

**The Jekyll and Hyde Element: The Career of Geelong Football Club Champion  
and Media Celebrity John ‘Sam’ Newman**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

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**Melbourne, Victoria**

**August 2017**

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## **Abstract**

Life histories of many famous Australian Rules football figures have been published. Yet despite John ‘Sam’ Newman having a significant influence as both a player and a media persona, neither aspects of his career have been the focus of systematic academic study. This thesis aims to redress the deficiency by deploying biographical methods to examine both Newman’s football and media careers. The first half of the thesis explores how a privileged secondary education shaped Newman’s attitude to life and football, before turning to his football career with the Geelong Football Club. The second half of the thesis traces Newman’s increasingly controversial media career in print, radio, and television – most notably on Channel Nine’s *The Footy Show*. A key aim of the thesis is to explore how and why the warm and generous John Newman developed the outlandish, sexist, patronising, opinionated, and narcissistic, persona of ‘Sam’ Newman that has both attracted and appalled television audiences for decades. Accordingly, the thesis concludes that Newman is a complex person, exhibiting two different personalities that sometimes coalesce, thus filling an intriguing gap in the corpus of studies of the playing and media careers of influential Australian Rules footballers.

**Declaration**

I, Julian Ross, declare that the PhD thesis titled ‘The Jekyll and Hyde Element: The Career of Geelong Football Club Champion and Media Celebrity John ‘Sam’ Newman’ is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotations and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material submitted, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

**Signature:**

**Date:** 31 August 2017



## **Acknowledgements**

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my initial principal supervisor, Associate Professor Rob Hess, for his wise and generous and unstinting advice, rigour, guidance and welcome sense of humour at challenging times during the research and writing associated with the thesis. I also wish to thank my initial co-supervisor, Professor Bob Stewart, who made many valuable suggestions concerning the thesis based on his own elite Australian Rules football career and his recollections as an opponent of John Newman. Dr Matthew Klugman also provided valuable feedback in his role as a co-supervisor and then principal supervisor of the thesis. In addition, I extend my appreciation to Carolyn Dew for her support and judgement.

For a full list of acknowledgements see Appendix 1.

**Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my dear late brother, David Ross QC, whom, I am sure, prepared me for the thickets of syntax and vocabulary.

**List of Acronyms**

|      |                                     |
|------|-------------------------------------|
| ABC  | Australian Broadcasting Corporation |
| AFL  | Australian Football League          |
| FC   | Football Club                       |
| GDP  | Gross Domestic Product              |
| GS   | Grammar School                      |
| MCG  | Melbourne Cricket Ground            |
| VFA  | Victorian Football Association      |
| VFL  | Victorian Football League           |
| WA   | Western Australia                   |
| WAFL | West Australian Football League     |

## Chapter One

### Preamble

The space of sports is not a self-contained universe.

Pierre Bourdieu<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.1 Introduction

Australian Rules football is the most popular football code in the nation. According to a comprehensive academic history of the game, the seeds of this code were planted in Melbourne during the late 1850s, where it soon changed the sporting landscape of Victoria, and later Australia.<sup>2</sup> After several landmark games at the end of the decade, a number of football clubs was formed in Melbourne (and elsewhere in the colony) and by 1877 the Victorian Football Association (VFA) had been established to help regulate the code. At the end of the 1896 season the six most powerful clubs disengaged from the VFA to form the Victorian Football League (VFL). In 1990, the VFL became the Australian Football League (AFL), marking the formal commencement of a national competition.

The Australian game has always attracted large numbers of fans. Speaking generally, Bob Stewart notes that ‘Football has an amazing capacity to capture the hearts and

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Program for a Sociology of Sport’, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 5 (1988), p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Rob Hess, Matthew Nicholson, Bob Stewart and Gregory de Moore, *A National Game: The History of Australian Rules Football* (Camberwell: Viking, 2008), p. 1.

minds of all sorts of individuals, communities and nations'.<sup>3</sup> In particular, he observes that 'Australian Rules football has also been able to embed itself in the collective psyche of families, neighbourhoods and communities ... It also attracts a supporter base that ... bridges most social, gender and ethnic divides'.<sup>4</sup> Stephen Alomes also points out that 'Australian Football is a major part of Australian culture, particularly in the southern regions'. He suggests that 'It provides an intense world of meaningful play for large numbers of players and larger amounts of spectators, both those at the grounds and "tele-spectators"'. In his view, 'Australian Football is also a window into Australian society in other respects: class, culture, gender, capitalism and consumerism, humour, popular law and views of justice, youth and age are worked out on the different arenas, stages and studios of Australian Football'.<sup>5</sup>

At the heart of the game is a network of clubs and teams across Australia that make up various leagues and associations, all the way from under-age level right through to the AFL. These multifarious competitions revolve around the participants, in particular, the players. At the elite level, it is the players who receive the lion's share of publicity and it is not surprising that supporters crave news and information about the careers of their favourite football personalities. On this basis, biographies of

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<sup>3</sup> Bob Stewart, 'Filling the Gaps in Football Research', in Bob Stewart, Rob Hess and Matthew Nicholson (eds), *Football Fever: Grassroots* (Hawthorn: Maribyrnong Press, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Alomes, 'Australian Football and Australian Culture – More Than a Game', in Stephen Alomes and Bob Stewart (eds), *High Mark: Australian Football and Australian Culture: Contemporary Studies of the Great Australian Game* (Hawthorn: Maribyrnong Press, 1998), p. 1.

Australian Rules football players have been a staple publication for more than 100 years.

Tim Hogan is the editor of a detailed annotated bibliography of the literature of Australian Rules football. In the introduction to a chapter in his collection titled 'Personalities', Hogan notes that 'Today, football biographies and autobiographies are churned out regularly and most great players are likely to be the subject of a biography'. However, he observes that 'many publications drift heavily into hagiography rather than objective observation and critical analysis'.<sup>6</sup> This thesis clearly resonates with Hogan's comments, which are a crucial starting point for this study as explained below.

Despite Hogan's claim that 'most great players are likely to be the subject of a biography', this is not always the case. Until relatively recently, the vast majority of players were only part-time footballers, and hence relied on alternate careers to supplement their income. In fact, despite careers in the spotlight, some players might prefer to fade from the public eye once their playing days are over. Other footballers may not be natural raconteurs and would perhaps feel daunted at having to write and fashion their memoirs into book length projects. It is also possible that some champions are never approached by publishers, thus an autobiography is never

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Hogan, 'Personalities', in Tim Hogan (ed.), *Reading the Game: An Annotated Guide to the Literature and Films of Australian Rules Football* (Melbourne: Australian Society for Sports History, 2005), pp. 173-174. Note that Hogan's guide has recently been revised, expanded and re-titled. See Tim Hogan (ed.), *Reading Australian Rules Football: The Definitive Guide to the Game* (Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2017).

produced. In some cases, biographies have only been recorded long after careers have finished, or even after players or coaches have died. Recent examples include the definitive studies of acknowledged champions such as Norm Smith, Dick Reynolds and John Coleman.<sup>7</sup>

The subject of this thesis might also be deemed a ‘champion’, and is often considered as such by the public. John Newman was born on 22 December 1945 and had a distinguished football career of 300 games as a ruckman with the Geelong Football Club (FC) from 1964 to 1980. He captained his club, won two Best and Fairest awards, and represented his state on eight occasions. Newman also polled a total of 100 Brownlow votes and in 2002 he was inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame.<sup>8</sup> After his retirement, Newman carved out a career in the media, and from 1994 to 2017 he has been the controversial star of the award-winning television football entertainment program *The Footy Show*.<sup>9</sup> And yet, despite his illustrious football career and very

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<sup>7</sup> Ben Collins, *The Red Fox: The Biography of Norm Smith, Legendary Melbourne Coach* (Melbourne: GSP Books, 2008); Doug Ackerly, *Coleman: The Untold Story of an AFL Legend* (Melbourne: Doug Ackerly Publishing, 2014); Daniel Eddy, *King Richard: The Story of Dick Reynolds, Essendon Legend* (Richmond: Slattery Media, 2014). For more on the National Rugby League *Footy Show*, see Ashnil Murray, Adam White, Ryan Scoats and Eric Anderson, ‘Constructing Masculinities in the National Rugby League’s Footy Show’, *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 21, issue 3 (August 2016), pp. 1-14.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 3: Annotated Chronological Overview of John Newman’s Football and Media Career.

<sup>9</sup> The nomenclature of *The Footy Show* is sometimes problematic, given that it is referred to in different ways. For example, *Footy Show*, or *AFL Footy Show*, are sometimes used, with the latter format necessary in order to distinguish it from the

high public profile, no biography of Newman's football career or media career, let alone both, has been forthcoming. In this sense, the career of Newman can be considered to be an intriguing gap in the corpus of studies of elite footballers. On this basis, an academic treatise on Newman's career provides an ideal forum to deliver the 'objective observation and critical analysis' which Hogan says is lacking in so many other hagiographic works.<sup>10</sup>

Newman's first senior coach at the Geelong FC was Bob Davis. A popular player and then premiership coach, who later forged a media career, Davis himself has been the subject of a (ghost-written) biography.<sup>11</sup> In a 2009 newspaper interview, Davis reflected on Newman's long career, and in doing so claimed that he had something of a 'Jekyll and Hyde element'.<sup>12</sup> It is this allusion by Davis which forms the first portion of the thesis title and drives the narrative framework for analysing Newman's career.

Davis's insinuation about Newman has its origin in the novel *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, written by the Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson and published in 1886.<sup>13</sup> In his fictional account, Stevenson analysed in one individual

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National Rugby League *Footy Show*. In this thesis, *The Footy Show* is preferred given its popular use.

<sup>10</sup> Hogan, 'Personalities', pp. 173-174.

<sup>11</sup> Bob Davis (with Jim Main), *Woofa: Football Legend* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Michael Davis, 'Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam', *Weekend Adelaide Advertiser*, 21 March 2009, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> R.L. Stevenson, 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', in R.L. Stevenson, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Octopus Books, 1984), p. 662.



the tension between good and evil. The tall, sober, industrious and gregarious Dr Jekyll discovered a drug or potion that turned Dr Jekyll into the short, repulsive and cruel Mr Hyde who murdered Sir Danvers Carew, a Member of Parliament. Jekyll states of his twin characters of good and evil: ‘You must suffer me to go my own dark way ... If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also’. Eventually, Dr Jekyll’s supplies of the transforming drug run out and he cannot duplicate the chemical formula. Hyde is wanted for murder, and Jekyll kills himself. The novelist and critic G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) noted that Hyde is not ‘a diabolic *alter ego* but a diminished part of Jekyll’s whole personality, pure evil where Jekyll is a mixture of good and evil. Jekyll’s deluded belief that, because man is dual rather than whole, the good in him can hence be separated from the evil provides a study in degeneration and ultimate human responsibility’.<sup>14</sup>

A number of biographers have also used the Jekyll and Hyde dichotomy to describe their subjects. For example, Robert Falcon Scott was a struggling Royal Navy officer who volunteered to lead a journey to Antarctica in 1901, first seeing the continent on 8 January 1902.<sup>15</sup> Scott was inadequate and incompetent as the captain and ill-prepared for such a demanding venture. The biographer of Scott, Roland Huntford, notes of Scott’s character: ‘The picture emerges of an insecure, unhappy emotional disciplinarian. It existed side by side with a considerate man ... He [Scott] was a kind

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<sup>14</sup> Chesterton cited in Ian Ousby (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 263. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>15</sup> Roland Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen: The Race to the South Pole*, Revised Edition (London: Pan Books, 1983), p. 150.

of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'.<sup>16</sup> In a more contemporary setting, former US president Bill Clinton has also been accused of possessing a Jekyll and Hyde personality. One of his childhood friends, Dolly Kyle, claims that Clinton's charming demeanour masked his inner ruthlessness, which manifested itself when he raped her.<sup>17</sup> There is also a sense in which it can be claimed that Newman also exhibits twin personalities. Although not an 'evil' man or a 'rapist', there are certainly two sides to Newman which seem to conflict with each other.

It is therefore fundamental to map the so-called two Jekyll and Hyde personalities of John Newman, as part of this study involves removing the façades that Newman has employed throughout his media career, especially between 1994 and 2017. Regarding disguises and masks, Louis Smith contends that there are three important aspects that should be considered when discussing 'the mask of life'. These aspects are the appearance, the façade, and the overt behaviour.<sup>18</sup> Smith's three features have an echo with John Newman and his public alter ego that Newman himself names as 'Sam' Newman.<sup>19</sup> In this vein, it is also possible to construe Newman as a human chameleon, meaning he is apt to change personality according to those whom he is with at the time, such as his family, his few close friends and acquaintances and

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<sup>16</sup> Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen*, p. 157.

<sup>17</sup> See World Net Daily, 'Bill Clinton's Longtime Friend: He's "Jekyll and Hyde"', available at <http://www.wnd.com/2016/10/bill-clintons-longtime-friend-hes-jekyll-and-hyde/> (accessed 31 January 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Louis M. Smith, 'Biographical Method', in Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), p. 291.

<sup>19</sup> This thesis is focussed on the nickname 'Sam' and other versions of this nickname, such as 'Sammy', as signifiers of Newman's alter ego.

individuals in the media. A parallel example of Newman as chameleon can be found in a description of the personality traits of the famous Welsh poet and playwright Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), where his biographer asserts: ‘Dylan’s way was to adopt the character most suitable for the occasion’.<sup>20</sup> American psychologist and medical practitioner, George Ainslie, contains an apt description where Newman’s conflicting personalities exist. Ainslie observes: ‘dissociation is a temporary reversal of preference to change what the person acknowledges as his “self” for which is seen to an extreme degree in multiple personalities’.<sup>21</sup>

## **1.2 Background to the Thesis Subject**

On a personal level, it is relevant to acknowledge that the author of this thesis grew up in Newtown, a suburb of Geelong. This background has provided the author of this thesis with some understanding of the ethos of the City of Geelong and the City’s elite sporting expression, the Geelong FC, which he has supported all his life. The author witnessed many games played by Newman for the Geelong FC, and also occasionally crossed paths with Newman when working at radio station 3AW from 1999 to 2002. Further general reflections on the nature of the relationship between the author and their subject are discussed in the concluding chapter.

No academic or rigorous study has been attempted concerning the career of John Newman, who turned 71 years old on 22 December 2016. In a 2009 radio interview,

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<sup>20</sup> George Tremlett, *Dylan Thomas: In the Mercy of His Means* (London: Constable, 1991), p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> George Ainslie, ‘The Dangers of Willpower’, in Jon Elster and Ole Jorgen Skog (eds), *Getting Hooked: Rationality and Addiction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 65.

Newman himself admitted: ‘I have been approached several times for my life story but what is the point of that other than to massage one’s ego?’, indicating something of his general reluctance to be involved with any broader examination of his life and/or career. A similar reticence was shown when the author first contacted Newman and informed him about the proposed thesis. However, Newman did agree to be interviewed, although the information supplied by him to the author was somewhat problematic in nature, as discussed in more detail below.

### **1.3 Thesis Structure**

The thesis is set out in a broadly chronological format, with a narrative style. After this introductory chapter, which provides a preamble and an overview of the thesis structure, the next two chapters focus on a review of the literature, with one longer chapter (‘Literature Review’) dedicated essentially to football-related items and another shorter chapter (‘Studying Sporting Careers Deploying Biographical Methods’) specifically devoted to the challenge of writing biographies and related literature on this topic. The fourth chapter (‘Research Design and Methodology’) comprises the research design for the study, based on triangulation, and the research methodology is also explicitly set out. These first four chapters thus reflect the essential theoretical and methodological background for the thesis. The following three chapters (‘The Newman Family Background and School Football’, ‘Newman’s Relationship with Graham Farmer, 1962-1967’, and ‘Newman’s Victorian Football League Career, 1964-1974’) both explore and analyse Newman’s football career in chronological format, discussing especially the development of his extraordinary talent as a schoolboy footballer at Geelong Grammar School (GS) until 1963, along with his senior career at the Geelong FC from 1964 to 1980. It should be noted that

Newman as a young and aspiring ruckman modelled himself on the brilliant and innovative Indigenous Geelong FC champion Graham ‘Polly’ Farmer, whose own life is investigated in relation to his influence on Newman in a separate chapter that is interspersed between the two chapters on Newman’s football career.

The remaining chapters are more thematic in nature, but still follow a broad chronological framework. One chapter (‘The City of Geelong During Newman’s Football Career, 1975-1980’) supplies an analysis of the history of the City of Geelong during Newman’s football career, and then the following two chapters (‘Newman and the Media, 1981-1993’, and ‘Newman and the Media, 1994-2017’) explore Newman’s media career, outlining *inter alia* his self-absorption as evident on television and the style in which he offends both friends and foes. A chapter (‘Newman’s Public Life’) then furnishes a discourse on other aspects of Newman’s public life, including his mixed stance towards women, and his anger at modern technologies such as social media. This is complemented by a chapter (‘Newman’s Private Side’) that conveys aspects of Newman’s private life, including his charity work, his closeness to his family and his assistance towards those in need. A concluding chapter provides a sense of how the author came to this topic, before setting out the major findings and themes of the thesis.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter constitutes an extensive analysis of the relevant literature. Specifically, this review deals largely with historical works related to the Geelong FC, presented in chronological order. In addition, there is an examination of the biographies of players associated with the Geelong FC, which are intended to convey something of a comparative aspect with the career of Newman. Biographies from players at other clubs are also discussed. For example, a biography of VFA star goal kicker, Fred Cook, contains multiple references to the activities of the retired Newman. Also included are references to ghost written biographies of stars from other clubs in order to depict how a study of Newman's career could be positioned. Non-football fictional works and memoirs also provide a dimension to this thesis and are addressed accordingly, as are scholarly works associated with Newman's media career. However, newspapers are considered in section 4.4 of the Research Design and Methodology chapter. John Bale, Mette K. Christensen and Gertrud Pfister emphasise that the distinction between 'academic' and 'popular' studies of athletes is 'somewhat spurious'.<sup>22</sup> This chapter follows their lead in discussing all the relevant scholarly and popular accounts of football (and related) careers, while the ensuing chapter engages more substantively with questions of genre and process. Therefore

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<sup>22</sup> John Bale, Mette K. Christensen and Gertrud Pfister, 'Introduction', in John Bale, Mette K. Christensen and Gertrud Pfister (eds), *Writing Lives in Sport: Biographies, Life-Histories and Methods* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2004), 9-10.

the primary aim of this chapter is to assess how the broader literature can help to shed light on Newman's career.

## 2.2 Historical Works

One of the earliest histories of the Geelong FC is titled *Those Mighty Cats 1968: Official Publication of the Geelong Football Club*, published in 1968.<sup>23</sup> As noted in the subtitle, it was published by the club and it is essentially a celebratory work. There is some information on Newman the star player, but the bulk of the content covers other Geelong FC players on the senior list for 1968.

Sixteen years later, Col Hutchinson compiled what can be considered a major historical work on the Geelong FC.<sup>24</sup> Now 30 years old, this publication is somewhat dated and was published with the imprimatur of the *Geelong Advertiser*. Although essentially a compilation of anecdotes rather than a narrative history, it does cover some key milestones in the club's history. Hutchinson uses the Melbourne newspaper the *Argus* and its sister publication, the *Australasian*, as well as the *Geelong Advertiser*, to cover the history of the Geelong FC from its foundation year of 1859 right through to 1983. This book contains a range of black and white photographs and cartoons to enhance entries on individual Geelong stars over the decades. The entry on John 'Sam' Newman is accompanied by a *Geelong Advertiser* file photograph of Newman wearing white football boots about to take an overhead mark. Hutchinson notes key information on Newman as follows:

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<sup>23</sup> Geelong Football Club, *Those Mighty Cats 1968: Official Publication of the Geelong Football Club* (Geelong: The Club, 1968).

<sup>24</sup> Col Hutchinson (compiler), *Cats' Tales: The Geelong Football Club, 1897-1983* (Geelong: *Geelong Advertiser*, 1984).

A champion ruckman/forward pocket/back pocket who became a useful centre half-forward late in his career. He was a magnificent high mark and a great handball exponent. His ability to manoeuvre his body into the correct position at ruck contests and marking duels was equal to that of Graham Farmer.<sup>25</sup>

Hutchinson also includes a paragraph on Farmer, and states that he was regarded as ‘the greatest exponent of handball in the history of football’.<sup>26</sup> However, historian Richard Stremski was highly critical of Hutchinson’s book in a savage review essay. He argued that ‘Every club in the VFL has a special relationship with the community it represents, but club historians tend to ignore this’. He also suggested that ‘Geelong [FC], as the only club outside metropolitan Melbourne, might provide a unique example of how the performances of a football team can personify the attitudes of local residents’,<sup>27</sup> but complained about Hutchinson’s approach in *Cats’ Tales*: ‘the three largest sections of the book consist of: season by season highlights (largely verbatim from the *Geelong Advertiser*); a listing of the players in, and the results of, every Geelong [Victorian Football] League match to 1983; and about 100 words on each of 256 Geelong players out of 831’.<sup>28</sup> As he pointed out ‘Scads of other statistics are scattered throughout the book ... but no attempt is made to write the history of the club. Despite interviewing 300 players and officials over the years,

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., *Cats’ Tales*, p. 167.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Stremski, ‘Football is More than a Game: Comments on Some Recent Histories of Victorian Football League Clubs’, *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 1, no 2 (May 1985), p. 87.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 88.



Hutchinson has merely compiled a chronicle of events'.<sup>29</sup> Stremski's closing critique is that *Cats' Tales* fails to show that football is 'a way of life that permeates Victorian society and affects destinies of those involved in it, whether as players, supporters, or officials. The social, economic and political forces that shaped each individual club remain largely uninvestigated'.<sup>30</sup>

Stremski might be overly critical, because Hutchinson did not set out to provide a comprehensive history of the Geelong FC. Moreover, despite Stremski's strident views, one interview in Hutchinson's *Cats' Tales* does detail the link between football and community in Geelong. In this case, Kevin Threlfall, Geelong FC president for five seasons (1983 to part way through 1987), expressed an opinion on the importance of the game of football to the community of Geelong. He observed:

The Geelong Football Club has played a vital role in the morale of our city ... On-field success of the team makes the place tick. It is widely recognised that there is a high correlation between a string of wins and an upturn in local commerce. Being the only provincial city with VFL representation places Geelong in a unique situation ... Co-operation between the football club and local business organisations in the form of sponsorship is of definite advantage to both. Finance assists the club and the wide publicity attracted by association with football increases business turnover.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 'Football is More than a Game', p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> Threlfall, cited in Hutchinson, *Cats' Tales*, p. 3.

These insights are useful, and will be discussed in a later chapter concerned with the relationship between the City of Geelong and the Geelong FC.

Next, in terms of published historical works on the Geelong FC, is a relatively lightweight publication by Geoff Davie and the Geelong Cats, titled *Cats on the Prowl: Stories from the Dressing Room*.<sup>32</sup> Items in this book, published in 1994, focus on humorous club activities, including examples of practical jokes. The paperback has numerous typographical errors, and can neither be considered a worthwhile, nor reliable, source.

In 1996, Russell H.T. Stephens released a rather different history of the Geelong FC. His large and attractive hard-cover book titled, *The Road to Kardinia: The Story of the Geelong Football Club*, reflects the style of an enthusiast rather than an historian.<sup>33</sup> In this vein, academic and football historian, Lionel Frost, reminds scholars, researchers and readers that ‘Club histories have for the most part been written by journalists and amateur historians’.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, it is worth noting that Stephens titles his volume a story rather than a history. This monograph is especially strong on the early years of the Geelong FC and the book does have considerable

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<sup>32</sup> Geoff Davie and the Geelong Cats, *Cats on the Prowl: Stories from the Dressing Room: Illustrations by Mark Cairns* (Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Russell H.T. Stephens, *The Road to Kardinia: The Story of the Geelong Football Club* (Sydney: Playright Publishing, 1996).

<sup>34</sup> Lionel Frost, ‘Clubs: Major Leagues’, in Tim Hogan (ed.), *Reading the Game: An Annotated Guide to the Literature and Films of Australian Rules Football* (Melbourne: Australian Society for Sports History, 2005), p. 30.

merit. However, it should be signposted that many errors occur in the text, with several discrepancies involving Newman.<sup>35</sup>

In 1998, John Ross and Garrie Hutchinson edited a large format hard-cover book titled *The Clubs: The Complete History of Every Club in the VFL/AFL*. This publication is a landmark work both in its scope and arrangement, with clubs covered in alphabetical order. Col Hutchinson contributed the section on ‘Geelong: My Club’, and he covers the history of the club in 27 pages.<sup>36</sup> A small break-out box contains a brief vignette on the football career of ‘John (Sam) Newman’. Hutchinson treads a well-worn path on Newman. He notes thus:

Using Polly Farmer as a role model ... [Newman] developed into a fine ruckman with excellent palming, marking and kicking ability ... and [he] read the play to perfection. During the 1967 First Semi-final, he suffered a serious kidney injury ... but he fought back ...’.<sup>37</sup> Although the book itself is a

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<sup>35</sup> For example, Stephens writes that ‘Newman had a natural all-round ability and could hold his own against the best ruckmen of his day ... in the first semi final of 1967 ... he suffered a serious kidney injury in a collision with Collingwood’s Ernie Hug’. See Stephens, *The Road to Kardinia*, p. 224. However, the *Geelong Advertiser*, 4 September 1967, p. 30, reported that ‘Newman crashed to the ground as he tackled Warren Roper with Newman’s own elbow doubled awkwardly under him and Newman rose gasping’. In addition to incorrectly stating that Newman collided with Hug, instead of Roper, Stephens also makes some errors with attributions of photograph credits on p. 291.

<sup>36</sup> Col Hutchinson, ‘Geelong: My Club’, in Garrie Hutchinson and John Ross (eds), *The Clubs: The Complete History of Every Club in the VFL/AFL* (Ringwood: Viking: 1998), pp. 176-202.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

substantial work, much of the material, including the section on Geelong FC, is celebratory in nature.

An official history of the Geelong FC was commissioned for the club's sesquicentenary in 2009. This valuable monograph was edited by John Murray and includes useful biographical material. *We Are Geelong: The Story of the Geelong Football Club* is a large-format hard-cover book that includes several pages on selected individual champions in the history of the Geelong FC. The focus is on living champions, although some may not have accumulated large numbers of games. Farmer is, of course, included although he played only 101 games between 1962 and 1967. Another contemporary of Newman, Deniston ('Denis') Marshall, a highly gifted running defender and midfielder from Claremont, Western Australia (WA), who played just 84 games between 1964 and 1968, is also featured among the profiles. Designated football researchers, writers and journalists are among the authors who contributed items, and worthwhile insights can be gained from their material. For example, the respected researcher and journalist, Ben Collins, devotes three pages to Newman, where he tellingly quotes Newman as saying, with some humility, 'I am where I am today, wherever that is, because I played football for Geelong. I owe my career, my vocation and my life to that fact'.<sup>38</sup>

Frost observes that '... club histories are often self-published by the authors ... [and] Print runs are usually very short'.<sup>39</sup> This was the scenario with Bruce Kennedy and Bruce Coe's self-published slim, yet full, account of the Geelong FC's 1963 season

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<sup>38</sup> Ben Collins, 'Sam Newman', in John Murray (ed.), *We are Geelong: The Story of the Geelong Football Club* (Docklands: Slattery Media Group, 2009), p. 197.

<sup>39</sup> Frost, 'Clubs: Major Leagues', p. 30.

that culminated in the club's sixth grand final win. Kennedy and Coe's book, titled *1963: Cats in Command*, begins with the 1962 finals series when Geelong lost the preliminary final replay to Carlton FC on 22 September 1962.<sup>40</sup> For each home-and-away round of the 1963 season, the authors list the selected Geelong FC team, the result, goals for Geelong and opponents, together with the League ladder for every round of eighteen weeks plus finals. More unusually perhaps, Kennedy and Coe also afford boyhood memories from 1963, such as reminiscences about football replays on black-and-white television, twiddling the radio dial to listen to games, and awaiting the Saturday evening newspaper, the *Sporting Globe*, for football information.<sup>41</sup> This instructive publication of 133 pages has a note on sources, along with a thorough index. However, 1963 was the year before Newman joined the Geelong Football Club as a senior player, so this book can only serve as background on the club before the commencement of his career.

A recently published history is by Geelong FC supporter, James Button, with *Comeback: The Fall and Rise of Geelong*, launched in September 2016. In the preface he espouses the book's main thrust:

This is the story about a football club that went close to extinction but came back against the odds to be among the best in the history of the Australian Football League. It is also about the only AFL team that is

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<sup>40</sup> Bruce Kennedy and Bruce Coe, *1963: Cats in Command* (Fyshwick, ACT: The Authors, 2010), pp. 16-18.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-33.

non-metropolitan and central to the identity of a regional city, one that has known plenty of struggle and self-doubt.<sup>42</sup>

These various studies of the Geelong FC testify to a particular connection between the club and its community – with the club being deeply embedded in the city’s history – which needs to be taken into account when considering the football career of significant players such as Farmer and Newman.

### 2.3 Biographies

In his annotated bibliography on Australian Rules football, editor Tim Hogan, in the introduction to his ‘Personalities’ chapter, claims that ‘A large amount of football literature is made up of biographical or autobiographical material’. In Hogan’s view:

Until the mid 1980s, only football identities who had assumed a very dominant place in the football and sporting community through long, illustrious and sometimes colourful careers were the subject of biographies or produced autobiographical works.<sup>43</sup>

One of the earliest autobiographies, and perhaps an exception to Hogan’s typology described above, was written by St Kilda player Dave McNamara. In 1914, at the height of his football career, he wrote the prosaically titled *Football*, which had a full subtitle explaining the topics that were included in the book: *Players, Management, Payment of Players, Gambling, History and Records, Fixtures and Laws, [and]*

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<sup>42</sup> James Button, *Comeback: The Fall and Rise of Geelong* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2016), p. v.

<sup>43</sup> Hogan, ‘Personalities’, pp. 173-174.

*Humourous Incidents*.<sup>44</sup> The book also included advertisements for football products, giving an early indication of how celebrity, biography, football and publishing could be combined for commercial advantage. It is not the intention of this literature review to survey all the biographical material related to Australian Rules football. However, as in previous sections, the focus will be on literature within various categories that are particularly relevant to the Geelong FC, to Newman (or his team mates or opponents), and to the time period in which he represented his club.

Also worth mentioning is the fact that in recent years, Russell Holmesby and Jim Main have spent considerable time and effort in compiling regular editions of *The Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers: Every AFL/VFL Player Since 1897* (now in its tenth edition).<sup>45</sup> This extraordinary reference work lists, in brief, the vital details of all players who have played in the AFL. Entries occur on John Newman and such Geelong FC ruckmen and teammates as Graham Farmer, Ian Hampshire and Bill Ryan. Also listed are Newman's opponents including John Nicholls and Don Scott, as well as Don McKenzie, Simon Madden, John Schultz, Noel Teasdale, Neil Balme, Neville Crowe, Carl Ditterich, Alan Morrow, Barry Round, Gary Dempsey, and Norm Brown. Given that some of these former star footballers were interviewed for this study, the *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers* is a valuable starting point for essential information on their careers.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Dave McNamara, *Football* (Melbourne: Page and Bird, 1914).

<sup>45</sup> Russell Holmesby and Jim Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers: Every AFL/VFL Player Since 1897*, Tenth Edition (Seaford: BAS Publishing, 2014).

<sup>46</sup> Interviewees and their background are specifically discussed in Chapter 4, section 3, of the thesis.

In terms of ‘objective observation and critical analysis’ Steve Hawke’s major work, *Polly Farmer: A Biography*, is a landmark publication.<sup>47</sup> First published in 1994, this book incorporates a wide range of interviews both in Perth and in Geelong with Farmer’s teammates and his opponents in WA and Melbourne. Accordingly, the original Hawke monograph contained a comprehensive index based on the surnames of players and officials. Hogan has described Hawke’s book as a ‘high standard biography of one of the game’s greatest and most influential players [which] covers all phases of Farmer’s life and career’. He also states that ‘a feature of this scholarly yet readable book is the examination of Farmer’s unique contribution to the game’s evolution’, and claims that ‘This book set a new standard in football biographies ...’.<sup>48</sup> However, Hawke is capable of errors and there are some incongruities in the book.<sup>49</sup> Ten years later, an updated and revised version of Hawke’s biography of Farmer was generated by a different publisher, with the new book containing an Afterword and an Appendix, together with a slightly different selection of

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<sup>47</sup> Steve Hawke, *Polly Farmer: A Biography* (South Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1994).

<sup>48</sup> Hogan, ‘Personalities’, p. 180.

<sup>49</sup> For example, on p. 198, Hawke claims that ‘Newman and another youngster, Bill Ryan, who had played a handful of games in the middle of 1963 were challenging the other big men of the side, Vinar, Watts, Yeates and Lowe for the right to play a supporting role to Farmer. The *Geelong Advertiser* noticed the influence of Farmer on the pair and both had adopted the early leap, and Newman in particular already showed the capacity for the grab and handpass that was the Farmer trademark’. However, the *Geelong Advertiser* reference provided by Hawke relates not to ‘the grab and handpass’ but to the 1964 preliminary final between Geelong and Collingwood on the Melbourne Cricket Ground.



photographs and an additional personal reflection by Gareth Andrews on Farmer's affliction with dementia.<sup>50</sup> Significantly, the revised version also encompasses a Foreword by Newman (which is discussed more fully in other sections of this thesis).<sup>51</sup> However, it is disappointing that many of the errors from the original version of the book remain, and there are several typographical mistakes and some poor editing.<sup>52</sup> It is also unsatisfactory that the index, included in the 1994 edition, is deleted from the 2014 publication. Nonetheless, the fact that this book explores the career of the man who had a seminal influence on Newman makes it an extremely important text.

Regarding Geelong FC and player biographies, it is difficult to ignore several books that have been written about Gary Ablett senior. Each of them is enlightening in different ways. For instance, Ken Piesse, a prolific writer and a journalist, was determined to document the life and football career of Ablett and wanted to produce an authorised biography. Another biographer, Garry Linnell, discusses this predicament and notes that Ablett was his normal private and indecisive self when it came to cooperation with Piesse. Indicative of the problem is that Ablett initially

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<sup>50</sup> Details for the revised edition are as follows: Steve Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated* (Richmond: Slattery Media Group, 2014). For the Andrews reflection, reproduced from the *Age*, 24 August 2013, p. 6, see Gareth Andrews, 'Precious Moments with a Legend', in Steve Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated* (Richmond: Slattery Media Group, 2014), pp. 346-349.

<sup>51</sup> John Newman, 'Foreword: The Best Ever', in Steve Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated* (Richmond: Slattery Media Group, 2014), pp. 13-15.

<sup>52</sup> For instance, 'Davis was telling anyone who would listen that Farmer would tum [*sic*] Geelong into a premiership team'. Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 165.

wished to be involved with the biography, and then changed his mind. Piesse indicated that ‘All through it we were being really careful to put in the positive stuff ... from my viewpoint, I wasn’t trying to bring down a hero ... There were lots of hair-raising stories that didn’t make it [into the book]’.<sup>53</sup> As a result of Ablett’s reticence to be involved, Piesse’s two editions of the Ablett biographies, the first version produced in 1994 and the revised edition in 1996, were both unauthorised.<sup>54</sup> Generally, the reluctance of subjects to link with their biographers is something of a double-edged sword. ‘Unauthorised’ biographies are often seen as more authentic, if not more revealing, as they tend to be less hagiographic. On the other hand, if the subject is not open in his dealings with a biographer, with access to key documents denied or with opportunities for necessary interviews declined, the resultant biography can lack insight and depth. Elements of this conundrum lie at the heart of this thesis.

Garry ‘Buddha’ Hocking was born in 1968. He grew up in Cobram, a town in northern Victoria. Though his brother, Steven, was a tough and disciplined defender in the senior team from the age of 19, Garry was a little wayward both on and off the field. At an Under 17 carnival, Ray Jordon, the experienced coach of Victoria and

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<sup>53</sup> Piesse, cited in Garry Linnell, *Playing God: The Rise and Fall of Gary Ablett* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2003), p. 268.

<sup>54</sup> Ken Piesse, *Ablett: The Gary Ablett Story: The Unauthorised Biography* (Melbourne: Wilkinson Books, 1994); Ken Piesse, *Ablett: Greatest Ever: The Unauthorised Biography*, revised edition (Baxter: Modern Publishing Group, 1996). A Brighton company named Fine Lines Communications was engaged to promote the revised biography. Liz Trainor noted in a press release of 20 May 1996 that Piesse had ‘... added 10,000 more words and included a more than a dozen more interviews plus a 32 page colour section’.

spotter of young talent, ripped into the team and Hocking in particular. As Hocking later reflected, ‘I knew for certain that he [Jordon] didn’t want to know about me and as long as my backside pointed to the ground there was no known way I would graduate to AFL ranks’.<sup>55</sup> Hocking’s parents moved to Geelong to help the younger boy settle into playing football with the Geelong FC and the autobiography (written with the help of Grantley Bernard) makes clear the importance of family connections during his career. In this context, Hogan describes *Buddha* as ‘a surprisingly intimate book’, marked by chapters on ‘influential coaches, state football, tribunal appearances and the disappointment of four grand final losses’.<sup>56</sup> Revealingly, Hocking records the importance of playing 100 games for the Geelong FC:

To play 100 games is to become part of club history. What it really meant to me became clear during a club function one night. Running an eye over the honour boards was a history lesson in itself as I mentally noted the men who had played 100 games for Geelong ... Indeed, the gold-embossed names on the honour board jumped off the wall at you. There was Bob Davis, John Newman, the Nankervis brothers, Bill Goggin, Reg Hickey, Leo and Michael Turner, so many others.<sup>57</sup>

In spite of Jordon’s opinion, Hocking played 274 games for 243 goals with the Geelong FC from 1987 to 2001.<sup>58</sup> What the career statistics do not reveal is that Hocking was also involved in community activities around Geelong. For example, he

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<sup>55</sup> Garry Hocking (with Grantley Bernard), *Buddha: An Autobiography* (Sydney: Harper Sports, 1999), p. 24.

<sup>56</sup> Hogan, ‘Personalities’, p. 181.

<sup>57</sup> Hocking (with Bernard), *Buddha*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>58</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, pp. 399-400.

notes: ‘To go to the children’s ward at a hospital and see the bravery these kids exhibit in the face of illnesses such as cancer. It doesn’t make it very hard to go that extra yard at training ... if you can picture their battles’.<sup>59</sup>

In 2003, Garry Linnell, a researcher, writer and journalist, produced a monograph of outstanding quality. It is titled *Playing God: The Rise and Fall of Gary Ablett [senior]*, and is an unauthorised biography.<sup>60</sup> Gary Robert Ablett was born on 1 October 1961. He grew up in a large family at Drouin in Gippsland where he had a reputation as a wild teenager, and he joined the Geelong FC from the 1984 season. A muscular and aggressive midfielder at 185 cm tall and 97 kg bodyweight, he was quick and kicked the football over long distances.<sup>61</sup> Ablett was tough. His speciality was long, running goals. Geelong FC coach, Malcolm Blight, later moved Ablett permanently to full forward. There Gary employed his speed, skill and strength to take freak marks and kick goals from any distance, any angle, often defeating two opponents simultaneously. In the early 1980s, Ablett married Sydney’s Sue Le Dain. The couple produced two girls and two boys. The family lived at Jan Juc, a Southern Ocean surfing area on the edge of the Great Ocean Road. Linnell is especially strong in describing Ablett’s interest in a charismatic religion based on a form of Baptist church in Torquay. After several years, Gary discontinued attending Bible studies due to a lack of privacy. Football gave Ablett direction, but he eventually retired in 1996. As Linnell notes ‘It didn’t take long before the Keepers of the Myth went to

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<sup>59</sup> Hocking (with Bernard), *Buddha*, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Linnell, *Playing God*.

<sup>61</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 7.

work to protect him'.<sup>62</sup> Ablett entered a church-based rehabilitation centre to be treated for depression, alcohol abuse and drug dependence. A review of Linnell's biography of Gary Ablett senior contains the following observation: 'Like Icarus, Ablett [senior] flew too close to the sun and crashed to earth, a broken man'.<sup>63</sup> The reviewer also remarks that 'Ablett lives out what French novelist Victor Hugo warned: 'He who is a legend in his own time is ruled by that legend'.<sup>64</sup> By way of comparison, while Linnell portrays Ablett as a recluse, he can be compared with Newman, who was an extrovert later in his football career, as discussed in more detail later in the thesis.

Paul Chapman grew up in Fawkner, a tough northern suburb of Melbourne. The Geelong FC drafted Chapman with pick 31 in the 1999 national draft. At the Geelong FC, Chapman played 251 games for 336 goals from 2000 to 2013. He was a passionate and aggressive midfielder and a small forward. Chapman was a triple premiership player who won the 2009 Norm Smith medal for best on ground in the grand final victory.<sup>65</sup> In 2015, Chapman released a biography titled *Chappy: Believe It or Not*. As co-author Jon Anderson noted in the Foreword:

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<sup>62</sup> Linnell, *Playing God*, p. 268.

<sup>63</sup> Christopher Bantick, 'Heavy Price of Football Fame', *Sunday Tasmanian*, 13 July 2003, p. 27.

<sup>64</sup> Hugo, cited in Christopher Bantick, 'Heavy Price of Football Fame', *Sunday Tasmanian*, 13 July 2003, p. 27.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Chapman (with Jon Anderson), *Chappy: Believe It or Not* (Richmond: Hardie Grant Books, 2015), pp. 144-145.

There was and still is a fair degree of Clint Eastwood-style characters in Chappy, someone who can't walk away when he sees an injustice ... [T]his is a warts-and all account of a remarkable sixteen year journey.<sup>66</sup>

In this vein, Chapman discusses an argument he had with Newman, aspects of which are discussed later in the thesis.

Sports journalist Paul Amy wrote a VFA/VFL column for many years with the football weekly *Inside Football*. In 2014, he produced the life story of the brilliant and brash full forward with Port Melbourne, Fred Cook.<sup>67</sup> In *Fabulous Fred: The Strife and Times of Fred Cook*, Newman figures prominently. For example, 'Sam' Newman offers a Foreword that begins:

It is a challenge to dislike Fred Cook. A persuasive, laconic, rambling raconteur, he is a flawed gemstone ... But he succumbed to the pressures of a pop-star Hollywood lifestyle, and he paid dearly for the romance. His foray into the hospitality industry as the proprietor of Port Melbourne's Station Hotel gave his extroverted life another kick, and his constant companions were the elite movers and shakers of society. As sure as night follows day, the opportunists, those detecting a chance to exploit, and the criminal underclass gradually permeated his person.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Jon Anderson, 'Foreword', in Paul Chapman (with Jon Anderson), *Chappy: Believe It or Not* (Richmond: Hardie Grant Books, 2015) pp. 8-9.

<sup>67</sup> Paul Amy, *Fabulous Fred: The Strife and Times of Fred Cook* (Melbourne: Melbourne Books, 2014).

<sup>68</sup> 'Sam' Newman, 'Foreword', in Paul Amy, *Fabulous Fred: The Strife and Times of Fred Cook* (Melbourne: Melbourne Books, 2014), p. 6.

Fred Cook had a limited elite football career with Footscray FC. He crossed to VFA club Yarraville and from there to Port Melbourne where he became the charismatic face of the VFA when Channel 0, now Channel Ten, televised regular VFA matches every Sunday. When his VFA career ended, Cook became the lease-holder of Port Melbourne's Station Hotel where he was banking \$30,000 per week due to the pub's great food and enviable atmosphere. In the book, Newman reflects that lunches:

were legendary, attracting business leaders, politicians, law figures, police and entertainers. People wanted to be in Fred's company. Interstate football supporters coming to Melbourne had two destinations: lunch at the Station on a Friday and a match on a Saturday.<sup>69</sup>

Dennis Allen, described by Amy as 'one of Melbourne's most violent criminals', became a regular at Cook's Hotel.<sup>70</sup> This criminal introduced the addictive-personality Cook to amphetamines, known as speed. Allen himself was a paranoid speed addict and he became enraged when he heard that Cook was a police informer, based on the fact that police lunched at the Station Hotel. Allen sent three gunmen to the hotel to assault Cook, also a drug user. Cook and the gunmen fought in a narrow hallway and they rained blows on Cook. Newman walked in on the assault and stood between Cook and the gunmen and talked them out of it, defusing the situation. According to Amy, Newman regards the incident as 'the scariest day' of his life.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Newman, cited in Amy, *Fabulous Fred*, p. 130.

<sup>70</sup> Amy, *Fabulous Fred*, p. 147.

<sup>71</sup> Amy, *Fabulous Fred*, p. 166.

Newman fetched towels and mopped up the blood from his mate's face.<sup>72</sup> Cook eventually became a shambling drug addict who had three separate gaol terms, and he lived in a caravan park for a time. Newman was best man at Cook's second wedding, and Cook, now in his sixties, counts Newman as a constant friend who phones Cook most weeks. In this context, Amy quotes Newman, who has been close to Cook for 30 years:

being friends with someone is unconditional. You're friends with them no matter what they do ... A lot of people are fair-weather friends ... Your friends are your friends, your acquaintances are those who like to come in and out of your life.<sup>73</sup>

This set of biographies provide insight into both Newman's life, and also the lives of other significant players of Geelong.

#### **2.4 Ghost-Written Biographies**

New Zealand academic Geoff Watson states in his article, 'From Chronology to Confessional: New Zealand Sporting Biographies in Transition':

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>73</sup> Newman, cited in *ibid.*, p. 188. While there are some typographical mistakes in the book, it is more important to observe that Amy quotes extensively from newspapers, but there are no dates or page numbers of any of these sources. Moreover there is no index.



The vast majority of sporting biographies are “ghost written”, that is they are related by their subject to a third party and presented in the voice of their subject.<sup>74</sup>

Tim Hogan puts this observation in a positive light by recording that ‘the sheer volume of books on football personalities in comparison with twenty years ago means there will continue to be a diversity of publications for the fans ...’.<sup>75</sup> Hogan also remarks that:

Today, football biographies and autobiographies are churned out regularly and most great players are likely to be the subject of biography. In many cases this will occur before a player retires.<sup>76</sup>

As far as academic reviews of football biographies and auto-biographies are concerned, Dave Nadel’s thematic review essay, written in 1996 where he analysed works about three of the ‘best known figures in Australian football’, Ron Barassi, Kevin Sheedy and Ted Whitten senior, should be included.<sup>77</sup> He stated that most of the ghost-written biographies in Australian Rules football have actually been written by a small number of journalists, and many of these co-authors are often in awe of their subjects.<sup>78</sup> He finished his important essay by claiming that ‘We need more

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<sup>74</sup> Geoff Watson, ‘From Chronology to Confessional: New Zealand Sporting Biographies in Transition’, *Journal of New Zealand Studies* NS21 (2015), p. 21.

<sup>75</sup> Hogan, ‘Personalities’, p. 174.

<sup>76</sup> Hogan, ‘Personalities’, p. 173.

<sup>77</sup> Dave Nadel, “‘Big Men’ of Australian Football”, *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 12, no. 2 (May 1996), p. 107.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

analytical biographical studies which go beyond the myths and auras surrounding leading figures of the game'.<sup>79</sup>

A selection of the genre of ghost-written autobiographies from elite teams other than the Geelong FC is also worth noting as part of an overall literature review, with some of the more out-going football characters perhaps holding more interest than their circumspect team-mates, with most claiming to reveal the 'true story' of their careers. In these cases, particularly, many journalists feature as the co-writers, although the extent of co-authorship is not always revealed. For example, in 1990 Brian Taylor, the former Collingwood FC full-forward produced the book *Black and White: The Taylor Diaries* with *Herald Sun* football journalist Jon Anderson, although Anderson's name is listed first on the verso of the title page.<sup>80</sup> In 1991 Doug Hawkins compiled *Hawkins: Both Sides of the Fence* 'as told to newspaper journalist Michael Stevens'. Hawkins grew up in the working-class western suburb of Braybrook. He joined Footscray where he became a champion midfielder between 1978 and 1994. Hawkins played 329 games and he proposes in the story of his life 'a warts and all expose'.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Brian Taylor with Jon Anderson, *Black and White: The Taylor Diaries – 1990* (Melbourne: The Authors, 1990). The verso of the title page refers first to Anderson then Taylor.

<sup>81</sup> Doug Hawkins, as told to Michael Stevens, *Hawkins: My Story: Both Sides of the Fence* (Moonee Ponds: Double M Marketing, 1991), p. viii.

Another ghost-written biography is Anthony Koutoufides's book, *Kouta*, authored 'with Tony de Bolfo'.<sup>82</sup> Koutoufides was a brilliant athlete and he became a champion AFL player with the Carlton FC. In 2011 Matthew Lloyd wrote *Straight Shooter*, 'with Andrew Clarke',<sup>83</sup> and in the same year Barry Hall released *Pulling No Punches*, written with Michael Cowley.<sup>84</sup> Hall was a big forward in his career of 289 games and he kicked 246 goals with two clubs. Another example is Brendan Fevola, *Fev: In My Own Words*, published in 2012. The title of this book is somewhat ironic, given that the cover clearly highlights that it was written 'with Adam McNicol'.<sup>85</sup> As can be noted, there is often a play on words in the titles of such biographies, which gives the impression that it is the player concerned telling the 'real' story. In some ways, given Newman's long football career and high media profile, it is somewhat surprising that Newman has not gone down this path and released a ghost-written biography.

## 2.5 Fictional Works and Memoirs

Works of fiction and memoirs convey a genre that may have relevance to Newman as the controversial star of football entertainment on television. For example, Tony Wilson's novel *The Players* has a football media identity named Ian 'Tickets'

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<sup>82</sup> Anthony Koutoufides, with Tony de Bolfo, *Kouta* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant, 2007).

<sup>83</sup> Matthew Lloyd, with Adam McNicol, *Straight Shooter* (Camberwell: Penguin, 2011).

<sup>84</sup> Barry Hall, with Michael Cowley, *Pulling No Punches* (Millers Point, NSW: Pier 9, 2011).

<sup>85</sup> Brendan Fevola, with Adam McNicol, *Fev: In My Own Words* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant, 2012).

Thompson that could be based on Newman, the ‘man about town’. However, Wilson, a legal practitioner, has a careful author’s note in his book, stating that ‘*Players* is a work of fiction. Any similarity between characters depicted here and any real person living or dead is entirely coincidental’.<sup>86</sup> Dave Nadel, who provides several annotations on various ‘Literary and Dramatic Works’ in Hogan’s bibliography, observes of Wilson’s *The Players* that it is ‘A satire about a football television show’.<sup>87</sup> Although it is a fictional work, *The Players* is therefore worthy of further discussion because of its potential relevance to Newman.

Wilson was a tall, athletic and competent footballer with the University Blacks FC, and his father, Ray, played 105 games with Hawthorn between 1966 and 1972.<sup>88</sup> This background would have provided Wilson with a number of unique insights into the code itself, as well as the media associated with it, especially at the elite level. On this basis, his portrayal of Ian ‘Tickets’ Thompson would seem to be clearly inspired by the public persona of ‘Sam’ Newman. For example, Wilson writes in *Players*:

Of course, it [his face] didn’t wrinkle as much at it once had[,] not since the Botox injections. Tanned, unblemished and pure Ian ‘Tickets’ Thompson – footballing legend, television personality and man about town – did tend to say so himself.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Tony Wilson, *The Players* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2005), p. x.

<sup>87</sup> Nadel, cited in Tim Hogan, ‘Literary and Dramatic Works’, in Tim Hogan (ed.), *Reading the Game: An Annotated Guide to the Literature and Films of Australian Rules Football* (Melbourne: Australian Society for Sports History, 2005), p. 136.

<sup>88</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 962.

<sup>89</sup> Wilson, *The Players*, p. 1.

He continues ‘Nowadays ... they turned on a camera and waited for the sad cases to come to them’.<sup>90</sup> In the novel, Wilson also observes of Thompson that ‘His word of the week was a secret ritual he’d adopted in the very first year of *Leather and Lace*’.<sup>91</sup> It does not take much imagination to acknowledge that this is a thinly veiled reference to ‘Sam’ Newman’s ‘Street Talk’ segment on *The Footy Show*.

Aside from fictional works that can provide useful observations on the world of football, memoirs also have the potential to be worthwhile sources of information. For example, a reminiscence with relevance to the sense of community engendered by the Geelong FC is *Loose Men Everywhere*.<sup>92</sup> It is written by John Harms, born in 1962, the son of a Lutheran minister, who had ministries in various regions of country Victoria. The Harms family also had close relatives that lived in Geelong and they were devoted supporters of the Cats. As Harms explains, he and his brothers inherited their loyalty to the Geelong FC from these relatives, and when his father was transferred to a church in Oakey in the Darling Downs of Queensland, Harms would listen to a crackly transistor radio for progress scores of Geelong FC games.<sup>93</sup> During this period, Harms notes how his family was visiting relatives in Melbourne. Under pressure from Harms and his brothers, their parents took them to Waverley Park for a Geelong versus Footscray game, circa 1972. Harms creates an attractive ambience in describing the events of the afternoon:

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<sup>90</sup> Wilson, *The Players*, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Wilson, *The Players*, p. 151.

<sup>92</sup> John Harms, *Loose Men Everywhere* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2002).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 67.

It is the middle of winter: overcast and windy and cold. We sit behind the goals. We are right behind the Geelong cheer squad. They are friendly. We are on their side. They talk to us. It's a huge ground. The Cats run out. We see our heroes live: Doug Wade, Billy Goggin, Bill Ryan, Sam Newman, Ian Nankervis, Gareth Andrews. This is really happening. We are really watching Geelong.<sup>94</sup>

As Hogan notes, Harms has the ability to write evocatively about his club, and in the process he continues to ponder 'the perennial under-achievements of the Cats' during this period in which Newman was involved with the club.<sup>95</sup> This work is of particular relevance to the thesis, because it provides a sense of the intense focus from football fans on players like Newman, along with the way his time at Geelong was seen by some supporters as disappointing because the club did not win a premiership.<sup>96</sup>

Barry Dickins provides further insight into the passions of Geelong supporters, in a semi-autobiographical manner that can be categorized as memoir. *You'll Only Go In for Your Mates* is a collection of 55 columns about football that he wrote for the local newspaper, the *Melbourne Times*, between 1980 and 1991.<sup>97</sup> Dickins and his brother

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<sup>94</sup> Harms, *Loose Men Everywhere*, p. 61.

<sup>95</sup> Tim Hogan, 'Cultural and Social Aspects', in Tim Hogan (ed.), *Reading the Game: An Annotated Guide to the Literature and Films of Australian Rules Football* (Melbourne: Australian Society for Sports History, 2005), p. 71).

<sup>96</sup> For more on the passions of Australian Rules football supporters, see Matthew Klugman, *Passion Play: Love, Hope and Heartbreak at the Footy* (Melbourne: Hunter Publishers, 2009); and John Cash and Joy Damousi, *Footy Passions* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009).

<sup>97</sup> Barry Dickins, *You'll Only Go In for Your Mates* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991).

‘Robbo’ are long-suffering Fitzroy FC supporters. In the column ‘Royboys are Hereby Disowned – Until the Weekend’, Dickens and ‘Robbo’ travel to Geelong for a Fitzroy versus Geelong game. Dickins contends:

Me and the tireless Robbo travelled out there to windy Geelong all the way down Geelong Road ... and we stood there with all the uglies and watched you lose. When we motored home, got tailgated and had fruit thrown at us by passing Geelong supporters.<sup>98</sup>

While there is no specific mention of Newman by Dickins, works like his certainly evoke the atmosphere in which football was played during the post-war decades in Melbourne and Geelong.

## **2.6 Scholarly Works on the Media Career of Newman**

A range of academics have differing interpretations of the public persona known as ‘Sam’ Newman, hence this section is devoted to some of the works they have produced. As explained elsewhere, the nickname ‘Sam’ was bestowed on Newman during his third year as a senior footballer at the Geelong FC. A number of scholarly articles and essays have divergent views on Newman’s media career, and either praise or are harsh towards the persona of ‘Sam’.

The academic Margaret Lindley has published several items on the history and culture of Australian Rules football. She has contributed chapters in monographs on football and presented papers at conferences on Australian Rules football, in particular, on the female involvement both as spectators and participants. In 1995, she addressed the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

character of ‘Sam’ Newman, the star of *The Footy Show*, in a newspaper article. Despite only reflecting on the first year of this television program, Lindley’s assessment of ‘Sam’ has currency. She comments on Newman as follows: ‘Skating along the line of rude/funny/offensive/amusing he performs or threatens to perform a kind of ethical striptease’.<sup>99</sup> Lindley also argues that it is important that ‘people should understand that his rudeness is calculated’,<sup>100</sup> and she has observed in Newman a carelessness, but it is ‘of the grand aristocratic variety. He is never slipshod, never inadequate’.<sup>101</sup> In addition, Lindley takes particular note of Newman’s body language, remarking that he ‘springs forward from his chair, leaning towards us to make a point, sprawls back in it, lounging in a manner extraordinary in a public forum’.<sup>102</sup> Lindley continues her analysis by enlisting a simile to compare Newman to an international actor that would also appeal to ‘Sam’s high opinion of himself. [Newman is]:

a darling of the gods perhaps, sent to the right school, growing taller than his fellows. Like Sean Connery, Newman was handsome when young, sexy when older.<sup>103</sup>

Lindley states that ‘Sam’ has a long fuse. *The Footy Show*’s popularity with women, who watch in greater numbers, gives the impression that Newman ‘does not lose his

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<sup>99</sup> Margaret Lindley, ‘Sam Newman, Is He Funny?’, *Age*, ‘Green Guide’, 21 May 1995, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.



temper'.<sup>104</sup> Lindley observes that Newman displays, 'with unusual skill, the comic effects of exasperation. "Why would you say that?" and "Honestly and "Really"'.<sup>105</sup> For all her invective aimed at the public personality of 'Sam' Newman, Lindley concludes with a surprising appreciation of 'Sam', the topic of her essay. She asks 'Is he funny?'. Her reply to her own question is that 'He makes me smile and laugh and I anticipate his performances with pleasure but then women have long been notorious for liking naughty men'.<sup>106</sup>

Nadel has also examined *The Footy Show*. He contends that *The Footy Show* is 'really a variety show'.<sup>107</sup> Nadel goes on to assert that 'Sam' Newman is the most important personality in the program, and he is most responsible for its popularity and ratings. As Nadel notes, Newman is a former footballer and

he is also both the object of fun, and provocateur of the fun ... Humour is an important part of ...[*The*] *Footy Show* ... They [panellists] frequently focus on Sam's marital affairs and his very young wives.<sup>108</sup>

Like Lindley and Silver (the show's executive producer), Nadel is conscious of *The Footy Show's* image. He observes that 'Viewers find it appealing seeing footballers

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>107</sup> Dave Nadel, 'The Thursday Night *Footy Show*', in Stephen Alomes and Bob Stewart (eds), *High Mark: Australian Football and Australian Culture: Contemporary Studies of the Great Australian Game* (Hawthorn: Maribyrnong Press, 1998), p. 50.

<sup>108</sup> Nadel, 'The Thursday Night *Footy Show*', p. 51.

being funny, and being good blokes, but not threatening blokes'.<sup>109</sup> Nadel continues his argument that *The Footy Show* appeals to women and non-football fans:

Perhaps part of the reason why it has rated so highly, particularly with women, and particularly with people who are not necessarily football fans, is that it is not really about football. It's about footballers and not football.<sup>110</sup>

In the same collection of essays, the historian Stephen Alomes adopts a harsh and caustic attitude in assessing 'Sam' Newman's pivotal role on *The Footy Show*. In particular, he critiques the segment 'Street Talk', where Newman takes to the street with the aim of sending up, or occasionally humiliating, what Alomes terms the 'idiots', that is 'his victims as fools less suave than his bourgeois self'.<sup>111</sup> On this point, Newman himself has remarked about ordinary people 'You actually get amused by their simplicity and stupidity'.<sup>112</sup> Taken together, the work of Lindley, Nadel and Alomes on *The Footy Show* provides an example of the divisive responses that Newman has elicited from both scholars and the more general football-supporting public.

In their national history of the Australian code, Hess et al. locate the contentious role played by *The Footy Show* within a broader media context. They claim that football's

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Stephen Alomes, "'Class, Beauty and Goodness": Beauties and Beasts on the Football Shows', in Stephen Alomes and Bob Stewart (eds), *High Mark: Australian Football and Australian Culture: Contemporary Studies of the Great Australian Game* (Hawthorn: Maribyrnong Press, 1998), p. 55.

<sup>112</sup> Cited in Madeleine Hangar, 'Wham, Bam, Thank You, Sam', *The Footy Show Magazine* (August 1999), p. 32.

popularity and profile were enhanced by the introduction of several high-rating panel programs on commercial television during the 1990s. In their view:

The most prominent was *The Footy Show* which first aired on Channel Nine in 1994 with regular panellists former Geelong champion “Sam” Newman and comedian Trevor Marmalade.<sup>113</sup>

They sum up by suggesting that:

The show thrived on controversy. It was an adept mix of semi-serious football commentary and vaudeville review and although it was criticised for its objectification of women and unnecessarily crass brand of humour, it was a huge ratings success.<sup>114</sup>

In 2000, feminist academic Karen Brooks built upon previous scholarly engagement with Newman to consider him as an exemplar of celebrity culture. More specifically, Brooks explored Newman’s personality regarding themes such as masculinity, the nature of the program’s audience, the mystique of celebrity figures, the cult of celebrity and Newman’s appeal to female audience members and television viewers. She also notes that Newman’s body language is personified with camera close-ups, which appeal to women and accentuate the essential distance between ‘Sam’ and his fans.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Hess, Nicholson, Stewart and de Moore, *A National Game*, p. 375.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Brooks, ‘More Than a Game’, p. 34.

Brooks argues that *The Footy Show* draws on ‘multiple televisual styles from other media to develop a structure that depends on distraction and fragmentation in order to subordinate and pleasure its audience’.<sup>116</sup> She follows this argument with an assessment of Newman’s defined sense of masculinity, noting that:

the construction of supra-star John ‘Sam’ Newman is configured on a specific masculine and heroic corporality, which, regardless of his media transformation, resides in the mythic allure of being a former football ‘great’.<sup>117</sup>

Moreover, Brooks perceives ‘Sam’ as ‘a powerful symbol of male dominance’.<sup>118</sup> She also points out that Newman is ‘someone who incorporates notions of heterosexuality, urban culture, consumption and masculine identity’,<sup>119</sup> conceding that ‘Sam’ possesses unquestionable charisma along with his intellect and wit.<sup>120</sup> In addition, she says that some researchers have suggested that Newman’s charisma ‘has spawned a condition known as “Newmania”’. His widespread appeal can be described as ‘the biggest magnet for *The Footy Show*’ and kept its ratings robust.<sup>121</sup> Similarly to Nadel and Silver, Brooks observes that ‘Sam’ appeals to female fans, and she claims that he is ‘fetishised’ throughout the show. For example, ‘the camera produces extreme close-ups, dwelling on his idiosyncratic expressions and

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

mannerisms'.<sup>122</sup> Brooks quotes a researcher named Porter who noted Newman's body language: 'The appraising narrow-eyed glance at the camera, the sideways and backward tilt of the chair, the stagey scrawl on the notepad'.<sup>123</sup> As Brooks, in agreement with Nadel and Hess et al., notes, 'Forget the game of football, "Sam" is the spectacle'.<sup>124</sup>

In essence, Brooks examines the basis of humour fundamental to *The Footy Show*. For instance, she notes that 'The laughter of the live audience is used as a comedic barometer through which to gauge the success and social appropriateness of the humour'.<sup>125</sup> It is standard for professional comedians to warm up a studio audience, to produce non-stop laughter so that when the principals appear and make some introductory remarks the studio audience, attuned to laughter, will laugh at anything. For *The Footy Show*, the studio audience is often 'warmed up' by professional comedian Michael Pope.<sup>126</sup>

Importantly, Brooks develops a key argument about the distinction between 'Sam' Newman and John Newman. She states that:

'Sam', the image, has overtaken the referent John Newman, in terms of how and where meaning accrues around his actions and words. 'Sam' Newman is

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>123</sup> Porter cited in *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>126</sup> See Michael Pope's website at [www.michaelpope.com.au](http://www.michaelpope.com.au) (accessed 23 March 2017).

fundamentally a *simulacrum*, which occurs when the image and referent implode until they are comprehended as a single concept.<sup>127</sup>

Developing this narrative, Andrew Torre indicates that ‘in neuroscience, the rational and irrational are in conflict and the irrational tends to dominate’.<sup>128</sup> Torre’s viewpoint has resonance with the masculine quality of the television celebrity ‘Sam’ concealing the other personality of John Newman.

Brooks also identifies the symbiotic nature of football fans with the cast of *The Footy Show*. She defines two aspects of the relationship between fans and cast. First, ‘the audience, both real and virtual, participate as team members in the game played by the cast’.<sup>129</sup> Second, the relationship also considers that fandom is seen as positive and desirable. Brooks contends that:

‘Winning’, through ratings and popularity and success of particular cast members, becomes increasingly significant because it can be equated with victory in *multiple* spheres of the fans’ lives.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Brooks, ‘More Than a Game’, p. 39.

<sup>128</sup> Personal communication with Andrew Torre, 21 December 2012. This view is supported by a reference website which indicates that ‘Rational decisions are generally made by people who are able to determine the possibilities of an outcome while irrational decisions are based almost entirely on emotion rather than experience’. These polarities are often in conflict. See Reference, <https://www.reference.com/world-view/difference-between-rational-irrational-decisions-459b46fdb97f782d?qo=cdpArticles> (accessed 15 March 2017).

<sup>129</sup> Brooks, ‘More Than a Game’, p. 40.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41. Emphasis in the original.

Brooks then completes her essay with the statement that Newman and the cast of *The Footy Show* separate themselves from their fan base ‘due to the cult of celebrity’.<sup>131</sup> However, the inherent weakness in Brooks’s argument is that she essentially concentrates on the public ‘Sam’ Newman personality. There is no attempt to unlock other aspects of Newman’s character or career.

## **2.7 Relevant Academic Theses**

Two academic theses have some relevance to Newman the elite athlete who has forged a career in television. The links between elite athletes, various communities and the media create scope for both debate and controversy. This is not a recent phenomenon. For example, Thomas Wills, one of the co-founders of Australian Rules football in the 1850s was one of the most charismatic and controversial figures in Australian sport at the time. He was a feisty administrator and media commentator. In his PhD thesis examining the life of Wills, Gregory de Moore argues that Wills was a man who was always the centre of attention. As de Moore notes ‘Somewhat narcissistic, he was embroiled in most of the controversies of the day’.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, during a cricket tour of Sydney, Wills was arrested ‘as he walked out on to the Albert Ground with the aboriginal team to play NSW. The initial statements included that Wills was in breach of contract’. As de Moore points out, ‘Money and false promises made by Wills were the basis of his arrest’.<sup>133</sup> de Moore’s contentions relate to the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>132</sup> Gregory de Moore, ‘In From the Cold: Tom Wills – A Nineteenth Century Sporting Hero’, PhD thesis, School of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance, Victoria University, Melbourne, 2008, p. 13.

<sup>133</sup> de Moore, ‘In From the Cold: Tom Wills’, p. 154.

personality traits of ‘Sam’ Newman in his ‘Street Talk’ segment on *The Footy Show* in that Newman has been banned from *The Footy Show* for demeaning women, and he also has been charged on summons over an alleged road rage incident, all such incidents being widely reported in the press.

Another thesis relevant to John Newman, the school football star, is Philip Badock’s 1993 MA thesis titled ‘Performance Attributes of Talented Schoolboy Australian Rules Football Players’.<sup>134</sup> The study group consisted of 50 best-identified schoolboy fifteen year old Australian Rules football players in WA. From this group, 25 were selected to represent WA at the Australian School Sports Council National Football Championships. The selected psychological characteristics were competitive anxiety (trait and state), competitive sport orientation (competitiveness, win and goal orientation) and sport confidence (trait and state). A further comparison of psychological characteristics and performance levels at the completion of the championships was made to determine any common characteristics. The results did show, however, significant differences between the perceptions of performance as rated by the players themselves and the ratings by the coach, manager and teammates. Badock’s initial characteristics likely concern Newman, a star footballer at Geelong Grammar School (GS) where ‘he was in the first eighteen for three years’.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> P.R. Badock, ‘Performance Attributes of Talented Schoolboy Australian Rules Football Players’ (Masters thesis, Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University, 1993).

<sup>135</sup> Jim Usher, ‘A Cat Named Sam’, *Football Life*, July 1970, p. 16.



Geelong FC senior coach Bob Davis was regarded as a players' coach rather than a committee coach. Davis recalled that he was in awe as he watched Newman kick eighteen goals from centre half forward in an Associated Public Schools match in mid-1963. Davis remembered that the teenage Newman's performance 'was sufficient to send me into a frenzy'.<sup>136</sup> Davis's use of the word 'frenzy' underscores his inclination to hyperbole.

## 2.8 Conclusions

This literature review has produced an overview of relevant material, including historical works on the Geelong FC, Geelong FC biographies, more general biographical items and ghost-written biographies, fictional stories and memoirs, works related to Newman's media career, and two relevant theses. All these publications have some resonance with the football and media careers of Newman, and serve as a useful foundation for a more detailed study of his conflicting personalities. The next chapter will focus on the specific challenges associated with studying the careers of influential sports figures. Discussion of these works will serve as the basis for an examination of the football and media careers of Newman.

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<sup>136</sup> Davis, cited in Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), 'The Trouble with Sam', *Australian Story*, ABC1 Television, 6 July 2000.

## Chapter Three

### Studying Sporting Careers Deploying Biographical Methods

No great man lives in vain. The history of the world is but the biography of great men.

Thomas Carlyle<sup>137</sup>

#### 3.1 Introduction

Bale, Christensen and Pfister suggest that sports biographies ‘often fail to reflect a *life* but rather [reflect] a *career*’.<sup>138</sup> However, in this thesis, the aim is to use the methods of biographical studies to examine Newman’s careers in both football and the media, rather than to reflect on his life in comprehensive detail. As Bale, Christensen and Pfister observe, a major difference between life histories and biographies is that biographies often reveal ‘smaller history as a representation of the bigger history’, while a life history of ‘ordinary, usually unknown persons’ is potentially more complicated, especially in regard to ‘space and relations’.<sup>139</sup>

In another collection, arising from a conference at Manchester in 2010, the brief introduction by the editor, Dave Day, highlights a major thread that runs across the chapters. What is evident, Day points out, is not only an understanding that the writing of biographical material is immensely difficult, but that different levels of

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<sup>137</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero Worship* (Frankfurt: Outlook Verlag GmbH), p. 22.

<sup>138</sup> Bale, Christensen and Pfister, ‘Introduction’, p. 10. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

accuracy can be perceived in the narrative of a person's life.<sup>140</sup> The conclusion he reaches is that 'Taken together these papers highlight the richness and diversity of sporting lives as well as demonstrating that these stories can never be entirely finished but will continue to evolve as further sources are uncovered'.<sup>141</sup>

In a more recent chapter on sports biographies Maureen Smith observes that the genre ranges from the 'downright horrible and full of clichés to fascinating and well researched'.<sup>142</sup> Smith argues that sport biographies have generally covered sports heroes. As she notes, 'it is a genre less about the heroic athlete and more about capitalising on an athlete's fame'.<sup>143</sup> This observation has an echo with 'Sam' Newman. There is a further link with 'Sam' Newman's former champion elite football career and his function on *The Footy Show* when Smith refers to Arnold Field's 2001 biography entitled *Gentleman Jim*, the story of the world heavyweight boxing champion, James J. Corbett. Smith notes that Field writes about Corbett as 'handsome and highly skilled student of the manly art', but she also acknowledges that Field is particularly illuminating on Corbett's second career as 'one of the most

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<sup>140</sup> Dave Day, 'Introduction', in Dave Day (ed.), *Sporting Lives* (Crewe: Manchester Metropolitan University Institute for Performance Research, 2011), p. i.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. For a discussion of methodologies related to biography, prosopography and oral history, see Samantha-Jayne Oldfield, 'Narrative Methods in Sport History Research: Biography, Collective Biography, and Prosopography', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 32, no. 15 (2015), 1855-1822, and Fiona Skillen and Carol Osborne, 'It's Good to Talk: Oral History, Sports History and Heritage', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 32, no. 15 (2015), 1883-1898.

<sup>142</sup> Maureen Smith, 'Sports Biographies', in Steven A. Reiss (ed.), *Companion to American Sport* (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p. 634.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

popular entertainers on the vaudeville stage'.<sup>144</sup> Like Corbett, Newman had two distinct careers. First, he was a champion elite footballer. Second, Newman became a star in a television football entertainment program, in some ways perhaps the equivalent of a vaudeville stage.

Other possible allusions to 'Sam' Newman are exhibited in two other biographies that Smith discusses. First, in William Baker's *Jesse Owens: An American Life*, Smith says that Baker 'does an excellent job separating fact from myth'.<sup>145</sup> Fact from myth applies to John Newman in that he persuades studio and viewing audiences of *The Footy Show* that 'Sam' is the reality. In other words, Newman is perpetuating a myth for the purposes of his media career. In fact, he only reveals the John Newman personality to his family and several long-term friends. 'Sam' Newman is the public persona. In her conclusion, Smith advances that the genre of sports biography has improved because biographers are now more likely to question myths and long-standing anecdotal information in order to 'move beyond hagiography'.<sup>146</sup>

This thesis adopts the tools of biographical studies in order to study the careers of John Newman in a manner that moves beyond hagiography and examines the facts and myths of his working life. Biographies have always held a particular attraction for writers. Indeed, Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), the famous lexicographer of the eighteenth century, claimed that '... no species of writing seems more worthy of

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<sup>144</sup> Smith, 'Sports Biographies', p. 638.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 641.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 650.

cultivation than biography ...'.<sup>147</sup> However, in a cautionary aside contained in an article entitled 'Dignity and Uses of Biography', he also observed that '... few can portray a living acquaintance except by its prominent and observable peculiarities and the grosser features of his [*sic*] mind'.<sup>148</sup> In this context, Johnson then goes on to assert that 'the business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those':

incidents which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life where exterior appendages are cast aside and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue.<sup>149</sup>

In terms of studying Newman's football and media careers, it therefore makes sense to follow Johnson's advice by focusing on the seasonal minutiae of these careers. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to acknowledge that deploying the methods of biography has its challenges, and it will be worthwhile to explore some of the specific problems associated with particular aspects of the biographical form in this chapter. More specifically, this chapter adopts a case study approach by examining what can be learned from a number of renowned biographies. An underlying question of this chapter concerns how the methods of biographical study can be used to reflect the careers of a significant sporting figure such as John Newman.

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<sup>147</sup> Samuel Johnson, 'Dignity and Uses of Biography', in John Gross (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 68.

<sup>148</sup> Johnson, 'Dignity and Uses of Biography', p. 70.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3.2 Forms of Biography

The American researcher and writer Louis M. Smith argues that obviously the first task in biography ‘is the decision concerning the person to write about. One must select a hero or heroine, be he or she recognised as such or not by the population at large’.<sup>150</sup> While not all subjects of biographies are by nature a hero or heroine, it is certainly true that the focus must, by definition, be on an individual. Smith also notes that a biography is ‘an active constructionist activity from the picking of a hero to the selection of issues and themes to the final image or portrait that is drawn’.<sup>151</sup> He also refers to the function of a biographer, stating that: ‘The biographer’s personality - motives, fears, unconscious conflicts and yearnings - reaches out to responsive, if not similar, territory in the person to be subject’.<sup>152</sup> It is relevant and necessary, therefore, to identify material that relates to the nature of researching and writing biographies and the difficulties that may exist during the process. A selected range of examples is briefly discussed below.

In Edmund White’s introduction to his biography of the French novelist Jean Genet, he notes: ‘The art of biography is often supposed to trace the small steps an individual takes in a clear direction ...’.<sup>153</sup> There is a sense, however, in which White’s view contrasts with Philip Furia who has argued that:

biographers have to resist the impulse to tell the reader *everything* they have learned about their subject ... they need to find the story they want to tell

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<sup>150</sup> Smith, ‘Biographical Method’, p. 289.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>153</sup> Edmund White, *Genet* (London: Picador, Pan Macmillan, 1994), p. xxxix.

about their subject, a story buried under all of the information they've gathered.<sup>154</sup>

Also, Smith indicates that 'there is still a lot of opportunity to write about distinguished sportsmen and sportswomen, and their accomplishments on and off the sporting field'.<sup>155</sup> Thus, White's 'small steps' and Smith's 'opportunity', are worthwhile to reflect upon, as it is the 'story' that is inherent in these approaches which must be elucidated in using biographical methods for a scholarly study of the careers of Newman.

One major problem confronting a biographer is the degree to which his or her subject can be known. Roy Jenkins, the author of a biography on Winston Churchill, claims that his task was not distorted by knowing his subject. Jenkins had a career in the English House of Commons at the same time as Winston Churchill who was Prime Minister during World War II. Jenkins and Churchill had no parliamentary relationship. Jenkins admits in his Preface to *Churchill* the challenges of such a biography:

although I had many inhibitions about venturing into a Churchill biography, the slightness of the acquaintanceship was not among them. I do not believe

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<sup>154</sup> Philip Furia, 'As Time Goes By: Creating Biography', in Carolyn Forché and Philip Gerard (eds), *Writing Creative Nonfiction: Instruction and Insights from Teachers of the Associated Writing Programs* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Story Press, 2001), p. 68. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>155</sup> Smith, 'Sports Biographies', p. 635.

that biography demands or even necessarily profits from personal knowledge. It can distort as much as it illuminates.<sup>156</sup>

Jenkins's final paragraph of *Churchill* contains the following:

... a judgement between Gladstone, undoubtedly the greatest prime minister of the nineteenth century, and Churchill undoubtedly the greatest of the twentieth century. When I started writing this book, I thought that Gladstone was, by a narrow margin, the greater man, certainly the more remarkable specimen of humanity. In the course of writing it, I have changed my mind. I now put Churchill, with all his idiosyncracies, his indulgences, his occasional childishness, but also his genius, his tenacity, and his persistent ability, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful, to be larger than life ...<sup>157</sup>

The final paragraph about Churchill offered by Jenkins may be relevant to the notion that Newman too, could also be classed as 'larger than life'. Moreover, the blurb from the front dust jacket of the Jenkins' biography of Churchill opines:

In this brilliant account of his [Churchill's life] Roy Jenkins uses his skills as an acclaimed biographer to analyse Churchill's exceptional character in all its strengths and weaknesses.<sup>158</sup>

Ideas and evaluations of character are therefore important when considering biographical methods, however it is also important that when the person of study appears 'larger than life' that this does not obscure the analysis of their life, or in the case of this thesis, their careers.

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<sup>156</sup> Roy Jenkins, *Churchill* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2001), pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 912.

<sup>158</sup> Cover blurb from *ibid.*



Place is also a relevant factor to consider, and Robert A. Caro demonstrates its relevance to an understanding of locale. In his four-volume study, for example, he evaluates Texas, the state from which Caro's subject, Lyndon Baines Johnson, the 36<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, originated. This focus on location is recognized by Caro's publisher, who notes in the blurb to one of Caro's books 'His depiction of Texas is as brilliant as his account of Lyndon Johnson's driven soul'.<sup>159</sup> In his second volume, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent*, Caro notes:

These years include the Second World War. Lyndon Johnson's six months in the United States Navy during the war ... the actual story, as will be seen is too complex for simplifications, and is strikingly revelatory of the violent contradictions in Johnson's character.<sup>160</sup>

While Newman, as a person, cannot be compared with a future president of the USA in terms of his war service before running for office, Newman, like Johnson, can be recognised for the contradictions in his character.

In addition, Caro observes in his introduction to *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Passage of Power*

... in the second major speech of his presidency, the State of the Union address he [Johnson] delivered to Congress on 8 January 1964 ... it was a program whose title, however hyperbolic, made

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<sup>159</sup> Cover blurb from Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent* (London: Pimlico, 1992).

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxx.

clear that he viewed it – this crude, coarse, ruthless, often cruel man, who all his life had made a mantra of pragmatism.<sup>161</sup>

There is perhaps some connection between Caro's assessment of Johnson's character and the 'Sam' Newman personality on *The Footy Show*, as a 'crude, coarse, often cruel man'.

Other biographies present other tensions in their subjects and in the biographical form they adopt. For example, in Pamela Stephenson's biography of her partner Billy Connolly, she states, 'Not a day has passed since I met him twenty years ago ... marvelling at his miraculous survival of profound childhood trauma'.<sup>162</sup> Stephenson not only reflects on her relationship with her husband, but she is all too aware of the impact of trauma on his early life. The challenge for a biography of Connolly, the Glasgow-born folk musician, raconteur and world famous comedian is that his wife has an extensive knowledge of Connolly's harrowing childhood in which he was sexually abused by his father.<sup>163</sup> She also details how Connolly became a welder at the Clyde River shipyards in Glasgow, noting that 'The men Billy wanted to emulate were the patter merchants'. As she recounts, 'Some of the men were very funny ... about every day situations'.<sup>164</sup> Connolly then began a foray into comedy in the 1960s, with Stephenson claiming that she always loved his early stories about 'Glasgow

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<sup>161</sup> Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Passage of Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), p. xvii.

<sup>162</sup> Pamela Stephenson, *Billy* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), pp. 2-3.

<sup>163</sup> Stephenson, *Billy*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>164</sup> Stephenson, *Billy*, p. 163.

parties, lively pictures of tenement chaos and drunken mayhem'.<sup>165</sup> It is in this context that Stephenson candidly discusses Connolly's struggle with alcoholism. In short, her biography of Connolly conveys the personal relationship between the author and her subject. However, in general she refrains from any tendency to portray Connolly in an overly positive light, and thus limits her study from the perils of hagiography.

Musician Bill Wyman, whose autobiography is described as 'the candid evocation of a life lived in fascinating times', can be highlighted for its different style of biography, that is his particular evocation of the period in which he lived.<sup>166</sup> Wyman, the electric bass player with the rock band The Rolling Stones, developed a candid autobiography. Wyman was born William George Perks on 24 October 1936.<sup>167</sup> Perks was called up with the Royal Air Force on his eighteenth birthday and as he relates:

I got to know Lee Whyman a lot better. He was a re-fuelling driver for the fighter planes, and always looked really funky. He made quite an impression on me with his style ... In 1964, I adapted his name and changed mine by deed poll.<sup>168</sup>

Wyman was also an amateur archivist of The Rolling Stones. In an appendix to his autobiography he lists all the record albums of his group from 1963 to 1969 with exact chronological dates, and also a listing of the band's shows, also with

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<sup>165</sup> Stephenson, *Billy*, p. 238.

<sup>166</sup> Cover blurb from Bill Wyman, *Stone Alone: The Story of a Rock 'n' Roll Band* (London: Penguin, 1990).

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

comprehensive chronological dates from 1962 to 1969.<sup>169</sup> This autobiography is notable for its honesty and candour. Wyman addresses how, after 30 years as a bass playing musician with the now international act, he was essentially dismissed as the two principals of the band, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, believed that there were electric bass players better than Wyman.

Likewise, Laurence Bergreen amassed an extensive biography of African American jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong's life and times based on his difficult childhood in New Orleans. His biography captures the atmosphere in New Orleans, Chicago and New York City, where Armstrong developed.<sup>170</sup> Bergreen details that Armstrong was sent to a harsh reform school after a shooting incident in his early teens. A tough but fair musical master allowed Armstrong to play the cornet, a valved brass instrument for school events.<sup>171</sup> In his mid-teens, he played cornet in the bordellos and funerals with other musicians. Bergreen observes that 'Many blacks were prominent and visible in New Orleans's public life, but Chicago's burgeoning black community tended to be invisible to white eyes'.<sup>172</sup> Armstrong developed his talent with a trumpet and he became a pioneer of jazz. Armstrong married four times, (Newman was married three times) but always his trumpet came first along with various bands on tours. Armstrong lived and played in Chicago and New York City. He had the ability to play the trumpet as a lead instrument, unusual in the 1920s and 1930s.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., pp. 650-681.

<sup>170</sup> Laurence Bergreen, *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life* (London: Harper Collins. 1998), p. 5.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-79.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

Armstrong also sang. He clowned at the bandstand. Armstrong also played his form of jazz in France and Britain. Bergreen notes that Armstrong was ‘... a distinctly American brand of optimism and striving ... he became the persona he employed to beguile the world ...’.<sup>173</sup> This biography yields insights into a particular culture, time period and growth of such American cities as New Orleans, Chicago and New York City during the 50 years that Armstrong lived and played in these cities. It is, in other words, another case study which points to the importance of considering place and community when employing biographical methods to study an individual, as well as examining how an entertainer developed a particular persona to maximise the reach of his entertainment.

In an Australian context, John Bird’s biography of the Melbourne-born international pianist and composer Percy Grainger is also worth a mention. For this work, the biographer interpreted a large collection of letters and musical notation during Grainger’s long artistic life from 1882 to 1961.<sup>174</sup> The biographer depicts the difficulties of such a task:

No single work can do justice to the life of George Percy Grainger. Perhaps no musician of any era has bequeathed such a large and bewildering collection of letters, manuscripts and documents ... To protect the innocent involvement of those still living, however, I have sometimes deliberately fallen short of as ruthless and thorough-going an investigation as I had originally intended.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> Verso of title page of John Bird, *Percy Grainger* (South Melbourne: Sun Books, 1982).

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. xi.

Newman has produced some letters but mostly diaries in which he hand-writes appointments, so there was not as broad an array of personal sources available for this thesis. Nevertheless, Newman's diary-keeping will be discussed in a later chapter.

Overall, these particular examples demonstrate how the educing of the 'life and times' from a subject's career or experiences can be an integral part of the biographical form. The 'techniques' associated with biographers are briefly discussed in the next section.

### 3.3 Techniques of Biography

Bernard Crick compiled a comprehensive biography of the great English essayist and political writer George Orwell who, aged in his late 40s, died of tuberculosis on 21 January 1950. In *George Orwell: A Life*, published 30 years after Orwell's death, Crick created a subhead in his work titled 'Biography and Character'. Here he acknowledges that: '... A biographer has a duty to show how he [*sic*] reaches his conclusions ...'.<sup>176</sup> Crick also reflects on the difficulties of uncovering Orwell's 'private side', especially given that his death occurred 22 years before research commenced.<sup>177</sup> Newman is obviously a different type of subject from Orwell because Newman is still living. In fact, given his high-profile football and media careers, there are a plenty of sources concerning the public 'Sam' Newman. What is common, however, is that identifying the alternative character of John Newman, his more 'private side', is as difficult a task for Crick's Orwell biography as it is for this study.

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<sup>176</sup> Bernard Crick, *George Orwell: A Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), 29-31

<sup>177</sup> In his biography Crick thanks the late Sonia Orwell who granted him unrestricted access to all of George Orwell's papers in 1972. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

This thesis, therefore, focuses on Newman's football and media careers. Although one chapter examines the private side of John Newman, the aim of this chapter is to better understand his careers rather than to provide a complete biography of his inner and outer lives.

To extend this discussion of character further, it can be noted that Michael Shelden produced a comprehensive authorised biography of Orwell, published in 1991. Shelden also faced a similar problem to Jenkins when writing about his subject in that Orwell was 'a private man' and that 'the thought of a biographer digging into his past would not have pleased him'.<sup>178</sup> However, Shelden also analyses the difficult functions of a biographer:

The rich complexity of his [Orwell's] character makes him a fascinating subject for a biography ... Even a very sympathetic one [biographer] would have some disturbing details to reveal if the research were done honestly and thoroughly ... Some facts are indispensable, but so are character and spirit ... he was motivated by strong passions, and no biography can do justice to his story by deliberately downplaying the importance of those passions ... It [biography] must have a strong narrative, and it must have some sense of the human character behind the public face ... but that does not mean inventing information or withholding criticism ... Every life is full of pieces that do not fit.<sup>179</sup>

As a champion footballer with the Geelong FC, Newman, like Orwell, was 'motivated by strong passions'. More importantly, perhaps, in the light of comments by Johnson

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<sup>178</sup> Michael Shelden, *Orwell: The Authorised Biography* (London: Heinemann, 1991), p. 5.

<sup>179</sup> Shelden, *Orwell*, pp. 4-8.

and Shelden in particular, the unfolding of Newman's persona, displayed in television football entertainment as 'Sam' Newman, must be contrasted by considering 'some sense of the human character behind the public face', notably the generous and introspective side of the 'private' person, John Newman.

### 3.4 Reflections on the Writing of Biographies

Two American academics have conducted arguments about writing biographies through various journal articles. Jill Lepore, writing in 2001, classified her approach to biography as 'microhistory', which she described as 'involving culture as a whole'.<sup>180</sup> Lepore defined the work of microhistorians, and proposed that 'even when they study a single person's life, they are keen to evoke a period ... the power of popular culture'.<sup>181</sup> She indicated that there is a distinction between microhistory and biography, in that 'It might be argued that biographies tell the story of a whole life while microhistories chronicle only key events'.<sup>182</sup>

Lepore believed that:

Finding out and writing about people, living or dead, is tricky work. It is necessary to balance intimacy with distance while at the same time being inquisitive to the point of invasiveness.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Jill Lepore, 'Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography', *Journal of American History*, vol. 88, no. 1 (June 2001), pp. 129-144.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.



In this context, she develops her argument with the belief that ‘in recent decades biography has become increasingly sophisticated ... about narrative, structure, voice and context ...’.<sup>184</sup> In addition, Lepore determined that examining an individual’s life ‘serves as an allegory for broader issues affecting the culture as a whole’.<sup>185</sup> As a microhistorian, Lepore points out that:

Biographers are notorious for falling in and out of love with the people they write about. Take a look at the preface to nearly every biography, and you will see what I mean.<sup>186</sup>

However, there is a contrary stance, as advocated by US academic, Francesca Mari. She roundly criticises Lepore’s article as well as her published biographies. Mari contends that Lepore employs a range of techniques ‘while giving more prominence to the landscape, time and social trends shaping a person’.<sup>187</sup> Indeed, Mari argues that one of the best ways to understand the nature of microhistory is to contrast it with biography, as reflected in Lepore’s glib title ‘Historians Who Love Too Much’.<sup>188</sup> Mari also complains that ‘the trouble with this [microhistorical] approach is that not all writers are equipped to make it work for all subjects’.<sup>189</sup> In her rebuttal of Lepore’s approach, Mari also finds fault with Lepore’s abiding involvement with microhistory rather than identifying the life of her subject. Given the debate about the

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Francesca Mari, ‘The Microhistorian’, *Dissent*, 60 (Spring 2013), p. 82.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

validity of various techniques, it is clear that an examination of Newman's career should strike a balance between the arguments that underpin the differences between microhistory and biography.

### **3.5 Conclusions**

This chapter has reflected on forms of biography and biographical method that can assist the study of the careers of a significant sporting figure. The case studies explored in this chapter illustrate the need to examine the locations and communities of the figures being studied, along with the importance of seeing beyond the fame of characters who appear 'larger than life'. In addition, there remains a need to strive for balance and to avoid hagiographical accounts, while adopting a method that allows for the use of microhistory but not at the expense of other biographical perspectives.

The next chapter will identify aspects of research design and methodology that centres on the importance of oral history. The study of Newman's careers requires interviews with his former teammates at the Geelong FC, together along with his football opponents.

## Chapter Four

### Research Design and Methodology

#### 4.1 Introduction

The main aspect of this chapter centres on a discussion of research design and methodology. In particular, there is a focus on the process of triangulation, whereby three different types of sources are employed to increase the validity of an investigation in the social sciences.

#### 4.2 Triangulation

This study evaluating the life of Newman and his two conflicting personalities is based on a research process commonly known as triangulation. The definition of triangulation refers to ‘the use of multiple means of data collection to explore a single phenomenon’.<sup>190</sup> While Chris Gratton and Ian Jones indicate that triangulation from using different data collection techniques may have the potential ‘to strengthen the validity of the research’, they also urge caution in this approach as problems in dealing with different types of data can arise.<sup>191</sup> At its most essential level, triangulation may be likened to a three-legged stool, where each leg provides strength and stability to the apparatus. In this study, the first leg is in-depth interviews. Such interviews were conducted with Newman himself, and his sister. Interviews were also conducted with Newman’s Geelong FC teammates and with key Geelong FC officials, including a former president of the Geelong FC who supplied insights into

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<sup>190</sup> Chris Gratton and Ian Jones, *Research Methods for Sports Studies* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 119.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

John Newman from the age of 18 to his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in December 2015. In addition, interviews were conducted with elite football opponents of Newman. The second leg of the stool consists of secondary sources such as books, journal articles and theses. The third data set includes primary sources, such as newspapers that will link Newman's football career together with key aspects of his involvement in the media. Also included in this category of primary sources are such items as annual reports from the Geelong FC, and Geelong GS publications, in particular *The Corian* from 1959 to 1963, which carry reports of Newman's exceptional skills as a schoolboy athlete and Australian Rules player, along with his academic record.

### 4.3 Interviews

The prime methodology of this study was based on oral history. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson provide a definition of oral history as follows:

A set of techniques for gathering a story in which the interviewer listens to records, shapes and edits the life of another. In oral history, the one who speaks is not the one who writes. Oral history, then, is a mediated form of personal narrative that depends on an interviewer who intervenes to collect and assemble a version of stories that are situated and changing.<sup>192</sup>

Formal and structured interviewing techniques and methodology were elaborated in Veale and Shilling.<sup>193</sup> As a starting point, they argue that 'oral history relates both to the personal stories and memories that people tell other people about the past and the

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<sup>192</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Second Edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 275.

<sup>193</sup> Sharon Veale and Kathleen Schilling, *Talking History: Oral History Guidelines* (Sydney: Department of Environment and Conservation, 2004).

formal collection or account of such stories and memories by oral historians and researchers'.<sup>194</sup> Veale and Schilling note that 'oral history has become more sophisticated: Just as cultural heritage practice has evolved and changed, so too has oral history'.<sup>195</sup> They reflect how:

oral history interviewees recall the past: In practice then oral history usually results in the creation of a taped interview based on good research that records the experiences and living memories of individuals, many of whom are not ordinarily recognised as being part of history. Recording oral histories provides us with a first hand insight into how people experience the past and remember it in the present.<sup>196</sup>

Veale and Schilling accept that 'Critics of oral history have often pointed to the variable nature of oral evidence as a reason for continuing to privilege archival or written sources'.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, the oral history adopted in this thesis allows for individual memories and stories to complement – as well as be triangulated with – written sources.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>198</sup> This understanding of oral history is shaped by migration history. See Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991); Miranda Miles and Jonathan Crush, 'Personal Narratives as Interactive Texts: Collecting and Interpreting Migrant Life-Histories', *Professional Geographer*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1993), 84–94; and Mary Chamberlain and Selma Leydesdorff, 'Transnational Families: Memories and Narratives', *Global Networks*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2004), 227–241.

Klaebe conveys sound advice about oral history. 'It is important to be very courteous to each interviewee ... People are not only giving you their time, they are also giving you the very special gift of their personal stories'.<sup>199</sup> Another aspect of courtesy towards a prospective interviewee is to 'telephone or write well in advance to arrange a time that is convenient to the interviewee and give them an outline of the types of questions you might ask them and the time frame or event you will be discussing'.<sup>200</sup>

She is also conscious of 'the health and mobility of the interviewee ... What might be psychologically neutral or "comfortable" location for the interviewee ... Whether the location will have excessive background noise. Be wary of clocks, birds, traffic, air-conditioning units for instance'.<sup>201</sup>

Klaebe issues a warning to interviewers: 'Do not borrow photographs or an object of significance to the interviewee ...'.<sup>202</sup> Like Veale and Schilling, Klaebe observes that 'oral history interviews have traditionally been recorded with a tape recorder, but increasingly these days, it is accepted that the interview will be captured as a digital recording'.<sup>203</sup> As explained below, a digital voice recorder was used in this study.

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<sup>199</sup> Helen G. Klaebe, 'Sharing Stories with Each Other: Collecting Oral Histories of Our Community', Queensland University of Technology, 2007, p. 6. Available at [http://www.aughty.org/pdf/collect\\_oral\\_hist.pdf](http://www.aughty.org/pdf/collect_oral_hist.pdf) (accessed 11 April 2017).

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

Given the general discussion above, the next category is an explanation of the practical arrangements for the oral history component of this study. Standard procedures were followed in that subjects were advised about the study through the 'Information to Participants' form (Appendix 2). They were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time (although no participant elected to withdraw). Individuals were then interviewed in a semi-structured manner with a set list of questions covered with space for further inquiries that depended on the answers provided. These interviews consisted of a number of open-ended dialogues about an individual's memories and involvement for the period 1964 to 1980, the years of Newman's career with the Geelong FC as well as his subsequent vocation in the media, from 1981 to 2017. The interviews focused in particular on these aspects: First, the interviewee's life history, experiences and the value and importance of elite Australian Rules football in their daily lives, and in community involvement, especially during the 1960s and 1970s in Geelong and Melbourne; Second, personal experiences or anecdotes associated with Newman. During or soon after the interviews, notes were taken about relevant elements of the interview (for example, location, non-verbal cues and body language, and observations on research-relevant items that some interviewees revealed before, during or after the interview). Whenever possible, relevant photographs, trophies, scrapbooks, and documents were photographed or scanned. There was no undue influence on the participant to show these objects or realia to the interviewer or to authorise the photographic reproduction of them. At the end of the interview, the participant signed a 'Conditions of Use' form (See Appendix 2). Interviewees trusted this study. However, some participants explained that they would not have been so forthcoming with their information if the arrangements were too stringent.

In all, 40 interviews were conducted in Geelong and elsewhere and fourteen in Melbourne. A short interview occurred with Newman himself. He was playing golf at the time of the interview on 17 November 2013. Newman refused to answer direct questions by the interviewer but did comment generally on his image in the media and specifically his profile in Melbourne newspapers. For example, he stated that some newspaper articles about him were ‘reasonably accurate but most were fallacious’.<sup>204</sup> While Newman’s general reluctance to be interviewed and his lack of cooperation with the study might be seen as a deficiency, this is counter-balanced by the fact that other interviewees were more than willing to share their views on Newman, and, as noted below, several revealing interviews with Newman have been published in the press.<sup>205</sup>

Other interviews took place with a select number of Newman’s football teammates, comprising Brian Brushfield, Wayne Closter, Eric Nicholls and John Yeates. Football opponents of Newman interviewed included Carl Ditterich, Michael Green, Simon Madden, Peter McKenna, Barry Round, John Schultz and Noel Teasdale. Also, located in Perth, were former teammates of Newman, such as footballers Deniston ‘Denis’ Marshall and Peter Featherby. Some of Newman’s teammates were unable to be interviewed. John K. Watts, for example, who was a great friend of Polly Farmer from primary and high school and shared premierships with him at East Perth, and

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<sup>204</sup> John Newman, interviewed by Julian Ross, 17 November 2012. Newman refused to answer direct questions.

<sup>205</sup> Newman’s comment regarding the ‘fallacious’ nature of the articles about him, also points to the need to triangulate the research with sources other than just newspaper articles.



then represented Geelong FC in 1963, was in poor health and could not be interviewed.<sup>206</sup> Other selected interviewees were not available. For instance, Geelong FC's former goal kicking champion, mate and former work colleague of Newman, Doug Wade, was not available for interview as he suffered a mild stroke in February 2015. As former star Collingwood full-forward and informant, Peter McKenna, noted: 'Wadey's memory and speech are just slightly impaired but he is much improved'.<sup>207</sup> In addition, Newman's former ruck teammate at Geelong FC, Ian 'Bluey' Hampshire, suffered a massive stroke on Christmas morning, 2014. Hampshire has no 'cognitive ability and speech and but stolen movement from his left side'.<sup>208</sup> Also, former Richmond FC champion and later president, Neville Crowe, an opponent of both Farmer and Newman, was a victim of memory losses and could not be interviewed.<sup>209</sup>

A key interview would have been with Farmer. Aged in his late seventies, Farmer is suffering advanced dementia. However, his older son Brett and daughter Kim are both experts on their father's distinguished football career both in Perth and Geelong, and they were both interviewed. Although Newman himself was not forthcoming in a

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<sup>206</sup> Watts subsequently died of bone cancer on 3 June 2017. The next day, Newman provided an appreciation of Watts via telephone on radio station 3AW, saying that Watts was 'a loud, bombastic, and rambunctious character – a great mate of Graham Farmer'.

<sup>207</sup> Peter McKenna, personal communication, 6 March 2015.

<sup>208</sup> Danny Lannen, 'Ian "Bluey" Hampshire Tackles Life After Severe Stroke', *Geelong Advertiser*, 18 April 2015, pp. 34-35.

<sup>209</sup> According to Mike Sheahan, 'He [Crowe] rejected the suggestion of Alzheimer's disease'. Mike Sheahan, 'Richmond Legend Neville Crowe Faces New Battle', *Herald Sun* online, 19 March 2011. Crowe died in 2016.

brief interview, his older sister, Mary Wenzel, was generous when asked questions about her brother. Also interviewed was veteran broadcaster, Steve Price, who worked with Newman on radio on three separate occasions. Trevor Marmalade, a professional comedian, who was ‘behind the bar’ and a colleague of Newman’s for fifteen years on the football television entertainment program *The Footy Show*, also furnished his insights on Newman. Importantly, the inaugural executive producer of *The Footy Show*, Harvey Silver, provided his slant on Newman as the pivotal personality on the show.

Aside from the practical arrangements outlined above, it is also important in this discussion of methodology to recognise and acknowledge the existence of a conceptual framework that indicates how and why football communities can change over time, including those that identify the relationship between elite footballers and the community of which they are a part, especially in the context of the development or problems and difficulties in the Geelong region. Relevant material ranges from prosopographical analyses of the Geelong FC by Mark Pennings and Robert Pascoe,<sup>210</sup> to the more sociological and theoretically inclined general interpretations of football communities analysed by Ian Andrews.<sup>211</sup> In view of this literature, and

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<sup>210</sup> Mark Pennings and Robert Pascoe, ‘The Corio Oval Tribe: A Prosopographical Perspective of the Geelong Football Club in the Nineteenth Century’, *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 29, no. 1 (May 2012), pp. 77-94.

<sup>211</sup> Ian Andrews, ‘The Transformation of “Community” in the Australian Football League, Part One: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Community’, *Occasional Papers in Football Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (August 1998), pp. 103-114, and Ian Andrews, ‘The Transformation of “Community” in the Australian Football League, Part Two: Redrawing “Community” Boundaries in the Post-War AFL’, *Football Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (April 1999), pp. 106-124.

the judgement from a qualitative analysis drawn from primary and secondary sources discussed above and below, it is pertinent to explain how semi-structured interviews and general research into the Geelong community and elite football during the subject's lifetime assist in delivering a more nuanced and highly contextualised study of the different and contradictory aspects of Newman's life and career.

#### **4.4 Newspapers**

Bearing in mind the observation of Douglas Booth that 'newspaper material varies enormously in reliability', and that 'a number of issues can arise from newspaper evidence',<sup>212</sup> it is important to reflect on the nature of this important primary source. Booth also observes that it is worth remembering the context in which newspaper journalists generate material. For example, he states that 'the preferences, bias, knowledge and experiences of journalists will always influence their observations, descriptions and opinions'.<sup>213</sup> Nevertheless, as Michael Oriard notes, newspapers can be considered as cultural texts which can shed light on the contested meaning of sports and significant sporting figures.<sup>214</sup>

While the information from the press is vast and dispersed, a detailed excavation of newspaper archives based on key episodes in the life of Newman does allow turning points in his personal landscape to be assessed. With this in mind, it is reasonable to suggest that the main newspaper which contains extensive coverage of Newman's

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<sup>212</sup> Douglas Booth, *The Field: Truth and Fiction in Sports History* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 185.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>214</sup> Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

entire football career with the Geelong FC was the *Geelong Advertiser*. This daily newspaper carried numerous articles on Newman's on- and off-field exploits, and his catalogue of football injuries. On special occasions there was also what can be termed 'saturation' coverage on Newman. For example, over a period of two weeks through 1980, the *Geelong Advertiser* published numerous items on Newman's preparations for his 300<sup>th</sup> game, scheduled for 16 August 1980. Coverage of this milestone also appeared in other sources, such as the *Football Record*.<sup>215</sup>

A brief survey of other published material reveals that Newman's early senior football career was covered selectively in *Footy Week*, published irregularly from 1965 to 1972. Weekly newspapers the *Sunday Observer* and *Sunday Press* both feature items from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, a period when Newman overcame injury to become Geelong FC's main ruckman. The *Sporting Globe*, a tri-weekly newspaper during this era, included a range of articles focused on Newman as a star footballer. For example, in March 1978, journalist John Rice observed that Newman 'was fit and ready for the forthcoming football season'.<sup>216</sup> Just over two years later, in September 1980, Peter Stone, a *Sporting Globe* journalist, urged Newman to retire. Stone referred to Newman's accumulation of injuries and a lack of form.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Jim Robb, 'One Goal Left for Cats' "Sam", *Football Record*, 16 August 1980, p. 7.

<sup>216</sup> John Rice, 'Super Cat', *Sporting Globe*, 8 March 1978, p. 12.

<sup>217</sup> Peter Stone, 'Don't Play it Again, "Sam"', *Sporting Globe*, 16 September 1980, p. 4.

In addition, daily newspapers in Melbourne have given specific attention to Newman's off-field antics. For instance, on 15 April 2005, the *Herald Sun* recorded Newman's tribulations with women when a 37 year old female broke into his house.<sup>218</sup> Reports of Newman defaming a woman as 'a liar and hypocrite' have also appeared in the press.<sup>219</sup> The other daily newspaper published in Melbourne is the *Age*. Stories such as 'Ex Girlfriend Fined Over Newman's Broken Leg' exemplify how Newman's troublesome relationships with women are often given column inches.<sup>220</sup>

Articles on Newman's football exploits also appeared in the sporting press. For instance, features were published in the specialist monthly magazine *Football Life* in 1967, 1970 and 1976.<sup>221</sup> Another specialist football newspaper is the weekly publication, *Inside Football*, which has on- and off-field news about what can be loosely termed 'the football industry'. Much of this coverage can be construed as peripheral or anecdotal in nature (for example, during its first year of publication, *Inside Football* published an article by Terry Granger on Newman's self-employment with team mate Doug Wade, who travelled around Victoria to deliver haircare

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<sup>218</sup> Michael Warner and Shelley Hodgson, 'Sam's Rude Awakening', *Herald Sun*, 15 April 2005, p. 5.

<sup>219</sup> Michael Warner, 'Sam's \$500,000 Moment of Madness', *Herald Sun*, 17 November, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>220</sup> Patrick Donovan, 'Ex Girlfriend Fined Over Newman's Broken Leg', *Age*, 25 July 1997, p. 4.

<sup>221</sup> See: Jim Usher, 'Those Off Beat Cats', *Football Life* (August 1967), p. 17; Usher, 'A Cat Named Sam'; Jim Usher, 'Geelong's John Newman', *Football Life* (August 1975), p. 25, Jim Usher, 'The Cat Approach', *Football Life* (September 1976), p. 23.

products),<sup>222</sup> but the cumulative impact of such reporting is of value in that it builds a profile of Newman's life beyond the football field.

Of particular relevance to this study, Melbourne's daily newspapers, the *Age* and the *Herald Sun* (as well as its forerunner, the *Sun*), regularly address Newman's controversial role in the media, in the main, from 1981 to 2016. Often this coverage is in the entertainment pages and on occasion features in the news section of the newspapers concerned. Only rarely does it merit information in the sport pages. On this basis, analysis of commentary about Newman's career as reflected in articles that appear outside the sporting pages of the daily press is an important portion of the thesis. To summarise, then, newspapers are a key source for this thesis, although the limitations of such material is acknowledged.

#### **4.5 Secondary Sources**

In this thesis, secondary sources are employed for important historical background and context. Much of this material was discussed in the literature review, but a brief outline is appropriate regarding a research design and methodology which relies on the process of triangulation. Specifically, the secondary sources consist of a number of historical works related to the Geelong FC. Furthermore, there is an analysis of biographies of players associated with the Geelong FC, which are used as a counterpoint to the career of John Newman. Ghost-written biographies, along with fictional works and memoirs, are also discussed, as are scholarly works associated with Newman's media career, and general works of contextual history.

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<sup>222</sup> Terry Granger, 'Big Sam – A New Man', *Inside Football*, vol. 1, no. 7, 15 May 1971, p. 15.

#### **4.6 Conclusions**

The main aspect of this chapter centred on a discussion of research design and methodology. Triangulation was discussed, and techniques of oral history were specifically appraised. Strengths and weaknesses of these methods were also analysed, as was the relevant literature associated with research design and methodology.

The next chapter will evaluate the origin of the Newman surname and Newman's brilliance as an athlete, in particular Australian Rules football, at Geelong GS where he boarded up until the end of 1963. Newman followed his father, Noel, who was also a brilliant schoolboy footballer and a gifted student who graduated in Commerce at the University of Melbourne and began teaching at Geelong GS from 1929.

## Chapter Five

### The Newman Family Background and School Football

Every wise man's son doth know.

William Shakespeare<sup>223</sup>

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains some of the initial narrative of Newman's early life. Aspects of the family's genealogy are dealt with, and the origins of the Newman surname are discussed. The circumstances of Newman's immediate family members, including his father, Frederick Noel Bolton Newman, a boarder and a more than competent Australian Rules footballer at Geelong GS, are also assessed. In addition, the chapter explicitly examines John Newman's career as a talented schoolboy footballer, a time when he was invited to play four reserves games with the Geelong FC in 1963. The culture of boarding at the school and its implication for Newman's career is also investigated.

#### 5.2 The Newman Surname

The surname Newman has a long history, largely deriving from Britain, and owing its origin to ancient Anglo-Saxon culture. On this basis, 'Newman' is possibly the name for a stranger or a newcomer and Old English names Neow, Niwe, and Nige, all mean 'New', with the word 'Mann' meaning 'man'. There are also early records of 'Stangrim Noueman' listed in the Pipe Rolls of Norfolk in 1166, 'Godwin Nieweman' in the Pipe Rolls of Oxfordshire, England in 1169, and 'Robert le Nyman' in the

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<sup>223</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, Act 2, Scene 2, in Samuel Phelps (ed.), *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, vol. 1 (London: Willoughby, 1878), p. 144.



Subsidy Rolls of Sussex in 1296.<sup>224</sup> The Hundred Rolls of 1273 list four entries for the name: Robert Niweman in Cambridgeshire; Herbert le Neuman in Oxfordshire; Matthew Neuman in Huntingdon; and John le Neuman in Bedfordshire.<sup>225</sup> An exhaustive genealogical search of the Newman family name has not been undertaken, and the scenario for the purpose of this thesis does not begin until after the Newman ancestors arrive in Australia and eventually settle in Geelong.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Pipe rolls of the exchequer are accounts of the royal incomes arranged by county for each financial year. They represent the earliest surviving series of public records and are essentially continuous from 1155 onwards until the nineteenth century. A copy of each pipe roll (known as the Chancellor's roll) was also sent to the Chancery. For additional information, see Joseph Hunter (ed.), *The Great Pipe Rolls for the Second, Third and Fourth Years of the Reign of King Henry the Second*, [www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/guide/pip/shtml](http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/guide/pip/shtml) (accessed 30 September 2016).

<sup>225</sup> 'The Newman Name Society', <http://newmannamesociety.org/Links.htm> (accessed 20 February 2016). The Newman family motto in Latin is *Ubi amor ibi fides*, which translates as 'Where There is Love There is Faith'. For further detail see the information at 'Family Mottoes from Coats of Arms', [http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jkmacmul/namemeanings-coatofarms/mottoes\\_N-P.html](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jkmacmul/namemeanings-coatofarms/mottoes_N-P.html) (accessed 6 May 2017).

<sup>226</sup> A famous carrier of the surname Newman is Cardinal John Henry Newman who was born in London in 1801. He later graduated from Trinity College, Oxford University, and became an Anglican vicar. At the age of 44, Newman converted to Roman Catholicism and in 1879 Pope Leo XIII made Newman a Cardinal. The Catholic Newman College, a hall of residence at the University of Melbourne, honours Cardinal Newman, who is not related to the subject of this thesis. See Cardinal John Henry Newman, [www.cardinaljohnhenrynewman/life](http://www.cardinaljohnhenrynewman/life) (accessed 1 May 2017).

### 5.3 Noel Newman's Football and Education

Noel Newman was born Frederick Noel Bolton Newman in Geelong on 26 December 1906. He was the only child of Fossey James Newman and Kathleen Antoness Newman. Noel Newman was later enrolled as a boarder at Geelong GS from 1916 to 1924 and was a member of Perry House. One of Australia's most renowned public schools, Geelong GS came to value sport highly, which was one of the reasons that the school became known as 'the Eton of Australia'.<sup>227</sup> The evidence indicates that Noel Newman was a brilliant student and a star schoolboy Australian Rules footballer who was vice-captain of the Geelong GS first XVIII in 1924. In 2009, his son observed that his father was 'an exceptional sportsman and scholarly man'.<sup>228</sup> Charles Cameron, coach of Geelong GS's first XVIII, and a former VFL player, also said upon his retirement in 1947 that 'Noel [Newman] was the best schoolboy footballer he had seen during his thirty-two years on staff'.<sup>229</sup>

After leaving school, Noel Newman lived at the Trinity College and was educated at the University of Melbourne, where he graduated with a commerce degree in 1928. He began teaching at Geelong GS's main campus at Corio in 1929 and remained there until 1967.<sup>230</sup> A range of diverse sources reveals some information about Noel

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<sup>227</sup> Weston Bate, *Light Blue Down-Under: The History of Geelong Grammar School* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>228</sup> Newman, cited in Davis, 'Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam', p. 6.

<sup>229</sup> Charles Cameron, cited at 'The Newman Club', <https://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/School/Sport/Sport-Support-Groups/Aus-Rules-Football--The-Newman-Club/Welcome> (accessed 20 May 2016).

<sup>230</sup> The Geelong Church of England, Corio, *School Lists* (Geelong Church of England, 1965), p. 2, includes, under the heading 'Assistant Masters', in alphabetical order by

Newman's teaching career. These include observations by some of Newman's students such as Kent Ball and Graeme Houghton. For example, according to Ball, a former Geelong GS boarder in Manifold House, Newman taught 'commercial principles and practice and he was the only master who talked about exams'.<sup>231</sup> Houghton, a boarder and contemporary of Newman in Perry House between 1961 and 1965 at Geelong GS, also recollected that Newman's teaching of commercial principles and practice 'probably assisted students as young farmers to run family Western District grazing properties as businesses'.<sup>232</sup> Other sources also provide information on John Newman's father, whom students nicknamed 'Nogga'.<sup>233</sup> Furthermore, Caroline Wilson claims that 'Noel Newman taught economics, geography and was a successful football coach'.<sup>234</sup>

John Noel William Newman was born in Geelong on 22 December 1945 to Noel and Nancy Newman.<sup>235</sup> The couple already had two daughters, Mary and Jane, twelve

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surname, 'F.N.B. Newman, B.Com, Trinity College, Melbourne'. Although sources vary on the years served by Newman as a Master, *The Corian: The Geelong Grammar School Quarterly* (September and October 1980), p. 121, listing his service until 1967, is seen as accurate.

<sup>231</sup> Kent Ball, personal communication, 17 October 2013.

<sup>232</sup> Graeme Houghton, personal communication, 23 April 2014.

<sup>233</sup> Kent Ball, personal communication, 17 October 2013.

<sup>234</sup> Caroline Wilson, 'Give Me a Break: The Night Sam Newman was a Victim of his Own Reputation', *Age*, 22 February 1997, p. 19.

<sup>235</sup> Nancy Newman 'was also a teacher at Geelong Grammar'. See J.K. Watts, 'The Know All Who Became a Legend', *WA TV History*, watvhistory.com (accessed 17 April 2016). According to Ball, 'she might have been a teacher at [Geelong

and ten years old, respectively, when John arrived. John Newman also became a boarder at Geelong GS, and was allocated to Perry House, similar to his father. John Newman always had an aptitude and talent as a sportsman, although he proved to be an average student. Like his father, Newman became vice-captain of the Geelong GS first XVIII in 1963. His journey into elite football would begin with four games in the Reserves (or the ‘Seconds’) at the Geelong FC in 1963. From 1964, Newman would be elevated as a senior footballer with the Geelong FC, the team that he had followed from his earliest years. However, John Newman often reflects on his relationship with his father, whom he both loved and respected, and aspects of this bond are discussed in Chapter Six when father and son observed the brilliant practice match form of the polished Indigenous ruckman Graham Farmer at the Geelong FC in March 1962. John Newman was 16 years old at the time.

#### **5.4 Newman’s Football Background**

Geelong GS is among the most expensive and exclusive private schools in Australia.<sup>236</sup> Geelong GS alumni include Prince Charles, John Gorton, Rupert Murdoch, the late Kerry Packer and novelist Peter Carey. Alumnae include songwriter and musician Melissa ‘Missy’ Higgins and Grovedale’s Amanda Lee Rogers, who, living in the United States, has adopted the new name of Portia de Rossi.<sup>237</sup>

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Grammar’s] Bostock House’, and he asserts that ‘She was not a teacher at Corio’. Kent Ball, personal communication, 20 November 2014.

<sup>236</sup> Bate, *Light Blue Down-Under*.

<sup>237</sup> She starred in the US drama series *Arrested Development*. ‘Star Portia in Rehab’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 3 July 2014, p. 3.

Given that his father taught at Geelong GS, it was appropriate that his son attended this school throughout his childhood. As Newman later admitted: ‘I went to the crèche, kindergarten, the junior school [in 1952, at the age of six]’.<sup>238</sup> Several sources also indicate that he was ‘brought up in an Anglican household’, although Newman rarely acknowledges this or any other religious affiliations.<sup>239</sup> According to Bob Davis, from his earliest years, Newman was a ‘competent student and a brilliant athlete’.<sup>240</sup> In 2015, Newman recalled his routine life as a schoolboy: ‘For holidays, we went down to Point Lonsdale where my folks had a house. School and Point Lonsdale, School and Point Lonsdale, until I was 18 [years old]’.<sup>241</sup>

It should be noted that Geelong GS’s House system is sophisticated. According to Houghton, day boys were all in Geelong House. Boarders belonged to houses that governed their daily activities including scholastic, religious, cultural and sporting pursuits. Ball confirms that Newman was ‘... a member of Perry House that was only for boarders’.<sup>242</sup> According to Houghton, Perry House wore dark blue blazers,

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<sup>238</sup> Hamish McLachlan, ‘Sam I Am’, *Sunday Herald Sun*, 27 September 2015, p. 32.

<sup>239</sup> Hanger, ‘Wham, Bam, Thank You, Sam’, p. 32. An exploration of religion and sport is therefore beyond the scope of this thesis. For an introduction to this topic see Tara Magdalinski and T.J.L. Chandler (eds), *With God on Their Side: Sport in the Service of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>240</sup> Davis, cited in ABC, ‘The Trouble with Sam’, *Australian Story*, ABC1 Television, 6 July 2000.

<sup>241</sup> Newman, cited in Hamish McLachlan, ‘Sam I Am’, *Sunday Herald Sun*, 27 September 2015, p. 32.

<sup>242</sup> Kent Ball, personal communication, 25 February 2013.

Francis Brown House had grey blazers and Cuthbertson, also for boarders, wore ‘cacky brown blazers’.<sup>243</sup> On 27 April 2015, Houghton provided this researcher with the copy of Houghton’s original photograph of Perry House in 1963. The custom in naming Perry members is surname name first, followed by initials, hence, Houghton G.T. and Newman, J.N.W.<sup>244</sup> The reason, according to Houghton, ‘is that masters and teachers only referred to students ... by their surname’.<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, Houghton crystallised his years as a boarder at Geelong Grammar:

All students, including day boys, had to spend a full year at the School’s Timbertop retreat in the Victorian high country near Mansfield. John Newman was at Timbertop all [throughout] 1960. I was there in 1962. It was an isolated existence, far away from standard subjects and sport. We studied geography and natural sciences. For sport, we had hiking and cross-country running. We got one newspaper a week.<sup>246</sup>

It is also possible that Newman may have experienced a disconnected life during his time at Timbertop, as the retreat separated him from school football, a sport by which he expressed himself. This account is borne out by a description of activities peculiar to Timbertop, as indicated in the ‘Timbertop Notes’ section of *The Corian*, where, in 1962, it was recorded that:

... prolonged fine weather suited camping and walking. Fishing was very popular and some good bags were obtained in the Delatite and Howqua Rivers. Much time and energy has been spent in cutting and carting firewood.

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<sup>243</sup> Graeme Houghton, personal communication, 21 April 2014.

<sup>244</sup> As indicated in the copy of the Perry House photograph from 1963.

<sup>245</sup> Graeme Houghton, personal communication, 4 May 2014.

<sup>246</sup> Graeme Houghton, personal communication, 3 June 2015.

Good work has been done on the pine nursery. As usual, the Chapel has played a leading part in the life of the School'.<sup>247</sup>

In 2005, long after his retirement as a footballer, Newman reflected on his early life as a boarder at Geelong GS. He revealed to journalist Mike Sheahan:

Boarding school is about getting on with people, fending for yourself, standing up for yourself. You had to perform at a very rigid standard of behaviour. I got belted and caned and strapped and penalised by masters and teachers and prefects alike.<sup>248</sup>

In a similar vein, Houghton, Newman's contemporary in Perry House at Geelong GS, remembers being the victim of the cane and the strap for 'misdemeanours that only they knew'.<sup>249</sup> However, Newman continued his studies with some capacity, passing all six of his Leaving (Year 11) subjects in 1962, and achieving a 'C' grade for his matriculation in 1964.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> 'Timbertop Notes', *The Corian: Geelong Grammar School Quarterly* (May 1962), p. 26.

<sup>248</sup> Newman, cited in Mike Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: I Did It My Way', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 17 December 2005, p. 8.

<sup>249</sup> Graeme Houghton, personal communication, 4 May 2015.

<sup>250</sup> 'JNW Newman – Six subjects. A pass completed', *The Corian* (May 1963), p. 20; 'Public Examination Results 1963. The following Matriculated ... JNW Newman (C)', *The Corian* (December 1964), p. 298). The assumption that the initial 'C' in brackets conveyed Newman's final marks as a 'C' (60-69%), a solid, but not spectacular, pass mark.

Houghton also recalls that it was compulsory at morning prayers for each student to read a passage from the Bible. He remembers that in March 1963, Newman's choice was a passage from the New Testament, James 4, verse 10: 'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up'.<sup>251</sup> While not a trait associated with his now very public persona, Houghton implies that humility was an aspect of Newman's character in his younger years. Nevertheless, it is notable that Newman's experience at the school encapsulated two of the key tenets of the longstanding British public school tradition of Muscular Christianity: strict discipline and the celebration of sport.<sup>252</sup> And it was the sport of Australian Rules football that Newman became most known for.

Newman did have special talents on the sporting fields at Geelong GS, and he shone at Australian Rules football. For example, his natural football ability was evident in the Under 14A team, with *The Corian* documenting 'On 25 July 1959, Geelong College played Geelong Grammar. Best players included Newman ...'.<sup>253</sup> It was also referred to in *Football Life* that during this period 'He [John Newman] was in the first

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<sup>251</sup> Graeme Houghton, personal communication, 23 April 2014.

<sup>252</sup> J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1981). For more on the emergence of the British pedagogical philosophy of Muscular Christianity in Australian public schools see: Martin Crotty, 'Manly and Moral: The Making of Middle-Class Men in the Australian Public School', *International Journal of the History of Sport* vol. 17, nos 2-3 (2000), pp. 10–30; and Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870–1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

<sup>253</sup> *The Corian* (August 1959), p. 152.



eighteen for three years and [a] Victorian Under 17 hurdles champion'.<sup>254</sup> In addition, the 'Football Notes' column of *The Corian*, in August 1963, comments that 'against Geelong College, the high standard of football was continued in the second quarter with Newman dominating the ruck'.<sup>255</sup> Later in that same year, the results of the 1963 School Sports appeared in *The Corian*, with 'JNW Newman' taking second place in the 440 yards event.<sup>256</sup>

Significantly, Newman followed in his father's footsteps as vice-captain of the First XVIII and was selected to play in the Associated Public Schools (APS) representative team.<sup>257</sup> Moreover, like his father, Newman was also known by his classmates as 'Nogga', and Houghton recalls that after Newman had starred in a First XVIII match for his school against another private school at Geelong GS's main oval, he congratulated him with the words, 'Great game, "Nog"'.<sup>258</sup> It was not surprising, then, that the senior coach of Geelong FC, Bob Davis, and the club secretary, Leo O'Brien, heard about this brilliant young footballer and visited Geelong GS in mid-1963 to watch Newman play. The pair witnessed Newman kick eighteen goals from

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<sup>254</sup> Jim Usher, 'A Cat Named Sam', *Football Life* (July 1970), p. 16. Other sources suggest that Newman may have also been a competent high jumper at school. See Wayne Closter, personal communication, 5 April 2015.

<sup>255</sup> *The Corian* (August 1963), p. 157.

<sup>256</sup> *The Corian* (December 1963), p. 236.

<sup>257</sup> See 'The Newman Club', <https://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/School/Sport/Sport-Support-Groups/Aus-Rules-Football---The-Newman-Club/Welcome> (accessed 20 May 2016).

<sup>258</sup> Graeme Houghton, personal communication, 23 April 2014.

centre half-forward in an APS match.<sup>259</sup> Davis approached the confident and assured Newman after the game and invited him to train at the Geelong FC, the club that Newman had followed all his life. Newman did, though, have the presence of mind to explain to Davis that he would join in training at Geelong on one condition. He requested a club training guernsey, with a number five on the back, the number worn by Farmer, Newman's favourite elite Geelong FC footballer. Davis was true to his word. He supplied Newman with the Farmer jumper.<sup>260</sup>

The request was prescient. The retired Newman observed: 'Polly's jumper is what I wanted. That guernsey was my fee for signing on at Geelong'.<sup>261</sup> However, like many episodes in Newman's life it should be signposted that there are often alternate versions of what transpired and sometimes what was said. For example, Doug Aiton, a well-known journalist and Geelong FC supporter, takes a more simplistic approach with incorrect details to Newman's transition from schoolboy football champion to Geelong FC player and his mistaken year for Newman's nickname. He writes: 'It was from those playing fields in 1962 that Geelong coach, Bob Davis, plucked the young John Newman, put him in blue and white hoops and called him Sam'.<sup>262</sup> Aiton is in error in nominating the year that John Newman, still a schoolboy, played four reserves games at Geelong FC. In this case, it was 1963, not 1962, when Davis first

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<sup>259</sup> Davis, cited in ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam', *Australian Story*, ABC1 Television, 6 July 2000.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Newman, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park: Celebrating 150 Years*, DVD (Richmond South: Visual Entertainment Group, 2009).

<sup>262</sup> Doug Aiton, 'Conversations: The Footy Showman', *Sunday Age*, 1 March 1998, p. 3.

approached Newman, whose senior career began in 1964. Moreover, Aiton seems unaware of the fact that Newman was always known either as ‘Sammy’ or ‘Big Sammy’. The shorter nickname ‘Sam’ resulted from Newman entering the media from 1981. Aiton’s errors testify to the importance of triangulating sources. However, they also indicate that the question of who Newman was to be known as – John, ‘Sammy’, or ‘Sam’ – was already an issue at his school. And later on, as he began his media career, Newman would use this to craft a particular persona for himself, as the second half of this thesis will demonstrate.

### **5.5 Newman’s Four Reserves Games at Geelong FC**

Newman was still a boarder at Geelong GS when he was selected to play four matches with the Geelong FC Reserves team in August 1963. Newman was required to secure from his headmaster a dispensation from the school that he later (in 2013) termed an ‘exceut’, the Latin subjunctive for ‘may he be released or may he leave’.<sup>263</sup> Reporting on this episode, the *Geelong Advertiser* pointed out that: ‘Geelong selectors lost no time in including Geelong GS ruckman, John Newman, in the Reserve Grade team after only one night at training’.<sup>264</sup> The local newspaper also reported on 31 August 1963 that ‘Geelong Grammar School ruckman, John Newman, who played his first match with Geelong Reserve Grade team on Saturday will play strictly as an

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<sup>263</sup> ‘Sam’ Newman, interviewed by Garry Lyon and Bill Brownless, *The Sunday Footy Show*, 23 June 2013. Newman is accurate with the Latin third person singular subjunctive. It is from the intransitive verb *excedo, excedere, excessi, excessum* – to go out or away. See *The Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 51.

<sup>264</sup> Play-On, ‘Geelong Makes No Panic Moves in To-Morrow’s Team’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 30 August 1963, p. 23.

amateur. This was endorsed on Saturday by club officials who said that Newman played solely on that condition'.<sup>265</sup> When interviewed, former Geelong FC Senior and Reserves player, Eric Nicholls, remembered: 'John Newman's first Reserves game was against Carlton at Kardinia Park. Still a schoolboy, John was not outstanding, but was a contributor'.<sup>266</sup> Newman himself recalled that 'I played the last four Geelong Football Club Reserves or Seconds games of 1963'.<sup>267</sup>

Several memories of informants describe the circumstances of Newman's debut games for the club.<sup>268</sup> Brian Brushfield, who played 15 senior games with the Geelong FC from 1962 to 1965, also played Reserves football.<sup>269</sup> He believes the selection for the 1963 Reserves Grand Final was controversial. The schoolboy Newman, playing his fourth game as a ruckman, 'was preferred over Brian Wilkinson who had been the Reserves ruckman the entire 1963 season'. However, he maintains that the selection of Newman was vindicated 'as he kicked two goals at critical times

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<sup>265</sup> Hutchinson, *Cats' Tales*, p. 83.

<sup>266</sup> Eric Nicholls, personal communication, 28 April 2015. Nicholls played 58 senior games between 1956 and 1963. See Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 656. In his Reserves games, Newman wore the Geelong FC number 39 jumper. Newman was a fan of motor racing, and perhaps coincidentally his jumper number matched the registered number of all US NASCAR racing cars of driver Ryan Newman.

<sup>267</sup> 'Sam' Newman, interviewed by Garry Lyon and Bill Brownless, *The Sunday Footy Show*, 23 June 2013.

<sup>268</sup> See, for example, Eric Nicholls, personal communication, 28 April 2015), and Play-On, 'Reserve Grade: Geelong Wins 15<sup>th</sup> Game in Succession', *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 September 1963, p. 32.

<sup>269</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 107.

in the Grand Final against St Kilda'.<sup>270</sup> Football journalist, Ben Collins, confirms Brushfield's recollection. One of Newman's four Reserves games was the 1963 Reserves Grand Final when Geelong defeated St Kilda by 37 points. As Collins indicates 'Newman 'slotted two goals as a ruck-rover'.<sup>271</sup> Newman's Reserves Grand Final teammate, Wayne Closter, vividly recalled the game when interviewed by David Rhys-Jones in the football weekly *Inside Football*:

Rhys-Jones: And in 1963, you played all year in the Geelong reserves and were part of a flag side on the same day that the seniors won a premiership. It must have been a big celebration in Geelong that night.

Closter: It was great. We came back in two buses from Melbourne and there were 10,000 or 20,000 people there. Both reserves and senior sides were presented to the crowd [at the Geelong City Hall].

Rhys-Jones: And 'Sam' Newman would have been in that [Reserves] premiership.

Closter: Sam was in the side, yes, Billy Ryan was another.<sup>272</sup>

Eric Nicholls also pointed out that the Reserves and Seniors Premiership sides came back to Geelong on two buses. He says that the 'huge and jubilant crowd made it impossible to reach the City Hall balcony for the official presentation to the supporters so the police created a path for us to get to the City Hall'.<sup>273</sup> While

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<sup>270</sup> Brian Brushfield, personal communication, 28 April 2015.

<sup>271</sup> Ben Collins, 'The Boy from the Grammar', *Football Record*, 4-6 April 2014, p. 18.

<sup>272</sup> David Rhys-Jones, 'Complete Cat', *Inside Football*, vol. 41, no. 11, 20 April 2011, pp. 28-29.

<sup>273</sup> Eric Nicholls, personal communication, 28 April 2015.

premierships are usually celebrated with gusto by all successful teams and their supporters, the welcome afforded the players on this occasion is reflective of a deep link between the Geelong FC and its community, a connection that is especially evident in a regional city where there is only one VFL team.

As an aside, Brushfield also reflected on the fact that the 1963 Reserves premiership for Geelong was to be the only winning grand final that Newman would ever play in during his long football career.<sup>274</sup> However, it is instructive to the oral history process that Newman's involvement in the 1963 Reserves premiership has been queried by some. For example, Geelong FC centre half-forward, Bill Ryan, was also interviewed by Rhys-Jones and was asked the following:

Rhys-Jones: In 1962, you played in Geelong's Under 19 premiership side, then in 1963 played in the reserves premiership.

Ryan: That's right, in 1963 both the thirds and firsts won. There weren't that many blokes from that side who went on and played firsts.

Rhys-Jones: Did Sam Newman play in that [1963] reserves [premiership] side?

Ryan: No, he was there the following year. Sammy and I were pretty good mates in those days.<sup>275</sup>

While Ryan is accurate in some details, he is in error on others, given that the Reserves and Seniors won the Grand Final on the same day. In fact, Hutchinson

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<sup>274</sup> Brian Brushfield, personal communication, 28 April 2015.

<sup>275</sup> David Rhys-Jones, 'Bill of Flights', *Inside Football*, vol. 45, no. 33, 24-30 September 2015, p. 30.

records that both Ryan and Newman were teammates in the 1963 Reserves premiership team.<sup>276</sup> The recollections of Newman himself about the event are sparse, but he does later recall (on 23 June 2013) that: ‘I drank a few ports in the bus after the [Reserves Grand Final] game and got back to school pretty shicker. There was a school dance on that night so I got into deep trouble at the time’.<sup>277</sup> The following year, Newman was elevated to the senior list of the Geelong FC.

## 5.6 Conclusions

This chapter covered some of the initial narrative of Newman’s early life. The circumstances of Newman’s immediate family members, especially his father, were assessed. Newman’s schooling was strict, and he suffered from some of the discipline, however he also benefitted from the focus that public schools like Geelong GS have on sport. More specifically, this chapter explicitly examined Newman’s career as a talented schoolboy footballer, a time when he was invited to play four Reserves games with the Geelong FC in 1963. In short, he exhibited outstanding ability as a footballer despite spending all of 1960 in isolation at Timbertop, far removed from the football fields in which he proved his worth.

The next chapter assesses in detail the life of Graham Farmer, a Perth-born Indigenous ruckman, acknowledged in many sources as the greatest ruckman in the history of Australian Rules football. Farmer joined the Geelong FC in 1962. He had

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<sup>276</sup> Hutchinson, *Cats’ Tales*, pp. 323-325. This observation again testifies to the importance of triangulation.

<sup>277</sup> ‘Sam’ Newman, interviewed by Garry Lyon and Bill Brownless, *The Sunday Footy Show*, 23 June 2013.

invented the long handpass as an attacking device. He also developed an early jump to unsettle his direct opponent. Farmer was introspective, but as a young ruckman, Newman watched Farmer and sought to emulate him in many ways.



## Chapter Six

### Newman's Relationship with Graham Farmer, 1962-1967

A true champion can adapt to anything.

Floyd Mayweather<sup>278</sup>

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses key aspects in the life of Graham Farmer, whose elite football career with WA club East Perth allowed him to excel after spending his first sixteen years in an orphanage for Indigenous children. Also addressed is how, in 1962, the Geelong FC recruited Farmer, who had originated a series of innovative techniques as a ruckman and was soon to be acknowledged as a champion of the game. It was Farmer who became a role model for the young John Newman, the subject of this thesis, and it is vital to examine football Farmer's career, because Newman endeavoured to replicate Farmer in all that he did on the football field.

Graham Vivian Farmer was born in Perth on 10 March 1935. He is an Indigenous person who 'calls himself a quarter caste'.<sup>279</sup> Farmer's mother, Eva, was a single parent who had struggled following the economic Great Depression of the 1930s. Hawke notes that 'It is easy to imagine a young single Aboriginal mother in

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<sup>278</sup> See 'Brainy Quote',

<https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/f/floydmaywe430455.html> (accessed 18 May 2017).

<sup>279</sup> Graham Duncan, 'Polly Farmer – Still Giving It All to the Game', *Age*, 9 September 1994, p. 13.

Depression-wracked Perth falling on desperate times'.<sup>280</sup> She gave her only child, Graham, aged 21 months, to an orphanage run by an elderly but caring Anglican nun, Sister Katherine Clutterbuck. 'Sister Kate' (as she was known) and her staff gave to the half caste and quarter caste Aboriginal boys and girls in her care starts in life. Through the ensuing years, Farmer grew tall and slender. In Hawke's words, 'He had just turned 14 ... but in the 1949 [football] season they [Farmer and Ted Kilmurray] played in their first adult competition with Kenwick in the South Suburban B Grade. Farmer was tall for his age and very lightly built'.<sup>281</sup> After displaying his ability as a footballer in WA rural leagues, Farmer joined the West Australian Football League (WAFL) club East Perth and soon became a premiership player who also won two Sandover medals as the Best and Fairest player in the WAFL competition. In addition, Farmer, representing WA, won the 1956 Tassie Medal for the best player at the national carnival. Not surprisingly, VFL teams competed to sign Farmer. Now retired from elite football, Newman maintains that Farmer is the greatest ever Geelong FC player who, despite his achievements, tallied just 101 games in the VFL from 1962 to 1967.<sup>282</sup> This chapter explores the influence of Farmer on the Geelong FC, and, by extension, his impact on the career of the young ruckman, John Newman.

## 6.2 Farmer's Early Life

Farmer had a difficult childhood, boyhood and teenage life. His mother, Eva, a single parent, could not afford to keep the child. In 2012, Perth journalist, Peter Sweeney, recorded that Farmer 'wasn't even two years old when he and his siblings were taken

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<sup>280</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 21.

<sup>281</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 30.

<sup>282</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 267.

to Sister Kate's in Queen's Park'.<sup>283</sup> However, there is no other reference in any of the literature to Farmer's siblings.<sup>284</sup> Farmer explained to a scholar of Indigenous sport, Sean Gorman, that he was born without a father: 'I knew my mother because she used to come out to the home to see us'.<sup>285</sup> Farmer's application of the word 'us' perhaps defines his democratic posture to the entire group of boys and girls at the 'orphanage', rather than the notion that he had siblings. Sister Kate moved the children far south to Greenbushes because during World War II, the original home at Queen's Park was 'close to a munitions factory and the risk to the children was deemed too great'.<sup>286</sup>

Sister Kate belonged to the Sisters of the Church, an Anglican order devoted to the education and care of children who, with her popular assistants, ran a large and caring home for Indigenous children including half-castes and quarter-castes. According to

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<sup>283</sup> Peter Sweeney, 'Mates Keep On Kicking Around', *Sunday Times* (Perth), 25 March 2012, p. 7.

<sup>284</sup> It is possible that information for Sweeney's article for the *Sunday Times* was drawn from, or was the basis for, an online article 'Graham Farmer', [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graham\\_Farmer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graham_Farmer) (accessed 18 May 2017). Sweeney's item includes the incorrect assertion that 'Farmer was 21 months old [when he] was taken to Sister Kate's church home in Queen's Park with his other siblings'. The statement is certainly incorrect as in response to a query a Farmer family member emailed this researcher on 12 May 2015 with the message: 'Dad [Graham Farmer] definitely no siblings'.

<sup>285</sup> Sean Gorman, *Legends: The AFL Indigenous Team of the Century* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011), p. 18.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

Duncan, Farmer ‘calls himself a quarter caste [Indigenous person]’.<sup>287</sup> Hawke observes that Sister Kate was ‘well beyond retirement age’ but ‘could not walk away from a lifetime’s mission of work with poor and abandoned children. They brought 22 English orphans with them’.<sup>288</sup> Farmer showed an immediate aptitude for Australian Rules football, despite the fact that he grew up ‘up with his left leg shorter than his right because of poliomyelitis’.<sup>289</sup> Hawke also offers an opinion on Farmer’s legs without any supporting evidence. He suggests that, like other boys and girls at the Sister Kate’s Children’s Home, Farmer spent most of his schooldays in bare feet, and indicates that Farmer can recall walking barefoot in the snow. The Home relied on donations and cast-offs to clothe the children and shoes were a rare commodity.<sup>290</sup> However, at one stage Farmer did manage to get a left shoe without its right partner. As he related to Hawke ‘Because I’m a left-footer and I wanted to kick the footy with a shoe on’.<sup>291</sup> Hawke explains that Farmer believes that ‘because he got around in one shoe, perhaps at the time of one of the rapid growth spurts that saw him shooting

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<sup>287</sup> Duncan, ‘Polly Farmer’, p. 13. This quotation points to the complicated aspects of Australian Indigenous identity. For more on this, see Sarah Maddison, ‘Indigenous Identity, “Authenticity” and the Structural Violence of Settler Colonialism’, *Identities*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2013), pp. 288-303.

<sup>288</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 18.

<sup>289</sup> Sweeney, ‘Mates Keep On Kicking Around’, p. 7.

<sup>290</sup> On the struggles faced by many of Australia’s Indigenous athletes, see Colin Tatz, *Obstacle Race: Aborigines in Sport* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1995).

<sup>291</sup> Farmer cited in Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 17.

up above his contemporaries, his right leg may have outgrown the left to balance things up'.<sup>292</sup>

Before Hawke's comprehensive biography was published, a number of sources continued to make incorrect assertions about Farmer's life. For example, in 1976 Usher incorporated two incorrect claims about Farmer in *Football Life*. The first, was that Farmer was an orphan.<sup>293</sup> However, Hawke counters this claim by reflecting that his mother, Eva, visited her son at Sister Kate's. As Hawke recounts, Farmer 'can dimly remember a couple of visits from his mother during his early years at Queens Park. She supplied a beautifully worked set of clothes for him'.<sup>294</sup> Second, *Football Life* suggests that Farmer was brought up at Sister Kate's farm.<sup>295</sup> It was not strictly a farm, but rather a home for half caste and quarter caste Indigenous boys and girls in Perth WA's inner north suburb, Queen's Park, 12 kilometres north from Perth, then from 1941 it was located at Greenbushes, 212 kilometres south from the city of Perth. However, some senior boys were later directed to farm labouring and senior girls to work in a domestic environment. The *Football Life* item recounts Farmer's memory that 'there were 20 boys and they lived like a very large family. It was a happy childhood'.<sup>296</sup> In later life, Farmer fondly remembered Sister Kate's and he credited the elderly nun for giving him 'a good religious upbringing, teaching us right from

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid, pp. 17-18. A number of other sources also verify that Farmer's left leg was shorter than the right.

<sup>293</sup> Usher, 'The Cat Approach', p. 23.

<sup>294</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 23.

<sup>295</sup> Usher, 'The Cat Approach', p. 23.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

wrong. I owe her and her dedicated workers everything. They gave me the chance to make something of myself'.<sup>297</sup>

At the age of 60, Farmer expanded on his childhood and early teenage years at Sister Kate's. According to Duncan, Farmer expressed the view that 'The rule is being a good person. I know the 10 Commandments'.<sup>298</sup> Duncan also included that 'He [Farmer] still does not know the name of his father and has only vague memories of his mother'.<sup>299</sup>

Farmer and John Watts (later his team mate in East Perth and at Geelong FC) met at Maylands Primary School,<sup>300</sup> and, according to Sweeney, they were both students of 'the old Forrest High School in Mt Lawley'.<sup>301</sup> As a six year old, Farmer had earned the nickname 'Polly' 'when people said he chattered like a parrot'.<sup>302</sup> Farmer himself recalled: 'During the war, the home moved and I went to Forrest High School which was a couple of hours away by bus'.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Farmer, cited in Sweeney, 'Mates Keep On Kicking Around', p. 7.

<sup>298</sup> Farmer, cited in Duncan, 'Polly Farmer', p. 13.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Watts, 'The Know All Who Became a Legend'.

<sup>301</sup> Peter Sweeney, 'My Beautiful Man in His Bravest Fight', *Sunday Times*, 25 March 2012, pp. 6-7.

<sup>302</sup> Sweeney, 'Mates Keep On Kicking Around', p. 7.

<sup>303</sup> Aaron Patrick, 'Whatever Happened to Graham "Polly" Farmer', *Herald Sun Footy Formbook*, 10 July 1993, p. 53.

As a rail-thin teenager, Farmer played country football. He was persuaded to join East Perth with two of Sister Kate's contemporaries, Ted 'Square' Kilmurray and Jack Hunt, together with Farmer's old white friend Watts. The brilliant but volatile individual, Jack Sheedy, coached the East Perth Royals. Sheedy taught his players to use handball as an attacking stratagem rather than as a defensive manoeuvre. Farmer stated that he 'lived my first 14 years at Sister Kate's orphanage',<sup>304</sup> but at age 15, Farmer began an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic at Winterbottom's, a General Motors agency, close to the Perth CBD. Sweeney indicated that Farmer developed the accuracy of his handball by handballing 'through car windows at the car yard where he worked'.<sup>305</sup> Farmer later admitted that of his apprenticeship 'I didn't like it but it kept me out of trouble when boys can go a bit wild'.<sup>306</sup> Another activity that Farmer disliked was the three months of compulsory national service with the army. In early 1954, at the age of 18, he lived at Swanbourne Barracks. However, the only skill he valued, according to Hawke, 'was a truck-driver's licence'.<sup>307</sup>

### **6.3 Farmer's Football Career in Perth**

Farmer is acknowledged as a champion of the game. He has had a biography written about his life and football career in Perth before competing in Victoria. Farmer was also inducted as a legend in football's Hall of Fame in 1996.<sup>308</sup> This Hall of Fame entry also includes the statement that Farmer 'Became a rucking giant after crossing

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Sweeney, 'My Beautiful Man in His Bravest Fight', p. 6.

<sup>306</sup> Patrick, 'Whatever Happened to Graham "Polly" Farmer', p. 53.

<sup>307</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 51.

<sup>308</sup> Michael Lovett (ed.), *AFL Record Season Guide 2016* (Docklands: AFL Media, 2016).

from Western Australia. His tap-outs were attacking and his handball revolutionised the game'.<sup>309</sup>

An influential and wealthy supporter, George Sweetapple, vice president of the East Perth FC, encouraged Sister Kate's orphanage players Farmer, Kilmurray and Hunt, along with Watts who was at primary and secondary school with Farmer, to join his club.<sup>310</sup> As East Perth's main ruckman, Farmer, according to Hawke, 'developed the technique that allowed him to dominate and frustrate opponents'.<sup>311</sup> Hawke argues 'If there was one hallmark of the East Perth team it was handball. The players used it more, and more effectively than any other team in Australia'.<sup>312</sup> Under Sheedy, East Perth won WAFL premierships in 1956, 1958 and 1959. Farmer won three Sandover medals in 1956, 1957 and 1960 for the Best and Fairest player in the WAFL. Farmer also won the 1956 Tassie medal representing West Australia. The Tassie medal is 'awarded to the most outstanding player at each Australian Football Interstate Carnival or Australian Championship series held between 1937 and 1988 ... The medal is named after Eric Tassie who was a South Australian football administrator'.<sup>313</sup> Hawke states that 'Farmer's awards were complete'. However, in Hawke's words, 'another award was emotional':

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid., p. 643.

<sup>310</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer*, p. 28.

<sup>311</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 74.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>313</sup> Lovett (ed.), *AFL Record Season Guide 2016*, p. 619.



... on his [Farmer's] arm] was his first regular girlfriend, a young Tasmanian by the name of Marlene Gray. Marlene had come to Perth on a working holiday in June ... She and Farmer met at one of the regular Canterbury Court dance nights not long afterwards. They enjoyed each other's company ... and the romance blossomed. In every way 1956 was a magical year for Farmer ... The perfect seal came on Christmas Eve when he and Marlene announced their engagement.<sup>314</sup>

#### 6.4 The Quest for Farmer

During 1961, Geelong FC's senior coach, Bob Davis, informed the general committee (under the chairmanship of president A.R. 'Jack' Jennings) that for Geelong to win a grand final, the club required a champion ruckman. With Davis's predilection and talent for hyperbole, he explained that Perth-born Indigenous 'Graham "Polly" Farmer was the best ruckman in Australia and the best ruckman in the world'.<sup>315</sup> In his home state, Farmer had perfected original ruck play. For example, at centre bounces, he would stand on the same side as his opponent, jump early, bump his opposing ruckman out of the play, and then aim a long left-hand handpass to a teammate in the clear and heading towards goal. As Hawke writes, Davis, 'was telling anyone who would listen that with Farmer in the side [the Geelong FC senior team] they would win the premiership'.<sup>316</sup> Davis reinforced his high opinion of Farmer and his own confidence as a senior coach when he explained: 'Farmer would be in a team that was being revitalised'.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>315</sup> Davis, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

<sup>316</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 158.

<sup>317</sup> Davis, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

Farmer considered himself ready to compete in Victoria, and his wife, Marlene, a Tasmanian by birth, acknowledged that Melbourne was closer to her relatives in the island state, so there were reasons to make the move to another state. The problem for Davis and O'Brien was enticing Farmer to the Geelong FC, rather than having another Victorian club secure his services. In Perth, Davis and O'Brien were both present when Farmer remarked: 'I want to be with a [Victorian] club that's not in the four but is on the way up'.<sup>318</sup> East Perth FC chairman, Fred Book, explained that his club would clear Farmer contingent upon East Perth receiving £2,000. According to journalist Jon Anderson, 'Eventually, Geelong FC chairman of selectors, Tom Morrow, secured a cheque for £1,500 from wealthy Geelong dairies owner, Frank Moore, and East Perth accepted it'.<sup>319</sup> Former Geelong FC president, Frank Costa, remembered how 'Graham Farmer cost the Geelong Football Club £2000 (\$4000), that was a lot of money in those days, but we recouped the lot when Cats members and supporters paid to watch Graham's incredible and innovative football in a couple of practice matches'.<sup>320</sup> In Farmer's biography, Hawke claims that Farmer 'was on a £1,000 a year – the same as coach Davis – free rental on his accommodation, plus the standard match payments'. He also adds that Farmer started a job selling Holdens [cars]'.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Farmer, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

<sup>319</sup> Jon Anderson, 'How Bob Davis Turned Farmer into an Aboriginal Pioneer', *Herald Sun*, 6 May 2006, p. 38.

<sup>320</sup> Frank Costa, personal communication, 27 March 2015.

<sup>321</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 166.

As for football, Farmer received a rapturous and thunderous welcome at Geelong in February 1962. He was an experienced and lustrous ruckman. In Victoria, Farmer gave his age as 27, although Newman indicated: ‘I don’t know how old “Polly” was when he arrived, when he played [at the Geelong FC] and what age he is now, but my guess is he was over 30 [years old] when he arrived in Geelong’.<sup>322</sup> Though Farmer was 191 centimetres tall and weighing 94 kilograms,<sup>323</sup> Hutchinson, Geelong FC club historian, suggested that ‘Polly always played much taller and bigger than he was’.<sup>324</sup>

Farmer was the centre of attention in Melbourne when he arrived during February 1962. For example, a feature on Farmer was published in the *Herald Privilege Football Book*, a 1962 pre-season publication published by the *Herald*. This booklet contained images in colour (an expensive process at the time), as well as black and white photographs.<sup>325</sup> Revealing his insights on the game, the feature on Farmer began with a quotation: ‘The handpass is the most energy efficient movement in

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<sup>322</sup> Newman, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*. It is not unknown for a League footballer to pretend he is younger, perhaps to extract from his elite club a longer, more lucrative contract. As a later example, Collingwood FC’s Denis Banks knowingly reduced his real age at Collingwood in the 1980s for fresh contract purposes. Banks himself notes of his deliberately reduced age: ‘That was being inventive when VFL clubs decided by age 30 you were too old, so I wound my birth date back two years ... Twenty nine sounds a lot better than 31. I got to 32’. Cited in Jon Anderson, ‘Blast from the Past – Denis Banks’, *Sunday Herald Sun*, 29 May 2016, p. 59.

<sup>323</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 267.

<sup>324</sup> Col Hutchinson, personal communication on the tour of the ‘Captains’ Room’ in the Charles Brownlow Stand at Kardinia Park, 10 May 2012.

<sup>325</sup> The *Herald Privilege Football Book* cost an expensive five shillings.

football'.<sup>326</sup> Farmer, smiling while adjusting his bootlaces in a colour photograph, also advised: 'never overlook any detail, however small'.<sup>327</sup> The booklet shows a black and white photograph of Farmer in a sleeved Geelong jumper handpassing to a muscular man wearing a number twelve Victoria state jumper shown from the back. The handball recipient is Farmer's senior coach, Bob Davis, then 33 years old.<sup>328</sup> Huge crowds paid to watch Farmer's practice match form and spectators cheered Farmer's every possession. Wearing the number five Geelong jumper, he shot out long handpasses to teammates running towards goal. Geelong's lead rover, Bill Goggin, quickly understood the Farmer technique of firing out a handpass to a Geelong player. Davis recalled: 'Polly would be on the way down when his opponent was on the way up'.<sup>329</sup>

Newman, at this point merely a young aspiring schoolboy ruckman, would later describe Farmer as 'an eternal legacy'.<sup>330</sup> He would copy Farmer's early jump and contested marking, and also provide important and scoring power as both a ruckman and a forward. After his retirement, Newman produced a fond reminiscence of first watching Farmer in action. This memoir was positioned in Newman's 'Foreword' to Hawke's biography of Farmer, revised and re-published in 2014. Here, Newman underlines his great respect for Farmer and his love of Newman's own father.

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<sup>326</sup> John Craven, 'Polly Farmer, the New Big Cat', in John Craven (ed.), *Herald Privilege Football Book* (Melbourne: Herald Gravure Press, 1962), p. 3.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> Craven, 'Polly Farmer, the New Big Cat', p. 5.

<sup>329</sup> Davis, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

<sup>330</sup> John Newman, 'Foreword', in Steve Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated* (Richmond: Slattery Media Group, 2014), p. 15.

Newman, aged 70, is uncharacteristically honest and candid with his vivid memory as a sixteen year old schoolboy footballer:

He [Farmer] was competitive beyond the call: he was sophisticated at a time when most of us were hillbillies, and, most importantly, he is the only player to have changed the game. Polly could see opportunities in space where others could only see conflict in close. His use of handball as an offensive weapon, in a time when it was used as a last resort, was years ahead of the pack. He was a conundrum as well. He was selfish, yet selfless. Selfish, in that nobody could handle a moment better than he could, nobody could battle an opponent better than him, and nobody could get the ball better than him, and then provide it to the best purpose for the team ... He knew what he could do, and he did it, week in, week out.<sup>331</sup>

Newman continues his Foreword:

I was with my late father, and we'd come from the Barwon River at the end of the end of the Head of the River, a lively little public [private] school for [rowing racing] boats. It was early in 1962, and we strolled from the river to Kardinia Park to watch Geelong in an intra-club match. The hype about Farmer was already huge – he had reached legend status in Perth and Geelong coach Bob Davis and secretary Leo O'Brien pulled off something of a coup to drag him across the Nullarbor.<sup>332</sup>

During 2014, Newman recalls with almost poetic imagery befitting his initial reaction to Farmer:

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<sup>331</sup> Newman, 'Foreword', pp. 13-14.

<sup>332</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 14.

We had gone to see if the hype matched the reality. I remember saying to my father as we took our places in the outer; ‘Now, which one is Farmer?’. At that moment, there was a boundary throw-in and this great arm reached to the sky, grabbed the ball, and, in the blink of an eye, the ruckman had done something I’d never seen before: he swivelled, and, in the same action, handballed ahead of the play to a running teammate. I turned to my father and said: ‘That’s him, that’s Farmer’. Little did I know what influence he [Farmer] would have on me, and my career: not via words, but by actions. Fortunately for me, we have indelible images of him in action. It’s an exhilarating view, as bright in my mind as the first day I saw him more than fifty years ago.<sup>333</sup>

Newman’s interpretation of Farmer is reserved for his all-time favourite elite footballer. Newman speaks often in person and in the press about Farmer’s genius as a player. The retired Newman also observes: ‘I learned everything about football from Farmer. Physically and mentally and even spiritually, the most important of all, Farmer had the game under control’.<sup>334</sup> Newman’s former Geelong FC teammate, Wayne Closter, remarked that ‘Newman watched how Farmer played and probably also watched “Polly” on television replays. Newman had that Farmer look about him. He used his body like Farmer. But Newman, as a young ruckman, had a big leap because he was a high jumper at school’.<sup>335</sup> It is patently clear that Farmer exerted a profound influence on Newman and his football career.

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<sup>333</sup> Newman, ‘Foreword’, pp. 14-15.

<sup>334</sup> Newman, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

<sup>335</sup> Wayne Closter, personal communication, 5 April 2015.

### 6.5 Farmer's First Game for the Geelong FC

Geelong FC's first match for premiership points in 1962 occurred in front of a 'sell-out crowd of an estimated thirty-seven thousand [spectators] at Princes Park'.<sup>336</sup> Spectators watching the match had the opportunity of seeing Farmer in action. As Hawke describes it, at a boundary throw-in there was 'a tangle of bodies that crashed to the ground, with Farmer beneath [Graham] Donaldson and [Maurie] Sankey'.<sup>337</sup> Farmer regained his balance but was limping with an obvious knee injury that would trouble him for the remainder of his time at Geelong.

Former Collingwood FC rover, the late Lou Richards played 250 games from 1941 to 1955. He captained Collingwood's premiership team of 1953.<sup>338</sup> In retirement as an elite footballer, Richards released his memoirs in a book entitled *Boots and All!*, published in 1963. Richards, the proud Victorian, admired Farmer, a West Australian, and noted the following:

Don't get the mistaken idea that Western Australia and South Australia don't produce good footballers, they do, but they don't produce enough good players at the one time to become a threat to Victoria. Take the case of 6 ft 4 in follower Graham 'Polly' Farmer. Although he broke down with a knee injury in his brief appearance with Geelong [FC] in 1962, he showed he'd be a

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<sup>336</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer*, p. 162.

<sup>337</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer*, pp. 162-163. Gorman is in error when he referred to Carlton's rucking duo for this game as 'Graham Donaldson and John Nicholls'. See Gorman, *Legends*, p. 21. Nicholls did not play in Farmer's first game. Hawke indicates that 'Nicholls was 'ruled out of the game at the last minute with an ankle injury'. See Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 169.

<sup>338</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 743.

champion in any company. In fact, he would be one of the best ruckmen that has ever donned a boot as far as Victorians are concerned. The way this fellow palms the ball, hand-passes to his rovers and picks out a rover or a team-mate with his passes is something to see. And if at the age of twenty-seven a player can come to Victoria and be a star he must be good.<sup>339</sup>

Farmer had an original approach to centre bounces, unknown in Victorian elite football. According to Hutchinson, who reflected on Farmer's career in 2012:

He would stand alongside his opposing ruckman, jump early and bump his opponent out of the contest and produce a long handpass to a teammate in the clear. VFL administrators changed the rules to stop Farmer. Ruckmen now had to face each other at centre bounces.<sup>340</sup>

Farmer's great rival in the ruck was Carlton's John Nicholls.<sup>341</sup> Nicholls knew that Farmer had injured his left knee five minutes into his first game against Carlton at Princes Park. He stated: 'Five games later against North Melbourne, his left knee gave up on him and Geelong's glamour recruit was out of action'.<sup>342</sup> Farmer himself remembered in his first season: 'I dislocated my knee in the first few minutes against Carlton. I played six games [in his inaugural season with Geelong FC] and was

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<sup>339</sup> Lou Richards and Ian McDonald, *Boots and All!* (London: Stanley Paul, 1963), p. 197.

<sup>340</sup> Col Hutchinson, personal communication on the tour of the 'Captains' Room' in the Charles Brownlow Stand at Kardinia Park, 10 May 2012.

<sup>341</sup> Nicholls played 328 games between 1957 and 1974. See Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 743.

<sup>342</sup> John Nicholls, with Ian McDonald, *Big Nick* (Hawthorn: Garry Sparke and Associates, 1977), p. 48.



carried off three times. If I had known about cartilages, I probably would have lost a month'.<sup>343</sup> In retirement, Newman himself would observe that Farmer 'got a knee injury in his first or second game at Geelong. He played a season with a severe knee injury. He had surgery to remove a cartilage in his knee'.<sup>344</sup> Usher, writing in *Football Life*, noted that 'only one day after the operation, he [Farmer] was sitting up in a bed with a football handballing into an armchair and a waste paper basket. One month later, he was getting about on crutches, one month later, he was walking freely'.<sup>345</sup> In retirement, Newman recalled his great respect for Farmer's ability to overcome serious injury: 'In his first or second game for Geelong, he damaged a knee cartilage and by modern standards, it was a botched operation. He played in agony. His knee would blow up like a balloon after training and after games. He'd receive treatment during the week. How "Polly" played at all was a testament to his courage'.<sup>346</sup> However, according to Sweeney, Farmer was a 'gymholic' and he believed that 'pumping weights was the best way of becoming bigger and stronger'.<sup>347</sup> Farmer's regular training in the weight room also influenced Newman who used a consistent weights program throughout his football career. Farmer, with upper body and leg training, was years ahead of his time. Nicholls, the great rival of Farmer,

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<sup>343</sup> Patrick, 'Whatever Happened to Graham "Polly" Farmer', p. 53. Gorman wrongly advances that in the opening five minutes of the Carlton match 'Farmer injured 'the anterior cruciate ligament on his left knee'. See Gorman, *Legends*, p. 21. Sources indicate that Farmer damaged a cartilage.

<sup>344</sup> Newman, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

<sup>345</sup> Jim Usher, 'Polly the Great', *Football Life* (August 1970), p. 10.

<sup>346</sup> Newman, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

<sup>347</sup> Sweeney, 'Mates Keep on Kicking Around', p. 7.

observed that Farmer was ‘a fitness fanatic. He worked in the gym daily’.<sup>348</sup> Other VFL coaches of the time, perhaps aware of Farmer’s strength, may have insisted that his players, after football training, complete regular and demanding weights sessions under the guidance of a dedicated instructor. Modern professional footballers incorporate compulsory weight training during the football season, so Farmer, and later Newman, were perhaps pioneers of gym work. A former teammate of Newman’s remembered ‘Sam’s regular weight training in the early 1970s. He would do push-ups with [Geelong FC rover] Bill Goggin on his back’<sup>349</sup>

Farmer recovered, to some extent, from his knee injury. His old East Perth FC teammate, John Watts, recalled over 40 years later: ‘When “Polly” moved to the Cats in 1962, he rang me and told me to come over in 1963. I lived with him when I went over to Victoria’<sup>350</sup>

## **6.6 Farmer’s Approach to Football at the Geelong FC**

Farmer was always a lateral thinker. This is evident in some anecdotal material drawn from a range of sources. For example, teammate Watts noted that on Monday and Wednesday training nights, ‘we would get an umpire down to Geelong and we would practice bouncelows and throw ins and he [Farmer] telling me go here, go there. We were the only three people there. “Polly” taught me how to ruck and play’<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Nicholls, with McDonald, *Big Nick*, p. 50.

<sup>349</sup> Ian Lewtas, personal communication, 20 August 2012.

<sup>350</sup> Watts, cited in Sweeney, ‘My Beautiful Man in His Bravest Fight’, p. 6.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*

As an Indigenous champion in Victoria, Farmer received racial taunts from opponents who sought to unsettle the Geelong ruckman. Watts acknowledged that ‘Polly copped a lot of racist comments in those days but it never worried him. I would be trying to whack blokes and he [Farmer] would tell me off for being sucked in and being out of position’.<sup>352</sup> Farmer implies that he never took any notice of what is now termed ‘racial vilification’ in Victoria. As Farmer himself attested, ‘It didn’t break my concentration when I was called names’.<sup>353</sup> Newman’s adoration of Farmer is notable, because later in his media career Newman behaved in a manner that many commentators decried as ‘racist’.<sup>354</sup> This aspect is discussed further when the thesis examines Newman’s media career.

Farmer had other original ideas and idiosyncrasies. Usher reports: ‘The Big Cat [Farmer], has no fads, but every match he wears a white handkerchief inside his guernsey, using it during the match as a sweatrag’.<sup>355</sup> This was 25 years before trainers, and water-boys were allowed on the field during breaks in play, such as when a goal was scored. As a master footballer, Farmer, at both centre bounces and boundary throw-ins, invented rolling the ball down his arm and turning to produce a long handpass. Hawke quotes a Geelong FC supporter who explained ‘The ball was bounced and the first thing “Polly” did was reach the giant paw up and let the ball roll

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Farmer, cited in Gorman, *Legends*, p. 20.

<sup>354</sup> Matthew Klugman and Gary Osmond, *Black and Proud: The Story of an Iconic AFL Photo* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013), p. 203.

<sup>355</sup> Usher, ‘Those Off Beat Cats’, p. 17.

down his arm and shoot out a twenty-metre handpass to a teammate'.<sup>356</sup> In contrast, North Melbourne ruckman, Noel Teasdale, recalled how 'at boundary throw-ins, Farmer would work his way to the front with great strength, roll the ball down his arm to the elbow, then punch the ball, not handpass, to a teammate steaming towards goal'.<sup>357</sup> No other player, including Newman at his peak as a ruckman, could hope to emulate this practice. Being the star ruckman he was, Farmer carried respectful nicknames such as 'The Big Cat' (also perhaps because of his cat-like reflexes) or 'The Master' (Captains' Room in the Brownlow Stand at the Geelong Football Ground). Even as a man suffering dementia now aged in his late seventies, Farmer is still known half a century later as 'The Big Cat'. As WA journalist, Peter Sweeney, observes: '... countless fans all over Australia remember "Polly"[,] "The Big Cat", as they saw him star on footy grounds wherever he went'.<sup>358</sup> After retiring from elite football, Newman acknowledged on a number of occasions that he owed his development as a footballer to Farmer. 'Polly was an introvert. He wasn't a teacher. I watched what he did at centre bounces and boundary throw-ins, how he would jump early at different angles and I tried to copy it'.<sup>359</sup> Hawke states: 'Newman adopted the early leap and grab and handpass that was the Farmer trademark'.<sup>360</sup> In this regard, former Bulldogs and Swans player (and joint 1981 Brownlow medallist), Barry Round, who played many games against Newman in the ruck, commented: 'Sam was

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<sup>356</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer*, p. 159.

<sup>357</sup> Noel Teasdale, personal communication, 14 July 2015.

<sup>358</sup> Sweeney, 'My Beautiful Man in His Bravest Fight', p. 6.

<sup>359</sup> Newman, cited in Poulter and Fine, interview with 'Sam' Newman on 1116 SEN, 23 September 2009.

<sup>360</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer*, p. 198.

about 6'3". He learned the use of the body, the early jump and creative handball from "Polly" Farmer. But Sam had a huge leap. He was also a beautiful kick of the ball'. Round also noted that Newman was not as tall as Collingwood's Peter Moore who was 6'6" and Bob Heard 6'7".<sup>361</sup>

Influential Geelong FC supporter, John Button, was an Australian Labor Party Minister of Primary Industry and the Senate Leader in the Labor governments of Bob Hawke. Button, a regular contributor of articles and reviews for magazines and newspapers, wrote about Hawke's biography of Farmer, recording that the author, a life-long Geelong FC barracker, is the son of the former Prime Minister.<sup>362</sup> Button's contribution includes personal reminiscences of Farmer, the Geelong FC champion, with reference to Hawke's biography. He recalls that Farmer was able '... to turn the progress of a match with his own touch of inspiration and leadership ... He [Farmer] set new and different standards of excellence and technique and became a football legend'. Button also adds that 'of almost any other player, he is remembered for his "intellectual" contribution to football, and the creative way in which he enhanced the skills contents of the game'.<sup>363</sup> While Button notes that Hawke's biography is 'well researched and well written in a classical biographical manner, it is a pity that this biography doesn't examine the extent to which Farmer's career influenced the commitment and ambition of a generation of top Aboriginal footballers who have

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<sup>361</sup> Barry Round, personal communication, 11 June 2015.

<sup>362</sup> Button's review appears, rather surprisingly, in a Catholic journal. See John Button, 'Remembering the Magic: Books', *Eureka Street*, vol. 4, no. 7 (September 1994), pp. 42-43.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

come after him [Farmer]’.<sup>364</sup> Despite Button articulating the one weakness of Hawke’s life story of Farmer, the reviewer finishes with a flourish: ‘Steve Hawke’s book is about the magic and integrity that an individual can bring to the saga of football’.<sup>365</sup>

While Farmer was known as the ‘Master’, Newman could be termed his ‘Student’. The retired Newman employed every opportunity to voice his admiration, almost bordering on adulation, for Farmer. An example is ‘Farmer had wonderful finesse. He brought people [Geelong FC teammates] into the game’.<sup>366</sup>

Geelong FC’s Wayne Closter noted: ‘It was pretty handy being around Farmer. There was a fair chance you’d get a few kicks off Polly’.<sup>367</sup> The retired Newman observed that ‘Farmer was effective even when he was having a bad day. Everything I know I learned from Farmer’.<sup>368</sup> Many opposing ruckmen believed that stopping Farmer would result in defeat for the skilful Geelong FC team. The scrupulously fair Footscray ruckman, John Schultz, the 1960 Brownlow medallist who played 188 games (1958-1968),<sup>369</sup> explained that ‘Farmer had great physical strength. He jumped early at centre bounces and would grab the ball and distribute it so quickly. If you attempted to nullify him at centre bounces, Polly would just change angles or

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Newman, cited in Mike Sheahan, *Open Mike: Conversations from the Ground-Breaking Fox Footy Program* (Richmond: Slattery Media Group, 2013), p. 234.

<sup>367</sup> Closter, cited in Rhys-Jones, ‘Complete Cat’, p. 28.

<sup>368</sup> Newman, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

<sup>369</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 792.

direction, grab the ball and handpass long to a teammate in the clear'.<sup>370</sup> North Melbourne ruckman, Teasdale, recalls how, during 1963, North's coach Alan Killigrew, the so-called 'Hot Gospeller' and 'a great orator', advised him to 'pin Farmer's arms to prevent Farmer from getting first use of the ball at centre bounces. Pinning Farmer's arms was impossible'.<sup>371</sup> Carlton's ruckman, Nicholls, recalls, with a measure of respect, his great rivalry with Farmer. Nicholls believes that he and Farmer

... met many times and had some torrid battles. I believe that Farmer was probably the better player, but because of my knowledge of how to use my body and because I was prepared to give him a bit of a biff now and again, particularly with floating arms in the ruck. I found myself nullifying him in most games. He [Farmer] had a tremendous ability to use his body, which, in my opinion, is the major art of ruckwork - you must use your body to get your hip and shoulders in front of the opposition ruckman and outposition him. He [Farmer] had a good leap and used his legs to ride.<sup>372</sup>

Farmer himself observed in 1993: 'John Nicholls from Carlton and Neville Crowe from Richmond were tough opponents'.<sup>373</sup> Carl Ditterich played 203 games with St Kilda from 1963 to 1972 and 1976 to 1978 with five seasons at Melbourne,<sup>374</sup> and was an opposing ruckman to both Farmer and later Newman. Ditterich recalled his

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<sup>370</sup> John Schultz, interviewed on the *Coodabeen Champions*, ABC 774, 22 September 2012.

<sup>371</sup> Noel Teasdale, personal communication, 14 July 2015.

<sup>372</sup> Nicholls, with McDonald, *Big Nick*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>373</sup> Farmer, cited in Patrick, 'Whatever Happened to Graham "Polly" Farmer', p. 53.

<sup>374</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 228.

contests with Farmer from 1963 to 1967 and stated that Farmer was in ‘the twilight of his career at Geelong but when I ran straight at him at centre bounces he would just turn his body, shield the ball, and get a long handpass away always to a teammate in the clear’.<sup>375</sup> He also reflected: ‘Ruckmen John Nicholls, John Lord [Melbourne], Geoff Leek [Essendon] and Schultz were tall and big ruckmen at the time’.<sup>376</sup> In retirement from elite football, Newman explained how ‘Polly’ could palm the ball with either left or right hands, noting that Farmer ‘had the ability to exploit an opponent’s weaknesses rather than strengths’.<sup>377</sup> Simon Madden, a former champion ruckman at the Essendon FC highlighted that ‘John Nicholls could only palm the ball with his left hand’.<sup>378</sup> North Melbourne FC ruckman Noel Teasdale played 178 games between 1956 and 1967 and was acknowledged as the club’s leading ruckman in the club’s ‘Team of the [Twentieth] Century’.<sup>379</sup> He recalled with clarity rucking against Farmer and states that ‘Polly’ was the best ruckman of all time, adding ‘Farmer could take the ball in mid-air. Also, with his early leap, at centre bounces and boundary throw-ins, Graham Farmer would force his opponent under the ball’.<sup>380</sup>

The succinctly entitled book *1963: Cats in Command*, is a short but worthy publication by Bruce Kennedy and Bruce Coe. It is, however, packed with detail culminating in the final series and Geelong FC’s grand final victory in 1963. As

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<sup>375</sup> Carl Ditterich personal communication, 17 March 2015.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Newman, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

<sup>378</sup> Simon Madden, personal communication, 17 September 2012.

<sup>379</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 873.

<sup>380</sup> Noel Teasdale personal communication, 14 July 2015.



conveyed previously, 1963 was the season before Newman began his senior football career, but the reflections of the authors on Farmer are apposite. For instance, Kennedy and Coe note that Farmer was the dominant ruckman in the League. They disclose that the media was ‘marvelling at Farmer’s unusual play-on football generated by quick long handballs, often from deep on the back-line and generally as an offensive weapon, opening up the play and creating chances for his teammates further down the ground. He [Farmer] had come through a major test of ability having battled against Schultz, Noel Teasdale, Alan Morrow and the dazzling newcomer Carl Ditterich’.<sup>381</sup>

In the second semi-final of 1963 Geelong defeated Hawthorn by 19 points. Regarding Farmer’s performance, the publication *Footy Fan* reflected that ‘everyone knows the value of Farmer’s handpasses to the Cats’. They also communicate that early in the season, the coaches of many clubs said Farmer ‘infringed the rules by placing a hand on an opponent, or by jumping for the hit out early, he interfered with opposing followers’.<sup>382</sup> Hawke also passes comment on Farmer’s performance in 1963, observing that ‘in the Melbourne game, he [Farmer] had argued briefly but fiercely with umpire Schwab when a free kick was awarded against him. He had gone up above Len Mann and palmed the ball away cleanly, but Schwab penalised him for having a hand on Mann’s shoulder. He was free kicked on other occasions that day by Schwab’.<sup>383</sup> Farmer’s teammate at the Geelong Football Club, John Yeates, remembered clearly that ‘Graham Farmer was always practicing his skills and as a

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<sup>381</sup> Kennedy and Coe, *1963*, p. 37.

<sup>382</sup> David Allan, “‘Polly’ was Great”, *Footy Fan*, vol. 1, no. 15 (1963), p. 26.

<sup>383</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, pp. 173-174.

person he was not backward in coming forward'.<sup>384</sup> Former Geelong FC President, Frank Costa, recalled how 'Graham Farmer had a special understanding with rover Bill Goggin and Graham often found Tony Polinelli heading towards goal at breakneck speed'.<sup>385</sup>

Farmer's teammate and champion full forward, Doug Wade, believes that Polly Farmer was the best footballer he played with. 'He [Farmer] was always looking for [star rover] Billy Goggin to handball to. His [Farmer's] shots at goal never missed'.<sup>386</sup> Sandy haired rover, Bill Goggin, was a lightning-fast and established star when ruckman, Farmer arrived at the Geelong FC. Farmer and Goggin established a playing rapport, although Goggin admitted that 'the only thing he found difficult about roving to Farmer was learning where to run for a left-handed ruckman'.<sup>387</sup> Farmer's excellent season in 1963 was acknowledged with a second place finish in the Brownlow Medal count.

In the 1963 grand final, Geelong was victors over Hawthorn by 49 points. Farmer was acknowledged as the best player on the ground. In an academic journal article, Hallinan and Judd advance the argument that 'the race-based attitudes of AFL recruiters discount the precedence of past Aboriginal footballers whose AFL careers were made in playing positions thought uncharacteristic of Aborigines'. In this context, they state that in the 1960s, 'Geelong's Graham "Polly" Farmer, who

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<sup>384</sup> John Yeates, personal communication 23 February 2015.

<sup>385</sup> Frank Costa, personal communication, 27 March 2015.

<sup>386</sup> Doug Wade, cited in Mike Sheahan, *Open Mike*, Fox Footy, 9 September 2013.

<sup>387</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 323.

revolutionised the game with his use of handball, is arguably the greatest ruckman of all time'.<sup>388</sup> Michael Lovett, editor of *AFL Season Guides*, a well-known Geelong supporter, observes that 'The great Polly Farmer directed Geelong's charge to the flag with a magnificent season and a superb performance on Grand Final day to see the Cats home by 49 points [against Hawthorn]'.<sup>389</sup> In 1963, the *Geelong Advertiser* extolled Farmer's performance by declaring that his 'sights are set so far above ordinary levels that he does not conform to standards usually applied to sportsmen. Farmer was acknowledged as a perfectionist in all he undertakes, he has been at pains to condition himself thoroughly to achieve his goal'.<sup>390</sup> Thirty years later Farmer himself recalled that the '1963 Grand Final I played in was my ambition obtained. That can never be taken away from me'.<sup>391</sup>

The 1963 senior premiership players and reserves premiership players were introduced from the balcony of City Hall to 20,000 buoyant Geelong supporters assembled below. The large numbers of faithful supporters is a clear indicator of the connection between the club and community (explored in more detail in the next chapter). Excitement among the fans reached fever pitch when Farmer raised the Premiership Cup. At the social for players and officials, also at City Hall, the night of the grand final win on 5 October 1963, Ron Casey, the famous and rotund host of the

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<sup>388</sup> Chris Hallinan and Barry Judd, 'Changes in Assumptions about Australian Indigenous Footballers: From Exclusion to Enlightenment', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 26, no. 16 (2009), pp. 2358-2375.

<sup>389</sup> Lovett, *AFL Record Season Guide*, p. 948.

<sup>390</sup> Play-On, 'G. Farmer Keystone of Geelong Premiership Win', *Geelong Advertiser*, 7 October 1963, p. 10.

<sup>391</sup> Farmer, cited in Patrick, 'Whatever Happened to Graham "Polly" Farmer', p. 53.

long-running Sunday television program *World of Sport* (1959-1982) interviewed Farmer, who was standing with teammate Watts. Casey stated: 'Here's the West Australian contingent', then Casey asked what the premiership meant. Watts answered: 'It hasn't really sunk in yet, has it, Pol?'. Farmer replied: 'It will hit us later in the week'.<sup>392</sup> Assessments of Farmer's relatively brief (101 games) career in Victoria frequently include the distance and accuracy of his creative handball. However, Newman has remarked many times both in print and interview that for his great football influence, Farmer was 'the consummate team player' and a 'selfish player'. 'Selfish', Newman says, 'because he worried about one thing only and that was how he played and handled the person who played against him ... All the rest followed ... because of the way he played football, he brought people naturally into the game'.<sup>393</sup> Newman makes the same point about Farmer's 'selfishness' in his foreword to Hawke's biography of Farmer.<sup>394</sup> Researcher and writer, Gorman, interviewed Farmer who reinforced Newman's frequent opinion of Farmer's selfish, yet team, aspect. Farmer said: 'Every time I went out onto [*sic*] the football field, I set myself to be best on the ground and win the game. That is how I prepared myself, so that the difference between good days and bad days was infrequent'.<sup>395</sup> Newman concurs: 'Farmer was effective even when he was having a poor game'.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Watts and Farmer, cited in *Cats: 50 Years of the Geelong Football Club*, DVD (South Yarra: Visual Entertainment Group, 2001).

<sup>393</sup> Newman, cited in Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>394</sup> Newman, 'Foreword', p. 13.

<sup>395</sup> Gorman, *Legends*, p. 20.

<sup>396</sup> Newman, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

Farmer also had high standards both off the field. As a champion player, Farmer was especially conscious of his involvement in the communities of both Geelong and Melbourne. In his very personal historical treatment of the club's recent history, Button relates an incident from 1962. He recounts that when Farmer arrived in Geelong, he conducted a clinic at Oberon Primary School. When the teachers asked the captain of the school team to give a little speech, the shaking boy could only stammer 'Thank you, Poll'. According to Button, Farmer replied 'Son, I hope you can play football better than you can talk'.<sup>397</sup> As Button notes, that boy, Bruce Nankervis went on to play 249 games for Geelong FC.

Hawke observes that Farmer became an admired idol throughout the Geelong region and even beyond. He perceives that 'The round of public appearances, in the media, at schools, at functions and openings and country socials around the western districts, [*sic*], was enormous. He often went with Catholic Father John Brosnan [Pentridge Jail Chaplain and Geelong Football Club supporter] out to Pentridge, where he [Farmer] was a great favourite'.<sup>398</sup>

'Hit-Out', who wrote for the *Geelong Advertiser*, produced an elegant and thoughtful report of Farmer's dominance in Geelong's loss to Collingwood on a muddy Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) in the 1964 preliminary final. Geelong scored 5.14.44 to Collingwood 7.6.48, kicking themselves out of a win. 'Hit-Out' recorded that in modern sport description:

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<sup>397</sup> Button, *Comeback*, p. 61.

<sup>398</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 223.

... where battered superlatives lose their value and flavour, perhaps it is sufficient to say that Farmer's display will be stored as a treasure in the memories of Australian Rules followers. Although Geelong lost Saturday's preliminary final, the game will be remembered for the football played by Graham Farmer. He lifted Geelong when it flagged. Farmer marked the heavy, greasy ball with ease and kicked with precision. Rain was pelting down in the second quarter.<sup>399</sup>

Retired from football, Newman explained that:

... in his early years, Farmer had great athleticism. In the latter years of Farmer's career at Geelong, with age and debilitating injuries, he became wily, more cunning. The younger guys were more valuable in getting a hit-out. Farmer would get between his opponent and the ball and give the impression he was going for it. He would give us an easy ride. We would get the stats and we would look like stars'.<sup>400</sup>

In 1995, Newman respected Farmer as a person and footballer when Newman observed that with Farmer 'you could always see that he was going to get the ball. He was two classes above everyone when he played. He brought flow-on offensive handball into the game twenty years before it became a reality'.<sup>401</sup> Newman continues his respect for Farmer as a role model: 'I learned everything about football from Farmer'.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> 'Hit-Out', 'Farmer Fought to the Finish', *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 September 1964, p. 31.

<sup>400</sup> Newman, cited in Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>401</sup> Newman cited in Ross Stapleton, 'Never Say Never', *Inside Sport*, no. 44 (August 1995), p. 143.

<sup>402</sup> Newman, cited in *Down at Kardinia Park*.

Yet Farmer could be could be harsh on Newman. According to Collins

There were times when Farmer spoke forcefully to his protégé. The pair had ‘a very loose plan’ at centre bounces whereby Newman would impede the run of the opposition ruckmen ‘to allow Polly what he did best’. At the opening bounce of an early match against Carlton, Newman blocked Carlton Blues ruckman Maurie Sankey and allowed Farmer to set up a goal ... Sankey warned ‘Don’t do that again’ ... Sankey knocked the ‘bejesus’ out of him breaking Newman’s jaw in two places. Polly didn’t have much sympathy for me’ Newman recalls ... The massive figure of Farmer glowered over him ... Through gritted teeth all he said was ‘Get up, you’re holding up the game!’.<sup>403</sup>

From that point on Newman made it a rule to ‘never to turn my back on anyone who threatened me’.<sup>404</sup>

Farmer played other finals throughout his 101 games, but he particularly rued the grand final loss to Richmond in the 1967 grand final. He also wished to continue and play out his career at Geelong FC. However, a bitter committee election campaign and jealousy by teammates forced Farmer to leave Geelong. Hawke is especially strong on the rift between Farmer and the Geelong FC. He says that Farmer ‘loved Geelong the town, and the life and friends he had made there, but had grown weary of the club’. However, Hawke claims ‘there were many at Geelong who recall with anger that there was no real effort made to persuade him [Farmer] to stay’.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Collins, ‘Sam Newman’, p. 196.

<sup>404</sup> Cited in *ibid.*

<sup>405</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, pp. 259-260.

Furthermore, Hawke interviewed Geelong defender and former vice-captain, John Devine, who was blunt in his opinion: ‘People got jealous of him [Farmer]. He was taking all the glamour, and (they) [the players] weren’t getting any of it. Polly never suffered fools readily. He could see all this was happening, so he was never really comfortable in the last couple of years... It became more political, [and] it became better to get rid of him’.<sup>406</sup> However, Farmer himself stated that ‘Geelong did not try one bit. There wasn’t one effort made to keep me there’. Farmer expressed the view that ‘I would have thought it [the club] would have showed a bit more interest, because there probably was a premiership there the following year – we were the best side in the competition at the time’.<sup>407</sup>

In 1968, the season after Farmer returned to Perth, he made a surprising admission to former umpire and then journalist, Harry Beitzel. Noting that the importance of football to Farmer’s life for more than 25 years, Beitzel revealed that Farmer ‘... will be learning a new technique – at the keyboard of a piano’. This observation was based on Farmer’s declaration that ‘I love music. I like reading too’.<sup>408</sup> However, the existing literature is deficient about Farmer learning to play the piano and it is surprising that such a shallow football weekly that lasted irregularly from 1965 to 1972 produced an original item with such clarity that it summed up aspects of Farmer’s intellectual passions, pursuits and interests. Farmer, at that time playing in Western Australia, represented his state in interstate games. So, too, did his former

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<sup>406</sup> Devine, cited in Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, pp. 259-260.

<sup>407</sup> Farmer, cited in Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 260.

<sup>408</sup> Harry Beitzel, ‘Lessons for The Master: Graham Farmer’s Secret’, *Footy Week*, vol. 4, no. 8, 3 June 1968, p. 11.



Geelong teammate Newman, who played in the ruck for Victoria. In the 1969 State Carnival which took place in Adelaide between 7 and 14 June 1969, one game (on 11 June 1969) pitted Farmer against Newman. In the match the pair became serious adversaries, though Newman continued his hero-worship of Farmer. Newman later recalled: 'I went up for a ruck throw-in, and I think I backhanded him. This is the pupil giving back to the master ... I did it once to him and the very next time we went for a ball, he [Farmer] broke my nose. He just went bang, straight back, and it [my nose] went numb. I thought it was marvellous'.<sup>409</sup> Following his performance at the Carnival, Newman won All Australian honours.

In the 1971 New Year's honours list, Farmer 'was the first Australian Rules footballer to be awarded an MBE, a member of the British Empire by the Queen'.<sup>410</sup> Farmer was typically brief regarding his award from the Queen of England. 'I had no reason not to accept it but it didn't make one bit of difference to my lifestyle. I didn't take advantage by becoming a member of the Royal Society. I didn't use it as a means of identification'.<sup>411</sup>

From September 1994, Farmer helped to establish 'the Polly Farmer Foundation' with former High Court judge Sir Ronald Wilson as president and former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Fred Chaney'. Indigenous actor Ernie Dingo was one of the patrons. At the time, Farmer said 'I want the foundation to be of practical assistance

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<sup>409</sup> Newman, cited in Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 297.

<sup>410</sup> Peter Sweeney, 'Polly's Final Battle: Friends and Family Support Great Who Changed the Face of Football', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 25 March 2012, p. 20.

<sup>411</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, p. 300.

to young Aboriginal people with potential. Not just in sport, but in the professions and business. I want to develop links with tertiary institutions and make Aboriginal people become leaders'.<sup>412</sup>

In 1997. Perth journalist, Torrance Mendez, recorded that the WA Transport Minister, Eric Charlton, had re-named the controversial \$400 million Northern City Bypass as 'the Graham Farmer Freeway'. According to Mendez, Charlton broke with a WA tradition that usually saw major highways named after political figures, including the Brand Highway, the Tonkin Highway and the Mitchell Highway.<sup>413</sup>

He [Farmer] already has a place in WA sporting folklore and it is fitting that a showpiece of the city's transport network should bear his name ... The northern traffic bypass system links West Perth and East Perth which are, coincidentally, the two districts which Graham Farmer represented with distinction on the football arena. Mr Farmer and members of his family attended a ceremony at the tunnel entrance off Newcastle Street ...<sup>414</sup>

## 6.7 Conclusions

Farmer left a notable legacy following his all too brief football career with the Geelong FC. Not only was he the key member of Geelong's 1963 premiership team, but from 1964 to 1967 Farmer was a role model for Newman, who watched how Farmer played and copied his rucking techniques. As documented by Hawke, his influence on the club and the local community was profound, and Newman himself

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<sup>412</sup> Farmer, cited in Duncan, 'Polly Farmer', p. 13.

<sup>413</sup> Torrance Mendez, 'Tunnel's a Winner for Polly Farmer', *West Australian*, 7 October 1997, p. 3.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

never tired of acknowledging his impact as a player and as a person. Nonetheless, Farmer departed Geelong after the 1967 grand final loss and returned to Perth with his family to resume his football career as the captain-coach of West Perth, winners of the 1969 and 1971 WAFL grand finals. The next chapter has a renewed focus on Newman's career with the Geelong FC from 1964 to 1980. During this period, he established himself as one of the leading ruckmen in the game and became the first Geelong FC player to achieve 300 games over 17 seasons.

## Chapter Seven

### Newman's Victorian Football League Career, 1964-1974

Teamwork is a continuous state of evolution.

David Parkin and Paul Bourke<sup>415</sup>

#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter captures and interprets important features of Newman's senior career at the Geelong FC. Key aspects include not only an overview of Newman's development as a high-leaping ruckman, before a serious injury in 1967 threatened prematurely to terminate his football career, but a survey of the many other challenges and problems that he faced throughout his 300 games at the club.

#### 7.2 Elevation to Geelong FC's Senior List from 1964

On 5 April 1964, Channel 7 Melbourne screened a segment featuring Lou Richards, the network's main football commentator, interviewing Geelong FC's senior coach, Bob Davis, who was wearing a South Australia state football jumper at the time. The men discussed a Geelong FC recruit:

Richards: Are you a little bit disappointed on missing out on the two star recruits of the year [South Australian champions] Brommell and Woods?

Davis: We tried very hard to get them, Lou, but I feel we've got a boy here, in particular you know, we won't worry about Woods or Brommell at all.

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<sup>415</sup> David Parkin and Paul Bourke with Russ Gleeson, *What Makes Teams Work: How to Create and Maintain a Winning Team in Business and Sport* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2004), p. 4.

Richards: What's his name?

Davis: A boy called Newman, John Newman, from the Grammar School in Geelong.

Richards: Didn't he play some reserves games last year?

Davis: That's right, Lou, four games. I'm confident Newman will become a top-class player.<sup>416</sup>

It was relatively rare for a young VFL footballer such as Newman to arrive at the Geelong FC directly from the Geelong GS. In normal circumstances, players were recruited from local clubs. A parallel is Newman's maternal grandfather, William 'Billy' Pincott, born on 24 July 1875, who was recruited from the Geelong suburb of Newtown and played 17 games from 1897 (the inaugural season of the VFL) to 1899.<sup>417</sup> Former Geelong FC president, Frank Costa, observed: 'Two Geelong Grammarians at the Geelong Football Club are [the late] Geoff Ainsworth [who preceded Newman as club captain] and Chris Mitchell'.<sup>418</sup> On the other hand, The Geelong College in Newtown provided the Geelong FC with several champions, including Brownlow medallists Edward 'Carji' Greeves (1924) and Alastair Lord (1962). David E. Clarke and Gareth Andrews both played well over 100 games with the Geelong FC. The Geelong Catholic School, St Joseph's, also in Newtown, produced a number of talented footballers for the Geelong FC. The selected group includes 2011 premiership captain Cameron Ling and triple premiership full-back

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<sup>416</sup> Interview cited from 'Channel 7's Football Show', 5 April 1964.

<sup>417</sup> Col Hutchinson, AFL printout on the profile of 'Billy' Pincott, 24 March 2015. Pincott's first name of William was possibly the William component of John Noel (after his father) William Newman.

<sup>418</sup> Frank Costa, personal communication, 27 March 2015.

Matthew Scarlett. Michael Mansfield, Mark Neeld and Barry Stoneham also attended the school. Another former St Joseph's student was Damian Bourke who captained Geelong FC from 1988 to 1990, playing 102 games between 1983 and 1989 and 1991 and 1992.<sup>419</sup>

Button indicates that, in 1967, the 'Victorian Football League divided the state [of Victoria] into country zones, each one tied to a VFL club'.<sup>420</sup> Geelong FC was allocated areas 'around Seymour and Healesville, then the Mid-Murray Zone around Echuca'.<sup>421</sup> Button suggests that the club 'loved recruiting from the Western District', and he notes that five 1963 premiership players came from there.<sup>422</sup> He explains that Geelong FC's zones were an inadequate source of great football recruits, compared with those allocated to other VFL clubs. The Geelong FC had to look to the Geelong district for footballers. 'As Geelong's river of country gold ran dry, it had little money to chase interstate [star] players ... For most of the 1970s nearly all its best

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<sup>419</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 80; Donald G. Gibb, *The Stratmark Footballer Who's Who: Player Profiles and Career Highlights of All Players on the 1991 Final Lists of All 15 AFL Clubs* (Port Melbourne: Stratmark Marketing, 1991), pp. 27-29.

<sup>420</sup> Button, *Comeback*, p. 62. For more on the system of Country Zones see Bob Stewart, *The Australian Football Business: A Spectator's Guide to the VFL* (Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press, 1983); Bob Stewart, 'The Economic Development of the Victorian Football League, 1960-1984', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 1, no. 2 (May 1984), pp. 2-26; Bob Stewart, 'Boom-Time Football, 1946-1975', in Rob Hess and Bob Stewart (eds), *More Than a Game: An Unauthorised History of Australian Rules Football* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1998), pp. 165-199.

<sup>421</sup> Button, *Comeback*, p. 63.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*

players came from in and around Geelong: the Nankervis brothers, Sam Newman, David Clarke, Gareth Andrews, Geoff Ainsworth, Rod Blake, Larry Donohue, Paul Sarah and Terry Bright, the nephew of 1963 premiership player Billy Goggin ... Just two top players, Jack Hawkins and Neville Bruns, came from the Mid-Murray Zone ...<sup>423</sup>

Veteran broadcaster, Steve Price, has reflected that Newman, in retirement from football, is a classic example of someone whose life has been shaped by his secondary education: 'It's given him an in-built confidence from early in his life that he was better than other people'.<sup>424</sup> Professional comedian and former *The Footy Show* colleague of Newman, Trevor Marmalade (stage name of Jason van de Velde), observed: 'any time, day or night, Sam Newman could recite in alphabetical order all his Geelong Grammar Perry House members from 1963's Year Twelve. He was always word-perfect'.<sup>425</sup> On this basis, it is clear that Newman had school football experience, but no local club affiliation.

The Geelong FC recruited John O'Neill from Warrnambool, a city on the south west coast of Victoria. O'Neill was a tough and quick midfielder with fine disposal, playing 136 senior matches from 1954 to 1962. During 1958, he played five games

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Price, cited in ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam', *Australian Story*, ABC1 TV, 6 July 2000.

<sup>425</sup> Trevor Marmalade, personal communication, 4 December 2012. See also reference to a similar feat that Newman performed on *The Footy Show* on 16 March 2017. Bethany Tyler and Jemma Ryan, 'Gossip Girls', *Geelong Advertiser*, 18 March 2017, p. 15.

with a broken wrist and won Geelong FC's Best and Fairest award.<sup>426</sup> O'Neill coached the Geelong FC Reserves team between 1965 and 1973.<sup>427</sup> The club gave his vacant number 17 jumper to Newman, in keeping with the club's tradition of giving new players jumper numbers of recently retired or delisted players.<sup>428</sup>

### **7.3 First Senior Game with the Geelong FC**

Newman was selected on the bench for his first senior game in Round 3 of 1964. It was a match against Fitzroy at their home ground at the Brunswick Street Oval, north of the intersection of Brunswick Street and Alexandra Parade. The strong Geelong side trailed the struggling Fitzroy team, and by half time the Cats had scored a most inaccurate 2.12.24. According to Ben Collins, a vocal spectator yelling at the Geelong FC coach's box exasperated the senior coach, Bob Davis. This spectator screamed: 'Put the Grammar boy on'.<sup>429</sup> Newman realised the shouting fan was a former Geelong Grammar schoolmate, Bervin Woods. The moment eventuated during the last quarter when experienced player John Sharrock suffered cramp and came off the ground. Davis ordered Newman to remove his dressing gown: 'Go on Sammy, get on' was the instruction.<sup>430</sup> Newman was a raw but energetic ruckman who copied his role model Farmer.

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<sup>426</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 602.

<sup>427</sup> Hutchinson, *Cats' Tales*, p. 322.

<sup>428</sup> John Yeates, personal communication, 23 February 2015.

<sup>429</sup> Collins, 'The Boy from the Grammar', p. 20.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*



Hawke wrote that Farmer's effect on the nineteen year old Newman was as follows: 'Newman and another youngster Bill Ryan who had played a handful of games in 1963, were challenging the other big men of the side [Paul] Vinar, [John] Watts, [John] Yeates and [Brian] Lowe, for the right to play a supporting role to Farmer'.<sup>431</sup>

Hawke continued, 'The *Geelong Advertiser* noticed the influence of Farmer on the pair, who had both adopted the early leap, and Newman in particular already showed the capacity for the grab and handpass that was the Farmer trademark'.<sup>432</sup>

#### **7.4 Development as a Senior Player**

Newman soon showed potential as a mobile ruckman with an excellent leap with a strong overhead mark and a decisive kick to a teammate clear of an opponent. North Melbourne's ruckman and North's Team of the Century first ruck, Noel Teasdale, had a somewhat dismissive attitude to John Newman. Teasdale stated: 'Newman was just Graham Farmer's understudy'.<sup>433</sup>

West Australian defender, John Watts, who was a member of Geelong FC's 1963 premiership team, remembered that 'Sam Newman who [*sic*] he played with was the quietest guy – he wouldn't say boo'.<sup>434</sup> Also, Watts claims that at Geelong FC, he would tell a joke on Friday that 'would dawn on Sam the following Monday'.<sup>435</sup> John

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<sup>431</sup> Hawke, *Polly Farmer: Revised and Updated*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>433</sup> Noel Teasdale, personal communication, 14 July 2015.

<sup>434</sup> Watts, 'The Know All Who Became a Legend'.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*

Yeates, who played 86 games between 1959 and 1965 with the Geelong FC, remembered that ‘John Newman was an extremely shy person’.<sup>436</sup>

As a young ruckman Newman had a perfect physique. He was 189 centimetres and 94 kilograms. As Collingwood adversary Peter McKenna recalls ‘Sam had a great leap, strong hands and fantastic endurance’<sup>437</sup> The Geelong FC’s 107<sup>th</sup> Annual Report and Balance Sheet of 1965 identified that John Newman placed third in the club’s Best and Fairest. It affirmed that ‘John Newman is one of the most promising players in the VFL. He has shown tremendous intelligence. If he retains his form, and shows the expected improvement, he could well establish himself as one of the best-equipped followers in the game. At 19 years of age, he has a tremendous future’.<sup>438</sup>

Newman’s developing skills, physique, and good looks attracted publicity in the football press. For example, *Footy Week* of 15 August 1966 reproduced an action photograph of Newman on its front cover, with the following caption: ‘Geelong’s teenage ruckman John Newman leapt high over Paddy Guinane of Richmond to hook the ball across to his rover during a tense ruck duel’.<sup>439</sup> Later, in retirement, Newman explained that Guinane ‘resembled comic-strip boxer, Joe Palooka in looks and spirit – a gentle giant off the ground, but vicious and brutal on it’.<sup>440</sup> Wayne Closter, a

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<sup>436</sup> John Yeates, personal communication, 23 February 2015.

<sup>437</sup> Peter McKenna, personal communication, 10 November 2012.

<sup>438</sup> Geelong FC, *Annual Report*, 1965, p. 13.

<sup>439</sup> *Footy Week*, 15 August 1966, p. 1. This is an example that already Newman’s particular presentation of masculine corporeality which Karen Brooks later analysed, was being noticed by the press. See Brooks, ‘More Than a Game’, p. 34.

<sup>440</sup> Collins, ‘The Boy from the Grammar’, p. 20.

centreman who played 191 games for the Cats between 1964 and 1975, recalled with clarity that ‘John Newman was always a smart [clever] fellow. He used his body like Graham Farmer. Sam had the Farmer look about him. He watched how Polly played.’<sup>441</sup> Newman’s propensity to leap was endorsed by Carl Ditterich who remembered that ‘Sam had a big leap, a long handpass and was a good kick to Doug Wade who seldom missed goals’.<sup>442</sup> Brian Brushfield, as a teammate of the young Newman, believed that Newman was ‘a dedicated player who trained hard’.<sup>443</sup>

### **7.5 Full-Time Employment**

In the semi-professional era, VFL players had to augment their meagre earnings on the field by full-time employment. Bob Davis related a story about Doug Wade and Newman, perhaps dated from around 1966: ‘Doug and John had jobs as tellers at the City branch of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney in Geelong. You would go in there to find queues out the door as customers waited to be served by those fellas [*sic*]. Once inside, you’d find no one wanting to be served by the other tellers. Later the pair transferred to the Belmont branch and the same thing happened there’.<sup>444</sup>

When retired, Newman articulated his employment in a Geelong bank. At school, he said, ‘I got through on the most basic of subjects. I wasn’t academic. I wasn’t

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<sup>441</sup> Wayne Closter, personal communication, 5 April 2015. Closter served for more than a year in Vietnam, which he admits restricted his tally of career games for the Geelong FC.

<sup>442</sup> Carl Ditterich, personal communication, 17 March 2015.

<sup>443</sup> Brian Brushfield, personal communication, 28 April 2015.

<sup>444</sup> Davis, cited in Kennedy and Coe, *1963*, p. 82.

qualified to do anything so I went into a bank. At the bank in High Street, Belmont, I sat opposite Doug Wade, who had no vocation at all'.<sup>445</sup> In March 1998, Newman had a vivid memory of work in a bank. His job was at the National Bank in High Street, Belmont for two or three years. 'The manager was Jock Russell, a very pleasant man, gone to the great vault in the sky now'.<sup>446</sup>

By the year 1970, Newman had changed his employment direction from bank teller. Jim Usher of *Football Life* documented that Newman's future was 'tied up in Geelong where he now works with a land development company'.<sup>447</sup> Because neither Newman nor Wade had steady careers or employment they began their own business. According to Terry Granger's item in *Inside Football*, in 1971 'Newman or Wade would travel for their business, Technique Distributors, once a fortnight. Newman or Wade would take off into Western Victoria to display their lines of hairdressing items at beauty salons and pharmacies'.<sup>448</sup> Newman later recalled: 'We started a slimming product called Nature Slim',<sup>449</sup> and he observed that 'Doug and I ended up in a very successful business for over a decade'.<sup>450</sup> Wade provided an alternative assessment of the business with Newman: 'We had eleven years together and the hair care company wasn't a huge success'.<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Sheahan, 'Sam Newman', p. 8.

<sup>446</sup> Aiton, 'Conversations', p. 3.

<sup>447</sup> Usher, 'A Cat Named Sam', p. 16.

<sup>448</sup> Granger, 'Big Sam – A New Man', p. 15.

<sup>449</sup> Newman, cited in Aiton, 'Conversations', p. 3.

<sup>450</sup> Newman cited in Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: I Did It My Way', p. 8.

<sup>451</sup> Wade, cited in Sheahan, *Open Mike*, Fox Footy, 9 September 2013.

## 7.6 Newman and his Nickname ‘Sam’

Events in 1966 had a profound non-football effect on Newman, a skilled and instinctive mimic. According to sports journalist, Peter Stone, ‘He could impersonate the famous such as the American comic actor W.C. Fields and Cassius Clay’.<sup>452</sup> Newman also entertained Geelong FC teammates with imitations of trainers and medical staff. At the age of 20, Newman had the unique ability to mimic the tight mouth and broad staccato speech pattern and idiosyncratic hand gestures of his senior coach, Bob Davis. There are many possible explanations for Newman’s nickname ‘Sammy’, most of which have appeared in print at some stage. For example, one explanation is that Davis watched on commercial television an American variety program titled *The Jackie Gleason Show*. The black-haired and corpulent Gleason (the inspiration for the animation character Fred Flintstone) entertained audiences with a number of caricatures. One was ‘Big Sam’, a gangster, who used various impersonations to extricate himself from trouble. Davis nicknamed his emerging ruckman ‘Big Sam’, which was subsequently shortened to ‘Sam’. The name stuck. Another explanation was given by Davis for the nickname. ‘He [Newman] was prone to do impersonations of anybody and he was interested in shows that were on television. In fact that’s where he got his nickname ‘Sam’ from *The Jackie Gleason Show*.<sup>453</sup> Newman himself gave yet another reason for the nickname ‘Sam’. In 2009, he explained to football researcher, writer and journalist, Ben Collins, that it was inspired by *The Jackie Gleason Show*. Newman mimicked Gleason telling his

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<sup>452</sup> Stone, ‘Don’t Play it Again, “Sam”’, p. 4. Clay later changed his name to Muhammad Ali.

<sup>453</sup> Davis, cited in ABC, ‘The Trouble with Sam’.

bandleader Sammy Spears thus: ‘A little bit of travelling music, Sam’, and so ‘Sam’ was born.<sup>454</sup>

Newman also produced another explanation for the nickname ‘Sam’. In his foreword to Bob Davis’s autobiography *Woofa*, written with Jim Main, Newman recalled that Davis was responsible ‘for giving me the name “Sam” after arriving at training one day as Jackie Gleason and inviting me on to the ground as if he [Gleason] were speaking to his orchestra leader, Sammy Spear, with that legendary catch-cry “a little bit of travelling music please Sam and away we go”’.<sup>455</sup> Newman later altered this reason slightly when he explained to journalist and interviewer, Mike Sheahan, that he chose not to imitate Jackie Gleason. However, Newman did note that ‘we [his Geelong team mates] used to watch the Jackie Gleason show. “Sam” came from Sammy Spears and his orchestra and Gleason telling Spears, “A little travelling music if you please - and away we go”’. Newman claims that ‘At [Geelong FC] training one day I said “a little bit of travelling music, Sam” and Bob Davis said “and away we go”’.<sup>456</sup>

Geoff Davie has related yet another explanation for Newman’s nickname ‘Sam’, involving his coach Bob Davis. Davie states that ‘Sam Newman’s nickname was apparently bestowed on him by Bob Davis. Newman was an accomplished drummer and, when the players put together a band one night, Davis came out with the famous

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<sup>454</sup> Collins, ‘Sam Newman’, p. 196.

<sup>455</sup> Newman, cited in Davis with Main, *Woofa*, p. 3.

<sup>456</sup> Newman, cited in Mike Sheahan, *Open Mike*, Fox Footy, 2 May 2013.

line “Play it again, Sam” – linked to but never said in the Humphrey Bogart classic *Casablanca* – and the name stuck’.<sup>457</sup>

Moreover, in April 2014, Newman appears to have provided a different year and reason for his nickname ‘Sam’. Most sources refer to Newman at the age of 20 during 1966 as the origin of the ‘Sammy’ or later the ‘Sam’ moniker. However, Newman may have told Collins that the name ‘Sam’ originated in 1964, two years earlier. As Collins says ‘Then 18, Newman was already nicknamed “Sam”. Before a training session, he had imitated US TV star Jackie Gleason’s regular line to bandmaster Sam [*sic*] Spear “A little travelling music, Sam” and Davis interjected with the rest [of the line] “And aaway we go ... out to training Sam!”’.<sup>458</sup>

Most of these explanations for Newman’s nickname ‘Sam’ are variations on a similar anecdotal theme. *The Jackie Gleason Show* screened on Channel Nine between 1966 and 1970. The program’s popularity in Melbourne reached its local peak through 1966. Newman is perhaps deliberately in error to show that his alternate first name ‘Sam’ is now 50 years old rather than the seemingly more accurate 47 years. Geelong FC Chief Executive Officer, Brian Cook, who knows Newman well, observes: ‘If Sam gave ... [multiple] reasons for his nickname it would be to amuse himself, yet pretending to be serious with journalists’.<sup>459</sup> More particularly, these various origin

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<sup>457</sup> Davie and the Geelong Cats, *Cats on the Prowl*, p. 7. For further information on the 1942 movie *Casablanca*, see discussion later in the chapter.

<sup>458</sup> Collins, ‘The Boy from the Grammar’, p. 20.

<sup>459</sup> Brian Cook, personal communication, 13 April 2015.

stories point to the importance of the ‘Sam’ persona which Newman was already cultivating – a persona linked to entertainment and showmanship.

### 7.7 Musical Talents and Nascent Showmanship

The Geelong FC was a team on the rise through 1967. During that year, *Football Life* carried a feature on several of the Geelong Cats’ stars, including Newman. In August the glossy magazine included text from Usher claiming that ‘Big ruckman, John Newman likes to be completely relaxed on a Saturday morning and if he feels tense at his home in Point Lonsdale, John sets up his drum kit. The neighbours smile when they hear a brisk tattoo coming from the Newman home on a Saturday morning – John is working off pre-match nerves so he won’t miss a beat on Saturday afternoon’.<sup>460</sup> Davie also referred to Newman playing the drums, claiming that: ‘Newman was an accomplished drummer and, when the players put a band together on night, Bob Davis came out with the famous line “Play it again Sam”’.<sup>461</sup> In 1967, former television personality and football commentator, Mike Williamson, hosted a live variety football program titled *The Club Show* (screened on Channel 7) from the Geelong City Hall. He recalled that ‘I introduced a young footballer called John Newman who was going to play the drums with the band. The song was *Song of India*, which had a long drum solo in the middle. Sam knew the beginning of the drum solo and he knew the middle bit but he didn’t know the end of the thing, so he just kept playing. The crowd loved it and the more they clapped and cheered, the more he kept playing’.<sup>462</sup> As a television celebrity with Channel 9, Newman has a

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<sup>460</sup> Usher, ‘Those Off Beat Cats’, p. 17.

<sup>461</sup> Davie and the Geelong Cats, *Cats on the Prowl*, p. 7.

<sup>462</sup> Williamson, cited in Corrie Perkin, ‘Sam I Am’, *Age*, 7 June 1999, p. 14.



habit of playing down his own talents, but anecdotes on his drumming prowess, for example, reveal something of his nascent showmanship, which initially developed while he was a player at the Geelong FC.

### **7.8 Newman's Kidney Rupture and its Threat to His Football Career**

The Geelong players had a decisive season during 1967, when they finished in third place on the ladder with thirteen wins and five losses, thereby qualifying for the VFL finals. Geelong was scheduled to play Collingwood in the first Semi Final and Newman began the game in great form. However, late in the first quarter he tackled Collingwood ruckman Warren Roper. According to the *Geelong Advertiser*, Newman 'twisted his elbow beneath him. He rose gasping as though winded. But it was more serious than that, for he could only watch, supporting himself hands on knees ... Trainers were attending Newman most of the quarter – he was sickly pale – and with 24 minutes gone, he was assisted over the line and Gareth Andrews ran on'.<sup>463</sup> Soon after, in the Geelong FC rooms at the MCG, a badly injured Newman lay on a rub-down table. As Newman remembers, 'My dear old dad took me into the urinal and I passed pure blood'.<sup>464</sup> He recalls that 'In those days, there were only nineteenth and twentieth men and, once you were off the ground, you were off for good. My father took my boots off'.<sup>465</sup> Newman stayed on to see Geelong win the match by 30 points but his anxious parents joined him in the ambulance that later transferred him to St

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<sup>463</sup> 'Hit-Out', 'Fitness and Grit Lift Geelong into Final', *Geelong Advertiser*, 4 September 1967, p. 34.

<sup>464</sup> 'Sam' Newman, interviewed by Garry Lyon and Bill Brownless, *The Sunday Footy Show*, 23 June 2013.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*

Vincent's Hospital in Fitzroy. Newman later recollected that 'In the ambulance on the way, my mother asked a doctor if her son will be all right and the doctor replied "It will be touch and go". I remember the hospital staff cut off my Geelong footy gear and bandages'.<sup>466</sup> The *Geelong Advertiser* reported that 'Injured Geelong ruckman John Newman underwent surgery at St Vincent's Hospital last night. Surgeons removed the upper portion of his right kidney in a two-hour operation.'<sup>467</sup> 'Hit Out' also reported that 'Newman's condition after the operation was described as moderately serious. Doctors said Newman probably would still be able to play football, but the final decision would be left to him'.<sup>468</sup> In 2013, with typical understatement, mixed with bravado, Newman commented on the episode: 'My blood was changed twice and, much to the chagrin of a lot of people, I survived'.<sup>469</sup>

An additional report in the *Geelong Advertiser* provides more detail on the incident, the operation, and the aftermath of the injury to Newman, a scenario not unusual for athletes who have suffered harm during the course of a game or contest, especially during a final.<sup>470</sup> According to 'Hit Out',

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> 'Hit Out', 'Newman Serious: Surgery', *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 September 1967, p. 34.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> 'Sam' Newman, interviewed by Garry Lyon and Bill Brownless, *The Sunday Footy Show*, 23 June 2013.

<sup>470</sup> Hugh Seward, [John Orchard](#), Heath Hazard and Darren Collinson, 'Football Injuries in Australia at the Elite Level', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 159, no. 5 (1993), pp. 298-301.

He left the ground nearing the end of the first quarter of Saturday's first VFL semi final, after having fallen awkwardly while tackling Collingwood's Warren Roper. Newman entered the operating theatre at 8 o'clock and emerged shortly before 10 p.m. The Geelong Football Club's medical adviser, Dr K.C. Threlfall, said that Newman had shown signs of improving when admitted to hospital, but his condition deteriorated on Sunday. Newman, who is 21 [years of age], has played 66 games with Geelong ... and kicked 39 goals during his career with Geelong.<sup>471</sup>

A sports journalist for the *Sun*, Kevin Hogan, quickly deduced three possible scenarios for the cause of Newman's kidney injury, and also commented on the support of Newman's team mates: 'Newman was hurt when he fell in a pack. He believes he fell on his own arm or struck and struck or struck another player's arm or leg as he went down. The Geelong team went to the [St Vincent's] hospital, [and] spoke to Newman for a few minutes on their way home by bus from the MCG to Geelong'.<sup>472</sup>

Geelong progressed to the grand final against Richmond in a game during which the lead changed eight times. Eventually Richmond prevailed by nine points. As an aside, Geelong's loss was Farmer's last game in Victoria and he subsequently moved his family back to Perth. Newman recovered from his kidney operation and undertook the 1968 pre-season as Geelong's main ruckman. After retirement, Newman explained that 'losing some of his kidney preyed on my mind for some

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<sup>471</sup> 'Hit-Out', 'Newman Serious: Surgery', *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 September 1967, p. 36.

<sup>472</sup> Kevin Hogan, 'Newman Seems Sure to Miss: He's in Hospital', *Sun*, 4 September 1967, p. 52.

time'.<sup>473</sup> Also he described the kidney operation as though he had been 'bitten in half by a shark', noting that 'It's all keyhole surgery nowadays'.<sup>474</sup> In 1970, just a few years after the injury, Usher reported on the claim that Newman, as a champion ruckman 'risked death' in continuing to play such a physically demanding game. He observed that 'To lessen the element of risk, he [Newman] wears a protective shield in the form of a canvas and leather brace. He says he's had knocks around the area'.<sup>475</sup>

When retired from football for fifteen years, Newman provided a slightly different version of how he severed his kidney: 'I went for a ball and got kneed in the kidney'.<sup>476</sup> The memories were also blurred when, on the fortieth anniversary of Newman's ruptured kidney, sports journalist Mike Sheahan recorded that Newman 'suffered kidney damage so severe he almost died at the MCG'.<sup>477</sup> Sheahan's account also reveals that Newman seems mistaken about the player that caused his kidney injury. Sheahan continued: 'His [Newman's] White Diamond boots went from under him on the old practice wicket area [at the MCG]. He fell into the path of an opponent he believes to have been [Collingwood FC midfielder] Con Britt'.<sup>478</sup> However, the *Geelong Advertiser* is accepted to be correct that Newman himself

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<sup>473</sup> Newman, cited in Geoff Poulter and Mark Fine, interview with 'Sam' Newman on 1116 SEN, 23 September 2009.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Usher, 'A Cat Named Sam', p. 15.

<sup>476</sup> Newman, cited in Stapleton, 'Never Say Never', p. 136.

<sup>477</sup> Mike Sheahan, 'Sam's Town: Newman Still Hurting for His Cats', *Herald Sun*, 8 September 2007, p. 39.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

caused his damaged kidney when the newspaper reported that he was tackling Collingwood's Warren Roper and that Newman's own elbow caused his kidney damage. Newman recalled that 'you don't like to go off in the first five minutes of a game so I went down and tried to take a ruck throw-in at the boundary line and Len Thompson brushed past me and it went through my body like I'd been hit by a truck'.<sup>479</sup> In retirement, Newman was also perhaps deliberately mistaken about the destination of the ambulance following his ruptured kidney. He explained to Sheahan on *Open Mike* in 2013 that 'I was rushed to the Alfred Hospital'.<sup>480</sup> On most other occasions, Newman correctly referred to his being conveyed to St Vincent's Hospital in Fitzroy, the major hospital closest to the MCG. The reason why Newman, for the first occasion, named Collingwood's Con Britt as colliding with Newman then Newman rushed by ambulance to the Alfred Hospital, are attempts by the now retired 'Sam' Newman to alter his life story possibly to sanitise information that he knows to be false but perhaps to persuade himself and sports journalists that the stories are true, accurate and genuine. By triangulating the various reports, it is possible to ascertain their accuracy, as well as see how they pertain to questions of character and courage.

In a similar vein, radio presenter, Mark Fine, mistakenly believed that Newman 'lost a kidney'.<sup>481</sup> Fine may have compared Newman with current Geelong FC's tall

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<sup>479</sup> Newman, cited in Stapleton, 'Never Say Never', p. 136. Newman also employed another metaphor for the contact with Thompson when he described it as if 'Nauru House [a large building in Collins Street in the Melbourne CBD] fell on me'. Newman, cited in Mike Sheahan, 'Sam's Town: Newman Still Hurting for his Cats', *Herald Sun*, 8 September 2007, p. 39.

<sup>480</sup> Newman, cited in Sheahan, *Open Mike*, Fox Footy, 2 May 2013.

<sup>481</sup> Mark Fine, *Evenings with Finey*, 1116 SEN, 26 June 2014.

defender Tom Lonergan, who almost died on the operating table when he lost a kidney after his courageous collision with Melbourne's Brad Miller at Geelong in 2006. An appropriate parallel with Newman's injury is that which was suffered by Collingwood FC full forward Peter McKenna, who kicked 838 goals from 1965 to 1975.<sup>482</sup> As background, during 1975 McKenna's form declined to such an extent that he was relegated from the senior team. During his first game for the Reserves after his return from injury, McKenna was kned in the back. He recalled in a personal communication that 'I was rushed to hospital and lost part of a kidney (the opposite one of Sam's). But Sam was about 21 years old, but I was old when we had our kidney operations'.<sup>483</sup> This recollection tallied with a story by Melbourne sports journalist, Scot Palmer, who wrote: 'The brilliant career of Collingwood goal kicker Peter McKenna, 29, could have ended tragically in front of empty stands at VFL Park, Waverley ... Dropped from the seniors, McKenna was hurt in a flying pack. He ruptured a kidney when struck by a knee against South Melbourne'.<sup>484</sup>

### **7.9 Newman's Return to Football from 1968**

With a large measure of courage, Newman returned to his best during 1968. *Footy Week* noted early in the season that 'Johnny Newman, back after his kidney operation, is better than ever. He seemed to possess unlimited energy. Yes, Newman is the new

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<sup>482</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 586.

<sup>483</sup> Peter McKenna, personal communication 10 November 2012.

<sup>484</sup> Scot Palmer, 'McKenna has Operation', *Sunday Press*, 22 June 1975, p. 54.

Big Cat'.<sup>485</sup> Football journalists believed that Newman filled the enormous gap left by Farmer. For example, the 1958 Brownlow medallist Neil Roberts, later a writer for the *Sporting Globe*, reported Geelong's win over Melbourne FC as follows: 'Newman's long handpass to [Gordon] Hynes for goal was Farmer at his best'.<sup>486</sup> Sports journalist John Rice (the brother of Geelong Football Club 1963 Premiership rover, Colin Rice) described Newman's mobility and athleticism for a big man in Geelong FC's win over Fitzroy at Brunswick Street Oval: 'Newman booted a badly needed goal for the Cats after dodging like a rover and reducing the deficit to three points'.<sup>487</sup>

Former Richmond FC ruckman and hard man and *World of Sport* football panellist, Jack Dyer, in an opinion column, was eloquent at disparaging the Farmer legacy while extolling the value and importance of Newman as Geelong FC's first ruckman in 1968. In the newspaper, *Truth*, Dyer maintained: 'Most sides would be in mourning if they lost a player of Polly's class and their play would suffer because of his loss. But with Geelong it's as though he never existed. John Newman has picked up the torch and he is running the ruck as strongly as Polly ever did. And whether or not his kidneys are 100 per cent, his play is all Geelong could want'.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Harry Beitzel, 'Newman: The New Big Cat', *Footy Week*, vol. 4, no. 3, 29 April 1968, p. 7. Newman would accept 'the Big Cat' as one of the nicknames used by Farmer when he was at the club.

<sup>486</sup> Neil Roberts, 'Cats by a Whisker', *Sporting Globe*, 11 May 1968, p. 9.

<sup>487</sup> John Rice, 'Geelong Wins Comfortably', *Sporting Globe*, 17 August 1968, p. 10.

<sup>488</sup> Jack Dyer, 'Cats Better Despite Farmer', *Truth*, 15 June 1968, p. 14.

Newman played every game in 1968 and subsequently won Geelong FC's Best and Fairest award. He also played in Geelong's first Semi Final win over St Kilda by 44 points. However, the Cats lost the preliminary final to Essendon FC by 24 points.<sup>489</sup>

The 1969 season proved an enriching year for both the Geelong FC, and some examples from the press highlight Newman's contribution. For example, in *Footy Week*, Tom 'The Turk' Lahiff reported on a draw between Essendon and Geelong at the Essendon FC's home ground of Windy Hill, naming Newman and team mate Ian Hampshire as 'too strong for [Essendon's] Don McKenzie'.<sup>490</sup> Newman's importance to the team was soon acknowledged, to the point where journalist Pat Scanlan argued that Geelong relied 'too much' on Newman in the ruck.<sup>491</sup> During 1969, Newman appeared in all 20 matches and Geelong finished the home and away season in third place with thirteen wins, six losses and a draw. The eventual premiers, Richmond, humiliated Geelong by 118 points in the first Semi Final at the MCG. Three times Richmond FC premiership ruckman, Michael Green, played 146 games in two separate stints at the club (1966-1971 and 1973-1975). He stood at 193 centimetres and weighed 94.5 kilograms, and played against Newman in the ruck many times during his career.<sup>492</sup> Green recalls 'Newman was not a tall ruckman. He was around 190 centimetres and about 94 kilograms. But he had a great leap. At centre bounces,

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<sup>489</sup> Lovett, *AFL Record Season Guide*, p. 953.

<sup>490</sup> Tom Lahiff, 'Draw at Windy Hill', *Footy Week*, 14 April 1969, p. 5.

<sup>491</sup> Pat Scanlan, 'Cats Now on Top of Ladder', *Footy Week*, 5 May 1969, p. 2.

<sup>492</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 339.



he had a good spring that made him appear taller than he was. Also, he was effective when the ball was on the deck. Newman was a gifted player who was also tough'.<sup>493</sup>

Newman's rich vein of form continued in 1970 and it was clear that he was quickly earning a reputation as an astute ruckman. For instance, Usher noted in *Football Life* in 1970 that 'He [Newman] has mastered the art of palming the ball to his rovers with either hand. He is a strong mark and has the intelligence to sum up a situation quickly'.<sup>494</sup> Moreover, Newman's imitation of Farmer's creative rucking principles was clear. In fact, Newman would later, as a ruck coach, teach the Farmer principle of palming with either hand to Essendon FC's long-serving ruckman Simon Madden.<sup>495</sup> Newman's serious injury was often referred to in the press and even in 1970, several years after his surgery, Usher claimed that Newman displayed 'his admirable courage to resume in fine style after losing the upper portion of his right kidney'.<sup>496</sup>

In 1970 Newman played all 21 games as a ruckman. Many years later, in a newspaper column, he claimed that his style of play resulted in 'fifty collisions per match with an opponent'.<sup>497</sup> Geelong FC finished the season in fifth place with

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<sup>493</sup> Michael Green, personal communication, 7 May 2015.

<sup>494</sup> Usher, 'A Cat Named Sam', p. 16.

<sup>495</sup> As an aside, a Scanlen's bubble gum picture from 1976 shows the mature champion Newman, wearing a long-sleeved Geelong FC jumper, about to handball with his left hand, perhaps in imitation of, and respect for, Farmer who had departed Geelong almost a decade earlier.

<sup>496</sup> Usher, 'A Cat Named Sam', p. 15.

<sup>497</sup> Sam Newman, 'Talls On the Ball', *Sun*, 27 July 1988, p. 80.

twelve wins and ten losses, and the Cats missed the finals for the first time since 1962.<sup>498</sup> However, Newman's good form was reflected by the fact that he ran third in the club's Best and Fairest award.

The 1971 season was, not coincidentally, disastrous for both Newman and the Geelong FC. The team finished the year in tenth place, and its points against showed that the Cats' defence leaked too many goals.<sup>499</sup> The position on the ladder was also shown by the fact that Newman only played three games due to twice breaking his wrist.<sup>500</sup>

In 1972, Newman suffered a number of ankle injuries that would also hinder him later in his career, but his courage allowed him to play 17 games for the season. A few years later, Usher explained that at the end of the season, in November 1972, Newman was 'back in hospital to have ligaments repaired in his ankle', and the *Football Life* journalist exclaimed that it was 'No wonder he was dubbed "The Cat with Nine Lives"' as Newman lay back in a hospital bed with his left leg in plaster from the toes to the knee'.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Lovett, *AFL Record Season Guide 2016*, p. 955.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 956.

<sup>500</sup> Ian Cover, 'Road to 300', *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 August 1980, p. 52. *Football Life* advanced that 'season 1971 saw Newman twice break his arm'. See Usher, 'Geelong's John Newman', p. 25. His two arm breaks appear different from Cover's view that Newman suffered two wrist fractures.

<sup>501</sup> Usher, 'Geelong's John Newman', p. 25.

### 7.10 Newman Under the Coaching of Farmer

In 1973, Farmer returned from Perth to coach the Geelong FC. He replaced Bill McMaster, who was essentially an interim coach.<sup>502</sup> At the time, only the most financially secure clubs could afford star players. Clubs like Geelong, who were in debt during this period, could generally only afford young and inexperienced footballers, which coincided with Farmer's tenure as coach. This a period is briefly outlined below.

In retirement, Newman expressed the view that 'Polly was easily frustrated as a coach because he was so demanding'.<sup>503</sup> In 1973, Geelong played Hawthorn in a pre-season practice match in Darwin. Upon the Geelong players returning to their hotel, most players sat around the hotel swimming pool. Newman, seemingly oblivious to the danger, 'was so keen to hit the water that he strolled on to the first floor balcony, climbed over the railing and dived in. He missed the edge of the pool by centimetres'.<sup>504</sup> Geelong finished the 1973 season second last on the ladder with just six wins and sixteen losses. The Cats could not easily score goals, and the totals kicked against them indicated that the team's defence was inadequate.<sup>505</sup>

During the pre-season of 1974, Farmer insisted on a heavy fitness regimen, and he arranged a team training camp at Bells Beach on the Surf Coast of Victoria.

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<sup>502</sup> Hutchinson, *Cats' Tales*, p. 311.

<sup>503</sup> Newman, cited in Geoff Poulter and Mark Fine, interview with 'Sam' Newman on 1116 SEN, 23 September 2009.

<sup>504</sup> Davie and the Geelong Cats, *Cats on the Prowl*, p. 62.

<sup>505</sup> Lovett, *AFL Record Season Guide 2016*, p. 958.

According to one of the participants, ‘Five relay teams would compete against each other. John Scarlett and Kenny Newland got a lift in a car and somehow avoided the relays. Polly was really angry when he found out what Johnny and Kenny had done’.<sup>506</sup> In the meantime, Geelong and Richmond engineered a player swap. Geelong’s Gareth Andrews transferred to the Richmond FC because at Geelong, according to Andrews himself, he ‘was getting on badly with Polly’.<sup>507</sup> As part of the swap, Rex Hunt, with a history of strong contested marking, crossed from Richmond FC to Geelong FC. In a further change, Newman was named Geelong’s new captain, and Wayne Closter became his vice captain.<sup>508</sup> The new skipper, aged 28, was at a time in his life when many footballers were on the cusp of retirement. However, the thinking may have been that Newman would provide leadership and experience to a group of young Geelong players. However, Newman’s form and captaincy were not enough to lift the team into the finals. At the end of 1974 Geelong finished sixth, two games and percentage outside the five teams that now contested the finals series. Nonetheless, Newman’s first season as captain was considered a success, despite ongoing problems with his ankles that affected his fitness.

The Geelong FC’s 116<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report and Balance Sheet* for 1974 summarised the season of ‘Captain Mr John Newman’ with a positive overview. The *Report* stated: ‘The second successive captain to be Geelong born and Geelong Grammar School educated, John Newman overcame nagging injuries to give courageous leadership.

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<sup>506</sup> Ian Lewtas, personal communication, 20 August 2012.

<sup>507</sup> Andrews, cited in David Rhys-Jones, ‘Travelling Man’, *Inside Football*, vol. 45, no. 4, 5-11 March 2015, p. 31.

<sup>508</sup> Hutchinson, *Cats’ Tales*, p. 312.

His own personal efforts won him the runner up position in the Best and Fairest Award<sup>509</sup>.

### **7.11 Conclusions**

This chapter has explored Newman's career as a player for Geelong FC and the way he not only became a star player, but also became notable for his showmanship and talent for entertaining more generally. As a player, Newman consciously modelled his game on Farmer, who influenced his development as a footballer. However, Newman suffered a serious kidney injury in 1967 that threatened his football career. Undaunted, he returned to the game in 1968 as Geelong's lead ruckman and won his club's Best and Fairest award, a testament to his ability and courage. He was also appointed captain of the team in 1974, the year after Farmer returned to become coach of the Geelong FC.

The next chapter will discuss how, during the 1970s, global economic downturns such as the first oil price shock and less demand for local woollen products had consequent detrimental effects on the City of Geelong, causing some industries to shut their doors for good as well as a major employer, the Ford Motor Company forced to reduce its work force. These reductions produced unemployment and empty shops in the Geelong CBD. The chapter will also discuss Newman's football career during the 1970s and will closely compare his status as a champion with the Geelong FC with the economic malaise that faced many working people of Geelong through no fault of their own.

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<sup>509</sup> Geelong FC, *Annual Report and Balance Sheet*, 1974, p. 6.

## Chapter Eight

### The City of Geelong During Newman's Football Career, 1975-1980

From the 1960s to the 1980s ... [a] sharp rise in unemployment in the Geelong region ... was linked to tariff changes.

Roy Hay and G.A. Mclean<sup>510</sup>

#### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates and evaluates social, economic and historical aspects of the City of Geelong during the 1960s and 1970s. It begins with an overview of a period of relative prosperity, and is followed by consideration of a period of decline when global economic conditions began to adversely affect the City. The relationship of the City with its elite football club, and with its increasingly prominent player, Newman, will also be explored. However, it should be noted that Newman, the subject of this thesis, was largely insulated from economic hardship during this period because he had regular employment (and acknowledged status) with the Geelong FC. This chapter also reflects on the context and circumstances by which Newman established himself as a professional footballer in the VFL during this period.

#### 8.2 Geelong's Economy During the 1960s and 1970s

The difficulties of the Australian post-war economy have been addressed by a number of economic historians. In a recent collection of papers devoted to the history of

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<sup>510</sup> Roy Hay and G.A. McLean, *Business and Industry, Geelong: A History of the Geelong Chamber of Commerce 1853-2005* (Teesdale: Sports and Editorial Services Australia in Association with the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, 2006), p. 63.

Australia, several chapters provide insights into how the economy fared during the 1970s. For example, Simon Ville explains that

In the 1950s and 1960s industrial expansion was viewed as the path to further economic development in Australia, which fostered increases in protection through quotas and local content requirements to support import substitution in particular industries'.<sup>511</sup> More specifically, he adds 'By the end of the 1960s, manufacturing's share of GDP [Gross Domestic Product] had begun to decline. Tariff policy played a complex role: on the one hand, the shelter provided by persistently high tariff levels, peaking in the 1970s, weakened underlying international competitiveness; on the other, subsequent tariff reductions pushed domestic producers out of business.'<sup>512</sup>

There were also other factors at work, such as the emergence of new industrial nations in Southeast Asia, and by the 1970s and 1980s there were thus difficult international trading conditions that were having an impact across the Australia economy.<sup>513</sup> It was inevitable, then, that Geelong's economy was also adversely affected by these wider developments outside of its control.

A local historian and archivist, Norman Houghton, has detailed the growth of Geelong during the 1960s and 1970s. He claims that development occurred 'mostly in the

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<sup>511</sup> Simon Ville, 'The Economy', in Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Cambridge History of Australia*, volume 2 (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 384.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 385-386. See also James Walter, 'Growth Resumed', in Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Cambridge History of Australia*, volume 2 (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 162-186.

outer areas of Lara, Lovely Banks, Corio, Highton, Belmont, Leopold and Newcomb, and at such a pitch that in February 1967, for example, Geelong accounted for twenty one per cent of private home development in non-metropolitan Victoria'.<sup>514</sup> This period also saw the development of local educational facilities. In the 1970s these included the establishment of the Marcus Oldham Agricultural College and the affiliation of the Gordon Institute with the Victorian Institute of Colleges.<sup>515</sup>

For a century, Geelong was the buoyant hub of the wool industry and wool stores sourced from Victoria's western district, however from the 1970s, despite some small pockets of growth, it began to suffer general decline. Various commentators have assessed this specific situation, writing that there was also a 'knock on' effect to a range of companies and employers, including, for example, International Harvester, whose factory in North Geelong eventually closed its doors as the demand for tractors and other farm equipment decreased during the 1970s. Nigel Bowen elucidated International Harvester's problems from the 1970s by suggesting that it suffered 'an on-going period of contraction chiefly as a result of tariff reduction and globalisation'.<sup>516</sup>

In 2014, the veteran *Geelong Advertiser* journalist, Daryl McLure, reflected on the economic circumstances of Geelong in the past 30 years. He noted that tens of

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<sup>514</sup> Norman Houghton, *Geelong: A Short History* (Geelong: Geelong Heritage Centre, 2003), p. 30.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

<sup>516</sup> Nigel Bowen, 'Geelong Our Economic Bellwether', available at [www.australiaunlimited.com/business/geelong/-our-economic-bellwether](http://www.australiaunlimited.com/business/geelong/-our-economic-bellwether) (accessed 8 August 2016).



thousands of jobs had been shed in the provincial city, evoking the memory of some well-known companies:

Remember the demise of the textile, clothing and footwear industry, International Harvester, Cresco Fertilisers, Jackson's Meatworks and Australian Portland Cement? They've all gone, as have many small and unsung businesses. Ford's workforce was about 6000 in 1980 but it is about 1000 today, and the components industry has largely disappeared. During that period, this community was also hit by the Pyramid [building society] collapse.<sup>517</sup>

Button, reflecting on the history of the town as background to his evaluation of the Geelong FC, echoes McLure's commentary, highlighting that: 'As factories like International Harvester and Jackson's Meatworks closed and Ford cut jobs, people began talking of Geelong's sunset businesses: wool, textiles, motor cars'.<sup>518</sup> Continuing his analysis. Houghton also added that the 'downturn in the economy, Federal Government policy changes on tariff protection and global trends in global manufacture and service industries exposed structural weaknesses in Geelong industry'.<sup>519</sup> In another publication, he clarified that 'manufacturing was in relative decline, although in absolute terms, it continued to be the major employment sector at

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<sup>517</sup> Daryl McLure, 'Why I'm Looking Forward to Geelong's New Age', *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 April 2014, p. 16.

<sup>518</sup> Button, *Comeback*, p. 62.

<sup>519</sup> Norman Houghton, 'The Story of Geelong', available at [www.geelongaustralia.com.au/heritage/history/article/item](http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/heritage/history/article/item) (accessed 1 December 2016).

around 30 per cent of the workforce'.<sup>520</sup> Like Houghton, Roy Hay and G.A. McLean contend that from the 1970s, 'tariff cuts introduced by the Federal Labor Government ... [led to] A sharp rise in unemployment in the Geelong region'.<sup>521</sup> They argue that in the mid-1970s, 'the combined effects of the first oil price shock and the decline in the rate of growth of the world economy, coupled with the appearance of higher unemployment and higher rates of inflation had an impact on the Geelong economy'.<sup>522</sup> In this context, Button refers to how the population of Geelong exhibits specific characteristics: 'The Census shows that Geelong is poorer, older and less well educated, with more unemployment and one-parent families than Melbourne or Australia overall ... Only a quarter of Geelong people have both parents born overseas: nearly half of Melbourne people do. The proportion of Indigenous people in Geelong, though, is twice as high as it is in Melbourne'.<sup>523</sup>

From the middle of the 1970s, stores and shops closed in the Geelong CBD from a combination of high rents and a lack of custom. According to Houghton, 'Many empty shops were left behind in the southern part of the CBD' and the preference for suburban shopping seemed to have taken over.<sup>524</sup> Therefore, closed CBD businesses produced another corpus of unemployed. Unemployment, in particular, for young

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<sup>520</sup> Houghton, *Geelong*, p. 32.

<sup>521</sup> Hay and McLean, *Business and Industry, Geelong*, p. 63.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>523</sup> Button, *Comeback*, p. 16.

<sup>524</sup> Houghton, *Geelong*, p. 32.

school leavers began to rise and social problems ‘relating to alcohol and drug abuse’ became evident among teenagers.<sup>525</sup>

A small ray of hope during the economic gloom was the creation of Deakin University, and McLure points out that in 1974 the tertiary institution enrolled 2,445 students at the Waurin Ponds campus.<sup>526</sup> The development of the campus of this university was consistent with industry’s need for highly educated graduates with a vocational focus.<sup>527</sup>

During the period from 1960 to 1970, further social, economic and technological developments occurred. For example, Houghton indicates that the administration of the City required ‘more sophisticated tools ... and in 1969 Geelong West became the first municipality to use computer services’. The largest municipality, Corio, followed suit in 1971.<sup>528</sup> The decade between 1970 and 1980, also witnessed the construction of new buildings and the development of new infrastructure. The Australian National Health Laboratory complex, the Performing Arts Centre, and a new Institute of Educational Administration were all initiated in this period.

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid. Even in 2017, former Victorian premier, Jeff Kennett, acknowledged youth unemployment in Geelong. He pointed out: ‘Geelong has a very high unemployment rate, particularly among its youth ...’. Chad Van Estrop, ‘Geelong Dudded on Convention Centre, Says Kennett’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 4 May 2017, p. 6.

<sup>526</sup> McLure, ‘Why I’m Looking Forward to Geelong’s New Age’, p. 16.

<sup>527</sup> As Hay and McLean accept, Deakin University was founded ‘drawing in part on existing resources of the Gordon Institute and the State College of Victoria at Vines Road’. See Hay and McLean, *Business and Industry, Geelong*, p. 61.

<sup>528</sup> Houghton, *Geelong*, p. 30.

Importantly, in Houghton's opinion, 'A partial solution to the problem of local government fragmentation in Geelong was the establishment of the Geelong Regional Commission in 1977 to oversee unified planning and development of policies'.<sup>529</sup>

Another positive development during this harsh economic period was the Ford Motor Company's continued sponsorship of the Geelong Cats, with former Geelong FC president, Frank Costa, confirming that the Ford Motor Company, in particular, the plant in north Geelong, has been the club's major sponsor since 1925.<sup>530</sup> As recently as 2015, journalist Nick Wade reminded his readers of the longevity of this relationship, noting that 'Geelong [FC] has today unveiled a long-term extension of its major sponsorship with Ford until the end of 2020. It takes Ford's sponsorship of the Cats to 95 consecutive seasons – a mark Ford hopes will be ratified by [The] Guinness [Book of Records] as a world record'.<sup>531</sup>

These developments can be juxtaposed with observations on changes in the management and governance of Australian Rules football during this period. For example, according to Robert Pascoe, during the 1970s 'There were several signs of a new corporate mentality in the VFL ... by introducing new mechanisms for raising revenue, including reserved seating and private boxes ... Clubs also began hunting

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<sup>529</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>530</sup> Frank Costa, personal communication, 27 March 2015.

<sup>531</sup> Nick Wade, 'Ford Extends World Record Sponsorship with Geelong Cats to 95 Seasons', *Geelong Advertiser*, 10 December 2015, p. 3.

sponsorships ...<sup>532</sup> In his view, the recruiting of expensive League footballers at this time ‘merely added to wage inflation’.<sup>533</sup> As Hess et al. note, ‘The 1970s was a chaotic and unstable period in all sorts of ways’.<sup>534</sup> In a wider context, they argue that Australian Rules football was actually at the frontline of the commercialisation of sport in Australia.<sup>535</sup> They also assert that in the 1970s, in particular, ‘players established greater bargaining and financial power’, an observation that seems to ring true in Newman’s case, despite the general downturn in the economy at this time.<sup>536</sup>

Essentially, through the 1960s and 1970s, the Geelong FC was a microcosm of the wider economy and the club began to look inward during these troubled economic times. As Button observes ‘For most of the 1970s nearly all its best players came from in and around Geelong: the Nankervis brothers, Sam Newman, David Clarke, Gareth Andrews, Geoff Ainsworth, Rod Blake, Larry Donohue, Paul Sarah and Terry Bright’.<sup>537</sup> However, from 1964 to 1980, Newman flourished as a ruckman with the Geelong FC and as a champion footballer he was both insulated and removed from the difficulties faced by the Geelong economy during this period. In fact, he was largely separated from crises in the Geelong economy from the 1970s because, as a champion footballer, he enjoyed regular employment until he became a full time, professional player during his last three seasons with the Geelong FC.

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<sup>532</sup> Robert Pascoe, *The Winter Game: The Complete History of Australian Football* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1995), pp. 183-184.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>534</sup> Hess et al., *A National Game*, p. 257.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> Button, *Comeback*, p. 63.

### 8.3 Mature Newman: A Football Showman, 1975

The year 1975 was a time of change for Newman. He remained as captain and Rex Hunt was named his deputy.<sup>538</sup> As mentioned elsewhere, Newman represented Victoria eight times in state games. However, playing amongst the best footballers in the game, Newman appeared to be a small fish in a big pond. As the Geelong FC captain, though, Newman had a propensity for showmanship that was illustrated by an all too infrequent drop-kick goal. As one journalist observed ‘It was a delight to see a couple of drop-kicks from Newman and [Bryan] Cousins sail through for majors’.<sup>539</sup> But as Geelong FC captain, Newman was reported, not surprisingly, for abusive language in Round 13, 3 July 1975, against Richmond. The League tribunal found Newman guilty and suspended him for two matches.<sup>540</sup> In this situation, Newman produced a torrent of colourful terminology directed at a goal umpire. As a book on the history of umpiring relates, ‘Geelong captain John Sam Newman was suspended for two matches after being found guilty of calling goal umpire, Ralph Wigg “you stupid !!!\*\*\*\* idiot”’. The book records that ‘A complaint by Newman and Geelong was rejected after the Umpires Association spoke to Wigg and accepted his explanation. Geelong and Newman consulted their solicitors concerning further action, while Newman maintained Wigg told him to get [expletive deleted]’.<sup>541</sup> As

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<sup>538</sup> Hutchinson, *Cats’ Tales*, p. 313. After retiring from football, both Newman and Hunt would forge prominent careers in the football media.

<sup>539</sup> Ken Miles, ‘Cats Grab Last Minute Win’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 June 1975, p. 34.

<sup>540</sup> Col Hutchinson, ‘John “Sam” Newman’, AFL printout, 24 April 2012.

<sup>541</sup> David Flegg, ‘The Politics of Umpiring: Power Relations in Action’, in Sue Harvey (ed.), *The Man in White: 100 Years of Umpiring with the VFL and the AFL* (Docklands: JoJo Publishing, 2009), p. 96. Newman seemed incapable of controlling

club skipper, Newman should have demonstrated a higher standard of behaviour for young teammates.

Newman's solid form continued during the 1975 season and he exhibited his usual range of talents and endurance as an inspiring skipper, despite the suspension for abusive language. For example, the *Geelong Advertiser's*, Ken Miles observed: 'Captain John Newman completely dominated the ruck, marked well around the ground and was always turning up in the goal square to take the saving mark'.<sup>542</sup> These efforts are all the more meritorious given that Newman continued to endure serious pain in his ankles despite several operations. His former teammate, Ian Lewtas, remembered the circumstances as follows:

Sam had loose ankles, I had tight ankles. The club doctor, Kevin Threlfall, travelled to the United States and came back with an apparatus known as a 'heel lock' favoured by American professional footballers at the time. This 'lock' gave 'Sam and me some relief to our ankles though it reduced our mobility'.<sup>543</sup>

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his tongue. However, his propensity for verbal abuse would later generate a rewarding livelihood with his catch-cry of 'You idiot!' in football entertainment on television in prime time.

<sup>542</sup> Ken Miles, 'Season Ends on a Good Note', *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 September 1975, p. 36.

<sup>543</sup> Ian Lewtas, personal communication, 20 August 2012. St Kilda FC's Carl Ditterich, a contemporary of Newman, also had major ankle injuries. He recalled that 'the St Kilda Football Club surgeon, Owen Deacon, operated on my ankles several times. But if I was walking down the street and tripped over a stone, my ankles would be back hurting again'. Carl Ditterich, personal communication, 17 March 2015.

Geelong FC completed the 1975 season in second last place on the ladder with seven wins and fifteen losses. As club captain, Newman won Geelong's Best and Fairest award, but it was hardly a comfort following the team's poor season. In the players' end of season trip to Queensland's Gold Coast, Newman had no interest in drinking beer, instead, preferring the tennis court. Team mate Lewtas attests that he, Newman, Robert 'Scratcher' Neal, and Terry Bright played a lot of doubles matches during the Gold Coast visit, and he observes that: 'Sam was very competitive at whatever game he played. He always had great hand-eye co-ordination'.<sup>544</sup>

#### **8.4 Attempts to Transfer to Other Clubs, 1976**

*Football Life* recorded that in the weeks leading up to the 1976 football season there was 'great consternation over the Geelong captaincy'. The magazine's journalist, Usher, explained the dramatic circumstances as follows:

John Newman, the side's skipper for the last two years, continued to hold out for clearance to Richmond, so finally, a week before the first game, Geelong took action. The club sacked Newman as captain after 41 games and gave the leadership role to defender Bruce Nankervis with David Clarke [senior] as

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<sup>544</sup> Ian Lewtas, personal communication, 20 August 2012. In 2009, it was the public 'Sam' Newman who, with *The Footy Show* colleagues, was intending to chat with people in line for the tennis at Wimbledon. Newman queried: '[Why would you] constantly bother lining up for the best part of your life to watch a pretty boring sport in tennis?'. Simon Yeaman, 'Kicking the Brits', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 27 June 2001, p. 49. The implication here is that Newman would rather play tennis than watch it. However, 'Sam' Newman, according to his public image, promotes a dislike of all tennis.



vice captain. On the eve of the season, Newman gave up his attempts for a clearance and returned to Geelong.<sup>545</sup>

Former Geelong full forward Larry Donohue was a contemporary of Newman's. A question and answer interview by David Rhys-Jones was titled 'Cats' Colossus', and Donohue was asked to reflect on the above episode:

Rhys-Jones: At the start of 1976 with Sam Newman seemingly gone, you were said to have your sights on playing in the ruck. Sam was going to leave for Richmond wasn't he?

Donohue: That was the talk of the time that Sam was going to Richmond. Collingwood was interested too. Sam was a devoted Geelong man. So I don't know what transpired there. My pre-season training was aimed at running around in the ruck because I had done a fair bit of ruckwork in the Under 19s. Sam trained twice before the first game then rocked up [against South Melbourne at the Lake Oval] and was best on ground.

Rhys-Jones: It was reported you said to Rod Olsson [Geelong FC senior coach 1976-1979]. What have I done all this running for – to be full forward?

Donohue: That's right, because most of those games I played in 1975 I changed with Sam in the forward pocket.<sup>546</sup>

*Football Life* supported Donohue's contention:

John Newman dropped plans to quit the [Geelong Football] club and play with a Melbourne-based team. Despite lacking condition, Newman played in the opening game against South Melbourne at the Albert Ground [the Lake Oval, the usual name for South Melbourne home ground] and he finished the day

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<sup>545</sup> Jim Usher, 'Bruce Nankervis Geelong', *Football Life* (May 1976), p. 24.

<sup>546</sup> David Rhys-Jones, 'Cats Colossus', *Inside Football*, vol. 41, no. 20, 22 June 2011, p. 28.

best on ground, a performance he has repeated many times throughout the year. Newman's decision to stay with Geelong has played a vital role in their success this year, as an addition to his outstanding ruck play, his mere presence on the field, despite the physical handicap of fatigued ankles, has served as a tremendous inspiration to the younger players in the team.<sup>547</sup>

Several factors were involved with Newman wanting to leave Geelong FC. One of them was that Newman had to train two days a week and play often in Geelong. Jim Main's interpretation is that Geelong 'pulled off one of football's most remarkable gambles in the opening game of the 1976 season against South Melbourne Football Club at the Lake Oval'. He says that '... Newman who had been fighting for a clearance to Richmond, had decided to stick with the Cats ... and after missing training with the club right up until the start of the season, took his place in the Geelong side against South. He destroyed South in the ruck'.<sup>548</sup> Main also argues that it is also possible that Geelong FC administrators were aware of Newman's attempt to transfer to the Richmond while Collingwood also made Newman an offer. In this scenario, perhaps Newman was exhibiting a degree of self-aggrandizement, unbecoming of a skipper and therefore the Cats sacked Newman as captain. Main also highlights that Newman had been 'crippled by severe ankle injuries over the past few seasons' and, despite surgery, had 'to wear special protective gear around his ankles in each match'. He adds that Newman was in business with former Geelong and North Melbourne full forward Doug Wade, and, at the time, lived and worked in

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<sup>547</sup> Usher, 'The Cat Approach', p. 23.

<sup>548</sup> Jim Main, *Victorian Australian Rules Superstars* (Sydney: Murray Publishers, 1978), p. 99.

Melbourne.<sup>549</sup> Critically, Main notes that ‘He [Newman] argued with the Cats that he was sick and tired of tearing up and down the Geelong road’.<sup>550</sup>

Bob Cain, writing in the *Truth*, set out the circumstances of the offers, and counter-counter offers, for Newman’s services. He states:

For Newman, the Geelong Football Club captain, Collingwood FC put in an offer of \$20,000 and ... [were] front-runners to get him until Richmond FC threw in a bid of 20,000 plus. However, Newman, 30, has a three-year contract with Geelong that still has one year to run. So Newman will play out his contract with Geelong, which will place him in a better position to get a clearance in 1977. Newman was considering standing out of football and, if necessary, would have appealed to the VFL Appeals Board. Newman, who is a member of the 200 Club, had a great season with Geelong last year [1975], winning their best and fairest award. He also shared the Gold Cazaly award with Leigh Matthews [of the Hawthorn Football Club]. One of the two clubs in the front-running position for Newman has not given up hope of getting him next year. They have approached Geelong with a suggestion that Newman be allowed to do all his training with them. This means that Newman will only have to travel to Geelong to play in home games’.<sup>551</sup>

The retired Newman shed light on the background to his attempted transfer to the Richmond FC. He recalled that Richmond’s delegation consisted of senior coach Tom Hafey, secretary Graeme Richmond and president Ian Wilson. Newman says that ‘They advised me that if I stood out of football for a year Richmond would pay

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<sup>549</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> Bob Cain, ‘Newman to Stay with Cats’, *Truth*, 17 January 1976, p. 40.

me in full. But I loved playing the game'.<sup>552</sup> In the same interview, Newman also related that 'The president of the VFL, Sir Maurice Nathan, called me into his office at Clausen's Furniture Store in Bourke Street [Melbourne] and told me that if you take the VFL to court you will win but we don't want our game run by court decisions. I took that information seriously and to heart'.<sup>553</sup> Clearly, Newman was reluctant to stand out of football for a season and he may have stuck with Geelong to preserve his reputation as a one-club player.

However, according to Collins, Newman's four hour round trip to and from Geelong became so laborious that he gained the permission of Hawthorn coach, John Kennedy, to train with the Hawks while playing with the Geelong Cats on Saturdays.<sup>554</sup> After retirement from football for 35 years, John Newman recalled that he trained with Hawthorn 'several times', claiming that he 'ran laps while Hawthorn senior coach, John Kennedy senior talked tactics with his players'.<sup>555</sup>

In mid-1976, Newman represented Victoria in interstate football. Yet he continued to experience ankle problems. Courageously, he played all 23 games. Geelong FC finished the season in fourth place on the ladder with 12 wins and 10 losses and thus qualified for the finals, defeating Footscray in the elimination final by seven points at

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<sup>552</sup> 'Sam' Newman, interviewed by Garry Lyon and Bill Brownless, *The Sunday Footy Show*, 23 June 2013.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> Collins, 'Sam Newman', p. 197.

<sup>555</sup> Newman, cited on Mike Sheahan, *Open Mike*, FOX Footy, 22 March 2016. Newman was interviewed with fellow septuagenarians, Peter Hudson and Barry Richardson (both premiership players).

Waverley, with Newman named in the best players. However, North Melbourne defeated Geelong by 33 points at the MCG in the following week. Of Newman, the Geelong FC *Annual Report and Balance Sheet* of 23 December 1976 simply noted ‘John Newman VFL Representative 1976. Third Best and Fairest’.<sup>556</sup>

### **8.5 Adoption of Trademark White Football Boots**

The 1976 season had another effect on Newman. While most League players wore traditional black football boots, Newman was anxious to wear new boots for pre-season training. Pacific Dunlop, makers of Adidas football boots at the time, arranged to have Newman wear white low-cut cricket boots but with football stops on a moulded sole. The brand’s three stripes were dark blue, Geelong FC colours. Newman, a nascent showman, would wear white boots until he retired. Veteran radio broadcaster, Steve Price, observed that Newman was ‘the first person to be a flamboyant marketer. He was the first player to wear white football boots and by marketing yourself on the field you would then get success off the field in other areas’.<sup>557</sup> In the mid-1970s, Collingwood FC star, Phil Carman, also favoured white boots, and during the late 1970s, many Richmond FC players employed yellow boots with a black Puma flash, their team colours. Moreover, most Hawthorn FC players sought yellow boots with a brown Puma flash, their team colours. Indeed, many modern day footballers prefer white boots. So in some respects, Newman was a pioneer. Rohan Connolly, an experienced sports journalist with the *Age*, had a different interpretation. A guest on the summer edition of ‘Hungry for Sport’, he and

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<sup>556</sup> Geelong Football Club, *Annual Report and Balance Sheet*, 1976, p. 7.

<sup>557</sup> Price, cited in ABC, ‘The Trouble with Sam’, *Australian Story*, ABC1 Television, 6 July 2000.

host Tony Schibeci discussed trademarks in sport, such as former Test cricket fast bowler Dennis Lillee's extravagant gold neck jewellery. Connolly asserted that Newman started wearing white boots when he could not get a game.<sup>558</sup> On the other hand, Newman's contemporary, Barry Round, reflected: 'Sam's white boots were unusual at the time because he understood that, in the mid-1970s, football was entertainment'.<sup>559</sup>

In 1995, for the first time, Newman disclosed in the magazine *Inside Sport*: 'I got paid to wear them [white football boots]. I used to wear Adidas boots. We were training in the summer and I rang for a pair and they [Adidas] only had the white leather that they made cricket boots out of at that stage. I had so much reaction to them that they paid me to wear them [white boots]'.<sup>560</sup> Newman was not only known for his white football boots, but illuminated his blossoming career when there was a general rise in salaries for a group of high-profile footballers. At the Collingwood FC, for example, Pascoe indicated that as the 1976 season opened, dissension within the club reached 'a new zenith'. He relates that players were accused of not passing the ball to the 'over-paid Fabulous Phil Carman'.<sup>561</sup> On this basis, it is possible that Newman may also have created some angst among lesser paid team mates at the Geelong FC, who were perhaps jealous of his celebrity status and high salary, and felt put out by his wearing

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<sup>558</sup> Connolly, cited on Tony Schibeci, 'Hungry for Sport', 1116 SEN, 9 January 2014.

<sup>559</sup> Barry Round, personal communication, 11 June 2015.

<sup>560</sup> Newman, cited in Stapleton, 'Never Say Never', p. 136.

<sup>561</sup> Pascoe, *The Winter Game*, p. 188. For more on the career of Phil Carman, see Matt Watson, *Fabulous Phil: The Phil Carman Story* (Melbourne: Brolga Publishing, 2017).

of flamboyant white boots underwritten by a wealthy sponsor. The evidence seems to indicate that Newman appears to have worn a new pair of white football boots for the beginning of each of his last five seasons.<sup>562</sup>

## 8.6 Final Football Seasons

By the late 1970s, Newman was nearing the end of what would be a career of seventeen seasons and he would become the first Geelong FC player to achieve 300 senior games. Near the end of his career, journalists would encourage Newman to catalogue all his football injuries, as it was these injuries which caused him to miss out on playing an estimated additional 100 matches. Understandably, writers became more interested in Newman's football legacy to his club and the code as retirement drew near.

Geelong began the 1977 season with a degree of hope. Despite his injuries, Newman continued to endure games in the ruck and his knowledge of the art clearly helped his club to a number victories. Following one game during the 1977 season, one football journalist likened Newman to an Oscar Wilde character, an allusion that Newman himself might have appreciated. Murray Davis encapsulated Newman's performance as follows: ‘

Geelong's battle-scarred veteran John 'Sammy' Newman's game has never been better in his long career than he turned on at the MCG yesterday. The dry ground allowed Newman to show his courage and class. His 'Dorian Gray' performance guided the Cats to a meritorious 24 point victory over the

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<sup>562</sup> See, for example, the commentary by Geoff Poulter, 'John Newman-Shane Grambeau', *Inside Football*, 19 April 1979, p. 5.

traditionally inaccurate [Melbourne] Demons. Newman had 13 kicks, 7 marks, 7 handballs but tallied an incredible 38 knockouts during ruck duels and marking contests during the day. He completely obliterated the Demons' [Craig] McKellar.<sup>563</sup>

However, as Newman's mobility declined due to ankle and achilles injuries, he became a permanent centre half forward, as Newman himself admitted: 'We didn't have a centre half forward at the time so I filled in there'.<sup>564</sup> It is revelations such as these which reveal that, for all his flamboyance, Newman was still the quintessential team player. This attitude is also exemplified by the fact that despite his incapacities, Newman played 21 games during the 1977 season, a testament to his courage in the face of personal adversity.

Leading into the 1978 season, the *Sporting Globe* declared that Geelong supporters would see a "new look" John Newman'. Rice observed that Newman, '... coming up for his 14<sup>th</sup> year of league football, has never looked fitter' and he claimed that 'It is the first time for many years that Newman has not spent the summer period recovering from ankle operations. The high-leaping ruckman is moving extremely well at training and could play in next Saturday's practice match against St Kilda at Moorabbin'.<sup>565</sup> Rice also quoted the general manager of the club, Terry Hogan, who

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<sup>563</sup> Murray Davis, 'Play it Again Sam', *Sunday Observer*, 24 July 1977 p. 78.

<sup>564</sup> Newman, cited in Geoff Poulter and Mark Fine, interview with 'Sam' Newman on 1116 SEN, 23 September 2009.

<sup>565</sup> John Rice, 'Super Cat!', *Sporting Globe*, 8 March 1978, p. 12.



effusively claimed ‘It’s a long time since I have seen John in better condition at this time of the year’.<sup>566</sup>

In 1978, Newman increased his media profile by contributing an eponymous column entitled ‘Big Sam Says’ to the midweek *Sporting Globe*. The material was ghost-written by sports journalist Greg Hobbs, and essentially it consisted of paragraphs of football gossip that lacked any semblance of a theme.<sup>567</sup> ‘Big Sam Says’ proved a disappointing series and only lasted one season.

The season itself was disappointing for Newman. He broke his thumb and missed nine games, and this was probably a contributing factor in Geelong only finishing the season in fifth place. At Waverley Park, Carlton defeated Geelong in the elimination final. However, Newman was still a popular figure at the club, exemplified by the fact that the Geelong FC *Annual Report and Balance Sheet* for 1978 featured an image of Newman on its cover, lauding his notable achievement. The caption proclaimed ‘John (Sammy) Newman, Club Record 268 games’.<sup>568</sup>

During the 1979 football season Newman played only 13 games. One of his outstanding games was against Footscray. At the time, football journalist Ian Cover reported on Newman’s contribution as a centre half-forward:

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

<sup>567</sup> See, for example, ‘Sam’ Newman, ‘Big Sam Says’, *Sporting Globe*, 19 April 1978, p. 32. In this article, Newman discusses a conversation he had with Farmer and the possibility that he might be useful as a specialist ruck coach at Geelong ‘where some of the techniques that made him a great player would rub off’.

<sup>568</sup> Geelong Football Club, *Annual Report and Balance Sheet*, 1978, cover.

At 33 years of age and in his 16<sup>th</sup> VFL season, Newman is playing with the zest of a recruit and shows no signs of the weariness which forced Richmond veteran Kevin Sheedy to retire last week at the ripe old 31. On Saturday, he [Newman] changed the course of the game with a great third term, which included a series of strong marks, two fine goals and a reflex handpass to David Clarke for another major. Newman's form at centre half-forward, in the space of six games this season, has gone from stopping up a gap to establishing a strength.<sup>569</sup>

However, despite the brilliant form described by Cover, Newman subsequently broke his ankle and missed the last eleven matches of the season.<sup>570</sup> Geelong fell short of qualifying for the finals series and it seemed Newman's days as an elite footballer were numbered, largely due to his ageing body and the toll of frequent injuries.

In early 1980, sports journalist Peter Kelly believed that he had a scoop by announcing that Newman would retire on a record 281 games with the Geelong FC. On 17 March 1980, Kelly prematurely proclaimed that:

John Newman, the giant hearted ruckman announced his retirement from V.F.L. football. Known Australia-wide as Sam, Newman said he was not in good enough shape to go on playing and in order to stop speculation and confusion, he had decided to retire. The good news for Geelong is that big

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<sup>569</sup> Ian Cover, 'Victory was No Crowd Pleaser', *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 May 1979, p. 33.

<sup>570</sup> Cover, 'Road to 300', p. 52.

Sam will stay with the club as a specialist coach teaching the young ruckmen.<sup>571</sup>

In fact, this was an erroneous report as Newman never publicly announced any plans for retirement before the first round of the season. There was no subsequent retraction or apology from Kelly, and Newman went on to play another nineteen games, retiring with a total of 300 games on 16 August 1980.

However, there were signs that Newman was thinking about his personal standing in the game. In April 1980, the Newman Club was founded to support Australian Rules football at Geelong Grammar School. The club was named in joint recognition of Noel Newman and his son John at the inaugural dinner and meeting at the Melbourne Zoo Restaurant on 29 April 1980. Present were Noel and John Newman. High profile guests included Robert Beggs, Sir James Darling, David Kemp, Chester Kernot, John Landy, Roger Newman, Paul Sheahan, and Ian Wilson (Richmond FC president). Michael Cavanaugh, the motive force behind the club, and convenor of the evening, welcomed the guests.<sup>572</sup> According to Sheahan, author of the article in *The Corian*, 'Noel Newman, the co-patron of the club, tip-toed delightfully through some of the history of Geelong Grammar School football ... [and then] John Newman, the other half of the patronage, spoke eloquently on behalf of football and the School'.<sup>573</sup> In Newman senior's speech, reprinted in the magazine, he explained

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<sup>571</sup> Peter Kelly, 'Play it Again, Sam', *The Footballer Magazine: The Official Journal Published by the V.F.L Players Association*, vol. 4, no.1, 1980, p. 11.

<sup>572</sup> Paul Sheahan, 'The Newman Club: Inaugural Dinner and Meeting', *The Corian: The Geelong Grammar School Quarterly* (September and October 1980), p. 122.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*

that ‘The first games [of Australian Rules football] seem to have been a mixture of Gaelic Football and Rugby with a few local additions. Sport, social life and hotels seemed to go together’. Accepting that the School had ‘... built up a tremendous football reputation between 1875 and 1907’, he claimed to have ‘become interested again in School football’ as he had ‘... grandsons and grandnephews at Corio’.<sup>574</sup> The occasion reflected the fact that father and son seemed to have a close and loving relationship, as noted in anecdotes in previous chapters of this thesis.

The 1980 season had some highs and lows for Newman, but clearly he still had some good football left in his ageing body. For example, in Geelong’s 37 point win over North Melbourne at the Arden Street ground, Cover commented as follows:

Leading the way was veteran John Newman at centre half-forward. In a classic display, the white booted wonder was an inspiration to his teammates. Club statisticians credited Newman with 12 kicks, 16 handpasses. Capping it all, Newman, 34, booted five great goals, including four in the final term.<sup>575</sup>

During his playing career Newman never publicly disclosed his contract with the Geelong FC. However, in retirement, Newman maintained that he earned ‘\$70,000 per season in my last three years’.<sup>576</sup> This amount is an extraordinary figure for a

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<sup>574</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>575</sup> Ian Cover, ‘Geelong’s New Image’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 21 April 1980, p. 31.

<sup>576</sup> Newman, cited on Mike Sheahan, *Open Mike*, FOX Footy, 22 March 2016.

former champion ruckman who was at elite football's advanced age of 32, 33, and 34.<sup>577</sup>

Three games before his 300<sup>th</sup> match, Newman was in hospital after a hard training session. According to Cover, 'Newman pulled up sore after the long solid workout in preparation for the vital match against VFL leader Richmond. The injury has affected his back and hamstrings making it difficult for him to run and bend'.<sup>578</sup> In this context, it was Newman's former rover teammate, Bill Goggin, then the senior coach of the Geelong FC, who 'nursed' Newman so that he could reach his 300 games. Newman subsequently played his 300<sup>th</sup> match against Collingwood in Round 20 at Kardinia Park. He was praised as the first player to reach the milestone for the club, which was first formed in 1859. On 16 August 1980, the *Geelong Advertiser* featured on its front page a bemused Newman holding up the number 300. The accompanying article noted:

He is almost paranoid about putting the team first and disregarding personal achievement. Newman has enjoyed a variety of rewards except for playing in a premiership team. No other footballer possesses that rare star quality – charisma.<sup>579</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> By comparison, a contemporary of Newman, Collingwood's Phil Carman, was in his prime and also on a large salary at this time. See Watson, *Fabulous Phil*.

<sup>578</sup> Ian Cover, 'Sam Sidelined', *Geelong Advertiser*, 25 July 1980, p. 27.

<sup>579</sup> Ian Cover, 'Play Them Again Sam', *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 August 1980, p. 1.

The Geelong FC cheer squad produced a special banner for the occasion with the words ‘Tireless Champion of V.F.L. Football. Big Sam 300’.<sup>580</sup> The *Football Record*, 16 August 1980, also acknowledged Newman’s triple century of games. In this publication, an article by Jim Robb reflected on Newman’s skill as a mimic and his hero worship of two sporting greats, US golf legend Jack Nicklaus and Graham ‘Polly’ Farmer. He wrote that:

Popular Geelong ruckman and centre half forward today joins a select group of the games champions when he plays his 300<sup>th</sup> VFL day game. He has shown his courage to perform week after week with patched up ankles after several operations. He can play golf from a single figure handicap with most majors winner, Jack Nicklaus, as his idol. He is a competent tennis player. Away from football John entertains his guests and teammates with an almost perfect impersonation of the late movie star W.C. Fields. He rates his development as a ruckman to his former teammate Graham ‘Polly’ Farmer.<sup>581</sup>

Robb also quoted Newman as revealing: ‘Without shadow of doubt, no one would go close to him as the best ever player. I gained a lot of knowledge just by watching him to see how he played the game’.<sup>582</sup>

According to Trevor Grant, Newman played his landmark game in a winning side ‘but spent a large part of the game sitting on the interchange bench’. In a humorous

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<sup>580</sup> A photograph showing Newman wearing his trademark white boots crashing the 300 game run-through, while a line-up of teammates applauded, is reproduced in John Ross (ed.), *100 Years of Australian Football, 1896-1996* (Ringwood: Viking, 1996), p. 291.

<sup>581</sup> Robb, ‘One Goal Left for Cats’ “Sam”, p. 7.

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*

aside, he posited that Newman spent so much time off the field that he ‘expended more energy later in the evening blowing out the candles on a cake at a celebration party’.<sup>583</sup> Newman’s performance in his final game was the subject of conjecture in later years, where the appropriate facts have become somewhat obscured. For example, Rohan Connolly, on a radio program, stated that Newman ‘spent his 300<sup>th</sup> game in a dressing gown on the interchange bench’.<sup>584</sup> This assertion is not correct. Newman did spend some time on the field, as indicated above. Even Geoff Davie, in his lightweight pages of amusing club events and practical jokes, does observe that in 1980, ‘champion Geelong ruckman John “Sam” Newman became the first Geelong player to join the “300 Club” when he lined up against Collingwood at Kardinia Park. Newman, however, started the game “in his dressing gown” and spent much of the day on the bench’.<sup>585</sup> Newman himself recalled ‘I remember starting on the bench and then I came on and I played at centre half-forward on [Collingwood FC’s] Rene Kink who played at centre half-back. There were 42000 [spectators] there’.<sup>586</sup>

In 1980, *Sporting Globe* journalist Peter Stone reviewed Newman’s catalogue of injuries, at the same time predicting Newman’s career as a football media identity:

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<sup>583</sup> Trevor Grant, ‘Blake Upsets Pies’ Big Plans’, *Age*, ‘Sport’, 18 August 1980, p. 26.

<sup>584</sup> Connolly, cited in Schibeci, ‘Hungry for Sport’.

<sup>585</sup> Davie and the Geelong Cats, *Cats on the Prowl*, p. 156.

<sup>586</sup> Newman, cited in Michael Auciello, ‘Newman Welcomes Enright to Elite Club’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 20 June 2015, p. 5. In 1980, *The Corian* prosaically reported that ‘John Newman (P. [Perry House], 1963) played his 300<sup>th</sup> V.F.L. game of Australian Rules football for Geelong [FC] on 15 August 1980 ...’. See Sheahan, ‘The Newman Club’, p. 121.

When he reels off his list of injuries during a 17 year career, it's enough to make any doctor shudder. You look at the man's ankles swollen out of all proportion, four ankle operations, a ruptured kidney, broken arm, three times broken nose, broken ribs three times. It would be no surprise to see him saddle up for another season. If he doesn't, I reckon he would make a marvellous commentator not just on football but any sport you care to name.<sup>587</sup>

Later in the season, Stone wrote more harshly about the 34 year old Newman, the oldest player in the League at that time, but he still maintained that a career after football beckoned. Following Geelong's second semi-final loss to Richmond by 24 points, they faced Collingwood in the preliminary final. Stone declared:

When big Cat John Newman hit the post from almost dead in front at VFL Park last Saturday, it could well have been the end of his great career. Geelong coach, Bill Goggin, took him from the ground shortly after Sam had missed his second shot at goal and then the former champion made one appearance late in the game. Cats' officials must now seriously look at the selection of Newman. Sentiment towards a grand clubman is one thing, winning football matches is another. While it may be end of Newman's 17 year career, it will be the finish of Geelong next Saturday in the preliminary final at VFL Park against Collingwood. It will be a bitter blow if he [Newman] is forced to take a place in the stands next Saturday. He should retire. He can continue a promising career as a radio and TV commentator.<sup>588</sup>

The Geelong FC selectors dropped Newman from the team, and the side subsequently lost the preliminary final against Collingwood by four points. The curtain thus came

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<sup>587</sup> Peter Stone, 'Big Sam: Cat with Nine Lives', *Sporting Globe*, 5 August 1980, p. 4.

<sup>588</sup> Peter Stone, 'Don't Play It Again, Sam' *Sporting Globe* 16 September 1980 p. 4



down on Newman's glittering playing career. While Stone referred to Newman as the 'big Cat', Newman himself would have been galled, as in his view there was only ever one player deserving of such a title and that was Farmer.

Not surprisingly, the final season of Newman's career, and his landmark 300<sup>th</sup> game, was a subject that he would return to, either of his accord, or when encouraged to do so in interviews. For example, on 20 June 2015, Newman, pretending to be the public 'Sam' as his dominant personality, was in a reflective mood when asked to comment on Geelong defender Corey Enright playing his 300th game against Melbourne FC at Kardinia Park. Thirty-five years after Newman's own 300<sup>th</sup> senior game, 'Sam' remarked:

What does it [300 games] mean? It means nothing. You've got to last the distance. You've got to overcome form fluctuations, injury, illness, suspension. If you're a reasonable footballer, it ends up being a mathematical equation. If you play 15 years and you multiply 15 by the number of games and you don't miss through injury and you play a few finals, you get there [to 300 games]. I would love to have played on. I played till I was 36.<sup>589</sup>

In his commentary, 'Sam' then changed suddenly into 'John' mode as his apparent cynicism dissolved:

You're part of a team you like to try to contribute and not let the people you play with down and not let the club down. I loved playing football. I loved

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<sup>589</sup> Newman, cited in Auciello, 'Newman Welcomes Enright to Elite Club', pp. 4-5. It should be noted that Newman was in error with his retirement age. He was then the League's oldest player, aged 34, when he retired.

playing for Geelong [FC]. I loved the competitiveness of the people I played against.<sup>590</sup>

Newman then continued with his disarming honesty:

I got asked if I'd to come [to celebrate Enright's 300<sup>th</sup> game] and I said I would. I will join Ian Nankervis [record 325 games with the Geelong Football Club] and we hope many more can play 300 games and join us. It's a huge day for the [Geelong Football] club.<sup>591</sup>

Many years later, Newman showed his displeasure with the fact that Bill Goggin started him on the bench during his 300<sup>th</sup> game. In fact, he wondered whether his coach should be asked to apologise. Making light of the situation, and perhaps letting his guard down, Newman rambled:

He [Goggin] must have found Christ or God or he must have located Mecca and someone must have prompted young Bill to say man, cleanse yourself of all your past sins and utterances. Ask him if he should apologise for starting me on the bench in my 300<sup>th</sup> game, ask him if he could include that in his apology as well. I wonder if that was a rider or just a codicil or just an added clause because I've been extremely hurt all those years.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Newman, cited in Joel Cresswell, 'Newman Lines Up for Apology from Sorry Goggin', *Geelong Advertiser*, 28 December 2009, p. 3.

The retired Newman was often asked to reflect on his football career. Interviewed by football researcher, writer and journalist, Ben Collins, Newman was both humble and conceited. First, humility:

I suppose I was pretty athletic. I was OK with my hands, a reasonable mark. I read the play all right – that was the one thing I could do. I got all my limited talent and ability from watching Graham “Polly” Farmer go about his business.<sup>593</sup>

Collins then adds Farmer’s assessment of Newman’s game: ‘John was well equipped. He had great fitness, was elusive, athletic, versatile, a great pack mark and he was smart enough to take advantage of other peoples’ weaknesses’.<sup>594</sup> Second, conceit: ‘I always thought I was as good as most opponents and maybe better than a lot of them’. Newman then concluded his self-evaluation with humility: ‘I am where I am today, wherever that is, because I played football for Geelong [FC]. I owe my career, my vocation and my life to that fact’.<sup>595</sup>

Because neither Newman nor champion full-forward and team-mate Doug Wade had steady careers or employment outside of football, they began their own business. According to Terry Granger, writing in *Inside Football*, in 1971 Newman and Wade ‘... would travel for their business, Technique Distributors, once a fortnight’. Granger reports that they ‘... would take off into Western Victoria to display their lines of hairdressing items at beauty salons and pharmacies ... When they aren’t in the

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<sup>593</sup> Newman, cited in Collins, ‘Sam Newman’, p. 197.

<sup>594</sup> Farmer, cited in Collins, ‘Sam Newman’, p. 197.

<sup>595</sup> Newman, cited in Collins, ‘Sam Newman’, p. 197.

bush, Newman or Wade whose wife Sue is a ladies' hairdresser could be doing their business in Melbourne or in the Geelong area'.<sup>596</sup> Newman himself recalled with some clarity, 'Doug and I started vending hairdressing supplies to ladies' beauty salons and pharmacies'.<sup>597</sup> On this topic, he also indicated: 'Doug and I ended up in a very successful business for over a decade'.<sup>598</sup> At this time, it was not unusual for VFL players to have employment outside of their football careers, and high profile sportsmen in particular could gain substantial extra income based on their celebrity status, rather than their expertise in non-football related occupations.

## **8.7 Conclusion**

The City of Geelong encountered economic challenges and problems throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In many ways, the Geelong FC was symptomatic of the City of Geelong when the club had debts and was unable to attract star footballers. The club had to become self-reliant and began to look more carefully within its local leagues and schools when recruiting new players. Newman, a Geelong local, grew into a champion at the Geelong FC and was talented enough to remain in constant paid employment during a turbulent commercial environment when tariff reductions and a global downturn caused by the first oil price shock created difficulties for the economy of Geelong.

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<sup>596</sup> Granger, 'Big Sam – A New Man', p. 15. See also Trevor Marmalade, personal communication, 4 December 2012.

<sup>597</sup> Newman, cited in Aiton, 'Conversations', p. 3.

<sup>598</sup> Newman, cited in Sheahan, 'Sam Newman', p. 8.

The next chapter assesses and discusses Newman's role in the media from 1981 (the year after he retired from football) to 1993. This period approximates to what can be considered the first half of Newman's controversial media career. Also evaluated are Newman's financial troubles in the late 1980s, and his subsequent emotionally fragile condition, which he recovered from thanks to friends who arranged a benefit on his behalf and a former Geelong FC president and mayor who interceded with a bank on his behalf. Newman recovered from these problems and after a hiatus rejoined the media, although in a limited capacity.

## Chapter Nine

### Newman and the Media, 1981-1993

Only passions, great passions can elevate the soul to great things.

Denis Diderot<sup>599</sup>

#### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses Newman's career in the media from 1981 to 1993 in the context of sources that reveal his involvement in radio, television and in print format. Newman began his post-football life talking about football in all three media outlets. It will be shown that Newman earned a reputation as an astute football judge with a light touch, employing his private schoolboy accent often for comic purposes. These talents distinguished him from the other football retirees who wished to join the media. There is evidence that Newman suffered financial difficulties, and his involvement in a daily newspaper helped to rehabilitate him with the result that he became a different, somewhat controversial voice in the football media industry.<sup>600</sup>

#### 9.2 Career in Radio, 1981-1987

Following his retirement, Newman joined the Melbourne radio station 3AW in 1981 as a commentator and analyst during the football season. This role lasted until 1987. He imparted hard football information with a light touch, often displaying a sense of

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<sup>599</sup> Diderot, cited in Hugh Rawson and Margaret Miner (eds), *The New International Dictionary of Quotations* (New York: Signet, 1986), p. 87.

<sup>600</sup> It should be acknowledged that the author of this thesis was employed part-time as part of a football program at radio station 3AW and observed aspects of Newman's 'larger than life' personality.

humour. However, Newman indicated his antipathy towards radio technology at the time.

Kevin Bartlett, a former Richmond FC premiership rover, also joined 3AW as a part-time caller and around-the-grounds man with Newman. He indicated that Newman ‘... exhibited exasperation bordering on anger not only with technology itself but faulty technology ... Sam would do this hilarious routine of how we can put a man on the moon yet we can’t speak with somebody from the Western Oval [Footscray’s home ground]’.<sup>601</sup> Newman perceived himself as a victim of the vagaries of radio equipment, and Bartlett related how ‘Sam complained: If we are not connected within twelve minutes, I’m leaving’. Moreover, Bartlett continued, ‘If we were having technical difficulties during a game, Sam would just sit there and refuse to talk’.<sup>602</sup>

Bartlett also suggested that:

... there were times when our around-the-ground box at Kardinia Park was situated out in the crowd. That upset Sam immensely. The box was barely under cover. But more than that, it was right underneath the siren. Sam always seemed to be talking just as the siren blew.<sup>603</sup>

### **9.3 Career in Television, 1981-1987**

Newman also began his career in television during 1981, and this proved to be a medium for which he developed a great aptitude. According to Paul Daffey, Channel

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<sup>601</sup> Kevin Bartlett, *KB: A Life in Football as Told to Rhett Bartlett* (Docklands: Slattery Media Group, 2011), p. 201.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

7 screened the first football panel show, *The Pelaco Inquest*, in 1958. It screened on Saturday nights during the football season and apart from analysis of VFL games, it also featured a quiz segment, with players dressed in uniform attempting to answer questions posed by the host. In Daffey's view, 'The era of football celebrities was under way'.<sup>604</sup> Channel 7 followed up with another football program, *World of Sport*, in 1959, which screened between 11.00 am and 2.00 pm every Sunday of the year, attracting a large television audience. The show covered all sport, but mostly Australian Rules football. It was possibly through the help of Bob Davis, Newman's former coach, experienced football panellist and a central pivot of the show, that Newman was invited to participate in the program, which boasted a range of football identities such as Jack Dyer, Lou Richards and Neil Roberts.

Various commentators have mused on the successful 'chemistry' evident in the show. For example, author and novelist Brian Matthews quoted from a 1965 article about the *World of Sport* football panel, first published in the *Melbourne Partisan*. Citing the anonymous author, he reproduced the text as follows:

The panel of experts is an unpolished, no-bloody-nonsense group whose discussions invariably disintegrate into a babble of ill-restrained abuse, led by Jack Dyer and Lou Richards. The only deference paid to intellect comes in the form of poly-syllabic pronouncements by the Professor Kevin Coghlan, but he is softly-spoken and is mercifully drowned out most of the time. As the panel takes the screen, Jack Dyer is invariably found brooding tensely or snarling across the table: while his football opinions may vary wildly from minute to minute, his mood remains admirably and consistently threatening.

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<sup>604</sup> Paul Daffey, *Behind the Goals: The History of the Victorian Country Football League* (Ballarat East: Ten Bag Press, 2017), p. 74.



He is not scrupulous about who he attacks, but it usually ends up being Lou Richards, whose frustrations at the Dyer flights of fractured logic, are often more spectacular than a whole half-hour of video-taped highlights.<sup>605</sup>

Newman obviously felt at home in the on-air environment, and there is a rich seam of anecdotes and antics that can be related concerning Newman's involvement in the rambunctious show. As Sandy Roberts, host of *World of Sport* from 1979 to 1987, related, he appreciated Newman's original style on television, as well as his habits off-air. Roberts observed: 'Like Dyer and Richards before them, today's biggest names have *World of Sport* to thank for their starts in TV. John Sam Newman, in all his spiky haired and blond tipped glory, came on board and quickly made an impact'.<sup>606</sup> Roberts continued:

Sam would come in with a bag every week and he'd fill it up with all the goodies he could find – the Ballantyne cheese, the orange juice, the Bertocchi smallgoods, the ties. Then he'd go out of the studio and hide his bag somewhere, come back and do the show, then pick it [the bag] up when the show finished. The crew realised this and one day they got his bag, pulled out all the goodies and replaced them with two *Yellow Pages* phone books.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Cited in Brian Matthews, *Oval Dreams* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1991), p. 139.

<sup>606</sup> Roberts, cited in Michael Harvey, 'The Sunday Institution: The Madness, Mayhem and Magic of the Legendary *World of Sport*, in Michael Roberts (ed.), *Heart of the Game: 45 Years of Football on Television* (South Yarra: Hardie Grant Books, 2001), pp. 69-70.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

Interviewing a player of the week, Roberts says that Newman turned a predictable line of questioning on its head by asking ‘Now in your long and illustrious career, you must have played against many, many opponents – who would you say was the worst?’.<sup>608</sup> Also, Newman displayed his talent for live-crosses in television, a notoriously difficult task. For example, at half time in the Grand Final on 26 September 1981, Channel 7’s main football commentator, Lou Richards, crossed live to the MCG ground level with the remark: ‘Let’s go down to Stephen Phillips who is talking to Sam Newman, one of the *World of Sport* panellists’. The caption for the live-cross was John ‘Sammy’ Newman. Answering questions from Phillips, Newman, sporting a moustache, understood modern ruck duels, a subject he knew assiduously after retiring as a ruckman from the Geelong FC the previous season. He was clearly not intimidated by the occasion or the focus of attention. Newman had little trouble elucidating that:

Collingwood leaving [Peter] Moore at full forward was a mistake. His leg had to be suspect. [Mike] Fitzpatrick [Carlton ruckman and captain] has dominated the ruck duels particularly in the centre, and they [Collingwood] can’t afford the luxury of leaving Moore in the forward pocket. He has to play in the ruck if they’re going to succeed today.<sup>609</sup>

Newman followed with his private schoolboy accent:

[Alan] Atkinson [Collingwood midfielder], you can’t knock the boy for his endeavour, but the occasion may be getting to him. Moore, when he went on

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<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

<sup>609</sup> John ‘Sammy’ Newman, commentary for Channel 7 at the Grand Final on 26 September 1981, <http://www.youtube.com/watch> (accessed 14 January 2011).

to the ball, did not have any great effect as far as getting the ball, but he did add a bit of life and confidence to the Collingwood side. They [Collingwood] wouldn't risk the champion Peter Moore is if he wasn't at least 95 per cent fit. If you're 95 per cent fit and a champion, you can get through most games.<sup>610</sup>

Newman remained at *World of Sport* until the program ceased in 1987. However, he remained critical of Channel Seven, which effectively sacked him. When Newman perceived himself as a victim, he reacted with cynicism, bordering on anger, when he stated more than a decade later: 'in my opinion ... [Channel Seven] is regarded as the poor relation to the *Herald Sun*'.<sup>611</sup> However, Newman's indignation towards the Seven network was occasionally overshadowed by a general appreciation of how the industry functioned. For example, reflecting on his situation with commercial television in 1999, he pointed out: 'everyone in the media is just filling in time until they get sacked'.<sup>612</sup> Ten years later, Newman altered this remark to the first person when he remarked: 'I'm just filling in time until I am sacked by Channel Nine's *The Footy Show*'.<sup>613</sup> Newman reinforced this more realistic attitude when he observed of the television industry: 'It can be a backstabbing, ruthless, disloyal, unethical, immoral industry. At some stage, we won't survive in it'.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>610</sup> Ibid.

<sup>611</sup> Newman, cited in Hanger, 'Wham, Bam, Thank You, Sam', p. 29.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>613</sup> Newman, cited in Poulter, and Fine, interview with 'Sam' Newman on 1116 SEN.

<sup>614</sup> Newman, cited in Shane Crawford, "'Sam' Newman's Year of Living Dangerously", *Sunday Herald Sun*, 24 August 2008, p. 91.

Newman also earned a reputation as an adroit teacher of football skills. Essendon FC employed the former Geelong FC star, part-time, as a ruck coach between 1981 and 1983. He taught the Farmer principles of the early jump at centre bounces and getting a ride at boundary throw-ins and changing angles to unsettle an opposing ruckman, and using one's body to hold out an opponent before sending a long handpass to teammates moving towards goal.<sup>615</sup> Essendon's ruckman, Simon Madden, understood, more than his teammate ruckmen, the Farmer method of changing angles. Madden explained that 'there were two movements – the early bump and the palm with both right or left palm to talented teammates such as Merv Neagle, Leon Baker and Tony Buhagiar'.<sup>616</sup> In the *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, the entry on Simon Madden indicated that he 'credited Sam Newman with improving his ruckwork by showing him how to run in at an angle and gain leverage from his opponent's body'.<sup>617</sup> Newman also taught Melbourne FC ruckmen at the time Mark Jamar, Paul Johnson and Jeff White.

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<sup>615</sup> 'Polly Farmer 1962-1967: The Colourful Era', *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 June 2006, p. 8.

<sup>616</sup> Simon Madden, personal communication, 17 September 2012.

<sup>617</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 540. Madden has also taught the 'Farmer technique' to a new breed of Essendon ruckmen, including indigenous player Paddy Ryder, giving the method a cyclical quality. During the Essendon versus Richmond 2012 round eight 'Dreamtime at the G' match, Channel 7's main football commentator, Bruce McAvaney, described Ryder as 'the new "Polly" Farmer'. See Bruce McAvaney, cited in Michael Lovett (ed.), *AFL Record Season Guide 2013* (Docklands: AFL Media, 2013). p. 1098.

#### 9.4 Financial Struggles

A key aspect of Newman's post-football career was his involvement in the media. This was, in some ways, a double-edged sword, for while it helped to provide him with an income, it also opened up his lifestyle to public scrutiny. Many of Newman's personal trials and traumas became fodder for the press, and when he suffered financial difficulties this became a subject for public commentary. In this section, aspects of how Newman earned an income, and the troubles associated with the management of his pecuniary interests are discussed. However, it is acknowledged that in terms of the precise details of Newman's income it is not always possible to be accurate or definitive in regard to his personal financial situation, and reports of his struggles often come from third parties rather than Newman himself. This observation reflects that the narrative is somewhat anecdotal and skewed in terms of detailed content and context where Newman's financial affairs are concerned.

Paul Amy, a journalist and the biographer of Port Melbourne FC goal-kicking legend Fred Cook, indicated that in 1988 Newman had the idea of producing newspaper articles based on a question-and-answer format with a sporting flavour. He took a transcript to the then editor of the *Sun*, Colin Duck, who was impressed at the uncompromising questions and blunt answers elicited by Newman. Duck decided to run Newman's idea. According to Amy, 'It was the first dollar Newman had earned since his financial trouble when he backed a friend at the bank. When the business failed, the bank called up Newman's guarantee'.<sup>618</sup> Newman subsequently published his long question and answer sessions between 1988 and 1992, a period when the *Sun* remained the top-selling morning newspaper in Australia. Under the byline of

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<sup>618</sup> Amy, *Fabulous Fred*, p. 185.

“‘Sam’ Newman’ and titled ‘Head to Head’, Newman conducted long interviews with high profile individuals in sport, such as star footballers and football commentators. This involvement in the newspaper industry marked the beginning of Newman’s climb back to financial solvency. Newman later recalled how his feature articles first took shape:

I asked [Hawthorn FC centre half-forward] Dermott Brereton if he’d like to be interviewed and I asked him all manner of abrasive, personal, impertinent, embarrassing and obnoxious questions. I said thank you, took it to the *Sun* and asked if [I] interviewed people in this format they would print it. They said we would, but who would want to be interviewed like that? I rang Dermott back and asked if it would be OK if we used that interview and he said go ahead and that was how it all started.<sup>619</sup>

Caroline Wilson, a sports journalist with the *Age*, observed that ‘... the *Sun* Q and A column was the reinventing of Sam Newman’, suggesting that his material ‘... was one of the must-reads in the paper’.<sup>620</sup>

The troubles that Amy refers to resulted from Newman’s severe fiscal difficulties, and Newman himself has admitted that he had been ‘broke’, although he is very coy about the specific details of his financial downfall.<sup>621</sup> According to associates such as Trevor Marmalade, in the late 1980s, ‘Sam lost everything when he guaranteed a loan for a partner in a transport company that went belly-up’.<sup>622</sup> Newman himself admitted

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<sup>619</sup> McLachlan, ‘Sam I Am’, p. 65.

<sup>620</sup> Wilson, cited in Perkin, ‘Sam I Am’, p. 14.

<sup>621</sup> Newman, cited in ABC, ‘The Trouble with Sam’.

<sup>622</sup> Trevor Marmalade, personal communication, 4 December 2012.

‘The bank took my home and whatever I had. I did not have a car. I can remember not having any money to buy food at one stage’.<sup>623</sup> Marmalade again supplied some further details of the situation: ‘He lived in [Newman’s Friend] Kevin King’s garage for eighteen months’,<sup>624</sup> but Newman claims that the time period was shorter: ‘I had to bludge off my great friend rent-free for a year’.<sup>625</sup> Friends rallied and organised a benefit concert in the late 1980s for Newman so he could get back on his feet. This benefit raised a generous amount of \$50,000. Newman candidly recalled his emotion at the time: ‘I felt humble. I felt inferior. I felt insignificant. I felt frail’.<sup>626</sup> Newman’s reaction to his financial plight was still raw. However, Newman revealed to Mike Sheahan that the ex-mayor of Geelong, and former president of the Geelong FC, John Holt, suggested that he and Newman ‘contact the top office of the bank and have a chat with them. We worked out a repayment package that I honoured to the last cent’. On this basis, Newman’s opinion was that ‘Holt was honest and sincere and that’s why I rate him as a very great man’.<sup>627</sup> Amy detailed Newman’s financial problems: ‘[F]or eighteen months he [Newman] lived in a room at the Ascot Vale home of his best friend Kevin King’.<sup>628</sup> Newman indicated to Amy that ‘He [King] put me up until I was able to claw my way back. I wasn’t bankrupt. I didn’t owe money to anyone, but I didn’t have any [money] myself’.<sup>629</sup> Amy and Marmalade both agree that Newman lived at King’s house for eighteen months. However, it

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<sup>623</sup> Davis, ‘Wham!, Bam! Thank You Sam’, p. 8.

<sup>624</sup> Trevor Marmalade, personal communication, 4 December 2012.

<sup>625</sup> Newman, cited in Sheahan, ‘Sam Newman: I Did It My Way’, p. 8.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Amy, *Fabulous Fred*, p. 185.

<sup>629</sup> Newman, cited in Amy, *Fabulous Fred*, p. 185.

seems Newman may have accidentally or perhaps deliberately altered his recollection, whereby he reduced by six months the timeframe that he stayed with King. On another occasion, 27 September 2015, Newman remembered that ‘I have one long-time friend who [*sic*] I lived at the back of his dental laboratory when I was broke. He says don’t mention me so I will. Kevin King, he’s a great friend of mine, known him for about 55 years and I speak to him every day’.<sup>630</sup> In these couple of examples related to financial insecurity, which are short on specific detail in terms of the monetary amounts involved, Newman displays the characteristic of exhibiting unconditional loyalty to several long-term mates including King and Fred Cook.<sup>631</sup>

### **9.5 Newman’s Approach to Print Journalism**

It is something of an exaggeration to suggest that Newman was a professional ‘journalist’, untrained in the profession as he was. But he certainly earned income from his newspaper duties, which essentially consisted of one-on-one interviews with sporting luminaries, particularly footballers, which were transcribed and then published in a morning daily newspaper in Melbourne for a period stretching over five years. Looking back over his published material, it is clear that he took his newspaper duties seriously and seemed to enjoy asking provocative, occasionally humorous, questions, sometimes goading the interviewees into forthright reactions as he played the ‘Devil’s advocate’ for the sake of debate or effect. This approach later became a trait of his involvement in *The Footy Show*, and it is not difficult to see how Newman’s approach to journalism translated directly into his subsequent media roles in radio and television. A sample of several extracts from some of his newspaper

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<sup>630</sup> McLachlan, ‘Sam I Am’, p. 32.

<sup>631</sup> Sheahan, ‘Sam Newman: I Did It My Way’, pp. 8-11.



interviews are reproduced and briefly discussed below. The aim of this section is not to provide extended content analysis of, or even broad context for, the many newspaper interviews conducted by Newman. Rather, the two extracts provide something of the flavour of Newman's work in the popular journalism sphere, demonstrating a particular aptitude for a somewhat combative interview style which later seemed to resonate with a television audience. As such, the examples below provide a worthwhile lens by which it is possible to view and assess Newman's professional and personal development after his football career had come to an end.

In 1989, 'Sam' Newman interviewed Geelong FC ruckman and captain Damian Bourke in his 'Head to Head' feature in the *Sun*. Bourke described the insular nature of Geelong and 'Sam' channelled his own sense of superiority, both as a retired champion footballer and perceived growing importance in the media, hence his use of the term 'snob' in the interview (noting that Newman himself had at times been described in this way):

Bourke: It's a good idea to keep a bit separate from your supporters at times.

We're there to do a job.

Newman: You've got to be snobbish. Are you a snob?

Bourke: No, I don't think so.

Newman: What do people criticise you for?

Bourke: I'm not a high possession winner in a game. I used to go to the footy when you were captain. I used to wear your number 17 on my Geelong jumper, those old woollen jumpers.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> 'Sam' Newman, 'Captain Crunch', *Sun*, 2 June 1989, p. 79. Bourke's memory of wearing Newman's number 17 is from circa 1975, when Bourke was about 10 years old.

Another aspect of the Newman interview style was its quasi-legal approach, an aspect that has received some notice by other commentators. For instance, according to Michael Davis, given ‘his schooling, intelligence, command of the language and ability to think on his feet Newman might have made an excellent barrister’.<sup>633</sup> The *Football Record* concurred: ‘Newman’s parents wanted him to study law’.<sup>634</sup> There is thus a sense that, although untrained, Newman has a lawyer’s approach to a person, admitting nothing and in a state of denial until proved otherwise. As to the notion that Newman missed his vocation as a barrister, he is realistic and honest about his calling. With disarming candour, Newman called himself ‘a dumb ex-footballer with no trade or university degree. I couldn’t do anything else if I wasn’t in show business’.<sup>635</sup> Yet, Newman admitted to a privileged life. On 27 September 2015, Newman observed: ‘To play for a league football side, that’s a privilege. It’s hard and tough and demanding but you are well paid for something you don’t need to be qualified in life to do or work your bum off studying something’.<sup>636</sup>

However, Newman provides almost a barrister’s cross-examination of the former king of 3AW radio football commentary [Henry] Harry Beitzel. Titled ‘Let’s Get Back to Basics’, the feature appeared in the *Sun*. As background, Beitzel had a career as a public relations consultant at Soccer Pools, and in the late 1980s, he was ‘the one who

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<sup>633</sup> Davis, ‘Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam’, p. 8.

<sup>634</sup> Collins, ‘The Boy from the Grammar’, p. 18.

<sup>635</sup> Davis, ‘Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam’, p. 6.

<sup>636</sup> McLachlan, ‘Sam I Am’, p. 32.

handed out the cheques to the winners'.<sup>637</sup> Beitzel then introduced the winners to Neil Russell, 'an expert in tax minimisation schemes'.<sup>638</sup> On 17 November 1989, Steve Crabb (then Victorian State Minister for Police and Emergency Services), stood up in the Victorian Legislative Assembly and using parliamentary privilege launched a stinging attack of Beitzel's financial advice. Crabb made the following speech:

He [Beitzel] gave [Victorian Soccer Pools] winners Margaret Woolnough and Jeff Doherty] advice and arranged to have the money [\$ 2 million] invested with people who turned out to be his [Beitzel's] associates. The money was transferred through a series of bank accounts and shelf companies from Melbourne to Singapore and ultimately to Hong Kong where it was invested in the bank account of a shelf company that was owned by Mr Doherty and Mrs Woolnough but was – unknown to them - controlled by Beitzel and his associates. The money was then used as collateral to obtain an overdraft for a company owned by Beitzel and his associates and then used as speculative investments in New Zealand. The overdraft was not repaid and Mr Doherty and Mrs Woolnough's money was taken by the bank as a guarantee for the overdraft. Therefore they were left with nothing.<sup>639</sup>

In October 1994 Beitzel was sentenced to eighteen months jail with a minimum of eight months after pleading guilty to obtaining financial advantage by deception. Beitzel and his new wife moved to Sydney to escape odium in Melbourne. As a former VFL umpire and media commentator, Beitzel was a prime target for a

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<sup>637</sup> Alan Kohler, 'No Sure Thing in the Superannuation Lottery', *The Drum*, ABC1 TV, 22 January 2015 (accessed 3 August 2015).

<sup>638</sup> Ken Linnett, *Game for Anything: The Tommy Lahiff Story* (St Leonards NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p. 269. Beitzel was a media colleague of Tommy Lahiff.

<sup>639</sup> Crabb, cited in *Victorian Legislative Assembly Hansard*, 17 November 1989.

Newman interview, where a dissection of his activities and his relationships with associates occurred:

Newman: Are you associated with companies in Hong Kong?

Beitzel: Apparently, I don't have a hell of a lot of financial expertise. I'm a trusting person. If my solicitor or accountant asked me to sign papers then I did.

Newman: Your many fans and admirers would like to know if you've done anything wrong?

Beitzel: I can only say I've never done anything dishonest. There are a lot of things that surprise me. I discovered through media reports that I was involved in some Hong Kong companies – which I didn't even know the names of.

Newman: Well, are you involved – names or not?

Beitzel: To the best of my knowledge, I have never seen a bank statement from a Hong Kong bank, signed a cheque or received any financial gain from these alleged institutions.

Newman: Was it naïve to introduce the winners to the investment company?

Beitzel: Yes, my solicitor introduced me and didn't bother to tell me that not only was he a client but a bankrupt as well. I wish I hadn't met the man. It's cost me in money and credibility.

Newman: What about a group in New Zealand that wanted to buy the Sydney Swans?

Beitzel: I never wanted overseas interests to own the Swans.

Newman: What were you going to get out of it?

Beitzel: Not a thing. I would have helped. I've never taken a cent for anything like that.

Newman: Rex Hunt took over your job at 3AW. Why don't you speak to him?'

Beitzel: I don't have any problems. As he [Hunt] publicly said I have helped him. He loves me and admires me.

Newman: Is this a publicity stunt, this empathy with the man in the outer? Have you ever been there in your life?

Beitzel: I broadcast from the outer now - at Collingwood.

Newman: Why are you so close to the man in the outer when you have so little in common with him?

Beitzel: I go to the practice matches in the outer. I love them – and the letters are fantastic.

Newman: I put it to you you'd never been to a practice match let alone in the outer.

Beitzel: Well you're wrong.

Newman: They say you and [fellow football radio broadcaster] Bill Jacobs are great professionally but socially distant.

Beitzel: Bill and I didn't mix socially. Nothing strange in that.

Newman: Ever had a disagreement with [Jacobs]?

Beitzel: Yes and they're confidential.

Newman: Where have you made all your money?

Beitzel: I've never been motivated by money.

Newman: Do you like younger women?

Beitzel: Doesn't everybody?

Newman: Where did you meet your wife Caroline?

Beitzel: I had seven years to get to know her when she worked with me at the [Soccer] Pools.<sup>640</sup>

The nature of Newman's no-nonsense, quasi-legal style of interview showed Beitzel to be evasive with the truth.

### **9.6 Newman Returns to Television, 1992-1993**

After returning to financial solvency, Newman resolved to return to television where, according to Harry Silver, he had been 'lurking around the corridors of [Channel] Nine for a couple of years'.<sup>641</sup> As Silver explains 'In 1992, he was a general news

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<sup>640</sup> 'Sam' Newman, 'Let's Get Back to Basics', *Sun*, 13 September 1989, p. 83.

<sup>641</sup> Harvey Silver, *Behind the Footy Show* (Noble Park: Five Mile Press, 1997), p. 16.

and sports reporter on *Melbourne Extra*, a current affairs show that went to air before the six o'clock news'.<sup>642</sup> Journalist Caroline Wilson had a different interpretation of Newman's involvement at Channel Nine during this period: 'In 1988, Newman started at Channel 9, first presenting a sports segment on Ernie Sigley and Denise Drysdale's morning program and later on John Jost's short-lived *Melbourne Extra*, where he developed his so-called "street-talk style"'.<sup>643</sup>

Also during 1992, Newman was contracted to the Sunday edition of Channel 9's program *Wide World of Sport*, assisting Simon O'Donnell and Dermott Brereton in reviewing the weekend's football matches.<sup>644</sup> Producer Harvey Silver called this arrangement a 'doughnut', that is, 'a 20 minute footy segment shoehorned into a rugby league-focused program'.<sup>645</sup> In hindsight, many of Newman's media activities, described above, can be seen as precursors to his central role in the long-running program, *The Footy Show*, which began on Channel 9 in 1994.

## 9.7 Conclusions

Newman became widely known by his alter ego name of 'Sam' when he entered the media from 1981. During his first year in retirement, Newman's natural wit and eloquence together with his cultured private school accent, and his credibility as an elite football champion over seventeen seasons with the Geelong FC, saw him join a

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<sup>642</sup> Ibid.

<sup>643</sup> Wilson, cited in Perkin, 'Sam I Am', p. 14. It is possible that Wilson may have noted incorrect years for Newman's stint at *Melbourne Extra*.

<sup>644</sup> Harvey Silver, personal communication, 7 August 2012.

<sup>645</sup> Ibid.

football panel on the television program *World of Sport*. Newman exhibited self-confidence and he may have assumed his media career would continue unabated. When Newman acted as guarantor for a transport business that failed, Newman lost his house and car and other key possessions. He showed a conflicting and vulnerable personality when he lived in the garage, rent-free, at the home of a friend in Ascot Vale. While he felt ‘fragile’, he rehabilitated himself financially in the journalism industry by publishing extensive question-and-answer interviews with elite footballers and sporting identities in the sports pages of the *Sun* over five years, 1988-1992. In hindsight, many of Newman’s media activities, described above, can be seen as precursors to higher profile roles that developed from 1994 onwards. Accordingly, the next chapter will provide a further analysis of Newman’s career in the media, tracing activities from 1994 to 2017. Many of these undertakings occurred in the context of his involvement with Channel 9’s mid-week panel show, *The Footy Show*.

## Chapter Ten

### Newman and the Media, 1994-2017

A lover of himself, without any rival.

Cicero<sup>646</sup>

#### 10.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies and discusses further aspects of Newman's different personalities, largely in the context of his public life during the latter half of his media career. The chapter incorporates additional material covering Newman's continued involvement with *The Footy Show* from 1994, examines particular incidents and character traits in Newman's life, and concludes with consideration of Newman's role in a much-hyped 're-boot' of the program in August 2017.

#### 10.2 Other Football Panel Shows

As noted in previous chapters, Newman gained a foothold in Melbourne's television landscape by becoming part of the football panel on Channel 7's Sunday morning *World of Sport* program. When the show ended, he crossed to Channel 9 where he took up a minor role on another football panel for the *Wide World of Sports* show, continuing to hone his media skills in front of the camera. Another show with a panel format was then instituted by Channel 9. Former Test cricket bowler and raconteur, Max Walker, became the host of *The Sunday Footy Show* between 1996 and 1997, where panellists included Newman, Dermott Brereton, Sam Kekovich, Doug

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<sup>646</sup> Cicero, cited in H.V. Prochnow, *The Toastmaster's Treasure Chest* (New Jersey: Castle Books, 2002), p. 67.



Hawkins, Mal Brown and Lou Richards. This eclectic mix of well-known faces discussed, in sometimes amusing detail, AFL football matches from the current round, and injuries to star players. They employed their collective brand of humour by predicting the following week's winners and losers. Host Walker did little to control the behaviour of the group, but he did manage to elicit a fun approach to football among his team of panellists. It was not surprising that Newman was invited to be part of this particular show as he was already part of Channel 9's mid-week ratings success, *The Footy Show*, which had began in 1994 and is discussed in further detail below.

### **10.3 Background to *The Footy Show***

In the expansive book by Hess, Stewart, Nicholson and de Moore, published in 2008, where they explore the national history of the code, there is only a single mention of Newman. Tellingly, the reference to Newman is in the context of the success of *The Footy Show*. On the surface, it is tempting to think that the football panel shows discussed above have a life of their own, devoid of social and economic context. They appear, and disappear, seemingly on the basis of ratings or popularity. But the authors of *A National Game* provide a broader context for understanding changes in the football media landscape. They suggest that the media 'are the AFL's greatest allies', asserting that while corporate sponsors and merchandise sales are an important source of revenue for the AFL and its clubs 'None of this would be possible without the support of the media, and in particular the blanket coverage provided by the AFL's broadcast partners and major daily newspapers in Melbourne, Perth and

Adelaide'.<sup>647</sup> They note that without many live broadcasts of football games during the 1960s and 1970s, most football-related television programs relied on current or past players to provide entertainment for viewers. As they highlight, 'Former players, such as Collingwood's Lou Richards and Richmond's "Captain Blood", Jack Dyer, became household names as a result of sitting on football panels, participating in skits and commentating on the game'.<sup>648</sup> In their view, it was during the 1980s and 1990s that 'the mutually dependent relationship of football and television became entrenched'.<sup>649</sup> They link this relationship to the national expansion of the code (and attendant commercial opportunities) that began with the Swans moving to Sydney from 1982, and continued with the addition of new teams from Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia. In 1988, the Seven Network gained exclusive rights to televise the national competition, later on-selling surplus games to pay-television providers.<sup>650</sup> By the end of the 1990s, 'AFL television broadcast rights were the most valuable in Australian sport' and telecasts 'achieved solid ratings in Australia's five major capital cities'.<sup>651</sup>

In this context, Hess, Stewart, Nicholson and de Moore claim that 'Football's popularity and profile were also enhanced by the introduction of several high-rating panel programs during the 1990s'.<sup>652</sup> Thus, it is understandable why Channel 9,

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<sup>647</sup> Hess, Nicholson, Stewart and de Moore, *A National Game*, pp. 373-374.

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 374.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 374-375.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>652</sup> *Ibid.*

lacking a broadcast deal, were so keen to take advantage of football's growing popularity, and concomitantly to undermine Channel 7's dominance where football programming was concerned. Hence, Channel 9's strategy to launch a new mid-week football panel show in 1994, hosted by Nine personality (and former sports journalist) Eddie McGuire, featuring regular panellists, notably Newman and comedian Trevor Maramalade. As Hess, Stewart, Nicholson and de Moore observe, 'the show thrived on controversy ... was a deft mix of ... football commentary and vaudeville revue ... [and] was a huge ratings success'.<sup>653</sup> This success was intensified when a News Limited consortium, that included the Nine Network, the Ten Network and Foxtel, gained the broadcast rights for the 2002-2006 seasons.<sup>654</sup> The flow-on effect from this investment was a particular boon to Channel 9 programs such as *The Footy Show*.

The long-running nature of *The Footy Show* has resulted in a number of publications and personalities that have reflected on the success of the program. Key among these, is Harvey Silver, the inaugural executive producer of *The Footy Show*, who authored a publication about the early years of the show in 1997. In particular, he related the pivotal role played by Newman. As he pointed out: 'Everyone who came into contact with Sam knew he had a bit of television magic'.<sup>655</sup> Silver added that because Channel 9 'did not have access to football footage and even highlights, we devised a program that concentrated solely on football entertainment'.<sup>656</sup> Professional

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<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

<sup>654</sup> Ibid, pp. 375-376.

<sup>655</sup> Silver, *Behind the Footy Show*, p. 26.

<sup>656</sup> Harvey Silver, personal communication, 7 August 2012.

comedian, Trevor Marmalade, also remembered that having him on the show and ‘behind the bar’ was Harvey Silver’s idea.<sup>657</sup>

Speaking about the first few years of *The Footy Show*, Marmalade provided insights into Newman’s approach: ‘Sam encouraged me to hang as much shit on him as you like, it’s all showbiz’.<sup>658</sup> Silver remembered that he would call a production meeting at 9.30 on Tuesday mornings during the football season. Those present were McGuire, Marmalade and Newman. Silver recalled that Newman ‘contributed to the meetings and was involved in producing run-downs’,<sup>659</sup> and Marmalade suggested that ‘There would be changes in the run-down between Tuesday morning and the show on Thursday night because footy news changed so quickly’.<sup>660</sup> Silver also advised that Newman often pretended on-air that he was not involved with production meetings because ‘they would reduce his spontaneity’.<sup>661</sup> This observation may well be an example of Newman altering the truth to the extent of exhibiting some hypocrisy.

In addition, Silver praised Newman’s courage. For example, he cited a well-publicised incident when ‘Newman suffered a double break of his right leg after being deliberately hit by a car driven by his former girlfriend [Leonie Jones, the mother of

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<sup>657</sup> Trevor Marmalade, personal communication, 4 December 2012.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

<sup>659</sup> Harvey Silver, personal communication, 7 August 2012.

<sup>660</sup> Trevor Marmalade, personal communication, 4 December 2012.

<sup>661</sup> Harvey Silver, personal communication, 7 August 2012.

Newman's third son, Max]'.<sup>662</sup> Silver also explained that by halfway through the show, Newman was in enormous pain. 'As he hobbled slowly back to his car on crutches and slid into the back seat, I thought of how gutsy he had been taking all the derision and put-downs and jokes that had been directed at him'.<sup>663</sup> At the same time, Newman worked to develop an anti-intellectual persona. Newman remarked self-deprecatingly in an interview with Madeleine Hangar in 1999 that he '... doesn't read. No newspapers, no books'.<sup>664</sup> Melbourne journalist, Peter Wilmoth, observed the absence of books in the Newman house: 'The room is notably devoid of books'. Newman himself wryly reflected 'Wouldn't need them. No time to read books'.<sup>665</sup>

It is not the intention of this chapter to convey a year-by-year summary of incidents from *The Footy Show*, or to provide and discuss a catalogue Newman's antics on television. However, there are some key aspects of his career development that deserve comment and attention, including related media appearances, such as acting and singing, which occurred contemporaneously with the early years of the program.

#### **10.4 Newman as Musician**

In some cases, Newman's public and private lives overlap. In 2002, 'Sam' Newman released a CD of his favourite songs. The album was titled *I Do My Best Work After Midnight*. Newman himself sang the lyrics to several of the tracks and he reveals a

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<sup>662</sup> Silver, *Behind the Footy Show*, p. 26.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid.

<sup>664</sup> Hangar, 'Wham, Bam, Thank You, Sam', p. 32.

<sup>665</sup> Peter Wilmoth, 'What's so Funny?', *Sunday Age*, 'Agenda', 13 August 1995, pp. 1-2.

small but true tenor singing voice.<sup>666</sup> In effect, it is the warm, caring side of Newman that comes to the fore in this venture, as the royalties accruing from sales helped to defray costs associated with the growing medical bills of his footballing mentor, Farmer, who at that time was suffering advanced dementia, and his wife Marlene, who had endured another bout of breast cancer.

Newman's belief in his public self-worth is also conveyed via a passing interest in music, with much of the evidence concerning his musical aptitude anecdotal in nature. For instance, he occasionally sings on *The Footy Show*, and in 2001 sports journalist Jon Anderson specifically drew attention to Newman's musical ability when he observed in the *Herald Sun* that 'Sam Newman has the chance to go scream for scream with Jimmy Barnes on *The Footy Show* ... in a version of Bobby Darin's *Mac the Knife*'.<sup>667</sup>

John K. Watts is famous at the Geelong FC. A natural musician and songwriter, he penned the Geelong Football Club theme to the tune of the 'Toreadors' Song' from the Bizet opera *Carmen* (1875). During the 1963 football season, Watts is credited with creating the words 'while sitting in the back of the team bus'.<sup>668</sup> Watts himself recalled that he wrote the Geelong FC theme song as a replacement for 'the very quant lyrics of the previous version'.<sup>669</sup> In 2012, according to Peter Sweeney, Watts wrote a song titled 'I'd Rather Be a Has Been, than a Never Was', which he and

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<sup>666</sup> Davis, 'Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam', p. 6..

<sup>667</sup> Jon Anderson, 'The Box Seat', *Herald Sun*, 26 July 2001, p. 89.

<sup>668</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 931.

<sup>669</sup> Watts, 'The Know All Who Became a Legend',

Newman recorded.<sup>670</sup> Newman and Watts' song royalties were also intended for the medical bills of Farmer and his wife.

In 1999, Corrie Perkin reported that 'On *The Footy Show* recently, Sam Newman did something unpredictable. The program was televised from Crown Casino and it opened up with Newman singing the old Sammy Cahn number *Come Fly With Me* in front of a 600 strong studio audience plus another half million at home. In true crooner style, he cruised through the crowd microphone in hand'.<sup>671</sup> Trevor Marmalade used *The Footy Show* to quip at Newman's expense: 'Nice singing there, mate. Are you sure your girlfriend didn't run over your throat?'.<sup>672</sup> This was not only a joke aimed at Newman's singing ability, but a reference to an altercation with a girlfriend who aimed her car directly at him.

In 2008, Newman considered an approach from the producers of a musical titled 'Call Girl' written by comedian Tracey Harvey. Craig Hutchison, writing for the *Sunday Herald Sun*, indicated that if he were to proceed as a key member of the cast, Newman would 'need to sing several songs as part of the role'.<sup>673</sup> Newman as 'Sam' has exhibited a large ego, perhaps to prove to football followers that he can achieve

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<sup>670</sup> Peter Sweeney, 'Mates Keep On Kicking Around', *Sunday Times*, 25 March 2012, p. 7.

<sup>671</sup> Corrie Perkin, 'Sam I Am', *Age*, 7 June 1999, p. 14.

<sup>672</sup> Trevor Marmalade, *Footy Show Jokes* (South Yarra: Hardie Grant Books, 2001), p. 30.

<sup>673</sup> Craig Hutchison, 'Sam Finds New Girl Theatre Calls for Song or Two from Newman', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 29 June 2008, p. 57.

anything he sets his mind to. The same attitude permeated his venture into acting, mostly as himself.

### **10.5 Newman as Actor**

It is not unusual for real-life footballers to play parts in movies or stage shows related to Australian Rules football. For example, in the 1980 movie version of David Williamson's 1977 stage play, *The Club*, a number of then current Collingwood players had small roles as fictional football characters, as did former players Lou Richards, Jack Dyer and Bob Davis, who featured as football commentators.<sup>674</sup> Newman has displayed yet another aspect of his public 'Sam' character, by providing a voice-over in a feature film. He and radio 3AW's, Shane Healy, played the parts of football commentators in the 1995 movie *Hotel Sorrento*, directed by Richard Franklin. In the story, actor Ray Barrett, the sport-loving father of three daughters, turns on a radio to hear 'Sam' Newman and Shane Healy call several seconds of a match, naming Gary Ablett (senior) as one of the players. Newman and Healy both received mentions in the closing credits.

Newman also obviously had wider public appeal in television media as his 'celebrity' status meant that he appeared as himself in the comedy game show *Blankety Blanks* in 1996. He also played himself in the first television series of the comedy/drama *Greeks on the Roof*, and in the television game show, *Temptation*, during 2007.

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<sup>674</sup> For commentary on *The Club* in the wider context of the history of Australian drama, see Richard Fotheringham, *Sport in Australian Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 205-206.



### 10.6 Incidents on *The Footy Show*

It is clear that Newman plays a defined role when taking part in *The Footy Show*. He is a provocateur, a lightning rod, or a devil's advocate, for often divisive commentary on contemporary issues in the football world and beyond. His responses to the on-air host(s) of the program when they ask 'What do you think, "Sam"?', are often apparently unscripted, and designed to provoke a reaction, if not from the studio audience, then certainly from the media over the following days. Similarly, his participation in skits or send-ups or practical jokes on the show, where sometimes he is the butt of the humour is designed not only to entertain, but to keep viewers (and critics) tuned-in to see what controversy might arise next time the program goes to air. In this scenario, there is perhaps the unrealistic expectation that Newman, in particular, will go 'one step further' on the next occasion, pushing boundaries for the sake of maintaining ratings and for keeping the show as a talking point in media circles.

Over time, Newman's role in the program, and the related persona he developed, attracted observations from various media commentators. For example, in 1995, when people were trying to explain the appeal of *The Footy Show*, Peter Wilmoth suggested that Newman seemed 'to have borrowed from many others to create the character [of 'Sam' Newman]. He's the fleet-of-tongue Sam Malone in [the US comedy] *Cheers*. But he is mostly Sam Newman, decisive, derisive, intimidating'.<sup>675</sup> It is these latter characteristics, as described by Wilmoth, that not only explain Newman's appeal, but, as discussed below, also the invective that is directed against him.

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<sup>675</sup> Wilmoth, 'What's so Funny?', p. 2.

Over time, 'Sam' Newman became well known for offending viewers of *The Footy Show* to the point where overstepping perceived boundaries of decent and respectful behaviour was an almost regular occurrence. This section of the chapter outlines a number of incidents where he has received public odium for his on-air antics. Some have been directed at former or current players and some at females such as a journalist and a club director. In 1999, for example, Newman blackened his face to resemble Indigenous St Kilda [and later Footscray] star player, Nicky Winmar, after he failed to appear as scheduled on *The Footy Show*. The issue was later resolved through mediation,<sup>676</sup> although Newman himself claimed the sketch was 'satire'.<sup>677</sup> On this basis, it can be observed that Newman is prone to present ugly incidents that he is responsible for as minor, hence 'satire'.

Another unpalatable occurrence that Newman was responsible for happened on *The Footy Show* is a good example of this attitude. Typically, Newman downplayed the result to indicate that it was all in fun, despite the fact that the incident had serious consequences. During 2001, Newman stated on *The Footy Show* that fellow panellist 'David [Schwarz] didn't have a great 150<sup>th</sup> game [as the centre half-forward of the Melbourne FC] due to injury, but we all clubbed together as a present from the Pies'. Newman unwrapped a present and slammed a cream pie into Schwarz's face which also besmirched Schwarz's suit. An angry Schwarz stood up and threw Newman to the studio floor. Newman rose with an injured back, and regained a semblance of composure and courage to challenge Schwarz with the question 'Do you want to give

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<sup>676</sup> Andrew Meath, 'Winmar Furore', *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 June 2001 p. 1.

<sup>677</sup> Amanda Smith, *The Sports Factor*, Radio National, 18 February 2005.

me another whack? Go ahead'.<sup>678</sup> According to journalist Andrew Meath, 'Both men could not conceal bad moods. Schwarz, Melbourne's 195 cm, 103 kg key forward, shouted to Newman "You're not my mate, you're a dog". Legal action was averted after Schwarz accepted an apology from Newman'.<sup>679</sup> Newman subsequently attempted to downplay the heated exchange with Schwarz over the cream pie, telling a blatant untruth when he suggested 'The two people who weren't worried about it were David and myself'.<sup>680</sup>

It is true, however, that Newman sometimes differentiates between his public life as 'Sam' and his private side. For example, 'Sam' Newman has admitted: 'People perceive me as a prick and I'm sexist, abrasive, rude, arrogant, in their face – and that's fine – that's my public image'.<sup>681</sup> Even so, Newman as 'Sam' supplied an instance of inverted snobbery: 'If you disagree with a woman you are sexist. If you disagree with gays you are homophobic'.<sup>682</sup> Newman has also vilified gay men on-air and the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board decided to hear a complaint against him based on his comments uttered on Channel 9's *Today Show*, 29 November 2004. According to Kate Uebergang, 'Sydney gay activist, Gary Burns, lodged the complaint after Newman said "Melbourne does not need mincing, lipping parading

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<sup>678</sup> *The Footy Show - The Greatest Hits: The First Decade*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQwP5T3pgyM> (accessed 12 May 2015).

<sup>679</sup> Andrew Meath, 'Sam Has Egg on His Face', *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 June 2001, p. 1.

<sup>680</sup> Yeaman, 'Kicking the Brits', p. 49.

<sup>681</sup> Newman, cited in Davis, 'Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam', p. 6.

<sup>682</sup> 'Sam' Newman, interviewed by Andrew Maher and Tim Watson, *Morning Glory*, 1116 SEN, 21 January 2013.

people wandering all over the country”’. On this basis, according to the reporter, ‘The Anti Discrimination Board President, Stepan Kerkyasharin said that Newman faced a maximum fine of \$40,000’.<sup>683</sup> Newman himself has reflected: ‘I’m not here to convince people of what I am. My friends and family know who I am and that’s all that matters’.<sup>684</sup> This is an indication that ‘Sam’ Newman portrays public bravado, whereas the private John Newman values his friends and family.

Newman occasionally thinks better of some of his stunts, and has been known to apologise. For example, in 2014 Nick Wade reported that Newman had ‘issued a reserved apology for flashing his genitals on national television after being admonished by the Nine Network ... The former Geelong ruckman exposed himself [genitals] on Thursday night’s *Footy Show* during a skit about the meningitis outbreak at Port Adelaide Football Club. He bared himself to the [Adelaide] crowd and viewers’.<sup>685</sup> A repeat offender in terms of exposing himself, media commentators have continued to chastise Newman. On one such occasion, Brisbane journalist, David Penberthy, excoriated Newman for showing his genitals on national television. He then went on to suggest that:

It is a testament to his sustained mindlessness that his marquee product, touted by [Channel] Nine in its promotional guff as a much-loved and edgy part of

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<sup>683</sup> Kate Uebergang, ‘Sam’s Showdown: TV Comments Put Newman in Tribunal’, *Herald Sun*, 7 January 2005, p. 28.

<sup>684</sup> Newman, cited in Alex Fevola, *Snapshot: A Portrait of Success*, Text by Fiona Killacky (South Yarra: Parragon, 2009), p. 112.

<sup>685</sup> Nick Wade, ‘Sam Sorry for Baring Kit in Skit’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 August 2014, p. 79.

the [*Footy*] *Show* is the ‘Street Talk’ segment. We should now have outgrown the concept of devoting a prime-time TV spot to a segment which corrals people who are mentally ill, morbidly obese, afflicted by speech impediments or physical handicaps so that a botoxed halfwit can crack jokes at their expense.<sup>686</sup>

On this same theme, academic Margaret Linley chimed in to claim that Newman was ‘a pseudo-wit that only the pathetic and/or ignorant can enjoy. [Newman is an] ... exploitive parasite’.<sup>687</sup> With a modicum of arrogance, Newman has defended his central function through *The Footy Show*. He indicated thus: ‘My general aim is to be facetiously obnoxious while recognising media guidelines and expectations. Our audience, which is vast, deserves and expects that’.<sup>688</sup>

However, Tim Morrissey writing in Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph* conveyed the distinction between Channel 9’s *The Footy Show* and *The Marngrook Footy Show*, a low-key competitor that screens on the Indigenous Television Network. Morrissey posed a rhetorical question, and then provided the answer:

Want to watch a footy show that’s about, well, footy and not boofheads, stupid gee-ups and the denigration of women? Then *The Marngrook Footy Show* on the Indigenous Television Network is for you. Marngrook is the traditional Aboriginal ball game which has claimed to ... [be] the inspiration for

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<sup>686</sup> David Penberthy, ‘Jaded Show Long Past Use-By Date’, *Sunday Mail* [Brisbane], 12 May 2013, p. 46.

<sup>687</sup> Lindley, ‘Sam Newman, is He Funny?’, pp. 3-6.

<sup>688</sup> Newman, cited in Matt Johnston, ‘Critics Can Moan, But I’m Not Listening Says *The Footy Show*’s Sam Newman’, *Herald Sun*, at [www.heraldsun.com.au/Sam-Newman](http://www.heraldsun.com.au/Sam-Newman) (accessed 23 November 2015).

Australian Rules football. And *The Marngrook Footy Show* is everything the AFL *The Footy Show* should be – informative, articulate and entertaining without insulting your intelligence. ‘We talk about footy unlike the other footy show – they don’t talk much about footy at all’, former Sydney Swans Indigenous star and [*Marngrook Footy Show*] panel member Derek Kickett said. *Marngrook Footy Show* host, Grant Hansen, pointed out: ‘It’s not predominantly pitched at an Indigenous audience, it’s for people who love football in general. Sam Newman mucking up has been good for us – people are turning off [*The Footy Show*] and tuning into us’.<sup>689</sup>

Other commentators are more generous towards *The Footy Show*, and some like *Herald Sun* journalist, Colin Vickery, have used incidents, such as the change in hosts, to reflect on the success and appeal of the program. In this case, Vickery declared his support for *The Footy Show* despite the allegations of co-host, Garry Lyon, having a close relationship with the former wife of panellist Bill Brownless. Lyon subsequently took leave of absence from all his media commitments due to his treatment for depression. Vickery advanced:

The show must go on. That is my reaction to news *The Footy Show* co-host Garry Lyon and panellist Billy Brownless have had a falling out. Lyon and Brownless have been integral to the success of the second incarnation of the AFL entertainment program, which is still going strong in preparation for its 22<sup>nd</sup> year on air. Let’s not forget that at the end of 2005, it looked like *The Footy Show* might not be able to continue. Punters were sceptical when Nine announced that Lyon and James Brayshaw together would replace [original host Eddie] McGuire. Lyon and Brayshaw took time to click but once they did, the show gained a whole new lease of life. It’s all about chemistry. Sam

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<sup>689</sup> Tim Morrissey, ‘A Footy Show for Real Fans: Indigenous Stars Put Newman to Shame’, *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 22 May 2008, p. 18.

Newman has thrived alongside the pair. He is more relaxed. You can tell he is really enjoying himself again. Billy Brownless as well as Shane Crawford has [*sic*] only added to the package. A decade later and *The Footy Show* is still rating well. Yes, it can be politically incorrect but it makes no apologies for that ... *The Footy Show* is a lightning rod for critics. They see it as some sort of indicator of the decline of Western civilisation. I say lighten up, it's not meant to be Shakespeare. Others complain the show is tired, but I disagree. It is still good for a weekly belly laugh ... Sam Newman said the situation was a private matter but that he was the 'last person on the planet to be giving them [Lyon and Brownless] advice about how to live their life. Professionally, I'm hopeful because it's very vital to our show that they're both part of it'.<sup>690</sup>

Experienced journalist with the *Australian*, Patrick Smith, with a measure of cynicism observed: 'Sam Newman does some odd things and has been in the headlines for reasons that have nothing to do with football and everything to do with him being a former footballer and national television identity. He has been a ratbag with little judgement'.<sup>691</sup> But when Kevin Bartlett and Smith, discussed Newman and his importance to the television football entertainment program *The Footy Show*, Bartlett, who has Legend Status in the AFL Hall of Fame, made the claim that: "'Sam" is more important than football'. Smith replied that "'Sam" is the one constant on *The Footy Show*', adding that, where Newman was concerned, 'People are happy to be amused and offended'.<sup>692</sup> The diversity of opinion about Newman was thrown into sharp contrast with one particular incident that garnered more approbation than usual, as discussed below.

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<sup>690</sup> Colin Vickery, 'How Two Best Mates Fell Out', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 14 February 2016, pp. 4-5.

<sup>691</sup> Smith, 'It's Appropriate Newman is In the Hall of Fame, Not Ablett', p. 20.

<sup>692</sup> Kevin Bartlett and Patrick Smith, *Hungry for Sport*, 1116 SEN, 16 February 2016.

### 10.7 Reactions to Newman's Mannequin Skit

On any given episode of *The Footy Show*, skits are employed in an attempt to add levity to the program. They often include panel members, the co-hosts or Newman dressing up or acting out roles. Sometimes props are used, and sometimes the skits are pre-recorded. Often, however, there is a great deal of spontaneity involved and much of the humour is derived from seeing how the participants react to what sometimes appear to be unscripted incidents. In 2008, Newman employed a lingerie-clad mannequin that had a picture of the *Age's* chief football writer Caroline Wilson stapled to it. He manhandled the figure and made provocative remarks. As a prominent female journalist in a largely all-male football media industry, Wilson was often the target of jibes on *The Footy Show*. This particular incident created a media storm, some of the details of which are outlined and discussed below.

Experienced Tasmanian journalist, Patsy Crawford, admitted not watching Newman's mannequin skit. Crawford relied on the opinion of those who had noted the Wilson cardboard model sketch on *The Footy Show*. Crawford could be guilty of 'lazy journalism', but it does not stop her from heavy criticism. She stated that:

at its best *The Footy Show* had a waggish charm. The program is now crossing over into sleaze. Many viewers find "Sam's" antics not only boorish but also woefully outdated. As humour, it was demeaning. As relevance, it ranked somewhere between a dinosaur and a gangsta [sic.] rap promo [sic].<sup>693</sup>

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<sup>693</sup> Patsy Crawford, 'Newman Smut is Just so Dated', *Hobart Mercury*, 10 May 2008, p. 32.



Kate Hagan and Samantha Lane generated an analytical and balanced article, *inter alia* describing the background to the skit, taking an obvious pro-Alberti and Wilson stance. The two journalists observed:

Alberti was one of five AFL club directors Newman described as liars and hypocrites after they wrote a letter of complaint to Channel Nine last year about a skit in which Newman employed a lingerie-clad mannequin that had a picture of the *Age's* chief football writer Caroline Wilson stapled to it. But there was no personal apology from Newman or *The Footy Show's* co-host Garry Lyon.<sup>694</sup>

Hagan and Lane also reported that:

the women who wrote the letter about the mannequin were branded liars because they included Collingwood board member Sally Capp as a signatory despite Lyon saying that Capp did not want to be part of it. Lyon singled out Alberti for buying two tables in *The Footy Show* audience in remarks that implied she was a hypocrite. Nine removed Newman from the program for several weeks and made him have counselling over his attitude to women.<sup>695</sup>

Late in 2009, Alberti, a Western Bulldogs FC board member, and millionaire businesswoman and lawyer was among female AFL identities who wrote a letter of complaint to Channel Nine bosses in the days after the mannequin stunt. She also brought a court action against Channel Nine. This action had a non-economic definition. The result was that Channel Nine apologised and agreed to pay Alberti

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<sup>694</sup> Kate Hagan and Samantha Lane, 'Defamation: Nine Says Sorry, Newman Doesn't', *Age*, 17 November 2009, p. 3.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*

\$220,000 plus costs. As Michael Warner notes: ‘The payment extended from the infamous 20 second skit in April last year when Newman fondled a lingerie-clad mannequin send-up of football journalist Caroline Wilson’.<sup>696</sup> Alberti soon after revealed how a stalker, who was subsequently gaoled, bombarded her with hate mail. In his article, Warner included an example of the hate mail addressed to Alberti: ‘Alberti, get a life, f--- off from the football world domain, leave it to the men. I have no hesitation in saying you are an a ...’.<sup>697</sup> According to Warner, ‘The stalker turned up at her [Alberti’s] apartment and favourite restaurants to protest her stand against the top-rating [*Footy*] Show’.<sup>698</sup>

Anna Krien, author of *Night Games: Sex, Power and Sport*, writing about the incident, has detailed that ‘on live television, the mannequin was wearing a satin bra and underpants. “I’ll tell you what, she’s a fair piece, Caro” he [Newman] said standing back to admire the dummy’.<sup>699</sup> Krien continued her assessment of the Wilson skit: ‘In other words, it wasn’t really about Wilson, it was about *them*. About a subculture of men trying to find a place – albeit a very lowly place – in their world for a woman’.<sup>700</sup> Catherine Deveny took a feminist approach to ‘Sam’ Newman on *The Footy Show*. In her essay ‘Pigs in Suits’, she recorded that:

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<sup>696</sup> Warner, ‘Sam’s \$500,000 Moment of Madness’, p. 3.

<sup>697</sup> Cited in *ibid.*

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>699</sup> Anna Krien, *Night Games: Sex, Power and Sport* (Collingwood: Black Inc., 2013), p. 16.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Sam Newman insults and undermines women once again. More a day in the life of a serial misogynist. He fondled a mannequin with the face of a respected female football commentator and then, when women kicked up, bagged all women associated with football. Why is Newman popular? The guy's a creep. I called Newman vain, ugly, a megalomaniac and a bully.<sup>701</sup>

In the view of academic Deb Waterhouse-Watson, Newman attempted to 'pass the [mannequin-groping] incident off as a bit of harmless fun telling Wilson that it was an affectionate send-up demonstrating how completely he admired and accepted [her] as part of the [football] culture'.<sup>702</sup> Newman's known tactic of sanitising his behaviour seems to occur when he is criticised for overstepping the boundaries of decent behaviour. In late 2008, Newman admitted that he had telephoned and apologised to Wilson who he says accepted his apology.<sup>703</sup> According to Davis, Wilson 'then went on to write about six articles, having said the issue was over'.<sup>704</sup>

Others, like well-known football journalist, researcher and writer, Jim Main, leapt to Newman's defence in regard to the Wilson mannequin incident on *The Footy Show*. Significantly, Main reflected on the distinction between 'Sam' and John:

I'll be blunt. Channel Nine has crucified Sam Newman at the altar of political correctness. Yes, he was crass in his dressing of a mannequin and went over the top with the skit, but there was almost an almost immediate apology even if it was reluctant. We have now been told that Newman needs 'counselling'

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<sup>701</sup> Catherine Deveny, *Say When* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2008), pp. 7-9.

<sup>702</sup> Deb Waterhouse-Watson, *Athletes, Sexual Assault and 'Trials by Media': Narrative Immunity* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 72-73.

<sup>703</sup> See Davis, 'Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam', p. 7.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*

about his attitude towards women. It has been suggested that his mental processes were affected by major surgery for prostate cancer. Yes, he is chauvinistic, but is a session or two on a couch going to make him warm and fuzzy towards women? Most people might disagree at what he says but he has the right to speak his mind. Those who rant and rave about Newman's thoughts and antics don't know the man. [In articulating John rather than 'Sam' Newman] I have bumped into him often and have always found him warm and considerate. He has been enormously generous towards friends and strangers alike and his charitable work is legendary among the football media. I am almost ashamed that so few of Newman's media colleagues – those who know and understand him well – have defended him.<sup>705</sup>

While Eddie McGuire is a supporter of Newman, he remarked: 'In the end, the Caroline Wilson dummy skit didn't work. It just wasn't funny'.<sup>706</sup> Other aspects of Newman's relationships with women are discussed later in the thesis.

### **10.8 Offending Friends and Foes**

The above discussion has revealed that Newman has a predilection for offending people with his words or his actions. Often this offence is intentional, but sometimes it is accidental. Very rarely does he apologise for his misdemeanours. In this section of the thesis, additional incidents are discussed which demonstrate that Newman does not just direct his barbs or his offensive stunts at his perceived enemies or critics. Rather, sometimes his friends and colleagues, or innocent bystanders, are also targets.

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<sup>705</sup> Jim Main, 'At the Risk of Self-Immolation, an Unreconstructed Fan of Sam I Am', *Inside Football*, 4 June 2008, p. 28.

<sup>706</sup> Eddie McGuire, 'Time to Drop the Act, Sam', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 1 June 2008, p. 83.

On several occasions, Newman, and/or his television network, has suffered criticism, if not sanctions, for his behaviour.

For instance, in 2001, Kylie Oliver, writing for the *Geelong Advertiser*, reported on how the Geelong FC had berated the retired Newman for criticising the club following an insipid loss. As Oliver noted: ‘Cats boss Brian Cook lashed out at past players Sam Newman and Dwayne Russell for their harsh criticisms in the wake of a morale-sapping loss to the Western Bulldogs at home ... the pair sunk [*sic*] the boots into their old club on Channel 9’s *Sunday Footy Show*’. Oliver continued ‘Cook, fed up with constant public criticism especially from Newman, said the high profile pair should stop throwing stones at the glasshouse they had helped build’.<sup>707</sup>

Newman was also capable of both cruelty and hypocrisy especially towards a Geelong FC footballer. In 1999, Paul Chapman was drafted by the Cats with national draft pick 31. He went on to play 251 games with the club from 2000 to 2013, winning the Norm Smith Medal for best on ground in the 2009 Grand Final. As a footballer, Chapman had ‘a passionate and aggressive style’.<sup>708</sup> In a lengthy passage from Chapman’s 2015 autobiography, *Chappy*, he relates how his passion spilled over into a confrontation with Newman at the 2003 Brownlow Medal count night. Chapman detailed the origin of an unfortunate occurrence that sheds light on Newman as a person away from make-up and television cameras:

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<sup>707</sup> Kylie Oliver, ‘Give it a Rest’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 June 2001, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>708</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, pp. 144-145.

It was around the time he [Newman] had been slamming the [Geelong Football] club on *The Footy Show* and I wasn't sure what his motives were. I couldn't help but think he was roasting us for the hell of it. I saw him as a champion of the club, a 300 game player, so his attitude was difficult to comprehend. Finally, I saw a chance to ask him what the reason was. He [Newman] was sitting with 1985 Brownlow medallist, Brad Hardie so I went over and sat with them. Brad Hardie was friendly but Sam asked if I was lost. Then he [Newman] asked what he could do for me? I told him that if Geelong meant that much to him then he should come down and support us. It would be great for the town to see Sam down there, and far more productive than his persistent efforts to discredit the club. He didn't address the issue and I started to become a bit emotional when he labelled 'Bomber' [nickname of then Geelong FC senior coach Mark Thompson] as no good and our game plan equally poor. He said we would go nowhere ... we would never win a Premiership and I got angry. Things were getting heated and loud. Sam stood up and I recall 'Cooky' [Geelong FC CEO Brian Cook] coming over and putting himself between us. 'Bomber' followed to see what was going on. Bomber supported my actions. He knew my intentions were for the benefit of the footy club. I wasn't sanctioned by the club. I told Sam that night that I wasn't interested in shaking his hand after we win a Premiership. I got caught up in the moment. He [Newman] was so smug and arrogant. I genuinely believe that past players contributed to our success and should enjoy the triumphs. They spilled the same blood for the same cause and I would have loved for Sam to be there to shake our hands like it meant everything to him. Many of the club's champions were there and did just that. I never spoke to Sam again after that night.<sup>709</sup>

Two years after Newman's distasteful confrontation with Chapman, Newman showed a different interpretation of himself: 'If your values are honest and you wouldn't dud anyone and you're loyal and you've got a good attitude, I think you might be a good

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<sup>709</sup> Chapman (with Anderson), *Chappy*, pp. 30-31.

person'.<sup>710</sup> Chapman might disagree with Newman's self-assessment, which borders on hypocrisy.

On the 17 September 2009 edition of *The Footy Show*, 'Sam Newman likened a Malaysian man to a monkey not long out of the forest'.<sup>711</sup> This was not an uncommon approach to eliciting humour on the program, but in this case, the Australian Communications and Media Authority ruled that Newman was likely to have 'provoked severe ridicule on the basis of the man's colour and race'. As Christine Kellett reported, in response Channel Nine offered to donate \$200,000 to charity and senior management agreed to 'an overview of materials to be used by Newman'.<sup>712</sup>

In this context, it has to be said that studio audiences and television viewers probably expect Newman to speak his mind during his 'editorials' on *The Footy Show*. As journalist Peter Wilmoth observes 'He works hard and is a demanding taskmaster ... No one's ever heard such offensive material delivered so smoothly'.<sup>713</sup> However, there is more to Newman's arsenal than his sometimes caustic commentary. Australian researchers have published on the nature of body language and it is clear that Newman displays a range of body language on *The Footy Show*. For example, drawing on the literature, his classic sideways glance can be perceived to

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<sup>710</sup> Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: I Did It My Way', p. 8.

<sup>711</sup> Christine Kellett, 'News', *Age*, 'Entertainment', 7 September 2010, p. 5.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>713</sup> Wilmoth, 'What's so Funny?', p. 2.

‘communicate interest, uncertainty or hostility’.<sup>714</sup> Newman also exhibits another body language trait identified by the literature; ‘The twisted smile can only be done deliberately which sends one message – sarcasm’.<sup>715</sup> Moreover, Newman, by leaning back on his chair, ‘... can show dominance, superiority and territoriality’.<sup>716</sup> Lindley has also observed the same characteristic of Newman’s body language with his chair on *The Footy Show*, observing that ‘He springs forward from it, leaning towards us to make a point; sprawls back in it, lounging in a manner extraordinary in a public forum’.<sup>717</sup> While the above observations may be seen as entirely subjective, it is clear that Newman does exude a physical presence on the set of *The Footy Show* and his body language is part of this demeanour.

### **10.9 Changing of the Guard at *The Footy Show***

In recent years, *The Footy Show* has not been quite so successful in maintaining or improving its television ratings, or seeing off its rivals. In 2014 Jon Pierik wrote of *The Footy Show* celebrating its 21st year. He indicated that:

[Garry] Lyon and [James] Brayshaw both came into the role with their own style and made it their own. It is such a challenging job that requires them to

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<sup>714</sup> Allan Pease and Barbara Pease, *The Definitive Book of Body Language: How to Read Others’ Thoughts by Their Gestures* (Buderim: Pease International, 2004), p. 179.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>717</sup> Lindley, ‘Sam Newman, is He Funny?’, pp. 3-5.



shift between host, hard-hitting interviewer, football expert, circus ringmaster and Sam-tamer ... and that is all just in one segment.<sup>718</sup>

Moreover, as mentioned previously, there were difficulties experienced by Garry Lyon, the co-host of the show, when he suddenly left *The Footy Show*, the Monday night *Footy Classified* and his other radio commitments, to deal with mental health issues. His departure resulted in the first female co-host of the program being appointed, when Rebecca Maddern began sharing duties with James Brayshaw early in 2016.

Later in 2016 Brayshaw left *The Footy Show* to concentrate on his role as chairman of the North Melbourne FC, and ostensibly to spend more time with his family.<sup>719</sup> Craig Hutchison, who was a panellist on Channel 9's *Footy Classified* show (and took over as host when Lyon departed this program), was invited to co-host *The Footy Show* with Rebecca Maddern. After an initial spike in ratings with male and female co-hosts, *The Footy Show* began to suffer a drop in viewers.<sup>720</sup> Also, allegations began to emerge of Newman having a personality clash with Hutchison, hence Newman's now infamous monosyllabic response to direct questions from panel members on the

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<sup>718</sup> Pierek, 'Star Still Shines on Footy Show', *Age*, 'Green Guide', 6 March 2014, p. 10.

<sup>719</sup> Brayshaw stood down as chairman of the North Melbourne FC in 2017.

<sup>720</sup> For a discussion of the television ratings of *The Footy Show*, see Debi Enker and Broede Carmody, 'Viewers Tune In to See New-Look Footy Show Perform', *Age*, 12 August 2017, p. 13.

show.<sup>721</sup> Hutchison was subsequently sacked and after the show went off air for two weeks, the original host of the show, Eddie McGuire, returned to *The Footy Show* after an absence of twelve years. The new look, rebooted version of *The Footy Show* screened from 10 August 2017, and immediately attracted an audience of 381,000, making it the twelfth most watched show in Australia overall.<sup>722</sup> Although the end of the 2017 season is too soon to make a firm judgement, it seems that with the return of McGuire, and his long-held respect for, and rapport with, Newman, under-pinning the chemistry in operation, that the program is now on a slightly firmer footing, at least in terms of television ratings.

### **10.10 Conclusions**

This chapter has identified additional aspects of Newman's different personalities, largely in the context of his public life during the latter half of his media career, from 1994 to 2017. The main focus was on Newman's involvement in *The Footy Show*, where an examination of particular incidents and character traits in Newman's life, and a consideration of his role in a much-hyped 're-boot' of the program in August 2017, provided insights into the public and private sides of his life, which are discussed in more detail in the following two chapters. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated how 'Sam' Newman and John Newman, do, on occasion, share

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<sup>721</sup> Newman had used 'silence' to show his displeasure in other media contexts. For example, as noted in the previous chapter, when working with Bartlett at 3AW, Newman '... would just sit there and refuse to talk' when he was unhappy with aspects of radio technology.

<sup>722</sup> Enker and Carmody, 'Viewers Tune In to See New-Look Footy Show Perform', p. 13.

personality traits, sometimes merging to provide a more rounded character than is usually observed by the public.

## Chapter Eleven

### Newman's Public Life

It will give the public a rest.

Frank Field<sup>723</sup>

#### 11.1 Introduction

As far back as 2008, Eddie McGuire, when initially hosting *The Footy Show*, advised Newman to have a break and ‘come back as John Newman, the man I know and love. I am over Sam and I reckon John Newman is too’.<sup>724</sup> Other hosts, or co-hosts of the program have also expressed their admiration, as well as their concern, for Newman and his public persona as ‘Sam’, who is sometimes referred to as ‘Samuel’ or ‘Fossil’ (shortened to ‘Foss’).<sup>725</sup> It is this public persona that deserves more exploration.

Newman's public life has often been the subject of controversy. In this chapter, the focus is not so much on his direct involvement with *The Footy Show*, but with other aspects of his life, some being off-shoots from his profile in the media. However, no matter what the activity, Newman's ‘celebrity’ status means that his language, behaviour and attitudes are nearly always under scrutiny and it is hard for him to escape the spotlight. Nonetheless, exploring the ‘public’ elements of Newman's life does provide some insights into his character, which will be contrasted with the more

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<sup>723</sup> Frank Field, *Observer*, 14 May 2000, cited in Ned Sherrin (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 155.

<sup>724</sup> McGuire, ‘Time to Drop the Act, Sam’, p. 83.

<sup>725</sup> Collins, ‘The Boy from the Grammar’, p. 18.

‘private’ aspects of his lifestyle, explored in more detail in the penultimate chapter of the thesis.

## **11.2 A Passion for Cars and Motor Sport**

It seems Newman has long had an interest in cars and motor sport. During 1971 Newman’s choice of transport was a high-powered motorcycle. As Terry Granger noted at the time, ‘From Leopold to Kardinia Park, Newman and his sweet revving Yamaha 650 have become as popular a duo as Peter Fonda and the *Easy Rider*’.<sup>726</sup> The same article also indicated that with his forearm in plaster, ‘Newman has been unable to play with the Cats as yet this season, but it hasn’t kept him from riding his 125-mph charger. He prefers to use it only for short hops and to the beach in the summer months’.<sup>727</sup>

While there are various anecdotes that link Newman with this passion, his ongoing fascination with motor sport was revealed when in 1990 he interviewed 500 cc motorcycle racing champion Kevin Magee, who had crashed badly during the United States Grand Prix in 1989. Magee had suffered a brain injury:

Newman: Many would say it’s a pointless exercise in stupidity to ride a motorbike around a tight circuit an inch from the ground at speeds up to 320 kmh.

Magee: I’ve been racing for many years. You have low times but you work to get back on top of things just like other competitive elite sportspeople do. I want to ride in a couple of grands prix before the end of this season.

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<sup>726</sup> Granger, ‘Big Sam – A New Man’, p. 15.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid.

Newman: Is this conversation you're having with me now as sharp as you were before the accident?

Magee: I can't find the right word immediately. Words don't matter it'll all come down to the way I ride.

Newman: Will you have to pass some kind of IQ test before the governing body decides whether you'll represent a danger to others or not?

Magee: A panel of neurosurgeons will give me extensive tests to determine if I can have my international racing licence back. At the moment I don't have one.

Newman: When do they decide to suspend a rider's licence?

Magee: With the type of head injury I had they suspend a licence - for everybody's good.<sup>728</sup>

The above interview indicates that Newman has always been serious and knowledgeable about motor racing, and it is clear that Newman himself likes driving. In 1999 he revealed to a journalist that 'It's [motor sport] a very good test of the physical and mental'.<sup>729</sup> He has always preferred fast cars and he admits to owning four of them. His present Italian performance vehicle is a yellow Lamborghini Murcielago roadster (and according to Sheahan, in a somewhat lighthearted aside, 'Newman says he no longer jumps out of the Lamborghini at traffic lights to argue and remonstrate with drivers who have offended him').<sup>730</sup> One of Newman's current favourites is a 1967 Ford Mustang GTA two-door convertible with a 289 cubic inch V8 engine which he has had restored. As Davis notes, 'He owns two vintage Ford Mustangs and a 1965 [Ford] Thunderbird convertible – [that] sit in a nearby warehouse which he owns near his \$5 million apartment at Melbourne's

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<sup>728</sup> Sam Newman, 'The Fast Life', *Sun*, 13 June 1990, p. 82.

<sup>729</sup> Hanger, 'Wham, Bam, Thank You, Sam', p. 32.

<sup>730</sup> Mike Sheahan, 'Sexy, 60: The Sum of Sam', *Herald Sun*, 15 December 2005, p. 5.

Docklands'.<sup>731</sup> In particular, Newman likes to drive his white 1967 Ford Mustang with a V8 engine, and perhaps it is no coincidence that he prefers to drive a Ford, as this company is the major sponsor of the Geelong Cats where he is a life member. Davis is especially evocative when he describes the arrival of Newman at the appointed time for an interview: 'The deep, rhythmic purr of a white 1967 Mustang announces the arrival of Sam Newman. Despite the Tuesday morning peak-hour traffic, Newman is on time. The 68 year old drives the classic muscle car daily'.<sup>732</sup>

As an indication of the seriousness of his motor racing passion, during the late 1980s Newman secured a Confederation of Australian Motor Sport racing licence. He subsequently registered his racing cars to carry the number 17, the jumper designation he wore in 300 games at the Geelong FC. Newman raced in the GT Production Car Class, and also competed in the Australian Nations Cup Championship. Later, Newman achieved the first pole position of his motor racing career driving an expensive Ferrari 360 Challenge number 17 in the Top Gun qualifying session at Sandown Raceway, which features a tight left-hand corner at the end of a long straight. According to Aiton, the Ford Motor Company, perhaps wanting to leverage Newman's celebrity status, wanted to be 'its icon, and drive in races'.<sup>733</sup>

'Sam' and John Newman portray similar personality characteristics and a meshing of personas expressed in his passion for motor racing. The serious John is integrated

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<sup>731</sup> Davis, 'Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam', p. 6.

<sup>732</sup> Collins, 'The Boy from the Grammar', p. 18.

<sup>733</sup> Doug Aiton, 'Conversations: The Footy Showman', *Sunday Age*, 1 March 1998, p. 3.

with the public 'Sam' character, illustrated by his humour following the first pole position in his motor racing career. For example, during 6-8 September 2002, Newman participated in the 35<sup>th</sup> Sandown Endurance Race, a sports car event over 500 kilometres. One news website carried the headline 'Sam Newman boots Ferrari into surprise pole position for Sandown 500'. The publication noted:

Football personality Sam Newman put the boot into his motor racing rivals with an upset pole position for the 35<sup>th</sup> Sandown 500 Classic in the Top Gun qualifying session at Sandown International Raceway in Melbourne today. Newman steered his \$400,000 Ferrari 360 Challenge coupe around the 3.1 km circuit in 1 minute 18.51 seconds securing the first outright pole of his motor racing career with a little help from the weather. He was the first of 10 drivers due to take their turn at the qualifying run off. Rain began soon after Newman completed his flying lap and no other driver was able to match the time. Jim Richards, the famous New Zealand professional racing driver, [with seven Bathurst 500s and four Australian touring car victories to his credit] who had set the fastest time in an earlier general qualifying session, and is a renowned wet weather expert, was second fastest in the Top Gun and will share the front row in a Porsche GT3 Cup.<sup>734</sup>

V8 Supercar regulars Paul Morris, John Bowe and Brad Jones, also driving Ferraris for the same Prancing Horse Racing team as Newman, qualified third, fourth and fifth respectively, whereupon Newman quipped 'I was very fortunate with the weather. I'm going to bolt the trophy to the roof of the car'. It should be added that a significant number of competitors did not finish the race.<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>734</sup> *Race News*, [www.motorsport.com/v8supercars/news](http://www.motorsport.com/v8supercars/news), 6 September 2002 (accessed 24 May 2014).

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 September 2002 (accessed 24 May 2014).



Understandably, Newman was not immune to accidents while pursuing his racing passion. According to Lawrence Money 'In late October 2003, Newman drove an Indy class open wheeler racing car in Queensland. He walked away from a 240 kilometres per hour collision'.<sup>736</sup> Newman subsequently confessed that 'I hurt my neck badly when I was car racing'.<sup>737</sup>

Accidents with motor cars have also featured in other aspects of Newman's life. The ABC 1 News on 10 July 2009 contained a report that South Melbourne police had interviewed Newman in regard to an alleged road rage incident. Given Newman's lack of forbearance towards female car drivers, Newman faced court over the incident. The court heard that:

[Newman] ... deliberately hit Hana Zapa's Ford Focus with the door of his vintage [Ford] Mustang convertible and called her a f---king bitch on 10 July last year. The road rage happened on busy Armstrong Street in Middle Park and was witnessed by three people, including two barristers. On top of the \$2000 fine, Newman was ordered to pay \$302 to compensate for the repairs to Ms Zapa's car'.<sup>738</sup>

No conviction was recorded. Kate Jones, from the Hobart *Mercury*, continued her report:

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<sup>736</sup> Lawrence Money, 'I Am Sam I Am', *Age*, 'Agenda', 2 November 2003, p. 3.

<sup>737</sup> Mike Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: I Did It My Way' *Sunday Herald Sun*, 17 December 2005, p. 8.

<sup>738</sup> Kate Jones, 'Sam Still Gets His Kicks', *Hobart Mercury*, 24 July 2010, p. 7.

Sam asked a waiting reporter if he had ever lost his temper. Newman was then attacked outside court by another woman who harassed him and kicked him in the leg as he tried to escape across Melbourne's William Street. The woman yelled 'Street Talk, Sam. Can't you handle it?' as she pursued Newman and his female solicitor. The woman was eventually escorted away by court protective service officers.<sup>739</sup>

Unnecessary speed in cars was also another problem that got Newman into trouble.

In 2010, Elissa Hunt reported on another Newman court appearance:

[C]hallenging the old adage that those who represent themselves have a fool for a client, Newman acted for himself as he faced court. He is fighting a \$227 penalty for doing 72 kmh in a 60 kmh zone in a car with the registration plate 07 PURR. The offence allegedly happened on the Monash Freeway before entering the Domain Tunnel in Richmond soon after midnight on 5 September 2008. He [Newman] claims he did not get the penalty notice in time to fight the fine.<sup>740</sup>

Newman has experienced other complexities while using public roads, including over-indulging in alcohol. Sheahan reported that Newman regretted losing his car licence for eighteen months for being 'seven times over the legal limit', with Newman admitting that he was 'completely out of it'.<sup>741</sup> However, other newspaper reports indicate that Newman exaggerated his blood alcohol level behind the wheel. Terry Brown and Michelle Poutney wrote:

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<sup>739</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>740</sup> Elissa Hunt, 'Sam Newman Wins More Time to Contest 2008 Speeding Fine', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 20 January 2008, p. 8.

<sup>741</sup> Newman, cited in Mike Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: I Did It My Way', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 17 December 2005, p. 10.

South Melbourne police pulled Newman over in his silver Porsche sports car at 1.05 am in Canterbury Road, Middle Park and police breath tested Newman who allegedly blew .149, three times the legal limit. Newman was also booked for speeding and failing to obey a traffic control signal. The breath test reading carries a penalty of 14 months licence loss and a \$420 fine and a mandatory court appearance.<sup>742</sup>

Investigative reporter Andrew Rule provided further insights into Newman's celebrity lifestyle by observing of the incident that:

It wasn't the free drinks that got 'Sam' Newman into trouble. It was the lack of one. Newman was already well-primed when he got to Crown casino just after midnight ... He [Newman] had eaten and drunk well at a dinner at the Flower Drum restaurant to wind up *The Footy Show* for the year. Then he moved on to the casino with a close female friend ... It highlighted the casino's carefully planned system of cultivating 'celebrities' to lure punters through the door. Described by Crown insiders as 'ambassadors', they're an elite band of athletes and entertainers [who] in return for benefits including free drinks and meals act as 'hosts' at the casino. Newman has a reputation as a moderate drinker. So well had he celebrated that when he called for another drink some time after 2am, staff in the casino's ritzy Oak Room refused to serve him. Newman yelled, swore and made a scene.<sup>743</sup>

Rule continued his article by reporting that:

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<sup>742</sup> Terry Brown and Michelle Poutney, 'Newman Booked', *Herald Sun*, 10 October 1996, p. 2.

<sup>743</sup> Andrew Rule, 'How Sam Blew the Cover on Casino's Celebrity Spruikers', *Sunday Age*, 20 October 1996, p. 3.

Newman's female companion drove him to his Middle Park address in his luxury Toyota Lexus and dropped him off still fuming. After 'resting' for about an hour, he [Newman] made his biggest mistake of the night. He decided to drive himself to see the woman at her nearby home. He stepped into his second car, a silver Porsche [sports car] and drove off. It was about 4.30 am. Minutes later, the police pulled him over in Canterbury Road, Middle Park. They booked him for speeding, failing to obey a traffic signal and driving with a blood alcohol level of .149, three times the legal limit.<sup>744</sup>

It was also reported by Christine Antoniou that Newman 'verbally abused and kicked a Crown Casino employee after ... [he] was denied another drink by the staff-member who believed Newman was too intoxicated to serve'.<sup>745</sup> Not surprisingly, *The Footy Show's* comedian, Trevor Marmalade, made a joke out of Newman's drink-driving record and his loss of licence:

Sam, we haven't really talked about the loss of your licence. What happened, mate? Just decided to drive around till you sobered up? ... Sammy had too much to drink, so we told him to get the bus home. Unfortunately, he took the booze bus.<sup>746</sup>

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid. Note that a discrepancy occurs at the hour that police intercepted Newman. Blown and Poutney, 'Newman Booked', p. 2, name 1.05 am, whereas Rule 'How Sam Blew the Cover on Casino's Celebrity Spruikers', p. 3, believed the hour was minutes after 4.30 am. Also, Rule did not allude to Newman kicking the Crown casino employee who refused to serve alcohol to Newman.

<sup>745</sup> Christine Antoniou, 'Newman Accused of Casino Assault', *Geelong Advertiser*, 22 February 2005, p. 3.

<sup>746</sup> Marmalade, *Footy Show Jokes*, p. 28.

One result of Newman's drunken night was that the Crown Casino's former employee '... was awarded \$285,000 in a worker's compensation claim after Newman verbally abused him before kicking him'.<sup>747</sup> According to the remainder of Matt Cunningham's report, 'The former Crown staff-member was suffering post-traumatic stress and psychotic depression'.<sup>748</sup>

Newman also developed other passions associated with motor sport, notably indulging in the purchase of a motor boat.<sup>749</sup> Like some wealthy individuals, Newman reflects conspicuous spending with his ownership of a \$1.5 million luxury motor yacht that once belonged to former Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir's finance minister. The yacht is named *Sea Sea Rider*.<sup>750</sup> A number of press reports indicate that Newman despises other boat owners and users,<sup>751</sup> but Sheahan reveals Newman believes his boat brings him 'serenity, calmness and remoteness which, I think, are three very important elements in life'.<sup>752</sup> It is possible to speculate, then,

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<sup>747</sup> Matt Cunningham, 'Casino Worker to Get \$285,000', *Herald Sun*, 22 February 2005, p. 14.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>749</sup> It is hard not to allude here to 'Toad of Toad Hall' from the children's novel about a wealthy, conceited but essentially likable character who, like Newman involves himself in a range of expensive and dangerous interests only to discard them and take up another interest. Witness Toad's statement: 'The fact is while I was getting my breath, I had a sudden idea – a really brilliant idea – connected with motor-boats'. See Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, first published 1908 (London: Puffin Books, 2008), p. 205.

<sup>750</sup> Davis, 'Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam', p. 7.

<sup>751</sup> See, for example, Money, 'I Am Sam I Am', p. 3.

<sup>752</sup> Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: I Did It My Way', p. 8.

that despite the public nature of Newman's liking for motor sports on land and sea, and the occasional related misdemeanour (often associated with alcohol), he is able to find some measure of escape in these activities, either behind the wheel of a fast car on the track, or in the remoteness associated with a motor-yacht cruise.

### **11.3 Illness with Prostate Cancer**

Apart from football injuries, Newman has always enjoyed relatively good health. However, in 2008, at the age of 62, Newman had surgery for prostate cancer at Epworth Hospital in Box Hill, an eastern suburb of Melbourne. The *Herald Sun* of 6 March 2008 carried on its front page the headline: 'Sam's Cancer Fight'. It was stated that Newman was 'facing the fight of his life after being diagnosed with prostate cancer following a blood test taken to check his cholesterol count'.<sup>753</sup>

Newman subsequently underwent four hours of surgery at the Epworth hospital, but he remained worried had the cancer had attacked other areas of his body. As Evans explained, 'He [Newman] now faces an anxious wait until the weekend before doctors can tell him if the cancer has spread. Newman learned of his condition just three weeks ago, revealing it only to family and a few friends'.<sup>754</sup> Newman himself was obviously in a reflective mood, with Evans quoting him as saying: 'It does go through your mind when it is all going to end. We don't want to make this too dramatic'.<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>753</sup> Chris Evans, 'Newman Clear But Urges Cancer Tests', *Age*, 10 March 2008, p. 6.

<sup>754</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid.*

Illnesses suffered by celebrities are obviously fodder for the press, as the public clearly take an interest in the well-being of high-profile luminaries. Every aspect of Newman's condition seemed to be reported in a range of different newspapers and on various television outlets. For example, Newman's urologist Dr Laurence Harewood was confident Newman could beat the cancer,<sup>756</sup> explaining that 'they had caught the disease at an early stage. It hasn't gone outside the capsule and we've got it all out cleanly'.<sup>757</sup> Newman himself was relieved that cancer had not struck other organs. He candidly remarked: 'Well, that's the best news I've ever had in my life'.<sup>758</sup> Understandably, though, the health scare did cause him to be reflective, if not circumspect. For instance, while Newman understood that some people 'will say it couldn't happen to a nicer bloke', he was realistic enough to recognise that 'If you are out there giving it, you have to cop it'.<sup>759</sup> Thus, a clearly ill Newman, recovering after surgery, demonstrated insight into how his media career involved taking a rise out of people unable to defend themselves (as happens, for example, in Newman's 'Street Talk' segment of *The Footy Show*). Indeed, Newman seemed to be admitting that in this particular situation he was unable to defend himself.

Taking advantage of public interest in Newman's health, the producers of *The Footy Show* decided to do a live-cross to a clearly ill Newman in his hospital bed. Prior to this, Newman had requested that television cameras from the Channel Nine program

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<sup>756</sup> Sam Edmund, "'Sam's' Cancer Fight', *Herald Sun*, 6 March 2008, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>757</sup> Evans, 'Newman Clear But Urges Cancer Tests', p. 6.

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>759</sup> Newman, cited in Milanda Rout, 'Sam Newman has Surgery for Prostate Cancer', *Australian*, 9 March 2008, p. 6.

*Sixty Minutes* have full access to his prostate operation, believing his surgery would encourage men to undergo regular prostate checks. In the face of a life-threatening illness, Newman once again displayed his characteristic bravado.

Newman eventually made a full recovery from his operation and football journalist Mike Sheahan later interviewed him in a question and answer format for the *Herald Sun*:

Sheahan: You've just emerged from the rooms of your urologist. What's the news?

Newman: He said he thinks I'll survive another month which will disappoint a hell of a lot of people.

Sheahan: Everything else is in working order in that leviathan body of yours?

Newman: As we get down the torso things are in a state of disrepair. Mind you, I've almost wound that side of things up.<sup>760</sup>

Geelong FC's Newman and his former football adversary in the ruck, Don Scott, of Hawthorn, had many battles on the football field. Field umpires watched the pair punch-on in most games during the 1970s. Both men captained their respective clubs, but unlike Newman, Scott was a three-time premiership player with the Hawks. Newman and Scott have shared a friendship since the 1990s. Between them, the two played 605 elite football senior games. They also share another similarity in that Scott suffered a virulent form of prostate cancer. Scott explained to football journalist Mike Sheahan during a television interview in 2012 that after he underwent surgery

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<sup>760</sup> Mike Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: Mellow, Calm (And This May Disappoint You) in Very Good Health', *Herald Sun*, 3 April 2010, p. 10.



on his prostate ‘a lot of people really supported me, including John Newman’.<sup>761</sup>

Scott chose Newman’s first name carefully. If he had named the public character ‘Sam’ Newman, he might have done his friend a disservice.

#### **11.4 A Passion for Golf**

Newman has been a golfer for four decades. In 1999, he disclosed the origin of his passion: ‘At the age of about ten [circa 1956], I used to play at Point Lonsdale [south western Victoria] with Peter Thomson [the professional multi major winner, including British Opens] and a wrestler named Harry Young’.<sup>762</sup> According to Usher, Newman eventually became a member of the Point Lonsdale Golf Club’,<sup>763</sup> and when he moved permanently from Geelong to Melbourne, he bought a home in Mt Waverley ‘overlooking the Riversdale Golf Course’.<sup>764</sup>

Newman’s golf prowess is worth noting, as he also hero-worships the famous United States golfer, Jack Nicklaus, who has won the most majors in the history of professional golf. Newman is a member of the Heritage Golf Course in Chirnside Park in Melbourne’s east. Looking back on the foundation of Heritage, Newman

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<sup>761</sup> Scott, cited in Mike Sheahan, *Open Mike*, Fox Footy, 4 September 2012.

<sup>762</sup> Michelle Hanger, ‘Hello Newman’, *The Footy Show Magazine* (April 1999), p. 45.

<sup>763</sup> Usher, ‘A Cat Named Sam’, p. 16.

<sup>764</sup> Usher, ‘Geelong’s John Newman’, p. 25.

explained with some pride: ‘I was present when Nicklaus turned the first sod’.<sup>765</sup> Newman even named his second son Jack Nicholas, as a tribute to Nicklaus.<sup>766</sup>

In May 2012 Newman talked about his game to Sheahan: ‘Golf really got to me because I thought I was better than I was ... I used to throw clubs. I used to cuss’, but he added, ‘I haven’t thrown a club for ten years’.<sup>767</sup> Several anecdotes shed light on Newman’s proclivity for golf. According to Anglesea real estate agent, Ian Lewtas, Newman was invited to play in a local golf tournament. He personally witnessed that Newman had a great swing and a technically excellent short game.<sup>768</sup>

Newman temporarily discontinued golf ‘after an on-course altercation with a former friend in the annual Portsea pro-am’,<sup>769</sup> but by November 2014 he appeared to have re-discovered his passion when he played in a charity event for the Shane Warne Foundation.<sup>770</sup> Furthermore, a photograph of Newman, golf professional Todd Sinnot

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<sup>765</sup> ‘Sam’ Newman, interviewed by Andrew Maher and Tim Watson, *Morning Glory*, 1116 SEN, 21 January 2013.

<sup>766</sup> Born in 1982, Newman’s son Jack was the first of two progeny of his third wife, Daisy, whom he married in 1977, and with whom he split in 1983. See Wilson, ‘Give Me a Break’, p. 1.

<sup>767</sup> Newman, cited in Sheahan, *Open Mike: Conversations from the Ground-Breaking Fox Footy Program*, p. 230.

<sup>768</sup> Ian Lewtas, personal communication, 20 August 2012.

<sup>769</sup> Sheahan, ‘Sexy, 60’, p. 5.

<sup>770</sup> Luke Dennehy, Jackie Epstein and Nui Te Koha, ‘Warne in Gold Form for Pro-Am’, *Herald Sun*, 19 November 2014, p. 27.

and Steve Johnson at the Victorian Open Pro-Am in 2015 shows Newman, looking relatively shy, with the two confident players.<sup>771</sup>

### **11.5 Relationships with Women**

Newman has boasted that he was a womaniser. Asked if he was monogamous, he maintained that ‘I just go with one person at a time’.<sup>772</sup> Also, journalist Michael Davis argues that ‘at 63, the charismatic former champion is the closest thing the city has to an aging rock star – and probably the first sportsman in town to have his private exploits, usually involving women, plastered across the newspapers’.<sup>773</sup> Whatever the case may be, Newman’s outlook towards women is an important aspect of the thesis, particularly since such attitudes are a very visible part of his public persona. A number of anecdotes demonstrate a variety of stances towards, and situations with, females in his life.

For example, Newman can be gracious, such as in his published interview with Winsome McCaughey. In his *Sun* column ‘Head to Head’, Newman conducted a long interview with Winsome McCaughey, a former Lord Mayor of Melbourne, who was instrumental in Melbourne’s bid for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. An extract reveals that Newman’s tone is almost respectful and gracious:

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<sup>771</sup> Ryan Reynolds, ‘Celebs Come Out Swinging’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 4 February 2015, p. 3.

<sup>772</sup> Newman, cited in Hanger, ‘Wham, Bam, Thank You, Sam’, p. 29.

<sup>773</sup> Davis, ‘Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam’, p. 6.

Newman: When you visited Barcelona [another city competing for the 1996 Olympic Games] and seen their facilities it proved Melbourne could host the '96 Olympics. Why?

McCaughey: Barcelona had banged its port and industrial and railway buildings between itself and the sea. Our great asset is our waterfront.

Newman: Your credibility overseas was enhanced because you were lord mayor?

McCaughey I never look back. I always look forward.

Newman: Melbourne's advantage is being a small city?

McCaughey: Our great advantage is the concentration of facilities next to the city.

Newman: Earlier this year, a Canadian tourist Michael Rossignol broke into your house and stole some documents. Maybe he was after the cash projections to give the Toronto organisers?

McCaughey: I think he was after money for other purposes.

Newman: What was your maiden name?

McCaughey: Howell. No one could ever pronounce it.

Newman: What was your vocation?

McCaughey: I worked for 15 years in child care services.

Newman: What would you say to detractors of the Melbourne bid?

McCaughey: Maybe we haven't got enough information out about the benefit of the Games not just cash benefits.<sup>774</sup>

Newman's first wife, Barbara Epstein, makes a generous assessment of him, and it is instructive that she referred to him as John, perhaps alluding to his warm, introspective nature and generosity of spirit. Epstein has also remained Newman's friend. In a newspaper interview, she observed:

I would defend him [Newman] any day because he has always been a good friend when it counts. I think people misunderstand John because they don't

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<sup>774</sup> 'Sam' Newman, 'The Last Lap', *Sun*, 18 September 1990, pp. 74-75.

know him. He really is a generous man who cares for his family, his friends and those less fortunate.<sup>775</sup>

Newman has also projected a complexity in his approach to a woman whom he respects in the football industry. For instance, football identity and latterly a news journalist, Beverley O'Connor, had a regular column titled 'Women in Football' in the *Herald Sun*. She alleged that high-profile football journalist and broadcaster, Craig Hutchinson vilified her in public at an AFL Media Awards night. She included the observation that: 'At the risk of ruining Sam Newman's carefully cultivated sexist image – he was one of the first to come to my defence'.<sup>776</sup> Although O'Connor did not elaborate on how exactly how Newman came to her aid, thereference perhaps captures more of John Newman than 'Sam' Newman.

Newman has been married three times and he has reflected on his overall marital status at twice in the press: In May 1999, Newman stated: 'I've been out – other than the three people I was married to – with at least four people for a much longer time than I've ever married for. I could have easily been married seven times'.<sup>777</sup> Not surprisingly, Newman has sometimes deflected speaking candidly and honestly about his marriages. For example, Shane Crawford, a panellist on *The Footy Show*, asked Newman in a newspaper interview if he still got on with his ex-wives or whether they

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<sup>775</sup> Epstein, cited in Sue Hewitt, 'Eddie's Plea to His Ailing Mate', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 1 June 2008, p. 5. Epstein's remark about how Newman cares about 'those less fortunate' accorded with Main's observation referred to earlier in the thesis.

<sup>776</sup> Beverley O'Connor, 'Women in Football', *Herald Sun*, 26 September 2012, p. 18.

<sup>777</sup> Newman, cited in Hanger, 'Hello Newman', p. 45.

had ‘all moved on’?<sup>778</sup> Newman evasively replied: ‘We haven’t moved on. We just live in a commune’.<sup>779</sup> Other people who know Newman understand his reticence when speaking about close relationships, especially with women. For instance Lorraine King, wife of Kevin King, Newman’s friend in whose garage he lived when he was broke, explained in 2000: ‘If he [Newman] did have any regrets about the women he let go he would never tell you. He’s very passionate early in most of his relationships. As the relationship progresses, when there are problems, he finds it easier to move on’.<sup>780</sup>

American medical practitioner and psychologist, George Ainslie, argued: ‘In a prosperous society, most misery is self-inflicted. We become addicted to destructive emotional relationships, usually while attempting not to’.<sup>781</sup> Looking back over Newman’s relationships with women, it might be said that some of his experiences reflect what Ainslie is referring to. For example, Leonie Jones, 26 years Newman’s junior, is the mother of his youngest son, Max. In 1997 Jones, angry with Newman about some unspecified matter, deliberately ran over him in her car, breaking his leg and ankle. During 1999, the incident was still raw for Newman who recalled with heavy sarcasm: ‘It’s pretty hard to handle when you are actually lying under the sump

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<sup>778</sup> Shane Crawford, ‘Sam I Am’, *Sunday Herald Sun*, 24 August 2008, p. 91.

<sup>779</sup> Newman, cited in *ibid.*

<sup>780</sup> King, cited in ABC, ‘The Trouble with Sam’.

<sup>781</sup> George Ainslie, ‘Precis of Breakdown of Will’, *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, vol. 28, no. 5, 2005, p. 635.

of a Daewoo with the GTX multigrade [oil] dripping on to your collar'.<sup>782</sup> Jones was later fined \$250 for purposely injuring Newman.<sup>783</sup> She did not appear in the Prahran Magistrates Court but pleaded guilty through her barrister, Ken Beruldsen.<sup>784</sup> According to McGuire, Newman suffered 'a double break of his right leg after being hit by a car driven by his former girlfriend. On the day Newman was due to have a pin removed from his ankle, he dropped a gym weight on it and instead had another three screws inserted ... He is on crutches for ten weeks and a further four weeks in a boot'.<sup>785</sup>

Newman has also been the victim of a physical assault concerning a woman. In 2000, 44 year old plumber Michael Hamill punched Newman in the face after ramming a van through the front gate of Newman's home. The dispute centred on 27 year old Melissa Skirton. In Newman's words: 'I heard this thumping and the doorbell rang and the person I was with said I shouldn't answer it ... [but I thought] It's my house. I opened the door and he [Hamill] gave me a bit of a seeing to. Changed my face. I had plastic surgery on my nose, my nose only'.<sup>786</sup> According to Victoria Button's

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<sup>782</sup> Cited in Hanger, 'Wham, Bam, Thank You, Sam', p. 29. By 2014, Newman illustrated both a perspective and sense of humour towards the accident: 'I was run over by a little Korean car made out of Coke cans'. Newman, cited in *RevHeads*, Channel 31, 22 February 2014.

<sup>783</sup> ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam'.

<sup>784</sup> Donovan, 'Ex Girlfriend Fined Over Newman's Broken Leg', p. 4.

<sup>785</sup> McGuire, 'Time to Drop the Act, Sam', p. 83.

<sup>786</sup> ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam'.

report of the incident, ‘When Newman opened the door ... Hamill threw a punch ... Hamill bit Newman’.<sup>787</sup>

Other episodes have not been so serious, but they are incidents, nonetheless, and perhaps reveal some aspects of the pattern generally identified by Ainslie, although perhaps exacerbated by Newman’s celebrity status and public profile. For instance, in October 2003, Newman clashed with a pregnant mother in a Brighton supermarket. In Newman’s version of the event:

My groceries were already being put through when her rampant unchecked little child ran under my feet and before I could say anything she called me a dickhead. So I gave her plenty and she started crying. I mean, if you are going to give it, at least take it.<sup>788</sup>

The episode associated with Newman’s abode is also instructive. At the height of *The Footy Show*’s success in the early 2000s, Newman owned a house in St Kilda where he lived on his own. In 2003, according to *Australian Story*, Newman ‘commissioned a local architect named Cassandra Fahey to design the building’.<sup>789</sup> At an academic seminar, Fahey was described as ‘... best known for her design of the Sam Newman house, which was an entry in the Residential Category of the RAIA (Vic) Awards 2003’. In documentation associated with the seminar, Fahey wrote: ‘the [Newman St Kilda house] project intensifies and highlights the public’s obsession with

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<sup>787</sup> Victoria Button, ‘Newman’s Attacker Gets Four Months Jail’, *Age*, 22 October 1997, p. 1.

<sup>788</sup> Money, ‘I Am Sam I Am’, p. 3.

<sup>789</sup> ABC, ‘The Trouble with Sam’.



celebrity'.<sup>790</sup> The hologram on the Newman house façade depicted Pamela Anderson, the Canadian born star of the United States television hit series *Baywatch*. This hologram received extensive media attention, partly because it seemed to convey the myth that Newman was a womaniser. In response to the furore, Newman, with some sarcasm, declared: 'I don't know what people think I do. They think I stand on a street corner with my fly undone trying to flag women down in cars and whip off with them'.<sup>791</sup>

Other incidents show that Newman's private property is seen as fair game for disaffected fans. For example, at 5.00 am on 14 April 2005, a female, later identified as a fan of *The Footy Show*, broke a window of Newman's Brighton house. A report in the *Herald Sun* set out the circumstances of the event:

John Sam Newman detained a woman who broke a window with a rollerblade at his house. Newman said he was woken by the sound of smashing glass about 5 am. Newman said he invited the woman inside then locked the front door and waited until the police arrived. The woman, Tatyana Micunovic, aged 37, has been charged with attempted burglary, criminal damage, being unlawfully on premises and giving a false name and address to police.<sup>792</sup>

With some women that Newman has had a relationship with, he has in fact indicated that he was his own worst enemy. For instance, there is no evidence that Newman has taken or indulged in illicit or recreational drug use. However, during 2003-2004,

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<sup>790</sup> Fahey, cited in *Research Seminar Series: Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2003), np.

<sup>791</sup> ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam'.

<sup>792</sup> Warner and Hodgson, 'Sam's Rude Awakening', p. 5.

Newman commissioned a woman named Louisa Larkin to source furniture for his home and for a restaurant he owned. Larkin and Newman subsequently became involved in a relationship. It was around that time that she was introduced to excessive use of illicit drugs cocaine and ecstasy, whereupon the 37 year old (perhaps to finance her habit) altered bank cheques for \$93,000 that Newman wrote for her on six occasions in 2003 and 2004. As Julia Medew noted in her report, ‘In one case, she changed a cheque from \$300 to \$33,000’.<sup>793</sup> The subsequent court hearing heard that Newman was reimbursed \$25,000 by the ANZ bank and \$35,600 by Westpac, but was still out of pocket \$17,700’.<sup>794</sup> The court also heard that Larkin was found guilty for ‘impersonating a police officer in two separate incidents in NSW in 2002 and 2004’.<sup>795</sup> According to Emily Power and Carly Crawford, Magistrate Peter Lauritsen ‘accepted the medical evidence that Larkin suffered a borderline personality disorder which impaired her ability to make rational choices. But he fined Larkin \$25,000 and ordered she repay \$61,600 to the Westpac and ANZ banks’.<sup>796</sup>

Newman’s language where women are concerned has also been under public scrutiny. In one example, Newman delivered an obviously sexist remark to a Tasmanian politician interested in promoting a dedicated AFL licence for the island state. In 2008 Paula Wreidt, then Tasmania’s Minister for Economic Development, appeared on *The Footy Show* in a pre-recorded interview. Controversy erupted when he

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<sup>793</sup> Julia Medew, ‘Newman’s Ex Lover Cocaine Addict’, *Age*, 9 November 2007, p. 5.

<sup>794</sup> Australian Associated Press, ‘Sam’s Ex in Drug Claims’, *Geelong Advertiser*, pp. 1, 5.

<sup>795</sup> Emily Power and Carly Crawford, ‘Cocaine Confessions of TV Star’s Ex Lover’, *Daily Telegraph*, 9 November 2007, p. 3.

<sup>796</sup> *Ibid.*

quipped: ‘We couldn’t get her on could we? It’s worthy of coming on her’. Nine’s executive producer of entertainment explained that there was never any intention to insult Wreidt, and Wreidt subsequently accepted Newman’s apology. Adding fuel to the fire, though, key officials defended Newman’s disparagement of Wreidt, with AFL Chief Executive Officer Andrew Demetriou expressing the view that he ‘... believed Newman made an honest slip’.<sup>797</sup> In this context, it is worth highlighting Davis’s observation that the rise of Newman on television has coincided with the era of political correctness. In his view, ‘Newman has made a fortune by ignoring it. Many people – men and women – find his take on things refreshing. Others are predictably outraged’.<sup>798</sup>

Other journalists also chimed in on this topic. For example, Elise Potter produced a scathing article, beginning with a provocative title, on Newman’s approach to women. Writing an extensive column in the *Geelong Advertiser*, with a readership arguably more supportive of Newman than most, Potter referred to *The Footy Show* and Newman, in particular. She asserted that Newman had:

for years disproportionally focussed on the looks of any female guest or audience members. Many of Newman’s contemporaries have often defended his [Newman’s] actions as part of a television act and [this] is in conflict with the real Sam.<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>797</sup> Mike Sheahan and Cheryl Critchley, ‘Stupid Sam’, *Herald Sun*, 2 August 2008, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>798</sup> Davis, ‘Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam’, p. 8.

<sup>799</sup> Elise Potter, ‘Bully-Boy Sam: Footy’s Sexist Champion’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 May 2008, p. 15.

Potter continued her slant: ‘A misogynist football dinosaur is always going to be threatened by a strong, intelligent woman and it’s not unexpected to see him revert to bully-boy tactics. The AFL conveys a clear message that attacks on women are fair game in the current football climate’.<sup>800</sup> Potter alluded to the ‘real Sam’. However, the truth of this notion is debatable. The real person is John Newman. Potter seems to ignore this distinction.

It is fitting to end this particular section with a brief discussion of the interactions that Newman has with the first female host of *The Footy Show*. Rebecca Maddern, aged 38, is a former *Geelong Advertiser* columnist who was born and raised in Geelong. She departed Channel Seven after her contract came to an end after more than 13 years of service in order to join the Nine Network’s AFL program alongside James Brayshaw and Newman. As Colin Vickery explained, the shock move came ‘... as Nine management decided it had to replace [Garry] Lyon who ... stepped down indefinitely due to ongoing mental health issues’.<sup>801</sup>

In writing about Maddern’s appointment in the *Geelong Advertiser*, Greg Dundas noted that ‘As the No. 1 [female] ticketholder at the Geelong Cats, Maddern is a regular face at Kardinia Park where Newman carved out a 300 game career from 1964-1980’.<sup>802</sup> Dundas then quoted Newman as saying ‘She will obviously give a

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<sup>800</sup> Ibid.

<sup>801</sup> Colin Vickery, ‘Rebecca’s Footy Coup’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 30 March 2016, p. 4.

<sup>802</sup> Greg Dundas, ‘New Host Bec Won’t Change Me’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 31 March 2016, p. 3.

diverse, lateral opinion of football from ... a women's point of view'.<sup>803</sup> However, Newman, perhaps with somewhat out-dated attitudes towards women, has been accused of sexism towards Maddern in her co-hosting role. Writing for the *Geelong Advertiser*, Genevieve Alison and Alice Coster documented the sexist comments, but revealed that despite being the target of more than a dozen inappropriate and offensive jibes (as at the end of 2016), Maddern remained diplomatic:

Sam will always be Sam ... If he says something maybe in the wrong tone a little bit, I don't give it any oxygen and move on with the rest of the show. We are there to talk about footy ... People love him [Newman] and he has been a part of *The Footy Show* since its inception. It is live, it is totally unscripted.<sup>804</sup>

While Maddern's diplomacy is laudable (and perhaps understandable), her statement that *The Footy Show* is 'totally unscripted' does appear to contradict former executive producer, Harvey Silver, who, as indicated previously, confirmed that Newman had a role in pre-production meetings and offered his opinion as to the shape and content of each program.<sup>805</sup>

### **11.6 Newman and His Critics**

Newman has never been short of critics. Indeed, he appears to receive some enjoyment from jousting with those who might direct criticism at him, and can be

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<sup>803</sup> Newman, cited in *ibid.*

<sup>804</sup> Genevieve Alison and Alice Coster, 'Sammy Slammed for Sexism', *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 September 2016, p. 3.

<sup>805</sup> Harvey Silver, personal communication, 7 August 2012.

particularly caustic in some situations. In September 2015, Tom Elliott, the host of the *Drive* program on radio station 3AW, began an editorial about Newman by stating that ‘Sam loves footy. More power to him’.<sup>806</sup> A female talkback caller then described Newman on *The Footy Show* as ‘rude and crude’. Another female caller opined: ‘I cannot watch *The Footy Show* because “Sam” Newman is an appalling individual’. Elliott retorted to these two calls with his own view: ‘Watching *The Footy Show* is not compulsory if you dislike “Sam” Newman’. Elliott then conducted a telephone interview with Susie O’Brien, a journalist with the *Herald Sun*, noting that she had a PhD in education. O’Brien claimed that Newman had ‘... attention deficit disorder’. Stridently, she accused Newman of mocking Geelong FC fans and putting people down. In her view, Newman had ‘had his day’.<sup>807</sup> Other callers also phoned in with criticisms of Newman.

Newman himself seemed to reserve a special antipathy towards educated critics such as O’Brien. He told journalist and interviewer Mike Sheahan:

I know from my experience on *The Footy Show* that those in the critique industry set up an arbitrary framework of reference that go on to make subjective judgements – they have some hysterical, pompous view that we’re aiming our shoe at them. In fact our target audience is the rank and file who can’t be bothered dismantling and analysing every episode that goes to air. Maybe it’s the legacy of doing the show live.<sup>808</sup>

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<sup>806</sup> Tom Elliott, *Drive*, 3AW, 18 September 2015.

<sup>807</sup> Callers cited on *ibid.*

<sup>808</sup> Johnson, ‘Critics Can Moan, But I’m Not Listening Says *Footy Show’s* Sam Newman’.

### 11.7 Reactions to Newman's Cosmetic Surgery

Perhaps similar to other celebrities under the public gaze, Newman maintains the use of a nickname and continues to see facelifts (purportedly performed in 2000 and 2005 and 2014) as necessary for maintaining the good looks necessary for his public image. While Newman has claimed he had surgery because of facial nerve damage during his football career, Newman's sister, Jane Caldwell, reveals: 'everyone asks us if he [Newman] has had cosmetic surgery or his eyes done, in fact, a facelift ... As a little chap, he had brown almond eyes'.<sup>809</sup> According to Newman's other sister, Mary Wenzel, a hypothetical question summed it all up: 'You [Newman] were much better looking before you did all this and why can't you grow old gracefully?'.<sup>810</sup> Researcher and journalist, Michael Davis, has also alluded to Newman's cosmetic surgery:

Newman looks a bit like actor Liam Neeson, although when he removes his sunglasses, he has the startled appearance acquired by those who have succumbed to lure of plastic surgery to retain their youthful appearance. Newman does not deny he has had work and even underwent a Botox touch-up live on *The Footy Show*. He could easily pass for a man ten years younger.<sup>811</sup>

In fact, nearly everyone seems to have a view on Newman's appearance, if not his vanity. For instance, journalist and Geelong FC supporter, Doug Aiton, propounded that Newman 'looks like Gary Cooper was trying to look like in [the 1952 movie]

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<sup>809</sup> Caldwell, cited in ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam'.

<sup>810</sup> Wenzel, cited in ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam'.

<sup>811</sup> Davis, 'Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam', p. 6.

*High Noon*.<sup>812</sup> Another journalist, Peter Wilmoth, believed that when 3AW's main football caller, the voluble Rex Hunt, crossed to Newman at another game, 'Newman gave the score, enunciating each syllable as though he were David Niven standing in front of a drawing-room fire'.<sup>813</sup>

In late 2005, Newman admitted to football journalist and broadcaster Mike Sheahan:

I've done nothing to my hair but I've had my teeth capped. And I've had a detached retina repaired. In the case of having the retina reattached the doctor asked me: 'Do you want your eyes done, a little, a "tidy up"'? I said 'Doc, feel free and not so easy on the little'.<sup>814</sup>

Newman also revealed a more radical facial cosmetic procedure in his interview with Sheahan, but could not recall its name.<sup>815</sup> In addition, with a measure of humility regarding his cosmetic operations, Newman confessed: 'This is actually not me at all'.<sup>816</sup>

Another commentary on Newman's appearance was offered by journalist, Amy Croffey, of the *Daily Mail*. In July 2014 she observed:

... it may just be that Sam Newman has been dabbling in cosmetic procedures again. The former Aussie Rules footballer looked remarkably wrinkle free

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<sup>812</sup> Aiton, 'Conversations: A Life in the Fast Lane', p. 4.

<sup>813</sup> Peter Wilmoth, 'Sam Newman: An Excitable Boy', *Age*, 13 June 1993, p. 30.

<sup>814</sup> Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: I Did it My Way', p. 8.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>816</sup> Newman, cited in *ibid.*



and showed off his tight visage as he attended *The Footy Show's* 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party at Crown Casino in Melbourne ... Dressed in a slick black suit, white shirt and blue tie, the 68-year old controversial TV presenter cut a very different figure compared to back in his footy days. His relatively line-free forehead raised eyebrows at the VIP soiree.<sup>817</sup>

Notwithstanding the criticisms of Newman's looks, Collins has simply observed: 'In recent years, his colleagues have taken to calling him "Fossil" ("Foss" for short) and despite battling numerous injuries in his 300 games, and that much-discussed and altered face aside, the old warrior looks great for his age'.<sup>818</sup>

### **11.8 Attitudes Towards Social Media and Technology**

It is not unusual for people of an older generation to express frustration with new technologies or new means of communication. When such people are in the public spotlight, and have the opportunity to vent their frustrations, like Newman does, the situation can be exacerbated, and even fodder for the media, as the following anecdotes reveal.

In 2008, Newman exhibited anger several times with skateboard 'louts' that he claimed were destroying public timber seating and chipping expensive stone walls outside his \$3 million Yarra Edge penthouse at Docklands. The skateboarders posted one of their argumentative debates with Newman on line at YouTube. The altercation

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<sup>817</sup> Amy Croffey, 'Doing the Duck Face! Pouting *Footy Show* Presenter, Sam Newman, Shows Off His Tighter Visage at Show's 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Soiree After Admitting in the Past to Using Botox', *Daily Mail*, [www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article) (accessed 16 July 2014).

<sup>818</sup> Collins, 'The Boy from the Grammar', p. 20.

was embarrassing for Newman, but his anger was amplified when he learned about the posting by the skateboarders. According to Fiona Hudson, writing for the *Herald Sun*, ‘One skater said: “Newman started trying to tell us to give up skating for football”’.<sup>819</sup> Hudson also reported that Newman, who paid \$8000 a year in property rates, met Melbourne City councillor Peter Clarke, who promised a ‘council clampdown on unruly riders’.<sup>820</sup>

When quizzed about his personal organisation habits, Newman admitted to Sheahan that he had a diary in which he wrote down appointments, at the same time confessing ‘I haven’t come to grips with computers or iPhones or Blackberries’.<sup>821</sup> However, Newman was both embarrassed and angered by the use of modern technology when, as the *Herald Sun* reported, ‘hundreds of people ... prank-called *The Footy Show* clown after a rascal from a restaurant where Newman made a dinner booking tweeted his mobile number.’<sup>822</sup> Newman expressed his anger, which sometimes surfaces when he perceives himself as a victim:

They thought they would broadcast my number on that dastardly and meaningless piece of crud called Twitter. It’s an invasion of privacy and I pointed that out to him [the perpetrator] and he said he hadn’t thought it

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<sup>819</sup> Fiona Hudson, ‘Sam Spits Dummy: Skateboarders Cop a Tongue-Lashing’, *Herald Sun*, 20 January 2008, p. 17.

<sup>820</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>821</sup> Cited in Sheahan, ‘Sam Newman: Mellow, Calm’, p. 10.

<sup>822</sup> Alice Coster, Kate McMahon and Jackie Epstein, ‘Tweet Talk has Newman Seeing Red’, *Herald Sun*, 24 August 2011, p. 25.

through, so he removed the whatever it's called [tweet] without us having to take further action or tell his boss to sack him.<sup>823</sup>

In September 2015, Newman increased his pejorative attitude to modern communication, stating: 'Ignorance is bliss. I don't have a computer and I'm not into social media, not into texting, tweeting or blogging, not sure what any of it means, to be honest'.<sup>824</sup> On another occasion, Newman continued his dismissive attitude to modern social media, declaring 'I don't use email so I have been unaware of those obsessive few who continually trash *The Footy Show*'.<sup>825</sup>

### 11.9 Conclusions

This chapter has explored aspects of the public persona of Newman. However, the focus was not so much on his direct involvement with *The Footy Show*, but with other aspects of his life, some being off-shoots from his profile in the media. Exploring the 'public' elements of Newman's life has therefore provided some insights into his character, hinting at some of the more 'private' aspects of his lifestyle.

The next chapter discusses another side of Newman. It describes how he is close to his two older sisters and has an affinity with his sons. The key people in his life name him as John, the warm and caring and introspective philanthropist who contributes to established charities. The penultimate chapter also includes consideration of

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<sup>823</sup> Newman, cited in *ibid*.

<sup>824</sup> 'Sam' Newman, interviewed by Hamish McLachlan at [www.heraldsun.com.au/sport/afl](http://www.heraldsun.com.au/sport/afl), 27 September 2015 (accessed 28 September 2015).

<sup>825</sup> Johnson, 'Critics Can Moan, But I'm Not Listening Says *Footy Show's* Sam Newman'.

Newman's generosity with time and funds for former teammates and even former opponents who have fallen on financially difficult times, including the Geelong FC itself, which faced extinction during 1999. In essence, the chapter explores the more private, less well-known side of Newman.

## Chapter Twelve

### Newman's Private Side

The sphere of private life.

Lord Melbourne<sup>826</sup>

#### 12.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the more private side of Newman. It is revealed that he is close to his family, in particular his two older sisters, and his three sons. While it is not surprising that these more intimate family relationships are often kept from the public gaze, other aspects of Newman's personality and interests do seem at odds with his brash and confident celebrity profile and lifestyle. In this context, while there seems to be a stark contrast between the two sides of Newman, there are aspects that point to a more complex character, elements of which are discussed in the final chapter of the thesis.

#### 12.2 Newman's Charity

The French artist of the 1800s, Paul Gauguin, warned: 'Be on your guard against the pride of humility'.<sup>827</sup> In a similar vein, United States academic, Howard Rachlin, drew the link between altruism and selfishness. He argued: 'Altruism and selfishness, like free will and determinism, seem to be polar opposites. Particular altruistic acts are compatible with a larger selfishness – selfishness on a more abstract level'.<sup>828</sup>

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<sup>826</sup> Sherrin (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations*, p. 274.

<sup>827</sup> Paul Gauguin, *Intimate Journals* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), p. 17.

<sup>828</sup> Howard Rachlin, 'Altruism is a Primary Impulse, Not a Discipline', *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, vol. 25, no. 2 (April 2002), pp. 239-241.

With these observations in mind, it is useful to consider Newman's involvement with a charitable cause that he established.

Kevin King, a long-term friend of Newman, commented on his mate's generosity: 'I know quite a few old footballers he played with and against whom he has helped out financially. He is not demonstrative about doing charity work, but he always does it if he can'.<sup>829</sup> While some aspects of Newman's less 'demonstrative' charity work will be evaluated, it does contrast with a different attitude and mindset he exhibited when he originated a charity based on his passion for golf. Newman is a member of the Heritage Golf and Country Club in the Yarra Valley. On 22 January 2013, he developed a celebrity golf day, and spruiked it on radio, explaining it was 'for charity – for Kids with Cancer and their families'. A number of celebrities such as Wendell Sailor, Peter Siddle and Tiffany Cherry were locked in, and Newman expected 'a large gallery who will donate to the cause'.<sup>830</sup> Despite his talent as a golfer, Newman did not participate in the event because he acted as the tournament director. Newman also illustrated talents as an organizer, with additional celebrities recruited for the day, including actor Gary Sweet and media personalities Andy Lee and Kerri-Anne Kennerley, not to mention considerable media coverage.<sup>831</sup>

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<sup>829</sup> King cited in Davis, 'Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam', p. 9.

<sup>830</sup> 'Sam' Newman, interviewed by Andrew Maher and Tim Watson, Morning Glory, 1116 SEN, 21 January 2013.

<sup>831</sup> For further details, see Nui Te Koha, 'Hello Sailor, Sweet Charity', *Herald Sun*, 23 January 2013, p. 20, and Eliza Sum, 'Stars Out Swinging for Charity', *Geelong Advertiser*, 26 January 2013, p. 14.

However, an accident occurred at the Golf Challenge that stymied the success of the event. The essence of the problem was that a golf buggy, with former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett as a passenger, ploughed into a group of spectators, putting two children in hospital. According to the report by Erin Marie, it was believed ‘... the golf cart driven by a pregnant woman slammed into spectators after a golf bag belonging to Mr Kennett fell on to the accelerator and propelled the buggy forward’.<sup>832</sup> While it was anticipated that the charity event would become a regular fixture, the inaugural ‘Celebrity Golf Challenge’ was Newman’s one and only original charity.

### **12.3 A Humble Newman**

In 2001, there was palpable expectation that Newman would be named in the Geelong Team of the Century at a sell-out gala function at the Palladium Room of Crown Casino in Melbourne. However, Geelong FC CEO Brian Cook intimated to the *Geelong Advertiser* that Newman might receive a mixed reception.<sup>833</sup> While the assembled crowd possibly expected an oration by the risqué and often cynical ‘Sam’ Newman, what everyone saw and heard was John Newman, who praised and thanked the important people in his life. In particular, he acknowledged the greatness of Farmer, his mentor. As Julie Hobbs reported ‘Newman’s often-acid tongue spoke

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<sup>832</sup> Erin Marie, ‘Kids in Hospital After Golf Drama’, *Herald Sun*, 23 January 2013, p. 2.

<sup>833</sup> Oliver, ‘Give it a Rest’, p. 1.

only of pride and spirit to the club faithful at Crown Casino ... [and] the 300 gamer walked on stage with another Cats' great, Graham "Polly" Farmer'.<sup>834</sup>

In his acceptance speech, Newman exhibited a great deal of humility, declaring:

I actually wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the man I'm standing beside. Without speaking one word, he [Farmer] taught me everything I know. I watched how a man overcomes not the physical, not the mental but the spiritual – that's the most important – he was an absolute star, about one decade, one century ahead of his time. But I'll tell you right now, besides singing the club theme song at a premiership dinner, this is the greatest night. I feel very humble to represent you. We are just custodians of your great support, your great passion and emotion.<sup>835</sup>

Hobbs also noted that 'Newman thanked his sisters Mary and Jane who were present on the night and whom he said were his greatest critics'.<sup>836</sup> She also quoted Newman as saying 'My late mother and father were great and avid supporters of this [Geelong Football] club and I feel honoured for their sake'.<sup>837</sup> In this context, it is likely that Newman was still grieving the death of his father, Noel Newman, who had died the year before, aged in his nineties.

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<sup>834</sup> Julie Hobbs, 'A Humble Sam? Well, About as Close as He'll Get', *Geelong Advertiser*, 25 June 2001, p. 2.

<sup>835</sup> Ibid.

<sup>836</sup> Ibid.

<sup>837</sup> Ibid.



There is no ‘Sam’ whatsoever in the above oration. It is in fact, the generous John, who on this occasion goes out of his way to praise others. The event also demonstrated that Newman was still the student in the presence of ‘the master’, Farmer. Furthermore, the above extract from his speech exemplified that Newman was close to his sisters and loved and respected the memory of his parents. In essence, it was an all-too-rare moment when the private side of Newman was on public display.

#### **12.4 Newman’s Family: Sisters**

There is abundant evidence that Newman has great affection for his two older sisters, Mary Wenzel and Jane Caldwell. Significantly in terms of the theme of this chapter, ‘The sisters always call their brother by his birth name of John’.<sup>838</sup> In fact, Newman’s sisters are often embarrassed by their brother’s antics and swearing on *The Footy Show*. Indeed, according to Caldwell, ‘some like him [John] and others, who have known him for many, years like him very much because they’ve seen the other side to him, not just the public life on television’.<sup>839</sup> Wenzel explained: ‘I think you could say that we’ve been privileged to be part of his [Newman’s] family or he’d be part of us, but he just embarrasses us and confuses us along the way’.<sup>840</sup> Newman is on the public record as expressing his love for his sisters when he noted: ‘My sisters are dear to me, but I wouldn’t say all the women in my life are dear to me’.<sup>841</sup> Newman’s

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<sup>838</sup> ABC, ‘The Trouble with Sam’.

<sup>839</sup> Caldwell, cited in ABC, ‘The Trouble with Sam’.

<sup>840</sup> Wenzel, cited in ABC, ‘The Trouble with Sam’.

<sup>841</sup> Newman, cited in Crawford, ‘“Sam” Newman’s Year of Living Dangerously’, p. 91.

former Geelong FC senior coach, Bob Davis also affirmed Newman's love of his sisters:

Sam has two sisters. They are very genteel ladies and their friends must say I can't believe John Newman is their brother ... at times they must look at the two girls and then look at Sam and say there must have been a mix-up at the [maternity] hospital [when Sam was born].<sup>842</sup>

Newman also valued his parents, who he acknowledged were 'quiet, dignified church-going, people both of whom lived into their 90s. My two sisters are very well-respected, quiet, sensible, conservative women. We get on well'.<sup>843</sup> In addition, Wenzel retained a family involvement with Geelong Grammar School. According to Steve Price, she keeps 'accurate and comprehensive records of Geelong Grammar girls' rowing regattas and other girls' rowing events'.<sup>844</sup>

### **12.5 Newman's Family: First Cousin and Own Sons**

For all his orchestrated profanity and sometimes idiotic antics on *The Footy Show*, Newman has a first cousin in Anglican Archdeacon Philip Newman. Football journalist, Mike Sheahan, asked Newman how a man of the cloth would react to 'Sam's' public performances on national television. Newman replied that the Archdeacon 'might think that five percent [of *The Footy*] show is mildly amusing but dislikes the other ninety five per cent'.<sup>845</sup> But, rather surprisingly, Newman referred

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<sup>842</sup> Davis, cited in ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam'.

<sup>843</sup> Newman, cited in Money, 'I Am Sam I Am', p. 3.

<sup>844</sup> Steve Price, personal communication, 4 May 2014.

<sup>845</sup> Newman, cited in Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: I Did it My Way', p. 11.

to his close connection with his cousin: ‘He’s blood [and we share] the same genes, and being a Christian man he [Philip] would say I forgive him, I support him’.<sup>846</sup>

At this juncture in the thesis, it is appropriate to identify and discuss Newman’s links with his three sons. It is clear that the boys have different personalities. However, respect between them appears mutual. With former wife Daisy, he has two sons, Geordan (born 1980) and Jack (born 1982). Geordan has a passion for martial arts, and according to sports journalist, Craig Hutchinson:

Sam Newman’s son Geordan is on the verge of making his debut in the world of amateur mixed martial arts fighting. [Geordan] Newman has been involved in the sport for several years and hopes to have his first fight in the coming months. Newman said his old man was slowly coming around of him being a fighter. ‘I know he [John Newman] likes boxing and that kind of stuff, but I don’t think he likes the new school of fighting ... The old school kind of guys like my old man are a bit raw, but I think he’ll come along. He said he would. He doesn’t seem overly enthusiastic though’.<sup>847</sup>

Of the two adult sons, Jack Newman has observed of his father: ‘Dad doesn’t care what people think of him, he only cares what his family and friends think’.<sup>848</sup>

Newman, however, has confessed his imperfection as a parent. He admitted: ‘I see my sons irregularly – one [Geordan] lives in Queensland. I don’t see them a lot. I’m probably not a very good father’.<sup>849</sup> Newman has also compared his own inadequacy

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<sup>846</sup> Newman, cited in *ibid.*

<sup>847</sup> Craig Hutchinson, ‘Son of Sam’s Debut’, *Herald Sun*, 13 March 2011, p. 66.

<sup>848</sup> Jack Newman, cited in Hewitt, ‘Eddie’s Plea to His Ailing Mate’, p. 5.

<sup>849</sup> Newman, cited in Davis, ‘Wham! Bam! Thank You Sam’, p. 9.

as a parent with his own father whom he loved and admired. Newman's third son, Max, by former girlfriend, Leonie Jones, was aged seventeen during September 2015. Max was then a boarder at Geelong GS. Owing to Newman's extensive public profile as the face of the hugely popular *The Footy Show*, he realizes there are down sides: For instance, 'I'm told my son gets a fair amount of bullying, but I say to him it's a bit like Johnny Cash and the man who named his son Sue, you just have to get tough. Might be good training for later in life'.<sup>850</sup> However, it is significant that Max calls his father 'Sam'. In one press interview, Newman explained that a problem in his relationship with Max meant that close contact had been 'suspended for a while'.<sup>851</sup> The distance between Newman and Max is perhaps in no small part due to the fact that the boy's mother, Leonie Jones, aimed her car directly at Newman, severely breaking his leg.

Perhaps based on the influence of his parents, Newman has twice stated in public that 'your reputation is what people think you are. Your character is what you really are'.<sup>852</sup> Newman also made the same statement in a different form in 2009: 'Your reputation is only what people think you are, your character is who [*sic*] you are'.<sup>853</sup>

### **12.6 Newman's Respect for Davis**

When Newman's first Geelong Football Club senior coach, Bob Davis, died on 16 May 2011, Newman was interviewed on the Channel Ten evening news that day. In

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<sup>850</sup> McLachlan, 'Sam I Am', p. 65.

<sup>851</sup> Newman, cited in Sheahan, 'Sam Newman: I Did it My Way', p. 10.

<sup>852</sup> Newman, cited in Aiton, 'Conversations: A Life in the Fast Lane', p. 4.

<sup>853</sup> Newman, cited in Fevola, *Snapshot*.

the interview, an emotional Newman (a skilled mimic) imitated Davis's tight mouth along with Davis's broad staccato speech pattern so brilliantly, with characteristic hand gestures, that it was almost better than the original. Back in 1996, Newman's deep respect for Davis was clear, otherwise he would not have impersonated Davis. Newman wrote about the origin of Davis's nickname of 'Woofa', bestowed during his 189 games at the Geelong FC from 1948 to 1958.<sup>854</sup> Newman was always fascinated by the origins of nicknames, as exemplified below:

He [Davis] became affectionately known as the 'Geelong Flier', due to his speed and prowess on Kardinia Park, taking the name from the steam train that sped between Melbourne and Geelong each day. Some say this was later shortened to the more colloquial 'Woofa', presumably the sound the train made as it raced through the stations en route.<sup>855</sup>

Newman continued his esteem of Davis, the person, noting that 'Bob's personality has not changed one iota over the years'.<sup>856</sup> Also, Newman was unable to resist impersonating in print the classic Davis speaking style in public: 'Bob-bee Davus is a fheere dinkk-uum un-beeleev-ab-l mg-niff-iss-nt person'.<sup>857</sup> In contrast, Newman claimed that 'away from the television cameras, Bobby spoke quite normally just like everyone else'.<sup>858</sup> Newman could almost be referring to himself. Once the Channel Nine studio lights for *The Footy Show* dim, it seems 'Sam' may give himself

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<sup>854</sup> Holmesby and Main, *Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*, p. 212.

<sup>855</sup> 'Sam' Newman, 'Foreword', in Bob Davis (with Jim Main), *Woofa: Football Legend* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1996), p. v.

<sup>856</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>857</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>858</sup> Newman, cited in *Channel 10 News*, 16 May 2011.

permission to become John, the introspective person close to his family and a few close friends. John rarely scorns anyone. Yet he protects assiduously the John aspect. To strangers, he calls himself ‘Sam’, and he signs autographs as ‘Sam Newman’.

Yet, it was John Newman himself who wrote a heart-felt appreciation of Bob Davis in the *Geelong Advertiser* of 18 May 2011, two days after Davis died. He produced quite a philosophical item as the thoughtful John, as distinct from the public and cynical and sometimes foul-mouthed ‘Sam’:

He [Davis] took me under his wing and took me through the ethics and principles of the game which meant so much to him – not that I followed too much of what he said. Bob’s great ability was to get players to play for him. He was the one who got Farmer from Perth. Farmer was the backbone, the architect. Bob has helped make me what I am today. If I had to sum it up, and these are someone else’s words it would be ‘many things catch your eye, few things catch your heart. Bob Davis was one’.<sup>859</sup>

Newman provided a back-handed compliment when he described Davis as ‘a non-thinking coach’.<sup>860</sup> In 2011, Newman attended Davis’s funeral at St Mary’s Basilica, a renowned Catholic church in Yarra Street, near the Geelong CBD. Newman who wore an expensive suit, and dark glasses concealed his grief and emotional distress. He stood tall outside the church by himself in pouring rain near a group of supporters, wearing their Geelong FC dark blue and white-hooped colours. *Geelong Advertiser* journalist, Daniel Breen, observed John Newman’s emotion at the Davis funeral:

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<sup>859</sup> ‘Sam’ Newman, ‘Sam’s Tribute: My Mate Bobby’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 18 May 2011, p. 6.

<sup>860</sup> Newman, cited in Sheahan, *Open Mike*, Fox Footy, 15 March 2016.

Sam Newman cut a forlorn figure as he stood out in the cold. This was a different Newman from the person we see on *The Footy Show*. He was impeccably dressed but the dark [sic] sunglasses couldn't hide the fact that he was doing it tough. Bob Davis made a huge impact on Newman, a star footballer who has carved out a hugely successful media career. It was a path that Davis cleared for many footballers to make a living after retirement. 'He [Davis] was a mentor of mine in football terms, a very good friend. I respected him. I suppose it's up to everyone to find their way in life, but you need some guidance when it all starts and Bob certainly provided that to me'. Newman said Davis had taught people to be humble and not take themselves too seriously.<sup>861</sup>

As with his appreciation of Bob Davis that 'many things catch your eye, few things catch your heart', Newman showed an ability to produce another philosophical statement without hesitation. This reflected the John and 'Sam' overlap. Journalist and interviewer, Mike Sheahan, acknowledged Newman's talent for a succinct remark. In May 2013, Newman closed an interview with what Sheahan termed a philosophical statement. Newman stated: 'We don't live in the past, we don't live in the future. We live in the present. It's no good crying over things that can't cry over you'.<sup>862</sup>

### 12.7 Hero Worship of Farmer

Newman continues to hero worship Farmer. After Farmer departed the Geelong FC, newspapers termed Newman 'The Big Cat', a nickname very much associated with

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<sup>861</sup> Daniel Breen, 'Tearful Newman Farewells Mentor', *Geelong Advertiser*, 25 May 2011, p. 4.

<sup>862</sup> Newman, cited in Sheahan, *Open Mike*, Fox Footy, 2 May 2013.

Newman's football role model in Farmer. Newman was always anxious to promote the cause of Farmer in football and Farmer's community involvement. *Geelong Advertiser* journalist, Daniel Breen, maintained that

[Sam] Newman, one of only two Geelong players to have reached the 300 game milestone, rated Farmer as the club's greatest: [Newman stated] 'For me, Graham (Polly) Farmer was the best to have pulled on the hoops'.<sup>863</sup>

Yet, Farmer, as a man in his mid sixties at the time, still suffers pain from his left knee where surgeons removed his cartilage at the end of the 1962 season, his first with the Geelong FC. As Farmer says 'My leg has been crook for the rest of my life'.<sup>864</sup> Significantly, in late September 2015, Newman answered a question concerning his most vivid remembrance in elite football. He stated:

My fondest memory is playing with the great Graham "Polly" Farmer. He taught me what this game was about, just by watching him play. He never spoke to me about it, but all his knowledge got me through my 300 games. He inspired me and he gave me the direction of how I should play.<sup>865</sup>

## 12.8 A Generous Newman

When Newman learned of financial distress, in particular with individuals he has known for a long time or with those whom he respects, Newman is generous with his

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<sup>863</sup> Daniel Breen, 'Sam Says Polly Pips Ablett as Debate Rages', *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 May 2011, p. 5.

<sup>864</sup> Farmer, cited in Aaron Patrick, 'Whatever Happened to Graham "Polly" Farmer', *Herald Sun*, 10 July 1993, p. 53.

<sup>865</sup> McLachlan, 'Sam I Am', p. 65.



money and time. He seems to have plenty of both. One obvious example relates to Farmer, who fell on difficult times in Perth. Farmer and his wife Marlene sold their house in 1992 to buy the lease on the two star Southway Auto Lodge in South Perth. This lasted until 1998 when the couple was evicted by the motel's owners after failing to pay the \$10,000 monthly rent after six years in the business due to poor trade. Farmer was notable as an enthusiastic gambler on racehorses, trotters and greyhounds, Mark Russell reported that he said 'he had lost everything – probably more than \$600,000'<sup>866</sup> ... [although he claimed] 'I haven't lost money on the punt'.<sup>867</sup> Later in 1998, the press reported that Bob Davis and Sam Newman were coming to Perth 'to do some shows and raise money for Polly'.<sup>868</sup> Not to be outdone, a number of Farmer's former teammates at Geelong FC, also managed to raise funds for Farmer.<sup>869</sup>

According to journalist Glen Quartermain 'Fund raising events in Melbourne and Perth raised \$120,000. The money was placed in a trust fund and used to buy a small villa in the Perth suburb of Innaloo'.<sup>870</sup> The skilled journalist Rex Jory generated an article on Farmer's financial plight that forced him to sell his Sandover medals to fund his retirement. It is relevant to quote from the published item:

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<sup>866</sup> Mark Russell, 'Footy Legend Down and Out', *Herald Sun*, 18 June 1998, p. 11.

<sup>867</sup> Farmer, cited in *ibid.*

<sup>868</sup> John Townsend, "'Polly' Farmer Broke But Not Beaten', *West Australian*, 17 June 1998, p. 3.

<sup>869</sup> John Yeates, personal communication, 23 February 2015.

<sup>870</sup> Glen Quartermain, 'Polly Selling Medals', *Sunday Herald Sun*, 12 March 2000, p. 9.

It is a tragedy that one of football's most decorated champions, Graham 'Polly' Farmer is being forced to sell his medals. Farmer, 65, has put his 24 medals and two plaques on the market to finance his retirement. At present, he is living in a townhouse in Perth, bought by a trust fund set up by football fans, and surviving on \$321 a fortnight pension and his football memories. Farmer lost what money he had three years ago when a motel he owned and operated went broke. He walked away with virtually nothing. It seems that unfair that in an era when top footballers earn nearly \$1 million a year, one of the game's greatest has had to pawn his medals to live. Farmer won three Sandover Medals, four Simpsons, a Tassie – and ten best and fairest medals. He was runner-up for the Brownlow Medal in 1963. In five seasons with Geelong [FC], Farmer revolutionised football with his creative use of handball. The fast-moving style of football played today – based on handpassing and kicking – was largely developed by Farmer. Many judges rate Farmer as the game's best ruckman. It's easy to argue that Farmer's humble financial situation is of his own making. Perhaps with the splendid clarity of hindsight, his motel venture was unwise. But selling his treasured medals is a harsh penalty. Sentimentality may be a disposable emotion. Swiss psychoanalyst, Carl Gustav Jung, said: 'Sentimentality is a superstructure covering brutality'. But there is no harm in sentimentality. To reminisce, to recall great feats, is an innocent and inoffensive pastime. To have reminders of those past deeds adds to the enjoyment. There is a brutality in forcing a man to sell those memory triggers in order to survive. Farmer explained 'I'm broke, 65, and just want to have something to see me through and to be able to help my family. The medals are my only asset' ... Farmer's medals are quite different. They are part of the man and his life. The medals are tangible symbols of success. It would be a tragedy if Farmer was [*sic*] deprived of his medals simply because he has fallen on hard times.<sup>871</sup>

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<sup>871</sup> Rex Jory. 'Let Not a Champ and His Medals be Parted', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 19 February 2001, p. 18.

Jory, though, made one oversight. Farmer is living in a townhouse bought by a trust fund set up by football fans. The so-called football fans were Bob Davis, John K. Watts and Newman. It is noteworthy that Newman never mentioned his generosity to the Farmers, neither in the press nor on *The Footy Show*.

Another example of Newman's largesse occurred in 1999, when the new Chief Executive Officer at the Geelong FC, Brian Cook, assisted by club president Frank Costa 'checked all the accounts of the Geelong Football Club and found the club debt was \$10 million. \$5.5 million was owed to the Bank of Melbourne.'<sup>872</sup> Brian Cook recalled: 'KPMG [an Assurance, Advisory and leading Accountancy Company based in Collins Street, Melbourne] had a look at the Geelong Football Club financials and discovered \$10 million of liabilities'.<sup>873</sup> Cook also observed: '\$6.1 million were owed to the Bank of Melbourne when bank rates during 1999 and 2000 were at 16 per cent'.<sup>874</sup> Geelong FC Board Member, Adam Trescowthick, with the board's approval, had \$2.5 million written off as a bad debt with the Bank of Melbourne. Cook noted: 'Adam Trescowthick was instrumental in leading negotiations with the Bank of Melbourne. [The] Geelong [FC] dissolved \$3.5 million that equated to 60 cents in the dollar'.<sup>875</sup> Seven Board Members contributed significant funds, such as \$3 million that was transferred to the Bendigo Bank. Geelong FC president at the time, Frank Costa, explained: 'This made sense because it was a regional community bank and the

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<sup>872</sup> Brian Cook, personal communication, 13 April 2015.

<sup>873</sup> Ibid.

<sup>874</sup> Ibid.

<sup>875</sup> Ibid.

Geelong Football Club is a regional club'.<sup>876</sup> Costa also remembered: 'Brian Cook guaranteed portion of the remaining and manageable \$3 million to be paid quarterly'.<sup>877</sup> Cook agreed with Costa:

The Geelong FC Board authorised \$3 million changed to the Bendigo Bank, subject to me giving a PowerPoint presentation to senior Bendigo Bank senior officers indicating the financial meltdown that the Geelong Football Club was facing.<sup>878</sup>

Also in 1999, Geelong FC President Frank Costa and Club CEO Brian Cook approached the Ford Motor Company, the Geelong FC's major sponsor, to provide three years of sponsorship in advance. Costa indicated 'we talked with Ford at Broadmeadows and they agreed to the advance'.<sup>879</sup> Cook observed:

'We gave a PowerPoint presentation to Geoff Polites, the Managing Director of Ford at the time. It was the same PowerPoint presentation we'd given to the Bendigo Bank but with different introductory slides. We asked Ford for one year sponsorship that Geoff gave us'.<sup>880</sup>

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<sup>876</sup> Frank Costa, personal communication, 27 March 2015.

<sup>877</sup> Ibid.

<sup>878</sup> Brian Cook, personal communication, 13 April 2015.

<sup>879</sup> Frank Costa, personal communication, 27 March 2015.

<sup>880</sup> Brian Cook, personal communication, 13 April 2015. While Costa remembered an advance of three years from Ford, Cook recalled only one year's advance from Ford.

Costa asserted: ‘the Ford Motor Company is the world’s longest major sponsorship of a sporting club [the Geelong FC] that dates from 1925. This year, Ford and Geelong [FC] celebrate ninety years together’.<sup>881</sup>

In January 2016, sports journalist Nick Wade reported:

Geelong [FC] ... honoured one of its own in presenting its Reg Hickey Award to one of the men who saved the club from extinction. Frank Costa stood out like a beacon. A former long-serving president, current club patron, lobbyist for Simonds Stadium [Kardinia Park] funding, Costa’s stamp on the Cats has been legendary. The Costa-Brian Cook partnership steered Geelong out of dire trouble in the late 1990s. Under Costa’s watch as president between 1999 and 2010, the Cats emerged out of a multi-million-dollar debt, rebuilt a decaying stadium and forged a path to drought-breaking premiership success.<sup>882</sup>

As ‘Sam’, Newman might have criticised the Geelong FC via *The Footy Show* or the press, but when his club was, according to the CEO, ‘four weeks off being foreclosed by the bank as ceasing to trade’,<sup>883</sup> Newman acted immediately and without fanfare, offering to assist in promoting Geelong FC memberships in Geelong and Melbourne. As Wilson reported, ‘Newman, who contacted Geelong president Frank Costa to offer his services free upon learning of the club’s financial plight, said he had been moved

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<sup>881</sup> Frank Costa, personal communication, 27 March 2015.

<sup>882</sup> Nick Wade, ‘Cats Honour Frank Costa, The Footy Club’s “Patron Saint” and Saviour’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 29 January 2016, p. 46.

<sup>883</sup> Brian Cook, personal communication, 13 April 2015.

into action by the club disappearing from the AFL'.<sup>884</sup> Putting aside his 'Sam' mode, Newman affirmed: 'whatever they ask me to do I'll be happy to do it. If the club failed to continue, you would have to wonder what your life was all about'.<sup>885</sup> Newman also reflected the link between the Geelong community and the Geelong FC when he observed: 'the prospect of ultimate failure would prove disastrous for the identity of the City [of Geelong], its supporters and former players'.<sup>886</sup> Club president Frank Costa believed that Newman would be the ideal front man to galvanise local and Melbourne support:

You can say what you like about Sam but his heart is 100 per cent Geelong. He comes along whenever he's asked and never charged us a cent. The Geelong Football Club marketing department is aware of his [Newman's] offer.<sup>887</sup>

Brian Cook remembered that, 'in 1999 and 2000, the Geelong Football Club appointed Newman as the patron of the 'Stand Up and Fight' campaign, aimed to reduce the club's debt'.<sup>888</sup> Newman gave speeches from a covered stage on the ground at Kardinia Park and appealed to Geelong FC members and supporters to make generous donations. Cook noted that 'Sam probably helped to raise

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<sup>884</sup> Caroline Wilson, 'Newman Pitches in to Help to Help Old Club', *Age*, 30 June 1999 p. 3.

<sup>885</sup> Newman, cited in *ibid.*

<sup>886</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>887</sup> Costa, cited in *ibid.*

<sup>888</sup> Brian Cook, personal communication, 13 April 2015.

\$250,000'.<sup>889</sup> Based on his track record of support for the club, it is likely that Newman himself made a hefty donation to the cause. Despite his occasional disappointment and public disparagement of the Geelong FC, Newman, has always valued being a life member of the club, and must have deep affection for it.

However, Newman's generosity towards the Geelong FC has caused him some minor embarrassment. For example, Newman bought the 3.5 metre by 2 metre Jamie Cooper painting of the Geelong FC Team of the Century, of which Newman is a member in the back pocket and his idol Graham Farmer is first ruck. Newman donated the \$40,000 painting back to the club where it hangs in the Club Cats bistro. 'We went to ease it [the painting] off the wall but Bob Davis wouldn't let us' Newman said after wandering the streets of Geelong filming "Street Talk" for *The Footy Show*'.<sup>890</sup> Costa confirmed that Newman 'paid \$40,000 for the painting of the Team of the Century', but wanted to highlight that 'Sam's donation is typical of the fine person we know at the Geelong Footy Club'.<sup>891</sup>

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<sup>889</sup> Ibid. The author of this thesis, who had a large housing loan at the time, donated \$1000 to Newman's 'Stand Up and Fight' group. The brother of the author, a QC, never disclosed his donation. However, the name David Ross appears on a plaque at the Geelong FC as a major benefactor. An inquiry showed that David Ross donated \$30,000 to Newman's Fund.

<sup>890</sup> Newman, cited in Michael Auciello, 'Sam Backs Off from Art Threat', *Geelong Advertiser*, 3 June 2006, p. 3.

<sup>891</sup> Frank Costa, personal communication, 27 March 2015.

## 12.9 Conservative Political Leanings

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence to confirm that Newman's political leanings are conservative. For example, he was for some years a football analyst and special comments person at 3AW, a radio station known for its conservative politics. During 2007, 'He [Newman] spoke at a Liberal Party rally at Moonee Valley racecourse',<sup>892</sup> and there is evidence that the Newman's family has a history of voting for the Liberal Party of Australia. Indeed, Newman once complained: 'The two political disasters in my life are [Gough] Whitlam's government and [John] Cain's'.<sup>893</sup> After playing golf with former Victorian Liberal Premier, Jeff Kennett, Newman remarked on television that 'Kennett did great things for this state'.<sup>894</sup> In fact, *Age* reported Sandra McKay revealed that Kennett tried to 'sign up Sam Newman for the Geelong seat of Bellarine in the late 1980s. Newman sought pre-selection, but the locals ignored the lead from Liberal headquarters'.<sup>895</sup> Also, in 2008, Newman himself admitted that there is a 'perception that I'm involved in the Koroit by-election, but I'm helping out a friend as a politically concerned private citizen', so there is evidence that he has an interest in politics.<sup>896</sup>

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<sup>892</sup> Paul Webster, personal communication, 9 July 2014.

<sup>893</sup> Newman, cited in Aiton, 'Conversations: A Life in the Fast Lane', p. 4.

<sup>894</sup> Sheahan, *Open Mike*, Fox Footy, 2 May 2013.

<sup>895</sup> Sandra McKay, 'The Football of Politics', *Age*, 10 August 1999, p. 13.

<sup>896</sup> Newman, cited in Hutchison, 'Sam Finds New Girl Theatre Calls for a Song or Two from Newman', p. 57.



Newman's conservative attitude is reinforced by a suggestion that he was urged to run for the Lord Mayor of Melbourne. A *Geelong Advertiser* journalist, Greg Dundas, reported that:

Cats Legend Sam Newman ... is considering a tilt at Melbourne Town Hall after being approached to run on an anti-political correctness platform. The *Footy Show* star, a proud supporter of US presidential hopeful Donald Trump, said he was also concerned about the feel of the city. 'It's about graffiti, litter and a few other things ... Melbourne needs a bit of tweaking ... They thought some of the things I'd said on *The Footy Show* would resonate with people ... but I'm wondering why I'd want to do it'.<sup>897</sup>

Radio station 3AW morning presenter, Neil Mitchell, interviewed Newman about his aspiration for the Lord Mayor's position in the October 2016 council elections. Newman candidly divulged 'Move on homeless people from the CBD ... How the hell would I know what to do with bike lanes in the CBD?'.<sup>898</sup> Worthy of note, and perhaps giving the interview slightly more gravitas, was the fact that Mitchell referred to Newman as John rather than as 'Sam'.

### **12.10 Newman's Overseas Travels**

There is a sense in which Newman's overseas travels have exemplified a fusion between 'Sam' and John. 'Sam' represented the public identity, employing theatre to impress his wealthy fellow travellers by swimming in icy Antarctic water wearing

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<sup>897</sup> Greg Dundas, 'Sam's Mayoral Aspirations', *Geelong Advertiser*, 23 June 2016, p. 3.

<sup>898</sup> Newman, cited in Neil Mitchell, *The Morning Program*, Radio 3AW, 23 June 2016.

only speedos swimming trunks. ‘Sam’ also identified overweight and diminutive creatures on ice floes as representing panellists on *The Footy Show*. However, it is John who expressed his wonderment at the remote and frozen continent, observing: ‘Words don’t do it justice because it was so remote and so awesomely big, besides feeling extraordinarily insignificant, and wondering what this climate- change chat is all about’.<sup>899</sup>

However, while trekking on the Kokoda Trail in 2014 with Garry Lyon, then co-host of *The Footy Show*, it was ‘Sam’ who reflected a predilection for certain foods and drinks that caused amusement. But the ‘Sam’ character seemed to morph into John who revealed his emotions when he read poems and writings by Australian soldiers who endured the mud, insect infestation and poor diet and many deaths to defeat the enemy during World War II. Moreover, ‘Sam’ suddenly became John when he reflected on the trip: ‘It was all encompassing – a very physical, mental and spiritual experience’.<sup>900</sup> He continued his personal understanding of Kokoda by relating that: ‘In front of a monument at Brigade Hill, we were asked to read some poems and letters, but I couldn’t get the words out’.<sup>901</sup> This was an admission by a person who makes his living through eloquence on television football entertainment. The sensitive side of Newman recognised:

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<sup>899</sup> Newman, cited in Aaron Langmaid, ‘Sam Goes with the Floe in Antarctic’, *Herald Sun*, 9 January 2014, p. 5.

<sup>900</sup> Newman, cited in Collins, ‘Conquering Kokoda’, *Football Record*, 25-27 April 2014, p. 8.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*

There are about 3500 Australians buried at the cemetery and you felt you'd done something on their behalf to remember and respect them. We encourage anyone who would like to absorb the DNA of this country's history and follow in the footsteps of real Australian heroes.<sup>902</sup>

### **12.11 Conclusions**

By focusing on aspects of Newman's private side, this chapter has conveyed insights into the contradictory personas of Newman. On occasion, particularly when away from his comfort zone, and perhaps a little less in the spotlight, the irascible public character of 'Sam' Newman interchanged with the thoughtful person of John. But sometimes it was difficult to reconcile the media profile of Newman with his desire to donate secretly to charities or to volunteer his services free-of-charge to worthwhile causes. Can a high-profile celebrity really have a 'private' life, or separate and different sides of their personality? The final chapter seeks to draw the threads of the thesis together, making some more general observations and conclusions about the complexities of Newman's character. The last chapter also includes a personal reflection by the author.

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<sup>902</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Thirteen

### Conclusions

While many life histories of famous Australian Rules football figures have been published, the playing and media careers of John ‘Sam’ Newman have not been the focus of systematic academic study, despite their substantial impact. This thesis has redressed this deficiency by deploying biographical methods to examine both Newman’s football and media careers. The first half of the thesis explored how a privileged secondary education shaped Newman’s attitude to life and football, before turning to his football career with the Geelong Football Club. The second half of the thesis traced Newman’s increasingly controversial media career in print, radio, and television – most notably on Channel Nine’s *The Footy Show*. A key aim of the thesis was to explore how and why the warm and generous John Newman developed the outlandish, sexist, patronising, opinionated, and narcissistic, persona of ‘Sam’ Newman that has both attracted and appalled television audiences for decades. Accordingly, the thesis concludes that Newman is a complex person, exhibiting two different personalities that sometimes coalesce, thus filling an intriguing gap in the corpus of studies of the playing and media careers of influential Australian Rules footballers.

More broadly, this thesis indicated that forms of biography and biographical method can assist in studying the careers of sporting and media figures who appear ‘larger than life’ in a manner that utilises microhistory without becoming hagiographical. Utilising both oral history as both a key method and a means of triangulating sources, the thesis was able to examine the influence of the city of Geelong (and the economic issues that troubled the city), Newman’s schooling at Geelong GS, and Polly Farmer,

on Newman's football career. While Newman was an excellent football player, he also revealed a flair for the dramatic and entertainment with the initial development of the showman's persona of 'Sam' Newman. After he retired from playing football, Newman's work in the media provided ample opportunities for him to further develop the witty, eloquent, and increasingly wilfully offensive persona of 'Sam'. This culminated in his starring role on *The Footy Show* where Newman became infamous for his satire and often vulgar sarcasm. Nevertheless, this thesis was able to trace some hints into Newman's private life that suggest Newman is more thoughtful and generous in his 'private' life. And thus, this thesis considers Neman as a more complex character than his public personal indicates.

By way of concluding the thesis, some author positioning is perhaps necessary and appropriate. I grew up in Prospect Road, Newtown, a suburb of Geelong adjacent to Geelong College. I was educated at Newtown Primary School, near the corner of Aberdeen Street and Shannon Avenue, and enrolled at St Joseph's College. I became a life-long supporter of the Geelong FC and have been a member for 20 years. Therefore, over time, I consider that I have gained some understanding of the nature of the City of Geelong and the history and ethos of the Geelong FC, the sporting expression of Victoria's largest provincial city.

My brother and I often attended Geelong FC training after school during the 1960s. At the age of ten, around March 1964, I vividly recall watching the Geelong team train. It was the pre-season, which, at the time, was a casual affair when senior players ran laps to warm up and indulged in kick-to-kick. We watched a new ruckman, a 'toff' from the exclusive Geelong Grammar School. This gangly, tall

bloke with blondish hair we knew was named John Newman. He kicked on his natural right foot and seemed comfortable kicking with his left boot. My brother observed: 'That Newman looks like he could play some senior footy some time this season'. I remember agreeing with him. We later learned that Newman had inherited Johnny O'Neill's old number 17 club jumper.

Through the early to mid-1960s, my brother and I played Saturday morning junior Australian Rules football with our district team Newtown (now Newtown and Chilwell). The Newtown junior and senior teams wore Essendon guernseys – black with a red sash (still their uniform) – and were nicknamed the Eagles. David and I would walk from our home to Kardinia Park, Geelong's home ground, to watch the Reserves team in order to evaluate both young players on the way up and experienced senior Geelong players returning from injury. Like a lot of men at the time, my father worked Saturday mornings. David and I would return home for lunch with my parents. Then my father, David and I walked down to the ground for a Geelong senior home match. My parents bought my brother and I Geelong FC junior memberships. These were cards with a buckram Geelong symbol on the front and a Geelong home fixture on the reverse. At the turnstile, the staff member would clip the appropriate game to admit us. Dad had the same sort of season's membership, only senior. Geelong supporters idolised the Indigenous champion ruckman Graham 'Polly' Farmer. We had Farmer's number 5 on the back of our Geelong jumpers, similar to the majority of kids. I recall approaching an injured Farmer who was watching a home game intently from the Ross-Drew Stand. I asked him for an autograph in my autograph book. For obvious reasons, I chose a blue page and handed him a blue biro. Farmer generously wrote for me in a firm hand 'Graham

Farmer'. Over half a century later I still have that Farmer autograph at home and it looks quite fresh. Farmer's young teammate ruckman, John Newman, was a developing player. He had a high leap and could pull down strong contested overhead marks. Like his role model Farmer, Newman's handpassing was long and accurate to teammates in better positions or heading towards goal. Newman was also a long kick. Farmer departed Geelong following the narrow loss to Richmond in the 1967 Grand Final, a game that Farmer would, in later years, complain publicly and bitterly about what he thought was partisan umpiring by the single umpire Peter Sheales in Richmond's favour.

My father received a promotion at his work in the oil industry. Near the end of 1964 he moved us all to Melbourne where we knew no one. All our mates lived in Geelong. Whenever possible, my family would drive to Geelong for home games. We always visited Dad's best friend, an avid Geelong FC coterie member and club financial backer. He ran the large and thriving Corio Bus Lines from a huge shed behind his home at 23 Catherine Street, Geelong West. He also owned Chisholm Petroleum, and a quarry outside Geelong. This quarry produced gravel for road building. In addition, he owned a farm at Meredith, 45 kilometres north of Geelong. Mr Chisholm employed a local work force. He was a millionaire, when it meant something, but he lived a simple life with his wife Gladys. Through the 1970s, we admired the mature ruckman Newman, and as spectators we shouted his nicknames of 'Sammy' or 'Big Sammy' (never 'Sam'). We knew that he played with a piece of his kidney missing during the opening minutes of the 1967 first Semi Final against Collingwood. That was why Newman never played in a senior Grand Final. We acknowledged that 'Sammy' was courageous, able to play great football with

debilitating ankle injuries. From the mid-1970s, ‘Big Sammy’ developed showman qualities by wearing white football boots. Opposition barrackers would chant ‘mug lair’ in Newman’s direction. David and I would retort: ‘At least he’s killing your dud ruckman’.

The observations of the historian of Australian theatre, Peter Fitzpatrick, support the above reminiscences. As a Geelong FC supporter from Gardenvale, a southern suburb of Melbourne, he articulated the period of the club’s dark age from 1956 to 1961. He endured the pain of Geelong FC Grand Final defeats in the 1990s. Fitzpatrick observed that:

those team affiliations which to outsiders look so arbitrary are for many of us crucial threads which link us to our childhoods and our former selves, and offer in a chaotic world some token of continuity and integrity that helps to explain to us who we are.<sup>903</sup>

The memory of growing up in Geelong and thus supporting the Geelong FC and the legendary Farmer who influenced the young and impressionable John Newman is endorsed from two examples in the academic literature. First, Sidonie Smith contended that ‘Heroes do not exist in isolation. Context exists in lives and context exists in writing lives’.<sup>904</sup> In this case, it is clear that Newman did not exist as a hero in ‘isolation’, and part of his ‘context’ came from the narratives of those around him,

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<sup>903</sup> Peter Fitzpatrick, ‘Bright Lights, Big Grabs: Football as Performance’, in Stephen Alomes and Bob Stewart (eds), *High Mark: Australian Football and Australian Culture: Contemporary Studies of the Great Australian Game* (Hawthorn: Maribyrnong Press, 1998), p. 37.

<sup>904</sup> Smith, ‘Biographical Method’, p. 293.



notably Farmer. Second, in terms of Newman's unfolding media career, and the biographer's function, Smith and Watson argued, generally, that 'life writers assign meaning to events, behaviours and psychological processes that differ widely over time, belief system and social position'.<sup>905</sup> Subsequently, I have developed a more dispassionate attitude toward both the Geelong FC and Newman. In recent years I have perceived weaknesses in Newman's public persona, such as tenuous reasons for his cosmetic surgery, capped teeth and evidence of liposuction. Moreover, Newman wrote to me on 4 August 2011 in response to a letter of inquiry that was sent to him with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. He asked how he could help me. Yet, the tenor of his response reflected remoteness. He signed his name 'Sam Newman', even though he and I had a passing acquaintance when I was employed behind the scenes in the football department at radio station 3AW for four years between 1999 and 2002. We were two of only a few Geelong FC supporters in the football department at the time. In private, I referred to Newman as John, but in public I called him 'Sam'. This kind of shared experience seemed to mean little in terms of Newman's attitude to me.

In short, this thesis looks at various aspects of the career of Newman, a champion footballer, who, upon retirement, embarked on a media vocation, culminating as the controversial public persona of 'Sam' Newman, the star and the voice of the television football entertainment program *The Footy Show*. Celebrities in particular often assume a public 'persona', partly as a self-protective device. Given that 'persona' is the Latin word for 'mask', it seems an especially appropriate word to describe how Newman, in his 'role' as a media celebrity often adopts a façade that

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<sup>905</sup> Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 253.

conceals another side of his personality and character.<sup>906</sup> Currently aged 70 with 50 years in the spotlight, Newman still lives an active life. The late Bob Davis, Newman's first senior coach at the Geelong FC, knew Newman well. He referred to Newman's reputation as a womaniser: 'The image of Sam being a womaniser is entirely false ... In fact, I think he [Newman] is perhaps almost lonely'.<sup>907</sup> Newman himself, with his penchant for honesty mixed with self-absorption, articulated his own feelings when he remarked: 'I've been divorced. I've been injured. I've been wounded emotionally, I suppose, so ... [that's] just run the whole gamut of what society and life is about generally'.<sup>908</sup> Thus, there are times when Newman has cause to reflect on his life experiences, and the contradictions therein.

Newman became a champion with the Geelong FC between 1964 and 1980. It was a club that was, perhaps due to its distance from Melbourne, intimately linked with its local community. A seminal influence on Newman's development as a footballer was Farmer, who not only became a role model in terms of football skills, but also a mentor in terms of his interaction with community groups. After retirement from the game, Newman became involved in the media, including television, radio, and in print, later becoming a controversial star on a television football entertainment program. The aim of this thesis was to explore the contrasting elements of Newman's career and character. More specifically, this study has revealed two distinct sides to Newman's personality, the public, extroverted 'Sam' Newman, and the private, more

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<sup>906</sup> S.A. Handford and Mary Herberg, *Langenscheidt, Shorter Latin Dictionary* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), p. 238.

<sup>907</sup> Davis, cited in ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam'.

<sup>908</sup> Newman, cited in ABC, 'The Trouble with Sam'.

reserved, John Newman. On the one hand, the readily accessible public record attests to a persona exhibiting elements of a sexist, patronising, opinionated narcissist, prone to outbursts of buffoonery including denigrating language and ribald stunts on live television. On the other hand, there is also less well-known evidence that illustrates the sometimes warm and generous side of Newman, who is close to his family and several friends, and generously supports a number of charitable organisations. Hence, the thesis concludes that Newman is a complex person, possessing two quite different personalities. While the allusion to Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in the title of thesis might imply that the subject of this dissertation is a sinister or unpredictable character, this is not the case with Newman. Rather, the point is that Newman has very distinct private and public sides to his life. Notably, however, it is also demonstrated that the contrasting aspects of Newman sometimes coalesce, perhaps revealing a more sincere, mature and composed aspect to his character.

## Appendix 1

### Additional Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge my late parents Jim and Patricia who were always so encouraging with my studies, and then sport and music in that order. In addition, my late uncle [by marriage], Colin Kerr, a features editor with the *Adelaide Advertiser*, taught me, as a boy, the fundamentals of elegant writing.

I am also blessed to have a large number of people who assisted with the development of this study. This group includes, at Victoria University, Ron Adams, Mark Armstrong-Roper, Rob Aughey, Lesley Birch, Helen Borland, Jenny Cameron, Angela Dressler, Melissa Drysdale, Michele Grossman, Denis Hemphill, Paul Mavroudis, Rob McCormack, Brent McDonald, Shem McDonald, Jennifer Murphy, Rob Pascoe, Amanda Pearce, Angela Rojter, Britta Schneider, Andrew Stewart, Ian Stinson, Deborah Zion, and especially Grace Schirripa.

At the State Library of Victoria, those who assisted me so freely were Kent Ball, Andrew Battaglia, Gerry Brody, Heather Evans, David Flegg, Bev Fothergill, Gerard Hayes, Tim Hogan, Rebekah Marks, Dermot McCaul, Andrew McConville, Colin Munro, Andrew Nicholas and Carmen Quick.

At the Melbourne Cricket Club Library, Trevor Ruddell and David Studham steered me towards information on Newman that appeared in hard copies of the *Football Record* and in *The Footy Show Magazine* of 1999 respectively.

Academics Chris McConville and Dave Nadel supplied me with their incandescent knowledge of Newman the footballer and media star. Researcher, writer and journalist, Ken Linnett, a keen and thinking Collingwood supporter, suggested to me the Victorian Legislative Assembly Hansard of 17 November 1989 regarding Harry Beitzel fleecing two trusting Soccerpools winners of their extensive funds.

At Melbourne University Sport, Con Allimonos, Justin Bilszta, Peter Crouch, Maree Ellul, Yasmin Geneva, Simon Hogan, Aaron Smith, Andrew Torre, Paul Webster and Gerard Williams were all sources of information on my topic. Melbourne University Sports gymnasium member, Graeme Houghton, was in the boarders' Perry House with Newman at Geelong Grammar School during 1963. Graeme gave me a photocopy of his original photograph of Perry House from 1963 that includes Newman. Graeme was a rich and eloquent source on the 1960s at Geelong Grammar. A former Geelong Grammar boarder, Sarah Kempter, noted that the public Newman's sense of humour was based on the private school's boarders' ability to send people up including themselves.

Connoisseurs on the history and also the modern history of the Geelong FC Bruce Coe, Col Hutchinson and Bruce Kennedy gave of their vast reservoirs of information so kindly to me.

I owe a debt of gratitude to many individuals associated with the Geelong FC. With the generosity of his Personal Assistant, Mary Kincaid, Geelong FC CEO, Brian Cook, gave me his time face-to-face with most instructive photocopies. Former Geelong FC president, Frank Costa, favoured me with detailed information about

Geelong FC's \$10 million debt in 1999. Former Geelong Football Club former players Brian Brushfield, Wayne Closter, Ian Lewtas, Eric Nicholls, Mark Yeates and John Yeates shared their understanding of Farmer and of Newman the footballer. Mary Wenzel, Newman's older sister, gave of her time and suggested some Geelong FC alternative contacts.

Ex-League footballers and champions gave their insights into Newman the footballer and his football influence in Farmer. This list included Carl Ditterich, Michael Green, Simon Madden, Peter McKenna, Peter Moore and Noel Teasdale.

Harvey Silver, the first executive producer of *The Footy Show* and Trevor Marmalade, on-air talent with *The Footy Show*, assisted me with many original stories and vignettes of 'Sam' Newman and how he became a television football entertainment star.

Anson J. Cameron was generous with emailing to me his page on Newman in Cameron's *History of Geelong Grammar School* (2012). In addition, Dermot McCaul, a staff member at the State Library of Victoria, located for me hard copies of *The Corian*, the quarterly journal of Geelong Grammar School.

Geelong Football Club members and supporters Bruce and Trenton Little knew of Newman's golf proficiency from a tournament at Anglesea several years ago. Father and son noted Newman's facelifts and how 'Sam's' once impressive physique had shrunk.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Ethics Application Documents**

#### **Information to Participants Involved in Research (On Victoria University Letterhead)**

##### **You are invited to participate**

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You are invited to participate in a research project entitled **'The Life of John "Sam" Newman: A Study of Two Conflicting Personalities'**.

This project is being conducted by a student researcher Mr Julian Ross as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Chief Investigator, Associate Professor Rob Hess, and Associate Investigator, Associate Professor Bob Stewart from the College of Sport and Exercise Science.

##### **Project explanation**

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This project is a biography of one of the most enigmatic figures of Australian Rules – John 'Sam' Newman – who played for the Geelong Football Club and later forged a very successful media career. The project will be based on an analysis of three major types of sources, namely in-depth interviews, published secondary sources, and primary sources (particularly newspaper archives).

##### **What will I be asked to do?**

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The methodology of this study is based on oral history. Participants will be interviewed in a semi-structured manner, with a set list of questions to be covered, and space for further questions depending on the answers provided. These interviews will consist of a number of open-ended questions about the individual's memories and involvement in the period 1962-1980, the period covering John Newman's career with the Geelong Football Club, as well as his subsequent career in the media, stretching from 1981 to 2013. All interviews will be recorded on a digital voice recorder.

The interviews will focus in particular on the following key aspects, namely the interviewee's life history and experiences, and the importance of football in their daily lives, particularly during the 1960s and

1970s in Geelong and/or Melbourne, and any personal experiences or anecdotes associated with John Newman in two key periods, particularly 1962-1980, and 1981-2013 [2017].

The interviewer will also ask to be shown any objects that are especially important for illustrating football's importance and Newman in particular (photographs, trophies, scrapbooks, etc.). It is completely up to the participant to decide whether to show these objects to the interviewer, and authorise a photographic reproduction of them. At the end of the interview participants will be then asked to sign a 'conditions of use' form in which they can add any conditions to the how the material from the interview is used by the researcher.

It is expected that interviews will last around 60 minutes.

### **What will I gain from participating?**

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Participants in the study will gain the satisfaction of sharing their memories of the life and career of an elite footballer. These memories will be integrated into a study that will enhance knowledge and understanding of the history of Australian Rules football. No monetary rewards will be offered to any participants.

### **How will the information I give be used?**

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The information gleaned from the interviews will be incorporated into a larger project on the life and career of John Newman which will form the basis of conferences papers, journal articles and a PhD thesis.

### **What are the potential risks of participating in this project?**

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It is highly likely that participants in this study will have frequently discussed the subject matter and related memories, so the potential risks associated with this project are expected to be minimal.

### **How will this project be conducted?**

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This project will be based on an analysis of three major types of sources, namely in-depth interviews, published secondary sources, and primary sources (particularly newspaper archives). Subjects will be interviewed in a semi-structured manner, with a set list of questions to be covered, and space for further questions depending on the answers provided. These interviews will consist of a number of open-ended



questions about the individual's memories and involvement in the period 1962-1980, the period covering John Newman's career with the Geelong Football Club, as well as his subsequent career in the media, stretching from 1981 to 2013 [2017]. All interviews will be recorded on a digital voice recorder.

### **Who is conducting the study?**

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Members of the College of Sport and Exercise Science, Victoria University are conducting the study:

Staff (Chief Investigator): Associate Professor Rob Hess, [Robert.Hess@vu.edu.au](mailto:Robert.Hess@vu.edu.au), 03 9919 4062

Student Researcher: Mr Julian Ross, [Julian.Ross@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:Julian.Ross@live.vu.edu.au), 0488 746 657

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

## **Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research (On Victoria University Letterhead)**

### **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS**

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into **'The Life of John "Sam" Newman: A Study of Two Conflicting Personalities'**.

Hundreds of biographies of famous Australian Rules footballers have been written. However, very few elite footballers have had their life and their career subjected to rigorous academic analysis. In short, this project seeks to construct a biography of one of the code's most enigmatic figures – John 'Sam' Newman – who played for the Geelong Football Club and later forged a very successful media career. This project will be based on an analysis of three major types of sources, namely in-depth interviews, published secondary sources, and primary sources (particularly newspaper archives). Subjects will be interviewed in a semi-structured manner, with a set list of questions to be covered, and space for further questions depending on the answers provided. These interviews will consist of a number of open-ended questions about the individual's memories and involvement in the period 1962-1980, the period covering John Newman's career with the Geelong Football Club, as well as his subsequent career in the media, stretching from 1981 to 2013 [2017]. All interviews will be recorded on a digital voice recorder. It is highly likely that participants in this study will have frequently discussed the subject matter and related memories, so the potential risks associated with this project are expected to be minimal.

### **CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT**

I, [name]

.....

of [suburb]

.....

certify that I am at least 18 years old\* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

**'The Life of John "Sam" Newman: A Study of Two Conflicting Personalities'** being conducted at Victoria University by Chief Investigator, Associate Professor Rob Hess.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by Mr Julian Ross and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- The interviews will focus in particular on the following key aspects, namely the interviewee's life history and experiences, and the importance of football in their daily lives, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s in Geelong and/or Melbourne, and any personal experiences or anecdotes associated with John Newman in two key periods, particularly 1962-1980, and 1981-2013 [2017].
- The interviewer will also ask to be shown any objects that are especially important for illustrating football's importance and Newman in particular (photographs, trophies, scrapbooks, and so on). It is completely up to the participant to decide whether to show these objects to the interviewer, and authorise a photographic reproduction of them.
- I will have the opportunity to edit and correct the transcript of my interview before it is used as a source for the study.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the chief investigator, Associate Professor Rob Hess, who can be contacted on 03 9919 4062 or at [Robert.Hess@vu.edu.au](mailto:Robert.Hess@vu.edu.au)

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

**[\*please note: Where the participant/s are aged under 18, separate parental consent is required; where the participant/s are unable to answer for themselves due to mental illness or disability, parental or guardian consent may be required.]**

### **Appendix 3**

## **Annotated Chronological Overview of John Newman's Football and Media Careers**

### **1963**

Newman was a boarder at Geelong Grammar School. He was a champion schoolboy footballer and a Geelong FC supporter. The senior coach of Geelong, Bob Davis, watched Newman kick 18 goals against another private school. Davis encouraged Newman to train at Geelong. Newman, still a boarder, played an allotted four games with the Geelong reserves, including their premiership victory.

### **1964**

Newman was elevated to the Geelong FC senior team. His first senior game was in Round 3 against Fitzroy FC at Fitzroy's Brunswick Street ground. Newman played 17 games in his inaugural senior season.

### **1965**

Newman, as a high-leaping ruckman watched and copied the innovative and original ruck play of Graham 'Polly' Farmer, a complete and polished ruckman who joined Geelong FC from Western Australia in 1962. The Indigenous Farmer is considered the one of the greatest ruckmen of all-time. Newman played 19 games for 13 goals.

### **1966**

Newman emerged as a developing star in the ruck but played second fiddle to Farmer. Newman played 16 games and kicked 11 goals.

**1967**

Newman played 15 games and ruptured his kidney by falling on his own elbow in the first semi-final against Collingwood FC. This injury threatened his football career.

**1968**

Newman showed courage to return and play elite football with the Geelong FC. In his 21 games, Newman earns enough votes to win Geelong's Best and Fairest award.

**1969**

Newman played 20 games in this season and he also represented Victoria at an interstate football carnival in the middle of the year. He was pitted against his former teammate Graham Farmer who was the first ruck in the Western Australian team. Victoria won, but during the match Farmer broke Newman's nose after Newman had backhanded him at a boundary throw-in. Newman won All-Australian honours this season, and represented Victoria on seven other occasions.

**1970**

Newman took up employment in various capacities to supplement a limited income from football. He played 21 matches.

**1971**

Newman played only three games in this season, as he suffered a broken wrist twice.

**1972**

Newman was now a mature ruckman who used his knees against opponents to give him extra lift at centre bounces. Newman played 17 games in this season.

**1973**

The Geelong FC team struggled this season due to fielding a young and inexperienced side. Newman played 16 games, but suffers from ankle problems.

**1974**

Farmer returns from Perth to become the senior coach of Geelong FC. Newman is appointed captain of team and provides leadership in 21 games.

**1975**

Newman played in 20 games and won the club's Best and Fairest award, his second.

**1976**

Newman lived in Melbourne and worked with his former teammate Doug Wade in a hair care company. Newman attempted to transfer to Richmond FC. The Collingwood FC also approached him with an offer. Geelong FC sacks Newman as captain after 41 games as the skipper. He remains with Geelong, playing 23 games.

**1977**

Newman played in 23 games, a testament to his tenacity despite ankle and achilles problems.

**1978**

Newman becomes a full-time footballer with Geelong FC. In his last three seasons he earned \$70,000 per year, perhaps equivalent to \$1 million per season in contemporary currency. Newman played only 15 games due to a broken wrist.

**1979**

Newman played only 13 games in this season due to a broken ankle.

**1980**

In his final season Newman played 17 games to become the first Geelong FC player to accumulate 300 games. He took the field in one final, and at the end of the season, he announced his retirement.

**1981**

Newman begins his media career providing special comments on VFL games on the radio station 3AW, and providing special comments on the Channel 7 broadcast of the VFL Grand Final between Carlton and Collingwood. Newman continued with 3AW until 1987.

**1982**

Newman joined Channel 7's *World of Sport* and remained a panellist until the show concluded in 1987.

**1988**

Newman commenced at Channel 9, presenting a sports segment on Ernie Sigley and Denise Drysdale's morning program, and later on John Jost's *Melbourne Extra*.

**1992**

Newman was contracted to the Sunday edition of Channel 9's program *Wide World of Sport*, assisting Simon O'Donnell and Dermott Brereton in reviewing the weekend's football matches.

**1994**

Newman begins his long-running stint on Channel 9's *The Footy Show*. The award-winning show ran during every subsequent football season and was still on-air in 2017, with Newman as a key figure.



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