' by authorities.[46]

Not all masters were adverse to students using their fists as a means to resolve their differences. Long-serving Geelong Grammar John Wilson (1863-1895) had a policy of leaving recess, lunch and after school unsupervised so that, within the general code of gentlemanliness, feuds and bitterness could be purged.[47] Even the Bible of proper Public school boy conduct, *Tom Brown's School Days*, endorsed fighting as a legitimate means to settle disputes, 'Fighting with fists is the natural and English way for English boys to settle their quarrels. What substitute for it is there, or ever was there, amongst any nation under the sun?'[48] Nevertheless, unsanctioned violence in the yard would never receive a broad level of acceptance across the early lifespan of the Australian Public schools. Violence could only be tolerated in a controlled setting, in order to maintain the gentlemanly sanctity of the boys involved. This setting was found, in all places, at sport.

[45] M. Crotty, "There's a Tumult in the Distance, and a War-Song in the Air: violence and in the Australian public school in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century," in *All Part of the Game: Violence and Australian Sport*, eds. Dennis Hempbill (Melbourne: Walla Walla Press, 1998), 2.
[46] *Sydneian*, August, 1888, 2.
[47] Bate, *Light Blue Down Under*, 90.
[48] Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days*, 300.

Certain games lent themselves to this violent expression of sporting virtuousness. Competitive shooting, after becoming tied to national defence during the early 1900's, encouraged participants from Scotch and Wesley to shoot at targets cut to resemble 'a man's head and shoulders'.[49] Even more than this, boxing evoked a paradoxical assimilation of amateurism and violence. Though prize fighting was widely criticised for its professional inclinations, amateur boxing within the schools grew in prominence among both masters and students. Mastering the art of boxing would ready boys to stand up for themselves and others, especially when one felt it was morally right to do so. In a time where war appeared to be waiting ominously on the horizon and the need of abundant fighting men paramount, this type of fighting could not only be tolerated but even praised. *Tom Browns School Days* had sanctioned such contests as a legitimate athletic pursuit: 'Not one of you will be the worse, but very much the better for learning to box well.'[50]

Boxing's popularity surged at Scotch College in the early 1900's thanks to its strong encouragement from authorities. The *Collegian* described the pursuit in 1908 as a 'noble art of self-defence', which had 'taken a firm hold among us.'[51] This encouragement was justified under the pretence of boxing as a legitimate forum to release the aggressive tendencies of young men in a controlled environment. The *Collegian*, discussing the existence of the school's boxing classes under capable tutelage of Sergeant Major Venimore Wright, reported on the seemingly incompatible existence of man's base thirst to witness violence and chivalrous code of honour associated with amateurism somehow co-existing within the ring, 'Day-boys, inspired and awed… older members, who veritably thirst for blood…The delights of the "cowards blow" are questionable… Already the floor of the gymnasium is liberally sprinkled with gore, happily the sole reminder of past mash-ups.'[52] What appears to be developing here is a confusing expectation on young men regarding what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable forms of adolescent violence within the sporting world, an issue even more pronounced in the highly competitive world of interschool sport.

[49] *Scotch Collegian*, April, 1908, 34.
[50] Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days*, 300.
[51] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1908, 57.
[52] Ibid., October, 1904, 42-43.

An integral component of Public school life, games had been ongoing sporadically since the 1850's.[53] They would take on a more formal construction in the major states after the establishment of the AAGPS of NSW in 1892 and the Associated Public Schools of Victoria (APS) in 1908. Cricket, rugby, athletics, Australian Rules football and rowing (known popularly as the Head of the River) were the highlights of the school year for staff and students alike. The recognised value of these contests related not only to their association with the moral and physical development of students but also for their ability to instil identification with and pride in their respective schools.

Attempting to stimulate school pride at the most important events on the calendar, masters wrote increasingly passionate school anthems in the hope of helping spur their representative athletes on to victory. The adoption of emotive expressionism helped to inflame the student's passions and the language of war in particular, with its seismic connotations, provided the best tool to achieve this. The Wesley sports song titled 'Before the Boat Race, 1907', written by Master F.S. Williamson, has undeniable martial undertones as well as a direct correlation between sports and playing field:

> There's a tumult in the distance, and a war-song in the air,
> Where the foemen in their galleys for another fight prepare,
> For they whisper in the country, and the noise is in the town,
> That the Wesley colours from the mast will soon be taken down.
>
> *Chorus*
> Then its forward boys, to battle—hear the bugle's thrilling tone—
> With the Royal Standard borne ahead, march on to hold your own,
> With the Lion proudly ramping as the ensign futters free,
> Let the Lion keep the river, as the Lion keeps the sea.[54]

[53] Though contested, many believe the first match of Australian Rules football occurred between Scotch College and Melbourne Grammar on the 7 of August, 1858 in the parklands around what is now the Melbourne Cricket Ground.
[54] *Wesley College Chronicle*, October, 1907, 3.

Scotch and Xavier College also delved into this practise. The Scotch's 'Cardinal Gold and Blue', written in 1908, included the verses:

> Fathers who wi' Wallace bled
> And whom Bruce has often led,
> Taught us how to fight for glorious liberty;
> And with courage just as high
> We're prepared to do or die,
> That our land, loved Australia, may be free.
>
> FALL IN, SCOTCH! The Bugles sounding,
> All there's when theirs work to do,
> Should a foe our land attack, There will be no holding back
> By the boys who wear the cardinal, gold and blue.[55]

While not promoting the sport and war connection as regularly as its fellow Public schools, Xavier College's school song 'Red and Black' stands alongside even the most militaristic of poems of the time, regularly utilising words such as 'march!', 'enemy', 'battle', 'war' and 'do or die'.[56]

The martial spirit had infected the sporting culture of the schools to such a degree that a former Melbourne Grammar student suggested that the Game Song be revised to include a 'War Verse'. As the original song contained innocent sporting themes and motifs linked toward school pride, the suggestion of the introduction of a 'War Verse', with its strong martial undertones, severely altered the interpretation of the entire song.[57] Proliferation of the sport and war paradigm clearly had an impact on this Old Boy, given he admitted his motivation for writing the 'War Verse' came after observing the same spirit in Old Boys in the Boer War as the schoolboy athletes of the day.[58] What

[55] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1911, 31.
[56] *Xaverian*, December, 1906, 9.
[57] J.B. Kiddle, ed., *Liber Melburniensis, 1848-1936: Melbourne Church of England Grammar School Official History* (Melbourne: Robertson & Mullins, 1937), 674-675.
[58] *Melbournian*, October, 1906.

also emerged during these contests was the shouting of 'War Cries' by students, a form of barracking invented by the boys to be directed not so much to support their team as to denigrate their opposition. The practise had also grown of attending in groups the matches between schools other than their own and lending vocal and physical support to 'friendly' schools, a practice that had the approval of Adamson.[59] The use of martial rhetoric in these songs and chants certainly indicate a clear militarising at the very heart of Public school sporting culture and identity.

The acceptance of the conceptualised relationship between play and battle, however, contained a darker element that emerged during interschool play. For decades, boys had been told to view their games with the same seriousness that they would one day approach the wider world. Now, with the rising prominence of the schools, the formalisation of a viable competition (particularly in the APS) and the highly competitive culture encouraged from the highest levels, school spirit and love of games surged dramatically. Yet as the international situation strained the linking of such schoolyard loyalties with the highest social calling began to take on a deeper significance. The intended effect of promoting school pride through harbouring feelings of us-against-them mentality began to produce volatile consequences in the form of violent clashes during school games.

This was of course nothing new, with intense rivalries a hallmark of interschool competition from their outset. As far back as 1879 the *Collegian* regretfully observed the lacking fraternal unity displayed during interschool contests. [60] However, the increasing importance placed upon games led to tensions between boys reaching a fever pitch. The arrival of Headmaster Dr Littlejohn's at Scotch in 1904 prompted observations of the rampant 'hatred, rancour, distrust and jealousy' that existed within the APS competition.[61] Hyped up on the aggressive militant language school anthems and encouraged within the wider school community to take such contests as if they were representative of some greater struggle, students from opposite schools often engaged in violent confrontations.

[59] Greg Denning, *Xavier: A Century Portrait* (Victoria: The Old Xaverian's Association, 1978), 102; Brian Lewis, *Our War: Australia during World War I* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 196.
[60] *Wesley College Chronicle*, August, 1879, 124.
[61] A. E. Pratt, *Life of Dr W.S. Littlejohn* (Melbourne: Lothian Publishing Company, 1934), 226.

The reception of this mounting animosity was mixed. Though deplored in some quarters as ungentlemanly, others condoned and even praised the perpetrators for what they interpreted as a healthy embodiment of the Australian male adolescent character and even an indicator of a generation that would one day be willing to spill the blood of their adversaries in the defence of nation and Empire. What eventuated were paradoxical expectations on the students and their behaviour at these sporting contests that reflected the clashing of amateur notions of 'fair play' and physical combativeness in games.

Cricket and Rowing were largely safe from such clashes. The nature of the play in cricket and rowing coupled with the respectable culture associated with such games rendered violence between teams not only inconceivable but also impractical. Contact sports were another matter altogether. With tackling and physical pressure core components of Australian Rules football in Victoria and rugby union in NSW, contests regularly saw spill-over into non-sanctioned acts of violence between participants. Many denounced in-play violence. The *Collegian*, after a Scotch v. Melbourne Grammar football that contained 'some slight displays of ill-temper', remarked that such acts 'ought to be entirely absent from these games'.[62] It further lamented what it saw as a year plagued by fighting on the football field, 'This year fists have been up on several occasions, and worse than that, blows have been struck by some who have been given their opponent no warning or chance of defending himself. This is not how it should be.'[63] Several school authorities denounced violent confrontation within games, threatening and enforcing suspension of competition is a means to discourage such behaviour. Interschool rugby in Sydney had produced such 'bad feeling' between the Sydney Grammar and Newington College teams that it forced the latter's sports committee to suspend matches between the schools.[64] Meanwhile, the APS competition, in response to continued accusations about undue attention placed upon sport, narrowly escaped self-abandonment in 1910.[65]

[62] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1909, 53-54.
[63] Ibid., October, 1909, 126.
[64] *Sydneian*, April, 1886, 5-6 cited in Crotty 'There's a Tumult in the Distance, and a War-Song in the Air', 4.
[65] This discussion also pertained to concerns that sport was interfering with academic development of students and concerns of creeping professionalism.

The reason for this distaste in excessive violence rests in the dictum of Public school sporting ideology. In line with the schools adherence to amateurism, an expectation emerged that players display chivalrous behaviour on the sports field at all times. Rough and un-gentlemanly play was considered beneath interschool play and best left to the professional codes.[66] The *Collegian*, in 1908, guaranteed not victory in the coming football season but promised the sportsmanlike conduct of its team, 'wherever we may stand, it is certain that no school will play a fairer game.'[67] The *Sydneian* also claimed that it desired above all 'to turn out good "sports".'[68]

Other commentators, however, encouraged boys to confront this rough play on the field with enthusiasm. As outlined previously, the ability to display restraint in the face of physical aggression and undue violence was a cornerstone of ideal middle-class masculinity. Rugby was without doubt the roughest sport in the land and its supporters regularly espoused the masculine value associated with their game, 'Ask a boy who "doesn't care to play", he'll probably tell you "mamma says it's a rough game."'[69] Violence on the field could even be acceptable if kept within the rules of the game, in which case it was celebrated. Praise greeted a Scotch v. Melbourne Grammar football match for the, 'friendly feeling which was exhibited before the game, continued until the end, and though the game was strenuous and hard fought at times, nothing approaching unseemliness occurred.'[70]

If expectations toward violence were difficult enough to understand within the field, the reception to violence on the sideline was even more unclear. This development is particularly intriguing. Even today one might understand if not condone violent behaviour within a contact game, where aggressive actions have a way of spilling over into violent repercussion. But what about the violence that emerged amongst those on the other side of the fence? It was violence between student spectators, if anything, which aroused significant debate within the school community. One infamous spectator brawl, brought about by 'too zealous partisanship' within the schools, typified a clash between

[66] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1909, 53-54.
[67] Ibid., April, 1908, 4.
[68] *Sydneian*, June, 1913, 1.
[69] Ibid., April, 1897, 20.
[70] *Scotch Collegian*, July, 1910, 87.

denunciations of such acts as un-gentlemanly and the growing acceptance of violence among young men as ideal behaviour.[71]

In 1905, during match played at St. Kilda Cricket Ground between Wesley and Melbourne Grammar in front of a crowd numbering four thousand keen onlookers, two groups of student supporters were separated to either end of the ground in order to prevent conflict. At half-time, the Melbourne Grammar boys moved into the centre of the ground. They would soon be joined by the Wesley crew, aroused by their side's aggressive play during the game and objecting to Grammar's symbolic possession of the arena, with conflict ensuing.[72] The *Argus's* report of the brawl evokes the increasingly militaristic language that became associated with the schools after 1900:

> Caps were torn off, and their owners knocked down… Some boys, shouting with delight, rushed round from group to group, hitting every hostile face they saw. Others picked out foemen worthy of their steel, and in a few minutes the field, like a battle-ground of long ago, was dotted all over in a series of hand-to-hand encounters.

Such was the size and ferocity of the brawl the police had to be called to break it up, taking considerable time, before a continuation of hostilities began as the two schools left the ground.[73]

There was considerable indignation from concerned witnesses and social commentators about the affair. One 'shaken' witness wrote in disgust to the *Argus* both because of the brawl and wider violence associated with the game, 'I was grieved to think that a game of football – which is a sport I do not wholly approve of on account of its brutality and vulgarity – could not be played without an accompanying prize fight.'[74] Others, however, appear to have been less concerned with the actions of the boys, far from it. The brawlers were in fact 'cheered by the spectators as keenly as the game

[71] *Scotch Collegian*, October, 1904, 36.
[72] Andrew Lemon, *A great Australian school: Wesley College examined* (Wahroonga: Helicon Press, 2004), 144; Crotty, 'there's a Tumult in the Distance, and a War-Song in the Air', 5.
[73] *Argus*, 18 August, 1905, 5.
[74] Ibid., 19 August, 1905, 14.

itself', with many heard to comment their attendance was largely motivated by a desire to see some skirmish break out.[75]

Affirmation and consternation over the incident continued in the weeks and months afterward. The Scotch College debating society stood in full support of the need for young men to fight on such an occasion. It was a view supported and expanded by the student editor of the schools magazine A. O. Rental, who, in very Darwinian language, explained both the boys 'instinct' to fight as well the schools desire to condone its expression:

> Delicate issues will always arise which school boys will always settle in their own way. And the Australian boy has not lost the fighting propensities of his sires. He is not gentle or mild; he has no desire to be canonised, he would not take it as a compliment if he were called a saint… Nor do we believe that any man or woman condemns such a wholesome instinct, for an instinct it is, and we need not desire to be otherwise. It makes for manliness… We believe that the authorities of the Public schools frankly recognise the fact, and we owe it to them, on our side, to recognise with equal frankness the justice of their attitude… They know a black eye is not fatal…

If this viewpoint isn't entirely unexpected from a student, then the reaction of school authorities certainly is. It appears that several educators supported the belief in a boy's need to fight when he felt morally justified in doing so. Mr Bligh, a master at the school, was invited to express an opinion on the very topic, and he believed that; 'a boy might have to fight on occasion…' notwithstanding it was always a demoralising thing to fight before spectators.[76]

The immediate reactions of those who possessed the power to eliminate such incidents within school culture enlighten us further to the inconsistent expectations regarding violent behaviour at interschool games. Wesley Headmaster Adamson and Melbourne Grammar Headmaster George Blanch appeared unconcerned by the brawl when asked for comment in its immediate aftermath. Both reasoned that the same thing happened at the Eton-Harrow match every year. If such incidences were occurring in

[75] *Leader*, 19 August, 1905, 18; *Age*, 19 August, 1905, 11.
[76] *Scotch Collegian*, October, 1905, 78.

Britain, then surely they must be an acceptable aspect of the Public school spirit. Adamson even seemed mildly amused by the whole affair, remarking to the *Argus*, 'we have a lot of caps – so many that I don't know what to do with them. I'm thinking of making them up into parcels, and sending them up to Grammar.'[77]

Perhaps sensing the impending public fallout Adamson would seek to qualify his statements the following morning. Though condemning the brawl and assuring future recourse to prevent their reoccurrence, Adamson refrained from neither reprimanding the boys nor accepting any personal responsibility for himself. Instead, he laid blame at the feet of the crowd for encouraging "the fun". This response was mirrored by the Wesley College council, who while also denouncing the brawl expressed 'sympathy' for their Headmaster and remained assured that their students 'were not the aggressors' (in contrast to most reports), before reassuring the public that the school would work with Grammar to promote a better relationship between the two.[78]

What we have here is school authorities approaching the brawl with justification and humour in its immediate aftermath, followed by a more considered yet half-hearted repentance pushed only by the ensuing public fallout. The immediate reactions must be considered as the most accurate reflection of the beliefs of the Headmasters with respect to the legitimacy of interschool violence, while the absence of any reprimand against the boys also reflecting the manner in which school authorities' viewed such incidents. The boys must have taken this leniency as a sign of approval. Some may have even been proud that their Headmasters had compared their actions to those displayed in the much-vaunted English Public schools. Adamson would continue with this contradictory view towards interschool sport violence after the 1909 Public school Boat Race Dinner:

> We want to "kill" while all the time we "love" the "foe". Public school sport is a thing that binds together all the boys of Public schools… we find out the good points of the other man if we meet him in a good fight…[79]

[77] *Argus*, 18 August, 1905, 14.
[78] Ibid., 19 August, 1905, 14; *Age*, 24 August, 1905, 9.
[79] *Wesley College Chronicle*, July, 1909, 45.

Other Headmasters displayed an outright encouragement of violence as legitimate when the school's honour was at stake. Scotch historian G. H. Nicholson recounts one particularly bizarre incident at an interschool football match that saw its long-serving Headmaster James Morrison become actively involved in interschool fighting. Morrison had informed his students that there must be no fighting, but if provoked beyond reason, 'see that you beat them.' It appears that the insults thrown by the rival schools could even be too much for Morrison himself. On one occasion, holding his umbrella at the slope, Morrison marshalled his boys behind him and led the way across the ground where they engaged with the enemy.[80]

The schools received strong support between newspaper columns in the weeks following the 1905 Wesley-Grammar brawl. Much of this support based itself on the traditions of Public school culture, both in Britain and at home, as well as the need to display school-spirit. 'Staid Citizen' traced the existence of school rivalries all the way back to the days of Tom Brown to be carried out by British boys 'in the old fashion way.'[81] Former students likewise viewed these contests in a similar light. 'Old Public School Boy' criticised those who would condemn the brawl through charges of ignorance of Public school life, 'none of them have ever graced a public school with their presence. They show an utter lack of knowledge concerning the traditions and customs of these great institutions…'[82]Amateur advocate and Public school sports commentator Reginald Wilmot, also an Old Boy of Melbourne Grammar and strong ally of Adamson, saw little to be concerned about such events, viewing them as intricate in the life of the Public schools and their students:

> Was any harm done? Is a single boy any the worse for the encounters that ensued? I doubt it very much… hands were given to the youth to defend himself and his ideals… Eton and Harrow are always ready for the fray, and who will say that the boys there do not represent the flower of the race?[83]

[80] G. H. Nicholson, ed., *First Hundred Years: Scotch College Melbourne, 1851-1951* (Melbourne: Brown, Prior, Anderson, 1952), 63.
[81] *Argus*, 19 August, 1905, 14.
[82] Ibid.
[83] *Australasian*, 19 August, 1905, 24.

The justification of fighting amongst boys for the honour of school pride gained further credence when it was extended out to matters of national defence. Though the *Bendigo Advertiser* preferred the 'quieter, firmer, more resolute and immensely more intellectual and scientific training of the Japanese officer' as opposed to the 'Rowdyism' and 'ragging' displayed by British footballers and junior officers,[84] others saw the seed plots of martial valour within the brawlers on St. Kilda Ground that day. The *Punch* would in comical tones compare the boys of the 1905 brawl to 'Kipling's soldiers in barracks', while a columnist for the *Australasian* took confirmation that the spirit of the boys should force a re-thinking of Wellington's famous Public school phrase, 'what he really meant to say was, that Waterloo was won upon the football fields of Rugby.'[85] With its unique satirical humour, the *Punch's* illustrator would recreate the skirmish as one akin to a modern battlefield.[86] Others took this comparison more seriously. One reassured commentators interpreted the boys' eagerness to confront their enemies on the playing field as a symptomatic of a future manhood who would rally to the call of arms, 'It will be a poor look-out for the British Empire when its younger school boys do not behave roughly and even rudely at times. Nations are not made or sustained by milk-sops…'[87]

Figure 3 A Riot of Boys [88]

[84] *Bendigo Independent*, 21 August, 1905, 2.
[85] *Punch*, 24 August, 1905; *Australasian*, 26 August, 1905, 15.
[86] "A Riot of Boys", *Punch*, 26 August, 1905, 10.
[87] *Argus*, 19 August, 1905, 14.
[88] "A Riot of Boys", *Punch*, 26 August, 1905, 10.

From all this we can decipher a direct link between the militarisation of school sport and an increased violence associated with such games. Pride in one's school team gave way to a form of jingoism, fuelled by militaristic school anthems and 'War Cries', and consequently interschool violence. Though deplored by some, many encouraged such actions in the defence of their school, as the very natural expression of a boys 'instinct' to fight, as an integral idiosyncrasy of Public school culture tracing itself all the way back to the British Public school system and even as a promising indication of the future security of the nation. The connection between sport and war had thus gone full circle. What we are left with, however, is a paradoxical set of values related to violence and amateur sports codes of ethics regarding sportsmanship, providing confusing expectations for students.

Public school violence in an era dominated by militarism and social Darwinian thought appeared to have been an acceptable and at times necessary part of male adolescence, especially when it tapped into apprehensions of national defence. These supposedly light-hearted scuffles, however, would escalate into increasingly bitter and hostile brawls between players and spectators against the backdrop of the war. As the former combatants of Public schools' games fought and died together at Gallipoli and Flanders, interschool matches descended further and further into animosity and violence of a farcical nature. Though Headmasters would publically condemn such actions as inappropriate, the schools themselves had played no small part in normalising violence within a sports setting.

Conclusion

The sudden insecurity surrounding national security in Australia after 1900 dramatically altered the purpose and meaning of sport. As the nation prepared itself for war, Public school educators and those committed to the amateur ideology envisioned their games as having an important part to play. Such comparisons emerged under a variety of pretences, as a justification against critics concerned over sport's antithetical effect on military training, as a tool to inflame school rivalry or because they were sincerely believed in. The fervour and consistency with which they were purveyed undoubtedly made

them an integral part of everyday Public school life and culture, and their acceptance was considerable given the students themselves were not averse to highlighting such connections.

Having said that, the significance of this connection in peacetime remained rather inconsequential; an acceptance of the connection within the schools as well as an increase in small-scale violence associated with their sports. The declaration of war, however, ultimately changed the entire complexion and meaning of the comparison, propelling it from relative obscurity of schoolyard fantasy to becoming the cornerstone of a variety of wartime functions. The connections made between sport and warfare championed within the Public schools ultimately laid down the groundwork for the influx of comparisons throughout the Great War. The lines of Newbolt would be among the most recognisable slogans of the Australian war effort, becoming synonymous with need of Australians to display the spirit of amateurism in support of the nation and Empire. Not only would these phrases, poems and songs remerge between 1914 and 1918, they would be put forward by many who had been educated under this educational dogma.

Yet the explosion of the sport and war paradigm held within it dire consequences for those who wished to utilise its potential. As young soldiers moved forward to the battlefront, high on this glorious interpretation of combat, their ecstasy would soon turn to bitterness and disillusionment under the brutal reality of war. In the following chapter, we will trace the paradigm's impact on those who wished to impart the connection upon the Australian consciousness through wartime propaganda and contrast it with the experiences of those tasked with 'playing the game'.

CHAPTER 3

Propaganda at Play: Comparison of Sport and War in Australian Propaganda, August, 1914 – May, 1915

The outbreak of war in 1914 brought into sharp focus the theories and philosophies of several social commentators who observed the close relationship sport attained with warfare. The Australian government had swiftly supported the British Empire in its declaration of war against Germany and her allies. As the symbolic and figurative guardian of the young nation, many saw it as their responsibility, both in the interests of the Empire as well as themselves, to quickly and fanatically support Britain in its hour of need. This attitude was embodied in the words of then opposition leader Andrew Fisher who pledged Australia would stand by Britain to 'our last man and our last shilling.'[1]

Its people followed down a similar line, approaching the conflict with the typical excitement that characterised the naivety in which the world plunged itself into war. At last, Australia would have a chance to prove itself as loyal to the Empire which had birthed it. It would send its best and brightest to the battlefields of Europe and help bring about a swift and glorious end to the war. In a country obsessed by sport one can guess who they envisioned would lead it to victory. Historian Michael McKernan explains, 'Australian commentators began to suggest that sportsmen had a special role to play in time of war...'[2]

This chapter will examine the existence of sport and its comparison with combat and martial ability during Australia's early wartime propaganda, principally the first year of the war. This period has been chosen for a specific reason. While the sport and war comparison would continue and even strengthen within the Australian propaganda machine across the next four years, its emergence before Gallipoli was one not yet fuelled by political agenda borne out of the social division that plagued post-Gallipoli Australia. Instead, comparisons in the first year of the war reflected a unified optimism over

[1] *Age*, 1 August, 1914, 15.
[2] McKernan, "Sport, War and Society," 3.

the wonderful influence sport had played in the moment henceforth recognised as the birth of the Australian nation.

By using a variety of sources, it is to be understood that calls for sportsmen to enlist were not simply the obscure opinions of a few individuals, rather, they represented a widespread phenomenon emanating from the country's powerful media institutions and by some it's most revered wartime personalities. The glorious actions of the Australians on the Gallipoli peninsula only solidified the assertions of these social commentators, with direct reference being made to the athletic appearance and temperament of the Australian infantrymen from several notable war correspondents, including Charles Bean, Phillip Schuler and Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett.

But while the war helped to substantiate the philosophies of amateur sporting theorists, it paradoxically managed to challenge their legitimacy. This chapter will conclude by recognising the experiences of those at the frontline, where instead of hard-tackling full backs sportsmen ran into a hail of machine gun fire.[3] Confronted with the brutal reality of industrialised warfare, a growing realisation dawned on soldiers of the hollowness of the comparison that accompanied the general disillusionment with the notion of war's glorious nature. In this the conception of sport as offering special training proved increasingly absurd to soldiers tasked with living up to the dreams and expectations of those far removed from the trenches.

The connection between sportsman and soldier in Australian propaganda has received specific focus by historian Murray Phillips, who classified the connection within propaganda in two basic ways, the 'Unsporting German' and the 'Athletic Anzac'. In this the Australian soldier was celebrated for his superior physical prowess and strong moral character due to the nation's sporting heritage. Conversely, the German soldier's committing of war crimes in Belgium and France owed itself to their lack of sporting culture which taught the values of chivalry and 'fair-play'. Sport therefore acted as a convenient and malleable tool with which Australian people could identify, understand and

[3] Wray Vamplew, *Play Up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain, 1875-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 8.

justify their war against a callous enemy.[4] While this explanation of the sport and war comparison has been convincingly argued, much of the relevant and additional evidence can be interpreted in varying ways. This chapter will examine the evidence based on a chronological framework, where the purpose and meaning of the connection transformed along with the context of the war. While post-Gallipoli comparisons between sportsman and soldier were motivated largely by wider political and social issues, this chapter aims to contrast the civilian's sporting-inclined romanticism of combat with the reality of the Australian infantry's experience on the front line.

Early War Euphoria and British Comparison

War was, for the most part, embraced within Australia society when declared on the 4th of August, 1914. While not universally celebrated as is popular belief, many believed the war provided the nation with much to be excited about. The announcement that its soldiers would soon head to Europe to engage the German adversary incited much jubilation amongst the general populace, as historian Bill Gammage explains, 'Crowds gathered to celebrate, laughing, cheering, and singing, surging with strength and joy and confidence.'[5] The Australian media were at the forefront of this enthusiasm. Newspaper coverage on the declaration of war acted to cultivate a mood of eagerness around the country, as John Williams maintains, 'Once war was under way, Australian newspapers did attempt to whip up enthusiasm.'[6]

It was within this early war euphoria that the sport and war connection found an acceptable footing amongst the population. Widely established ideas of war in 1914, that it would be a great test for the nation to prove itself, that it would be over shortly, that battle was glorious and an opportunity for adventure and that only the strongest and best would revel in the action, alongside traditional concepts of amateurism and athleticism, social Darwinism and muscular Christianity, all acted to empower the

[4] Phillips, "The Unsporting German and the Athletic Anzac," 14-29.
[5] A clear example of this can be seen in the *Age's* reporting scenes shortly after the declaration of war, *Age*, 4 August, 1914, 8; Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), 4.
[6] John Frank Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War* (NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1999), 14.

belief that sportsmen equated to idyllic soldiers. It was an idea expressed fervently within the national press, particularly its prestigious newspapers, who began to portray war as a grand, if risky, sporting test for men of the bulldog breed who should promptly join up lest they miss the experience of a lifetime.[7]

This was a thought process encouraged with equal ardour in Britain. Sport was used to frame the superior fighting qualities of the British soldier, as the Football Association announced on the 31st of August, 1914:

> Thousands on thousands of the flower of British youth and manhood who on the playing fields of this country have acquired and developed the splendid characteristics of the fearless and undaunted warrior are now, at the peril of their lives, fighting the battle of honour.[8]

As such the belief in Britain that 'a sportsman is already half a soldier' and 'the best sportsman is the best soldier' was forthcoming.[9] Comparisons also focused on the 'unsportsmanlike' conduct of the German army, after evidence emerged of its committing of war crimes against French and Belgian civilians. Cricket was often used as a framing device to reinforce this point. A game widely considered to embody all that was good, true and honest in British society; cricket best evoked Britain's unwavering commitment to 'fair play'. After a series of reprehensible German atrocities, British propaganda quickly moved to explain that the German way of war was 'just not cricket', a phrase even used by the ruling Monarch George V.[10]

Inspired by this form of propaganda and with its own strong history of similar philosophies in mind, early war comparisons between sportsman and soldier in Australia faced little in the way of contestation. In fact, the only observers that questioned the connection during this period were socialist inclined papers, who failed to buy into the mood of war euphoria. Believing the war to be just another imperial and industrialist venture wherein the masses were readily offered up as cannon

[7] Ibid., 15.
[8] Brandon Luedtke, "Playing Fields and Battle Fields: The Football Pitch, England and the First World War," *Britain and the World* 5.1 (2012): 99.
[9] Eliza Riedi & Tony Mason, ""Leather" and the Fighting Spirit: Sport in the British Army in World War I," *Canadian Journal of History* 41 (2006): 487, 497.
[10] *Darling Downs Gazette* (Qld), 9 October, 1914, 5.

fodder, the *People*, in January, 1915, criticised the rulers of society as viewing the great international conflict as some sort of spirited contest:

> Let us be honest, war is not a game; it is murder – this and nothing more. To call it a "game" is merely to gloss over the savage fury, the incarnate fiendishness, the hellish bloodthirstiness of multiple murders. Is the slaughter of thousands of human beings, the dismemberment of thousands of bodies, the shattering of bones, the blowing out of eyes, the reduction of unrecognisable masses of festering corruption, is all this a "game"?[11]

But regarding the nomination of the close relationship between sportsmen, soldier, games and combat, there emerged little in the way of immediate contestation.

Sport and War Comparison August, 1914 – April, 1915

The pronouncement that Australia's sporting culture made its soldiers ready for battle appeared just days after a state of war with Germany was declared. Sports writers working for papers with a proclivity toward amateurism were foremost in this. Less than a week after Australia was notified of the outbreak of war the *Winner* relayed its assuredness that the future of the nation lay in the safe hands of its sportsmen, 'at such a moment in our career as a nation… it is at least pleasant to reflect that the physical competency ensured by participation in the athletic arena will stand us in good stead...'[12] A few days later "Fife and Drum", the sports commentator for the *Pastoral Review*, held to a similar confidence, 'We will show that the "muddied oaf" and "flannelled fool" has learned his lesson from games, and that he can catch hold of the bit, and lay down to it, when called upon for real work.'[13]

Others Australians were quick to make such assurances. The wealthy industrialist and former St. Peters College student Essington Lewis spoke of his belief that the training on the football field would

[11] *People* (Sydney) 14 January, 1915, 1.
[12] *Winner* (Melbourne), 12 August, 1914, 10.
[13] *Pastoral Review*, 15 August, 1914, 783.

stand them in good stead for active war service.[14] Poetry also proved an effective weapon to highlight the belief that Australian sportsmen were already well 'equipped' for the front. The *Winner* published one such poem in late September:

> Oh! It's good to see a leaven of our sportsmen in the Forces,
> That we're sending to make history in the battlefields and forts;
> For its British stamina conquers on the sporting grounds and courses,
> And the sportsmen make all good soldiers and good soldiers all make sports.[15]

Illustrations within the *Punch* would blur the distinction between soldier and sportsmen in early 1915, using its distinctly comical approach.[16] Though propaganda would become decidedly more serious as the war progressed, illustration's such as these reflected the light-heartedness the press approached the conflict during its early months.

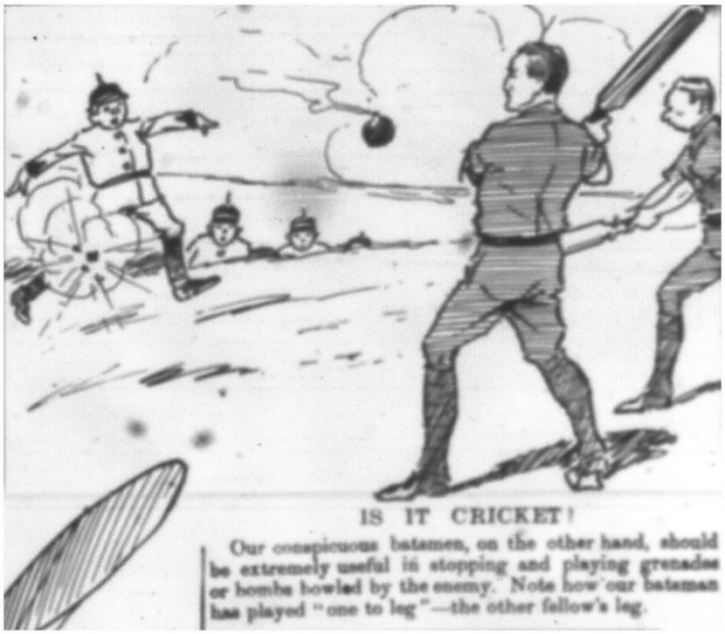


Figure 4 Is it Cricket? [17]

[14] *The Mail* (Adelaide), 11 September, 1914, 4.
[15] *Winner* (Melbourne), 23 September, 1914, 1.
[16] "Is it Cricket?", *Punch*, 25 February, 1915, 270.
[17] Ibid.

The idea that British and by extension Australian sportsmen were well prepared for combat stemmed largely from what the "Fife and Drum" mentioned above as the 'lessons learnt' on the sporting fields during their youth. This rationale evoked the pre-war proclamations of several Public school administrators who had foreseen the future competency of Anglo-Saxon martial prowess, a competency that owed itself principally to their athletic prowess and moral temperament developed on the sporting fields of their youth.

The influence of Public school rhetoric was apparent in these early comparisons. For example, numerous conservative papers referred to the famous Henry Newbolt poem discussed in the previous chapter, where it called upon sportsmen and citizens to sign up and 'Play the Game'.[18] Meanwhile, the *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* resurrected another commonly heard phrase found within the elite Australian schools during the pre-war years:

> The Battle of Waterloo, said the Duke of Wellington, was won on the playing fields of Eton. It has been 100 years since the Battle of Waterloo, and to-day Australians fresh from the playing fields are rallying to the call of arms… The athlete must make his influence felt in the army. Strong in body and mind, he is an ideal soldier.[19]

The Public school theory that games instilled young men with a unique moral virtuousness comprised an important aspect of proclamations that sportsmen made ideal warriors. Echoes of the ideas expressed by the likes of Adamson and Cuthbertson were heard once again in the columns of middle-class newspapers during the war's first months. The *Maitland Daily Mercury* printed in December of 1914:

> We have splendid fighting material in men of other races fighting under the Union Jack with all the bravery, determination and chivalry of British born, because our administrators abroad

[18] *Maitland Daily Mercury*, 23 December, 1914, 2; *Farmer and the Settler*, 7 October, 1914, 2; *Daily Standard* (Brisbane), 14 November, 1914, 4; *Leader* (Melbourne), 14 November, 1914, 48.
[19] *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 18 September, 1914, 33.

> learnt to "play the game" on the playgrounds of Britain, when boys at school and young men at university… playground discipline makes for the better soldier.[20]

As for exhibiting one of the most important virtues of amateur and Public school sport, that of chivalry, several columnists maintained it was the ennobling effect of sport which had made their soldiers not only more capable, but in fact more honourable on the battlefield. In an article titled 'Playing the Game', released when Germany's war crimes in Belgium were first coming to light, the writer draws upon ideas closely associated with muscular Christianity to explain Britain's superior moral temperament over its foe:

> We may claim to be able to give the Germans many points in what we call "playing the game." Christian principles have permeated our public schools and universities, and in connection with our national sports and pleasures, in which much is done for the up-building of character, a high code of honour has been evolved, which is expressed in the term "playing the game"…[21]

Australian Minister of Defence Senator Pearce, Member of Parliament Donald Mackinnon and the nationalist *Bulletin* magazine, along with many others, rationalised Germany's war crimes in a similar fashion; though wisely overlooking the 'Christian' element of the criticism given Germany itself was a devoutly Christian nation.[22]

Aware of the Australian public's obsession with games, the nation's authorities and pro-war institutions were providing the masses with a banal, yet relatable interpretative framework in which self-assuredness could pervade, both in their chances of victory and the righteousness of their cause, as Phillips has argued.[23] Nevertheless, after years of similar comparisons the war provided opportunity to have such theories tested for real and thus their 1914 expression emerged from a place of conceivable sincerity. Enlistment rates throughout August and September were so strong that there

[20] *Maitland Daily Mercury* (NSW), 23 December, 1914, 4.
[21] Ibid., 30 September, 1914, 4.
[22] *Age*, 14 May, 1915, 10; *Age*, 1 May, 1915, 12; *Maitland Daily Mercury*, 30 September, 1914, 4; *Register*, 1 May, 1915, 8; *Bulletin*, 2 December, 1915, Red Page.
[23] Phillips, "The Unsporting German and the Athletic Anzac".

was no need for patriots to use the connection to pressure athletes into enlisting, or for sporting leagues to use the connection as defence for their games continuation under the pretence of preparing its future soldiers.

On top of this exists the fact that many of these comparisons emerged from individual's with an orientation towards amateurism and its companying ethos, underlying their assumed acceptance of the innate relationship between sport and warfare. The war remained an exciting adventure and their ignorance was permeated by their distance from the reality of what was actually occurring in Europe at the time. Tens of thousands of French and German casualty figures may have made for impressive reading, but the sight of only a few hundred dismembered Australians would end up making a far stronger impression. It can therefore be concluded that early comparisons between sportsman and soldier were made as much through genuine belief in their legitimacy as much as a tool to justify the war effort.

What also must be recognised about these early proclamations is that, to this point in time, they were merely unsubstantiated promises and predictions. During the first crucial weeks and months of the war Australian personnel was far removed from the roar of the guns. Commentators therefore had to make do with correlating themselves with the exploits of the British Expeditionary Force or 'Tommies', who were currently engaged with their German adversary in France. Many articles remarked on the positive effects games had had on the British soldiers, with the implication being that as Australians they too had inherited similar attributes through their strong ancestral ties. Amidst the romantic visions of combat, the *Farmer and the Settler* proudly pinpointed sport as the maker of its superior recruits, 'the world has learned that the same desire to excel that makes the Britisher such a thorough sportsman makes him also the finest soldier of nations.'[24] The *Sydney Mail* made similar observations:

> The Briton is a born devotee to field sports… The cricket, the footballer, the harrier, the fox-hunter is not the follower of an idle game, but a happy warrior, cultivating all the factors that

[24] *Farmer and the Settler*, 7 October, 1914, 2.

> make for victory… The cricket-oval, the football field, the tennis court, the harrier trail are in truth training grounds for soldiers...[25]

It was not only the moral temperament, but the physical prowess of the British soldier that sport had grafted in the preceding years, 'the physique of the nation. They have toughened the muscles and developed the bodily powers, enabling soldiers to be fit and cheery after long, continuous, and strenuous fighting and marching.'[26]

Whilst these articles discuss only the 'British military proficiency' and 'physique of the (British) nation', all were printed to remind Australian audiences of a similar soldierly competence that exists in the Antipodes. Designating the Australian race as a part of the British or Anglo-Saxon race was in fact the conventional mindset of the social elite and by extension most Australians at the time, especially before its own troops distinguished themselves on the Gallipoli Peninsula. This continued during the war's early stages as the Empire stood united in their crusade to defeat German designs of world-conquest. The *Referee* quoted a British soldier at the front during 1915 that attests to this connection, **'**There is a relationship between the sporting spirit and the combatant instinct which lies concealed somewhere in the overwhelming majority of the Anglo-Saxon.'[27]

Under the guise of this Anglo-Saxon umbrella of racial and national classification, Australian propaganda could align itself with the actions of the British soldiers thanks to their closely intertwined history, ethnic make-up and culture. But Australians were keen to see their own countrymen forge a reputation, none more so than their sportsmen. As the war failed to conclude with a rapid victory as predicted, an opportunity would soon present itself.

[25] *Sydney Mail*, 3 March, 1915, 37.
[26] *Maitland Daily Mercury*, 23 December, 1914, 4.
[27] *Referee*, 9 June, 1915, 16.

The 'Race of Athletes'

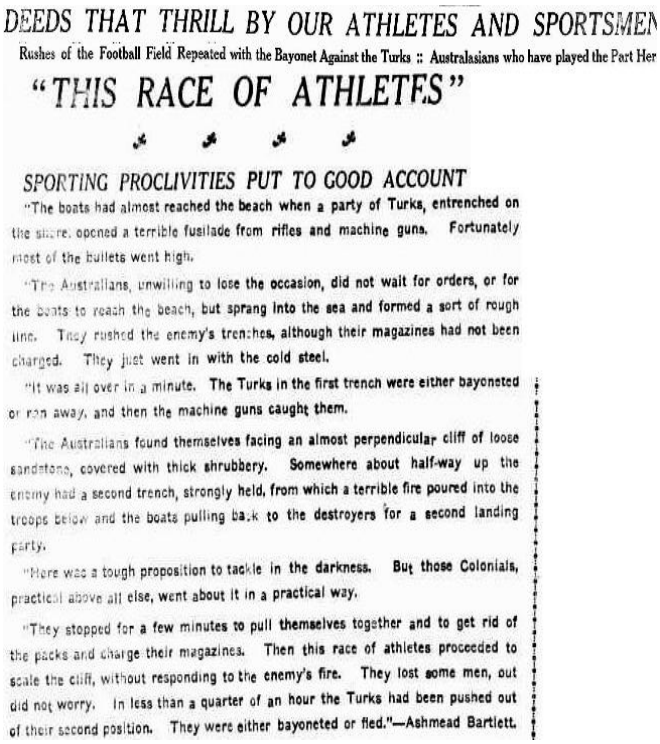
Commentators would not have to wait long to see their sportsmen face the ultimate test. By early 1915 the ANZACs were preparing their assault on the Ottoman Empire and the theorised influence of sport on the Australian contingent was already making an impression on observers. An article in the *Register* mentioned the fact that, 'Everybody in the land of Pharaohs talked about the "fine athletic type" of the Australian soldier.'[28] The acceptance of the Australian soldier as uniquely 'athletic', however, would not gain widespread acknowledgement until the dispatches of the British war correspondent Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett surfaced in May. Bartlett's correspondence provided the first major account of Australian soldiers at arms during the Great War. Reporting on the invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula on the 25th of April, 1915, Bartlett was glowing in his appraisal of the Australian troops who fought their way up the bluffs of the Turkish shore:

> As the moon waned the boats were swung out, the Australians received their last instructions, and men who six months ago were living peaceful civilian lives began to disembark on a strange, unknown shore in a strange land… Then this *race of athletes* proceeded to scale the cliff without responding to the enemy's fire… the Australasians proved themselves adepts at this kind of warfare…[29]

When Bartlett's article hit stands it caused a sensation. Australian's took an immense pride in the knowledge that their countrymen had performed gallantly on the ultimate stage. Without doubt a strong sense of Australian nationalism emerged from Bartlett's words. The fact that this came from such a respected source only added to the credibility of this view, so much so that the report was read to schoolchildren nationwide at the request of the Prime Minister.[30] That over 2,000 men had become casualties that day was of course quietly ignored, as was the failure of the campaign in the preceding months. Grandiose myths therefore emerged out of unmitigated disaster that the campaign had

[28] *Register* (Adelaide), 20 February, 1915, 12.
[29] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 May, 1915, 13; The language adopted by Bartlett is not altogether surprising given he himself was a product of the British Public school system, attending Marlborough College in his youth, a school firmly entrenched in the ideals of athleticism. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, 41.
[30] Robson, *the First A.I.F*, 43.

become in order to distract from the horrible truth. 'The fantasy', wrote Brian Lewis, 'became history.'[31]



DEEDS THAT THRILL BY OUR ATHLETES AND SPORTSMEN

Rushes of the Football Field Repeated with the Bayonet Against the Turks :: Australasians who have played the Part Her

"THIS RACE OF ATHLETES"

SPORTING PROCLIVITIES PUT TO GOOD ACCOUNT

"The boats had almost reached the beach when a party of Turks, entrenched on the shore, opened a terrible fusilade from rifles and machine guns. Fortunately most of the bullets went high.

"The Australians, unwilling to lose the occasion, did not wait for orders, or for the boats to reach the beach, but sprang into the sea and formed a sort of rough line. They rushed the enemy's trenches, although their magazines had not been charged. They just went in with the cold steel.

"It was all over in a minute. The Turks in the first trench were either bayoneted or ran away, and then the machine guns caught them.

"The Australians found themselves facing an almost perpendicular cliff of loose sandstone, covered with thick shrubbery. Somewhere about half-way up the enemy had a second trench, strongly held, from which a terrible fire poured into the troops below and the boats pulling back to the destroyers for a second landing party.

"Here was a tough proposition to tackle in the darkness. But those Colonials, practical above all else, went about it in a practical way.

"They stopped for a few minutes to pull themselves together and to get rid of the packs and charge their magazines. Then this race of athletes proceeded to scale the cliff, without responding to the enemy's fire. They lost some men, out did not worry. In less than a quarter of an hour the Turks had been pushed out of their second position. They were either bayoneted or fled."—Ashmead Bartlett.

Figure 5 "This Race of Athletes"[32]

This mythicised sense of Australian national identity obtained a special place for the very entity which had helped to create it. Based strongly on social Darwinian theory, Bartlett's labelling of Australian soldiers as inherently athletic helped to verify everything social commentators and Public school sporting advocates had proclaimed in the pre-war years and early war months, establishing the popular image of the Australian race as inherently athletic, physically superior and therefore militarily proficient than all others.[33] Just 11 days after the article appeared in the country, the Victorian Premier Sir Archibald Peacock stated to the approval of his fellow parliamentarians, 'We knew before that the quality of the British stock in Australia had not deteriorated, and the world realised that as soon as Mr

[31] Lewis, *Our War,* 139.
[32] "This Race of Athletes", *Referee*, 12 May, 1915, 1.
[33] Phillips, "The Unsporting German and the Athletic Anzac," 21.

Ashmead-Bartlett's story was published.'[34] Indeed, Bartlett's dispatch not only confirmed the Australian race was in a healthy state, it even led some to question whether it was a superior breed to their British forbears. As the *Age* wrote in 1916, 'Australia has produced a race of men with splendid physique – a race of men whose superiority in stature to the average run of mankind is apparent to the eye of the most cursory observer.'[35]

Of course, Phillips reminds us that such uses of racially based stereotypes were entirely flexible; often altering to suit the purposes of the idea they wished to convey, not to mention appearing downright contradictory at times. Whereas before Gallipoli Australian commentators had to rely on the abstract classification of the Anglo-Saxon or British race, it could now point to a unique Australian type. What therefore emerged was a culturally sensitive and applicable national stereotype that paradoxically stressed Australian uniqueness but linked the nation with Britain through a common sporting heritage.[36]

Propaganda of racial design was quite common during the First World War, as scientific classification of supposedly varying human races obtaining differing physical, intellectual and moral traits was decades from being discredited, leaving governments and other voices to acclaim their race as superior in order to relay confidence in their own conduct of the war. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy explains, 'Race myths are valuable since they make everyone within the master race, the chosen people, or whatever, feel superior, however plebeian their pre-existing status...'[37] This form of racial based propaganda, just like all propaganda, stemmed more from political motivations as opposed to hard facts. This is just as true for the designation of the Australian soldier as inherently athletic. For the physical superiority of the Australian soldiers observed by Bartlett and others at Gallipoli, if it existed at all, can probably be put down to its more selective criteria of volunteers, particularly of its first contingents.

[34] *Age*, 19 May, 1915, 10.
[35] Ibid., 2 December, 1916, 4.
[36] Phillips, "The Unsporting German and the Athletic Anzac," 23.
[37] Nicholas O'Shaughnessy, *Politics and Propaganda: Weapons of Mass Seduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 96.

Unfortunately, adherence to pseudoscientific theories of social Darwinism and racial classification held strong reverence at the time, a development strongly fuelled by the rampant propaganda of the period. In a letter written to the *Sydney Morning Herald* many years after the conflict, Charles Bean admitted:

> In my youth it seemed to be almost universally believed that qualities such as courage or gentleness were 'in the blood' of some peoples, and ruthlessness and savagery 'in the blood' of others. The belief had become part of our language.[38]

Bartlett's observations were therefore taken seriously, particularly the one that ascertained a direct correlation between Australia's sporting past and its impressive performance on the battlefield. Accordingly, several notable figures in Australian society could now confidently make assertions that their newly discovered soldierly competence owed itself to its sporting culture. The Anglican Reverend Canon Hughes spoke at a sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral shortly after the release of Bartlett's influential dispatch in early May, 1915, his words channelling muscular Christianity in an effort to further arouse sport and war comparisons amongst the Australian populace. Hughes spoke of the 'Creator' who had endowed them with the virtues of 'health, strength, vigour and manhood' to undertake in this noble crusade and 'make history'. He reasoned that other sportsmen should now head for the front, so 'All might have, if they dared, a glorious life or grave.'[39] The executive committee of the NSWCA too remarked in July, 'remember it could only be a race of athletes who could have stormed the Gallipoli heights successfully.'[40]

Of course, such comparisons often concealed their own emerging agendas. A vitriolic attack on professional footballers by Lawrence Adamson in April (to be discussed in later chapters) had drastically altered perceptions of sport on the home front. Optimistic expectation of sportsmen enlisting was giving way to frustration and finally vilification against those not yet in uniform, as well as those codes and leagues who refused to disband. Sportsmen had proven themselves to be great

[38] Peter Rees, *Bearing Witness: The remarkable life of Charles Bean, Australia's greatest war correspondent* (Crow's Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2015), xiv.
[39] *Argus*, 10 May, 1915, 10.
[40] *Referee*, 14 July, 1915, 13.

soldiers but many had to be reminded of where their duties now lay. Accordingly, the words by Hughes and the NSWCA were in fact appeals to athletes to enlist as a part of the nation's first recruitment campaigns, rather than an expression of pride in the contribution of Australian sport to the performance of its soldiers. Yet sports defenders also used the Bartlett report to defend their games against the barbs of patriots. The editor of the VFL record, 'Wideawake', took great pride in Bartlett's dispatch as evidence of the intimate connection between games and the competency of the Australian soldier:

> Australia has been often referred to as a land where there is too great a fondness for sport. But see what the love of and indulgence in athletics have done for the race. There was not a man amongst those who went away to war who was not an athlete in one way or another. They were all built up to fine specimens of manhood. Their sports had made them hard and fit for the grim requirements of war… Yet there is a crowd of people in Melbourne who declare day after day that there should be no football while the war is on.[41]

By outlining sport's role in the glorious deeds of ANZAC "Wideawake" was justifying the continuation of games on the home front against those who sought their eradication. The comparison between athlete and soldier now had a new purpose outside genuine belief, one that increasingly dominated its comparison and plagued it with an increasing level of vitriol and bitterness.

Despite this, Bartlett's dispatch was essential to solidifying the belief in the competency of Australian combatants which owed itself to sporting traditions and instincts, as well as the apparent superiority of the Australian soldier that in many ways still exists today. As the *Referee* commented in 1917:

> It was Ashmead-Bartlett who, having seen what the Australians accomplished in their initial rush upon the barbed-wired beaches and up the cliffs and arid hills of Gallipoli, described those citizen soldiers as a race of athletes. The term fitted, for the first contingents embraced the flower of our athletic sportsmen fresh from their mimic fights on the fields of football and

[41] *VFL Football Record*, 15 May 1915, 3, State Library of Victoria (SLV); See also *VFL Football Record*, 19 June, 1915, 3-5, SLV.

> cricket… In a climate such as ours, with a people whose blood and traditions are those of the athlete, all this was destiny.[42]

Before one becomes too critical of the media for propagating such a misconstrued concept, it would do one well to remember their own difficult position. These commentators had been brought up on the stories of war's romance and the ennobling effects of sport that their elders had told them, which they in turn were now imparting on the next generation. Newspaper columnists and other social commentators had little appreciation of the horrors of the Great War and the complete frailty of the human body and mind. Protected from the acrimonious experiences of the front through the tyranny of distance, the absence of returned soldiers on leave, the inability of returned soldiers to express the bitter truth of the front and perhaps most tellingly the restrictive nature of information flow from the front, the media were yet to adequately conceptualise the battlefield in its true form. While the increasing casualty lists of 1915 may have brought home the great cost of the war, during these early stages of the war there was little comprehension of its cost in a tangible sense.

Even if or when they had understood the true nature of the war and the illusions of their comparison, they owed their allegiance largely to the interests of their government. To keep spirits high on the home front, stories of soldierly heroism that civilians could readily identify with was one such way of maintaining morale. It was not always a job the media enjoyed. Minister of Defence Pearce recalled in his memoirs how much of the press remained 'restive' under the boot heel of censorship.[43] Nevertheless, they were obliged under severe penalty of the *War Precautions Act* to toe the government's line. As such, the reality that war in 1915 was far removed from sports and games could only be observed by those who experienced it firsthand. MCC Secretary Hugh Trumble's letter to Captain Francis Bond of the 6th Field Ambulance in late 1915 reflects the continuing romanticism and sporting terminology that framed conceptions of war, even as the body count began its terrible climb, 'we are quite confident that they will keep their wickets intact until the last ball is bowled… It is a great uphill game that is being fought but I think that bull dog tenacity and courage will ultimately

[42] *Referee*, 19 December, 1917, 1.
[43] George Foster Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet: Thirty-Seven Years of Parliament* (Melbourne: Hutchinson & Co, 1951), 119.

carry the day.'[44] If Trumble and these media outlets had seen what their soldiers, not to mention their own senior war correspondents had seen, their presumptions might not have been so enthusiastic.

The Reality of the Sport and War Connection

Unfortunately, the close relationship of sportsmen and soldiers identified by social commentators and confirmed by the brilliant performance of the ANZAC troops at Gallipoli masked an increasingly sobering truth. Newspaper editorialists, columnists and other adherents to the sport and war paradigm, shielded by distance and censored dispatches from the realities of the front, could have no true understanding of the fact that sportsmen, let alone human beings, stood helpless in the face of the relentless ferocity of modern war. Hot metal would pierce a man's soul as easily as it would tear his flesh, no matter how resolute in mind or physically endowed in body sport might have made them.

When the *Sydney Mail* urged readers to 'watch a struggle on the football field, when opposing teams clash in fierce contest, straining every nerve and fibre for victory' and then to imagine such men undertaking a 'bayonet rush', they seriously miscalculated the mutilating effect machine gun or artillery fire could have on a young man's body and psyche.[45] About the same time *Maitland Daily Mercury* proclaimed British military proficiency owed itself to strenuous athletic exercises, which had subsequently 'toughened the muscles and developed the bodily powers', half a world away French stretcher bearer Raymond Clement wrote in horror at the sight of a young Lieutenant with his head cracked open and the right side of his skull completely 'scalped by shrapnel… Blood and brain spread around him.'[46]

In the same year that the Adelaide *Register* spoke of the need to recruit sporting youths 'whose muscles are toughened by open-air games' making them 'fine raw material for soldiers', Patrick McGill, a London stretcher bearer on the Western Front, wrote of:

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[44] Hugh Trumble, letter to Capt. Francis Bond, 11 November, 1915, item 22, *Letter book 1913-1915*, 49, Series A1 letter books, Box 11, Melbourne Cricket Club Archives (MCC Archives).
[45] *Sydney Mail*, 27 June, 1917, 14 cited in Phillips, "Sport, war and gender images," 85-86.
[46] *Maitland Daily Mercury*, 23 December, 1914, 4; Paul Ham, *1914: The Year the World Ended* (North Sydney: Random House Australia, 2013), 492.

> Men and pieces of men… lying all over the place. A leg, an arm, then again a leg, cut off at the hip… The harrowing sight was repellent, antagonistic to my mind. The tortured things lying at my feet were symbols of insecurity, ominous reminders of dangers from which no discretion could save a man…[47]

And as for the 'race of athletes', whose reported 'mimic fights on the fields of football and cricket' had all but prepared them for their ultimate test in Europe, as though it were somehow manifest destiny, ANZAC veteran Walter Downing had this to say about his supposedly superior comrades and the horror of war:

> The finest soldiers… were slaughtered in thousands; riddled by bullets, rent, mangled, twisted and tortured by shells; suffered thirst, hunger, the heat of surviving in battle at noon, the horror of dreadful nights, the frigid misery and the weariness of soul at daybreak; the torments of hell under fire; wounds; the loss of brothers and comrades; the frightful sounds and sights of death and agony; the nausea, the unutterable suffering of mind and soul and body that comes from the frequent tension of waiting to attack, and from nervous strain, long and unrelieved; the noise, the wailing, the silences – till life was hell.[48]

The hollow reality of the comparison is typified in the fates of some of Australia's greatest sporting champions. Test cricketer Tibby Cotter's desire to take part in the cavalry charge on Beersheba, even though he had been assigned as a stretcher bearer that day, cost him his life. Olympic freestyle gold medallist Cecil Healy, who in 1913 had strongly advocated the need of Britain to monitor the German aggression, was also killed in France just a few months before the war ended. The glorious praise of his sacrifice by a fellow officer is undermined by the details that Healy was shot in the neck then riddled with bullets to the chest as he lay dying on the ground.[49]

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[47] *Register* (Adelaide), 10 August, 1915, 4; Daniel Toadman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), 15.
[48] Walter Downing, *To the Last Ridge: The First World War Memoirs of W.H. Downing* (Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove, 1998), 64-65.
[49] *Crookwell Gazette*, 8 March, 1933, 4; *Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 7 December, 1918, 8.

The deaths of several Australian rules football too exposed the brutal reality of combat for the modern athlete. Corporal Arthur Pearce had been a star player for the Melbourne Football Club. Playing for a team strongly immersed within the idealism of amateurism, Pearce himself played for no financial compensation, refusing to accept even out of pocket expenses. Clearly middle-class sporting ideologies had made an impact on him, for when the call to arms came Pearce enlisted, believing himself to be an ideal candidate for the front, 'I am young, strong, and athletic, and I think I ought to go. If I don't come back, well – I have done my duty.' The Melbourne press seems to have agreed, 'To those familiar with his great dashes from full back on the football field, it is easy to picture Corporal A. M. Pearce in a gallant charge after the enemy on the heights of Gallipoli.'[50] Pearce would never be able to showcase his athleticism, for he was fatally shot in his boat whilst approaching the Gallipoli shore.[51]

Carlton Football Club star George Challis provides a similar example of the media's unrealistic expectations of the sportsman's ability to impact the tide of modern battle. Challis had been rejected from the AIF in 1914 because of a toe defect, much to the bemusement of the *Punch*, 'What irony! What a reply to the croaker who deplores (the) brutal roughness of football that a footballer such as Challis is not considered fit to stand a campaign of war!'[52] Challis would eventually be accepted to the armed forces where his abilities from the sporting field could be used to full effect on the battlefront. The *Football Record* said before his departure that 'a regiment of Challises would be a great asset for the Australian Army.'[53]

In an altogether horrific indictment on the belief that athletes where better prepared to confront the trials of battle than their fellow man, a comrade reportedly witnessed 'Cheerful Challis' being 'blown to bits' by an incoming artillery shell during his first action at Fromelle, 1916.[54] Reports of his death two years later during the 1917 recruitment campaign, however, stated that Challis 'went under

[50] *Sport* (Melbourne), 18 June, 1915, 3.
[51] Jim Main and Allen David, *Fallen - The Ultimate Heroes: Footballers who never returned from war* (Melbourne: Crown Content, 2002), 145.
[52] *Punch*, 22 April, 1915, 42.
[53] *VFL Football Record*, 7 August, 1915, 19, SLV.
[54] Dale Blair, "War and Peace, 1915-1924," 127.

fighting hard… How can men die better?'[55] In fact, the athletic physiques that sport had helped to develop could even work directly against the survival of men on the frontline, rather than for it. Leslie Lee, a former VFL footballer incapacitated by wounds whilst in no-man's land, was reportedly unable to be assisted because his solid physique had been too much for the stretcher bearers to carry, a fact that ultimately led to his demise.[56]

As for the remarks of Australian Minister of Defence who designated the British race as a 'race of sportsmen' that believed in 'playing the game', referring to the supposed nobleness of the Australian and British soldiers' as opposed to the dishonourable conduct of the German armed forces, historian Peter Stanley's research has revealed a far more brutal reality. Though resistance to callous and barbarous behaviour was common among the AIF, there also existed numerous 'casual admissions' in soldiers letters of the committal of war crimes and a common belief in the killing of Germans, in cold blood or otherwise, as being of 'no crime in the AIF.'[57]

Australian soldiers would even refer to such acts within a sporting framework, taking a perverse pleasure in what they interpret as the game of war. One stated, 'there is no sport equal to it – chasing, shooting and bayoneting turks.' He was another Australian who refused to take prisoners. Though such expressions partially substantiate the idea of soldiers viewing war as the ultimate sporting contest, others were disturbed by this sadistic enjoyment of combat. The diary of John McKenzie, a stretcher bearer somewhat removed from the dehumanising effects of killing, was disturbed by such actions and combat generally. He wrote in late October of both the 'old lie' of war's grandeur as well as its unsportsmanlike nature, 'When one sees a few of the sights which are to be seen out here one queries the old saying the "glories of war". To me this is a game of pathos.'[58]

Indeed, the deteriorating concept of warfare as glorious, akin to some kind of amusing game, was understood by the soldiers themselves and can be observed in their writings whilst on the frontline.

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[55] *Herald*, 24 May, 1917, 2.
[56] Richardson, *The Game of their Lives*, 218.
[57] Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force* (Millers Point: Murdoch Books Limited, 2010), 133.
[58] *Western Mail* (Perth) 11 June, 1915, 8; John McKenzie diary, 3 July – 21 January, 1916, 41 cited in Blackburn, *Sport, War and the Anzac Tradition*, 26.

The research of Bill Gammage indicates that it was common for Australian soldiers to write of their experiences using a sporting language and euphemisms. This was particularly prevalent before the men entered the fray.[59] The diary of Private Thomas Richards, the former national Rugby Union representative, gives a fascinating insight into the brutal realisation of war's detachment from the leisurely playing fields of home. Though not a Public school boy, Richards had embraced Union for its association with amateur values, rejecting professional sport for 'not having the same honour or enthusiastic achievement' as the former.[60] As he sailed to the great conflict in October, 1914 Richards' observations reflect the amateur belief in the innate sporting appearance and temperament of the Australian soldier:

> It is surprising the number of sports followers there are on board and the present cricket season and the coming football season must suffer in consequence. When one looks over the troops as they stand around their height and physique are admirable, their age is thoroughly mature and their faces, though hard and weather-beaten, are very determined and strong looking.[61]

Some sportsmen quickly began to realise that the transition from athlete to soldier was not necessarily going to be an easy one, despite the assuredness of the local press. VFL player Carl Willis wrote whilst in training, 'It is a remarkable fact that men who are champions at one form of sport cannot imagine how they are not champions at shooting at practically their first attempt, and get quite annoyed when the target is not hit.'[62] This realisation, however, was lost on the likes of Richards as they approached the front. Though in deep thought in the days before the Gallipoli invasion he held little conception of the devastating impact the war would have on himself and his comrades, expressed in his diary entry on the 24th of April, 'I don't feel the coming danger any more than I have felt anxious the night before an international football match.'[63]

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[59] Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 90.
[60] Diary of Thomas Richards, 21st February, 1915, 2DRL/0786, AWM.
[61] Ibid, 20 October 1914, 2DRL/0786, AWM.
[62] *Winner*, 26 April, 1916, 4.
[63] Diary of Thomas Richards, 24 April, 1915, 2DRL/0786, AWM.

During the initial weeks and months of fighting many soldiers even held to the view that combat provided an adventurous and exhilarating experience wherein the individual could make a difference, thus reminding them of their sporting contests in civilian life. This was particularly prevalent at Gallipoli, where the horror of massive artillery barrages was rare. On the 19th of May, during his first day of combat on the peninsula, Lieutenant Hale wrote 'I think it is wonderful how our boys love fighting. It is just the same as sport. Australia can hold its own against the world… in sport, and… in fighting.'[64] To Hale war was just another place for Australians to compete against the world. Not only this: some soldiers observed the importance of sport in preparing its competitors. North Sydney and Manly rugby union player Herbert Mitchell sent a well-publicised letter home to his rugby teammates praising the qualities that rugby fostered and their compatibility for battle, 'I met a number of fellows who played the old game, and all acquitted themselves well, which goes to show there is nothing like rugby to turn out the rugged and determined fellow.'[65] Archibald Mychael of the Light Horse too wrote to his sister from the peninsula that, 'one doesn't feel afraid; you dash in just the same as on a football field…'[66]

The language of sport continued to frame aspects of their day-to-day lives on the frontline throughout the war. There were 'sides'; men had an 'innings' between leave and wounds. Even those defeated or dead 'took the count.'[67] Richards himself would continually refer to rugby terminology to describe a particularly savage encounter during the battle of Bullecourt in May, 1917.[68] Even the commander of the AIF and former Scotch student John Monash was a full convert to the belief in the last year of the war, claiming that his soldiers were 'by nature and instinct sportsmen'.[69]

Ultimately, however, soldiers would view the war and sport comparison with increasing scepticism, particularly under the strain of a life on the Western Front. There existed here more than anywhere

[64] He would be killed on the battlefield two years later, Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 90.
[65] *Referee*, 29 September, 1915, 13.
[66] He was killed in action three days later. Archibald John Mychael, letter to Mary, 19 August 1915, 3DRL/6051, AWM cited in Blackburn, *Sport, War and the Anzac Tradition*, 25.
[67] Gammage, *The Broken Years*, p. 218.
[68] Diary of Thomas Richards, 7 May 1917, 2DRL/0786, AWM.
[69] C.E.W. Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918: Volume VI: The Australian Imperial force in France: may – the Armistice* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1942), 200.

little chance of exhibiting individual prowess or ascertaining romantic notions of glory. Though the use of sporting terms to describe combat continued through this campaign, they became bereft of their former implications, possessing only a procedural similarity.[70] While the familiar language of sport was used to describe the unfathomable experiences at the front there could be no doubt that war presented to them a reality far removed from the joys and glory of youthful contests, not to mention a disintegration one's athletic pedigree as having any real importance amidst the carnage of combat.

This eroding connection was already underway as the Gallipoli campaign ground to a deadly stalemate. Soldier N. H. McNeil explained his realisation of the hollowness of the formerly adhered to assertion of war's glory and gaiety:

> I supposed I could dispense with the information that war is inglorious. Some people have called it glorious, but that is a conception manufactured in a summer-house in the country, where everything in the garden is lovely… no one here is enthusiastic over a war like this.[71]

After a month at Gallipoli Richards too began to reject the now antiquated notions of war, with its idealisation of chivalry, patriotism, moral fibre and physical prowess, which had been interpreted through a sporting framework:

> It seems to me that war as we read about and glory in, such as honest open hand-to-hand or man-to-man conflicts where the bravest man gets the upper hand, where the strongest arm and the noble heart wins the honour and gratification of the country, is old fashioned and out of date, like the flint-lock rifles and the broad sword.[72]

Of course, sport as a training mechanism had some practical uses on the battlefield, though not in the romantic manner amateur enthusiasts had envisioned. Victorian cricketer Frank Lugton found his cricketing skills more than useful at Gallipoli, especially when throwing grenades. However, he derived no pleasure from the ultimate test of his sporting arm, 'this game. It is different to cricket, and

[70] Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 218.
[71] *Scotch Collegian*, December, 1915, 240.
[72] Diary of Thomas Richards, 11 June 1915, 2DRL/0786, AWM.

one often wishes the other side would bowl a few more wides and no balls…[73] Lugton was yet another Australian soldier who employed sporting terminology as a descriptive tool for life on the frontline, yet there is no mistaking his distaste of combat which emerged as far removed from the one described by amateurs' advocates and newspaper columnists. Sport had its uses, but its training provided no shield against bullets and artillery and the harrowing impact on the spirit of the soldier.

For Public school boys years of indoctrination under athleticism was not always forgotten so easily. In a letter from an officer during the battle of the Somme a former Geelong Grammar boy proclaimed elite education as the principal factor in the moulding of a chivalrous officer corps, even amidst the mud and blood of France:

> His association and education have trained him for it and he falls into his place as naturally on the battlefield as he does on the football ground. He has learned which is the right thing not necessarily from his religious knowledge but from seeing and doing in sports…[74]

Lieutenant George Wood, in a letter to his beloved Scotch College dated 8th of April, 1917 also revered the sportsmen of his youth whom he now fought side by side with in France:

> It is with feelings of real pride that I walk up and salute my seniors, men who played in my underage teams in days gone by. At games I could only look on at their contests, but in this greatest of all games it is fine to have a place in the team, and to get placed with so many of those who showed themselves champions in the school.[75]

Such descriptions, however, speak nothing of combat as some glorious sporting adventure where athletes revelled. Indeed, arrival in France in early 1916, where the static and miserable nature of trench warfare ruled supreme, forever shattered the connection altogether. Signaller Geoffrey Rose of

[73] Lugton's apprehensions were realised soon after, as he was killed at Pozieres the following year. Alf Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game: The Melbourne Cricket Club and its Ground during World War One* (Brighton: MP Publications, 1998), 296-297.
[74] *Corian*, August, 1916, 52.
[75] *Scotch Collegian* May, 1917, 187.

the 30th Battalion wrote that living alongside maggots and rats in his trench as, 'the side of war that isn't sport nor fun.'[76]

Richards would make similar comments to Rose from his European trench in April, whilst watching the dogfights above, 'These airmen get all the sport there is in war nowadays.'[77] But it was his experiences through the trial of battle on the Western Front and out the other side that best exemplifies the soldier's appreciation of the difference between playing field and battlefield. Watching units of the 2nd Division return from Pozieres to the cost of 8,100 casualties, Richards stood aghast at the transformation of the once physically glorious comrades. The sight of champion diver Sid Riddington after just ten days on the line made a significant impact on the former Rugby star, 'there was something in the haggard glassy stare and that slow, halting voice that was sufficient explanation as to the despair of that fine young athletic physical bearing.'[78]

Traces of amateur philosophies lingered amidst the safety of the life behind the frontline. At a cricket match in September, Richards admired the temperament of his fellow sports lovers, who he still believed to be the 'pick of the unit'. Yet his forthcoming return to the front in October sobered Richard's outlook once again. Observing a football match his thoughts drifted between the joy of games and the horror of combat. The language used to describe the match suggests nostalgic thoughts of peaceful playing fields of home, no doubt deepened by the 'hilarity and hearty vents of enthusiasm' to be found there. Richards spent some time writing of the game, with 'grass delightful in its softness and colour', and the match disturbed only by the calls of 'cows browsing in the field', urging on the valiant athletes to fight relentlessly for the honour and prestige of their units.

The dreaded reminder of 'the greatest hell ever' was of course never far from his thoughts, but Richards, undoubtedly speaking for the rest of the young men trapped in this state of purgatory, was determined to enjoy one of the last vestiges of happiness that remained to them:

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[76] Geoffrey Rose memoir based on war diaries and letters cited in Backburn, *Sport, War and the Anzac Tradition*, 41.
[77] Diary of Thomas Richards, 23 April 1916, 2DRL/0786, AWM.
[78] C.E.W. Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume III – The Australian Imperial Force in France: 1916* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1929), 862; Diary of Thomas Richards 7 August, 1916, 2DRL/0786, AWM.

> what care they for the morrow, let's find out who are the best footballers while there is still time in hand… No international match was more keenly fought out, and as the defeated side came off the field their friends went over and sympathised in the manner of true sportsmen and noble soldiers. They had played a good game.

It was here, while celebrating the gloriousness of sport, that the ever-present reminder of 'the greatest hell' occupied Richards's consciousness yet again. His tranquil vision of the game that day was contrasted against the terror and uncertainty of warfare which they were all at the mercy of, 'At the bloody Somme any day now both conqueror and vanquished will fight a different fight where rules do not govern the struggle and God alone is the referee.'[79]

Charles Bean and 'King Sport'

The confronting realisation of soldiers regarding the hollowness of the sport and war comparison is also exemplified by one Australian who never partook in the action, but who stood by those in the trenches for the entire war, Charles Bean. After being appointed Australia's official war correspondent Bean travelled with the men from initial training in Cairo, through Gallipoli and to the Western front until war's end in 1918. His observations of the experiences of the First World War provide yet another fascinating insight into the altering perception of combat and the limitations of human beings amidst the carnage of modern war. It appears that several of the notable correspondents who covered the Gallipoli campaign referred in some way or other to the Australian soldier as 'athletic' in nature. Ashmead-Bartlett has already been discussed. Another is Phillip Schuler, a less famous but keen observer of the events at Gallipoli. Educated at Melbourne Grammar where he displayed a considerable interest in sport, Schuler's 1916 publication *Australia at Arms* considered the first contingent on route to Cairo as 'a force of young athletes' who possessed an innate Australian 'sporting instinct'.[80]

[79] Diary of Thomas Richards, 10 September, 19 October, 1916, 2DRL/0786, AWM.
[80] Mark Baker, *Phillip Schuler: the Remarkable Life of one of Australia's Greatest War Correspondents* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2016), 25-28; Phillip Schuler, *Australia in Arms: A Narrative of the Australian Imperial Force and Their Achievement at ANZAC* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1916), 37, 162.

It was Bean though who incorporated the sport and war paradigm with a consistency unmatched by any other correspondent during the war. The son of none other than Edwin Bean, a prominent figure in Australian Public school history and one of the strongest advocates of athleticism in his time, amateurism remained a cornerstone of the family's world view. The words of *Vitai Lampada*, which had been inspired by his time at Clifton College, were also 'hammered' into Bean during his time there.[81] In the words of Geoffrey Serle, Bean became 'a romantic public-school man, brought up on the adventure literature of British imperialism, whose ideal Australian soldier was of pastoral background, a horseman and sportsman…'[82]

Such a description of Bean's disposition can be readily observed within his correspondence during the war. His usage of the Public school games ethic to evaluate the war and the performance of the Australian soldier began before his countrymen even saw action. After Bean's criticisms of the rowdy behaviour of Australian soldiers in Cairo were poorly received amongst the soldiers, he set about undoing the damage. Bean sent an article to the morning papers praising the progress of the AIF troops through the prism of Newbolt, summarised in his belief that the troops were now 'playing the game.'[83]

When the men finally entered the fray at Gallipoli, Bean's sport-like understanding of events endured amidst the chaos of war. Combat itself was viewed through this sporting lens, despite the unparalleled tension that saw no equal in games. His description of Major Bill Swannell's death during the first day of fighting is shrouded in the glorious imagery of the sportsman turned soldier, 'he realised he would play this game as he had played Rugby football – with his whole heart.' Bean even saw the athletic alter-egos of soldiers shining through as they gloriously fought and died on the Peninsula. Witnessing the slaughter of the 10th Light Horse during the August offensive at the Nek, Bean wrote, 'The best loved leaders in sport… then rushed straight to their death. Wilfred (Harper)... was last seen running

[81] Ross Coulthart, *Charles Bean* (Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014), 16.
[82] Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash: A Biography* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1982), 393.
[83] Rees, *Bearing Witness*, 106.

forward like a schoolboy in a foot-race.'[84] Though appearing in his *Official History* of the war published years thereafter, such descriptions are based on the recollections within his own diary and notes collected during the campaign and remain largely untainted by post-war nostalgia.

This sporting interpretation of battle also existed within his dispatches home to be printed in the local press. One dispatch featuring in the *Advertiser* in August, 1915 spoke of the whips and cracks of sniper shots and far off artillery explosions reminding him of his youthful days on tranquil cricket fields:

> One could not get it out of one's head that it was a holiday afternoon at home, and that the occasional smack that rang out of the hills above our heads was the good, healthy sound of a cricket bat with plenty of wood behind it, and that some local club must have been having its evening net practise.[85]

Such descriptiveness evokes the idea of the Gallipoli campaign as some kind of vacation for soldiers, occasionally disrupted by the somewhat harmless intermissions of sporadic shellfire. This could be understood as an attempt by Bean to misrepresent the front as to encourage the surge of recruitments, thereby adding to the sense of romanticism warfare obtained in early pro-war propaganda. He himself admitted that maintaining morale at home was a part of his job as official war correspondent, 'the bright side has to be written up in one's letters [dispatches], and that leaves a great deal more than due proportion of criticism for the diary.'[86] In actuality, such writing is more reflective of Gammage's usage of sporting terminology as a means to explain experiences often beyond the public's or Bean's own comprehension. Bean's sporting imagery, whilst in many ways adding to the delusion of warfare as some kind of glorious adventure and even a game, was written with undeniable sincerity and under the influence of an education steeped in Public school rhetoric on sports relationship with life and war. It appears that the Gallipoli experience had not done much to alter this perception. While the

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[84] C.E.W. Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume I, The Story of ANZAC from the outbreak of the war to the end of the first phase of the Gallipoli campaign, May 4, 1915*, 297; *Volume II, The Story of ANZAC from 4 May, 1915 to the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1924), 618.
[85] *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 21 July, 1915, 11.
[86] Rees, *Bearing Witness*, 163.

campaign had in no way been an enjoyable experience for Bean, upon his evacuation he referred to tolerating the campaign as 'one does with toothache.'[87]

This mindset was quick to change after the Australian military contingent arrived on the Western Front in 1916. Bean's arrival in France may have well been to a different world, not one of sand and shore akin to a holiday afternoon at home. Instead, the endless miles of trenches rolling through the French and Belgian countryside offered only mud, rain and the relentless bombardment of artillery and blinding agony of gas attacks. As biographer Peter Rees notes, 'The differences between Gallipoli and the Western Front struck Bean immediately… This would be a very different front…'[88]

Bean's usage of sporting imagery on the front lingered for a short time in spite of his initial observations of the morose state of affairs, referencing war on arrival in France as 'King Sport.'[89] Even after the disastrous first day of the Somme, in which the British army suffered nigh on 60,000 casualties, Bean continued to utilise sporting metaphors to describe the events before him, 'One's heart was lightened as it is when one arrives at a cricket match and finds that your own team has got a real good start on the other side – 180 on the board and only one wicket down. Clearly we had taken Fricourt.'[90] However, constant exposure to the horror and bleakness of the Somme would take its toll. Bean's use of sporting metaphors and presumptions about the capabilities of the once mighty ANZAC soldier would alter drastically after the most devastating action in Australian military history.

After Australian troops went into action at Fromelles on the 19th of July, suffering an astonishing 5,533 casualties in a single day that equated to one fifth of the entire losses suffered during the eight month campaign at Gallipoli, Bean heard an Australian remark that the 'shellfire at Gallipoli was child's-play to this.'[91] As the severe slaughter of Australian and British troops was compounded by the appalling conditions suffered by the living, the lessons of Beans youth were fundamentally shaken. He quickly learned that in France war was not a game and his sporting imagery gave utilised

[87] Diary of C.E.W. Bean, 18 December, 1915, 38 3DRL 606 – Diaries, Notebooks and Folders, AWM.
[88] Rees, *Bearing Witness*, 204.
[89] John Mulford, *Guardians of the Game: The History of the New South Wales Rugby Union 1874-2005* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2005), 59.
[90] Rees, *Bearing Witness*, 224.
[91] Diary of C.E.W. Bean, 20 July, 1916, 38 3DRL 606 – Diaries, Notebooks and Folders, AWM.

to good effect at Gallipoli gave way to a more brutal language, almost purpose built for war, which tried to make sense of the mind-numbing statistics.[92]

The particularly harrowing battle around Pozieres in which the Australian armed forces incurred a further 23,000 casualties in seven weeks, and suffered under some of the most ferocious artillery bombardment of the war, forever shattered Bean's comprehension of the glory of battle, the infallibility of the ANZAC soldier and the relationship between sportsmen and soldier:

> The men are simply turned in there as into some ghastly giant mincing machine… I will rend your flesh and pulp an arm or a leg – fling you, half a gaping quivering man like these that you see smashed around you, one by one, to lie there rotting and blackening like all the things you saw by the awful roadside... Ten or twenty times a minute, every man in the trench has that instant fear thrust upon his shoulders – I don't care how brave he is...[93]

Unfortunately, while this excerpt provides a morose yet accurate vision of the battle which transformed Bean's inner dialect, such passages would never make up the dispatches sent home to the Australian public during the war. Of the artillery bombardment that the Australian 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions suffered through at Pozieres, Bean wrote in contradiction of all his newfound awareness and probably his inner judgement too, 'What is a barrage against such troops! They went through it as you would go through a summer shower – too proud to bend their heads…'[94] Bean now appeared to be recording two versions of the war. His dispatches remained positive, telling of heroic acts, victories and advances while his personal diary became more melancholy, giving vent to his own doubts.[95]

In fairness, Bean held within him a strong allegiance to fact over fantasy. The painstaking research and historical accuracy of the *Official History* lays testament to this. But while he had made a declaration in 1915 to avoid the 'nonsense' spewed by other correspondents,[96] his representations of events during the war itself were often clouded by the more immediate demands of a nation

[92] Vamplew, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, 450-451.
[93] Diary of C.E.W. Bean, 4 August, 1916, 38 3DRL 606 – Diaries, Notebooks and Folders, AWM.
[94] *Western Australian*, 19 September, 1916, 8.
[95] Scott Bennett, *Pozieres: The ANZAC story* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2011), 151.
[96] Ibid., 89.

perceivably engaged in a struggle of life or death. His wish to portray events truthfully was impinged by a desire to protect the families of soldiers from the distressing scenes he observed first-hand. Compounding this manipulation of events was Bean's role as official Australian war correspondent, which held him accountable first and foremost to the Australian military and government. He was, as historian Scott Bennett explains, 'part of the army machinery'[97] and thus his hands, and the hands of his felloe correspondents, were strictly tied.

The reality of life at Pozieres and later battles on the Western Front was therefore lost to the minds of Australians, or, better yet, distorted. Small raids became war winning manoeuvres, while ridiculous stereotypes of Herculean Australians were thrust upon the entire AIF. These exaggerations and fabrications created by correspondents appear to have irked many, with one soldier commenting in 1916, 'a petty raid on the Boche trenches, padded up with such rot as "These giant athletes leaping the trenches" makes one sick.'[98] This disgust for fabrication shadowed a sense of guilt for a reputation built upon a fantasy, for which sport played its own irritating part. This guilt appears to have been shared by Bean, who played a central part in creating the legend of Anzac itself. In many ways he would come to regret the manner in which he and fellow correspondents constructed both the war and the ANZAC soldier to an eager public. Writing in his diary in September, 1916, Bean attested to this, 'The truth is, soldiers aren't the fictions which correspondents have made them…'[99]

It was not that he had lost his admiration for his countrymen, quite the opposite, he now obtained a healthier appreciation for ordinary men who displayed the extraordinary, and empathy for those who could not, far removed from the fanciful ideas of early war proclamations of the sporting induced infallibility of the Australian soldiery. After one soldier told Bean, 'For God's sake, don't make us

[97] Ibid., 205.
[98] *Morning Post*, 8 July, 1916.
[99] Diary of C.E.W. Bean, 20 September, 1916, 38 3DRL 606 – Diaries, Notebooks and Folders, AWM; Ashmead-Bartlett would also become decidedly uncomfortable with his exaggerations, admitting in 1927 about it being 'heart-rending work having to write what I knew to be untrue.' Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 78.

heroes. We can stand anything but that', Bean wrote, 'They are no heroes. They are just ordinary Australians doing their particular work as their country would wish them to do it.'[100]

Despite this sobering realisation of a man's fragility against the tide of modern war, the reality of wartime censorship which distorted the happenings of the battlefront and need to maintain morale at home meant that Bean could not adequately portray in 1916 the horror of the Western Front. While the soldier's themselves quickly became aware of Sassoon's 'old lie', the public's understanding of the front for the time being remained warped thanks to censorship wherein the general populace accessed only a virtual understanding of the war far removed from its graphic reality.[101] Accordingly, only a civilian could seriously have suggested that 'the feints and swerves of the football field' would help a soldier 'weapon less in no man's land'.[102]

Sport was viewed as integral in the lives of soldiers for sure, but not in the capacity that it somehow endowed them with special qualities or protected them from shell fire. Endless casualty lists and the return of disfigured and disturbed serviceman would eventually bring this reality home for the public. But comparisons of the playing field and battlefield within newspapers, recruitment efforts and wider propaganda remained without being entirely laughed off with disdain. For the time being, sport's amiable relationship with the war would continue on the Australian home front, assisting its understanding of both the war and its emergent sense of national identity.

Conclusion

Led initially by numerous newspaper editorials and early war-rousing speeches, it was a general belief that Australia's sporting youth would lead the Empire to victory in the battles in the old world. Bartlett's article and select writings of Charles Bean and other correspondents summarily acted as confirmation of the superiority of the Australian soldier owing to their sporting heritage. The importance of sport in the life of the nation had received affirmation in the most glorious manner.

[100] Rees, *Bearing Witness*, 248-249.
[101] Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War*, 1-11.
[102] Riedi & Mason, ""Leather" and the Fighting Spirit," 497.

Meanwhile, the blanket of censorship which protected the public from understanding the inhumanity of life at the front would harbour further comparisons between sportsmen and soldiers. By mid-1915 the acknowledged glorious sacrifice of athletes on the Gallipoli peninsula reinforced to the patriotic and war minded middle-class of need to send more of these formidable soldiers.

Yet as the war dragged on with no notable sign of concluding, many would become resentful of the sight of apparently eligible young men cavorting on sporting fields at home. These men, who for decades were believed to be made of the material from which Herculean soldiers could be grafted, were suddenly deemed to be thumbing their noses at their sacred Imperial duty. From mid-1915 onward, comparisons between the sportsmen and the soldier were done not with innocent misconception, but rather to entice them into enlisting and condemn those who refused. As Booth and Tatz maintain, 'pro-war groups never failed to draw parallels between the sports field and the battlefield.'[103]

[103] Booth and Tatz, *One-eyed,* 94-95.

CHAPTER 4

Would they play the Game? Sport and Recruitment, 1915

Throughout the First World War the Australian government launched several recruitment campaigns in order to help fill it's ranks. Sport, and the targeting of sportsmen and their spectators, emerged as a key component within these efforts. Attempts to incite and shame athletes into the khaki would come from a variety of voices throughout the war and not just from the government. Patriotic social commentators and sporting organisations regularly remarked on the Australian sportsman's suitability for combat and therefore his obligation to enlist. Such calls were a core component within the debate surrounding sport's appropriateness during the war and will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

This chapter, however, focuses on sport's involvement within the official government recruitment campaign. Proposed by individuals who traced their own origins back to the middle-class community, they drew on traditional notions of Public school athleticism and amateurism, but also emerging concepts of nationalism and masculinity, in order to arouse the 'sporting instinct' of the eligible Australian male. Sport's influence was recognised as so powerful to the common Australian that officials even attempted to organise collectivised military units compromising men with athletic backgrounds. Though appearing as desperate and at times gimmicky efforts, sports prominence within the national recruiting campaigns cannot be understated.

Yet government attempts to utilise sport as a recruitment tool would have its own drawbacks. With the volunteer system breaking down and the population bitterly divided along class and sectarian lines, attempts to encourage sportsmen and spectators into the khaki led to confrontation between the government and sporting community, sometimes of a violent nature. This chapter will focus on the attempted recruitment of sportsmen and sports fans in 1915. It was within this year's various recruitment campaigns that the ideas of utilising sport as a recruitment tool first emerged, as well as providing traces of the turmoil that would plague the 1917 campaign two years later. In doing so, the

supposedly powerful influence of sport in the lives of Australians challenged what amateurism had argued for years, provoking a serious re-thinking of sport's place within Australian society.

Recruitment, 1914

The connection between sport and war was utilised for propaganda purposes almost immediately after hostilities began, helping Australians to take an early confidence in their martial competency owing to their sporting heritage and instinct. For this reason the press called upon sportsmen around the country to enlist at once. The Australian government, however, was far less concerned with the athletic qualifications of its first allotment of 20,000 troops promised to Britain, or with any of the subsequent contingents raised that year.[1] This is not to say it would send just anyone. When enlistment depots opened on the 10th of August prospective enlistees were required to pass some of the strictest physical requirements of any nation in the world. To be accepted a soldier in the AIF an applicant had to be an extraordinary 5 feet 6 inches in height, have a 34 inch chest and be of an age between 18 and 35.[2]

Such strict criteria failed to dampen the eagerness of citizens keen to aid the Empire, join in on the adventure, prove their manhood or simply gain employment. When the doors opened recruiters were met with an embarrassment of riches. Over 6,000 enlistees stepped forward in Victoria during the month of August, some 3,600 on the 11th alone, and by the end of the year over 52,000 had joined the AIF nationally. Finding themselves flush with manpower, authorities could comfortably sort the quality from the quantity, turning away almost 30% of applicants during August, including many noted sportsmen, sometimes on the most trivial of physical deficiencies. During these first months there was no need for the officials to do anything but watch the flood of volunteers roll in.[3] Recruitment campaigns, including a special appeal to sport and sportsmen, was not yet required, as the flower of the nation's youth could be carefully selected anyway.

[1] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 203.
[2] Robson, *The First A.I.F,* 23.
[3] Ibid., 29; Scott, *Australia During the War*, 210-212, 871.

By 1915 events abroad prompted a change in attitude. The bloody stalemate on the Western Front was now locked into place as press reports of colossal battles were made all the more terrifying by the monumental casualty lists. The realisation in Europe that no quick victory would be won was beginning to dawn on the Australian government and its people. The departure of the AIF in November and falling enlistment numbers since the highs of August only reinforced the mounting gravity of the situation.[4] Though committing more than its fair share in resources and manpower, concerns as to the appropriateness of Australia's business-as-usual attitude began to mount; something identifiable in the almost untouched continuation of Australian sport across that summer (see Chapter 6).

Sports administrators in Victoria appear to have been troubled by the perceptions of their own indifference, particularly against the patriotism shown by the British sporting community. Sensing the public's shifting attitude to the war and fearing a potential backlash, Victoria's sports administrators moved quickly to prove their patriotism and protect themselves from any imminent criticisms. Such fears were more real than imagined. Fischer assured the sporting community in early March that it would be a mistake to restrict 'healthy, legitimate sport'.[5] Nevertheless, it was out of this sense of unease that sport was first incorporated into the recruiting movement.

The Sporting Appeal Begins

The first genuine moves to integrate sport into the Australian war effort were made by the MCC, which on the 2nd of February held a Special General meeting in order to 'join in taking steps to interest their members in forwarding the defence movement in Victoria.' The delegates decided to incorporate the influence of the state's wider sporting bodies to assist in this endeavour by inviting them to a meeting at Melbourne Town Hall on the 10th. Meanwhile, club secretary, Hugh Trumble, was directed to get in touch with the Defence Department and ascertain 'which direction they would prefer our efforts being used', while also requesting the Department to send an official to talk over

[4] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 871-872.
[5] *Register* (Adelaide), 4 March, 1915, 4.

such matters with the club. Aware of the powerful influence of the state's sporting community, the Defence Department approved of the initiative almost immediately.[6]

It is unsurprising that the MCC was the first sporting body to surrender itself to the government. Not only was it one of the oldest and most prestigious sporting organisations in the country, it was also known as a bastion of amateurism in the pre-war years. MCC historian Alf Batchelder remarks:

> The club's outlook owed much to the influence of the private schools, where so many of its members had learned that games were not only a source of enjoyment but a powerful force in the development of physical and mental fitness. To their generation and social class, the positive values and qualities of sport fitted an individual for the tests which would be faced throughout life...[7]

Committed to this philosophical disposition, MCC officials recognised it now owed its allegiance to supporting the Empire in its hour of need.

The meeting at the Town Hall attracted some 100 delegates from the state's major sporting bodies, many of whom also traced their origins to the middle-classes and their prestigious Public schools. Some of the notables present were MCC President Justice Cussen and its Secretary Hugh Trumble, VCA President, former Geelong Grammar boy and Member of Parliament Donald Mackinnon and Wesley Headmaster Lawrence Adamson. But the initiative also received support from the professionally inclined VFL, alongside all the other major Victorian sporting leagues. Attending on behalf of the Defence Department was State Commandant Colonel Wallace. Despite their at times turbulent history, the state's sporting elite had gathered to reconsider their commitment to nation and Empire as a collective unit.

It was not long before this community determined on how best to apply their considerable social influence. Cussen, who chaired the meeting, informed his fellow constituents that circulars had been sent, 'to the various sporting bodies asking them to make a combined and systematic effort to

[6] Special General Meeting, 2 February, 1915, File A6012, Item 10, *Rough Minutes Books*, 103-104, Box 246, MCC Archives.
[7] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game,* 152.

encourage sportsmen to bear their share of the burden of the Empire.' What burden did he speak of? Mackinnon made it clear, 'immediate action should be taken upon the sportsmen of Victoria that it is their duty to at once respond to the Empire's call by enlisting.' Mackinnon himself had become convinced of the need to remind the nation's sportsmen of their duty. In anticipation of the meeting he had expressed to the VCA his disappointment that Australia's sportsmen had not enlisted in sufficient numbers, especially when compared to the athletes of Britain.[8]

To this point in time the movement to encourage enlistment among sportsmen had been one driven by civilian and sporting administrators with a strong predisposition toward the amateur outlook. Now, the government would make its first tentative steps toward supporting this approach. To help focus their endeavour Wallace suggested the idea of raising a company of soldiers composed purely of athletes from the state. Though he cautioned that the government would stick to Lord Kitchener's regional organisational structure of the army, Wallace decided that a Company of athletes could be collectivised to form its own special unit, much in the same mould as the Public schools Company (see Chapter 8).[9]

The creation of a military unit raised exclusively from athletes and notable sportsmen was undoubtedly inspired by similar developments in the mother country. The original Sportsmen Battalion, otherwise known as the 23rd Royal Fusiliers, was a gathering of notable British athletes who had formed during the previous September. It was essentially a middle-class undertaking raised by Mrs Cunliffe Owen, a relation of the royal family, and was designed to attract predominantly men of higher social standing.[10] This desire was achieved by charging a required subscription fee to prospective recruits in order to gain admittance, enabling affluent sportsmen to serve together in the conflict without having to 'rub shoulders with the wrong type of citizen.'[11] As such the ethos of amateurism largely influenced the battalion's conception, particularly the 'perception of something

[8] *Victorian Cricket Association Minutes*, 8 February, 1915, 38, Cricket Victoria Archives (CV Archives).
[9] *Argus*, 11 February, 1915, 6; *Age*, 9 February, 1915, 8.
[10] Michael Foley, *Hard as Nails: The Sportsmen's Battalion of World War One* (Gloucestershire: Spellmount Limited, 2007), 33.
[11] J. M. Osborne, "Sports, Soldiers, and the Great War," *British Society of Sports History Bulletin*, 11 (1991): 23.

almost light-hearted and fun' about fighting in the war.[12] The example set by the British Sportsmen Battalion helped legitimise Wallace's proposal. Impressed by this 'very fine body of troops' the *Argus* enthusiastically threw its support behind a Victorian equivalent.[13]

The desire to form such a unit became the driving resolution of the gathering. With an executive committee established, a public meeting was announced for the 24th to attract the required recruits. In the ensuing fortnight things proceeded smoothly with the formation of Australia's first sportsmen's unit being highly anticipated by the press and public alike. The executive sent out calls for sportsmen to come forward and enlist on the night and though no effort to acquire recruits based on socio-economic standing was undertaken, the campaign nevertheless adopted the ethos of amateurism to elicit a response from the state's athletes. Mackinnon made a strong public appeal in the days leading into the event, 'every sportsman who can possibly attend is earnestly urged to be present and assist in making this movement's success.' He continued, 'It is useless disguising the fact that every able-bodied man available is wanted at the front, and no better fighting material can be found in the world than the Australian athlete.'[14]

The press were also prominent in arousing strong public support. The *Weekly Times* called on men to 'Play the game!' by joining the unit, reminding sportsmen of their duty to defend their country:

> I have heard many capable athletes, whose strength and courage have stood every test, declare their willingness to "defend Australia" should the enemy come here. It is time they realised that the frontiers of Australia are, to all intents and purposes, in France and Belgium.[15]

An air of confidence arose that the formation of the unit was soon at hand. The *Leader* commented, 'the formation of a sportsmen's battalion is proceeding satisfactorily, and the influential and representative executive… is pushing the matter vigorously through its initial stages.'[16] This assurance emerged after 197 men presented themselves for medical inspection at the Victoria

[12] Foley, *Hard as Nails*, 37-40.
[13] *Argus*, 12 February, 1915, 7.
[14] Ibid., 16 February, 1915, 7.
[15] *Weekly Times*, 20 February, 1915, 20.
[16] *Leader*, 20 February, 1915, 19.

Barracks three days prior, many of whom made inquiries as to the joining the Sportsmen's Battalion.[17] The government too, while making no ironclad commitment, encouraged this swelling confidence. The Minister of Defence Pearce, a vocal critic of Australian spectator sport, stated that if large numbers of athletes enlisted together he promised they would have every chance of serving together.[18]

Attended by an estimated crowd of 2,500 onlookers, including noted dignitaries such as the Governor-General Sir Ronal Munro Ferguson and the Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sir David Hennessy, the formation of the unit appeared to be a foregone conclusion that night. To be sure the crowd was whipped into a frenzy after rousing speeches from the State Governor Sir Arthur Stanley, who used the popular comparison between athlete and soldier, as well as sport and warfare, to garner support, 'this meeting was called to invite more men to take part in what was the greatest of all sports – to go to war… if a man was willing to risk his neck in the hunting-field or race course, to risk breaking his leg on the football field, then he ought to be willing to take his chance in war (cheers).' The call-to-arms also received support from Pearce who tapped into the ethos of amateurism in a bid to remind Victorians of why they had played their games in the first place:

> Was it for the selfish motives of Sport? … Did they not think that the time might come when their Empire might call them to the sterner game, the greater and higher duty? (Applause) … It was the sportsmen's turn to go, their captain had called. Would they skulk or go to the field to play the game?

With the roaring approval of the crowd Mackinnon passed the unanimous agreement that 'this meeting urges all sportsmen who have not enlisted to respond immediately to the Empire's call.[19]

The overwhelming enthusiasm aside, the meeting turned out to be a stunning failure. Just 44 men would enlist that night, an exceedingly low number given the size and passion of those in attendance. Much of this probably has to do with estimates that as many as 75 per cent of the turnout comprised

[17] *Argus*, 17 February, 1915, 9.
[18] *Age*, 12 February, 1915.
[19] *Farmer and the Settler* 26 Feb, 1915; *Singleton Argus*, 27 February, 1915; *Argus*, 25 February, 1915, 9.

men of, 'greybeards or bald heads'.[20] Clearly the appeal to the 'sporting instinct' of eligible Victorian males had not resonated as strongly as the proponents of amateurism had expected. Though the committee stated it was satisfied with results and looked forward to a great many more in the coming days, it also conceded that it had 'expected a larger number would actually volunteer.'[21] Mackinnon and Trumble encouraged sporting associations to continue their efforts, but the committee established would not meet again, leaving the concept in a state of purgatory.[22]

The government appeared relatively unconcerned by this minor setback. Enlistment figures, while on the decline, remained an extremely healthy 10,225 for the month of January.[23] On the back of more than 50,000 recruits the previous year Wallace even claimed that there was no need for the government to appeal for recruits en masse.[24] Events, however, rapidly overtook this contentment. Public awareness of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli and the German sinking of the *Lusitania* civilian liner precipitated a flood of enlistments from around the country. With 6,250 men volunteering nationally during April, the impact of these events saw numbers climb at an astonishing rate, reaching heights never to be seen again during the war. 36,575 men in July and 25,714 in August were accepted into the armed forces.[25]

Faced with its second wave of mass enlistment in under a year, the Australian government cabled their British overlords in June inquiring whether it would accept as many men as could be recruited. It replied that every available man was required. This sudden demand for soldiers was compounded by the fact that for the first time Australia needed to reinforce the heavy losses of its own forces. It could no longer sit back and watch; it needed to actively encourage men to enlist, as many as it could. The great recruitment drives of 1915 thus began, wherein authorities decided to widen their approach towards the nation's sporting community.

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[20] *Leader*, 17 July, 1915; *Age*, 25 February, 1915.
[21] *Argus*, 25 February, 1915, 9.
[22] Notes for Chairmen RE Sporting Meetings, Victorian Sportsmen Recruiting Committee Minutes (VSRC), Returned Service League Victoria Archives (RSL Victoria Archives); For a wider discussion of the 1915 Victorian movement see Richardson, *The Game of Their Lives*, 71-75; Batchelder, *Playing the Greater G*ame, 84-89.
[23] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 871.
[24] *Argus*, 11 February, 1915, 6.
[25] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 871.

Less than a week after the British cable Victoria set up the Victorian Parliamentary Recruiting Committee consisting of three members including Donald Mackinnon. Local committees were put in place around the state and recruiting officers unleashed to carry their appeals, which they set about with a particular intensity. Bands played patriotic and martial music and fiery speeches were made. Amidst this push came the infamous 'Will they never come?' recruitment poster, the first official recruitment poster released during the war. Inspired by a similar poster released in Britain it was displayed at over 250 railway stations and on 400 hoardings throughout Melbourne, including the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). A highly provocative piece, it included a bloodied Australian soldier standing over his dead comrade against the backdrop of a large crowd at a football match, the poster's slogan written in large letters underneath.[26]

Figure 6 Will They Never Come?[27]

[26] Jim Hannah, State Parliament Recruiting Committee (Vic), *An Appeal from the Dardanelles: Will They never come?*, 1915, ARTV07583, Poster, AWM; Robson, *The First AIF*, 46-51; Richardson, *The Game of Their Lives*, 89; Dale Blair, "War and Peace, 1915-1924," 121.
[27] Jim Hannah, *Will They Never Come?*

This slogan and its attempts to guilt sports fans into enlisting also featured in several recruitment films released that year. *Will they Never Come?* and *Hero of the Dardanelles*, both directed by Alfred Rolfe and produced with co-operation of the Department of Defence, relayed to audiences the precedence the war now played over their games. *Will They Never Come?* told the story of two brothers, one of whom enlists while the other cavorts at the racetrack. The latter is soon overcome with feelings of guilt as his countrymen are left undermanned on the battlefield. Its sequel, *The Hero of the Dardanelles*, adopted a similar technique, displaying the image of a young man playing with his cricket bat before seeing the *Will They Never Come?* poster out his window, prompting him to grab his rifle and head off to training camp.[28]

The *Will They Never Come?* appeal indicates the point at which the Victorian officials began to actively target the wider sporting community and not just its athletes. The commencement of the popular winter sports fixtures brought about the sight of an untapped reserve of manpower desperately needed. It was hoped that these posters and films would arouse the sporting community into the realisation that they were needed on the front over the trivialities of games. But these tactics also reveal the changing attitude of the recruiting movement in general. The whole idea of the slogan was immersed in the belief that sections of the community were making a conscious decision of sport over duty. One paper described the plot of *Will They Never Come* itself as based upon the idea of reminding audiences of the duty to one's country 'in contradistinction to the younger members devoting their leisure to sport.'[29] The *Mercury's* interpretation of the poster read far more bluntly, 'This is intended as a reproof of the "slackers" who were wasting their time with sports…'[30] The active involvement of Australian soldiers at Gallipoli had begun to harden the resolve of the government against emerging traces of war apathy. Positive encouragement was no longer deemed as the only measure. Coercion and manipulation were increasingly resorted to as the best means to stimulate enlistment.

[28] *Will They Never Come?*, directed by Alfred Rolfe, (Australia, Australasian Films, 1915), Film; *The Hero of the Dardanelles*, directed Alfred Rolfe, (Australia: Australasian Films, 1915), Film.
[29] *Northern Western Advocate and Emu Bay Times*, 21 April, 1915, 15.
[30] *Mercury*, 19 July, 1915, 4.

Despite these new tactics being adopted, the response of the sporting community continually failed to live up to expectations of recruiters, fomenting further tension and angst surrounding the presence of sport on the home front. Aware of these rumblings a Parliamentarian within the Victorian state government warned against any a 'violent dislocation[s]' of the 'common people'.[31] Nevertheless, the pressure against sport continued to mount. Though some saw the potential of sport as a recruitment tool, others increasingly viewed sport's presence as potentially detrimental to the war effort.

Impressed by the efforts in Victoria, which netted 21,698 recruits in July alone, the state of New South Wales embarked on its own recruiting drive in August.[32] Though lacking the fanfare or heights of its interstate cousin, the NSW campaign drew recruits at a far steadier rate, which it would continue to do throughout the war.[33] There was, however, one noticeable action deployed during this drive, the re-emergence of the Sportsmen Battalion concept. Campaigning by the middle-class orientated *Referee* newspaper and 'Billy' W. W. Hill, the Secretary of the New South Wales Rugby Union Association, prompted a wider push for a NSW sportsmen's unit. From this a meeting was called at Sydney's Town Hall on the 13th of August.[34]

Just like it's Victorian counterpart, the language of amateurism and its identification of the close relationship between sport and warfare were central to the NSW appeal. At the gathering speaker William Windeyer, a member of the 1891 Australian Rifle Team, spoke of sport's unique ability to prepare young men for war, 'The best preparation for war has been truly stated to be outdoor sport and strenuous exercise. But the time for practise is over. The game's afoot. Throw yourselves into it.'[35] In an audience reportedly 'packed with sportsmen', the motion to form a Sportsmen's Battalion was carried out 'unanimously amid great enthusiasm.'[36]

As a result the newly established Sportsmen's Battalion Recruiting Committee took the reins of co-ordinating the unit and establishing good relationships with the state's sporting community. Poor early

[31] *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, 26 May, 1915, 24th Parliament, Vol. 139, 29 April – 26 May, 456.
[32] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 871.
[33] Robson, *The First A.I.F.*, 51.
[34] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August, 1915.
[35] *Referee*, 18 August, 1915.
[36] *Tamworth Daily Observer*, 14 August, 1915.

organisation aside the campaign had successfully gathered some 1,100 men by September into its ranks.[37] This was achieved primarily through rallies and newspaper advertisement, but also the shrewd tactic of passing out cards for registration among sporting clubs.[38] Of course, to say that the NSW movement somehow captured the 'sporting instinct' of the state's population would be misguided, given its success came on the back of the 20,000 plus men obtained during the height of the NSW recruiting campaign.[39] Such reasoning made no matter to authorities, but it is obvious that such high recruitment numbers would have been achieved whether the Sportsmen Battalion campaign had existed or not.

Despite this relative success the NSW Sportsmen's Battalion drive would run into its own problems. Unlike the British Royal Fusiliers they so wished to emulate, the Battalion never became the fighting force it was envisioned to be. After the men had enlisted under the proviso that they would fight as a collective unit, they were quickly separated by the military authorities in mid-September to various training grounds around the state, including Liverpool and Warwick Farm. Of the 1,100 enlisted, just 200 were allocated to the campaign's allotted headquarters in Holdsworthy.[40] Their units contained little to no identification as sportsmen's units and despite inquiry by its organisers, the Battalion once split never made it to formation and active duty.

This development would seriously anger and disappoint those involved. The *Singleton Argus* reported on the discontent among those recruits who were now told they would not serve together with their fellow athletes, 'The sportsmen complain that the military authorities are not keeping their agreement… Men who are given a promise, especially sportsmen and athletes, have no fancy to be side-tracked in that fashion.'[41] Many of the recruits remained disillusioned while at camp, now finding themselves enlisted for active duty under severely false pretences and 'without a hope of

[37] Phillips, "Sport, war and gender images," 80.
[38] *Sunday Times*, 29 August, 1915.
[39] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 871.
[40] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September, 1915
[41] *Singleton Argus*, 18 September, 1915.

transferring to their mates.'[42] The final result was a contingent consisting of 320 men becoming the 7th reinforcement of the 20th Battalion.[43]

The movements throughout Victoria and New South Wales to establish fighting Battalions made entirely of local athletes and sportsmen ultimately failed in their objectives. The concept appeared as a forgone conclusion to many given the hype created in the press, not to mention Australia's strong sporting culture and passionate loyalty to the Empire. In the minds of its organizers the formation of military units based on a sporting identity made for a perfect fit. However, the indisputable failure of the Sportsmen Battalion campaign in Victoria and the failure to consolidate effective recruitment into a collective unit in NSW occurred due to a lack of military backing as much as deficient popular support.

Defence officials, while impressed with the initiative of the Victorian sporting fraternity, appeared unconvinced by the Victorian effort and accordingly provided support in the form of word rather than deed. The government was unwilling to formalise such a Company or Battalion from the outset, as it wanted to keep within the sanctioned lines of recruitment handed down by Lord Kitchener. Though it helped in promoting the campaign, its involvement reflected a wait-and-see approach. Both Wallace and Pearce, who possessed the authority to bring the idea to reality, never truly came around to the concept. For Pearce the lack of immediate response at the Town Hall meeting on the 24th of February ended his support for the Victorian contingent altogether. He told reporters the following day that, 'he could not see his way clear to form a purely sporting battalion', believing the principle to be an 'unsound' concept. Instead, he offered to keep those sportsmen who enlisted together within the same units.[44]

But even with the required numbers achieved in NSW the government baulked at the concept. Reneging on its promises it scattered the enlistees into various units as individual replacements, to the dismay of those who had invested in the campaign. The *Sydney Morning Herald* lamented 'the object

[42] *Farmer and the Settler*, 26 November, 1915.
[43] *Barrier Miner*, 19 October, 1915, cited Phillips, "Sport, war and gender images," 79.
[44] *Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 13 March, 1915; *Age*, 26 February, 1915.

of a united sportsman battalion… had not been achieved, the military authorities only meeting the organisers of the movement to the extent of allotting sportsmen's companies to various batches of reinforcements.'[45]

The 1915 sportsmen unit campaigns were therefore concepts driven by several notable amateur figures within each state's sporting community, rather than from any official government impetus or mass popular support. The government was concerned with simply gaining recruits, not sportsmen. Of course, it had no real reason to resort to such gimmicky ventures at this stage of the war anyway. As long as the men kept rolling through the enlistment depots, which they were in their tens of thousands throughout 1915, it had little incentive to abandon official British army structure. The concept of sport as an appealing impetus to enlist, most notably through the sportsmen unit campaigns, had in the minds of authorities only a partial effect on the audience that counted most, eligible men. Yet to others this appeal had yet to be fully explored. With the well of willing volunteers all but dried up by 1917, and with one of amateurism's greatest exponents moving into the most influential position in the recruiting system, the appeal to the Australian affinity with sport would once again be called upon.

Sport and Recruitment in Conflict

What we can also discern from the 1915 campaign is the provocative potential of attempting to recruit from the Australian sporting community. Cracks were already beginning to appear within social unity during 1915, as well as between the government and its people. Sport did not avoid such turmoil. By mid-1915, with the death toll rising at Gallipoli, the debate over sports legitimacy in a time of war was in full swing. With a number of amateur sports and clubs disbanding, including rugby union, athletics and tennis, the professional popular spectator games, including football, boxing, horse-racing and rugby league came under increasing pressure from the press to disband. But the sporting community would soon find themselves engaged in a conflict not only against the press, but also against their own government.

[45] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 December, 1915.

Unleashed as a part of the government's 1915 recruiting drive, agents made their way into the sporting stadiums and grounds across the nation to acquire eligible men. Though working sincerely to stimulate recruitment in the best interests of the country, historian John McQuilton interprets their emergence as a 'mixed blessing'.[46] While the press raged at players it was the utter apathy of the crowds that provoked the ire of recruiters, whom engaged with one another at close quarters. To them, the Australians love of sport was considered so influential that it was seriously believed to be dissuading thousands of onlookers from enlisting; a curious paradox given it was also supposed to aid the enticement of men into the army. To see such crowds containing scores of young men with apparently no purposeful occupation fuelled the fires of recruiters who had developed the extraordinary notion that every available man ought to enlist. It was this train of thought that had prompted the designation of the fruitful 1915 recruitment campaign as a 'failure', instead of the unmitigated success it was retrospectively. Frustrated recruiters therefore displayed an increasingly bad temper with crowds at sporting fixtures.[47]

Of course, crowds were equally guilty of contributing to the deterioration of relations, often responding to recruiters with discourtesy and at times open hostility. Though largely supportive of the war effort in 1915, many spectators simply wanted to escape rising consumer prices and the thoughts of loved ones in danger and enjoy themselves at their beloved pastime. Confronted in their sanctuary and resentful of persistent outsiders who continually criticised their games and by extension their own commitment to the war effort, sporting crowds often treated recruiters with a similar enmity.

Class allegiance often determined the response of efforts to recruit from the sporting community, owing to campaigns against sport focusing predominantly on spectator and professional fixtures. It is interesting to note the differing interpretations of the provocative 'Will They Never Come' poster. Former Melbourne Grammar student turned frontline soldier E. R. Cordner considered the poster to

[46] John McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great War: from Tarrawingee to Tangambalanga* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 45.
[47] Standard payment of footballers was about 25 shillings a match compared to the 6 shillings paid a day to Australian soldiers. Blair, "War and Peace, 1915-1924," 118-122; Michael McKernan, *the Australian People and the Great War*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1980, 98; McKernan, "Sport, war and society," 4.

be ‘a good one, and to the point. I have been reading about the Football League’s stubbornness about the programme this year… hang football![48]

Others, however, interpreted the poster as much a slight on football and the working-class community as it was an effort to encourage enlistment. The Melbourne periodical *Sport* resented what it perceived to be a clear class bias against their game, ‘Footballers and supporters have taken strong exception to this form of “class distinction,” as holding them to contempt…’[49] The importance of class in these opposing attitudes may have had something to do with the indoctrination of imperial loyalty that was so concentrated within Public school and middle-class life, expressed through the ethos of amateurism and athleticism. For Irish working-class audiences less inclined to share this fervent sense of devotion to Empire, recruiting appeals based on ideas of some ‘sporting instinct’ simply did not have the same impact.

As the animosity grew confrontation between recruiting efforts and spectators emerged with increasing regularity and escalating belligerency. A prime example of this can be observed when NSW Labour Premier William Holman took centre stage the Les Darcy vs. Eddie McGoorty title fight in late July. Holman had already made his feelings clear to the public about the playing of sport earlier that month, ‘Your comrades at Gallipoli are calling you. This is not the time for football and tennis matches.’[50] Now, seeking to encourage recruitment in a more direct manner, the Premier’s call found few sympathetic ears among a rowdy crowd of some 15,000 to 20,000 patrons. Though the audience welcomed a group of wounded Gallipoli veterans with a rapturous applause that ‘rushed up to the roof and round the dim walls’, Holman’s address prompted a most hostile response. A report of that night went as follows:

> Hooting started from the back benches (a place usually occupied by the poor). It rose to a roar, and then the dissenters started to count the Premier out… A counter demonstration soon started from those near the ringside (a place occupied for the wealthy), but it was soon

[48] *Melburnian*, December, 1915, 155.
[49] *Sport* (Melbourne), 9 July, 1915, 3.
[50] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July, 1915.

> overpowered by the column of noise from the back. A soldier with an arm bandaged stepped forward and asked the crowd for fairplay. He was cheered, but when he stopped and the Premier once more made an effort to speak the demonstration started again.[51]

Holman soon appealed to the crowd's love of sport in order hear his pleas, 'gentlemen, show your sportsmanship.' But it was to no avail: shrugging his shoulders Holman left the stage to the applause of the crowd.[52]

The Protestant church and press's vitriolic campaign against boxing during the war years can largely trace itself back to this debacle. Prize fighting had always been a popular spectator sport, with Darcy being a strong drawcard amongst the Irish-Catholic population of NSW. Now, its critics had evidence to call for its outlawing on the grounds of this unpatriotic display. In the immediate aftermath of that night the Presbyterian minister Reverend David Brandt called upon the government to prohibit 'prize fighting' and to compel people (who attended such fixtures) to train for the defence of Empire.'[53] The audience would receive support from the *Sportsmen*, a paper that regularly defended the presence of spectator fixtures throughout the war. It reasoned that the crowd booed Holman the politician, not the recruiter, also claiming the crowd was unnecessarily provoked when threatened with the introduction of conscription.[54] Holman was quoted to have said, 'If it happens that we are confronted with demonstrations like this… There will be no alternative but to take these young loafers and compel them to perform the duty they are leaving to braver and better men.'[55]

Holman's inflammatory attitude was probably prompted by the 'Call to Arms' recruitment meeting he had attended the day before. Alongside the Governor, Premier, the Prime Minister, Lieutenant-Governor, leader of the opposition, the Anglican and Catholic Archbishops and the State Commandant, Holman had agreed that 'every physically fit man, of military age, unencumbered by

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[51] *Sunday Times*, 1 August, 1915, 9; *Worker*, 5 August, 1915.
[52] *Sunday Times*, 1 August, 1915, 9.
[53] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 August, 1915.
[54] Holman was a strong support of conscription, something that would end in his expelling from the Trade Unions and ultimately prompt his leaving the Labour Party on the 14th of November, behind Prime Minister Hughes; Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians and the Great War* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013), 235, 245; *Sportsmen*, 4 August, 1915
[55] *Sunday Times*, 1 August, 1915, 9.

family ties and not directly engaged in the production of warlike supplies, should offer himself for service.'[56] With such extraordinary expectations decided upon, the sight of a vast crowd enjoying themselves whilst Australians died in the trenches at Gallipoli must have gotten the better of him. As McKernan has argued, the crowd would support the war but would not be subject to the 'hectoring and abuse of would-be recruiters.'[57] This is a somewhat unfair charge; given most reports indicate that the derision of Holman began almost immediately after his taking stage, prompting his provocative response.

Wherever one looks to find blame for the fiasco that night, it is obvious that tensions were simmering under a Gallipoli induced national unity. Yet the complexity of sport's relationship with recruitment in 1915 was only in its formative stages. While efforts to recruit men through a sporting framework achieved only partial success, and could even be seen as detrimental in the eyes of radical patriots, the appealing nature of the concept helped revive it later in the war, albeit under different circumstances and far more unsavoury consequences.

Decline in the Volunteer System

The direction of the war would ultimately change the complexion of the government's attitude towards sport's usage in the recruiting movement, as well as intensifying the controversy that surrounded it. Much would happen in Europe and on the Australian home front between the recruiting drives of 1915 and 1917. The national unity which rallied behind the cause of Empire at the outbreak of war had flowed unabated for some time. This enthusiasm swelled to an apex around the Dardanelles campaign when Australians of all walks of life beamed with pride over the triumph of the ANZAC landing. The end of the war, however, was further away than ever. The Allies and Central powers, unable to manoeuvre and unwilling to compromise, oversaw an escalating war of attrition in which they simply hoped to outlast their opponents. Nations thus mobilised entire economies and populations, consuming enormous amounts of money, material and men. In this state of total war a

[56] Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, 105.
[57] McKernan, "Sport, war and society," 7.

full scale commitment from every civilian and soldier alike became essential to outlasting the enemy. This was particularly true for nations such as Australia, who were still reliant on an exclusively volunteer fighting force.

The pressure of a restricted commitment soon began to take its toll on the once solid national unity. Whereas middle-class patriots never wavered in their loyalty and support of the war effort, the majority of the working classes became disillusioned with its continuation, or at least were perceived to be by their 'social betters'. The growing sense of apathy to the wars outcome infuriated patriots and their rage was taken out on those whom they considered nothing short of traitors. 1916 was the year in which tensions boiled over. A series of union led-labour strikes and Britain's brutal suppression of the Easter Sunday Rising in Ireland fuelled social discontent with the war. Patriots' treated this disgruntlement with a suspicion that bordered on paranoia. This division was reflective in the sporting community. The VFA disbanded, while the VFL split over the issue of whether to continue in 1916, with five clubs from the socially affluent areas deciding to disband under patriotic pretences, while the four remaining clubs, largely from working-class districts, pressed on, much to the chagrin of patriots.[58]

Nevertheless, it was the infamous debate over conscription which proved an unmitigated disaster for national unity. After the rush of enlistments during mid-1915 the volunteer system began to steadily decline in effectiveness. The enthusiasm of 1914 and 1915 was simply missing and the rhetoric all too familiar.[59] With the AIF undertaking another costly military campaign on the Somme and Britain calling on increasingly more recruits the new Prime Minister Billy Hughes was forced to call a plebiscite on the 28th October to address the controversial issue of enacting forcible enlistment.

A fierce public debate ensued from both the 'Yes' and 'No' camps, and class and ethnic allegiance often determined one's position on this most divisive of issues. The Labour party itself split over the issue, with its leader Hughes expelled from the Party, a fracture that would take over a decade to fully recover. Indeed, historian Pam Maclean has recognised the politically and socially divisive

[58] McKernan, "Sport, War and Society," 10-11.
[59] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 871, 405; McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great* War, 45.

conscription referenda as having the most spectacular impact on the Australian home front during the entire war.[60] Their defeat, if only by the narrowest of margins, remained a source of bitterness to the patriotic middle-class community. Paranoia appears to have also infected the highest levels of government. Hughes, in a message to British Prime Minister Lloyd George, blamed these social influences on the handicapping of Australia's war effort:

> The Irish question is at the bottom of all our difficulties in Australia. They – the Irish – have captured the political machinery of the Labour organisations… The (Catholic) Church is secretly against recruitment. Its influence killed conscription.[61]

By 1917 Australian society, which had successfully united and flourished with minimal bloodshed to this point, or more appropriately little European bloodshed considering its brutal suppression of the Indigenous population, was painfully fragmented unlike any other period in its short history. After his re-election in May Hughes was able to fuse together a brittle government under his newly formed National Labour Party. However, he oversaw a country fighting a war on two fronts, both in Europe and amongst itself. Displaced by the domination of the conscription issue across 1916, recruitment would once again take centre stage in 1917.

It is in this light that the government's adoption of sport as a recruiting tool for the 1917 campaign must be investigated. The power of sport within the Australian consciousness, somewhat unrecognised among official recruiting schemes two years earlier, would play a central role in attempts to meet the daunting quota of 5,500 men required a month. The first action of the government to reignite the volunteer system 'out of the ashes of the conscription campaign' was to hire a man 'of action, determination and enterprise' to lead it. That man was the newly appointed Director-General of Recruiting, Donald Mackinnon, who took up the position in November, 1916. Impressed by his successful running of the 1915 Victorian drive, responsibility for the nation's recruiting scheme was removed from the Defence Department and placed firmly in his hands. It was

[60] P. Maclean, "War and Australian Society," ed. Joan Beaumont, *Australia's War 1914-1918* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 64.
[61] L.F. Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger* (Sydney: 1979), 276.

an unenviable task given the declining efficiency of the volunteer system, not to mention the divisiveness which now plagued the cities and countryside.[62]

Despite the enormity of the task confronting him, Mackinnon quickly set about his work with great energy. He started by amalgamating the various state-run recruiting bodies and bringing their respective strategies in line with his own. The plan was ultimately 'business-like', with Mackinnon nominating a Recruiting Committee in each state with whom he corresponded directly on general matters affecting the organisation of attaining enlistees. These State Committees controlled local Committee's in the various cities and towns, who in turn oversaw the re-deployment of recruiting agents.[63] Aside from reorganising the recruitment system Mackinnon also employed certain tactics he felt might further stimulate the dormant male populace into accepting their duty. As one of the drivers of the effort to utilise the sport to aid enlistment in 1915, Mackinnon never let go of his belief in its potential as a recruiting mechanism. With official control now in his hands, the new Director-General regularly sought to incorporate sport in all its forms to prop up the flagging war effort.

But Mackinnon was not only a man of 'enterprise', he was also quite perceptive, a quality clearly lacking in these highly turbulent times. Observing the detrimental impact the conscription route had had on war enthusiasm, both because of its autocratic nature and the vitriolic campaign undertaken to impose it, Mackinnon decided to take a more conciliatory approach. Described as a 'fair-minded' and 'patient man' not easily ruffled by unfair provocation, Mackinnon decided the 1917 drive would be one in which men were enticed, encouraged and implored to enlist, rather than shamed and coerced, which he deemed to be a counter-productive approach.[64]

Make no mistake Mackinnon was utterly determined to see the recruitment system succeed. He was a man who believed in the need to support Empire. In a letter written to his son after his decision to enlist Mackinnon reveals his staunchly patriotic disposition, 'Forty years ago when I was your age I

[62] Monthly enlistment figures had dropped under 5,000 a month during the first half of 1917. Scott, *Australia During the War*, 872.
[63] Robson, *The First A.I.F.*, 124.
[64] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 399.

had an easier time than you are having, but your luck's to be able to play a fine man's part.'[65] Nevertheless, Mackinnon recognised that bullying men into uniform was simply not the answer. The 1917 campaign would therefore be, in his own words, a 'people's movement'.[66] A product of the Australian Public school system, where he had an close relationship with Geelong Grammar master James Cuthbertson, Mackinnon had clearly carried with him not only the connection between sport and greater things, but also the rules of sportsmanship and 'fair play' that should be applied to wider life. He would now apply these lessons to the 1917 recruitment drive.

Conclusion

The increasing requirements of the war in Europe facilitated the rise of sport as an amiable tool to stimulate recruitment in Australia during 1915. Constructed around the ideals of amateurism and athleticism formulated decades beforehand, appeals to sportsmen and their fans appeared frequently throughout the recruitment drives of that year. The great test had finally come for the sporting nation and it was now up to them to answer to the call to arms. Yet, in spite of strong enlistment numbers across the year, the government and recruiters remained unsatisfied with the response of the sporting community. The nation simply needed more men to keep up with the unrelenting demands of the war.

While at the end of 1915 social disharmony was only in its formative stages, the turbulent events in Europe and on the home front across the next year transpired to drastically disrupt social cohesion. With conscription momentarily off the agenda in early 1917 sport was once again called upon to encourage men out of their cleats and into the khaki. Sadly, Mackinnon's desire to keep the campaign free of the vitriol that dogged previous efforts to reinforce the AIF would amount to nothing more than wishful thinking. The events of 1915 provided a warning unheeded, as the sporting fraternity would be dragged down into the turmoil of a society divided against its government and itself,

[65] Donald Mackinnon, letter to Brice Mackinnon, 9 January 1917, Letters 1915-1919, MS9470, Mackinnon Family Papers, SLV.
[66] *Argus*, 9 January, 1915, 5.

wherein the place of sport in Australian life was called into question in the most painful of circumstances imaginable.

CHAPTER 5

Bitter Enemies of the Sporting Fraternity: Sport and Recruitment, 1917

Impressed with its potential as a recruitment tactic, Director-General of Recruiting Donald Mackinnon made sport one of the central pillars of the 1917 recruiting drive. Mackinnon's more formal recruiting structure adopted the familiar ethos of amateurism and athleticism to entice sportsmen, sports fans and anyone else into joining the AIF. Recruiters would not only appeal to the 'sporting instinct' of Australians, they would venture into the very heart of the sporting community to do so. If approached in the proper spirit, this tactic promised to awaken Australian men from their slumber and accept their obligations as sportsmen to nation and Empire.

What eventuated was a confrontation between those within the sporting fraternity and those charged with procuring them. Despite direct instructions from Mackinnon to maintain the conciliatory tone of the 1917 campaign, the inflammation of pre-existing social tensions throughout that year reached a boiling point, wherein a jaded sporting community and the government's incessant determination to acquire recruits met head on. This chapter will trace the re-emergence of the sporting appeal within the 1917 recruitment campaign as well as the turmoil it created in tow. Long envisioned as a tool to prepare men for combat and remind them of their sacred duty to defend nation and Empire, the ethos of amateurism and athleticism, when put into action, would not only prove themselves ineffective, they would add fuel to the fires of social hostility that characterised Australia's social crisis during the middling years of the war.

Sport and the 1917 Recruitment Drive

MacKinnon's wish to incorporate sport into the 1917 recruitment drive began almost immediately. Embarking on a national wide tour in January to kick-start the year's wider campaign, Mackinnon publicly encouraged stockmen, farmers, Public school Old Boys and finally sportsmen to enlist as

one. This latter group was specifically targeted by Mackinnon who expressed the 'immense help' sporting bodies could provide in aiding the government's latest call-to-arms. Meeting privately with some of the most powerful administrators in Sydney and Melbourne, both amateur and professional, Mackinnon's plea to incorporate their influence fell-on sympathetic ears, judging by the reactions of Australia's two major sporting hubs. The delegates of the Sydney meeting decided to form the NSWSRC to act in co-operation with the State's Recruiting Committee, targeting their efforts specifically to those under their direct sphere of influence. Included in this group were delegates from rugby union and league, cricket, amateur athletics, horse-racing, the Public schools and even women's sport.[1]

After arriving in Melbourne to launch the Victorian leg of the drive, Mackinnon met with delegates from his own VCA as well as the VFL, MCC and the State Recruiting Committee to discuss the best means to get sportsmen into the war. It was decided here that Mackinnon would forward a letter to all the state's sporting associations to ask their assistance in the upcoming drive, regardless of sporting ideology. He informed these bodies that, given Australia's strong sporting culture, their organisations presented 'a most desirable auxiliary… in the movement to rally reinforcements.' As such Mackinnon informed these bodies that with the application of their 'influential weight' both players and supporters would be moved to take an active part in the campaign. He also requested, in the spirit of 1915, to call another meeting between the state's wider sporting communities, so that they may collectivise and concentrate their efforts. This was greeted with enthusiasm and a meeting was set at the Lord Mayor's Reception Room on the 26th of January.[2]

Some 50 representatives from the state's various sporting bodies met with the Vice-Chairman of the State Recruiting Committee, R. C. Blackwood, as well as G. Dean, Assistant to Mackinnon, that night. Though recognising the important work done previously by Victoria's sporting community, Blackwood emphasised the necessity of raising the state's reinforcement numbers immediately. He thus proposed that Victoria make its own Sportsmen Recruiting Committee made up of a select

[1] *Sun* (Sydney), 9 January, 1917, 5.
[2] Preliminary Meeting, VSRC (Minutes), RSL Victoria Archives.

number of representatives, similar to the one formed in Sydney. In the meantime, these sporting bodies were asked to make their grounds available for recruiting purposes, submit lists of sportsmen who would be willing to address recruiting meetings and most importantly suspend their fixtures on the 24th of February for the planned 'Win-the-War Day'. All these proposals were agreed to and an executive committee known as the VSRC was soon established, with Bowls representative Simon Nathan acting as Chair.[3] By early 1917 Mackinnon had completed his restructuring of the disjointed recruitment system, collectivising his auxiliaries so they could focus their efforts on those he wanted most. Now they could go to work.

While receiving an avalanche of support from the NSW and Victorian sporting communities, signs were already emerging that Mackinnon's desire to keep the campaign amicable was going to be more difficult than hoped. To be sure the NSWSRC and VSRC desired to toe the line. In conjunction with the United Sporting, Athletic and Amusement Associations of NSW, the NSWSRC had officially decided to focus their campaign on a "COME!" not "GO!" approach.[4] When the *Sunday Times* printed an anonymous promotion for an official NSWSRC event, which contained an overly hostile approach, the Committee moved quickly to distance itself, announcing an intention to investigate the matter and publicly stating its disapproval of such an approach.[5]

The struggle to keep the campaign free of vitriol was also noticeable within the in-house discussion of the two Sportsmen's Committees, motivated by the conflict between professional and amateur's attempting to work together in the name of recruitment. NSW Committee member and boxing promoter Snowy Baker proposed to organise boxing matches to promote recruiting. These matches were to consist of purely amateur participants of military ineligibility, to ward off ruffians and attract only 'the right class of men'. But fellow committeemen Major Shellington announced the State Recruiting Committee's concerns that the use of boxing in general would bring great criticism owing to the sports low standing at the time, after the flight of the professional boxer Les Darcy two days before the 1916 conscription vote. Shellington had to be assuaged by Baker and other Committee

[3] VSRC (Minutes), 26 January, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.
[4] NSW Sportsmen Recruiting Committee Correspondence (NSWSRC), 7 February, 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[5] NSWSRC (Minutes), 30 June, 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.

members of the purely amateur nature of the exhibition, with others reasoning that boxing remained the best method of pulling 'crowds of young men', especially 'the men we want to reach.'[6]

A more ideologically divisive atmosphere punctuated the Sportsmen's Committee in Victoria. At one of its first meetings a representative for the infamous racecourse owner John Wren, a Mr Solly, moved to have the conscription issue dropped from campaign talk as he believed young Australia would soon answer the call. However, not all were so willing to adopt a passive approach. With the campaign against sports continuation raging across the country several delegates tried to align the position of the new Committee with the anti-sport movement. Tennis representative O'Hara Wood voiced his opinion at a meeting on the 26th of January that sporting clubs should close their grounds to any man who could not prove his ineligibility for active service. An equally antagonistic motion was put forth four days later when VSRC Chairman Nathan Simon, and seconded by a Victorian Amateur Athletics Association President Mr Abbott, to the effect that 'all governing bodies or committees of clubs be requested to debar all eligible men from taking part in any matches or competitions.'[7]

Such a proposition was bound to arouse serious discussion within the Committee, which it duly did, as well as strong opposition from race-course owner Wren's representative. 'It was useless', Solly reasoned, 'to "sand-bag" a man first and then expect him to volunteer. The proposal savoured of compulsion'. This argument prompted MacKinnon's deputy, G. Dean, to put an end to the proposal then and there. He informed the members that compulsion had no part in his campaign and that no coercive suggestion would be sanctioned. This motion was withdrawn and subsequently crossed out from the minutes.[8] Mackinnon's directive to keep the campaign impartial would take no risk in provoking the turmoil still smouldering in post-conscription Australia and he would not have the sporting fraternity further alienated from the recruiting movement.

Nonetheless, the Committees were clearly disjointed as to getting sportsmen into uniform, reflecting the widening division emanating between the government and the sporting fraternity, as well as the

[6] NSWSRC (Minutes), 19 July, 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[7] VSRC (Minutes), 26, 30 January, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.
[8] Ibid. 31 January, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.

civil war being waged within the sporting fraternity itself among professional and amateur codes. The tense atmosphere of the country and the potentially provocative impact the 1917 recruitment drive was also sensed by Solly. He raised the very sensible suggestion that instead of recruiting officers and 'outsiders', addresses at sporting meetings should be given by sporting men associated with the leagues and clubs they were addressing.[9] Apparently overlooked, the suggestion should have been granted closer consideration given what was to follow.

Despite these early warning signs, Mackinnon continued to push the importance of sport on the other branches of his new recruiting scheme, as well as the conciliatory tone critical to consolidating the message. To help local recruiting agents at the coalface, Mackinnon authored and distributed a series of pocket-books titled the *Three Companions*. Consisting of the *Speaker's Companion*, the *Organiser's Companion* and the *Recruiter's Companion*, these instruction manuals guided the fostering of successful relations between recruiters and their audiences in the hope of stimulating further support for the war, a particularly important concern given the previous antipathy that existed amongst over-zealous agents and unresponsive crowds. Instead of badgering men into enlisting Mackinnon instructed recruiters should not 'by a single word or deed be aggressive' but instead display a 'conciliatory and persuasive' approach. Even if provoked recruiters should always display a 'friendly manner' toward the general public.[10]

The drawcard of sport and the targeting of sportsmen and their fans appear were a prominent element within these instructive guidebooks. *The Organiser's Guide*, though pushing the line of Mackinnon's conciliatory approach, instructed women to hold aloof from sports meetings not designed for specific recruiting purposes. In what was described as a 'bulls-eye set of recruiting shots fired by the journalistic rifle', the handbook also incorporated the *Australian Traveller's* list of 10 themes to assist

[9] Ibid., 26 January, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.
[10] *Speakers Companion*, 1, Australian Department of Defence, Director General of Recruiting, 1917, Call No: 355.223620994, AWM.

in recruitment, which instructed agents to draw upon the 'sporting instinct of all Australians, which should urge them to take a hand in the greatest game of all'.[11]

Meanwhile, the *Speaker's Guide* encouraged recruiters to visit their local sporting clubs, arming them with the best means by which to tap this profitable source of manpower. It reminded recruiters of the inherent value that these institutions provided in creating an atmosphere wherein men felt compelled to enlist, labelling the various sporting associations a most 'desirable auxiliary' in the state's efforts to incorporate the 'irresistible force' of public opinion toward recruitment. This influence could best be used against the members of the clubs themselves. The *Guide* reminded its recruiters to always remember that 'many leading sportsmen are already at the front and have won high honours' and that it was confidently expected that those behind only needed to be called upon to bring forth a 'hearty and unanimous response.' Such words clearly indicate that Mackinnon wanted his recruiters to display tact when dealing with the already disgruntled sporting community, who had been routinely subjected to the barbs of their predecessors and instead required positive reinforcement to get them into the khaki. They should instead use the lines of a poem featuring in London's Spectator titled "the cricketers of Flanders":

> And other eyes than ours would see;
> And other hearts than ours would thrill;
> And other say, as we have said,
> "A sportsman and a soldier still!"[12]

Indeed, Mackinnon's guiding influence was never far away, especially where his Sportsmen Recruiting Committees were concerned. He made sure his directives existed not only in policy but also in practise. On the 28th of February he instructed the VSRC to act on two initiatives. The second looked to the incorporation of 'womenfolk associated either directly or indirectly with sport', a directive seized upon with the utmost enthusiasm (see Chapter 7). The first directive, however, called

[11] *Organizer's Companion*, 27-28, Australian Department of Defence, Director-General of Recruiting, 1917, digitised item, Bib ID: 492160, National Library of Australia (NLA).
[12] *Speakers Companion*, 25-26, AWM.

for the Committee to consider the re-emergence of the ill-fated 1915 sportsmen unit campaigns. A popular suggestion, the prospect of assembling the state's athletes into 'one great effort' incited much excitement within the Committee. The proposal was quickly approved and became known as the Sportsman's Thousand campaign.[13]

This initiative gathered momentum fast, aided by the immediate rectification of the mistakes of 1915. The Committee decided to target sportsmen from rural Victoria, instead of just the city. Apprehensions that a lack of official recognition might stifle its successful establishment were also assuaged by Minister of Defence Pearce, who this time supported the concept, even suggesting the advertisement slogan attached to the campaign, 'join together, train together, fight together, and go to the motherland together.'[14]

With official approval and a wider net cast the Victorian movement gained far greater opportunity to attract recruits, leading commentators to anticipate an immediate response.[15] A West Melbourne stadium was booked for a recruiting rally on the 16th of March with reports estimating an attendance of 3,000 to 4,000 onlookers. Yet, just as they had in 1915, popular gatherings hardly equated to productive outcomes. Just 20 recruits stepped forward that night, while a similar gathering organised on the 27th at Town Hall secured a paltry four volunteers, owing to a high number of its attendees being ineligible.[16] Despite such setbacks the government's commitment to the sporting appeal was obvious compared to its more tentative 1915 predecessor. With a planned goal of attaining seven units of 150 men, applicants to the Sportsmen Thousand were advised to inquire with their recruitment officer and then fill out a sportsman card upon enlistment.[17]

The Sportsmen Thousand campaign also received a prolonged and extensive public exposure programme that afforded them time to obtain the manpower required. Australia's first Victorian Cross winner and noted boxer Captain Alberta Jacka was a focal figure on several recruitment posters for

[13] VSRC (Minutes), 7 March, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.
[14] Ibid., 7, 8 March, RSL Victoria Archives; *Age*, 8 March, 1917.
[15] *Age*, 10 March, 1917.
[16] *Argus*, 17 March, 1917; *Myrtleford Mail and Whorouly Witness*, 5 April, 1917.
[17] *Argus*, 23 March, 1917.

the Thousand.[18] Sportsmen of repute were crucial to enticing regular men into uniform, forwarding the belief that by enlisting in such a unit volunteers were connected to their sporting heroes and their accomplishments. There was no more fitting candidate than Jacka, according to his biographer Robert Macklin, for 'he fitted perfectly into that unique brand of Australian soldiery.'[19] Accompanying his imposing stance came slogans based in the intimate connection between Australian athletes and soldiers, 'Show the enemy what Australian sporting men can do' and the traditional catch cry 'Play Up Play Up and Play THE Game'. Stickers were also distributed on the cars of supporters of the campaign calling on eligible men to 'Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand', while shopkeepers put signs in their windows calling on cricketers not to be bowled out, but to join the contingent.[20]

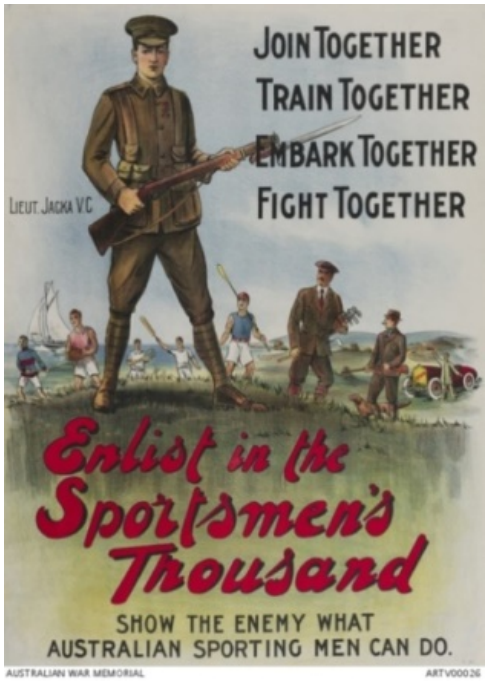

Figure 7 Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand [21]

[18] VSRC, *Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand*, 1917, ARTV00026, Poster, AWM; VSRC, *Enlist in the Sportsmen's 1000*, 1917, ARTV05616, Poster, AWM.
[19] Robert Macklin, *Jacka VC: Australian Hero* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2006), 12.
[20] *Kyneton Guardian*, 3 May, 1917; *Echuca and Moama Advertiser and Farmers Gazette*, 4 August, 1917.
[21] VSRC, *Enlist in the Sportsmen's Thousand*.

Figure 8 Enlist in the Sportsmen's 1000 [22]

Despite this intense exposure, response to the campaign remained frustratingly slow. Organisers often complained about a lack of interest at rallies and public meetings. A Ballarat boxing exhibition staged to aid the campaign failed to entice potential recruits, infuriating its organisers as well as the local press. Charging no fee for attendance, the night attracted a large crowd of over 3,000 attendees. However, with just 14 volunteers and just 20 pounds raised, organisers, 'had every reason to be satisfied with the demonstration… except for one reason, and that was the all important thing – the scarcity of recruits.'[23]

After months of unsuccessful campaigning the frustration began to show. The Gippsland Recruiting Committee set up in conjunction with the campaign had become 'practically non-existent' by June due to the refusal of eligible men to enlist. These men, 'having arrived at this conclusion… considered that it is but a waste of time and money endeavouring to secure eligible men.'[24] The appeal to sportsmen simply did not generate the strong and immediate popular support officials envisioned. Only 485 applicants had volunteered by late July and just 650 by September, before inquires ground

[22] VSRC, *Enlist in the Sportsmen's 1000*.
[23] *Ballarat Star*, 29 June, 1917.
[24] *Gippsland Times*, 21 August, 1917.

down to a trickle.[25] It would take until April the following year that the full quota of 1,050 men would be reached.[26]

The NSW movement, known as the Sportsmen's Battalion campaign, was slightly more successful. Calls to re-visit the sporting appeal appeared in February, around the same time as its Victorian counterpart.[27] However, it would not be until mid-year that the NSWSRC decided to act on the initiative in earnest. A sub-committee with Sir Henry Yule Braddon acting as Chair was soon organised and its administrative body adopted a slightly different approach from the Victorian effort. It decided to centralise its efforts by fulfilling a full Battalion's worth of 750 recruits in one day, to be known as the Sportsmen's Recruiting Day, scheduled for the 27th of July.

Highly publicised and methodically organised, the event was to be held in the streets, theatres and stadiums of Sydney, as well as the surrounding suburbs and neighbouring towns. Former athlete Reginald "Snowy" Baker headed the organisational aspect of the day, utilising all his skills learnt as a boxing promoter to create a buzz surrounding the event.[28] For a month leading into the rally the Committee met every few days, assembling speakers, distributed thousands of promotional posters and hiring two journalists from the *Sun* to endorse the event.[29] The press were largely responsible for bringing the event to the attention of the public. The *Arrow* called upon potential recruits to respond to the call that 'no true Australian sportsmen will see a mate in distress without making an effort to relieve him… Let it be blazoned forth to the world on the day after, 'Australian sportsmen will be there!''[30]

Thanks to this considerable promotional effort the Sportsmen's Recruiting Day was met by the general public with great enthusiasm. A military procession through the streets of Sydney continued with an open air show, vaudeville entertainment and an outdoor military display. The day concluded

[25] *Mount Alexander Mail*, 25 July, 1917; *Camperdown Herald*, 8 September, 1917.
[26] *Age*, 16 April, 1918.
[27] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February, 1917, 8.
[28] NSWSRC (Minutes), 29 June, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[29] Ibid., 29, 30, June, 19, 20, July, 2DRL/1121, AWM; Harry J. Weston, *Sportsmen's Recruiting Day, 1917*, ARTV06114, Poster, AWM.
[30] *Arrow*, 21 July, 1917, 3.

with music and boxing in the city's premier boxing stadium, witnessed by a reportedly large crowd.[31] Among many speeches and pleas for men to enlist came this rousing appeal from the Prime Minister William 'Billy' Hughes:

> Sportsmen of Australia, to you is given a great opportunity, upon you rests a heavy responsibility. As you have played the game in the past so we ask you to play the greater game now. This is your day. Its success or failure rests with you. You are wanted to-day in the trenches far more than you were ever needed in the football or cricket oval. When the last word is spoken in to-day's great campaign every fit man of military age in New South Wales worthy of the name of sportsmen will have enrolled in the A.I.F. I ask you to be true to yourselves, and to prove yourselves worthy members of the great brotherhood of sport.[32]

Figure 9 Sportsmen's Recruiting Day [33]

Its impressive organisational structure and popularity aside, the Sportsmen's Recruitment Day yielded not even a third of its projected target, with just 241 volunteers enlisting for the day.[34] Undoubtedly a commendable effort, it was still significantly short of the expectations of the Committee. Despite this

[31] *Referee*, 25 July, 1917, 9; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 July, 1917, 13.
[32] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 July, 1917, 7.
[33] Harry J. Weston, *Sportsmen's Recruiting Day, 1917*.
[34] *Referee*, 1 August, 1917, 11.

setback, the NSWSRC carried on relentlessly in an effort to assemble a sportsmen's unit. Numerous other rallies and appeals around the state were held, including tours by recruiters in country districts. Posters continued to hang on the walls throughout Sydney appealing for men to come forward and a weekly magazine titled *Sport* was launched and distributed at tram, ferry and train stations for four months, with over 5,000 copies published per week.[35]

With official government backing, the VSRC and NSWSRC sportsmen unit campaigns were far greater endeavours than their 1915 predecessors. Although never intended to form a collective Battalions, but rather a place where fellow sportsmen could enlist together and assemble into small replacement units, the campaigns did manage to somewhat achieve their goals of obtaining a commendable quota of recruits. In total, the NSW Sportsmen's Battalion raised 1,197 men, while the Victorian Sportsmen's Thousand filled its quota of seven units for a grand total of 2,247 recruits.[36] Although Phillips has questioned the campaigns' contribution in relation to the 416,809 personnel who served during the First World War,[37] the persistence of organisers in obtaining recruits during a time of generally low national enlistment makes this effort a more commendable one than is perhaps given credit for. During the height of the sportsmen unit campaigns total enlistment figures in Victoria and NSW continued on their downward trajectory. From July to November volunteers in NSW barely rose above 1,000 a month, while in Victoria they dropped under this mark in June and as low as 619 men in September, roughly where they would sit for the rest of the war.[38]

Having said that, there is no denying any success achieved owed itself to its prolonged campaigning rather than through any attractive appeal through sport. Just like the efforts two years prior, the NSWSRC official magazine *Sport* played into amateur ideology and the Australian 'sporting instinct' in order to appeal to eligible men, bluntly outlined in an edition published on the 4th of August:

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[35] Phillips, "Sport, war and gender images," 87-88.

[36] The fate of the seven units from Victoria is according to Phillips 'difficult to ascertain' but it appears that the majority of the Sportsmen Thousand recruits ended up as reinforcements in the 8th, 21st, 29th and 39th Battalions. Meanwhile, the Sportsmen Battalion campaign reinforced the 17th, 18th and 19th Battalions. Phillips, "Sport, war and gender images," 92.

[37] Phillips, "Sport, war and gender images," 81; Arthur Graham Butler, *The Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services in the war of 1914–1918 Vol. III: Special Problems and Services* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1943), 889.

[38] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 872.

> It is like the sign of a secret society – the society of sportsmen. It cannot be neglected or ignored; no man of honour dare be deaf to this appeal; it is a supreme challenge to his quality; let him evade it, and he will know that not again will he stand the same among his people. This is a supreme appeal.[39]

Similar tactics were adopted in Melbourne, where the *Punch* newspaper promoted the formation of the Sportsmen Thousand campaign through reminding audiences of the connection between sportsmen and soldiers. The appeal stipulates that Australians, 'in the firing line, and behind the trenches, they always acted up to their traditions – sportsmen ever.' The article continues:

> The landing at Anzac was a feat of athletes, the Light Horse victory at Romani was a feat of endurance and stamina which only athletes could stand. The history of Australia's part in this war shows in every detail that the true sporting spirit has been predominant.[40]

These appeals to the honour and duty of the athlete aside, the sportsmen units were not all they claimed to be. War-weary citizens obviously detected that the sportsmen unit campaigns were just another means by which the government hoped to secure more cannon-fodder, with its supposedly attractive association with sport operating as a glamorous front. The NSWSRC admitted as such within the confines of its assembly. When discussing the purpose for the establishment of *Sport*, the Committee reasoned that its 'underlying objective is recruiting but we will have this cleverly disguised…'[41] Top priority rested with the acquisition of as many eligible men as possible. Sport and all it entailed was merely the tool used to achieve this.

Accordingly, the failure of the campaigns to stimulate an immediate response prompted the Committees to adopt gimmicky tactics to entice recruits, making them appear more a 'desperate attempt to shore up flagging recruitments' rather than a true expression of the Australian 'sporting instinct'.[42] With the momentum of its efforts stalling, the VSRC decided in June to establish a Sportsmen Thousand band. Designed to create awareness about the campaign itself and attract eligible

[39] *Sport* (NSW), 4 August, 1917, 2.
[40] *Punch*, 1 November, 1917, 4.
[41] NSWSRC (Minutes), July, 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[42] Blackburn, *War, Sport and the Anzac Tradition*, 30.

recruits to the cause, the band paraded through Melbourne's inner city suburbs with donated instruments, before heading out and completing a country tour over several months.[43] Admittedly, the band was considered to be a surprising success, proving popular amongst those it performed for; but also acquiring 113 recruits in a single month.[44]

These encouraging results aside, what cannot be denied are the great lengths with which the recruiting authorities had to go to fill their promised recruitment quota. Sportsmen, or anyone for that matter, were not rushing to their call to arms, and the mere fact that men had to be enticed to enlist through musical accompaniment is indicative of both the failure of the sporting appeal and the public's indifference toward the war. While Phillips has described the band as a 'creative and innovative' approach to attract men in a diminishing pool,[45] one could easily view the band as a desperate measure in the context of their initial high expectations.

The Victorian campaign was not alone in adopting such gimmicky ventures. In fact, the NSW Sportsmen Battalion campaign walked an even more peculiar avenue to securing its recruits. Discussions within the NSWSRC to generate enlistments in the aftermath of the much-publicised Sportsmen's Recruiting Day prompted the floating of a possible 'spectacular football match'. Not just any regular rugby league game, the idea included a contest between a team composed of players dressed in German military uniforms against a team of sportsmen from the second or third units, who would be dressed in khaki outfits. At intervals during the game it was proposed that members of the khaki team would retire 'hurt' to be replaced by volunteers from the audience, who by doing so would also be enlisting. At the same time returned soldiers stationed around the ground would encourage likely recruits, as Committee members hoped 'to take advantage of the excitement of such a football

[43] *Age*, 23 June, 1917; *Argus*, 26 July, 1917, 8; *Chiltern and Howlong Times and Ovens Register*, 3 August, 1917; *Daylesford Advocate, Yandoit, Glenlyon and Eganstown Chronicle*, 4 September, 1917; *Portland Guardian*, 5 September, 1917; *Port Fairy Gazette*, 6 September, 1917, 2; *Warrnambool Standard*, 14 September, 1917, 2; *Maffra Spectator*, 17 September, 1917; *Colac Herald*, 21 September, 1917, 2; *Geelong Advertiser*, 21 September, 1917, 2; *Donald Times*, 12 October, 1917; *Argus*, 15 October, 1917, 9.
[44] Phillips, "War, sport and gender images," 80; While popular in some regards, some residents of the country districts had been 'bitterly disappointed' by the fact that the men of the band had not been to the frontline, VSRC (Minutes), 5 November, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.
[45] Phillips, "Sport, war and gender images," 80.

match (which) will awaken in the crowd.'[46] Predictably, this over-the-top concept never materialised and a far more practical recruitment match took its place instead. But the mere discussion of such an idea proves the drastic lengths these organisations were considering to go in order to quench the recruitment drought. Not only this, the confidence of drawing on the 'excitement of the crowd' proved to be rather misplaced, as will be discussed shortly.

The campaign would even push the boundaries of good taste. The VSRC had planned numerous memorial services to be conducted throughout Melbourne during late 1917 and early 1918. Instructions from organisers maintained that the affairs were to be of a solemn nature with care being shown to obtain an accurate list of names of the fallen. Hymns and songs were to be sung and an invitation to the Roman Catholic Church sent. This admirable service, however, was sadly not without its own agenda. Instructions also stipulated that recruiting meetings were to be held on the night in which the service was to take place, with such gatherings held 'primarily in the interests and on behalf of the Sportsman's Thousand Unit'.[47]

This desperation was reflected in the speech of Mackinnon at the ceremony on the 9th of December, to commemorate the 126 men from the Melbourne and East Melbourne areas who 'had fallen in the service of their country'. MacKinnon played up to the service's location, the MCG, to voice the connection of sport and war in order to remind civilians of their duty to continue serving the nation:

> (it was) fitting that on a ground which had been the scene of so many manly athletics, a memorial service should be held to commemorate those who had gone forth to take part in a much higher sphere of manliness… Australia must be prepared to put forward her utmost strength to assist in the just cause… let those who were hesitating to do their duty follow the example of the heroic dead. [48]

The Australian public appears to have seen straight through such manipulative and gimmicky tactics employed under Mackinnon's directive. Aside from the 241 men gathered during the NSW Sportsmen

[46] NSWSRC (Minutes), 2 August 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM; *Argus*, 16 March, 1917.
[47] State Recruiting Committee of Victoria – Instructions of Captain Organising Secretary Dyett to Metropolitan Recruiting Officers Concerning Memorial Service, 14 November, 1917, VSRC, RSL Victoria Archives.
[48] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater* Game, 417.

Recruiting Day, there was no immediate or popular response to the appeal to the 'sporting instinct' of Australians.

Sport and Recruitment in Conflict

Much of the reason why 1917 Australia remained unsusceptible to the sporting appeals lies in the tumultuous state of society at this point, which was seemingly at war with its government and itself. Living in the fallout of the divisive events of 1916, recruiters faced an exceedingly up-hill battle to win over the support of those left behind. Official historian Ernest Scott has used positive reports from the mining districts of Western Australia to determine that the desire to enlist was 'general and not confined to class or place…'[49] However, touring reports of agents working on behalf of the NSWSRC cannot disguise the levels of bitterness and war-weariness within the rural and lower socio-economic areas of NSW that ultimately diminished successful recruiting, as well as tensions between these jaded communities and the frustrated patriotism of recruiters.

The failure of the Sportsmen Recruiting Day prompted the NSWSRC to send recruiters into the rural districts of the state in order to fill the Battalion's roster. These agents were instructed to meet with local recruiting committees between August and November to assist in their endeavour. They could not have picked a worse time to go. The state was currently in the grips of the Great Strike of 1917, which had crippled its railway industry. As the government grappled with the unions, the indignation of strikers was further compounded by the aggressive attitude of Hughes, who warned the strikers in September:

> let me now add one or two very necessary words by way of warning to those who are endeavouring to paralyse industry, ferment civil disorder and hamper the Commonwealth in

[49] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 404.

its war policy. The Government will not permit their disloyal, reckless and tyrannical methods…[50]

The areas toured by the NSWSRC agents were pivotal junction points within the state's railway system. Hard hit by its fallout, the townsfolk were increasingly hostile to the high demands placed on them by the war. They were now confronted with a visible face of the war, who despite appealing to them 'as a sportsmen', was in their minds greedily asking them to sacrifice once more for a cause that had taken so much from them already.

There were admittedly some positive reports regarding enlistment figures and general wartime enthusiasm in some of the towns.[51] However, the recruiters' impressions of neighbouring areas were less than inspiring. One agent was sent to the small town of Junee, a notable site of social unease, and his reports reflect the detrimental impact of the strike on recruitment, 'absolutely the worst town I have visited from a recruiting point of view. This town is devoid of unity... the town requires to be wakened up to its responsibilities.' Efforts to arouse recruits was made all the more difficult by fact that his appeal at the town's picture show had been delayed by 3 hours, before he was finally given permission to take the stage at 11pm. This delay had occurred because the hall's manager Mr. Tinker had noticed audiences had been grumbling because his shows were being turned into recruiting rallies. After previously being warned of a possible poor reception by strikers, the people immediately began to leave as soon as they saw men in uniform on stage, with just one recruit being secured. The recruiter himself suspected foul play behind the scenes, commenting, 'one would suggest that there was someone working in the dark to stop or hinder objects of a Rally.'[52]

The October report of the Barrabri and Inverell tour in particular reflected just how low the levels of enthusiasm for the war had ebbed. Remarks by one of the town's people of Moree that 'We will fight when the Germans come to Moree' struck a chord with the crowd who agreed through loud cheers. The fact that it was shouted by a 'gallant six-footer' only further aggravated the rather frustrated tone

[50] *Age*, 6 September, 1917, 7.
[51] NSWSRC (Tour Reports Riverina Region), 21 August 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[52] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 August, 1917, 9; NSWSRC (Tour Reports Western NSW), 10 August 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.

of the recruiter, seeing as such a large man would be more than suitable for the front. Some of the townsfolk even openly admitted that cowardice was keeping them from enlisting, a shocking confession in such a masculine driven society as Australia, where appeals to one's manhood emerged as a prominent recruiting tactic. Such was the unreceptive mood and response that confronted the recruiter that he remarked that the only viable solution remained conscription. Another recruiter appeared shocked after a visit to one small town which possessed an attitude a patriot could only consider as treasonous: 'The attitude of most young men is one of callous indifference – they simply do not care who wins the war, and some say they would be as well off under the German flag as under the Union Jack'. Meanwhile, unsatisfactory atmosphere in the Barrabri and Inverell regions was once again put down due to the 'attitude of some politicians'.[53]

But speakers and recruiters using the 'sporting appeal' ironically faced the greatest difficulty from the sporting community itself. Friction between recruiters and sports fans materialised for the same reasons it had two years earlier. Only this time, thanks to the turbulent events of 1916, the hostility contained a heightened viciousness, particularly from sports with strong working class followings. Photographic evidence of recruiting officers at sporting grounds in 1917 paints a particularly sorry picture. The desperate appeals of one recruiting official at the Sydney racing showground warrant little recognition by an indifferent crowd. Standing on top of an artillery piece, with arms spread wide, as if to beg the crowds' sympathy, the recruiter is met with disinterested faces that cannot bother to meet his gaze. A similarly apathetic reception can be seen at a Geelong VFL match on the 24th March. Recruiting official Sergeant Dangerfield seems to have attracted the attention of the crowd, though little enthusiasm is noticeable. In any event we can discern that Dangerfield's appeals were unsuccessful, given no volunteers stepped forward that day.[54]

[53] NSWSRC (Tour Reports Narrabri and Inverell), 31 October 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[54] *Sydney Mail*, No Title, No Date, A03375, Photograph, AWM; *Geelong Advertiser*, No Title, May, 1917, Photograph, Bob Gartland Collection.

Figure 10 Recruiting Appeal at the Sydney Showground [55]

Figure 11 Sgt Dangerfield addressing a crowd at Corio Oval[56]

The frustrations of sports fans often moved beyond mere apathy with recruiters and even toward open confrontation. Speakers at the boxing exhibition staged for the Sportsmen Thousand in March were reportedly 'counted out' by hostile sections of the audience. Without doubt the 4,000 strong crowd

[55] *Sydney Mail*, No Title, No Date, A03375, Photograph, AWM.
[56] *Geelong Advertiser*, No Title, May, 1917, Photograph, Bob Gartland Collection.

was in attendance to witness the boxing on offer that night, rather than to hear the pleas of recruiters.[57] Similar friction occurred in NSW. A report from a special Rugby League recruiting match organised by the NSWSRC in August detailed an unresponsive and at times hostile reception amongst the audience. The pleas of recruiters in the crowd apparently fell on deaf ears as just seven men volunteered. Not only this, the report indicated the mood of the crowd as largely 'antagonistic to recruiting' and expressed this 'by counting out the speakers.'[58] Just like the NSWSRC agents in the state's rural areas, recruiters were confronted with antagonistic audiences fuelled by grievances with the Great Strike, reflected in the dominant working-class composition of the game's followers.

But the most infamous reception encountered by recruiters appears to have come from the crowds of the VFL. The VFL had approved of addresses from the VSRC representatives at the annual meetings of several clubs, including South Melbourne and Fitzroy, who were addressed during late February. The speaker at South Melbourne was reportedly met with a 'good reception'; however, the representative at Fitzroy, a notable working class club, was treated with little welcome. He was not given permission to address the meeting until 10pm and upon taking the platform found that the club's Chairman and fellow officials had left him alone. Word got back to the VSRC, with one outraged member, Mr G. H. Inskip, suggesting it send a protest. The VSRC Chairman and others decided that it did not want to make waves with the League. However, if the disgruntled committeeman wanted to act on his own initiative the committee would offer no objection.[59] The issue appears to have passed by without any public protest from the VSRC, possibly to avoid inciting any conflict with the VFL and its clubs.

Then, after receiving permission from the League to allow recruiters into their matches on Saturday 12th of May, the VSRC received further reports of their staff being subjected to 'harsh treatment' by crowds.[60] The details of this 'harsh treatment' were soon leaked to the media, revealing what appeared to be the most spiteful encounters between recruiters and the public seen during the war.

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[57] *Argus*, 17 March, 1917.
[58] NSWSRC (Minutes), 27 August 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[59] VSRC (Minutes), 12, 28 February, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.
[60] Ibid., 17 May, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.

Sergeant W. H. Durand claimed he was subjected to an unsympathetic crowd at the working class affiliated Collingwood and Richmond match, 'The crowd was hostile. And it was hard to get a hearing, and, therefore, we abandoned the attempt.' The reports of the other two games tell of far more scandalous encounters. Sergeant Kilpatrick, who visited the South Melbourne ground, stated:

> They absolutely refused to let me speak, and pushed me, and jostled me all over the place. They said I had no right to go there and spoil their sport, and I had to leave the ground, as they threatened to deal with me. I have no desire to go to any more of these meetings unless I have some sort of protection.[61]

Likewise, Lieutenant R. H. Maskell, who was at the Fitzroy ground, reported:

> The (Fitzroy) committee gave us no assistance, bar admitting us to the grandstand. The majority of the public were averse to us speaking, and hurled personal interjections at us. We continued the meeting until the match again started, and when coming down the stairs of the grand-stand we were attacked by men and women, which necessitated our leaving the ground. I am not keen again being called upon to attend these matches. My staff also requests that they should not be sent.[62]

The response of the conservative Melbourne press is what one might expect of an institution that had waged its own war against the sport for the last two years. The *Age* grumbled 'These are narratives in plain language of heartless, vicious and detestable actions on the parts of individuals who class themselves as sports people… It is another big blot on football.'[63] From such accounts the footballing community was quickly painted as the aggressor against the commendably patriotic efforts of recruiters. It had certainly been a tumultuous start to the 1917 season for the League, which was only just coming to terms with the wrath of the media after revelations that it had broken its promise to donate all its revenue to the patriotic fund, a promise made to appease the games critics and legitimise its 1916 season, and instead spent far more on resolving debts and paying some of its players. This

[61] *Argus*, 19 May, 1917, 19.
[62] *Australasian*, 26 May, 1917, 24.
[63] *Age*, 19 May, 1917, 10

prompted the more serious threat of the State War Council, which informed the League it must now apply for permission to play its remaining matches.[64]

With the harassment of recruiting officers going public the VFL held an emergency meeting, dubbed as a 'war session' by the *Argus*, to address the various controversies that had besmirched the League's reputation that May. The meeting began with the resigning of the Leagues President O. M. Williams, who appears to have succumbed to the considerable pressure placed on the League by the press and War Council. However, when the recruitment controversy was raised the various delegates moved to hose down the accusations by questioning the validity of the reports, as well as the media's sensationalism. When asked to weigh in on the controversy Fitzroy delegate M. Clota refused to acknowledge the accusation, stating 'We don't take much notice of what is said in the papers'. Clota's resentment of the press was matched by the ponderings of the Collingwood delegate E. Copeland, who questioned why newspaper reports appeared only after the recruiting agents had released their statements: 'The peculiar thing is that there was no reference to it in the daily press. The reports do not miss anything like that.' It was a good point; journalists were unlikely to overlook such incidents if they had witnessed them, especially given their campaign against the VFL during the war. The delegates' conviction fed off one another's testimony. The South Melbourne delegate maintained 'no complaints' had reached their committee and that the Lieutenant at the ground was 'cheered and listened to attentively'.

Inskip, who had moved to publicly denounce the League for its treatment of speakers back in February, was also present at the meeting. He found himself in an awkward position, being the representative for the non-playing St Kilda Football Club, which was not partaking in the competition for patriotic reasons, as well as a member of the VSRC. With the two bodies in open conflict, Inskip walked a cautious line, hoping to support his patriotic inclinations, yet all the while hoping to avoid alienating his club from the League which had discussed its removal the previous year. He suggested that a representative of the ground might have prevented a lot of heckling if he had been present alongside the speakers. But the other clubs' confidence evolved into open defiance against their

[64] Blair, "War and Peace, 1915-1925," 130.

accusers. United by the weight of evidence and three years of vilification on their shoulder, Copeland responded rather coldly to Inskip's suggestion, 'It all depends on the speaker. We had Mr. Jowett at our annual meeting, and he received a splendid hearing, but used a lot of tact.'[65] The aggressive attitudes of recruiters were the problem the according to clubs, not the crowds.

The boldness displayed by the delegates during the 'war session' is somewhat surprising given the seemingly precarious position they had put themselves in during early 1917. The dispute with the State War Council, a body which could suspend League play if it felt compelled to do so, was yet to be resolved. But the League's willingness to confront its accusers was backed by a number of factors. Firstly, its scepticism of the press's reporting of the incident was supported by the testimony of former Fitzroy player and University coach, Gerald Brosnan, printed in the *Winner* a few days prior to the 'war session'. Having witnessed firsthand the appeals of recruiters at South Melbourne, Brosnan provided a far different version of events, labelling the reports of the recruiters 'purely and simply fabrications'. He admitted to hearing a few interjections from the crowd, but stated that these had come from none other than returned soldiers. Brosnan also heard from a friend that no such incidents had taken place at neither Collingwood nor Fitzroy.[66]

Secondly, the League must have felt secure in the strength of its position as a whole; especially given talk of the government's pending decision against sporting fixtures. The League's popularity was remerging after falling to its nadir during the previous season, aided by the return of the Geelong and South Melbourne Clubs, who, after disbanding for patriotic purposes in 1916, had come to the realisation that their absence had not helped to stimulate recruitment at all.[67] This strong position was confirmed by the support of a powerful figure within the recruiting branch of government. "Wideawake" from the *VFL Record* rebuked the barbs of critics by highlighting that Mackinnon had

[65] *Argus*, 26 May, 1917, 17; St Kilda had showcased a particularly patriotic spirit from the wars outset, changing its colours in 1914 from the traditional red, gold and black uniform, the colours of the German Empire, to Belgium's red, black and white. McKernan, "Sport, War and Society," 2, 10-11.
[66] *Winner*, 23 May, 1917, 7; Brosnan's testimony is made all the more credible given he had harshly criticised the VFL in the post for failing to donate significantly to the patriotic fund, Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 369; Similar support was found from the editor of the *VFL Record*, a powerful voice within the football community, *VFL Football Record*, 26 May, 1917, 3, SLV.
[67] Blair, "War and Peace, 1915-1924," 126, 128.

previously expressed no issue with football being played.[68] So, with the repudiation of falsehoods purveyed by embittered recruiters and a hysterical Melbourne media, the League took new confidence that the game had no ill-bearing on recruitment and had been right to continue on all along.

Pressure from the War Council over the patriotic fund donation scandal would soon be eased thanks to the League's agreement to postpone an entire round's matches so as not to interfere with a planned recruitment drive on the 4th of August. The leniency of the War Council was surely a result of the fact that its Chairman was also one Donald Mackinnon.[69] Without such a reasonable man in this key position the League might have faced far greater sanction, but there is no doubt that it had come out on top against its attackers.

Loss of face for the VSRC prompted further frustration among certain members, both with the League and the timidity of their passive approach. In the days following the VFL's 'war session', a letter was read from Amateur Athletic representative Dr Norman McArthur suggesting that the VSRC make some form of public protest against the continuation of football and boxing in the state. Although framing a possible protest on more general concerns, the incidents against their own staff earlier that month must have weighed into the proposal. After considerable discussion, it was decided to defer the matter.

But McArthur would not let things slide and at a meeting on the 10th of July, this time with the assistance of a fellow amateur committeeman, spoke at length on the need of the Committee to take a 'firm stand' against sport. McArthuer's resolve would have been strengthened by the government's pledge to install official sanctions against sport, which was announced between the two meetings. The minutes do not contain the details of the issue discussion, but it was reported that the proposal generated 'considerable controversy' within the VSRC. No doubt this controversy must have come between the amateur and professionally associated delegates, given their clashing on similar issues in February. It appears that amateurs lost the argument, or at least failed to convince the all-important vote of Mackinnon's representative to act against his superiors conciliatory instructions. The motion

[68] *VFL Football Record*, 26 May, 1917, 3, SLV.
[69] Blair, "War and Peace, 1915-1924," 131.

was once again deferred for the Committee's next meeting on the 31st of August, by which point the government had already made its announcements on which sports would be restricted, making any 'firm stand' pointless.[70] As social discord intensified, the amateur – professional rift within the VSRC only appeared to be widening, as was conflict between the sporting and official state braches of Mackinnon's recruiting organisation. By mid-year both the VSRC and NSWSRC acknowledged significant tension with their respective bodies owing to the unforseen competition for the dwindling number of recruits.[71]

Nevertheless, the view that sporting fixtures were impeding recruiting efforts was obvious within the ranks of the amateur delegates of the VSRC during 1917. This belief was reflected in the production of a series of recruiting posters that carefully addressed what they saw as a conscious choice made by sportsmen of the playing field over the frontline. The previously mentioned Sportsmen Thousand posters featuring Alberta Jacka hinted to where the place of sportsmen should be. Though not explicitly denouncing the continuation of sport, one of the posters clearly implies the need for sportsmen to leave their games and enlist. The *Geelong Advertiser* deciphered this meaning when it commented on its distribution, believing its purpose was to convince men to 'cast aside' their respective sports to 'play the greater game'.[72]

Another of the VSRC's posters reflects this burgeoning frustration with sport's detrimental influence on the recruitment push. Outside associations between fulfilment of masculinity and military service, the poster seeks to awaken the Australian man up to the importance of the war and in particular encourage enlistment in the Sportsmen Thousand. Underneath this, however, the poster outlines the absurdity of the continuation of sport in a time of national crisis, asking its audience to make what it saw as a choice between the war, with all its accompanying glory and significance, over the triviality

[70] VSRC (Minutes), 17, 30 May, 10 July, 31 August, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives; *Northern Lismore* (NSW), 30 June, 1917, 5; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August, 1917, 8.
[71] VSRC (Minutes), 14 June, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives; NSWSRC (Minutes), 27 August 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[72] *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 April, 1917.

of sporting leisure and enjoyment.[73] In a time of national crisis, the choice is implied to be an obvious one.

To the poster's creators the two were clearly competing attractions and given the uncertainty of the war's outcome at this point in time, the choosing of sport over war was unacceptable. But by informing the men of the creation of a unit of sportsmen in which one could enlist, the VSRC implies that men need not cut all ties with their sporting heritage, and instead offers them opportunity to be involved in a unit which merges both their duty to the nation and desire to indulge in sporting games. Posters such as this provide ample evidence of sport as paradoxically proving a distraction in a time of war; all the while using the attractive elements of sport to entice recruits.

Figure 12 Man You ARE Wanted! [74]

[73] VSRC, *Which? Man you are wanted! In the Sportsmen's 1000*, 1917 ARTV05005, Photograph, AWM.
[74] Ibid.

Government Movement against Sport

With many in and outside of the 1917 drive believing sport and recruitment to be no longer compatible entities, the long-awaited showdown between the two came to a head. Right up to 1917, and despite the constant partitioning of pro-war groups and press, authorities appeared unwilling to intervene with the supposedly distracting influence of sport. Admittedly, several State governments had curtailed racing owing to the war.[75] But for the most part these were limited in their severity. Other sports had meanwhile been allowed to continue unabated, even when they provoked the authorities, as the Victorian State War Council had been. The Federal government also appeared reluctant to intervene. As late as March, requests from the Bellina Win-the-War Council to close Race Meetings and Boxing matches because of their detrimental impact on recruiting were brushed aside, with the Prime Ministers Department reasoning that any action against such fixtures would be a fruitless show of strength as far as recruitment was concerned. In any case, such a matter was deemed outside the jurisdiction of the Federal government and best left to the State officials.[76]

The re-election of the Hughes government, however, precipitated a drastic backflip on policy. Hoping to assuage the cries of patriots while also awakening the Australian public to the seriousness with which it must now take the war, Hughes announced in late June that controls would in fact be placed on sport. The reasoning given revolved around economic and recruitment considerations. The heavy financial burdens placed on the state during this time had forced the Commonwealth to direct its resources toward 'national purposes'. It is unsure how the restricting of sports fixtures would work to directly stimulate the war economy and the ambiguity surrounding such reasoning was left unaddressed. But the bulk of Hughes' motivations to move against sport had to do with matters of enlistment. Sport, he deemed, 'distract[ed] the minds of men from matters of life and death should be put aside so that all men may see to do their duty.'[77]

[75] Age, 22, July, 1915, 7 April, 1916; Truth (WA), 22 September, 1917.
[76] Edward Walcott, letter to Prime Ministers Department 15, March, 1917; Prime Minister Department, letter to Edward Walcott, 18 May, 1917, both found in "Sport. Restrictions On", Prime Minister Department, Correspondence File, A2, 1918/1151, National Archives of Australia (NAA).
[77] *Northern Lismore* (NSW), 30 June, 1917, 5.

At the reassembling of Parliament in July the Governor-General confirmed that action would indeed be taken to curtail sport meetings throughout the Commonwealth, in order 'to concentrate the minds of the people on the more serious aspects of the war.' Though the enlistment record of the sporting community was defended within Parliament, the restrictions would nonetheless go ahead.[78] After consultations with the states' various sporting codes, Defence Minister Pearce announced in August which sports were to be curtailed under the War Precautions (Control of Sports) Regulations, 1917. Spectator sports of a professional impetus were primarily under consideration, notably horse-racing, boxing and football.

On the 12th of September, it was decided that boxing and racing fixtures were to be restricted, with the highly vilified yet undeniably powerful football codes given the all-clear to continue unabated. The restrictions themselves were based on the 50 per cent reduction from pre-war levels as suggested by the NSW conferences.[79] Monthly racing at metropolitan venues were restricted from 136 to 64 meets in Queensland, from 102 to 56 in Western Australia and from 134 to 97 and 94 to 30 (near metro) in NSW. Tasmania appeared to have been singled out for significantly bad treatment with its 100 meets reduced to just 26. However, this turned out to be a misunderstanding and was eventually adjusted. Meanwhile, Victorian and South Australia, having already cut its meets substantially, received minor restrictions. Prize-fighting was also reduced to one 20-round contest in each state per fortnight. These restrictions would apply retroactively to the 1st of August.[80]

The patriotic press widely supported the government for its desire to refocus the people's eyes back toward the war. The *Sydney Morning Herald* even used the decision as an opportunity for the nation to reconsider the place of sport in the everyday lives and national character of Australians. Others were not so impressed. After a push to restrict fishing was announced in the days after the decision, Victorian Parliamentarian and friend of racing mogul John Wren, William Beckett, proclaimed that the government was attempting to 'create a privileged class of Melbourne sports to the detriment of

[78] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 11 July, 1917, 2nd Session, 7th Parliament, Vol. 82, 11 July – 30 August, 1917, 8, 28-29.
[79] Argus, 8 August, 1917.
[80] *Daily Standard*, 13th September 1917; *The North Western Advocate and Emu Bay Times* (Tas), 29 September, 1917; *Age*, 8th April, 1916.

people in the country.'[81] Others based their dissatisfaction on the scepticism the sanctions would have in regard to recruiting. *Sport*, the official organ of the NSWSRC, less afflicted by internal divisions and hoping to keep their primary audience on side, called government's move 'weak' and 'one that will result in little good in the direction hoped for.' The magazine perceptively reasoned, 'If men want to enlist, they will for it; if they don't, they won't…'[82]

Figure 13 Restricting Sport [83]

[81] *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, 18 September, 1917, 24th Parliament, Vol. 147, 11, 20, September, 1602; "Beckett, William James", Thomas Sheehy, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 10 October, 2016, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/beckett-william-james-5179.
[82] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September, 1917, 10; *Sport*, 6 October 1917, 2.
[83] "Restricting Sport", *Punch*, 12 July, 1917, 60.

The government had certainly chosen the easy targets of boxing and horse-racing, which had already obtained a somewhat poor reputation owing to their immoral association with gambling and corruption. Hughes astutely avoided confrontation with the re-merging power of football, while also allowing other near-on defunct sports such as cricket to continue on. In retrospect, Hughes' careful movement against sport revealed the insincerity of his claim that sports stymied recruitment and the wider war effort. The restrictions were motivated far more by placating sections of patriotic public opinion and realigning Australian society on a war-footing, than by stimulating enlistment numbers. It was the kind of extreme policy that he hoped would pave the way to have his desire for conscription accepted later that year. Indeed, Historian Nick Richardson has called the measure a 'half-hearted attempt to convey an idea that sport was still a nefarious influence on recruiting.'[84]

In any case, whether the government truly believed restrictions on sport would aid recruitment, it appears quite the opposite occurred. Not only did enlistment numbers continue their decline, the decision actively worked to the detriment of recruiters. The former NSW Liberal Premier Sir Joseph Carruthers commented to acting Prime Minister William Watt about the detrimental impact the government's restrictions on racing were having, 'instead of helping recruiting, the Federal intervention against racing, had damaged it.' Carruthers, despite being a renowned patriot and amateur sportsmen, could even recognise that 'the keen resentment felt at the very unjust and arbitrary method… caused many people to cool down their efforts'. This was compounded by the aggressive nature of recruitment itself, especially during the reign of former state recruiting director Rev. Professor Macintyre.[85] The J. J. Knight of the Brisbane Newspaper Company too observed that the curtailment of racing in Queensland had created 'a considerable amount of feeling and resentment among those who are striving their best to awaken the eligible to a sense of their responsibilities.'[86] In an economic sense, proof that the measures had cost the government seriously needed war funds came

[84] *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 13 September, 1917, 4; Richardson, *The Game of their Lives*, 244.
[85] Joseph Carruthers, letter to acting Prime Minister W. A. Watt, 13 May, 1918, "Sport. Restrictions On", NAA; "Curruthers, Sir Joseph Hector", John Ward, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 5th September, 2017, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/carruthers-sir-joseph-hector-5517.
[86] J. J. Knight, letter to acting Prime Minister W. A. Watt, 23 April, 1918, "Sport. Restrictions On", NAA.

in the announcement of the 1918-1919 budget. Revenue gained from taxes on entertainment fell by 40,890 pounds as compared to the previous year owing the restrictions.[87]

As race-goers simply attended whatever course was open at the time, all that the intervention truly achieved was the further alienation of the once supportive members of the community. After taking the government to task, Carruthers again urged caution to Watt in any future dealings with what remained of the sporting fraternity:

> We have the liquor trade against us; we also have the Irish Catholics with few exceptions; we have the trade unions, very largely; and we are making bitter enemies of the Sporting fraternity except for a favoured few. This latter class is more numerous than you can imagine. Moreover it includes tens of thousands who are just as loyal as you or I… Your Government is hitting these men very hard – unnecessarily so. You are sapping their morale…[88]

Stubbornly committed to their fruitless stance, the Federal cabinet were quick to rescind the restrictions at the first available opportunity. Just two weeks after the cessation of hostilities it was decided the restrictions would be released, to come into effect on Christmas day.[89] It was the last regulation under the War Precautions Act to be introduced and the first to be rescinded, with Pearce himself admitting the futility of the restrictions.[90]

Decline of Recruitment and the Sporting Appeal

The confrontation between sport and recruitment in the end had few winners. Mackinnon's desire to keep things controversy free had clearly not gone as planned, a problem made all the worse by its failure to substantially stimulate the volunteer system. After Hughes' re-election put the issue of

[87] Joseph Carruthers, letter to acting Prime Minister W. A. Watt, 13 May, 18 June, 1918, "Sport. Restrictions On", NAA; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 25th June, 1918.
[88] *The Farmer and the Settler*, 18 June, 1918, 4; Joseph Carruthers, letter to acting Prime Minister W. A. Watt, 13th May, 1918, 18 June, 1918, "Sport. Restrictions On", NAA.
[89] Memorandum for the Secretary, the Prime Minister's Department, 26 November, 1918, "Sport. Restrictions On", NAA.
[90] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 13th December, 1918.

conscription firmly on the table once again, though not officially announced until November, his determination to win support for forcible enlistment seemingly rendered the appeal to Australia's 'sporting instinct' redundant. Yet this was not immediately the case. Instead of providing an honourable avenue for potential recruits, the sportsmen unit campaigns in Victoria and NSW became hijacked by radical patriots as a most useful vehicle to promote the 'Yes' cause. In doing so, the appeal to the 'sporting instinct' of Australians, which had been based on the high-minded ideals of amateurism, was corrupted and eventually abandoned as a major force within the recruiting drive.

There were several incidents where the campaigns were used as a soapbox to deplore the country's decision of the previous year and convince it to vote differently next time. The launch of the Sportsmen Thousand campaign on the 27th of March at Melbourne's Town Hall reflected this. In what was described as a 'fiery' occasion, speakers at the meeting often displayed the frustration and passion of the previous year's conscription campaign. Sir John Madden announced to the receptive crowd that he was 'sorry' that conscription had not been introduced and that they now had to deal with those who had not gone, but who 'ought to go.' What followed was an even more volatile speech by the Chaplain-General John Rentoul of the Presbyterian Church. A fierce supporter of conscription, Rentoul had just returned home from the front, where 'scoundrel cowards dwell in safety because of the deathless valour of their younger brethren.' Rentoul delivered a particularly scathing review of the nation's decision the previous year, which had betrayed the essence of Australia's sporting identity:

> Australia had reached the blackest day in her history when, by a slight of a majority of alien dastards and cowards, she refused to make the sacrifice for our Motherland… The principle of the Australian sportsmen, above all, was that they always went to the aid of their 'pals' when they were in danger…[91]

It was clear that pro-conscription sections of the community were unconvinced by the campaign itself. The sour reputation of sport among patriots prompted Frank Parker, a pro-conscription writer for the radically patriotic *Australian Statesman and Mining Standard*, to express a rather low opinion of those

[91] *Argus*, 28 March, 1917, 7; *Age*, 28 March, 1917, 11.

who volunteered, 'Not much is to be thought of those sports who waited for a "Sportsmen's Thousand" to be mooted before volunteering'. From here Parker even suggested that those who did not take this final opportunity should never again be able to represent the country on 'playing fields of less danger and cheaper glory.'[92]

As 1917 rolled on and the volunteer system failed to meet its monthly quotas, Hughes began to float the idea of conscription yet again. On the day devoted to Mackinnon's appeal to the finest aspects of the Australian male, wherein Hughes himself had implored the men to finally prove themselves 'worthy members of the great brotherhood of sport' by enlisting, he also cautioned as to the consequences of their failure to do so. While stating that he believed the voluntary system could supply the losses at the front, Hughes announced that the response from such days would prove whether his faith was misplaced. 'Voluntarism' he insisted, 'is on its trial'.[93] The insinuation being that the failure of such a system left conscription as the only viable recourse. Rentoul too continued this radicalisation of the sporting appeal in October during the parading of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sportsmen Thousand reinforcements through the streets of Melbourne. Though seemingly a celebratory occasion of the efforts of recruiters, Rentoul remarked, amidst much cheering from the crowd, that solving Mackinnon's problem of recruiting could be done with one word, 'conscription'.[94]

The abject failure of the volunteer system prompted Hughes to finally recall Australia to the polls to decide the issue once and for all. By this point the effort to use sport as a recruitment tool had almost run its course. However, the culmination of Hughes' long and brutal conscription campaign saw the final traces of the sporting appeal swept up in one of the most raucous political rallies ever seen, staged at the home of Australian sport, the MCG. It was uncustomary for the ground to host political events, but these extraordinary times had prompted the MCC to react favourably to the Reinforcement Referendum Council's request to stage a 'Demonstration' there. To be held just 10 days from the plebiscite, four platforms hosted three separate speakers, including the Lord Mayor, the NSW Premier

[92] *Australian Statesman and Mining Standard*, 3 May, 1917.
[93] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 July, 1917, 7.
[94] *Age*, 12 October, 1917.

and the Prime Minister himself. On paper the plan for the demonstration would run like clockwork, strict, smooth-running and orderly. What eventuated was chaos.

Come the day the ground was reportedly, 'packed with people to their full limit', with estimates putting the figure at around 75-80,000 onlookers in attendance. The crowd appeared for the most part supportive of the proposal for forced enlistment, 'the loyal fervour was given vent to in deafening cheers for the "Yes" campaign, cheers for Mr. Hughes and hoots for Germany.' However, it was not long before the anti-conscriptionists present made their presence felt. Gin-crackers were thrown into the crowd prompting the screams of women and children present, jeers greeted the proposals of conscriptionists while the socialistic anthem *Solidarity For Ever* of the 'anti's' and patriotic hymn *The Red, White and Blue* of the 'Yes' crowd tried to supress one another. Reverend Henry Howard attempted to quell hoots with a plea to, 'Play the Game! Why don't you play the game, men?' It failed to quell the surging unruliness, just as it failed to gain the necessary recruits, and this final appeal to the 'sporting instinct' of the crowd was drowned out by the kind of discontent that characterised wartime Australia. From this point anarchy gave way to danger and finally violence:

> When the women pressed against the barrier began to scream, owing to the pressure against them, a special constable gave the order to charge the mob. Batons were drawn, and jumping out into the midst of the mob the special constables struck out in every direction… special constables… were struck with bottles… many were bleeding from cuts about the head.

Such was the ferocity of the combatants a St. John Ambulance Brigade had to set up a casualty ward.[95] Hughes' arrival to the podium incited 'wild scenes of enthusiasm', but also scorn. Almost immediately a large stone was thrown in his direction as the crowd tried to rush the stage, with reports of one assailant attempting to throw a nine-inch knife at the Prime Minister. Hughes had to be dragged from the stage by Alexander Peacock and Lord Mayor Stapley. To his credit, he pushed on courageously, readdressing the crowd on multiple occasions, but to no great avail.[96]

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[95] *Argus*, 11 December, 1917, 7; *Age*, 11 December, 1917, 7.
[96] *Age*, 12 December, 1917, 10; for a full description of the rally at the MCC see Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 418-424.

The night has since been described by MCC historian Alf Batchelder as 'the rowdiest gathering ever at the Melbourne Cricket Club, a frightening example of the anarchy generated by wartime strains and the conscription issue.'[97] The MCC would refuse the Labour Party's request for their own anti-conscription rally the following week, hoping to avoid the 'disturbances' that had occurred previously.[98] The rancour at the ground that night was only too typical of the turmoil that had engulfed the country during 1917. The optimism that had accompanied the beginning of Mackinnon's campaign in January, 1917 had ended in farcical circumstances for which the ideals of sport itself could not even save. After conscription was defeated yet again, Mackinnon was forced to soldier on with his spluttering volunteer system until the wars end.[99]

There were some tentative attempts to incorporate sport in the final months of the war. A conference organised in April by the Governor-General brought the divided sections of Australian political life together in the name of recruitment. Representatives included leaders from both Federal and State Nationalist Parties as well as Labour and Union delegates. There, the elected President Mackinnon put forward the idea of a "Voluntary ballot enlistment", believing 'the Australian lad is prepared to take a sporting risk' on the idea. But Labour politicians and trade unionists failed to endorse this and other approaches to recruiting. Instead, they used the conference to push the government on a list of political and industrial grievances, including the repealing of the limitations placed against sport. The scars of the previous two years ran deep and before long discussions broke down into 'bickering and bantering' with little discussion of recruitment taking place.[100]

From here, sport only appeared sporadically within recruiting efforts. The unheralded pleas of Reverend Howard in many ways symbolised the end of the sporting appeal to Australians on a major level. The shelving of the sporting appeal was evident with the publication of *The General Plan of the 1918 Campaign for Reinforcing the AIF*. Decided upon by Mackinnon, the document contained no

[97] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 423.
[98] *Minutes of the MCC Committee*, 11 December, 1917, MCC Archives.
[99] At no point from November, 1916 until the end of the war did the government hit its target of 5,500 recruits a month. By February and March, 1918 enlistments nationwide had fallen to just 1,918 and 1,518 respectively, Scott, *Australia During the War*, 871-872.
[100] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 447-58; *Daily Post*, 18 May, 1918, 5.

reference to sporting slogans and appeals, instead focusing on demonization of Germany and its expansionist polices.[101]

In summary, the failure to stimulate the 'sporting instinct' and the conflict it provoked emerged from an overestimation of sport's importance within the Australian society and identity. Mackinnon's belief that men would respond if called properly represented a misunderstanding of those left behind. For sure, the ethos of amateurism assisted in the strong enlistment rates of Public school Old Boys early in the war (see Chapter 8). Yet the notion that abstract ideas and language associated with amateur sport would somehow entice war-weary civilians to enter the caldron of mass death that was the Great War must have been insulting to the intelligence of those who read the lists of deceased and witnessed the dishevelled and debilitated figures who returned, not to mention frustrating for those unable to enlist because of unbreakable ties at home. Australians loved their sport, but it was not enough to convince them to make such a momentous decision.

Not only was the majority of the population unwilling to enlist in a war of misery and death based entirely on an appeal to their 'sporting instinct', they were also perturbed at the government asking for their assistance, a government that had attempted only a few months prior to force them into service and who blamed their last remaining amusement for their own supposed apathy. In his report of the 1917 recruitment drive Mackinnon admitted that while 'nearly every device' had been tried, efforts had been 'continually hampered by political exigencies and party differences' that fuelled social hostility among the masses.[102] With an army of recruiters, who saw service to Empire as an inalienable duty, attempting to enlist a large section of the population scorned, slandered and cynical to such beliefs, it is hardly surprising that the 1917 recruiting campaign and its appeal to Australia's sporting identity became dragged down into the vitriol and violence that characterised the wider social tension of that year.

[101] James R. Fletcher, *General Plan of Campaign for Reinforcing the Australian Imperial Force*, Department of Defence, 1918, RARELTF 940.394 F63, SLV.
[102] Scott, *Australia During the War*, 440-442.

Discord only further alienated the population from responding to the sporting appeal while simultaneously prompting the authorities to question sports place within Australian society by flirting with its prohibition. In the end, the attempt to tap the reserves of manpower in the sporting arenas and fields of the nation had generated limited impact at the cost of hostility and even violence.

Such thinking lends itself to a wider discussion surrounding recruitment during the war. Only 40 per cent of all eligible Australian males would volunteer and their reasons for going, or not going, were extraordinarily varied.[103] By 1917 those who were willing to go had already gone, having been confronted with every conceivable tactic adopted by authorities, while those who remained were usually jaded by the war which had cost so much. Generalised ideas about recruitment, such as appealing to supposedly universal Australian proclivities to Empire, honour, manhood, and even sport were rendered impotent against the complex considerations of the individual. While recruitment tactics and schemes obtained a strong influence during the war's first few years, they had simply lost their powers of persuasion. After all that had happened up to 1917, being labelled a coward, shirker or unsportsmanlike was simply not enough to convince a man to enlist.

Conclusion

Recognising the importance of sport within the hearts and minds of the people, authorities aligned their recruitment efforts toward the appeal of sport in the hope of stimulating the eligible population's commitment to Empire. But recruiting was no place for the faint-hearted. Social turmoil caused by the pressures of total war led to a bitter split among the nation's populace, as many grew weary of war. Though emerging in 1915 the worsening context of the war two years later exacerbated the underlying tension between the sporting fraternity and the government determined to fulfil its commitment to Britain. Attempts that year to entice embittered and vilified men into the khaki through hollow sporting slogans and appeals largely failed, achieving only further fracturing of relations between the state and its people. The anger flowed both ways, as recruiter and those to be recruited clashed on

[103] Robson, *The First A.I.F.*, 203.

multiple occasions. Frustrated by the unwillingness of the average Australian male to respond to their pleas, some began to second-guess the place of sport in society.

But it was not only the government that began to question the detrimental impact sport was having on the war effort. This chapter has broached the debate which raged over the appropriateness of sporting fixtures during the time of national crisis that the Great War became. The following chapter will outline the public side of this debate. Though the government intervention would restrict certain sporting fixtures during the last year of the war, the debate over its continuation was predominantly one waged among civilians. And while it contained a strong element of class bias which shaped so many other issues in wartime Australia, denunciations could reach even the noblest, sacred and most amateur sports of the period.

CHAPTER 6

Amateurism Divided: Cricket and the Sport and War Debate

Though considered by some to be a beneficial tool in furthering the Australian war effort, the existence of sport proved in the minds of others a detrimental presence in the effective conduct of wartime operations. However, it was not only the Federal government and many of its recruiting staff who resented the presence of sporting fixtures on the home front. The debate over sports continuation was in fact ignited and waged predominantly within the public, press and sporting community. While critic's maintained sporting fixtures should be abandoned as they distracted the nation from its commitment to Empire, sport's defenders argued this distraction was a necessary relief for those overburdened by the pressures of the war. In many ways, this debate represents the greatest manifestation of sport and the war in open conflict.

Traditional historiography surrounding the public campaign against sport understands it as one led by the advocates of amateurism, who argued that the major shirkers within the sporting community existed within the professional leagues. Sports critics reasoned that paid sport prevented eligible men from enlisting for its financial incentives, while absorbing the attention of spectators, diverting their money into non-war related pockets. Given the class alignment of these opposing affiliations, historians, led by Michael McKernan, have argued the debate emerged as merely an aspect of the 'larger conflict' between the two great Australian classes in a time of war.[1]

On closer analysis, however, not all amateur sports were united in facilitating their own disbandment, nor were they exempt from the criticisms of vocal patriots. The acceptance of McKernan's findings has prompted research almost exclusively on professional sporting codes during the war, consequently militating against examination of amateur codes, which were widely considered to have dispersed as early as 1915. This chapter will attempt to fill this gap by studying the external criticism and internal

[1] McKernan, "Sport War and Society: 1914-1918," 2.

division that impacted Australian cricket during the war. While not decried on the same level as professional spectator sport, the controversy surrounding the continuation of state and local cricket, with its strong amateur culture, indicates that wartime social conflict cannot always be simplified to a clash between long-standing sporting ideologies and class friction. Though not discounting the McKernan thesis, the turmoil that afflicted cricket proves the clash between sport and the war was far broader than previously thought, serving to reinforce the crisis of sport's place in wider Australian culture and identity.

Traditional Historical Analysis of the Sport and War Debate

Before discussing the tumultuous state of Australian cricket during the war, it is necessary to briefly outline both the debate within the sporting community and its traditional historical interpretation, so as to fully appreciate the significance of the controversial place sport occupied during the war. As discussed in earlier chapters, Australian sport in pre-war society was soundly divided between two camps based upon ideological grounds, namely amateurism and professionalism. It would be a falsity to say that these two peacefully co-existed before 1914. However, the excruciating pressure placed on society by the war, where the Australian way of life was envisioned to be at stake, made this the focal point of amateur – professional hostility until the former's un-ceremonial disappearance during the 1970s.[2]

The broader campaign against professional sport was ignited on the 22nd of April, 1915 by the ubiquitous Wesley Headmaster Lawrence Adamson. Addressing his students at morning assembly, Adamson launched a scathing tirade against the continuation of professional football within the state. With anticipation of the Australian entry into the battlefield mounting and the opening of the VFL fixture set to go ahead on the 24th of April, a furious Adamson set about denouncing the indifferent attitude of professional football toward the war. Adamson opened by remarking that the question of stopping games in a time of 'supreme trial' could only be judged by one standard, whether or not the

[2] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, 70-71.

game itself could offer 'any inducement to men to abstain from enlisting.' Aim was clearly being taken against the professional codes that, due to their offering of financial incentives to players, were most culpable in the harbouring of shirkers. Proof of this was found in the selective comparison between the high enlistment rates of amateur clubs against their professional counterparts. Adamson considered this show of apathy as a potentially treasonous act, one which would best please German loyalists living in Victoria. While they could not 'guide Zeppelins' into attacking Britain or 'signal to baby-killing cruisers', they could:

> get into touch with the most physically fit men in this community – the most fitted for war by their practise in mimic warfare, and to pay them 30s to 3 pounds a week to stay here in Australia, instead of going to fight the Fatherland.

Adamson asked, '*Deutschland uber Allies*! Why not Iron Crosses for the premiers instead of medals?'[3]

The press was quick to pick up on the speech and within a matter of weeks the wider sporting community, not to mention many frustrated patriots, began discussing the appropriateness of not only football but all sport in a time of national emergency. The debate took on a whole new level of meaning after the publishing of endless casualty lists of Australians from the Dardanelles. Critics of sport regularly pointed to Adamson's professional – amateur contrast as a means to highlight the unpatriotic attitude of the former. The disbanding of the elite amateur sports such as rugby union, tennis, athletics, lifesaving, swimming and several amateur football clubs was held against the continuation of the professionally inclined rugby league, boxing, professional Australian rules football clubs and horse-racing fixtures. That many of these latter clubs and codes catered to a largely working-class clientele only reinforced the belief of the class-biased campaign against sport. Victorian Trade Unionists William Billson asked in 1916 why people on the platform and in the press declaimed the sports of the workers and not those of 'gentleman'.[4]

[3] *Wesley College Chronicle*, May, 1915, 13-14.
[4] *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, 12 July, 1916, 24th Parliament, Volume 143, July – September, 1916, 113.

Rampant sectarianism was also blamed as a chief motivator for criticisms of professional sport, particularly in the case of the vilification of Australian boxing champion Les Darcy. Born into a poor family of strong Irish-Catholic origins, Darcy was subject to accusations of war profiteering and disloyalty to nation by the patriotic press and staunchly Protestant Council for Civic and Moral Advancement, who ignored his attempts to enlist that were blocked by his parents due to his age. Faced with limited opportunities to support his family, Darcy took flight illegally to the United States to compete. Infuriated by his actions the campaign against Darcy intensified and his attempts to secure fights in the U.S. were blocked due in some part to pressure heaped from Australian politicians. Sadly, the champion would die there in 1917 due to pneumonia. The presence of sectarian bitterness and the amateur-professional debate is found in the *Bulletin's* reporting of Darcy's death, 'Coming of a stock to which England is merely the ancient oppressor and Home Rule for Ireland a religion, it is not unnatural that he jibbed at sacrificing a money-making career to risk his life for a "King and Empire" which meant less than nothing to him and his friends.'[5]

As we know the incessant public pressure directed toward professional sports across 1915 and 1916 led to the government's decision to step in and force their curtailment. That those under consideration were all spectator sports of a professional inclination confirmed to many the belief of a government waging its own campaign against the recreations of the common man, supported in the previous restrictions on gambling and public hotel trading hours.[6] After observing that race tracks in Melbourne of a traditionally working-class clientele received heavier sanctions than their more socially prestigious rivals, an irate employee of race-course owner John Wren wrote in frustration, 'We that have permitted our flesh and blood to enter the battle resent the mouthing's and feel the sting of propagandists, leisured and dimpled who offer and suggest prohibition in regard to all things but those directly affecting themselves.'[7]

[5] *Bulletin*, 28 June, 1917, 7.
[6] McKernan, "Sport, War and Society," 15.
[7] H Lawrence, letter to Prime Ministers Department 8th May, 1918, "Sport. Restrictions on", NAA.

With such evidence forthcoming historians have identified a neat class–ethnic alignment that dictated the two sides of the amateur–professional debate during the war.[8] But how do these historians explain the vilification and division of a notably popular amateur sport during the war years? Though considerably reduced by mass enlistments and self-curtailment, there was, in the words of VCA President Donald MacKinnon, a considerable effort to 'keep the lesser game alive while the greater game was being played.'[9] Such efforts were led by administrators who held strong roots within Australia's social elite and the ideals of amateurism, particularly in Victoria. But it was this determination to continue that ignited a two-pronged campaign against the game, both from radical patriots inside the game and social commentators outside its fringes, that prompts us to question the infallibility of the amateur–professional clash over the war.

Business-as-usual: Cricket August, 1914 to February, 1915

The declaration of war had only a partial impact on the Australian national pastime. The Australian Cricket Board of Control (ABC) announced in mid-August that it would 'defer' the planned tour of South Africa that summer. This decision to 'defer' rather than disband the tour is indicative of the Board's attitude that envisioned the war more as momentary undertaking rather than the monumental infliction it would become on the country and its people. Confidence that events would soon return to the status quo were underlined in the ABC's prediction that the 1915/16 English tour of Australia would go ahead as scheduled.[10] In the meantime, cricket fans were appeased with the announcement that the domestic game would be carried on without hesitation. Though the enormous casualties incurred by the Europe's armies were steadily becoming public knowledge, there was no genuine movement from within or without to abandon the 1914/15 season. Local grade competitions opened

[8] McKernan, "Sport, War and Society," 1-2; Blair, "War and Peace, 1915-1924,"; Noonan, "Offside: Rugby League, the Great War and Australian Patriotism,"; Will Evans, *A short History of Rugby League in Australia*, (Richmond: Slattery Media Group, 2012); Phillips & Moore, "The champion boxer Les Darcy: a victim of class conflict and sectarian bitterness in Australia during the First World War,"; Blackburn, *War Sport and the Anzac Tradition*; Richardson, *The Game of Their Lives*.
[9] *Argus*, 19 September, 1916, 10.
[10] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 August, 1914, 15.

as scheduled in October and the interstate 'Sheffield Shield' competition resumed in December.[11] Just like the ABC many believed that war would not last out the year, making the abandonment of sporting fixtures an unnecessary response. The minutes of the VCA reflect this contentment. After universally agreeing to continue its matches in September the Association would make no mention of the war for another six months.[12]

With the game's officials giving the green light for the recommencement the press and public alike entered the season with a sense of excitement. The writings of the *Australasian* cricket correspondent Tom Horan, also known as 'Felix', reflected an ignorance toward the war's seriousness that would be interpreted in hindsight as indifference. Horan's mindset certainly appeared carefree, as between September and December he remained less concerned with the war than how the inclement Melbourne weather was affecting the game.[13] He was not the only one guilty of this attitude. Review of the MCC's Annual Report showcases a notable apathy to the fighting in Europe:

> The success of both our teams (MCC and Victoria), but particularly of the First Eleven, showed how anomalous the position hitherto had been. Spurred on by the knowledge that their success would meet with material acknowledgment, the players threw their whole hearts into the game, with the result that they carried all before them, and the 1914/15 Pennant, flying at the Melbourne Ground will, in the years to come, be regarded by all as the symbol that marked the beginning of a new era in the game of cricket in this state.[14]

In fairness, this was a common mindset of the time. MCC historian Alf Batchelder has sympathised with the perceivably indifferent attitude of the game toward the war during the summer. It was a time of 'action and excitement' where the war and its costs remained remote from the everyday lives of Melbournians. There was, Batchelder reminds us, 'an unquestioning, cheerful and romantic optimism

[11] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 76, 78-80.
[12] *Victorian Cricket Association Minutes*, September, 1914 – February 1915, CV Archives.
[13] *Australasian*, 26 September, 31; 3 October, 23; 17 October, 21; 31 October, 22; 7 November, 22; 14 November, 22; 21 November, 22; 28 November, 20; 12 December, 26; 26 December, 1914, 20.
[14] *MCC Annual Report for the Season 1914/15*, MCC Archives.

to it all.'[15] Caught within the vortex of the short-war complex that dominated sporting circles and wider society, cricket pushed on ahead without a second thought.

Rumblings Begin

The beginning of 1915 brought with it a significant change in attitude from the cricketing community, one punctuated by trepidation. The first murmurings against sport were beginning to emerge at the tail-end of this last carefree summer, not against football, but rather cricket. The *Examiner* printed one such letter in January, 'Some people content that people should not indulge in cricket… during this time of war… Just at present the cricketers have a little civil war or two of their own on.'[16] Of course, any action to be taken against sport was dispelled by Prime Minister Andrew Fischer's belief that it would be a 'mistake to restrict healthy, legitimate sport'.[17] Such remarks should have assured the cricketing community that all was well. But the almost non-decision to continue with the summer game and the joyful way it was conducted appears to have imbued cricket authorities with a sense of guilt and concern of a potential public backlash. Cricket, they feared, could be accused of not taking the conflict as seriously as it should and its existence might work directly against its best interests, with regard to emerging issue of recruiting.

The growing seriousness with which Australians approached the war by early 1915 saw the MCC and VCA in particular move to prove their commitment to the cause. As remembered it was these governing bodies who led the Victorian sportsmen unit campaign in February, 1915 (see Chapter 4). The push on MacKinnon's behalf was in fact motivated by the growing concern that Australian cricketers had not answered the call in the same manner that English cricketers had. His singling out of the significant enlistment figures of English cricketers as opposed to the relative inactivity of Australian cricketing organisations during the last six months lays testament to this.[18]

[15] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 76.
[16] *Examiner* (Hobart), 18 January, 1915, 7.
[17] *Register* (Adelaide), 4 March, 1915, 4.
[18] *Age*, 9 February, 1915, 8.

In reality, the belief that the English game had showcased a superior patriotism was built upon misleading foundations. The Marylebone Cricket Club, the governing body of world cricket, whose administration consisted exclusively of middle-upper class and amateur gentlemen, had adopted a business-as-usual approach to the outbreak of war, just as the Sheffield Shield had. But when the first reports came through of high casualty rates on the European continent the public mood altered dramatically. Lucky to be in its customary off-season during this time, English cricket watched on as rival winter codes sustained a hailstorm of condemnation from the press and public alike. It therefore had no other option but to abandon its upcoming fixture in January, 1915. The timing of all this worked heavily in the game's favour and its reputation became a notably patriotic one, as historian Simon John writes, 'although the county season had not been cancelled at the outbreak of war, the false notion that it had ceased at that point soon took shape.'[19]

The myth of the wholeheartedly patriotic stance taken by all English cricketers and administrators prompted many to question the lacking commitment of Australian sportsmen and consequently cricket's place in society. The sports commentator "Fife and Drum", who in August had predicted the strong showing of the nation's sportsmen, was prompted in February to criticise Australian sporting culture after hearing that an entire English cricket team had enlisted: 'What is the good of games if they do not provide a training ground for the sterner battles in our lives'. "Fife and Drum" even proposed that if such games were not conducive to the creating of a martial society it would be best that Australia 'blotted them out from our daily lives altogether….'[20] The Australian cricketing community had much to live up to and it therefore moved quickly, through its establishment of the sportsmen appeal, to display its loyalty to nation and Empire.

The meetings organised by cricket administrators that February, however, would have unforeseeable consequences for not only cricket but all sport in the coming months and years. Their great legacy was in matters far less tangible than the numbers of recruits which they produced. Rather, they turned a spotlight once and for all on the sportsmen of Melbourne and Australia. From now on their

[19] Simon John, "A Different Kind of Test Match': Cricket, English Society and the First World War," *Sport in History* 33 (2013): 20-23.
[20] *Pastoral Review*, 16 February, 1915.

willingness to enlist would become a matter of no small concern, an unavoidable development which forced each sport to examine its own contribution to the war effort, and ultimately, the reasons for its existence and continuation in wartime society. The meeting signalled that sport could not hope to proceed on a pre-war footing.[21] Though definitely not their intention, the games' highest authorities had unknowingly opened the doorway for critics to vilify players who refused to enlist and consequently those institutions which harboured their choosing of the playing field over the battlefield. Cricket's commitment to patriotism would in effect sow the seeds of its own demise.

Criticisms Emerge

It was not long before cricket began to feel the pressure of the anti-sport campaigners. An organisation strongly associated with the amateur ethos, the Melbourne Universities Sports Union forwarded a cordial letter to the VCA in mid-April suggesting that it stage only non-competitive fixtures.[22] Others proved to be far less affable. The *Forbes Times* published an article in late March titled 'Cricket or War?' in which one concerned citizen scolded the wider cricketing community for its self-absorption in a time of national and Imperial crisis, 'While Europe is torn with war, Australia discusses schemes for brightening cricket!' This is in direct reference to the publishing of a NSWCA report on how to improve the game six days earlier. In response to this callous show of apathy, the article proposed the need to curtail sport by government intervention and send 'all cricketers to the war…' This was followed by a more personal attack on the players, 'the cricketer himself, in the words of the parodist, would rather: Knock a hundred up at the National game, than a hundred down with a gun!' The article concludes that 'such a policy is not "good cricket" in either its literal or figurative sense.'[23]

[21] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 89.
[22] *Victorian Cricket Association Minutes*, 12 April, 1915, 47; Meeting of the Melbourne University Sports Union, 24 February, 28 April, 1915, *Melbourne University Sports Union Minutes Book, 1909-1920*, 185-188, Melbourne University Archives.
[23] *Forbes Times* (NSW), 30 March, 1915, 4; *Referee*, 24 March, 1915, 12.

Two days later a letter to the editor in the *Dandenong Advertiser* titled 'The Shirkers' made similar feelings on the sport clear. It placed a great deal of pressure on its local cricket competition, helping set the tone for later attacks that would plague the game for the next two years. It commended the paper for acknowledging the Dandenong Footballers who 'at the first sound of war's alarm, volunteered for "the front" to uphold the dignity of Australia.' It then put the onus on the local cricket competition:

> it is now up to Kipling's "Flannelled Fools (?)" of the Dandenong cricket clubs… to show that material they're made of, either by immediately enlisting for the Front or skulking in ignoble security, to be forever branded 'cowards' and members of 'the rotten stick brigade' and pointed at with scorn by the women and children they would cravenly abandon to the ruthless, ravishing, merciless German monsters were they to invade Dandenong tomorrow.[24]

The focus on cricket rather than football in early 1915 occurred due to it being the major sporting fixture during the summer months. As the year rolled on attention quickly shifted toward Australia's winter codes. There is no denying that football was the principal victim of 1915. But even as the 1914/15 cricket season wound down and the war geared up, the campaign against cricket began to gather its own momentum. Though it has since been drowned out by the hysterical cries against football, cricket in 1915 would suffer under an intense level of persecution.

Internal Cracks Appear

Cricket momentarily dodged the barbs of anti-sport campaigners throughout May and June. But larger events were in motion that the various cricket authorities must have observed with a close eye. News of the Gallipoli landings brought excitement initially, but the endless casualty lists that appeared in June and the arrival of the wounded and maimed soldiers in July sobered an Australia drunk on war's romanticism. As the *Australasian* printed on the 15th of July:

[24] *Dandenong Advertiser and Cranbourne, Berwick Oakleigh Advocate*, 1 April, 1915, 3.

> That frightful landing in Gallipoli, the desperate fight against fearful odds to hold the positions so hardly won, the tragic tale told by the succession of casualty lists, the mourning in thousands of Australian homes – these things have burned themselves into the hearts and brains of the people.[25]

This loss of young men augmented the belief that the playing of games was now inappropriate and a distraction from recruitment and the public's focus on the war. With recruiters now explaining that every available man was needed, attacks against sportsmen and sporting fixtures escalated dramatically. The criticisms of social commentators were legitimised by the changing attitude of government officials. On the 24th of June Senator Grant questioned in Federal Parliament the appropriateness of newspapers in discussing cricketing matters, 'If one looks down the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*, what will he find? A whole page devoted exclusively to sporting matters. A portion of it deals with cricket…[26] This was followed by the NSW Premier William Hollman's comments on the 2nd of July that 'this is not the time for football and tennis matches.'[27]

Impressed by these developments, the NSWCA adopted a new attitude to the war that would divide the cricketing community by year's end. Though the VCA wished to encourage recruitment, the NSWCA was primarily concerned with impeding it. Accordingly, it sent a message to its great rival and partner on the 7th of July proposing the early abandonment of the interstate competition for the upcoming season. The VCA did not consider the proposal immediately, deciding to wait almost two weeks until its next meeting on the 19th to discuss the matter. It even went about preparing its schedule for the summer, going so far as to inquire with the Tasmanian Cricket Association as to possible dates in which a match could be staged in January.[28] Though VCA President Donald Mackinnon had just been appointed as one of three administrators on the newly formed Victorian Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, his sympathetic attitude toward sport precipitated his organisation's resistance to the NSWCA's determination to disband interstate play.

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[25] *Australasian*, 15 July, 1915 cited in Keith Dunstan, *The Paddock That Grew: The Story of the Melbourne Cricket Club* (London: Cassell & Company, 1962), 117.
[26] *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 24 June, 1915, 6th Parliament, Vol. 77, 26 May – 21 July, 1915, 4301.
[27] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July, 1915.
[28] *Age*, 9 July, 1915, 7; *Daily Post* (Hobart), 10 July, 1915, 8.

Hoping to simultaneously pressure the VCA and stamp its new patriotic stance on the war-minded public, the NSWCA sent out the following recruitment appeal to the players and wider cricketing community to enlist at once:

> A large number of cricketers have joined the colours, and some have laid down their lives for the Empire, but more are needed to fill the gaps at the Dardanelles… The various district clubs belonging to affiliated Associations throughout the state are requested to make of their annual meetings recruiting ones. It was only a race of athletes which could have stormed Gallipoli heights successfully. Your country men did this, and in doing so have a name for bravery which will endure forever. Will you emulate this glorious example?

The NSWCA would reaffirm this position on the 27th during its annual meeting. President J. H. Clayton renounced the idea that competitive sport held any respectable place within society during a time of national crisis, 'sport has no claims whatever when country calls – I hope every boy will give serious thought and enlist…'[29] A strict expectation from the NSWCA had emerged that 'all players who are not married, who have no family responsibilities, and are physically able, ought to enlist'[30]

With the NSWCA now firmly on the side of recruitment over all other considerations the VCA was left with little choice. To continue without its major competitor would make for an altogether shambolic affair. At the meeting on the 19th it unanimously decided to withdraw from any interstate matches. The South Australian Cricket Association followed willingly on the advice of these organisations. Accordingly, no interstate play would be held for the first time since its inception in 1863. VCA affiliate and East Melbourne representative C. W. Nodrum, commenting on the decision, stated that Victoria 'was not willing to carry out any programme of interstate fixture unless the war terminated'. He also insisted that no Victorian cricketer would want to see interstate matches being played anyway whilst the war continued.[31]

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[29] *Saturday Referee and the Arrow* (Sydney), 17 July, 1915, 7; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 July, 1915, 12.
[30] *Referee*, 19 January, 1916, 12.
[31] *Victorian Cricket Association Minutes*, 19 July, 1915, 53-56, CA Archives; *Age*, 20 July, 1915, 7; *Daily Herald* (Adelaide), 11 August, 1915, 4; *Australasian*, 24 July, 1915, 24.

The decision was welcomed by many, if not widely celebrated. The *Darling Downs Gazette* used the decision to take a stab at other sportsmen who refused to abandon their games.[32] Others, however, fretted over the common belief that the game in NSW was in the decline. The *Sportsmen*, a paper that supported the continuation of sport throughout the war, wrote, '(cricket) already in a comatose condition… could be killed off by its friends.'[33] Of course, while interstate matches had been scratched, the game's administrators would not commit to abandon play entirely. Across the country grade matches would go ahead for the time being, though only on social terms with no championship being awarded.[34] The NSWCA had certainly taken a more proactive stance on the issue of playing cricket in wartime than their Victorian rivals. Seemingly in agreement by July, the continued efforts by the VCA to have some form of interstate play would result in an unsavoury dispute between the game's major governing bodies by years' end, bringing the sport to the point of extreme internal conflict.

Cricket under Attack

The considerable sacrifice made by cricket administrators to abandon their chief sources of revenue was not enough for many Australian patriots, even within the game itself. In the days following the decision to go ahead with a purely social grade competition the captain of the Redfern District Cricket Club, H. Goddard, spoke strongly against the continuation of matches. Fuelled by concern for his friends at the front and unable to enlist himself, Goddard felt 'ashamed to see my name mentioned as being an office bearer of the Redfern Club. I am ashamed with the shirkers who could enlist and do not.' He continued 'Cricketers or other sportsmen who can go should not be applauded in the field for their ability, but jeered at, as they are not sports when they know their comrades at war require their assistance.'[35]

[32] *Darling Downs Gazette*, 21 July 1915, 4.
[33] *Sportsmen* (Sydney), 29 September, 1915, 1.
[34] McKernan, "War, Sport and Society," 7; *Australasian*, 24 July, 1915, 24.
[35] *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW), 26 July, 1915, 5.

Similar discontent was held with the Parramatta and District Cricket Club. The proposal to continue the club's schedule was met with strong antagonism, with a generational wedge between the clubs' older and younger members, the latter of which reportedly refused to enlist in adequate numbers. But the real fire came from a local reporter, whose opinions on the continuation of cricket exceeded even that of the NSWCA, encouraging the state's grade clubs to disband in the face of the 'unpatriotic' invitation to play.[36] Discord was also brewing in Victoria. A Melbourne periodical published a poem titled 'To Shirkers' which criticised the state's cricketing community:

> They talk of crops and cricket,
> And some 'talk' of making guns,
> While others face the wicket,
> And boast their record runs;
>
> But when the foe is beaten,
> And victory's bestowed,
> Then they'll rush to be enlisted,
> And reap what others sowed.[37]

Attitudes toward the game could be civil; however, the gravity of the war had an unusual way of inducing hysteria and agitation from sections of the community. As the beginning of the various district and local competitions drew closer, a renewed offensive against the game in Victoria emerged, led by one of the most radical and vitriolic patriots of the war. On the morning of Thursday the 7th of October, five days after the beginning of the Victorian District Cricket season, an extended article appeared within the *Australian Statesman and Mining Standard* titled 'Cricket and Shirking'. The article contained a vicious and slanderous attack on the state's elite cricketing community for their failure to answer when their country had called. Though no author claimed responsibility, the article

[36] *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate* (Parramatta), 24 July, 1915, 3.
[37] *Advocate* (Melbourne), 7 August, 1915, 20.

was most certainly written by Earnest Oliphant, the journal's editor, who would make identical criticisms of cricketers the following year, as well as similar attacks against Xavier College in 1917.

Though footballers had displayed a serious lack of patriotism throughout the winter of 1915, Oliphant reminded readers that representative cricketers had largely escaped public scorn. He therefore set about turning the blowtorch on the summer game. Footballers, despite their 'deplorable attitude' which could 'scarcely be surpassed', had actually displayed an altogether 'noble spirit' when compared to the inaction of its cricketers, which Oliphant labelled 'an altogether unheroic display.' This was certainly a loaded accusation given the shameful reputation footballers had worn during 1915.

Strong statistical comparison with the VCA's cross-state rivals was used as evidence to defame the state's elite cricketers. Oliphant commended the satisfactory enlistment rates of NSW and South Australian representative cricketers, claiming that 11 out of 35 (31 per cent) of the former and 6 out of 16 (37 per cent) of the latter had joined the khaki by October, 1915. Victoria, however, had the comparatively low total of just 1 out of 21 (5 per cent) of its 1914/15 representative cricketers in uniform. This substantial discrepancy thus constituted 'an enormous disgrace to Victorian cricketers…' Oliphant, in a move that embodies the unapologetic nature of the onslaught, proceeded to publish the names of the remaining 20 unenlisted cricketers, including Warwick Armstrong, 'Dainty' Ironmonger and Jack Ryder, all current or future legends of the game, in the hope of bringing about further public scorn and forcing them into enlistment.[38]

But the article's wrath isn't reserved solely for the state's players: 'not only is the association not ashamed of itself, it has even the audacity in its annual report to indulge in an amount of cock-crowing over the fact that last season the State obtained possession of the Sheffield Shield.' This is in direct reference to the recent publishing of the VCA's 1914/15 Annual Report in late September:

[38] The biographies of both Ryder and Armstrong can give no definite answer as to why they did not enlist, although one can imagine Armstrong's advanced age (38), diagnosis of Malaria and family commitments had something to do with it. Marc Fiddian, *A Life-Long Innings: The Story of Jack Ryde*r (Pakenham: Pakenham Gazette, 1995), 35; Gideon Haigh, *The Big Ship: Warwick Armstrong and the Making of Modern Cricket* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2001), 252.

> Cricket in Victoria during season 1914-1915 proved harmonious, progressive and eminently successful. Every individual Club in the Association worked whole-heartedly with its fellows for the advancement of the game, and for the winning back of the prestige of the State. Members of all Clubs, leading players, from the Victorian Captain to the latest interstate recruit, and everybody connected with the sport, exhibited earnestness and enthusiasm that could not be withstood, and that culminated in the winning of the Sheffield Shield. It was, in fact, a glorious season for Victorian cricket; and, but for the gloom that has been cast on the civilized world in the consequence of the devastating war now being waged in the old world, and in which Australia has sacrificed and is still sacrificing thousands of her noblest and bravest sons, the dominant note of this report would be one of joy and general satisfaction.[39]

The somewhat cheerful tone of this document was merely reflective of an incredibly successful season for Victoria, as well as the euphoria that permeated throughout an Australian society yet to fully embrace the seriousness of the war that summer. Nevertheless, the drastic change in the public's mood altered the perception of the report itself. The pride that greeted the winning of the Shield contrasted with the report's brushing over of the war's growing tragedy and meaning. In a post-Gallipoli Australia, it is unsurprising to see why an ultra-patriot like Oliphant might have interpreted the VCA's report as callously apathetic to the sacrifices of its countrymen. Oliphant concluded his attack with a blanketed denunciation of Victoria's cricketing community from top to bottom, along with other sporting players, bodies and fans, who he labelled as 'enemies of their country.'[40]

Historian Nick Richardson has labelled Oliphant's article 'the most pointed of all the press reactions towards the playing sportsmen' during the war.[41] Indeed, it was a remarkably spiteful attack, one that rivalled Adamson's for animosity, if not infamy. It still managed, however, to inspire others to fire their own shots at the summer game. Two days after Oliphant's article and in response to the opening of the grade matches, the Adelaide's *Register* commented, 'one cannot help wondering how so many physically fit young men without home ties have the courage to enter into the game this season while

[39] *Victorian Cricket Association Annual Report for the Season 1914-15*, 6, CA Archives.
[40] *Australian Statesman and Mining Standard*, 7 October, 1915.
[41] Richardson, *The Game of Their Lives*, 97.

their comrades are risking their lives fighting for their country.' The VCA also drew surprisingly little public support from the Sydney *Referee's* cricketing correspondent 'NOT OUT' when raising the article.[42]

Unfortunately, this was no time for calm assessment. The August offensives saw another rush of dismayed and dismembered soldiers return from the Dardanelles. Meanwhile, the real epicentre of war, the Western Front, had ensnared Britain, France and Germany in a mad embrace of mutual destruction, where the very essence of national sovereignty and even British civilisation was purported to be at stake. Nothing or no one could change the convictions of patriots like Oliphant and he would continue to make sure cricket did not escape its proper judgement. It was Oliphant's first reproach against the game, but certainly not his last.

The end of the 1915/16 season might have given cricket supporters a relief from the barbs of patriots, but the game's most vicious detractor had other ideas. With recruitment figures dwindling and murmurings of conscription gaining serious momentum, Oliphant, after being invited as the Guest of Trustees of the Victorian Public Library, mounted the platform at the La Trobe Gallery to speak before a large audience. In a speech titled 'Do we deserve to win?' Oliphant asked 'Did any people deserve to win that had been so slack and so backward, so short sighted and so unpatriotic, as had the people of Great Britain?' He saved special criticism for the nations sporting community, with racegoers and footballers receiving their fair share of condemnation; however, Oliphant once again saved his most venomous remarks for Victoria's cricketers:

> When one looked at athletic young men disgracing their country and themselves by devoting themselves to cricket and other sports when their country needed them, one might again ask whether as a people we deserve to be successful in this terrible war…[43]

The *Argus* picked up the speech and printed it shortly afterward. Unlike his previous attack in October, however, Oliphant's pointed criticisms sparked retaliation from one of the VCA's more

[42] *Register* (Adelaide), 9 October, 1915, 13; *Referee*, 27 October, 1915, 12; admittedly there were those who rejected Oliphant's accusations, *The W. A. Record*, 13 November, 1915, 17.
[43] *Argus*, 29 June, 1916, 6.

tenacious administrators. Ernie Bean, the VCA's new secretary, wrote to the *Argus* a few days later defending the Victorian cricketing community against Oliphant's assault. Considered by cricket historian Jack Pollard as a 'strongman' as well as a 'cunning and successful strategist', Bean was not above publicly expressing contempt for those who opposed him, no matter their standing, as his battles with the Australian cricketers over control of the 1912 Ashes tour had proven.[44] Bean was not conciliatory as Mackinnon was and as such was never likely to take Oliphant's second condemnation lying down.

Bean wrote to the paper rejecting Oliphant's 'reckless denunciation' as 'so remote from the truth' that it carried no weight in the state's cricketing community. He questioned the validity of Oliphant's claims and defended those who had not enlisted, responding that many were married men with important concerns at home or ineligible for active service. As such Bean determined that 'all classes of Victorian cricketers have answered the Empire's call magnificently' and he therefore found it difficult to understand 'why the lecturer should have made such erroneous statements…'[45] Oliphant was a man firm in his convictions and one disinclined to be challenged publicly, especially when the war was concerned. The day after Bean's response was published Oliphant fired back one of his own. He claimed that Bean's response had totally missed the point of his criticism, which he reminded was one aimed at the state's 'leading cricketers', i.e. its Sheffield Shield representatives from the 1914/15 season. Oliphant signed off that Bean would be hard pressed to prove that these cricketers were 'men and patriots.'[46] Bean would not be cowed and the two men continued their spat in the proceeding days through the *Argus*.[47]

The whole affair appears rather petty, two stubborn men squabbling over the insignificant details of one another's assertions. This is perhaps expected of a man like Oliphant, who consistently displayed an uncompromisingly vindictive attitude toward those he considered not entirely devoted to Empire. Victorian Cricket historian Robert Coleman holds a low opinion of critics such as Oliphant,

[44] Jack Pollard, *The Turbulent Years of Australian Cricket*, *1893-1917* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1987), 178, 230.
[45] *Argus*, 3 July, 1916, 13.
[46] Ibid., 4 July, 1916, 8.
[47] Ibid., 6 July 1916, 8; Ibid., 8th July, 1916, 16.

particularly given they used their advanced age as a shield to denounce young men for shirking. Coleman labels such critics as "would-to-Godders" as in "would to God I were 10 years younger: I'd be over there!"[48] Nevertheless, the words had stung all the same. Clearly the pressure aimed at Victoria's cricketing community had finally unnerved the VCA. Bean's engagement in an unbecoming and very public slanging match with a man such as Oliphant, cultured but obstinate, indicates that he was fed up with the unfair criticism being levelled at the game he loved and the players who played it.

He would do so again a month later when compiling the VCA's 1915/16 Annual Report, a rather sad indictment of the war's disastrous impact on the game, which reads as more concerned with outlining cricket's contribution to the war effort than anything to do with the playing of cricket across the last year. After mentioning the Associations generous financial contribution to various war funds, its authors Bean and MacKinnon reminded the public of the game's substantial contribution of men to the front, 'the appeal to the young men of Australia to enlist and fight for the Empire has been loyally responded to by Victorian cricketers.' This statement was reinforced by the claim that to August, 1916 2,854 men who had previously played under the auspices of the VCA were now in uniform.[49]

In September, the annual meeting of the organisation presented the report publicly and Mackinnon highlighted that given the game had contributed so many men it was justified in continuing matches during the year. It was a position they held to across the following season, 'These matches provide a sane recreation for those who are ineligible to enlist; they do not hinder recruiting'.[50] Mackinnon and his organisation were clearly making a statement that they would not be perturbed by their critics. The VCA would refuse to respond to a third attack launched by Oliphant on it the following year.[51]

What remains particularly noticeable within Oliphant's attacks is his focus on former representative cricketers, who would gain no financial incentive owing to the abandonment of interstate cricket, as

[48] Robert Coleman, *Season in the Sun: The Story of the Victorian Cricket Association* (North Melbourne: Hargreen Publishing Company, 1993), 285.
[49] *Victorian Cricket Association Annual Report for the Season 1915/16*, 7-8, CA Archives.
[50] *Referee*, 27 September, 1916, 13; *Victorian Cricket Association Annual Report for the Season 1916/17*, 7, CA Archives.
[51] *Australian Statesmen and Mining Standard*, 14 June, 1917.

the primary culprits of the state's sporting community, rather than the more common target of professionally paid footballers. From this one can gather that Oliphant and many others considered sport itself to be the roadblock that prevented the enlistment of young men and not necessarily the inducement of financial incentives that Adamson had raged against. The cries of the most radical patriots regarded all sport with contempt regardless of code or creed. As Oliphant proposed during the 1917 recruiting crisis:

> Every sporting body of the Commonwealth should come together and decide that… neither the commonwealth or any state of the commonwealth should ever again be represented by any man who was eligible for the front and shirked his obvious duty'[52]

But Oliphant and his supporters should have considered that, given the abandonment of the Shield had done little to improve recruiting of its players, sport perhaps had no direct link with the decision to enlist, even after financial incentive was removed. The VFL, which by-and-large removed payments to players during the 1916 season, had also continued to incur the wrath of criticisms from patriots for its detrimental impact on the volunteer system. The problem is that these extremists viewed the opportunity to play sport as the only reason why an athlete would not enlist. They defined these men as sportsmen and sportsmen only, with their entire decision making process directed by this fact. While patriots viewed sport and the war as competing entities, as seen in the Figure 14 below, the blaming of sport was in actuality a scapegoat to explain why some men simply did not wish to take part in the war raging abroad.

[52] Australian Statesman and Mining Standard, 3 May, 1917.

Figure 14 Duty v. Pleasure [53]

An Ideological Split

With the game under increasing pressure from the outside, the cracks between its major governing bodies widened into open fissures. This internal division occurred predominantly due to the differing approaches of the VCA and NSWCA regarding the appropriateness of sport in wartime society, which took on increasingly alternating trajectories as 1915 wore on. Division had begun to emerge as early as July, with the VCA's delayed agreement to abandon the 1915/16 Sheffield Shield season. This was further reflected in each Association's annual report for the 1914/15 season.

The pride and joy with which Mackinnon accepted the Shield lay in stark contrast to the more sombre tone of the NSWCA report released in July. While graciously acknowledging Victoria's achievement, the NSW President J. H. Clayton qualified his team's poor performance as owing to its focus on more serious matters, 'the unfortunate war… rendered an enthusiastic preparation for the cricket campaign quite out of the question.' The report continued, 'It is apparent that little or no interest would be taken

[53] "Duty v. Pleasure", *Punch*, 24 February, 1916, 277.

in the game by the public. The players naturally lacked enthusiasm, and consequently, the selectors experienced considerable difficulty in choosing the interstate teams.'[54] In Oliphant-like reasoning if not temperament, the poor performance of the team was excused under its prioritisation of the war over its games, a qualification that by extension discredits the eminence of Victoria's achievement and even paints it as thoroughly unpatriotic. Despite having run along the same line as its Victorian counterpart, the NSWCA was clearly employing its own historical revisionism towards the apathetic attitude it had similarly displayed the previous summer. NSWCA delegate C. B. Cochrane was head to remark, 'The proper colours for the young players at the present is khaki… Why, last season I felt ashamed to be seen carrying a bat!'[55]

In any case, the release of Australian casualties lists that July had radically hardened its stance against the playing of cricket. In contrast, the VCA began to take a more optimistic view toward the role of sport, refusing to buy into the argument surrounding its debilitating impact on recruiting and instead appreciating its potential to raise much needed war funds. It soon moved to have its own opinion of the issue felt on the cricketing landscape. In October, VCA member Ernie Bean pushed to reconsider the abandonment of the awarding of the premiership in the local grade competition.[56] The proposal failed, but it was obvious that several Victorian administrators were getting itchy feet as the summer approached. Seeking to see some form of elite cricket played it proposed to the NSWCA the possibility of staging of a series of Patriotic Matches between the states, with all proceeds raised going toward the war fund.

The NSWCA rejected the proposal immediately, strictly adhering to its July affirmation that it would not be privy to any form interstate play, nor offer any player the inducement of a free interstate trip that may prevent players from enlisting. It would not even be goaded into playing by taunts that it feared an embarrassing defeat at the hands of the champion Victorian team, an altogether justifiable

[54] *New South Wales Cricket Association Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the New South Wales Cricket Association Season 1914-15*, 7-8, State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW); *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 July, 1915, 12.
[55] Phillip Derriman, *True to the Blue: A History of the New South Wales Cricket Association* (Mosman, NSW: Richard Smart Publishing, 1985), 139.
[56] *Argus*, 1 October, 1915, 3.

stance in the opinion of Oliphant, who viewed Victoria's desire for interstate play as a means to 'take advantage' of the weakness of the other states who had displayed a 'superior patriotism'.[57] Victoria, disappointed but undeterred, decided to continue with the fund-raising matches alone.

The issue should have died here, but the VCA in its desire to actively contribute to the war effort in some meaningful way would see it cross state, legal and ethical lines. With strong support from the state's cricketing fraternity, it invited the NSW stars Warren Bardsley, Charlie Macartney and Monty Noble as well as South Australia's Clem Hill to participate in its Patriotic Matches. Though Noble and Hill politely declined the invitation due to prior commitments, Bardsley and Macartney showcased an enthusiastic interest in participating. Bardsley wrote to the VCA on the 7th of December that he was 'only too pleased to take part.' Though not holding the reservations of the NSWCA, Bardsley clearly knew his involvement would cause trouble, given that he informed the VCA that he intended to discuss the matter first with the NSWCA. The VCA too must have sensed it had acted outside its own jurisdiction, as it quickly sent a letter to the NSWCA that it had requested the services of 'several' of its players.[58]

Already aware of the VCA's manoeuvring through the Melbourne press the NSWCA moved to block any involvement of its players in the Patriotic Matches. It sent a series of letters to the VCA on the 11th stipulating that it had refused sanction of its contracted players to take part in the matches. On top of this, the NSWCA wished to convey its displeasure in the VCA for inviting its players to take part in a match which it had already refused to sanction. In doing so, it considered the VCA to have committed 'a distinct breach of the agreement between the various associations in not having first asked permission.' The NSWCA once again explained that it sought to encourage recruiting, not cricket.

These letters were laden with restrained hostility, not only because they claimed that the VCA had knowingly acted outside its authority, but also because they basically insinuated it was more

[57] *Referee*, 22 September, 1915, 13; *Winner*, 29 September, 1915, 6; *Age*, 22 September, 1915, 15; *Australian Statesman and Mining Standard*, 7 October, 1915.
[58] *Age*, 7 December, 1915, 8; *Argus*, 10 December, 1915, 5; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December, 1915, 6.

concerned with sport than assisting recruitment. The *Evening News* made comment on the hostile tone of the NSWCA letters, 'It is practically the case of an association (NSW) telling another body that it is not "playing the game."' Such an insinuation undoubtedly raised eyebrows in Victoria given the President of the VCA was also a key member of the Victorian Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, whose efforts had garnered far more recruits than their NSW counterpart, and whose other representatives had led the charge in the Victorian sportsmen unit campaign earlier that year.

Mackinnon responded on the 14th with his usual diplomacy, refusing to engage in a public slanging match with the rival body. Nevertheless, he stood by the initiative claiming that they not only had public sympathy but would simultaneously provide for the patriotic fund and help to stimulate recruiting. As for any legal lines the VCA had crossed, Mackinnon argued that this was no time for 'standing on technicalities.' He reinforced this position by stating that Macartney intended to enlist after the match anyway. Mackinnon was supported by his hard-nosed secretary Bean, who reasoned matter-of-factly that there had been no breach of any rule or agreement.[59]

The tension between the two organisations reached boiling point after the NSWCA released a public statement that came, according to the *Argus*, 'with rather an ill grace from New South Wales to Victoria.'[60] Directly responding to the VCA's public justification of its actions the previous day, it made its feelings clear regarding what it considered to be the continued underhanded and unpatriotic dealings of the VCA. The letter finished with a clear indication of where its priorities rested, 'just now, when the Federal Government is calling for recruits… Our association will not do anything to encourage men to disregard their duty to Empire during this present crisis.'[61]

An impasse had finally been reached. The VCA refused to bite back at the NSWCA latest public lashing and under the instructions of Mackinnon was instructed to 'smooth things with New South Wales' in the last-ditch effort to acquire the services of NSW players. The NSWCA remained unwilling to come to terms with the VCA and neither player partook in either match. Bardsley,

[59] Under the headline 'Interstate Friction', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 December, 1915, 7; *Age*, 14 December, 1915, 8; *Evening News*, 13 December, 1915, 5; *Argus*, 14 December, 1915, 8.
[60] *Argus*, 16 December, 1915, 8.
[61] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December, 1915, 6.

despite his disappointment, stayed publicly loyal to the position taken by the NSWCA.[62] In the end the matches would go ahead between the Victorian XI and a Next Fifteen, producing the best cricket of the war. Most importantly, the matches generated £3,255 in desperately needed funds for the Victorian Sick and Wounded Soldiers Fund.[63]

A clear discrepancy that had been simmering since July had finally erupted in December, resulting in a very bitter and public spat between two of the country's most powerful cricketing bodies. The 'difference in the point of view' between the two Associations was, according to one of Sydney's senior cricketing correspondents, 'striking'.[64] At the heart of this dispute lay a lack of consensus over what constituted acceptable wartime behaviour on the home front. For the NSWCA, sport held no right to exist while Australians fought and died abroad, while the VCA, believing it could not force men to enlist, sought to make the most on what the sporting community could provide to the war effort.

Their conflicting interpretations of this issue took much incentive from the personal opinions of their respective leaders. The inflexible patriotism of the NSWCA displayed throughout 1915 is reflective of the patriotic outlook of Clayton, which evoked the fanaticism of men like Oliphant, Adamson and even Prime Minister Hughes. Clayton was not averse to attacking his own in the name of Empire, 'I unhesitatingly state that the junior cricketers of the country have not responded, and are not responding, to the call from the comrades who are fighting and dying for their liberties in Gallipoli.'[65] Of course, belligerent patriotism over broad notions of duty and Empire often concealed a more personal angst. Clayton had two sons on the frontline during these months, one of which had been wounded in June.[66] It is important to recognise that indaviduals such as these, who appear almost irrational in their desire to force men into uniform, were often motivated by a desire to aid those nearest and dearest to them.

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[62] *Victorian Cricket Association Minutes*, 13 December, 1915, 85, CA Archives; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 December, 1915, 6.
[63] Dunstan, *The Paddock that Grew*, 117.
[64] *Referee*, 15 December, 1915, 12.
[65] *Sun* (Sydney), 2 September, 1915, 5.
[66] *Daily Telegraph*, 7 September, 1915, 3; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 June, 1915, 14.

This aggressive approach was contrasted with that of Mackinnon who, even after occupying positions in the State War Council, State Parliamentary Recruiting Committee and National Director-General of Recruiting, has been described as 'the sanest man in the country on the issues which were bitterly dividing the nation.'[67] His sympathetic attitude toward the Australian public during the recruitment campaigns was extended toward sportsmen. Unlike Clayton, he refused to openly denounce cricketers, sportsmen or his countrymen in general, instead opting for a more conciliatory approach. As Richardson explains, 'Mackinnon, as always, had faith that once decent men were presented with good reasons or compelling evidence to enlist, they would sign up.'[68] What makes this stance more commendable is that, even after his son Brice's death on active duty, he remained fair-minded on such issues.[69]

But it was not only the Associations who differed on the issue of interstate cricket. The dispute between these powerful bodies was playing out in a very public manner and it was not long before the states respective press and public weighed in. Melbourne cricket correspondents, with little else to write about that summer, waged a campaign against the perceived pigheadedness of the NSWCA that continued even after the patriotic fixtures were complete. 'Slips' remarked, 'The dog-in-the-manger attitude of the New South Wales Cricket Association… has earned the condemnation of sportsmen generally.'[70] 'Short Stop' too claimed the matches would aid, rather than impede, recruiting. Therefore, it considered the NSWCA attitude 'illogical.'[71] Having adopted the outlook of their cricketing authorities, but with no diplomatic considerations to hold them back, the Melbourne Media could forcefully express their frustrations with the NSWCA.

In response, many of NSW's cricketing writers swiftly rallied behind the NSWCA and its more radical stance against sport. The *Referee's* cricket correspondent 'NOT OUT' spoke at length of the contrasting interpretations between the Sydney and Melbourne media as indicative of the central issue dividing the Associations. Though considering the Melbourne view with respect and open-

[67] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 309.
[68] Richardson, *The Game of their Lives*, 98.
[69] *Argus*, 8 August, 1918, 1; Letters 1915-1919, Mackinnon Family Papers, SLV.
[70] *Sporting Judge* (Melbourne), 22 December, 1915, 4.
[71] *Leader* (Melbourne), 25 December, 1915, 18.

mindedness, 'NOT OUT' confirmed that he couldn't help but stand by the belief that this was no time for representative cricket. The 'underlying principal' of the NSWCA's position was one that viewed the concerns of nation and Empire above leisure. As such, 'NOT OUT' believed the NSW view epitomised the true nature of amateurism and the ultimate purpose of sport:

> There is the English cricket attitude… Let us keep our games going in a domestic sense and encourage the boys growing up to follow in the footsteps of the men of the generation before them, so that they, in their turn, if the necessity arises, shall be qualified by their physical training to play the big parts on the battlefield, or, if peace comes soon, on the field of mimic war – that of international sport. But this is not the time for specular interstate sport among the men who play as amateurs unless such men be of the prescribed ages.[72]

Despite the strong stance from Sydney's senior cricketing correspondents, others from the state were less convinced of the Association's amateur-induced altruism. The *Sportsmen* was known for its support of the continuation of sporting fixtures throughout the war, as well as the athletes who played them. It therefore published an article that sympathised with the VCA's attitude toward cricket, as well as rejecting the NSWCA stance that such a match could prevent men from enlisting, considering this as 'too absurd to be seriously considered.' Indeed, the obvious irrationality of this approach suggested to the author that something darker lurked behind the stubbornness of the NSWCA:

> It sees the invitation extended to cricketers who reside in this state to help the Patriotic Funds as an attack on the NSWCA power. It is probably that the patriotism of the NSWCA is geographically limited, or that it believes that the patriotism of the VCA is only a shelter behind which to strike the NSWCA. The ghosts of past troubles with the Melbourne Cricket Club still haunt the NSWCA, which sees in every shadow a spook. The memory of the troubles with the players also still rankles in the official mind of the NSWCA and is prepared to see red every time, and all the time.[73]

[72] *Referee*, 15 December, 1915, 12.
[73] *Sydney Sportsmen*, 22 December, 1915, 4.

Could the NSWCA's refusal to co-operate with the VCA's Patriotic Matches have been motivated by some petty feud long since forgotten, disguised under the cloak of altruistic patriotism? While this explanation is unlikely, there does exist several examples of attacks against professional sportsmen that fronted for some personal acrimony, opening our awareness to the fact that the patriotic stance taken by amateurism was not always as altruistic as has been claimed.

Lawrence Adamson's attack on professional football in 1915 came only after his heated dealings with the VFL as President of the Metropolitan Amateur Football Association (MAFA). Concerned with the professionalising influence of the VFL on the MAFA, Adamson had refused to bow to the League's 1915 'ultimatum' to agree to the merger of the Metropolitan juniors with League clubs, despite the threat of acquiring their grounds.[74] Adamson was a true patriot concerned with the enlistment of all eligible men, but surely the vindictiveness of his attack which occurred around the same time of the League's threats must have at least been partially motivated by a sense of reprisal.

Personal retribution masquerading as patriotism was more clearly apparent in some of the attacks made against Les Darcy. Reginald Baker and Hugh McIntosh, powerful figures within the boxing industry, vilified Darcy's flight to America under patriotic pretences across 1916 and 1917. However, both appear to have been motivated by more personal grievances. Baker had invested substantially in the young boxer and lost current and future earnings upon his departure. Likewise, the well-connected McIntosh had his promotional advances turned down by Darcy and was even quoted as saying he would 'move heaven and earth to stop Les getting fights.'[75]

With these cases in mind the relationship between Australia's most powerful cricketing boards had been rocky before the war. Parochial rivalry between colonies was discernible within interstate cricket matches, a rivalry that seeped into animosity between the VCA and NSWCA during the last decades of the 19th century.[76] The *Sportsmen* article above was most likely in reference to the bitter war waged

[74] "Adamson & Sport," in *Adamson of Wesley: the story of a great headmaster*, ed. Felix Meyer (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1932), 168-169.
[75] Peter Fenton, *Les Darcy: The legend of the Fighting Man* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1994), 140-142; Phillips and Moore, "The champion boxer Les Darcy," 105-106.
[76] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, 106; Jack Pollard, *the Turbulent Years of Australian Cricket*, 1893-1917, 17.

between the MCC and NSWCA the previous decade for the control of Australian cricketing tours to England. The outbreak of war certainly had a undying effect on old enemies and only a few months prior one paper had revered the 'harmonious feeling' between the Associations that was as strong as the 'attitude of antagonism' that had permeated beforehand. But by late December, this relationship had deteriorated once again into 'interstate jealousy, which it was hoped had long since died away.'[77] Though it is unlikely that previous indiscretions had fuelled the fire, the war had certainly rekindled the flames of enmity at the most inopportune of times.

Though never expressing as much publicly the VCA appeared to harbour a grudge towards the NSWCA attitude, particularly after the effort to organise similar fund-raising matches failed to live up to the 1915 original. Disappointment would consequently manifest into frustration, compounded by the NSWCA staging of its own fundraisers in 1916.[78] The VCA moaned after their underwhelming 1917 fundraiser that 'this class of match, with the interstate element eliminated, does not sufficiently appeal to the general public.'[79] Though unwilling to say so in as many words, it was clearly insinuating that the NSWCA's stubbornness was preventing much needed financial imbursement for the war effort. Surely the fact that the NSWCA organised another match in early 1917 between old international players and interstate players must have confused and exasperated the Victorians to no end.[80]

The inflexible patriotism of the NSWCA would continue unabated throughout the war and even echo on in its aftermath, prejudicing itself against those who had failed to answer the call when asked. In 1926, the Association considered a joint benefit match for the now cricketing icons Charlie Macartney and Warren Bardsley, both of whom had been the centre of the Patriotic Match controversy. The Association's war-time vice-president and now President, Billy McElhone, who was away at the time, cabled the committee blocking the motion for reasons long past, 'Rumoured Association proposes joint benefit Macartney – Bardsley. Doomed failure. Macartney senior. Returned man entitled

[77] *Journal* (Adelaide), 1 October, 1915, 5; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 December, 1915, 10.
[78] *New South Wales Cricket Association Annual Report for the Season 1916/17*, 12, SLNSW.
[79] *Victorian Cricket Association Annual Report for the Season 1916/17*, 7, SLV.
[80] *New South Wales Cricket Association Annual Report for the Season 1917/18*, 10, SLNSW.

preference.'[81] The long memory of the Association had reminded it that an unenlisted man such as Bardsley, whatever his contributions to the game, could not be compared with a man who had served his country. Of course, they failed to remember that it was Bardsley who had stayed loyal to them during the Patriotic Match controversy, despite his desire to assist in the fundraiser.

Disputes between the nation's highest cricketing bodies reflected the internal debate ongoing at the lowest levels of the game over appropriateness of playing cricket in wartime. Victoria, a state particularly divided over war-time issues, could find little consensus on the acceptable level of play. The South Melbourne Cricket Club led several clubs in pushing the MCC to resume the grade level Premiership competition for the 1916/17 season. Victoria's cricketing overlords would have none of it. At the end of the month the MCC responded that it was 'in favour of matches being played on the same basis as last year', that being on a purely social basis. This view was reinforced a few days later when the VCA decided that social games would continue purely to 'keep the lesser game just alive while the greater game was being played…'[82]

It faced further confrontation the following year from the swing of the pendulum. Fearing that their social fixtures were retarding the efforts of the 1917 recruitment drive, a push to abandon social cricket by leading members of the VCA gained momentum. A discussion of the issue took place at VCA headquarters in June, with a strong push against the games continuation heard. Various club delegates referred to the composition of last season's teams, where many players appeared to be eligible for military service. It was mentioned that many non-eligible players, although keen to continue the games, were quite prepared to accept the position should it be considered necessary to abandon them. The Parham Committee pushed hardest for the discontinuance of all forms of cricket, while the sub-District Committee even raised the suggestion of barring unmarried men between the ages of 21 and 45 from playing.

Other delegates, however, expressed concern that it might be presumptuous on the Association's part to exercise any form of compulsion on its players. The chairman of the meeting, Mr H. R. Rush, said

[81] Derriman, *True to the Blue*, 144.
[82] *Age*, 22 August, 1916, 6; Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 295; *Leader*, 23 September, 1916, 20.

it would be better for the Association to await an expected Federal government announcement before acting. It must have had confidence that the government was never likely to restrict cricket, a game which had fallen to new lows in terms of involvement and attendance, if it appeared unwilling to do so against the popularity of football. In the ensuing time the game received support from the *Referee*: 'it has been clearly demonstrated that good, not harm, had followed the determination of the Victorian Cricket Association to keep the game alive.' To them, the game's amateur nature was a big part of this: 'The case for cricket is all the stronger, in that there are no money issues involved, entrance to matches is free, and the players are strictly amateur.' The Minister of Defence's announcement in early August that only racing, boxing and football were under consideration of curtailment was good enough for the VCA. At their next meeting on the 20th of August it rejected the motion to discontinue all cricket for the 1917/18 season or any other form of player exemption.[83]

The wider details should not obscure the point. Whether the NSWCA and other cricketing bodies seeking to abandon the game were displaying an illogical stubbornness, or whether they had legitimate claims in the need to focus the public's attention on more important matters, the fact remains that a striking division within the game had erupted. This division held its roots within two irreconcilable interpretations over what constituted acceptable levels of commitment to the war effort. The Patriotic Matches controversy in particular, Richardson argues, 'was an illustration, if anyone needed a better example, that there were two compelling sides to the argument about sport's role in wartime.'[84] Only this dispute related in no way to financial gain in a time of war and instead constituted a clash between patriots who prided themselves on their dogged loyalty to king and country and those who viewed the situation with a pragmatism usually reserved for professionals. As such the debate over sport in wartime was not always one between professionals and amateurs, but one that could exist within the very heart of Australian sport itself.

[83] *Argus*, 9 June, 1917, 22; *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 16 June, 1917, 21; *Referee*, 20 June, 1917, 13; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August, 1917, 8; *Victorian Cricket Association Minutes*, 12 June, 1917, 125, 20 August, 1917, 127, CA Archives.
[84] Richardson, *The Game of Their Lives*, 98.

The Decline of Cricket

The vindictiveness of internal disputes and external attacks appears distasteful and petty now, but the rancour which greeted ideas of sport and duty indicates just how powerful the divisive impact the war was having on Australians. Even cricket, a game which was to embody all that was noble and pure in the English culture and race, and which had done so much to forge a sense of Australian nationalism and identity in the pre-war decades, was being spoiled and split by the malevolence of war. It also indicates the detrimental impact that patriots felt cricket – and for that matter all sport – was having on recruiting and the war effort in general. What remains somewhat ironic about this perception of the game, however, is that it remained so far removed from the reality of the situation. Hysterical cries against cricket as one of the great harbourers of shirkers and cowards overlooked the vast numbers of players who enlisted. During the height of cricket's persecution in late 1915, the MCC's *Annual Report* named 423 of its members having enlisted, while smaller clubs and leagues were forced to disband thanks to a lack of players now at the front.[85] Indeed, the number of cricketers now in camp throughout Victoria must have been considerable, given the Defence Department denied the 'numerous' requests for leave from cricketers wishing to partake in social matches for fear that the training of whole units would be compromised.[86]

With the highest formats of the game suspended and so many players from all levels at the front the game remained a shadow of its pre-war self. Alf Batchelder has traced the popular writings of Tom Horan during the 1915/16 season as a heartbreaking expression of its decline.[87] Unlike the previous year Horan wrote with bitter-sweetness about the upcoming season in terms that could hardly be representative of the distracting influence critics considered cricket to be:

[85] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 59, 157; *Australasian*, 24 July, 1915, 24; *Age*, 20 January, 1916, 8.
[86] *Victorian Cricket Association Minutes*, 11 October, 1915, 79, CA Archives.
[87] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 185-198.

> Down on the ground now there is no music of bat and ball… Only the other day, I heard an old man say, "When shall we have another test match on the Melbourne Ground?" I am afraid it will be a very long time.[88]

Horan's yearning for a happier time now past reflected a society devoid of its previous innocence to be replaced by one scarred with a terrible loss of life and mounting social discord.

This sense of melancholy over the decline of the national pastime was exacerbated by the deaths of several icons that made cricket the great game it was. Victor Trumper, W. G. Grace and a score of others, both on the battlefield and off it, died during 1915 and with them the last vestiges of what would subsequently be known as 'the Golden Age of cricket', a title given due to both the quality of its players and the gentlemanly manner in which it was played.[89] Of course, the Golden Age was probably more a work of post-war romanticism than a uniquely special period of cricket, borne out of the scarred post-war memories of men like Horan. Whatever the reality of the Golden Age, the nostalgic yearning of Horan's 1915/16 correspondence makes it clear to him that something special had passed into history amidst this terrible war. He was no pacifist, but it was obvious that Horan considered the war as some kind of mean-spirited thief who had taken away the thing most dear to him in the world. In March, he journeyed to East Melbourne's ground, where he had played so much of his club cricket, and the encounter set him reminiscing once more about happier days:

> Where now is the throng of eager and excited lookers-on, the tumult and the joy, when the light of victory was in your eyes, as the captain roused the thousands by his stirring speech in front of the pavilion at the close of play? … Those stirring days of club cricket will probably never come again.[90]

For Horan this was unfortunately true. His health had been in decline and probably his wanderings into the past owed themselves to a sense of fatalism. He would finally succumb to dropsy in April.[91]

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[88] *Australasian*, 16 October, 1915, 22
[89] Jack Pollard, *the Pictorial History of Australian Cricket* (Melbourne: JM Dent, 1986), 137.
[90] *Australasian*, 11 March, 1916, 21.
[91] Batchelder, *Playing the Greater Game*, 198.

Horan clearly did not see what the game's critic's saw across the fields of play that summer. The state of cricket was something to be mourned, not condemned.

By war's end it was looking as if cricket had contributed to the war effort in a manner unrivalled by most other Australian sports. The game had declined to such a point that it verged on irrelevance. As VFL football embarked on its long road to recovery in 1917, the 1916/17 VCA season produced 'a mood of greyness', while the nadir of the following season prompted cricket journalist Jack Worrall to label it as the 'degenerate days' of cricket.[92] It was a sacrifice made all the weightier by the perception of the declining financial state during the early 20th century. By November, 1918, the NSWCA credit balance was a mere 9 pounds and 11 shillings.[93] Yet the game had still managed to contribute in a significant financial way, thanks mostly to the VCA's pragmatic attitude to sport and their subsequent 1915/16 Patriotic Matches, not to mention their sending large quantities of cricketing material to the soldiers at the front for recreational purposes.[94]

None of this could compare to the contribution of manpower afforded by the game. Near the end of the war Clayton had boasted that 600 of the 900 cricketers playing under the auspices of the NSWCA had enlisted, with the VCA claiming 300 of its registered players being killed on the frontline.[95] As tragic as these deaths were they certainly provided a powerful advert for the patriotism of the game, as Worrall revealed in one of his dispatches, 'the game as a sport is thoroughly entitled to the goodwill of every unbiased individual for its splendid answer to the call in men, money, and material.'[96] Though patriots had bemoaned the detrimental impact sport was having on recruitment and the war effort, there is no doubt that the war had a far more devastating bearing on cricket and the wider sporting fraternity, one that would be felt long after the guns fell silent. By 1918 the war was viewed

[92] Ibid., 295.
[93] Derriman, *True to the Blue*, 142.
[94] *Victorian Cricket Association Minutes*, 11 October, 1915, 79, CA Archives; The NSWCA also contributed smaller amounts of funds through their own patriotic matches as well as cricket gear. Derriman, *True to the Blue*, 143.
[95] Derriman, *True to the Blue*, 140; Coleman, *Seasons in the Sun*, 292.
[96] *Australasian*, 14 October, 1916, 23.

as a curse, one that had ripped the heart out of the game once thought to have been crucial in the development of the nation.[97]

Conclusion

Australian historical research into the debate over sport during the Great War has viewed it as a neat clash between amateurs and professionals. This division was said to have fronted for deeper socio-economic and ethnic divisions, which were engaged in their own conflict on much more important issues. The influence of class and ethnicity were important factors in the attitudes of every code, league, club, administrator and player. It cannot be denied that the McKernan thesis still holds a guiding influence over the campaign against sport.

However, as this chapter has shown, the campaign against sport cannot be truly appreciated through such a narrow prism. Domestic and local cricket, a fundamentally amateur pursuit, was subject to some of the harshest criticism levelled against sport during the war, despite its considerable efforts to encourage recruitment, raise war funds and showcase its appreciation of the gravity of the conflict. It abandoned its most elite levels of competition and removed any semblance of payment to players, so as to not distract the population and players from their duty. Yet, this was still not enough for radical patriots who applied a blanket view of the immorality of continuing sport. The internal division over the legitimacy of its continuation indicates that not all friction came from between working class professionals and middle-class amateurs. This internal discord was prevalent within the highest offices of the VCA and NSWCA as well as the humblest local leagues and clubs.

The debate over cricket's continuation enlightens us on the severity with which sport was denounced during the war, providing a clear description of the way in which the former ideological bedfellows of sport and war were now in a state of conflict. Dreams of Australia's athletes hastily abandoning their games at the call of Empire were, in the minds of patriots, failing to come to fruition. Not only that, sport and the war were now in direct competition to acquire the services of men. Sport, while

[97] See Mandle, "Cricket and Australian Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," 46-72.

considered an aid to those at the battle front, was alas an enemy on the home front. Patriots thus began to question its role in society and culture, while its defenders bemoaned the detrimental impact of the war on their games.

This expectation that ‘all players who are not married, who have no family responsibilities, and are physically able, ought to enlist’ revealed the high expectation placed upon not only sportsmen but also the entire nation’s male population. Epitomising previous conceptualisations of model masculinity, the sportsman now took second place positioning to the soldier in the hierarchy of Australian manhood. The press, government, certain sporting organisations and sections of the public had attempted to impress this on the sporting community. Now, it would turn to one of its most powerful influences for Australian sportsmen to accept the obligations of their burgeoning manhood: women.

CHAPTER 7

She could be a "Sport" too: Women, Sport and the War Effort

The utilisation of sport as a means to encourage enlistment and denounce the apathetic regularly incorporated women into its endeavours. This is a particularly fascinating development, given that the two realms which the sporting appeal based itself on were envisioned as exclusively male-occupied zones. Historian Richard Cashman has observed Australia's sporting culture before the war as one that either 'excluded women' or acted to underline their 'subordination and subsidiary position in society.'[1] In a similar fashion, Marilyn Lake and Joy Damousi remind us that women were uniformly 'disarmed' at the inauguration of the nation state in 1901 and defined, along with children, as those to be protected.[2] In spite of this explicit segregation, evidence indicates that women found a way to play an active and discernible role in this feature of Australia's wartime experience.

This chapter will explore the involvement of women in the sport and war paradigm adopted to aid the flagging war effort. This manifested itself in a variety of ways. A strong female voice was clearly distinguishable in the campaign against male sporting leagues during the war. Not only in that, they proved to be willing soldiers in the government's efforts to extricate athletes and fans from sporting arenas and get them into uniform. Finally, with male sport ostracised, female sport was adopted as a legitimate means of supporting the war effort. This incorporation of women into the sport and war paradigm based its intended impact on pre-war ideas of gender identification and stereotyping, which, under the pressure of total war, evolved into a set of gender specific obligations to be fulfilled by men and women. According to Murray Phillips, the sport and war paradigm's utilisation of women fits into what Carmel Shute has identified as the general reinforcement of 'the mythology engendered by the Great War (which) affirmed the dichotomy of the sexes and re-established and enshrined the

[1] Cashman, *Paradise of Sport*, 72, 82.
[2] Marilyn Lake and Joy Damousi, *Gender and War: Australians at war in the twentieth century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-4.

inviolability of the traditional sexual stereotypes of man, "the warrior and creator of history", and woman, the mother, the passive flesh at the mercy of fate.'[3]

Nevertheless, one cannot deny the transforming effect the war had on women's identity, just as it did on men's. The recognised importance placed on the female population on home helped to foment almost radical ideas, rhetoric, acts and events that characterised the growing influence of women in society between 1914 and 1918. This chapter will conclude by arguing that involvement of women in the sporting appeal, while reinforcing gender stereotypes, also acted to simultaneously challenge traditional concepts of female subordination in society. Thus, the incorporation of women into the sport and war paradigm, just as it did for the conscription debate or temperance movement, embodies how the war offered opportunity for women to exercise a degree of influence which extended beyond the bounds of previously accepted ideas and paved the way for future change.[4] As such the involvement of women within the sporting appeal fits neatly into the war's paradoxical impact on Australian gender roles and relations which simultaneously entrenched traditional stereotypes and expectations and provided the conditions in which those old patterns might be disrupted and dissolved.[5]

Australian Women and the War

With the large absence of men and the all-encompassing nature of total war on the home front, the everyday lives of Australian women were destined to alter in some way. The obvious manifestation of this would presumably be the influx of women into the labour sector to fill the void left by men, as is generally understood to have occurred in Britain and elsewhere. However, evidence indicates that while the number of women in the national workforce increased from 24 to 37 per cent between 1914 and 1918, it was largely in clothing, textile, food and printing industries, all of which comprised

[3] Phillips, 'Sport, war and gender images," 91; C. Shute, "Heroines and heroes: Sexual mythology in Australia 1914-1918," in *Gender and War,* 23.
[4] P. Maclean, "War and Australian Society," in *Australia's War 1914-18*, ed. Joan Beaumont (St. Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1995), 83.
[5] Lake and Damousi, *Gender and War*, 5.

conventionally acceptable occupations for female employment. In fact, just 4,000 additional female jobs in the manufacturing sector were created despite the loss of 20,000 male jobs during the war.[6] Even those acceptable positions closest to the frontline for women hardly provided a large forum for women to contribute to the Australian Army, with the government enlisting the help of just 3,000 female nurses.[7]

Women therefore found limited avenues to assist and influence national defence, particularly in the war's first two years. As enthusiastic as anyone to contribute to the war in some meaningful way, yet unable to enlist in impactful roles, they resigned themselves largely to organising fundraising schemes. Though important in its own regard, historian Michael McKernan has deemed the unpaid nature of such work precipitated its going 'unnoticed', meaning that such a contribution could hardly be considered as essential to the Australian war effort.[8] But with the breakdown of the volunteer system and push toward the conscription plebiscite during 1916 the vote of women quickly became a critical component in the maintenance or breakdown of the war effort. Indeed, the conscription debate became notorious as much for its targeting of the women vote as for its vicious intensity. Both the 'Yes' and 'No' camps adopted appeals to the maternal instincts of women, shaping them specifically to their cause.

From this point on women were increasingly acknowledged as important players with relation to war-time issues on the home front. For instance, recognition of their potential influence over eligible men led to their incorporation into the recruitment drive of 1917. Director-General of Recruiting Donald Mackinnon became 'convinced' that the women element would 'save the situation in this recruiting campaign'.[9] Women were therefore employed by Mackinnon's organisations and acted on behalf of their own motivations to convince men of their need to enlist, using 'every effort' and 'every method'

[6] Jennifer Crew, "Women's wages in Britain and Australia during the First World War," *Labour History* 57 (1989): 30.
[7] "Great War Nurses," Australian War Memorial, accessed 1 November, 2016, https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/nurses/ww1/.
[8] Mckernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 67.
[9] VSRC (Minutes), 7 March, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.

to achieve this.[10] Accordingly, the voices of women would play a prominent role in the issues that engulfed sport throughout the war.

Women and the Sport and War Debate

In many ways, the debate over the continuation of the major sporting fixtures during the war played more prominently into the question of Australian masculinity. Attacks against sportsmen would regularly call into question the 'shirkers' sense of manhood to shame them into enlisting. While generally unrecognised in the historical examinations of McKernan and others,[11] women played a small yet active role in this controversial issue. After Adamson's attack on professional football countless voices joined their opinions to the debate. Within this initial discussion, the *Winner* published what appears to be the first substantial contribution made to the debate made by a woman. The author, known only as 'Lady Correspondent', adressed the issue with an calm rationality, believing sport to be an important contributor to the nation's war effort and producer of the 'best soldiers', while criticising the minorities of 'well-meaning' but misinformed critics of sports and entertainment.[12]

As the war dragged on into 1915, however, more and more women added their voices to the campaign against sport. Open hostility against male sporting leagues began in earnest mid-year when the *Everylady's Journal* printed the particularly irate opinion of one female critic, 'it seems incongruous and callous', the author comments, 'to see virile athletic men who would seem to be dissipating so much energy in games where there is so much work calling them.'[13] By 1916, obscene casualty figures and emerging social tensions acted to further isolate the fervently patriotic from the war-weary. During this turbulence female attacks against the sporting fraternity took on a truly malicious

[10] Robson, *The First A.I.F.*, 137.
[11] Female involvement in the debate was briefly raised by Shute in "Heroines and heroes," 26.
[12] *Winner*, 5 May, 1915, 8.
[13] *Everylady's Journal*, 6 June, 1915, 352.

tone. A letter to the *Sun* by Sydney resident Gladys Fitzpatrick evoked the growing frustration of patriotic women, this time focusing not on the athletes but rather onlookers of sporting fixtures:

> I think it a positive disgrace and degradation to see about our city streets, at the football matches, at the Stadium, and other rendezvous of sport, young, vigorous men shuffling about with a poisonous weed protruding from their lips…[14]

Female criticism against sport reached the highest levels of government. In a slightly different case to others, Miss C. A. Baly, writing on behalf of the Sydney-based After Care Association, an organisation assisting patients discharged from mental hospitals, wrote to the Prime Minister's Department in an attempt to stop a professional tour of American boxers from going ahead. The plea centred on the inappropriateness of allowing a money-venture, designed to benefit foreigners, when such funds were sorely needed elsewhere. After the appeal was rejected, Baly forwarded another denunciation of the tour and yet again appealed to the government to use the power it possessed to prevent its commencement. This second letter focused again on the impropriety of financially rewarding foreigners in a time of national crisis, but adopted far greater emotional intensity to hammer the point home. It criticised the 'blood suckers' and expressed disappointment with the government for condoning a 'social evil' that appeals only to the 'lower instincts of men who do not enlist'. Baly made a direct plea to the Prime Minister to consider women like herself as well as the hundreds of others 'out in the piercing wind and rain working gladly to collect money for suffering soldiers.' Baly finished her letter by bringing into question the Prime Minister's own masculinity, 'the opportunity makes the man'.[15]

This call-to-arms against sport was heard by various other pro-war women's organisations who attempted to utilise the influence of their sex against the great harbourer of the unpatriotic. While attacks against sport often emanated from the personal opinions of a few frustrated individuals, female involvement in campaign soon took far more concentrated approach. The rise of pro-war women's organisations after 1915 provided a soundboard in which collective disproval against male sporting

[14] *Sun*, 14 August, 1916, 4.
[15] C. A. Baly, letter to the Prime Minister's Department 13, 30 June, 1916, "Sport. Restrictions On", NAA.

fixtures could be expressed with greater weight. In 1916 the Women's Christian Temperance Movement joined a large gathering of representatives from various churches and other organisation's to oppose horseracing, asking the government for its curtailment.[16] More direct attacks against sportsmen and their male fans came from the Women's Liberal League in Sydney, which passed a resolution in which it criticised eligible men at stadiums, race meetings and at football matches, labelling them 'heartless and unpatriotic' and the whole affair a 'national disgrace.'[17]

An even more controversial example of female collectivisation came in the form of a proposed protest against punters at the Albion park race course in Brisbane. Prime Minister Hughes had promised during his May, 1917 election campaign to institute controls on sport, which he would finally do in September. In the meantime, it appears patriots grew restless at their continuation. For those in Brisbane the completion of seven out of eleven days of horse-racing at Albion Park appears to have been too much to handle. While awaiting the government's decision, an idea was put forth by the Queensland Women's Recruiting Committee (QWRC) to disrupt the racegoers at the course on the 23rd of June. It was proposed that a thousand women dressed in black, all of whom have relatives at the front, were to line the approaches to the racecourse and form a perfectly silent "guard of dishonour" for racegoers to pass along, while twenty drums beat a steady tattoo, in an emphatic protest against the continuance of horse racing and 'every man' who languished there.[18] The proposed plan was widely printed in newspapers across Australia and attracted much anticipation to its potentially explosive outcome. This widespread exposure resulted in MacKinnon catching wind of it. He informed the Federal cabinet, who after two and a half years of reluctance were forced to finally address the issue in the hope of avoiding a potentially violent confrontation.[19]

Though hardly alone in their condemnation, these accusations must have particularly irked. To have a woman publically call into question your courage, honour and in essence your manhood must have been a particularly stinging and shameful accusation in a nation as patriarchal as early twentieth

[16] No doubt this was merely a pretence for which such groups could better press their long held case against gambling and other immoral behaviour, *Chronicle* (Adelaide) 26 August, 1916, 15.
[17] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 April, 1916, 14.
[18] *Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 14 June, 1917, 4; *Brisbane Courier*, 26 June, 1917, 6.
[19] *Daily Mercury*, 20 June, 1917; *Brisbane Courier*, 17 June, 1917.

century Australia. One such respondent vocalised his displeasure in the *Truth* newspaper against the proposed protest. In questioning the approach of these and other 'hysterical screeching' women, the writer queries the illusionary conception of an all-encompassing Australian masculinity, slumbering by the trackside and merely in need of a stern lecturing to awaken itself, against the harsh realities of the diverse and flawed nature of the male body:

> (i)t seems to have become chronic that every male person who patronises sport of any kind is a born athlete, fit as fire, and that, if they all went to the front, the war would be over… The attendance at the recent Albion Cup meeting was a large one, but if the male portion of it were paraded before the doctors the majority would probably prove a veiny, spavined, broken winded lot of ineligibles, and well-nigh useless for active service as required by the military authorities.

The author, having dispelled quite correctly the unfair masculine ideals thrust upon all Australian men, then contends that the objections of women can merely be put down to similar stereotypes that he himself had hoped to discredit:

> Woman is always looked upon the weaker vessel, and at trying times, when nerve-shattering situations arise, allowance had to be made for her hysteria. In her foolish, ill-advised remarks in train, tram, highway, and by-way, some of her are no doubt sincere, even if ridiculously wrong…[20]

These 'hysterical screechers', however, would not back down and their usage of gender identification and roleplaying to force their point was broadened to appeals within their own sex. The Australian Women's National League (AWNL) carried out unanimously a resolution on the 8th of February, 1917, condemning the continuation of VFL season on behalf of its 50,000 members. To demonstrate its stance the AWNL encouraged its sizable following to refuse to attend football matches.[21] The National Council of Women (NCW) too adopted a similar philosophy only a week later when it

[20] *Truth* (Brisbane), 1 July, 1917, 7.
[21] *Argus*, 8 February, 1917, 7.

convened on the 15th of February. In a meeting held to discuss the best ways it could assist in the war effort, Mrs James Booth suggested 'that eligible men be ostracised on the sports grounds by all young women.' This was to be achieved principally by directing women to refuse attending or playing sport's with any eligible men who they knew were yet to volunteer.

By avoiding contact at sporting arenas these women were sending a powerful message to single men, namely, their advances would not be rewarded, let alone acknowledged, while desirable men fought to protect them overseas. It was a contentious proposal that aroused serious animated discussion within the Council. One delegate in particular appears to have become rather incensed with the idea that the council 'imagined it could order women or girls to do any such thing' and that such a direction would only draw down 'the contempt of the community upon themselves by talking in such a fashion.' Nevertheless, the resolution was passed with just the singular dissident.[22]

The seemingly vicious and narrow-minded complexion of attacks by women was a hallmark of the wider crusade against sport during the Great War. Those holding such opinions emanated from an unquestioningly patriotic disposition, who simply could not fathom how society could indulge in leisurely games while their countrymen died in the thousands to defend King and country. Juxtaposed against this faction were the defenders of sport, such as the 'Lady Correspondent' from the *Winner* and the racing correspondent 'Vesta' from the *Argus*, the latter of whom, while saying nothing of male punters, maintained that such accusations against women attending the races 'is one which I am not prepared to endorse…'[23] It is interesting to note that these defences appear far more rational when compared to the hysteria and vitriol of sport's accusers. Nevertheless, the distinguishably hostile nature of the anti-sport campaigners probably reflects the personal anguish which characterised the war experiences of thousands of Australian women, who fretted daily over the fate of their loved ones while trying to contribute to a war effort they were so comprehensively removed from.

Ironically, two women from either side of the debate appear to be equally frustrated by such constraints placed upon them by their sex. Gladys Fitzpatrick, who seethed at the 'degradation' of the

[22] *Darling Downs Gazette* (QLD), 28 February, 1917, 3; *Age*, 16 February, 1917, 8.
[23] *Argus*, 21 November, 1917, 12.

'Young Australia' that loitered at sporting matches, also remarked 'I would, in this hour of crisis, that I were a man, to grasp the glorious opportunity of striking a blow for the noblest of all causes–human liberty!'[24] Likewise, the lady correspondent of the *Winner*, stated 'there are many who would gladly go to the front if they could, but they have ties here, and then, so few are privileged to nurse.'[25] Despite the frustration held on both sides, the usage of gender stereotypes to further their respective causes in some respects acted to reinforce female secondary standing in society. The anti-sport movement in particular touched into traditionally oppressive gender constructs in order to plead its case. The sight of seemingly fit, young eligible men rejecting the opportunity to make a significant impact on the war, while they were resigned to knitting and organising fundraisers, prompted these fanatically patriotic women of Australia to question loudly how these shirkers could play games when the ultimate gauge of their manhood awaited them abroad.

Of course, not all appeals from women to sportsmen manifested themselves in spiteful attacks. The wartime publications of two Australian authors in particular, Mary Grant Bruce and Lillian Maxwell Pyke, drew upon the sport and war connection to reinforce the importance of the latter over the former. Both authors had a strong middle-class background and education, were prolific and popular writers of Public school life and, most intriguingly of all, were female. Their literature produced during the war was primarily concerned with convincing Australians, notably young men, of the need to support the war effort by enlisting at the cost of all other personal interests, which they envisioned as the highest embodiment of their burgeoning manhood.

In Bruce's 1916 publication *Jim and Wally* the story's main protagonists and now young soldiers remain bemused by their captain's inquests into civilian life and particularly their school's footballing matches. To Jim and Wally, these things were 'interesting enough in peace time' but rather stale 'with Europe ablaze.'[26] Pyke too made clear reference to the obligation for sportsmen to enlist in her 1916 publication *Max the Sport*. Reading as much a handbook on proper male adolescent behaviour as it is schoolboy hero literature, *Max the Sport* follows the journey of Max Charlton through the trials and

[24] *Sun*, 14 August, 1916, 4.
[25] *Winner*, 16 June, 1917, 9.
[26] Mary Grant Bruce, *Jim & Wally* (Melbourne: Ward, Lock & Co. Limited, 1916), 14.

tribulations of adolescence and Public school life. The book culminates with the ultimate test of Max's boyhood training when confronted with the decision as to whether to enlist or not after Britain's declaration of war. Max's mother considers that the Kaiser's invasion of Belgium, which she describes as a 'breach of fair play', would appeal to the sportsman in Max:

> What college boy with sporting blood in his veins would listen for a moment to such reasoning? What "sport" that had played for the honour of the school could hear such sophistry without doubling up his fists and striking the bully? What was all the talk about "playing the game" if it only applied to small things of life and was not incorporated in the nation's body politic?

Max concludes that he must enlist so as 'to show I am indeed a sport in deed as in name', at which his mother considers him now to truly be a man.[27]

Pyke addresses a related message in her next publication *Jack of St. Virgil's*, published the following year. Before being addressed by a former student turned war hero, main protagonist Jack looks admiringly on the school's many sporting trophies. The sobering thought that many of these former champions were now lying in unnamed graves across Gallipoli, Egypt and France crosses Jacks mind. Though gone from this world, the deceased were now, according to Jack, 'living in the heart of the world at large, having practised in the fierce arena of actual strife the game which they learned to play under the guidance of the school.'[28] This scene, according to Martin Crotty, is important in its understanding of the perceived connection between the realms of sport and warfare, but reinforces also the general understanding that duty to country is undoubtedly the 'higher calling' of the two.[29] Both Pyke and Bruce hold to the importance of games in training boys for the tests of later life, yet make a clear distinction between the two in the hope of reminding readers of the fact that sport is only a preparation for manhood, not its full realisation.

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[27] Lillian M. Pyke, *Max the Sport* (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1916), 234-243.
[28] Lillian M. Pyke, Jack of St. Virgil's (Melbourne: Ward and Lock, 1917), 120-121.
[29] Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 109.

Although Bruce and Pyke's books undoubtedly focus on the concepts of ideal masculine behaviour through a sporting lens, they are not adverse from delving into the roles and responsibilities of women in a time of war. Women were barred from influencing the fighting in a direct sense but, in line with perceived female gender roles during the war, could encourage the men in their lives to fulfil their role as protectors of the nation. This was a common responsibility thrust upon women during the Great War, as Shute reminds us, 'maternity was elevated to the realm of heroism, and the worth of a woman was now gauged by the number of sons she was willing to abandon to the imperialist cause.'[30] Pyke's description of Max's mother encouraging him to enlist uses the language of sport in the realisation of her own duty:

> She could tell Max she would let him go – she would let him see she could be a "sport" too – he should go and she herself would "buckle on his armour".

Though initially resistant to relinquish her son, Max's mother recognises that just as the decision to enlist or not was the ultimate examination of Max's manhood, so too is the willing sacrifice of Max the true test of her womanhood. By sacrificing her son 'to the cause of humanity' Max's mother was proving that women too could 'play the game' in their own way.[31]

While these works provide evidence of a female contribution to a traditionally male-formulated and orientated theoretical discussion regarding sport and war's intimate relationship, one can also not deny the commanding influence male figures had on their work. It appears Pyke's almost fanatical patriotic attitude to the war, epitomised in her 'buckle on his armour' attitude, had to some extent been handed to her by none other than Lawrence Adamson.

If one looks closer at Pyke's *Max the Sport* and *Jack of St. Virgil's*, the fictional Public school of St. Virgil's is in many ways a homage to Wesley College, while the outlook and language of the school's Headmaster evokes the indomitable figure of Adamson. This is made all the more apparent when Pyke expressed her great admiration for the Wesley Headmaster after she dedicated *Jack of St.*

[30] Shute, "heroines and heroes," 24.
[31] Pyke, *Max the Sport*, 240-243.

Virgil's to Adamson, 'whose teaching I am indebted for whatever understanding of "the Public School Spirit" I have acquired…'[32] The influence of Adamson over Pyke allows a better understanding of her seemingly misplaced sense of duty, wherein a mother holds priority of the nation over the safety of her own son. For even the perplexity of a mother encouraging her son to war to such an extent that she would gladly 'buckle on his armour' palls in significance when confronted with the disturbing convictions of Adamson, reflected in a poem by the Wesley Headmaster during the war:

> To-night the Old Grey Mother
> Who sits and marks the score,
> Counts all her absent children
> Yet longs to send out more.[33]

To this end one may argue that the ideological teachings of such female authors are merely a rehashing of male-formulated constructions of gender identity and roles in society. In any case, the major works of wartime adolescent novelists appears to have encouraged traditional gender stereotypes of men and women, in which sport played a central role, as means to support the war effort.

Women, Sport and the 1917 Recruitment Drive

The incorporation of women into the sportsmen recruiting efforts certainly utilised traditional gender sterotypes and roleplaying to meet its goals. Murray Phillips' investigation of the NSWSRC highlights the usage of sport and combat as interconnected vehicles to inculcate masculinity, manliness and manhood. But what also stands out within this campaign was the encouragement of women to fulfil their own womanhood by pushing men into fulfilling their obligation to nation, namely through the NSW Sportswomen's Union (NSWSU) and other recruiting agents. As such these campaigns epitomised the war's ability to contribute to the 'polarization of gender identity.'[34]

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[32] Pyke, *Jack of St. Virgil's.*
[33] Lawrence Adamson, "The School and the War," in *The History of Wesley College, 1865-1919* (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird & Co, 1921), 82.
[34] Phillips, "War, Sport and Gender images," 91.

One recruiting agent associated with the NSWSRC, while on tour in the Riverina Region in July and August, expressed the need of the Committee to incorporate Australia's mothers and daughters into the campaign, having to this point not been used 'as the strong agents they should be.'[35] By October the NSWSRC had come to fully realise just how much the 'uplifting influence of the fair sex can be utilised in a novel manner to secure the eligible men of the State'. It sounded a call-to-arms of the state's female sporting elite. Letters were sent out to various amateur branches of women's sports requesting attendance at a meeting at the Sydney Town Hall on the 20th of October to form the NSWSU. This action resulted in the response of 113 women who offered their services.[36] Unsurprisingly, the women involved in the Union were predominately from middle-class backgrounds, as with most women's organisations who wished to encourage recruitment and general support in the war effort.

In line with Committee's 'Come' not 'Go' approach, the letter implored its new female members not to attempt to acquire recruits in 'an aggressive or public manner'. Rather, it implored these women to entice young men into uniform 'in the quiet, unobtrusive, appealing way, known only to women.'[37] Though understanding the potential influence of the NSWSU from a maternal or family dynamic, it also hoped to target the relationship between young men and women. One cannot rule out the underlying connotations of the phrase 'appealing way, known only to women', denotes the usage of sexually suggestive appeals in order to aid recruitment of impressionable young men.

Not only did it incorporate masses of women to assist in recruiting, the Committee employed the services of some of the most fervent and prominent female pro-war advocates. The NSW Sportsmen Battalion campaign of 1917 was aided by Georgina Temperley, the creator of the 'One Woman, One Recruit League' and first woman to be appointed to Victoria's State Recruiting Committee. At the creation of the NSWSU, Temperley passed out an official declaration to the 113 women in attendance. In this she outlined the mission of her organisation. The 'One Woman, One Recruit

[35] NSWSRC (Tour Reports), 10 August 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[36] NSWSRC (Correspondence), letter to Amateur Sportswomen of New South Wales, 23 October 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 November, 1917, 12.
[37] NSWSRC (Correspondence), letter to Amateur Sportswomen of New South Wales, 23 October 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.

League' pledged to 'gather under our banner all women who will help to WIN THE WAR, by each doing her utmost to secure one recruit.' In some respects, this 'duty' of women existed on a similar level to those who were fighting on the frontline:

> For each one of you, there is somewhere in the firing line, a man fighting that you may live. His life is in your hands. Will you leave him to fight on, tired and weary though he be, or will you, as a Woman, do your utmost to enlist a man to take his place? Why, Women, it is in our power to send forth a second band of ANZAC's. Let each one of us become obsessed with this idea, the enlisting of one man, the setting out on his march of one soldier…

Determined to make the nation's recruitment crisis the personal concern of all women, each recruiter would receive due recognition by having their names placed on an Honour Roll. The oath finished by asking the women present to sign a commitment to join the League and 'do my utmost to enlist one man by appealing through my Womanhood to his Manhood.'[38]

The NSWSU attempted to encourage enlistment by other means, including the presentation of a specially designed diploma to be awarded to eligible men that had a logo showing a soldier discarding his sporting apparel for a gun. Its purpose was to impress upon these men the importance of forsaking the triviality of their games for their duty at the front. But such techniques could also employ far more underhanded tactics. Given the calamitous state of volunteer numbers at this point in time, these women appear to have ignored MacKinnon and his Committee's determination to restrain women from acting in an 'aggressive' manner to acquire recruits. For example, each lady was given a medallion which she would then bestow on an eligible man. The medallion distributed to these women contained the French phrase 'QUI S'EXCUSE S'ACCUSE' (he who excuses himself, accuses himself) written on it.[39]

Though unexplored in Phillips' article the VSRC and its Sportsmen Thousand campaign too attempted to employ the influence of women, playing upon similar gender stereotypes and roleplaying

[38] NSWSRC (Minutes), 2DRL/1121, Australian War Memorial.
[39] NSWSRC, (Pamphlet, no date), 2DRL/1121, AWM.

to better stimulate its own recruiting efforts. Donald MacKinnon quickly observed not only the wealth of potential recruits cavorting on playing fields but also considered how to acquire them. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 5, MacKinnon had dictated to the VSRC the potential associated with the 'arousing of the interest of the womenfolk associated either directly or indirectly with sport.' In MacKinnon's eyes, women entailed the crucial element by which adequate recruits could be secured and thus conscription avoided, 'I am convinced that the women element is going to save the situation in this recruiting campaign…' [40]

The suitability of this idea had been realised by MacKinnon and the Committee after receiving a letter from the President of the Victorian Croquet Association, Mr. N. B. Were, during mid-February. After the Committee approached the various sporting clubs around the state asking for their involvement in the recruiting campaign as well as the names of enlisted members, Were informed the Victorian Committee that of the club's 1,000 members, all but 50 were female. Mackinnon quickly grasped the need to utilise 'the great influence that could be wielded by an association of a thousand women' and invited female co-operation with the state's attempt to recruit athletes.[41]

This powerful influence could be concentrated on the male sections of the sporting fraternity, in which Mackinnon believed women had a particularly strong influence, 'Clubs, and especially football clubs, have a great many lady friends and supporters,' he continued, 'From personal experience I know how valuable women are in connection with all sports clubs – especially when there are difficulties; and they have unlimited enthusiasm which should be made available at a great crisis like this.'[42] The VSRC embraced this directive wholeheartedly from the beginning, deducing that 'the services of womenfolk must undoubtedly play an important part' in recruiting efforts.[43] A discussion

[40] VSRC (Minutes), 7 March, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.
[41] Ibid.
[42] MacKinnon was right to claim the existence of 'many lady friends and supporters' within the VFL. Historian Rob Hess estimates that at least 40% of VFL supporters leading into the war were of female orientation, proportionately more than any other football code in the world. Whether or not this strong presence equated to influence over the men associated with the game and by extension their decision to enlist is a debatable issue. Nevertheless, Dale Blair has concluded that it is 'quite possible that they had an appreciable influence on the decisions of footballers and male spectators.' Rob Hess, "The VFL takes Over, 1897-1914," in *More Than a Game*, 101-102; Blair, *"War and Peace, 1915-1924,"* 126.
[43] VSRC (Minutes), 7 March, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.

took place over the possible formation of a subset committee of women in early March, however, it never took off, leaving women's involvement restricted to establishing a comfort funds to aid the recruits of the campaign.[44]

Though women would remain absent from administrative aspects of the campaign, Mackinnon's determination to see them used in a recruitment capacity began even before the directive was officially given. Communications from the VSRC Chairmen Simon Nathan were sent out to representatives of Bowling clubs asking them to ask their wives and daughters to assist in the recruiting campaign, as well as several clubs belonging to the Ladies Bowling Association,[45] as were numerous ladies' Tennis Clubs and players. Nathan's letter evoked the sentiments of Mackinnon, arguing that the usage of large numbers of women associated with sporting clubs, if properly organised, 'would affect very materially the progress of the recruiting campaign.' He thus urged the club to encourage those within their local area with every 'influence you possess' while asking its individual members to 'do all that you can'. The how and why of recruitment was largely left up to the ladies themselves, but the urgency of the situation was made paramount to its audience, 'the need for reinforcements was never so great as it is today.'[46]

Nathan's request to Melbourne's ladies' Tennis clubs reinforced its message by employing the help of local seasoned charity worker Mrs Helen McBride, a task she was 'honoured' to do.[47] McBride reasoned that while the sporting community and its tennis affiliates had not been idle in responding to the nation's need, more could be done. It was here that McBride began her impassioned plea for assistance by reminding the ladies to fulfil their duty to the nation, through convincing men of theirs:

> It is generally acknowledged that it is with the women of Australia to send, or to hold back, the men. It is realised, too, that the sacrifice of the women who send their men is in many

[44] VSRC (Minutes), 28 February, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives; *Graphic of Australia* (Melbourne), 16 November, 1917, 34.
[45] VSRC (Correspondence), 15 February, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.
[46] Ibid., Simon Nathan, letter to Melbourne Ladies Tennis Clubs, 27 February, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.
[47] VSRC (Minutes), 28 February, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.

> cases greater even than the sacrifice of the men who go… And yet, in spite of that, we appeal to you to do all in your power to send men.

McBride continued:

> Will you therefore use your influence, not only with the men belonging to your club who might enlist, but with all whom you know, that our debt of honour to the men who have gone before may be paid, and the end of this terrible war brought nearer.[48]

Helen McBride's emotional call to arms of women very much embodied the primary role middle-class women were expected to play on the home front, and indeed the role all women should play, to 'sacrifice' the men in their lives in order to end the war. Just like their NSW cousins, the VSRC appeal to women and the tactics adopted by the women themselves appear to have reinforced traditionally held gender stereotypes and roles expected of Australian men and women during wartime. Though distinctive in their approaches, the involvement of women in both sportsmen unit campaigns seemingly helps to re-establish their place as the 'passive flesh at the mercy of fate', while acting to remind men of their preeminent place as the 'warrior and creator of history.'

To this point the usage of sport and its relationship with women had only served to restrict the development of female emancipation during the Great War, a process as much of their own making as not. Women could be the incorrigible arms of patriarchal instruction, as the women of the NSWSU were, or in fact the purveyors of these stereotypes themselves, as several female authors and women's groups appeared to be. Women were thus both the players and pawns in this powerful tactic and in their own gender-constructed oppression. The opinions and attacks highlighted above reflect a substantial number of women using their femininity, perhaps the only tool at their disposal, to fiercely impress upon sportsmen and their male supporters the need to fulfil the obligations of their manhood. By doing so they not only reinforced unfair expectations onto the male identity, but also limited the scope of their influence on the war by ceiling their contribution within a male context. For once a man

[48] VSRC (Correspondence), Helen McBride, letter to women's tennis players, 3 March, 1917, RSL Victoria Archives.

accepted his duty, the role of women would once again be resigned to the unappreciated work of knitting socks, raising pennies and waiting for their men to return home.

Following from Phillips' and Shute's lead, it appears that female coercion in the sport and war paradigm served to only reinforce the stereotypes of both men and women that changed little in the post-war decades. But while historians such as Alistair Thomson have observed an Australian masculinity in crisis during and after the war,[49] it is largely believed that the conflict only sought to reinforce conceptions of femininity and the prescribed role of women in society. As McKernan argues, 'the war experience of women confirmed rather than challenged their place in society.'[50] One cannot deny that concepts of traditional female gender identity being utilised within the sporting appeal. But on closer examination, one begins to question such a narrowly focused interpretation of the evidence.

Women, Sport and the War: Oppression or Emancipation?

Through the incorporation of women into the war effort using sporting themes, one can observe a certain undermining of the traditional acceptance of female subordination in Australian society. This occurred in a variety of subtle yet discernible ways. McKernan has conceded that the establishment of numerous women's organisations during the war, whether pro-war or otherwise, helped to instil confidence in women that they could organise and administer as well as men. However, it must be mentioned that he too believed female involvement in such political organisations was based purely on stereotypical thinking, thus making them 'tools to be used to achieve a result' rather than an act of self-orchestrated emancipation.[51]

This is a fair interpretation of the involvement of several women's organisations in the sport debate and the NSWSU, especially when the instructions of the NCW and the in-house directives of

[49] See Alistair Thomson, "A crisis of masculinity? Australian military manhood in the Great War," in Lake and Damousi, *Gender and War*, 133-147.
[50] McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 93.
[51] Ibid., pp. 77, 93.

MacKinnon to the VSRC and the tactics of the NSWSU are observed. As such one must not exaggerate the war's impact on female emancipation in Australia across the twentieth century. On the other hand, to summarily dismiss the impact of women's involvement in these political driven organisations is a similarly detrimental mistake for historians.

The NCW and the AWNL appear to have acted much on their own motivations and without the direct instruction of male authorities. Their outrage was their own and their ability to collectivise their efforts and concentrate them displayed a strong level of female empowerment. More to the point, when such women's groups were established as arms to further the interests of authoritative patriarchal institutions they often displayed a strong will of their own removed of their puppet masters. For example, the QWRC and NSWSU both acted against MacKinnon's instructions to frame their recruiting efforts in passive and sympathetic attitudes and instead adopted a far more aggressive approach, no doubt influenced by their perceptions of the need for drastic action in a period of national crisis. This indicates a strong sense of female agency, showing they were not always willing to comply with the direction of the male establishment, thereby weakening McKernan's classification of them as a mere 'tool' of the establishment.

Female participation in recruitment work, undoubtedly considered the most important contribution of women outside the dual conscription referendums, must also have felt empowering and fuelled the belief that women could serve a purpose outside their homes. The rhetoric of the campaigns is an important example of this, particularly given that in most cases such language was formulated by the women themselves. Though the methods employed by such organisations undoubtedly reinforced and propagated gender stereotypes, the rhetoric surrounding the campaign could be interpreted as placing women in a position of considerable influence in society.

A strong example of this is located within the appeals of Mrs McBride's letter to the ladies of various Tennis Clubs around Melbourne. One is struck by the chosen angle of McBride's appeal. Though obviously hoping to encourage women to impress upon men the need to fulfil their prescribed duty by heading to the frontline, words to the effect that 'it is with the women' to 'send or hold back (men)'

certainly indicate the important position of women in an abnormal time, a position 'generally acknowledged' around the nation. Though motivated by a desire to enhance recruitment, McBride's appeal places the traditionally 'weaker' sex as the controlling influence over men regarding the most important decision this generation were confronted with during their lives, the decision of whether or not to enlist. Women are reminding each other that their voice matters. Not only this, McBride's appeal even suggests that the 'sacrifice' that women must make, that of sending their men to the frontline, is in fact of 'greater' significance than that of the men themselves. This may be interpreted as just another example of women seeking to measure their contribution in a society that held them from doing so in a more tangible sense, however, it continues to impress upon women that their impact on the war effort can be just as valuable as a man's, if not more so.

McBride's letter is made all the more impactful given such ideas were emanating within an environment that had traditionally sought to remind women of their second-class status in society. Tennis was not only a game that reinforced nineteenth century Victorian era constructs of femininity through its emphasis on 'grace and sociability rather than competitiveness and exertion'. It was also played on private courts, so as to guard it from the eyes of the outside world.[52] McBride's words could be understood as transforming an arena of oppression into one of empowerment.

Miss Temperley's plea to the women of the NSWSU also evokes similar ideas of womenfolk who now possessed an unprecedented level of power over the fate of their compatriots, the nation and ultimately the Empire. Temperley's reasoning to the NSWSU that the lives of the soldiers were 'in your hands' and that they alone had the power to 'send forth a second band of ANZACs' provides a particularly significant understanding of their strong influence. Admittedly, Temperley was simply attempting to capitalize on the now over-represented female population in Australia in order to further the war effort. But the motivations of McBride and Temperley are perhaps irrelevant. Women were becoming all too aware of their now potent influence they possessed and wished to spread this knowledge to the rest of their sex. While pleas such as these seek to use women to encourage enlistment of men through pre-existing gender roles, they indirectly infer on women their ever-

[52] Booth and Tatz, *One-Eyed*, 10, 63.

increasing power and influence in society, as well as their role integral role in the success and failure of the gargantuan conflict raging abroad. That the actions of the QWRC had a direct effect on a change in government policy toward restricting sport is evidence that the weight their actions were indeed having a significant impact on the form and function of the Australian war effort.

As the sportsmen's units acted to inform women of the growing influence they now possessed they also undermined certain oppressive constructs placed upon women in the pre-war society. The constructions of motherhood and maternal destiny were adopted by recruiters and both sides of the conscription debate during the war. However, recruiters were prepared to employ a particularly powerful yet scandalous tactic, that of female allure. Women's sexuality and its consequent influence over men had throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras been overwhelmingly oppressed in a society dictated by patriarchal Christian attitudes. Sex was an acceptable activity for women, but only to reproduce and within the framework of marriage. Though Lisa Featherstone has outlined that Australian women did in fact partake in pre-marital sex and sex for pleasure during this period, society, led by the major religious denominations, deplored and discouraged any semblance of female sexuality and promiscuity, as they also did with male sexuality, believing it represented moral degeneration.[53]

This preservation of feminine decency penetrated the nation's sporting culture, best exemplified in the shaping of women's sporting uniforms to suit moral rather than practical concerns. Conversely, sport was also thought to help suppress male sexual urges, such as masturbation and even homosexuality. But the dire need of recruits led the establishment to reconsider its moral scruples. Simon Nathan's plea to women to use every 'influence you possess', and even more so the directive of the NSW Committee to encourage enlistment 'in the quiet, unobtrusive, appealing way, known only to women', indicates the willingness of authorities to entice recruits through sexual coercion, if only by suggestive means. This process was aided by the NSWSRC periodical *Sport*. The magazine had played on concepts of gender attraction to encourage enlistment back in its first edition: 'Can't get a girl, eh! Get

[53] Lisa Featherstone, *Let's Talk About Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australia from Federation to the Pill* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 19-37, 43-62.

into khaki; or better still, join the Sportsmen's Unit, and the girls will rush to you.'[54] However, it took this to a whole new level in the following months. In an article titled 'The Silence of Parents – Why' the magazine attempts to remove the shroud surrounding the taboo issue of sex, while also making a tenuous attempt to link prudishness with the kind of language used to vilify the unpatriotic:

> Parents continue to try to maintain the old policy of silence as regards all matters pertaining to the subject of sex… What's the matter with the parents of to-day? Are they slackers? Here is an obvious duty, a vital duty, a duty that rests upon no one's shoulders but their own – and they shirk it. They not only neglect it. They absolutely refuse to perform it when it is pointed out to them.

In particular, it seems to focus on the need to educate women on matters of their own physicality and sexuality, which for too long has been denied to them because of the conservative outlook of society. The author states, 'A young lady was talking with me to-day on the subject of physiology. "Do you know," she said, "I could never listen to a lecture upon the subject, because I was all the time thinking about myself, and it made me grow faint."' This ignorance is deplored and the need to do away with self-consciousness surrounding the issue demanded.

The author believes there is no need to shy away from sex, not only because of its central place within the continuation of the human species, but also because of the joy one can derive from the act, 'We must be living great creative power simply for physical gratification, and we are afraid we will be found out. If we have called our children into this existence because we wanted them, is there any reason why we shouldn't tell them so, and tell them all about the wonderful processes by which this great gift of life was made possible?' Such opinions appear to be incredibly progressive and would not be considered, let alone accepted, for decades to come. But such arguments were less concerned with advancing liberalism than with patriotism. The reader, now encouraged to think of sex as nothing to be ashamed or afraid of, is then subjected to the following poem, titled 'Are you the bloke?':

> Come on, be a sport and a patriot – don't wear the slacker's ar.

[54] *Sport* (Sydney), 26 July, 1917, 4.

But be the bloke you ought to be –

Which your best girl thinks you are.[55]

Efforts by *Sport* to remove the social stigma surrounding sex, particularly that which is attached to women, came just prior to the NSWSRC efforts to utilise the powerful influence of the 'appealing way' of women to entice young men to enlist. Though one could interpret the appearance of the article as coincidental, we must remember the 'underlying objective' of the magazine itself was to enhance recruitment. Every article was therefore carefully constructed to help achieve this. Using such methods to 'cleverly disguise' this political objective,[56] it is safe to presume that the literature of *Sport* set about incorporating women into their recruiting efforts, insinuating that sexual manipulation could be used. Though not expressed explicitly, one cannot deny that the 'appealing way known only to women' suggests as much. The usage of women in this light embodies the great lengths the sportsmen unit campaigns were willing to go in order to secure their quota of recruits. The patriarchal society, represented in the NSWSRC, had compromised the traditionally dominant concern of moral purity to mitigate the recruiting shortage of 1917.

Encouraging women to utilise their sexuality to this purpose may have awakened the powerful sway they obtained over men and, even more than this, the instructions of the National Council of Women to 'refuse to play with eligible men' who were yet to volunteer, prompted the discussion of a degree of self-recognised sexual empowerment. Before the war girls and young women were instructed that femininity was dependent upon modesty,[57] but now, with the nation and Empire's sovereignty at stake, gender constructs were re-visited. Male desire and female allure had been partially unleashed for the greater cause. Various other women's pro-war organisations attempted to do likewise, such as the Australian Women's Service Corps, which highlighted maternal destiny but also played on male sexual insecurity.[58]

[55] *Sport* (Sydney), 25 August, 1917, 2-3, 6.
[56] NSWSRC (Minutes), July 1917, 2DRL/1121, AWM.
[57] Featherstone, *Let's Talk About Sex*, 24.
[58] Pam Maclean, "War and Australian Society," 78.

Though Featherstone's examination of the prevalence of venereal disease in the Australian Armed Forces during the war argues that attitudes towards sexuality had changed little during these years, it is also recognised as the 'turning point' in which an open discourse about sexuality emerged.[59] Shute's long accepted interpretation of the war as enshrining traditional conceptions of womanhood based exclusively on the biological function of maternity overlooks this development. The utilisation of the influence of female sexuality by higher authorities and by women themselves certainly runs in opposition not only to traditional gender principles, but also to Shute's interpretation of the Great War as facilitating, virtually unchallenged, the inviolability of the stereotype of woman as mother.[60] Thus, with greater research, perhaps there is room for a re-visitation of the war as a purely gender reinforcing period in Australian history.

Women's Football during the War

A more pronounced example of the war's relinquishment of the constraints placed on Australian women exists in the emergence of female Australian Rules football matches between 1915 and 1918. These games were organised across South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria in an attempt to help stimulate donations to the nation's war effort and raise war enthusiasm in general. Women's sporting contests provided a legitimate source of revenue for the effort according to patriotic groups, who refuted similar claims by male sporting leagues whose meagre contributions were offset by their harmful impact on recruitment. But their existence definitely stands out as a moment of liberation from the constraints of patriarchal society.

Unlike cricket, hockey and tennis, the violent and frenetic nature of the game had traditionally rendered it as an exclusively masculine pursuit, one unsuitable for female participation. Many of the qualities that made for a good footballer – athletic prowess, courage, determination, selflessness as well as aggression and physical resilience in the face of violent play – were closely aligned to conceptions of ideal masculine behaviour. More than any other these two latter traits ostracised

[59] Featherstone, *Let's Talk About Sex*, 111.
[60] Shute, "Heroines and Heroes," 30.

women from participation in the game, given the frailty regularly associated with femininity. Prime Minister Deakin once reasoned that a man brought up playing the 'uphill game' was better fitted for the contests the world had in store for him than if he had been 'brought up in the precincts of a ladies' school.'[61]

This attitude sustained itself right on through to the outbreak of war, with female participation cruelly discouraged in spite of their noticeable affection for the game and desire to partake in it. The Presbyterian Ladies' College school magazine appears to have treated with disdain one girl who 'was bold enough to suggest that a "football club be established" at the school because she had observed how much "fun, enjoyment and excitement" boys seem to have in that game'. Unsurprisingly, no record of any such club forming exists.[62] In fact, the little evidence of female participation in the Australian rules football usually describes 'carnivalesque-type' matches, played more for novelty rather than for any competitive inclinations of the players.[63]

But the circumstances of the war forced a concession of misogynistic thinking for more pragmatic concerns. Though we must be careful not to overemphasis its lasting impact, the research of historians Peter Burke and Robb Hess has concluded that the emergence of women's Australian Rules matches between 1915 and 1918, organised merely as a means to support the war effort, can now be interpreted as an 'important element in overall understandings of how both masculine and feminine ideals were being challenged and redefined by sporting practises… in a time of social flux.'[64]

The first documented cases of female football match occurred in Perth in 1915 with two fundraising matches instigated by the retailing firm Foy and Gibson. Origins of the games lay in the turbulent state of Western Australian football in 1915. Debate surrounding the justification for continuing the game in a time of national crisis prompted a decision by the West Australian Football League

[61] Alfred Deakin, Australian Football Council, Minute Book, 18 December, 1908, 21 cited in Peter Burke, "Patriot Games: Women's Football during the First World War in Australia," *Football Studies*, 8 (2005): 8.
[62] R. Crawford, "Moral and Manly: Girls and Games in Early Twentieth-Century Melbourne," in *From "fair sex" to feminism: sport and the socialization of women in the industrial and post-industrial eras*, eds. James Mangan and R.J. Park (London: 1987), 190.
[63] Rob Hess, "Missing in Auction? New Perspectives on the Origins and Diffusion of Women's Football in Australia during the Great War," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31 (2014): 2331.
[64] Rob Hess, "Playing with 'Patriotic Fire': Women and Football in the Antipodes during the Great War," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28 (2011): 1402.

(WAFL) in August to curtail its season, which almost ended in the Supreme Court after two competing club's challenged the WAFL's decision. Amidst this turmoil several women's football matches were organised to raise war-funds, consisting usually of teams associated with workplaces. These workplaces retained a strong connection with the nationalistic and patriotic cause and their involvement in the league acted as a vehicle for companies to display their patriotism.[65]

Considered at the time to be one-off fundraisers, the matches, to the surprise of the organisers, attracted 'big crowds' and generated great interest from other workplaces. From the humble beginnings of the 1915, further expansion throughout 1916 and 1917 saw numerous women's teams raised by several notable companies. Admittedly, the foremost reason for this encouragement of women's football lay in the political alignment of big business in Perth. The main instigator of the matches, the retailing firm Foy and Gibson, had showcased a strong support of the conscription movement in the following years and encouraged their male employees to enlist, along with many other of the 'big stores' of Perth. According to Burke, women's football in Perth during the war acted predominantly as a 'promotional vehicle for companies to display their patriotism.'[66]

But while the motivations of these companies might have been the benefit of the nation and their own image, the impetuses of the players were not always necessarily dictated by nationalistic concerns. Years of lecturing to the effect that they were unwelcome in the man's game had certainly not diminished female affinity with football. Mr Davidson, a supervisor at Foy and Gibson, noticed the women under his authority were 'football mad' even before the matches were organised. When the opportunity to partake in the Australian game emerged in 1915, those eligible grabbed it enthusiastically. Norah Metcalfe, for instance, saved weeks for enough money out of her meagre wages to afford a pair of football boots. Players also relished the opportunity to represent their workplace, team, region and themselves, an opportunity they took seriously. Ida Board, who participated in the games, recalled several 'catfights' and 'bitterness' during the games between

[65] Displaying patriotism is Perth was important, given the enthusiastic manner in which the state embraced the conflict. It sent proportionally the most volunteers and recorded almost a seventy per cent approval in the conscription referendums. Peter Burke, "Patriot Games: Women's Football during the First World War in Australia," 10-11.
[66] Ibid., 11-15.

Fremantle and Perth teams, traditional rivals in men's games. Such squabbles clearly reflect less concern with playing the game in the friendly spirit of a patriotic fundraiser and more of the competitiveness of a genuine sporting contest.

THE GIRLS' FOOTBALL MATCH

Figure 15 "The Girls Football Match"[67]

The significant attendance and media reporting of the matches suggest that the wider public viewed such contests with an equal weight as players. The games were certainly well attended; with one match at Subiaco Oval in October, 1917 attracting a 'good attendance' along with 60 pounds of revenue. The preference of spectators for female over male football contests certainly paints a picture of a patriarchal sporting culture reverse. Nevertheless, this may have been simply driven by a desire to see sport when legitimate opportunities to do so where limited.[68] The *Western Mail*, while criticising the the player's lack of skill, recognised the 'vigour' with which the combatants approached the contest, as well as the ladies' 'fine turn of speed.'[69] Rob Hess maintains that though the attire of the

[67] "The Girls Football Match", *Western Mail*, 26 October, 1917, 3.
[68] Ibid., 11-15.
[69] The article contained an accompanying photograph of the winning team. *Western Mail* (Perth), 5 October, 1917, 21.

players appears to have been based on moral decency and therefore restrictive of movement, the general reporting of the Perth matches and final score lines, the presence of a well-known umpire, the keenness of the participants and its location at one of the major ovals in Perth certainly added a sense of 'legitimacy' to the contest.[70]

Of course, not all women's football was treated with the legitimacy it was in Perth. In South Australia during 1916 a match involving female players dressed in 'various grotesque costumes' was held to raise money for the 'Soldiers Fund'.[71] The gimmicky attire restricted the players from much movement and provided onlookers with a source of amusement:

> The absurdity of the situation provided some compensation for the spectators. The players frequently became excited, and the advice such as "Take it the other way" and "Give it the boot" was gratuitously given.[72]

The game therefore fronted as an amusement for the crowd to gawk and laugh at, rather than an expression of interest in female physical prowess or athletic capability. The reporting of the game, in which the 'inherent gentleness' of the players was said to have 'robbed the play of any vigour', the female umpire's relief by a male soldier after her inability to finish the strenuous game, and the 'feminine timidity' of the players who refused to give their names, only served to add to the notion that football and women were irreconcilable in nature.[73] Nevertheless, while female participants in a match two years later prompted 'highly amusing' shouts and derisive 'roars of laughter', the eventual skilful displays surprised the crowd greatly.[74]

Other matches, however, provide telling insight into the way in which women's football gained a level of legitimacy during the war, if only in a patriotic setting. Ballarat, a city renowned for its support of the war, hosted a game between the 'Khaki Girls' and 'Lucas Girls' on the 28th of September, 1918. The game was organised to fundraise for the planned 'Arch of Victory' memorial,

[70] Hess, "Playing with 'Patriotic Fire," 1394-95.
[71] *Daily Herald*, 28 July, 1916.
[72] Ibid., 29 July, 1916.
[73] Ibid; Ibid., 28 July, 1916.
[74] Hess, "Missing in Action?," 2335.

dedicated to the city's war dead. In a similar fashion to the matches in Western Australia, both teams emanated from manufacturing companies, the 'Khaki Girls' from the Commonwealth Clothing Factory in South Melbourne and the 'Lucas Girls' from a textile and clothing company in Ballarat.[75]

The arrival of the 'Khaki Girls' prompted fanfare within the local press, who praised the patriotic efforts of the players. One such poem printed in the *Ballarat Courier* was by Shepparton resident Thomas Edwin Holtham, who appeared moved by the activities of the local Khaki girls. While Burke argues that the underlying discourse in newspaper reports was that participants' behaviour in the Perth matches remained 'ladylike',[76] Holtham's descriptions of the squad draws upon both traditional gender stereotypes and characteristics un-associated with femininity.

The opening verses for example outline the gracefulness and beauty of the Khaki Girls, the foremost qualities to be expected of and admired in women during the time. As the poem continues, however, Holtham's description of the team transcends from the attraction of enchanting femininity to one of military form and function, noticeably absent from the conventional description of women during the war based purely on 'maternal instincts':

> On ye come with martial tread,
> Supple swing and well-poised head
> Trained aright and smartly led –
> Khaki Girls! Khaki Girls!

Holtham, while admiring the traits of the Khaki Girls that aligned with traditional femininity, pronounces that it is in fact their sense of patriotism wherein their substance truly lies:

> Yet, while world on axis whirls,
> Khaki Girls,
> And war spatters it with gore,
> Reft by foe on sea and shore,

[75] Hess, "Playing with 'Patriotic Fire," 1396-1398.
[76] Burke, "Patriot Games," 16.

Khaki Girls.

What we most in you admire
Is not beauty nor attire,
But your patriotic fire –
Khaki Girls! Khaki Girls!
Precious more than priceless pearls,
Khaki Girls.

Is the answer you've decreed
For your country in her need,
Khaki Girls.

'Hence our Duty to fulfil,
Pit we all our strength and skill' –
And the world knows that you will –
Khaki Girls! Khaki Girls!

Never Flag like yours unfurls
Khaki Girls
Woman's war when Huns arise,
Much as man's you realise,
Khaki Girls.

Indeed, Hess has described such verses as open recognition of the 'changing role of women in society'.[77] Before anointing the Holtham's poem and by extension the 'Khaki Girls' as evidence of an

[77] Hess, "Playing with 'Patriotic Fire," 1399.

overthrow of gender stereotyping and identity, the following verse appears, expressing a more domesticated interpretation of a women's potential contribution to the war:

> So, while men for Freedom dare,
> Women nobly do their share –
> Food and strength and clothes for wear –
> Khaki Girls! Khaki Girls![78]

Such lines remind us of the need to view the war as a purely emancipatory experience for women. While doused in martial rhetoric and admiration, the distinguishing of 'men for Freedom dare' and women for 'food and strength and clothes for wear' clearly aligns with Shute's interpretation of the Great War as the reinforcer of man as 'the warrior and creator of history' and woman as 'the passive flesh at the mercy of fate.' And yet such poems give us cause to reflect on the traditional interpretation of the war as a period which reaffirmed gender constraints. Holtham's words discuss a greater burden of responsibility and importance placed upon the shoulders of Australian women in response to national crisis. Thus, the manner in which Australians observed this women's football match embodies the dual-occurring process in which the pressures of war enforced gender stereotypes but also 'acted to disrupt desired boundaries and demarcations' of pre-war society.[79]

[78] *Ballarat Courier*, 25th September, 1918, 4.
[79] Lake and Damousi, *Gender and War*, 4.

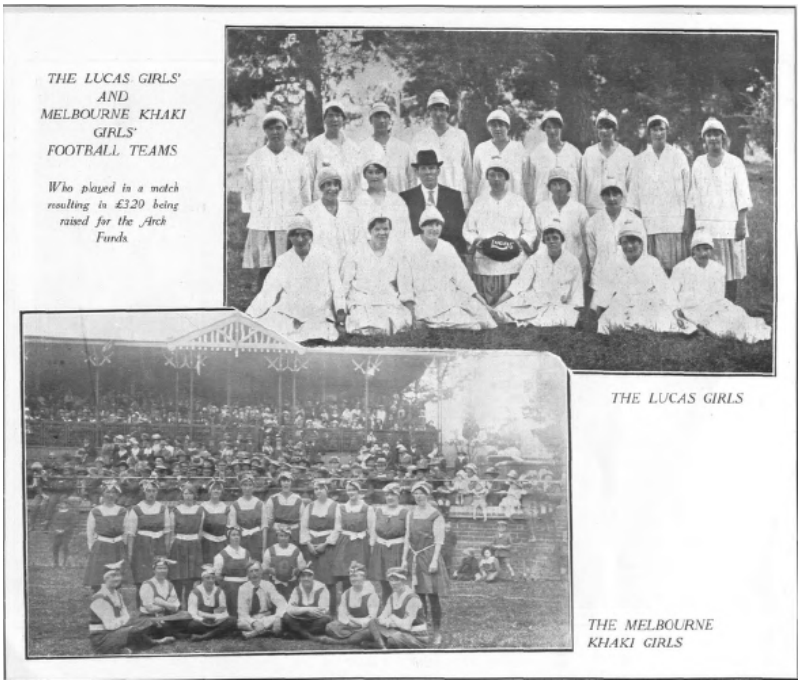

Figure 16 The Lucas Girls and Melbourne Khaki Girls[80]

The match itself would appear to have been aligned closer to the re-evaluation of the traditional construction of womanhood than to its reinforcement. The significance of the contest is revealed in the interest it received from the local press and wider Ballarat community. The arrival of 120 mostly women from Melbourne associated with the 'Khaki Girls' was met with wild cheers from the locals before a meeting with the mayor, and their 'smart appearance' and 'military bearing' had impressed the locals so much as to incite 'complimentary criticisms regarding the value of systematic physical training for girls.' The *Ballarat Courier* continued, '(they) marched very credibly indeed and in their ease of movement, combined with grace and dignity, they had nothing to fear from comparison with military parades of the sterner sex.'[81]

The arrival of the teams drew neither amusement nor derision, but rather 'cheer after cheer' from the 'packed crowd'. The intense coverage of the match indicates the legitimacy of a genuine sporting contest taking shape. But it was none other than the players themselves who set the tone for this

[80] *An Appreciation: the Arch of Victory and Avenue of Honour, Ballarat*, Baxter & Stubbs, Ballarat, 1921, 15, Manuscripts Collection, SLV.
[81] *Ballarat Courier*, 27, 30 September, 1918, 1.

attitude, as the *Courier* reported, 'both teams threw themselves into the game as if it really meant business.'[82] The emergence and development of women's Australian Rules football during the war provided its players with a 'rare opportunity to step beyond the normal restrictions of stereotypical gender roles that restricted women's activities' typical of the period beforehand.[83] Traditionally envisioned as a man's game unsuitable and irreconcilable with femininity, female football and footballers embraced the opportunity not only as a forum to assist the war effort but also to simply play the game they loved. In doing so they more often than not demonstrated that gender stereotypes were far from inviolable and need not necessarily dictate their lives.

Unfortunately, the cessation of hostilities rapidly ended this opportunity of footballing emancipation. The disintegration of these competitions and matches after 1918 reinforces Burke's point that the rise of women's football was merely a 'transitory phenomenon' in Perth that emerged only so long as the paternalistic structures of several male dominated companies could rationalise it.[84] Women's sport had been instituted not for the emancipation of women, but rather as a legitimate means to support political interests. With the war over, conviction in the football field as an exclusively male domain resumed with little encumbrance for decades, a process facilitated by the return of male competitors and competitions to their previous full strength.

The ill-fated destiny of women's football in the post-war world is epitomised in the attempt of a female Foy and Gibson employee to recruit women from the company to establish a team. The employee had her dreams cruelly dashed when the company barred women employees from using the company as a base for women's football teams after 1918, with unsupportive boyfriends and husbands also deterring their partners from competing.[85] Matches from here-onwards were sporadic or a novelty. Pictorial evidence exists of the first women's football match being held in Victoria in July of 1921. Though sporting traditionally male attire and with crowds in attendance, the coverage itself considers the match a trial to help answer the much debated question of whether women should play

[82] Ibid.
[83] Burke, "Patriot Games," 14.
[84] Ibid., 17.
[85] Ibid., 16.

football, instead of a celebration of women in the game.[86] Meanwhile, women's games in Western Australia during 1921 were patronising affairs designed purely for leisure.[87] Football had once again become a man's game.

While the termination of women's football may prompt the suggestion of the war's insignificant impact on the emergence of female sport and broader notions of emancipation, the post-war decades proved to be a revolutionary period in the development of women's sport. Booth and Tatz identify the link between those who experienced momentary emancipation during the war with the 'energetic, exuberant, sporting, active young women eager to flaunt their independence and sexuality' who emerged after it.[88] Traditional sports aligned with femininity such as hockey and tennis resumed their popularity. However, team sports associated with traditional masculinity became partially acceptable pursuits for women, including cricket and rugby, a sport which had so deeply ostracised women due to its combative nature. The establishment of the Ladies Rugby Football League in Sydney in 1921, consisting of five teams and 200 players who wore the same attire as their male equivalents speaks to the popularity of the game among women.[89] These sports were largely controlled by competent female administrators and received coverage, though not always positive, in the national press. [90] Traces of this were even found in the 1921 football match in Victoria. While several of the female player's peeked shyly from the dressing room at the wet and muddy conditions outside, Ivy Evans, emerged with a yell, 'Come on girls. Who's frightened?' The entire team followed suit, to the cheers of the crowd.[91]

Though the growth of women's sport was undoubtedly underway before 1914, it appears that the war, just as it did in many other facets of society, acted to accelerate social developments that may have otherwise stagnated in a period of peace and social stability. While women's sport would struggle to gain recognition until the late twentieth century, it appears that the First World War had a serious

[86] *Table Talk*, 28 July, 1921, 26.
[87] Burke, "Patriot Games," 15-16.
[88] Booth and Tatz, *One*-eyed, 103.
[89] Marion K. Stell, "A Sports Association of One's Own 1901-1939," in *Half the Race: A History of Australian Women in Sport* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus and Robinson, 1991), 56-57.
[90] Ibid., 48-70.
[91] *Herald*, 16 July, 1921, 4.

impact in breaking down the stigma attached to women's involvement with sport, particularly contact games deemed to be irrefutably male-only zones. If British historians can relate the growth of women's cricket in the post-war decades to the 'unique and liberating experience' that was the Great War,[92] perhaps we can observe similar developments in the emergence of women's sport in Australia.

Conclusion

To distinguish the Great War as a period of great female empowerment or emancipation would be somewhat misguided. The research undertaken and conclusions expressed in this chapter hardly point to a need to seriously overhaul our understanding of the impact of the Great War on gender in Australian society. In many ways Shute's appreciation of those terrible years, in which man remained the 'the warrior and creator of history' and woman 'the passive flesh at the mercy of fate', holds firm against the tide of further analysis. The major political and economic structures of Australia's patriarchal society were not fatally weakened by the war and life for men and women in many ways returned to its pre-1914 path.

Yet, while pro and anti-war groups drew upon traditional concepts of gender to further their causes, one can observe a simultaneously existing strain on gender identification and stereotyping, brought about under the unrelenting pressure of war. The war's destabilisation of the gender identities Australian society was founded upon can be witnessed through the motif of sport. Attacks made on male sporting codes highlighted a level of patriotic superiority over their male counterparts, while attempts to raise recruits from Australia's sporting fraternity offered women the ability to recognise their own ability to impact events of national importance, no doubt taking much from their designation of responsibility and competency. And while they often had to be informed of their newfound empowerment by the patriarchal establishment, they also encouraged each other to act upon their influential potential through the creation of collectivised organisations and institutions consigned to get sportsmen into uniform. Thus, women told one another that they did not have to simply wait by

[92] Jack Williams, *Cricket and England: A Cultural and Social History of the Inter-war Years* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 94.

and weep while events passed them by. Evidence of the impact of this could be witnessed even during the war, with the reconsideration of traditionally patriarchal structures in the name of the war effort, including sexual liberation and female sport. While these were only momentary in nature they sowed the seeds for further change across the following years, forever altering the very complexion of women's sport in Australia.

Indeed, sport had clearly had a considerable impact on the manner and method of the Australian home front's response to the war. The recognition of the intricate relationship between playing field and battlefield that had been professed since the late nineteenth century had come to its full expression throughout the Great War, despite the considerable controversy and conflict it had generated in its wake. The institutions that had first formulated its construction, the Australian Public schools, would bask in the realisation of the amalgamation between sportsmen and soldier, as well as their contribution to this. Yet they too would become bogged down in their own controversy borne out of their own making, forcing a re-think of their own athletically dominated educational procedures.

CHAPTER 8

Great Deeds and Regrettable Incidents: Public School Sport in Wartime

The identification of sport's close relationship with warfare penetrated multiple levels of the Australian war effort between 1914 and 1918. Propaganda, recruitment, fund-raising, gender relations, social unity and division, even combat training, all were in some way influenced by Australia's cultural love of sport. While the intersection of the two had resulted in mixed outcomes, there is no denying that Australia's war was influenced by sport and Australian sport affected by the war. But how was sport's place in wartime interpreted by those who had first recognised the connection all those decades ago?

In this, the final chapter of the thesis, an investigation into the Australian Public schools and their response to the war will be undertaken. More specifically, it will focus on their continued proliferation of the sport and war paradigm that not only continued but also intensified between 1914 and 1918. While many held genuine belief in their intimate connection, much of the reason for this comparison focused on substantiating the validity of Public school education and its adoption of athleticism as an instructive tool, thereby protecting the continuation of their games throughout the war. With the campaign against professional and spectator sports raging across the country, school administrators claimed their games offered a legitimate form of sporting recreation in a time of war. Led by Wesley College Headmaster Lawrence Adamson, they based this justification on the fact that their games generated zero revenue and consisted of players of military ineligibility; while gifting the nation with soldiers of a discernibly martial proficiency. In this, Public school sport was held up as a noble pursuit, one that had the best interests of the war close to its heart.

However, just as it had with propaganda, recruitment, fundraising and sport itself, the amalgamation of war and sport in the schools led to complications. While the schools boasted about the patriotic disposition of their games, increasing friction and violence punctuated the playing of interschool

sports, notably Australian Rules football, during the war years. Normalised in the decades before 1914, boys high on the ecstasy of patriotism and war's glorification took interschool rivalry to near-farcical levels. The situation had become so bad by 1917 that the Headmasters were forced to re-evaluate the place of sport within APS, culminating in the suspension of interschool competition. The insistence that Public school games helped to provide legitimate recreation were seriously undermined by the fact that its students were, in the words of Adamson, 'playing at hate'.[1] Although praised by historians for their self-sacrificial commitment to the war effort, this chapter views the hypocrisy of Public school attitudes toward sport on the home front as yet another example of the discord surrounding the association of sport with the Australian war effort.

The Public Schools and the War

The Public schools of Australia, acting as a microcosm of Australian middle-class society, embraced the declaration of war against Germany with a particular zeal from its outset. Just as the government and press supported the decision unflinchingly, the Public school community pledged their undying loyalty to the Empire, which they held so dearly in their hearts. Those of military age, exposed to the rampant militarism that dominated Public school life from 1900 onwards, enlisted in their droves, while the schools themselves kept the fires of patriotism burning at home. The numbers of Old Boys who enlisted across the country certainly makes for impressive reading. Nearly 5,000 from the APS of Victoria enlisted during the war, with 756 confirmed killed. Their NSW brethren have a similarly imposing record, with Sydney Grammar contributing some 1,800 enlistees, including 260 killed, while the classes of 1889-1918 from Shore school produced 791 enlistees (700 of whom had enlisted by 1917) and 129 killed. Adelaide's most prestigious institution, St. Peters College, also provided an incredible 1,139 Old Boys of whom 173 perished.[2]

[1] *Wesley College Chronicle*, December, 1917, 8-9.
[2] No universally agreed upon figure of enlistments from the Australian Public schools has ever been concluded. Statistics taken from Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 91; Geoffrey Sherington, *Shore: A History of Sydney Church of England Grammar School* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 93.

As many of their former students rushed to enlistment depots, the schools embraced the war with a similar enthusiasm. The outbreak of war is notable for producing an atmosphere of euphoria among staff and students alike. The following report of the Foundation Day Concert at Melbourne's Scotch College spoke to the blind devotion the wider school community felt towards Empire in its hour of need:

> It is impossible to describe the feelings which we all experienced – hearts were thrilled with an ecstasy of extreme ardour inspired by the great thoughts which arose in the minds of all… What a wave of emotion swept over the whole gathering, each one could feel the blood coursing wildly through his veins in the wild thrill of excitement![3]

This unhinged patriotism was encouraged from the highest echelons of the Public school system. Lawrence Adamson was foremost among the authoritative figures who relished Australia's entry into the war. His glorified understanding of combat was even more romanticised than that of his naive students. Knowledge of the great losses incurred and the miserable conditions endured by his Old Boys at the front never doused his passion for the war. He forever retained in his mind's eye a sincere belief in the glory of battle and honour of sacrifice in the name of Empire. Adamson was often heard to refer to the war as the 'Great Adventure' he regretfully could not take part in.[4] Though not quite as fanatical as Adamson, the other school Heads would leave no doubt as to their commitment to Empire and the need of Australia and the Public school community to rally to the motherland's defence.

The fervent patriotism displayed by the Headmasters greatly influenced their respective student bodies. In any case, they needed little encouragement. Michael McKernan, in his study of Australia's schools during the war, explains, 'war will always excite and stimulate young minds romantically attuned to notions of heroism, courage and sacrifice.'[5] As such the reactions of school magazines, monitored under the watchful eyes of discerning Headmasters but constructed largely by the students themselves, reflected this fascination with the war. The editor of the *Scotch Collegian*, J. D. Burns,

[3] *Scotch Collegian*, December, 1914, 144-145.
[4] Adamson, "The School and the War," 63.
[5] McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 45.

composed a poem about his decision to enlist, titled 'the Bugles of England', which featured in the *Scotch Collegian* in May, 1915. Written whilst in training at Broadmeadows camp, the poem expresses the sweet calls to arms of the mother country and the obligation he owed to defend his ancestral home:

> O, England, I heard the cry of those that died for thee,
> Sounding like an organ-voice across the winter sea;
> They lived and died for England, and gladly went their way,
> England, O England – how could I stay?[6]

The poignancy of his words touched many, encapsulating the feelings of the entire Public school community who held close in their hearts this sense of duty to King and country.[7]

Of course, this patriotism was not a unique development within the Public schools. Wider historical research indicates a similar response within the state and Catholic schools, particularly during 1914 and 1915.[8] However, the Public schools, just as they had during the Boer conflict, expressed their own vested interest in the conflict. Not only were they concerned with serving Empire in its hour of need, they were also keen to associate the service of their Old Boys with the school that had taught them the meaning of Imperial duty. The President of the Old Melburnians C. J. Zichy-Woinarski bid farewell to the departing Old Boys in September with a request of them to wear the Old Melburnian badge under their tunic when charging into battle.[9] Meanwhile, the *St. Peter's School Magazine* appeared disturbingly impatient to see its Old Boys feature in the casualty lists with their English brethren, 'To read the English School Magazines gives us a pang of envy. Their lists of those who have died for their country are a source of sorrow, of course, but what pride!'[10]

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[6] *Scotch Collegian*, May, 1915, 43.
[7] The poem was even wrongly attributed to British propagandist Rudyard Kipling, such was its stature. Burns, however, would be killed in action just three weeks after arriving at Gallipoli. A.E. Pratt, *Life of Dr W. S. Littlejohn*, 229.
[8] Triolo, *'Our Schools and the War'*; McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 49.
[9] *Melburnian*, December, 1914, 108.
[10] *St Peters School Magazine*, December, 1914, 29-30.

Such a desire stems from one word, vindication. The war provided the ideal opportunity to display the self-proclaimed superiority of Public school education, which had been boasted of in the decades beforehand. The historian of Shore school, Geoffrey Shore, argues the war service of its students, 'became a test of national and school values…'[11] They therefore stood united in distinguishing themselves from the other schools, believing their pupils shared common ideals and a common spirit.[12] Attempts to collectivise this unity and show it to the world were witnessed in the establishment of a Victorian Public schools' unit, or 'F' Company of the 5th Battalion, shortly after war's outbreak. Serving briefly at Gallipoli, the unit drew no lines between the different schools, for they were all connected by 'the capacity of devotion to the cause' that was the 'crowning honour of our Public Schools'.[13] The schools were deeply loyal to the cause, but they were also keen to be seen doing so in order to meet their own glowing reputation.

The Sport and War Paradigm Continues

This widespread anticipation of the Great War as a testing ground of Public school training was accompanied by pronouncements of sport's invaluable place within it. Consistently theorised in the pre-war years, these comparisons now obtained a far greater relevancy for those who held to them. Recognition of the relationship between athleticism and a tangible commitment to Empire can be witnessed in the remarks of several Headmasters at the outbreak of war. Noticeable within Adamson's speech at the Farewell Dinner to the Wesley Old Boys in September, 1914 was his acknowledgement of the importance of school games in shaping the patriotic minds of his former students turned soldiers:

> The training of the Public School instils devotion to the cause. Sometimes we are told we devote too much attention to games and to winning matches, but these are merely symbols.

[11] Sherington, *Shore*, 91.
[12] McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 63.
[13] *Melburnian*, December, 1914, 112; Adamson, 'Wesley and the War', 56.

> We begin with patriotism at home for things near and dear to us, and this grows into devotion to things which seem further off when we are young, but grow nearer as we grow older.

Adamson concluded his remarks with the school's promise to 'keep the score of your successes' and a reassurance to the departing that, thanks to their training, 'no one can beat the Australian Public School boy.' Headmasters at Scotch, Xavier and Melbourne Grammar's 1915 Annual Report expressed similar sentiments.[14] Sport was held in such high regard that it was even considered a deterrent to the war. Adopting similar prose used by numerous newspaper editorialists and government officials, the Melbourne Grammar Headmaster George Blanch maintained that Germany's lack of sporting culture had prompted it to test its national virility through the examination of battle, 'The absence of games creates a demand for war as a school of courage and endurance.'[15]

The fact that this assured connection was being touched upon before Public school boys, or for that matter any Australians, had entered the battlefield never seemed to trouble those who vocalised it. In their eyes amateurism, athleticism and a Public school education had prepared their boys for the invaluable service they would provide for the Empire. Reflecting this confidence is an article published in the *Scotch Collegian* shortly after the ANZAC assault on Gallipoli, 'to think that among them are many whom once we used to cheer wildly on the football field! These old Scotchies have before them now a longer and sterner fight than ever they fought then and Scotch looks to them to acquit themselves like true sons of the school…'[16]

The sporting induced superiority of its Old Boys gained a strong boost after details of the landing hit the Australian press. Just as it had nationwide, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett's correspondence confirmed to those within the Public schools that their staunch adherence to the training of young men via the doctrine of athleticism had been vindicated on the shores of Gallipoli, despite the fact that the ANZAC's who stormed the heights contained a cross-section of the wider Australian and New

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[14] *Wesley College Chronicle*, December, 1914, 5; *Australasian*, 12 September, 1914, 23; *Xaverian*, December, 1914, 22; Melbourne Grammar School 1915 Annual Report cited in Weston Bate and Helen Penrose, *Challenging Traditions: A History of Melbourne Grammar School* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002), 118.
[15] *Melburnian*, December, 1914, 88-89.
[16] *Scotch Collegian*, May, 1915, 7.

Zealand populations. This assurance was expressed repeatedly by Melbourne Old Boy and amateur enthusiast Reginald Wilmot, 'almost every (Public) school in Australia is represented in the first and subsequent lists of casualties… we would not have it otherwise.'[17] He soon pounced on Bartlett's description of the athletically disposed Australians as the proof of the superior Public school athletic training and the underlying connection between that of sport and war:

> The lists of casualties which have come through from the Dardanelles contain the names of many who have played in the school games in the last 10 or 15 years… The training in athletics has stood them in good stead in their mettle. "The athletic Australians" as Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett calls them, have made the world ring with their prowess, their daring, their dash, and last, but by no means least, their courage…[18]

With credible evidence in the form of Bartlett's report, the schools would, for the remainder of the war, pinpoint the sporting contests of their former pupils as the breeding ground for their martial competency. At Shore's Empire Day celebrations in 1918, James Ashton, MP, proclaimed that, 'the great deeds of the Australians are the outcome of their love of sport.'[19]

School poetry and song also reflected this justification of the connection between sporting excellence and combat effectiveness. This was easier done before the war degenerated into mechanical slaughter that readily consumed all involved in it, as we remember Alan Gross's 1914 poem *Young Chivalry*, 'Because through many a bloodless field and fray, we learned the code which governs war and play' (see Chapter 2). But even the sobering effect unfathomable casualty lists had on war fever failed to dampen love of nation, Empire and of course school. Using Newbolt's *Vitai Lampada* as a template, students continued to equate their sporting matches with the exploits of Old Boys half a world away. One such example featured in the *Sydneian* in December, 1916:

> Rolled cheer th' arena round,
> As they struggled to gain the hard-fought ground,

[17] *Australasian*, 8 May, 1915, 23.
[18] Ibid., 22 May, 1915, 25.
[19] *Torch Bearer*, June, 1918, 20.

But a mightier cheer than ever told

Of a handsome win for the Black and Gold.

A raid to be made on the "fearful Hun"

(Taken as part of their daily fun)

It's right in the forefront,

Brave and bold,

That you'll find the boys of the Black and Gold.[20]

The high enlistment rate among former school sports stars suggests the significant influence Public school athleticism had on students when the test finally came. The appeal to Australia's 'sporting instinct' had little impact on the wider public during 1917, both due to their unfamiliarity with the ethos of amateurism and their overall weariness with the war in general. But for a generation of Old Boys, the lessons imparted on the playing fields of their youth appear to have hit the mark. The entire 1915 class of the AAGPS were all reported by be at the front by 1917.[21] Meanwhile, in Victoria, every Scotch cricketing and football captain between 1904 and 1916 either enlisted or attempted to, while never fewer than ten of each 1st XVIII football side also answered the call. In fact, the football teams of 1909-15 saw almost every Scotch player in the AIF, years that specifically coincided with athleticism's forceful integration with militarism in the schools. Similar statistics can be found at Wesley, where the entire 1910 champion cricket team and 1911 Head of the River crew enlisted.[22]

Many Old Boys were convinced themselves that their educational indoctrination within the schools had indeed created a generation of loyal, determined, courageous and dutiful defenders of Empire. Former Wesley student Captain Chaplain E. T. Leslie put down the excellence he had seen from Australian Public school soldiers to the rigorous training they had encountered at school:

[20] *Sydneian*, December, 1916, 31.
[21] NSWSRC (Correspondence), Letter Brother Edwin, Secretary Athletic Association of the Great Public Schools sent from St. Josephs College, Hunter Hill, 15 June, 1917, AWM.
[22] McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 57; Adamson, "Wesley and the War," 59-60.

> …nothing in the war has been finer than what Australian boys – many of them Public School boys – did for the Empire and humanity on the heights of ANZAC… What a debt I owe to dear old Wesley and to men of the calibre of Mr. L. A. Adamson I cannot really compute.[23]

This could also be directly linked with the lessons of athleticism. Let us not forget the letter of the former Geelong Grammar boy who believed a Public school education enabled the Old Boy to take part in combat, 'as naturally on the battlefield as he does on the football ground.'[24]

Of course, the cavalier attitude of Adamson and by extension the wider Public schools toward the 'Great Adventure' would certainly have been 'obscene in many people's hearts', particularly the families of loved ones lost.[25] For wartime Wesley student Brian Lewis, confronting the traumatic reality of war hurt all the more after word reached him of his brother's death whilst on active service. Much of his anger was directed at Adamson, whose sporting romanticisation and trivialisation of the deaths of students was more than Lewis could stomach. Sobbing on his bed while the 'foundation of our world melted away', Lewis felt 'lucky not to have been at school assembly when the Head announced that it had scored another death.' To him and many others, Adamson and the educational values he preached now appeared, 'ridiculous and artificial', as they did for many of the soldiers on the frontline.[26]

This disillusionment with Public school educational values exists beside the emptiness of the proclamations of the supposed martial superiority they imbued in young men. Charles Bean submits that while the AIF chose its first contingent of officers largely from the Old Boys who had been 'cadets and prefects and leaders in games', the next generation of officers would be selected from the 'rank and file', who proved themselves just as 'reliable, vigorous, and potential leaders' as their 'social betters' had. Men of little education became, from Bean's observations, 'the great strength of the First A.I.F.', dispelling the myth that the Public school athletic-based education had somehow

[23] McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 63; *Wesley College Chronicle*, May, 1916, 21.
[24] *Corian*, August, 1916, 52.
[25] Lemon, *A Great Australian School*, 158-159.
[26] Lewis, *Our* War, 300, 321.

turned them into soldiers, or as Geelong College's school magazine *Pegasus* labelled them, 'the very cream of the country'.[27]

Just as athleticism hadn't armed Public school soldiers with superior leadership potential, so too did it failed to make them exceptional soldiers, as outlined in Chapter 3. Old Boys were mown down alongside their 'social lessors', not to mention their 'un-sporting' adversaries. Young men photographed in tennis or football outfits one year appear the next in khaki and slouch hats, and often are listed the following year as among the dead or injured.[28] While Wesley marvelled one day at the enlistment of its entire 1910 cricket team and 1911 rowing sides, it would soon mourn the deaths of four members from each side killed in action.[29]

Nonetheless, the discernible patriotism exhibited by the wider school community provided it with inexorable assuredness that both the ethos of amateur sport and Public school athleticism had truly proven themselves in the trenches of Gallipoli and France. As Wilmot explained, 'the fellow who has shepherded you or for whom you have shepherded in the ruck, the batsman who has held an end or, by some brilliant hitting, has pulled a match out of the fire… these are the men for the trenches or the charge.'[30]

Public Schools and the Sport and War Debate

Just as the war vindicated athleticism, so too did it test it. The ennobling spirit of Public school sports was understood to have blossomed at Gallipoli, in the Middle-East and in France. Unfortunately, that same spirit was disappointingly lacking on the home front, not only among their professional sporting rivals, but more surprisingly, within the Public schools themselves. This chapter will now examine the exploitation of the war by the Public schools, which hypocritically used the veil of patriotism to preserve the sanctity of their games and defame their professionally inclined rivals.

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[27] C.E.W. Bean, *Here My Son: am account of the independent and other corporate boys schools' of Australia* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1950), 201-202; *Pegasus*, May, 1916, 39.
[28] McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 59.
[29] Adamson, 'Wesley and the War', 59-60.
[30] *Australasian*, 4 March, 1916, 24.

By 1916, Headmasters, students and other individuals within this community had, just like wider middle-class society, begun to show concern that their fellow Australians were becoming apathetic and hostile to the war. The *Scotch Collegian* wrote alarmingly that, 'the people of Australia are divided into hostile sections – class strife is rampant, religious strife imminent.'[31] The schools discussed and debated social issues, including the conscription campaigns, industrial strikes and sectarian divisions that raged across 1916 and 1917. There was never any question as to which side of the debates the schools would lean, given their often-pronounced commitment to Empire.

With a passionately patriotic stance taken on important wartime issues, the schools also campaigned against the continuation of professional sporting fixtures. As long-time bastions of amateur sporting ideology, the schools were quick to denounce the decision by professional leagues to continue with their games. To them the war had finally lifted the shroud of glamour that hung over such fixtures, exposing their moral corruption. Wesley Headmaster Lawrence Adamson commenced the public movement against professional sport in April 1915, as this thesis has discussed in previous chapters. Yet his attack that day put the spotlight not only on professional football but also on the wider school community:

> What then is (our duty) as patriotic Australians and as public school people… Some of you (students) have been in the habit of attending League or Association football matches; you cannot be faithful to your vows and do so any longer… Every sixpence you pay to see a professional football match helps clubs indirectly induce men to stay away from the fighting line…[32]

Adamson was not only hoping to bring shame down upon those indifferent to the higher calling of Empire, he was directly trying to spread his disapproval among the wider Public school community, specifically the student body. By equating their attendance of such fixtures as contrary to their 'duty' and 'vows' to Empire, Adamson was affording eager yet ineligible students an avenue to assist the war effort.

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[31] *Scotch Collegian*, December, 1917, 203.
[32] *Wesley College Chronicle*, May, 1915, 13-14.

Adamson's stand against professional sport received strong support within the wider Public school community. Wilmot, somewhat predictably, described the speech as 'remarkable'.[33] A former student studying at Melbourne University too remarked that every man from his College house would have loved to be in assembly to hear the speech and join in with the 'hoy' that surely must have followed.[34] One patriotic Old Boy now at the front, who resented the idea that his fellow compatriots were watching games while their comrades fought and died a half a world away, gave his approval toward Adamson's sentiments. Keith Phillips, after writing about the horror and sacrifice of the Gallipoli landing and a particularly costly manoeuvre, commented, 'I wish the shirkers and racecourse touts could see this.'[35]

Current students, however, appeared more hesitant to comply with this call-to-arms. Adamson's attack prompted debating clubs at Scotch, Wesley and Melbourne Grammar to question the abolishment of professional fixtures, with varied responses.[36] The hearts of boys must have been conflicted. It was no easy task to forsake their love for the old game and commit to the new one. Nevertheless, with tales of the ANZAC heroics at Gallipoli making their way home, students began to come around. The 1916 Alexander Morrison winning essay by Scotch pupil J. P. MacNeil, titled "Australia after the War", called for reform on the nation's unhealthy sporting obsession with professional leagues and codes. While not wishing to ban sports in their entirety, 'for it was their athletic training that stood our troops in such good stead (at Gallipoli)', McNeil maintained sport, 'must never be allowed to become the ruling passion and aim of our lives' and should be used only as a means for better service to country.[37]

Despite this wealth of support, Adamson had opened a Pandora's Box of sorts that morning. Embittered victims of Adamson's attack began to question its hypocritical and biased nature against one sport over the other. *Sport* magazine was so bold as to make a public challenge to the Wesley Headmaster to live by his decree: 'Wonder whether the public schools' boat race will be abandoned

[33] *Australasian*, 24 April, 1915, 18; *Argus*, 23 April, 1915, 11.
[34] *Wesley College Chronicle*, August, 1915, 39.
[35] *Scotch Collegian*, August, 1915, 130-136.
[36] *Wesley College Chronicle*, August, 1915; *Melburnian*, May, 1915, 30; *Scotch Collegian*, May, 1915, 32-33;
[37] *Scotch Collegian*, December, 1916, 215.

this afternoon. The Wesley College crew have entered, Mr L. A. Adamson, the head master, should withdraw his crew from the race.'[38] In order to preserve the sanctity of athleticism against these questions, the Public schools community would regularly point to the connection of wholesome Public school sport and combat, which underlined the formers practicality during wartime. The acting Headmaster of Sydney Grammar defended the continuation of their games amidst public disapproval:

> In common with the other schools, we have been freely criticised on the maintenance of these School competitions in a time of war. We do not apologise for them. We believe in them. The War is not yet over, and I do not know any better way in which these lads can prepare themselves to take part in the actual struggle.[39]

This was done easily enough for sports whose makeup was of a noticeably militarised nature, as it had been before 1914. Those involved with the Shooting Team at Melbourne Grammar were disheartened by the decline of the sport during the war, considering it a 'pity, since a knowledge of rifle shooting should be encouraged at a time of national stress.'[40] Likewise, Sydney Grammar's Boxing instructor Tommy Hansley, while demonstrating the craft to a large crowd of students, preached that its usefulness lay primarily on the battlefield, 'To ensure peace' Hansley stated, 'you must prepare for war.'[41]

But associations were also made for sports of a less direct military utility. At the 1917 Speech Day, acting Headmaster A. H. S. Lucas, discussing the strong performance of the school's sporting and athletic record during the last year, unashamedly reinforced the importance of games in both school and national life. Lucas stated to his students that they themselves were fully aware of the importance of such contests, 'they are training body and mind for military work, and that the rivals whom now they strain every limb to vanquish are the comrades who will fight by their sides in the field.'[42] A similar defence of school sport at Sydney Grammar the following year in the *Sydneian*, which equated

[38] *Sport* (Melbourne), 7 May, 1915, 1.
[39] *Sydneian*, March, 1918, 6.
[40] *Melburnian*, May, 1917, 54.
[41] *Sydneian*, March, 1918, 19.
[42] Ibid., March, 1918, 6.

student attendees of interschool rugby matches with older boys enlisting for service in the armed forces. The article maintained that the school would be failing in its duty to the state if it did not instil a sense of patriotic feeling. Therefore, as the most 'natural outlet for this feeling is in the enthusiasm for the sporting enterprises of the school,' it hoped to see its boys attend in great numbers all sporting matches possible.[43]

One of the greatest exponents of school games was also quick to defend their sanctity by differentiating them from the immorality professional leagues. Wilmot was in no doubt school games had imbued the great contingent of Old Boys with the spirit of loyalty they now displayed in Europe and the Middle-East. His report of the 1916 Head-of-the-River rowing regatta specified that the participants of such games were foremost among those now in the uniforms of the AIF:

> [f]rom no source had the recruiting been so thorough as from the athletes of the public schools… Statistics show that there is hardly a boy who has rowed in these races in the last ten years who is now not in khaki… Public school sport has proved its worth to the Empire in its crisis…

The prominences of Public school sportsmen within the AIF was no coincidence, for these games had conditioned Old Boys for the battlefield in the past and were now preparing another generation for the same task:

> There are many men in Geelong to-day who have enjoyed the sport because they realise its value to the nation, because they know that every one of these boys is fitting himself for that greater game, in which old public school rivals will fight for the nation's honour as comrades, and in the full that they are honouring their schools and repaying a debt to their schools and repaying a debt to their alma mater by doing their duty.

In linking the 'worth' and 'value' of Public school sport so closely with the performance of Australian soldiers abroad, Wilmot hopes to justify to the general public the need for school sporting contests in a time of war. Nevertheless, the large attendance of spectators at such events left the Public schools

[43] Ibid., December, 1917, 63.

open to similar criticisms levelled at professional fixtures. The crowd must have been considerable that day. Geelong, which hosted the event, was reportedly teeming with spectators, 'all day with excited people, young and old… every hotel, every boarding house, is full to overflowing… every road this morning seemed to lead to Geelong.' Wilmot therefore moved to distance the meets enormous crowds from the immorality of competing codes:

> The crowd today has for the none forgotten Verdun, Loos, the Marne, Gallipoli, Kut-el-Armarna, and has thrown itself into the carnival to encourage the development of clean amateur athleticism. For there is nothing professional about these races. The prize is naught.

The article also attempted to legitimise the popularity of the race by noting within the crowd 'the sobering note of the khaki'. Wilmot even went so far as to label the school meet as 'essentially a soldier's boat race.' [44] The *Scotch Collegians* editor made similar statements the following year, declaring that since professional sport had aligned itself against the ideals of patriotism, it now more than ever juxtaposed itself against the nobility of Public school games.[45]

The hypocritical justification of Wilmot and others must have infuriated the supporters of the much-vilified football leagues of Victoria. How is it, they must have wondered, that vast crowds at the Head of the River had not forgotten the sacrifices of current and former soldiers abroad, yet the crowds at football fixtures, which during the finals were their lowest for the century, were guilty of such? For sure, many soldiers enthusiastically supported the regatta, but so too did they attend and approve of football matches. One young Victorian soldier on the eve of the Gallipoli invasion took solace in the thought that Australia's war and the VFL season were commencing at the same time. 'Two campaigns,' he wrote, 'both for a flag.'[46] Wilmot's other justification for Public school sport, that the boys competed for no prize money which may dissuade them from enlisting, ignored the fact that the great majority of VFL players had agreed to relinquish their match payment at the beginning of the

[44] The *Chronicle* appears to have borrowed this report from Wilmot. *Argus*, 6 May, 1916, 18; *Wesley College Chronicle*, May, 1916, 31.
[45] *Scotch Collegian*, August, 1917, 108.
[46] Vamplew al eds., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, 450.

1916 season.[47] Acknowledgment of such hypocrisies was rarely made, if ever, by those who purveyed them, so it is no wonder that football's supporters saw a clear class bias that dictated the campaign against their game and all professional sport. Nevertheless, Public school games remained in the minds of Wilmot and many others the last beacon of truly decent sporting competition in the country.

Abandonment of Public School Sport

For all its self-anointed superiority, the intense sporting rivalry fostered within the Public schools in the pre-war decades boiled over between 1914 and 1917, painting an altogether distasteful picture. There had been some minor division within the AAGPS of NSW owing to the war. One Sports Master had refused to allow his team to play matches with teams of eligible Old Boys, as he deemed that the latter should be at the front.[48] However, this division occurred most tellingly during the Victorian APS's annual football Premiership. Fighting between players and spectators, as well as the use of 'war cries' and general feelings of animosity between schools, forced the Headmasters into suspending interschool competitions, so as to save the reputations not only of the games but also of the schools themselves. The existence of such bitterness, and the fact that such fighting had been encouraged in the pre-war years, only further revealed the sanctimonious nature of the claims of superior patriotism showcased within Public school sports over their professional adversaries.

Though the seeds of this turmoil were sown over a decade beforehand, the influence of the war was crucial in the escalation of interschool sport conflict. Public interest with school sport reached remarkably high levels during the war.[49] The Headmasters of the AAGPS recognised this growing attention when it decided to move its Rugby matches from mid-week to Saturdays.[50] This popularity also developed in the APS of Victoria. A 'great crowd' gathered for the 1917 football Premiership

[47] Blair, "War and Peace, 1915-1924," 125-126.
[48] NSWSRC (Correspondence), Letter Brother Edwin, Secretary Athletic Association of the Great Public Schools sent from St. Josephs College, Hunter Hill, 15 June, 1917, AWM.
[49] It was common for the schools to claim that interest in games had declined during this period, perhaps in the hope of hosing down comparisons with professional fixtures. The *Melburnian* printed in 1916, 'The most noticeable way in which this side of our life has altered lies in the remarkably decreased interest outsiders now evince in our sports, as compared to the former days.' *Melburnian,* August, 1916, 59.
[50] Sherington, *Shore*, 103.

decider, followed by a record attendance at a Xavier vs. Wesley game in 1918.[51] The popularity of the Head of the River rowing carnival also appears to have increased remarkably during the war. From the very healthy estimated attendance of 12, 000 to 15, 000 in 1914, crowds doubled to 30, 000 by 1918, just short of the highly vilified VFL Grand Final attendance of 39, 262.[52] Xavier historian Greg Denning believes that sports-mad Melbourne, deprived of many of their games during the war, turned to Public school contests to accommodate their sporting obsession.[53] With increasing attention from the wider community, Public school sport took on a greater meaning for those directly associated with its outcomes.

The equating of duty to the school with the higher calling of loyalty to nation and Empire further compounded the mounting significance of such contests. McKernan argues, 'Pupils… fulfilled this need to involve themselves personally by identifying themselves closely with their school; they believed that the loyalty they gave to their school would stimulate the loyalty they owed to Empire.'[54] No doubt, this process was encouraged within the schools themselves. The *Sydneian* implored its students to display their patriotism by taking a greater interest in their school, including 'every football, cricket, rowing or shooting match… indeed, every indoor and outdoor function of school life.'[55] Adamson suggested that each Wesley boy '[a]dopt in his mind an Old Boy who had been killed, and by their daily task attempt to complete the work that had been started by those who would not return.'[56]

Asked to envision their commitment to school as a soldier would commit himself to defence of the Empire, the boys looked at their old sporting adversaries with increasing hostility. Though students were told of their belonging to wider Public school community, whose chief purpose was to support the nation and Empire, old allegiances, and rivalries, were not soon forgotten. The best conceivable

[51] *Winner*, 29th August 1917, 9; *Age*, 20 July, 1918, 10.
[52] These figures, admittedly, are based on estimates, as opposed to the more accurate gate takings of the VFL matches. *Leader* (Melbourne), 16 May, 1914, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 May 1918, 7; Jim Main, *More than a Century of AFL Grand Finals* (Essendon North: Pennon Publishing, 2001), 48.
[53] Denning, *Xavier Portraits*, 92.
[54] McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 49.
[55] *Sydneian*, September, 1914, 17.
[56] Blainey, Morrissey and Hulme, *Welsey College: the First Hundred Years*, 124.

way to display a soldierly devotion to school was to defeat those who wished to bring dishonour upon it. Schoolyard identification therefore became even more tribal than before the war, if that were possible. More than anything else interschool sports conjured up war-like feelings of duty but also competition and conflict against a perceived enemy. Consequently, the intense feeling now associated with school games often ended in violence when students were confronted with their adversaries, as often occurs with all forms of selective identification. Such descriptions might appear melodramatic; particularly given the students often approached such confrontations with a somewhat light-hearted outlook. But for the Headmasters concerned with the corporate image of the schools, the increase in violence at games constituted a substantial public relations issue.

Admittedly, the exhilarating impact of the war on Public school games took some time to sink in. Announcement of the declaration of war against Germany during a Xavier vs. Melbourne Grammar match distracted many of the players, who displayed 'some kind of lethargy' and a 'most feeble display of football.'[57] However, the shock soon wore off and from 1915 onwards, an increased fanaticism took hold, particularly during football matches. School magazines glossed over interschool brawls and demonstrative chanting, but evidence of its existence can be found in the reports of Wilmot and the wider Melbourne media. When a 1915 Xavier vs. Melbourne Grammar match descended into farce after a 'cap riot' between barrackers from each school, Wilmot felt compelled to speak out against the violence associated with Public school football, especially given the circumstances of the war. Though admitting that the 'scrap was amusing in many ways', Wilmot maintained it was a pity that such hostile practise should have been revived 'just now' given the campaign in Gallipoli was currently underway.[58]

Though concern was mounting, the wider school community was not blameless in their continued sanctioning of violence as a means to settle disputes. The publication of Lillian M. Pyke's *Max the Sport* in 1916, which catered largely to Public school audiences, did little to quell the flames, informing the boys that fighting was acceptable where 'constant bickerings' where involved, if only

[57] *Xaverian*, December, 1914, 107.
[58] *Australasian*, 14 August, 1915, 23.

away from the debasing eyes of the mob.[59] The boys appeared to have gotten the message, or at least half of it. For 1916 proved one of the most hostile football seasons ever seen, both on and off the field. Police were forced to intervene in a scrimmage between Scotch and Wesley spectators during one match, while a rough encounter between fierce rivals Scotch and Xavier ended in a Scotch player having his tooth removed and a Xavier player being hospitalised.[60]

By 1917, with the war in a perilous state, recruitment at an all-time low and social disunity bubbling over, it was decided enough was enough. At a conference on the 24th of February, consisting of the six Victorian Public school Headmasters and their sports representatives, a general discussion took place regarding the bitterness emanating between the schools at football matches and the rowing regatta. 'Frank statements', the Headmasters conferred, 'were made as to real or imaginary grievances' between the schools, owing to the 'premiership dominating school games'. The drastic measure of immediately discontinuing the football Premiership was met with reluctance from Adamson and the other delegates, who did not want to risk, 'impairing a system in games which admittedly had been one of great benefit to the Public Schools, and which in many ways is an admirable one.' Therefore, after much discussion, the following resolution passed:

> That the Premierships (interschool competitions) proceed as usual this year, but that if any regrettable incident occurs showing ill feeling between any schools the Headmasters will stop all premierships for the remainder of the year.

The term 'regrettable incidents' included the shouting of war cries, crowds shouting at one another during or after the matches and fighting amongst spectators or players.[61]

It was a stern warning to the student body and the wider school community, who had placed a great passion in the footballing Premiership for some time. Wilmot, who 'glowered at the excesses in competitiveness' of professional sport, supported the decision whole-heartedly, conceding that interschool rivalry had gotten out of hand:

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[59] Pyke, *Max the Sport*, 40-41.
[60] *Australasian*, 29 July, 1916, 14; *Australasian*, 26 August, 1916, 32; *Xaverian*, December, 1916, 139-140.
[61] Minutes Book – Delegates Meetings – Public Schools Association of Victoria, 1908-1930 (Minutes APS Victoria), 24 February 1917, Scotch College Archives.

> [g]ames are of great educational value, but only if played aright and in the proper spirit… This war has brought us all closer together. Old boys of the various schools once keen rivals are brothers in arms… side by side in many a deadly fight…[62]

The resolution was reported with diplomacy in the various school magazines. However, in the largely pupil controlled magazines such as the *Scotch Collegian*, there existed a sense of anxiety and even discontent over the decision. One report stated that 'the resolution… does not err on the side of leniency, and might perhaps be designated as drastic,' the article continues, 'at the first glance, it seems in just that all the schools should be held liable to a penalty because of the misdeeds of an unruly section in some of them…' The writer manages to avoid appearing insolent to the Headmasters by acknowledging their 'difficulty' in finding the 'real offenders' and suggesting that such a measure would have the effect of restraining 'over-enthusiasm' in the crowd. The article concludes with a special appeal to the followers of Public school sports to behave in accordance with the resolution given the national crisis, but appears more concerned about losing treasured games:

> Healthy rivalry is a good thing, but feuds and bitterness between the schools should be a thing of the past, especially in this hour of the nation's trial, when Old Boys of all the Public Schools are sharing a common responsibility and fighting side by side.[63]

While doing their best to downplay the excesses of school rivalries, the resolution of the Headmasters was always going to be tested. In early 1917, a request by Scotch Headmaster Dr Littlejohn that the boys should show a spirit of friendliness and camaraderie at the cricket match with Wesley was met with scorn by one student, 'What does he expect us to do – fall on their necks and weep?'[64] To their credit, it appears that the warnings had their intended effect on the various student bodies of the Victorian APS. The football competition appears to have been played in a proper sportsman-like spirit, or at the very least, no words of any incidents reached the ears of the press or the Headmasters.

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[62] Denning and Kennedy, *Xavier Portraits*, 153; *Australasian*, 24th February, 1917, 19.
[63] *Scotch Collegian*, May, 1917.
[64] G. H. Nicholson, ed., *First Hundred Years: Scotch College, Melbourne, 1851-1951* (Melbourne: Scotch College Centenary History and Register Committee, 1952), 92.

In the final week of footballing competition, however, things went terribly awry. At the Xavier vs. Scotch Premiership decider on the 22nd of August and at the Wesley vs. Melbourne Grammar match two days later several 'regrettable incidents' appear to have taken place. The two sets of schools both possessed a long history of conflict at their games. As discussed in Chapter 2, Melbourne Grammar and Wesley had engaged in the infamous spectator clashes of 1905 and 1906, both of which required police intervention.[65]

Xavier and Scotch too had developed a sour relationship on and off the field during the pre-war decade. Xavier's early years in the APS football Premiership were a harrowing experience, as their more experienced opponents put them to the sword. One game against Scotch in 1907 proved particularly humiliating given their opponents appeared more concerned with acquiring their leading forward the league's goal-kicking record.[66] Revenge was found in the wild excitement that greeted Xavier's breakthrough Premiership victory over Scotch in 1910, firmly cementing the rivalry between the two. From here, feelings turned nasty. In 1912 Xavier's protests against Scotch's use of ineligible players cost them the football Premiership, with Scotch returning fire later that year by informing authorities of the ineligibility of a Xavier boy in the athletics championship, with similar consequences.[67]

In 1913, a particularly unsavoury incident during a Scotch and Xavier football match took the rivalry to the next level. Although ignored in both school magazines, the *Age* reported on a violent altercation between Xavier boy Harold Quinlan and the Rodgerson brothers of Scotch. Quinlan reportedly knocked the younger brother out and engaged in a scuffle with the older one, as police had to prevent Scotch supporters from rushing the field and attacking their assailant. The game continued to be marred with 'spiteful' play, being described as 'one of the worst tempered games that had been seen between public schools for many years'. Quinlan was involved in another fight that day; punching a

[65] *Argus*, 18 August, 1905, 3; The 1906 brawl was particularly wild as it occurred not at the game but all the way down Flinders street, with one Grammar boy having two teeth knocked out. *Argus*, 16 June, 1906, 15.
[66] Scotch full-forward Bowden scored 138 of his team's 164 points to Xavier's 9. The Xavier boys admittedly invited Bowden up to their rooms to congratulate his individual performance after the game; nevertheless, the experience would have been humiliating all the same. *Xaverian*, December, 1907, 31-33.
[67] *Xavierian*, December, 1912, 121, 126; Denning, *Xavier: a Centenary Portrait*, 152.

Scotch boy named Morrison in the back of the head and then in the face, before the two were separated by the police. Former Xavier student and witness of the fight Victor O'Shaughnessy reported many years later that Rodgerson provoked Quinlan with a religious slur.[68] For sure, sectarianism, with Scotch being a Presbyterian institution and Xavier a proudly Irish-Catholic one, would have played its part in fuelling such a bitter rivalry. The war years saw witness to further violence as 'Brou-has' erupted during Xavier games during 1914, 1915 and 1916.[69]

With this sordid history in mind a series of 'regrettable incidents' occurred during both matches. Reporting on the Wesley vs. Melbourne Grammar match the day after the game, the *Argus* stipulated that at the three-quarter time change of ends the supporters of both teams engaged in a 'scrimmage'. There were also 'war cries' heard during the match, notably from the non-affiliated Scotch, who sang songs and used the outlawed Wesley 'war cry', which was joined in by the boys of Melbourne Grammar. Photographic evidence from the match surely indicates a packed crowd of young, boisterous boys cheering on their teams passionately. Wesley Reverend Nye spoke to both sets of boys before tempers boiled over, pointing out the potential consequences of their actions. The boys agreed and decided to settle, thus resolving the affair peacefully. Similar 'war cries' were also heard at the championship match between Xavier and Scotch, which Xavier duly won. [70] Though denied by Xavier its spectators must have been somewhat rowdy, given the MCC sent it a congratulatory letter accompanied by a bill for damaged seats during the match itself.[71]

Given the unruliness seen in previous years these incidents were comparatively innocent and may have been overlooked considering they occurred during the final round of the year. However, with the wider public capturing wind of events through the local media the Headmasters must have considered their hand to be forced, lest their authority and reputation come into question. On the 30th of August,

[68] *Age*, 22 August, 1913, 8; *Great Scott*, December, 2009, 75.
[69] Denning, *Xavier: A Centenary of Portraits*, 178.
[70] *Argus*, 25 August, 1917, 6; *Australasian*, 1 September, 1917, 18; *Scotch Collegian*, December, 1917, 205; Minutes APS Victoria, 22 September, 1917, Scotch Archives; "Public School Football", *Punch*, 30 August, 1917, 333.
[71] Hugh Trumble, letter to Rev O'Keefe, Xavier College 25 August, 1917, Item 24, *Letter Book 1917/18*, Series A1, Box 12, MCC Archives.

the Headmasters made good on their threats to suspend the forthcoming cricket Premiership and athletics championship:

> As war-cries were used at or after two recent football matches, and there were gatherings of boys to shout at each other after those matches, thus constituting 'regrettable incidents', the P.S. Competitions will be stopped for the remainder of the year.

Only Xavier dissented, though it appears to have been assuaged with the knowledge that it would still be awarded with that year's football Premiership.[72]

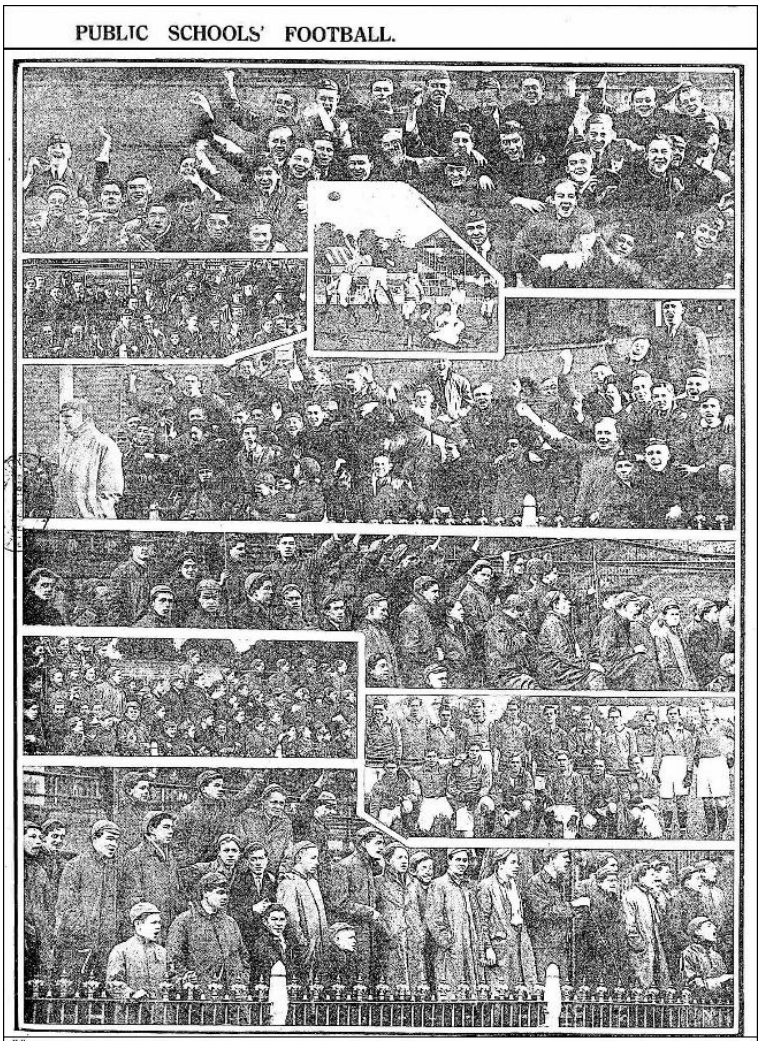

Figure 17 Public Schools Football [73]

[72] Minutes APS Victoria, 22 September 1917, Scotch College Archives.
[73] "Public School Football", *Punch*, 30 August, 1917, 333.

The suspension of interschool sports was reported in the school magazines and media in Melbourne, but also as far as Sydney and even Western Australia, stimulating much comment on the legitimacy of the decision. Wilmot supported the Headmasters, believing that while there was nothing serious in these incidences the resolution put forth earlier that year left the Headmasters with little alternative. Wilmot was only agitated by the boy's use of a forbidden 'war cry', which he considered 'unpardonable.' [74]

Yet general opinion within the Public school community lay in stark contrast to the Headmasters and Wilmot, with expressions of disappointment, resentment and even outrage at the resolution. Melbourne Grammar students would direct their anger at the media, who had 'unnecessarily' brought the issue to a head with its 'garbled' account. Meanwhile, the editor of the *Scotch Collegian*, A. W. Dawes, conceded that if a regrettable incident had occurred than the Headmasters had no other choice but to act on their threats. However, Dawes argued that no such incident had taken place. Other criticisms were based on the decision itself, believing that the punishment was too harsh for the low-scale nature of the crime, or that it was punishing most of all those players of games who had behaved accordingly all year.[75]

Justification of the boy's behaviour also came through the interpretation of these 'regrettable incidents' as a natural, even positive, instinct of adolescent men. A letter to the editor of the *Argus*, ironically the paper that had brought the issue to the public knowledge, pondered the wisdom of the decision: 'are we to lose the finest sports meeting in Australia because some schoolboys… dared to exhibit their natural exuberance in a few yells at a football match.'[76] One particularly irate female fan in Western Australia even went so far as to argue that the excitement of the boys could be related to that same patriotic spirit which had so wonderfully expressed itself at the front, 'the boys were merely carried away by the same spirit which has made the public-school recruiting record so glorious...'[77]

[74] *Australasian*, 1 September, 1917, 8.
[75] *Melburnian*, December, 1917, 109-110; *Scotch Collegian*, December, 1917, 203.
[76] *Argus*, 1 September, 1917.
[77] *Western Mail* (Perth), 21 September, 1917, 35.

Discontent with the decision culminated when the six Victorian APS captains held a meeting and dictated a letter later sent to the Headmasters, pleading for the future competitions to recommence:

> While fully recognising that the blow dealt to the Public Schools by cancelling all competitions during the remainder of the year 1917 was just and, under the circumstances, inevitable, still we feel in common with every other Public School boy, and many others besides, that it is drastically hard to punish all the Public School boys and those interested in them for the thoughtless action of a few.

The Headmasters met on the 22nd of September to consider the appeals of their captains as well as the public outcry the resolution had generated. Adamson, speaking on behalf of the Headmasters, responded to the Captains, appreciating their position but ultimately standing firm with their original decision. 'Playing at hate here in Victoria' Adamson declared, 'seemed repulsive when hundreds of letters told how the real brotherhood of all Public-School boys was being showed under other skies and tested as it has never been before.'[78] Perhaps this sentiment truly motivated the Headmaster's determination to see their decision through to the end. No doubt, the letters of numerous Victorian Public school boys had confirmed the very 'brotherhood' that the war had cultivated among the once-upon-a-time arch rivals, whether as comrades in the Public School 'F' Company at Gallipoli or through chance meetings on the line.

Old Public school rivals now at the front would often recall similar 'regrettable incidents' of the past with nostalgia and humour. Old Melbourne Grammar boys Ian Watt and E. R. G. Baker, celebrating the victory of their school on being the Head of the River in their trench, invited three Wesley Collegians and a Scotch boy to celebrate with them. The hatchet of previous scuffles was buried, although at one stage 'a rather fierce argument arose as to whether or not we achieved the better of a fight on the St. Kilda ground way back in 1907, at the Wesley-Grammar match.' After resolving the

[78] *Wesley College Chronicle*, December, 1917, 8-9.

issue, the men finished their celebrations with a toast to the race and all the Public schools of Victoria.[79]

This united Public school spirit, which had encouraged bitter rivalry on the sporting fields of their youth, was now recognised as an equally important factor in formulating a unique camaraderie between Old Boys on the battlefield. Geoffrey Hall of Scotch spoke of the help afforded to him by two Melbourne Grammar boys who rescued him when wounded on the heights of Gallipoli. Hall's father, in appreciation, wrote to Grammar, 'our Public school boys, though keen to fight each other in their battles on the football and cricket fields, yet in the common cause of fighting for liberty under the British Crown, are capable of showing that humanity and heroism is a prominent feature all over the British Empire of Public School boy life.'[80]

The conceptualisation of the war as a place where old feuds were forgotten was never more poignantly reinforced through the chance meeting of two formerly bitter enemies in the trenches of France. Lt Harold Quinlan, the Xavier boy who had engaged in the violent altercation against the Rodgerson brothers during a 1913 football match, was killed in action in March 1918 whilst trying to save his orderly. Reports claimed that Quinlan had fought 'shoulder-to-shoulder' and fell 'side-by-side' next to none other than the Scotch boy he had assaulted, Rodgerson.[81] Powerfully moving stories such as these would undoubtedly have strengthened the resolve of the Headmasters to stand firm in their decision. Not only that, regular news of Public school boys fighting and dying in the cataclysm of the Great War fairly brings into question the petty squabbles of boys.

Historians of the respective schools have thus been glowing in their appraisal of the Headmasters' action against their own beloved games. Wesley historian Felix Meyer looks admiringly at the decision as an acceptance of the 'corporate responsibility' that Public school boys owed one another in wartime, while simultaneously condemning the boys for breaking the conditions of the

[79] *Melburnian*, August, 1916, 78.
[80] *Scotch Collegian*, December, 1915, 244; also reported in *Melburnian*, December, 1915, 165.
[81] Rodgerson luckily escaped albeit with severe wounds. Great Scotch magazine in 2009 questioned whether the story was mere folklore, though the original *Xaverian* report of the incident proclaimed that the story was based on the 'best authority' and vouched on its accuracy. *Xavierian*, December, 1918; *Great Scotch*, December, 2009, 75.

Headmasters.[82] Meanwhile, Scotch historian Harvey Nicholson has scoffed at the boy's rationalisation that these incidents were merely light-hearted results of the 'natural, healthy and spontaneous outbursts' of youth, labelling them as nothing but 'vulgar brawls'. Nicholson appears particularly critical of the boys, who should have ameliorated the bitter and undesirable aspects of Public school rivalry in a time when hundreds of Old Boys were 'living, fighting and dying together.'[83] It is unsurprising that such accounts failed to look past blaming the obvious culprits in the boys. Meyer had written his publication in appreciation of Adamson after his death in 1932, while Nicholson's was in relation to the 100th anniversary of the school itself. The impartial nature of these accounts therefore rejected any culpability placed at the feet of the exalted figures within the APS.

Having noted the condemnation levelled against the boys for their betrayal of the Public school spirit, the opinions of the Headmasters, Wilmot and subsequent historians must now be viewed as grossly unfair. Harsh criticisms of the boys should have taken the corrupting influence of the war into account. A generation of adolescent boys fuelled on the ecstasy of a war they were unable to take part in found their own battle on the playing fields of schools. They could not fight the Germans, but they could fight their old adversaries. They could not shoot bullets, but they could shout and throw punches.

This desire to display a sense of patriotism had been encouraged by the schools themselves in the first place, where Headmasters implored students to approach commitment to Empire through a commitment to their school. It was ironic, but also hypocritical, that the very methods used to foster school rivalry, so as to create a sense of school-aligned patriotism that would one-day lead to a higher devotion to their own king and country, would quickly be branded by the Headmasters as unpatriotic. Even more damning is the fact that these incidences were merely the continuation of the by-product of interschool rivalry that had existed long before war's outbreak. While hardly commendable, to say that these 'war cries' and 'regrettable incidents' flew directly in the face of Public school ideals

[82] Meyers, "Adamson of Wesley," 182.
[83] Nicholson, *First Hundred Years: Scotch College*, 92.

ignores the toleration and even encouragement of such behaviour in the pre-war period, under the pretence of their exemplifying the Public school spirit.

The Headmasters' unwillingness to accept even a modicum of responsibility for what eventuated was not lost on those who suffered under the decision. An author for the *Scotch Collegian* resented the claims that there existed any real animosity between the schools when the Headmasters made their threats back in February. These 'disturbances' emerged purely as 'natural outlets for partisan excitement, or latterly as an established custom – that, and nothing more.'[84] A clearer expression of the boy's antipathy towards the Headmasters is evident after the cancelling of interschool premiership. Two Scotch students, Best and Freemantle, wishing to convey the standpoint of the student body, had the courage to question if the measure was overly harsh given these types of incidents were almost commonplace in interschool sports:

> Is it quite reasonable to expect schoolboys, who have for many years been following almost a precedent, to gain immediate control over their feelings to such an extent that no altercations whatever should occur? [85]

Attacks of a more explicit nature emerged from outside the schools. The *Referee* sports correspondent 'Rambler' considered the decision of the Headmasters as 'too severe' being that 'boys will be boys', before taking further aim at school authorities for their inability to impress their authority upon the students.[86] Indeed, the schools and their masters had sown the wind of discord in the years beforehand and were now reaping, much to their displeasure, the whirlwind, both in the premiership controversy of 1917, but also, and far more tragically, in the hundreds of dead that they themselves had cheered off to the war.

The hypocrisy of the accusation that the Public school boys were displaying an unpatriotic attitude through their discord is underlined by the disunity amongst the Headmasters themselves. Adamson had acted as the public face of the Headmasters who reviled the over-exuberance of their boys.

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[84] *Scotch Collegian*, May, 1917, 8.
[85] Ibid., September, 1917, 205.
[86] *Referee*, 12 September, 1917, 11.

However, while standing aligned with his colleagues publicly, behind closed doors he wished to distance both himself and his school from the controversy. Adamson wrote to Xavier Headmaster James O'Dwyer in the ensuing fallout from the decision, hoping to exonerate both schools of having in any way 'contributed to the stoppage' through a carefully worded summary of the decision to appear in the *Wesley Chronicle*. Adamson probably hoped to find common cause with the one College that had dissented at the abandonment the Premiership.[87] Though advocating a united front on behalf of the Headmasters, Adamson clearly rejected the idea that the institution under his control was culpable of any wrongdoing and even appeared willing to sell out those who had stood by him in order save his own reputation. If the boys had not displayed the proper Public school spirit, than neither had their Head.

The Headmaster's desire to display this uncompromising patriotism was not worth the risk of facing the backlash it had endured that year. Though the Sports Masters of the schools suggested making the February 1917 resolution a permanent one, the Headmasters' wisely recognised the corner they had put themselves in. Seeking to gain room for manoeuvre for the following year, and hoping to avoid the level of public outcry which had greeted their previous action, they determined that, if further 'regrettable incidents' took place, they would decide which school was responsible and debar them from competing in that particular sport they had transgressed in.[88]

Unfortunately, the 1917 premiership decider generated further discord within the Victorian APS community, once again driven by the unhinged patriotism encouraged within the Public schools. Xavier's victory over archrivals Scotch brought about their crowning as champions of the 1917 football season. Their opponent's would congratulate them humbly on their victory in the true Public school spirit. The *Corian* labelled them as a 'fine even combination' and the *Chronicle* recognised Xavier as 'deserving of the congratulation for the good, clean football they played.'[89] Wilmot too congratulated Xavier on their second APS football Premiership. In doing so, however, he planted in

[87] Lawrence Adamson, letter to Fr James O'Dwyer, 5 December, 1917, accompanied by typescript proposed article "The Stoppage of the Public-School Premierships", Xavier College Archives; Minutes Book APS Victoria, 22 September 1917, Scotch College Archives.
[88] Minutes Book APS Victoria, 22 September 1917, 8 June, 1918, Scotch College Archives.
[89] *Corian*, August, 1917, 20; *Wesley College Chronicle*, August 1917, 30.

the minds of some, whether intentionally or otherwise, the idea that Xavier had achieved their victory through underhand tactics contrary to the Public school spirit and, more shamefully, their duty to Empire. Wilmot described the Xavier team as deserving of their victory owing to their team's stronger, heavier and experienced bodies. This contrasted against their opponents, who had only five of their previous premiership winning side from the 1916 season. Because of this experienced playing list, Wilmot described Xavier as 'good a team as has been seen for many years.'[90]

The chauvinistic *Australian Statesman and Mining Standard* extrapolated a hidden message of denunciation from this seemingly innocuous observation. It believed that the physical supremacy and maturity of Xavier over their opponents, described as 'men playing against boys', was in fact no chance happening. The reason for the advanced maturity of the 'victorious Roman Catholic Institute' was that the other schools had lacked their older players because of their enlistment at the earliest possible opportunity. It this Catholic influence that separated the shirkers of Xavier from the rest of the patriotic, and dare one say Protestant, Public schools, 'At Xavier, a different standard of honour and patriotism prevails; and accordingly, the bitterness felt by all the other schools against these lads of inferior loyalty should be stopped.' The author suggested the schools should have considered the lowering of the age limit beforehand, however, in a final shot at Xavier's integrity, questioned if the school would honour such a decision given its previous behaviour. The author even pondered whether the decision to suspend the Premierships had less to do with the boy's use of 'war cries' and other occurrences of 'regrettable incidents', but was motivated by the 'great dissatisfaction' of the other Public schools regarding the disloyalty of the Xavier team. [91]

The legitimacy of the accusation was questionable at best. The minutes of the APS make absolutely no mention of the age of Xavier's boys or any resentment directed toward the school whatsoever, especially on religious or ethnic grounds. Without doubt, the claims of the *Statesman* were motivated by the belligerent attitude its editor Earnest Oliphant regularly displayed throughout the war, especially where sports and Catholics were concerned. Melbourne Archbishop Daniel Mannix

[90] *Australasian*, 25 August, 1917, 17.
[91] *Australian Statesman and Mining Standard*, 6 September, 1917, Xavier College Archives.

attended the final in support of Xavier, as he did on a regular basis. Irish born, Catholic and firm opponent of conscription, Prime Minister Hughes had referred to Mannix as a 'Sinn Feiner' and even considered prosecuting or deporting him for his wartime statements against the war.[92] It is his presence at the game that day that undoubtedly would have fuelled the *Statesman's* own suspicions of the school's patriotic loyalty.

In spite of the hollowness of such remarks, Xavier historian Greg Denning has described them as 'bitter, harsh words' in 'hard times' for the school.[93] Xavier appears to have resented such suspicion directed at them over their Catholic roots, particularly given that it committed to the war effort with the same ardour as its contemporaries. It responded defensively to perceived swipes at the honour of its students on the sporting field. After a particularly hard game of football with Xavier the *Scotch Collegian* labelled their opponents play as 'at times rather vigorous', congratulating their own side on going for the ball, 'instead of the man, even in rather trying circumstances.'[94] Wilmot too criticised the apparent rough play of Xavier: 'The Xavier boys did many fine things; but they have much to learn, and, I may add, much to forget. I myself saw a Scotch boy lose a tooth from a blow which was intentional.'[95] The *Xaverian* responded that the game was 'certainly vigorous, but absolutely fair on both sides. Bumps were given and taken in a friendly spirit.' It then responded irately to Wilmot's condemnation:

> A Scotch player, we hear, lost a tooth in the game. After a thorough inquiry, we categorically state that such an incident was entirely accidental… What, then, are we to think of the following statement of "Old Boy"… had "Old Boy" been so minded, he might, with equal reason, and equal injustice, have laid a similar charge against our opponents.[96]

The criticisms directed at Xavier after the following year's controversial Scotch vs. Xavier final prompted resentment once more from the *Xaverian*, which questioned those who 'thought fit to haul

[92] Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger*, 276.
[93] Denning, *Xavier: a Centenary of Portraits*, 93.
[94] *Scotch Collegian*, December, 1916, 221.
[95] *Australasian*, 26 August, 1916, 32.
[96] *Xaverian*, December, 1917, 139-140.

in Xavier as one of the stumbling blocks' by accusing them, falsely in their eyes, of provoking the incident after flying their school flags toward the Scotch culprits.[97]

Sectarian hatred aroused by the conscription referendum and directed at Irish Catholics had spilled over into the sports fields of the Public schools, and doubtlessly onto the trams and into the streets, wherever schoolboys met. McKernan suspects that such sectarian insults would have occurred during the infamous 1917 Xavier and Scotch match and the shouting matches between the boys afterward.[98] Surely such accusations hurt all the more given that, in spite of their Irish-Catholic heritage and the accompanying suspicion it brought in tow, Xavier had felt it had always strongly supported the war, as its boys fought as honourably and died as numerously as their fellow Protestant Public school brethren. Though the schools had always encouraged strong ties with the Catholic institutions within the APS, the rampant sectarian bitterness during these tumultuous years was never outwardly supressed within the school community, in fact, quite the opposite. The APS of Victoria were hardly a united force during the war years, despite regularly professing their solidarity.

Conclusion

In the eyes of the Australian Public schools, their mantra of sport's ennobling effect on young men was visible during the Great War. Not only were the significant enlistment numbers of Public school boys proof that sport had imbued them with the sacred sense of patriotism and loyalty to nation and Empire, their impressive performance at the front vindicated the saturation of games in their youth. Sport had imparted them with the courage, determination, selflessness and endurance that they had so often exhibited on the battlefront. Indeed, the cult of athleticism had truly vindicated itself in Turkey, France and the Middle East, as Weston Bate concluded, 'The playing fields of Eton could have not offered more.'[99]

[97] *Xaverian*, December, 1917, 133.
[98] McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 62-63.
[99] Bate, *Light Blue Down Under*, 165-166.

On the home front, the schools offered a clear window into middle-class attitudes and politics during the war, often expressing them when discussing the integral cornerstone of Public school life, sport. They deplored professional fixtures that illustrated the wider apathy of sections of the Australian populace with the war, while maintaining the usefulness of their own games, which supported the war effort. Compromising ineligible participants who played for no prize other than for the honour of their school, Public school contests emerged as the shining beacon of purity and patriotic sentiment.

Yet this sense of superiority ultimately based itself on hollow foundations. The supposed nobility of Public school sports came into question through the general bitterness of play during the war. The Headmasters lectured the culprits about the inappropriateness of their actions that ran against the Public school spirit, conveniently overlooking the fact that such intense school patriotism and rivalry was encouraged for decades beforehand, much to the bemusement of students and the wider school community. Wherever the blame lay, the pressures of the war had forced a re-think of sport's place within the schools. Just as they would throughout the war, middle-class interpretations of sport faced controversy, conflict and ultimately revaluation.

Conclusion: A Lesson Unlearned

Sport occupied a central role in Australia's waging of war between 1914 and 1918, infiltrating many of the core faculties implemented to support the nation's commitment to Empire. Having already played a unique part in the evolving Australian culture and identity before 1914, sport had long been envisioned as a malleable tool to assist in the defence of nation and Empire. Based on the ideological assimilation of playing and battlefield, chiefly within the elite Australian Public schools, the playing of sport, principally in its amateur form, was thought to have armed the Australian male with not only the physical but the moral temperament necessary to accept and face the trials of combat.

The outbreak of war in 1914 saw Australia's sporting clubs and leagues donate financial assistance to the war fund, as well as sporting gear for its soldiers moving towards the front. Sport itself also acted to keep its soldiers physically fit and mentally fresh, so that they may face the trials of battle better prepared. But the idea that sport could also offer something deeper in a time of national crisis became crucial to the belief in its uniquely important role during a time of war. When the motherland sounded the call-to-arms many felt contented that Australia would not fail in its task, principally because its young warriors had acquired the best possible training on the fields of 'mimic war' in the decades beforehand.

The faith of newspaper editorialists, Public school educators and other amateur philosophers was rewarded after Ashmead-Bartlett's report of the wonderful performance of Australian soldiers at Gallipoli, finally proving the intimate connection between the countries' sporting past and its military future. Though the majority of soldiers soon became aware of the hollowness of this romantic conceptualisation of warfare, it's most ardent supporters, protected by the tyranny of distance and in the euphoria of the moment, jumped upon Bartlett's correspondence to confirm the importance sport must play in a war with no foreseeable ending.

Yet this relationship proved to be far more troubled as the war dragged on. It was at this point, in mid-1915, that we begin to see the first significant confrontation between the two seemingly amiable

worlds. Brought about by the growing seriousness with which Australian society began to take the war the place and role of sport was brought into question. Many continued to believe in sports inalienable contribution to the war effort. The sporting community was said to have provided considerable men, material and financial aid to its soldiers abroad. Meanwhile the continuation of fixtures provided war-weary citizens with a joyful distraction from the omnipresent pressures war placed upon them, as well as preparing yet another generation of future warriors. Indeed, the very appeal to the Australian's instinct for sport and its relationship with honour, duty and fair-play, was utilised to assist the government in its desire to replenish the depleting forces of the AIF.

Others, however, were not convinced by such reasoning, and believed they had ample proof to suggest that sport not only failed to support the Empire sufficiently, but even actively worked to the detriment of those tasked with winning the war. The continuation of sporting competitions on the home front, particularly professional spectator sports, was perceived to be preventing eligible men from enlisting while simultaneously distracting the population from the primacy of the war. Divergence over the place of sport led not only to a bitter public debate, it also resulted in violent confrontation between recruiters at sporting events. The belief that emerged during 1914 that sport and the war shared similar interests was rocked by these and other disturbances, including several fundraising scandals and increased violence in Public school sports.

The once popular notion that sport remained crucial to the development of a united and great society committed to the defence of Empire was called into question under the trial of total war. Did sport really make Australian soldiers more efficient? Did it teach them loyalty to the higher cause? If not should it be curtailed or even removed? Should women's sport take its place instead? And was the young's obsession with sport corrupting future generations, preventing them from realising where the true battle existed?

Such questions forced a significant re-evaluation of the very entity which had done so much in the formation of Australian culture and identity. Though McKernan has interpreted the clash between sport and the war as a triumph for the amateur ideology, based on the closing of so many sporting

fixtures, the disillusionment among soldiers over the sport and war comparison, failure of recruiting efforts based on the appeal to the 'sporting instinct', refusal of the major professional leagues to desist, split in the amateur leagues that remained, emergence of female sport and turmoil of the Public school sports, perhaps prompts a reconsideration over the success of amateurism on the Australian home front during the war.[1] As such there existed much reconsideration of the place sport occupied in the lives of Australians during a time of war and even what form it should take once the fighting was done.

This development was of course not confined to Australians' understanding of and relationship with sport. The unrelenting pressure of total war had forced the nation to re-evaluate many aspects of its young self. National and racial identity, relationship with Empire and the wider world, political representation and the role of government, class-consciousness and ethnic division, gender roles and stereotyping, the glory of warfare and the price of military greatness, along with many other issues, came under both affirmation and reconsideration from pre-1914 thinking. Sport was yet another example of the First World War's significant impact on Australian society, culture and identity, though not always in the positive framework commonly seen in the memorials, museums, political speeches, newspaper articles, educational and historical texts, films and television programs across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The trauma associated with the amalgamation of sport and war might have caused Australia to stop and rethink such comparisons as it moved into the post-war era. In reality, the opposite occurred. Sport's intermeshing with militarism had become so integral to the Anzac legend and by extension to the emerging national identity that their amalgamation not only survived but thrived throughout the twentieth century. Of course, the soldiers themselves continued to brush off such comparisons. Writing in an account of sport played by AIF soldiers after the war, 59th Battalion Lieutenant G. H. Goddard spoke in no uncertain terms of the game of the .303 mark VII bullet as being 'the most

[1] McKernan, "War, Sport and Society," 18.

unpopular of all'.[2] Despite this, others moved quickly to re-define the place of sport during the war, beginning just days after the cessation of hostilities. At the first meeting of the VCA on the 18th of November, President and now former Director-General of Recruiting Donald Mackinnon stated to his associates, 'When the history of the War came to be written the work of sport would be fully realised. The men had played the game.'[3]

Mackinnon's words would prove quite prophetic. Across the next 100 years the sporting community moved to rewrite the history of its place during wartime, highlighting its valuable contribution in men and connection to the glories of Anzac, all the while ignoring the less-than-reputable impression it had made on the home front. This desire to forget war-time resentments is understandable. Australians were desperately keen to move on from their painful experience of the war which had divided its society, claimed the lives of over 60,000 of its citizens and scarred for life hundreds of thousands more. Sport offered a familiar tonic to ease its suffering, but only if it left behind the animosity that had plagued it across the last three years. By ignoring the division that it was both the cause and victim of, however, it further facilitated the unchallenged amalgamation of the two within the story of Anzac and by extension the Australian understanding of its experience of the Great War.

Just over a year after Germany's surrender Mackinnon continued to push the myth that sport had played an entirely positive role in Australia's war, this time at an exhibition cricket match between Victoria and an AIF XI. After a crowd of some 18,000 witnessed a 6-wicket victory to the AIF, Mackinnon announced at the post-match dinner that sport had been a 'great aid' to recruitment, contrary to the opinion of the government and a solid proportion of the public during the war.[4] The myth appears to have stuck. In 1931 a local Melbourne periodical, *The Sporting Globe*, covered its front page with a dedication to the 'bold and ready response' of the sporting community to the call of Empire. The Norwood Football Club was singled out for special praise due to the large number of

[2] Lieutenant GH Goddard, *Soldier's and Sportsmen: an account of the Australian Imperial Force during the period between November, 1918 and September, 1919* (AIF Sports Board of Control, The Rosebery Press, 1919), 13.
[3] *Victorian Cricket Association Minutes*, 18 November, 1918, 161, CA Archives; *Australasian*, 23 November, 1918, 18.
[4] *Age*, 19 January, 1920, 8.

players it provided in the armed forces; conveniently ignoring that the club had taken part in the rebel Patriotic Football Association (PFA) which formed after the South Australian Football League decided to disband in order to prove its commitment to the war.[5] That the club received praise for the actions of its players, which it had no control over, and avoided scorn for continuing with the PFA, reflected the sporting community's determination to hijack historical fact for the betterment of its own image.

The research of Kevin Blackburn finds that several important cogs in the Australian war machine quickly moved to re-establish the connection between playing field and battlefield during the Second World War, just as they had twenty years earlier. Official Australian war correspondent Kenneth Slessor regularly referred to the inherited sporting tradition and makeup of the Second AIF and though certain restrictions were put in place on sport, the Menzies and Curtin wartime governments both made comments insinuating the athletic disposition of the Second AIF.[6] Soldiers continued to dismiss false comparisons, most famously done by Royal Australian Air Force pilot and Test cricketer Keith Miller's remark that 'Pressure is a Messerschmitt up your arse. Cricket is not'.[7] Nevertheless, Australia appeared unwilling to let go of something so intricate to its sense of self.

Even today, with all our modern awareness of the horrors of the battlefield relayed regularly on television and computer screens, Australia clings on to the relationship. Many sportsmen make obligatory remarks differentiating the two, lest they incur the wrath of critics, including opinionated historians. Former Australian cricket captain Ricky Ponting, in his 2014 autobiography *At the Close of Play*, conceded, 'There often references to war and battles in sport but it is disrespectful to draw any comparison between the two.'[8] Beneath these assurances, however, lies an Australian sporting landscape saturated with militarism and comparisons based on the myths established during the Great War.

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[5] The article does mention the plight of persecuted boxer Les Darcy, but the sheer level of vitriol created by his departure is largely overlooked. It also demotes mention of this to page 12 of the issue. *The Sporting Globe* (Melbourne), 22 April, 1931, 1, 12; McKernan, "Sport, War and Society," 9.
[6] Blackburn, *War, Sport and the Anzac Tradition*, 66-77.
[7] *Chronicle*, 11 November, 2015; see also Malcolm Knox, *Bradman's War* (Melbourne: Viking, 2012), xii.
[8] Ricky Ponting, *At the Close of Play* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2014), 247.

The most celebrated examples include the annual Australian Football League's Anzac day football clash and the NRL's Anzac Day Cup. The world of cricket has also delved into such connections. Whilst *en route* to England for its 2001 Ashes tour the Australian cricket team visited the trenches at Gallipoli. Here they were photographed wearing Anzac-styled slouch hats, wearing war medals and recreating the famous photo of Australian soldiers playing on Shell Green. The link between the two historic moments had initially arisen from a conversation between Australian Captain Steve Waugh and then Chief of the Australian Army Peter Cosgrove. Waugh recalled, 'We started talking about cricket and the army. Particularly similarities like camaraderie, discipline, commitment and the importance of following a plan.'[9]

Figure 18 Anzac Cricket Match on Shell Green, 1915 [10]

[9] "Cricket, comrades and the ANZAC spirit," Andrew Ramsey, Cricket Australia, 25 April, 2017, http://www.cricket.com.au/news/remembering-anzacs-gallipoli-cricket-steve-waugh-adam-gilchrist-ricky-ponting-classic-photo/2017-04-25.

[10] C. E.W. Bean, GO1289, 17 December, 1915, Photograph, AWM.

Figure 19 Australian Cricket Team at Shell Green, 2001 [11]

It is not just the sporting fraternity that has moved to push the connection to the forefront of the Australian consciousness. Australia's military community has made great efforts to inform the public of its intimate relationship with sport. Between 2006 and 2008 the Australian War Memorial, in conjunction with the Australian Sports Commission, conceived a travelling exhibition to highlight how sport and war have played a significant role in the development of the Australian culture and identity.[12] Two years later Patrick Watt, speaking at war veteran's luncheon at the National Sports Museum, espoused the notion that Australia had been built on values that are created in both the sporting field and in the theatre of war. The statement was met with warm approval from the crowd filled with war veterans, who after years of indoctrination may have come round to the current state of thinking.[13] Current soldiers have also joined in on the act. Victoria Cross recipient Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith, when asked about the connection, responded that, 'It takes the same amount of heart.'

[11] "Cricket, comrades and the ANZAC spirit," Andrew Ramsey, Cricket Australia, 25 April, 2017, http://www.cricket.com.au/news/remembering-anzacs-gallipoli-cricket-steve-waugh-adam-gilchrist-ricky-ponting-classic-photo/2017-04-25.
[12] Sport and War Exhibition, AWM, accessed 9 November, 2017, https://www.awm.gov.au/visit/exhibitions/sportandwar.
[13] Patrick Watt, "National Sports Museum: Sport and War," *Ethos*, 18 (2010): 26.

The fact that Robert-Smith believed 'All the elite sportsmen used to volunteer because they thought it was their duty' underlies just how misguided such thinking is.[14]

Such developments prompt one to question: why do Australians continue to purvey a connection based on entirely superficial and out-dated ideas? The answer, sadly, is to exploit them. For an Australian sporting landscape now dominated by professionalism and commercialism the incorporation of the Anzac legend, under the justification of sport's contribution to said legend, provides a unique opportunity for increased public exposure and capital gain. Nothing exemplifies this development more than the emergence of Anzac day football. The annual football match staged on the 25th of April has become a staple of the Australian sporting calendar, as well as one of the most prominent examples of the considerable public devotion to commemorating Australia's military history and the legend of Anzac. Sydney-based journalist Peter FitzSimons reported glowingly on the commemorative event:

> Rarely (have I) seen something so impressive in the world of sport. As they played the *Last Post* and the national anthem, the 100,000-strong crowd uttered not a peep, whispered not a murmur. The atmosphere was electric and the general mood in the air one of reverence for the diggers and anticipation of the game to come... Somewhere, someone has done a superb job organising that landmark day in Australian sport.[15]

To be sure some elements of the day are to be admired. The respect shown during the last post and particularly the running out of the teams between the one banner, signifying that whatever antipathy exists between them is secondary to honouring the memory of the armed forces, stands out as fitting tribute to commemorating former and current military personnel. Outside the obvious grandeur and reflection the match inspires, however, historian Melissa Welsh, alongside a number of journalists, has squirmed at the increasing commercialisation of the day.[16] Much of this exploitation bases itself on comparing yesterday's Anzac heroes with today's sporting ones in order to attract a wider

[14] *Daily Telegraph*, 23 April, 2011.
[15] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May, 2008.
[16] Melissa Welsh, "Lest We Forget': The Tradition of ANZAC Day Football," *Sporting Traditions* 25 (2008).

audience. Journalist Liz Porter has interpreted a promotional poster for the game bearing the words 'Lest We Forget' as a 'solemn pledge… reborn as an advertising slogan.'[17]

Yet this desire to pass athletes off as war heroes has led to more troublesome developments. While loose comparisons are often made in pursuit of the name of the almighty dollar, they have made Australia more vulnerable to the government's increasing militarisation of society for the purposes of intense nationalism. The equating of sporting stars and war heroes appears to have heightened in the immediate period after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the committing of Australian armed forces in Afghanistan and later Iraq.

Media reporting of the Anzac Day clash in 2002 was laced with a particularly hyperbolic equation of the football match as the modern battlefield. The Anzac day medallist of that year, awarded to the player who best exemplifies the Anzac spirit, was awarded to seventeen year old Mark McGough in only his second game for Collingwood. In a period in which Australia was deploying soldiers into the middle-east *Age* journalist Greg Baum equated McGough to soldier, 'In 1915 he might have been a volunteer.'[18] Baum's assertion ignores the glaring fact that he also may have refused to enlist just like many other sportsmen, and been consequently scorned and vilified by the patriot press as a 'shirker' and coward. Nevertheless, the distinction between ideal athlete and willing soldier was being narrowed in a time of war, just as it had been during the First and Second World Wars.

More direct connections can be observed in the special edition of the magazine *Inside Edge*, published in the early months of 2003. The special edition was dedicated to the career of Australian captain Steve Waugh. In attempting to honour the sporting hero the magazine routinely equated Waugh with the Anzac legend. Mention of his 'Anzac face' and the suggestion that Waugh 'could easily have been one of those Anzacs' are littered throughout this and other editions during the period. The presence of such 'military allusions' was accepted by the magazine's editor Angus Fontaine, who placed 'the camaraderie he would bring to the trench', within the context of Australia's impending invasion of Iraq:

[17] *Age*, 19 April, 2009.
[18] *Ibid.*, 26 April, 2002.

> So in the world going to hell in the quest for peace, does Steve Waugh playing his 157th Test on April 10 and so breaking the world record really matter? Certainly the answer must be yes… Just as he defied the odds to bring a nation to its feet on January 3, so too has he the power to lead us off the field too… So, on Anzac day this year, salute our troops in Iraq but spare a thought for the other Waugh, who keeps fighting harder, longer and straighter for Australia than anyone ever has. And feel safer for that at least.[19]

A clear merging of Australia's current sporting and military heroes is underway here, as is the assertion that such heroes are for the decision to partake in the highly controversial invasion of Iraq that the Howard government was peddling amidst great opposition. The militarisation of Australian sport in early 2003 was emphasised when the AFL issued a warning to its players about making statements on the Iraq War, after Western Bulldogs player Robert Murphy painted "No War" on his arm for his official team photo, prompting a wider discussion among players about the intersection of football, politics and free-speech.[20]

The militarisation of Australian rules football has certainly had an effect on violence within the game during its annual Anzac round. Though much violence has been eradicated from the game across the last decade, crowds are witness to an increase in brawls and mêlées between teams hyped up by the martial rhetoric and symbolism of the week. The fact that the 2016 Anzac Round produced a record 28 charges for mêlées and other incidents, involving tens of thousands of dollars in fines and two players suspended, evokes memories of similar problems during Public school football before and during the war.[21] That these mêlées also sparked approval from popular media commentators reminds us of the winks of approval from the likes of Adamson over the infamous 1905 brawl, 'I actually enjoyed this', *Herald Sun* Chief Football writer Mark Robinson commented, 'it was just exciting.'[22]

The links between sport and war appear as strong today as they did during 1914, for the new purpose of commercialism and the old one of militarism. Despite this popularity, it remains a connection based

[19] *Inside Edge*, PCB Publishing Party, 2003, 10, 39, 9.
[20] 'Stand-off looms over war ban', *Age*, 21 March, 2003.
[21] *Herald Sun*, 25 April, 2016.
[22] *AFL 360*, aired 27 April, 2016, Fox Footy, Television Programme.

on the false notion that sport and the Australian war effort were intricately aligned during the First World War. Welsh's understanding of the Anzac day clash that acts as an exercise in commemoration through 'strategic remembering and forgetting' and re-inventing the past may have only been in reference to the existence of football on Anzac day between the 1960s and 1980s, yet this interpretation can easily be applied to the clash between sport and the war that took place hundred years before. The AFL's use of 'selective memory' praises the contribution of the games players who enlisted, while ignoring or even covering up the fact that football and sport in general incited the ire of those deemed to be supportive of the war effort.[23]

An example of this comes in the AFL's re-invention of its own history. In 1996, when the commercial potential of the clash was yet to be realised, the AFL produced a history of the VFL/AFL titled *100 years of Australian Football*. It spoke openly about the conflict between the VFL and the war effort, as well as the unpopularity of the game among patriots, framed within the wider context of the social division during the war.[24] 12 years later, and with the Anzac clash firmly established as a cornerstone of the AFL calendar, it produced another history titled *The Australian Game of Football*. A celebratory publication released in conjunction with the games 150th anniversary, it made little acknowledgement of the turmoil football provoked, instead rejoicing in the enlistment of its players. The waves of public scorn directed against the game and wider social turmoil that characterised the period were brushed aside as 'rare' in occurrence and deemed as only a 'minor consideration'.[25]

Perhaps it is time for us to finally reconsider the way we perceive their relationship today. It is admittedly a delicate balance. To refrain from playing sport would continue to elevate Anzac Day to one of an almost religious significance, further reinforcing linkages between Australian nationalism and militarism. Yet to saturate the day with sport and its connections with combat only serve to undermine the seriousness of modern warfare and all its horrific consequences. A delicate balance may be found between the two, as long as we are willing to look. The best way to start would be to throw off the presumption that sport had walked hand-in-hand with the Australian war effort. By

[23] Welsh, "Lest we forget," 2.
[24] *100 Years of Australian Rules Football*, Ed. John Ross, Viking, Ringwood, 1996, 88-93.
[25] *The Australian Game of Football*, Ed. James Weston, Slattery Media Group, Docklands, 2008, 312-219.

reconsidering such things it may also help us to review the place of the First World War as an essentially nation-building exercise and acknowledge its more complex impact on Australian society.

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