

Experimental Rules

Contributed by Svenny

Dare I say it, but a theme is forming among these pages.. And Drubbing is so on the money.

Been meaning to do some venting about this pre-season hoo-haa nonsense since what feels like the late 12th Century, and in light of Hase's predicament have finally decided to pull my finger out so the vent can get some air through it.

Like your average Freo supporter, rarely will I miss a game when the boys are playing. And on these rare occasions invariably someone's presented me with a scenario which just can't be weaselled out of without an almighty backlash from friends and family. Usually they're a tolerant lot, but sometimes it's impossible to wiggle out of births, deaths, weddings, lanyard-related trips to emergency, and so forth.

However this AFL pre-season baloney competition really irks me and my resolution is wavering.

Normally when driving past the scene of an accident, I make an effort not to slow down and gawk at someone else's misfortune - no matter how spectacular. Even if Dennis Cometti rolled the Tarago, I'm doing my best Craig David impersonation: I'm walking away.

However this never seemed to translate when watching pre-season footy. I've always managed somehow to slow down enough to take in the train-wreck that is the AFL pre-season competition.

Year after year I'll still manage to have a squiz at as many pre-season games each week as possible; even despite trying not to acknowledge the corporate name of this competition (instead preferring to wave my Little Red Book at those decadent capitalistic banking swines or just lazily referring to it as the Ansett Cup).

Whatever you want to call it, one thing's for sure; this is not Australian Rules. It's Experimental Rules. And let's face it; all the kiddies really want to see by now is good-old Aussie Rules, not some officially sanctioned Frankenstein-esk laboratory experiment where The Big D tries to re-animate his monster. (The only time I want to hear someone in AFL House shout, "it's alive, it's alive", is if Clive pops in for a cuppa.)

Look, don't get me wrong fellow brethren. It's great to see Freo play again after what seems an eternity. And of course any Freo win is a good win.. More so if it's a win over West Coast Inc.

But let me say this: when watching pre-season games it seems we're as much tuning in to make sure none of the lads gets hurt, suspended, exploded, etc rather than just totally enjoying the spectacle of watching a rampant Freo knock over the Scum.

Sure, injuries happen during the H&A all the time; but in no way is it ever a component of the conditions of determining whether or not I'm going to watch the game.

At any point of the season-proper you don't sit there numbly thinking mantra-style "geez I hope Shauny Mc doesn't blow another knee" or "will the Wizz spontaneously combust due to his supernatural-like on-field powers?"

The thinking is more likely to be "geez I hope Shauny Mc doesn't blow another pass" (no disrespect intended to Mr Soreknee) or "will the Wizz spontaneously combust Selwood due to his supernatural-like on-field powers?"

And when someone does blow a sandshoe during the season, it is of course a cause of much angst for the player, club and supporters. But it would be an injury sustained in direct pursuit of a more tangible cause: which is ensuring that we're climbing that all-powerful ladder in order to give us a good tilt at grabbing us one of those \$25.00 Premiership Mugs we want to see in our club's trophy cabinet.

Right now I don't give a flying fudge that the Ansett Cup is an avenue allowing the AFL to try out its goofball new rules. Yeah, there's the argument that there are also existing commercial arrangements and contracts in place, blah, blah, blahdy blahh. Don't care. Hase's leg is at right angles, so enough's enough.

Harves takes a pretty enlightened stand on this (for a former Essendon tough-nut), saying more or less the players don't spend much time dreaming about pre-season glory, but that whilst the blokes are out there playing they're certainly not going to hold back.. So I guess we're just going to have to keep our fingers crossed, continue the mantra and hope no-one else gets hurt before round one (opposition players included - except of course the Cornes kiddies).

But wouldn't it be better if we instead could play a scratchie or two, or the odd intra-club free-for-all barney and just trash

the whole pre-season experiment and have one season that lasts between 22 and 26 weeks?

Then let's party with our own \$25.00 Mug. Hopefully soon too...