
By

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
At Murdoch University
March 2004
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work, which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Sean Edward Gorman.
ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses and investigates the issue of racism in the football code of Australian Rules to understand how racism is manifested in Australian daily life. In doing this, it considers biological determinism, Indigenous social obligation and kinship structure, social justice and equity, government policy, the media, local history, everyday life, football culture, history and communities and the emergence of Indigenous players in the modern game.

These social issues are explored through the genre of biography and the story of the Noongar footballers, Jim and Phillip Krakouer, who played for Claremont and North Melbourne in the late 1970’s and 1980’s. This thesis, in looking at Jim and Phillip Krakouers careers, engages with other Indigenous footballer’s contributions prior to the AFL introducing Racial and Religious Vilification Laws in 1995. This thesis offers a way of reading cultural texts and difference to understand some Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships in an Australian context.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have often wondered where I would be if I had not made the change from work to study in 1992. In doing this I have followed a path that has taken me down many roads to many doors and in so doing I have been lucky to meet many wonderful and generous people.

My first acknowledgments must go to the person who set me on this path and twice saved my life in the process. Brad Gilbert. With Brad’s support, patience and understanding he has helped me throughout many difficult and weird times and for that I cannot thank him enough. Cheers mate.

To the Krakouer family: Eric, Jim, Phillip, Nola and your families thankyou for allowing me to come into your lives and share your story with a stranger. I am truly honoured and grateful for this opportunity.

To my diligent and generous supervisors Kathy Trees and Deborah Robertson who have listened to me, imparted valuable advice and given of their time thankyou for guiding me through this journey.

To Glen Stasiuk and all the staff and students (past and present) at the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre at Murdoch University thankyou for the opportunities and the friendships I have made. Thanks also to Steve Kinnane, Dave Wish-Wilson, Michelle Carey, Denise Groves, Len Collard, John Fielder, Tony Buti, and Dave Palmer for your collegial support and friendship.

To Ron Joseph and Martin Flanagan who without your help I would not have been able to start or maintain this project, I cannot thankyou enough. To Greg Champion thankyou for giving me permission to use the lyrics to the song The Chant of Jimmy Krakouer.

To Denis McInerney, Mike and Bernie Dolbey, Steve Hawke, Rod Austin, Graham Moss, Wal Maskiell, Allan Carpenter, Barry Cheatley and Michael Gawenda and his staff at The Age thankyou for your help when I requested it.

To the administrative staff at Murdoch University Lyn Dale, Janice Pell, Trish Coyne, Karen Olkowski and especially Cheryl Miller who patiently formatted this doctorate thankyou so much. Thanks also to the administrative staff at Claremont Football Club and the West Australian Ministry of Justice.

To my friends Brad and Nerida, Bev and Susanna, Brad and Mandy, Mr and Mrs Rodney Hoggett, Glen and Rachel, Butch and Jen, Darryl and Jodie, Felicity and Damon, Jahne and Chris, Ian and Tina, Jim and Sally, Simon, Suzzi and Lummy, Kath and Karl, Greg and Jo, Ben and Bec, Helen Parry, Mandy Yip, Phil and Charmaine, Alan and Karina, Warren Pitt, Ian and Victoria, Marty and Lisa and Spencer, thanks.

To cousin Kait, Phil Culmsee, Bruce and Elenaor Wright, Gary and Trudi Sandilands, Ken Gillam, Diane McDonald, Riley and Sog, Louie Beulke and staff at the Richmond Club Hotel, Jenny Henzell, Nell, Ian and Lee, Emerson, Carly, Pip, Nick, Reen Greg, Pia, Anthony, Sonia, Sam Hayes, management and staff at the
Fremantle Arts Centre, management and staff at Visual Entertainment Group, the Fremantle Dockers, the people of Mt Barker and everyone who agreed to be interviewed also thanks.

To the Gorman family, especially Annette, who transcribed the vast majority of my interviews and had all the patience that a mother could afford (and Dad who endured it), Ainsley and Jamie you are very dear to my heart.

Which brings me to the two most important people in my life - Mon and Clay - I am sorry for all the time I spent away and all the time I spent working alone but without either of you this would simply mean nothing. This is for both of you.
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The names of deceased people are mentioned in this document. This may cause some readers some concern or distress.
INTRODUCTION

In 2001, at the Australian Football League’s national draft, Beverley Knight the Director of Essendon Football Club and Eddie McGuire, Collingwood Football Club’s President sat next to each other. The expectation in the room was palpable as the 16 AFL clubs, in order of preference, chose players. At number 11 it was Collingwood’s turn and they duly picked Richard Cole, a young man from Tennant Creek – Warumungu Country. McGuire turned to Knight and said, “Yknow Beverley we would not have been able to draft him three years ago.” McGuire said this because Collingwood had developed a bad relationship with many Indigenous communities and people because of the vilification experienced by Indigenous players Michael Long and Nicky Winmar at Collingwood’s homeground Victoria Park in 1993.

It seems both alarming and sad that a football club in the late nineties could not draft an Indigenous player because the negative backlash from its supporters would be too great. More recently, the redemptive power of sport has seen Collingwood make a huge cultural and social shift and now sees them embrace Indigenous footballers, for instance Cole and, in particular, Leon Davis.

In a game at the MCG in 1999, St Kilda’s ruck Spider Everett and Melbourne’s Scott Chisholm verbally sledged one another. Chisholm “had a go” at Everett for his poor performance and lack of fitness and Everett taunted Chisholm about his mouth-guard, which was coloured red, black and yellow, the colours of pan-Indigenous Australia. As the ball came down into St Kilda’s forward line Everett kicked a goal. He then sought Chisholm out, grabbed him by the jumper and proceeded to call him a “black cunt” to his face.

A few years later, Chisholm was interviewed for the documentary *AFL: Not Just A Game* and recalls how he felt after the incident with Everett:

> It turned me off football, it turned me off where I wanted to be. You have to take it and fight it because if you don’t fight it it’s going to happen to some other young boy who has never faced the vilification that I did that day.²

Under the AFL’s rule 30 Everett was ordered to pay $20 000 dollars to a charity of Chisholm’s choice. Since this incident there has not been any major vilification cases and the AFL regularly run cross-cultural workshops and discussions for players and staff of AFL clubs.

On the fourth of January 1992, a young Indigenous man had been to a party to celebrate his 19th birthday. Laying down on the side of the road to rest a car-load of white youths came across him, beat him and then ran over him. His name was Louis Johnson. Despite having massive internal injuries, Johnson was still lucid enough to describe the incident to a cyclist who had found him at 7am. When the ambulance officers arrived, they assumed Johnson had been sniffing petrol and instead of taking him to hospital took him home. This is where Johnson died. The driver of the car was apprehended and during questioning, was asked what motive he had for running someone over. His reply was *because he was black.*³

Louis Johnson’s case by comparison to the first two examples is extreme. The reason why I have used it is to show how racism, as a belief, can manifest itself as an action and produce a terrible reality. All three situations, whether we like them or not, are connected by racism in Australia.

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There was a time that all three of these incidents would not have worried me greatly. Thankfully, after 11 years of studying Indigenous issues and history and talking with many Indigenous Australians I am able to engage with these situations, and ones similar to it, differently. I am able to do this because I am equipped with the social and cultural knowledge and the critical and academic skills that allow for greater interpretation and understanding. This thesis, *Moorditj Magic: The Story of Jim and Phillip Krakouer* is then the manifestation of the process, the discussions and the investigations I have made with Indigenous peoples on the issue of racism in Australian society.

When I first started study at Murdoch University in 1993, I enrolled in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander degree program. This was the first time that this type of degree was offered in Western Australia. At the time I had no real idea what I wanted to study at a tertiary level and I felt that at least this degree would be interesting. If I didn’t like it I could change. To my amazement I found myself being constantly challenged as I found out many things I had not previously known regarding Indigenous people(s) and the issue(s) surrounding them. I gained information about the 1966 Freedom Rides, the 1967 Referendum, Mogumber Native Settlement, A. O. Neville, The Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Royal Commission and Indigenous infant mortality rates to name a few. I came to realise that I had been ignorant to many things that Indigenous peoples in Australia had to endure like forced containment, the removal of children, the loss of land and language. At the time of starting tertiary study there was also much political debate about the Mabo decision and I found myself questioning why it was that *terra nullius* was applied to Australia at all. I was confused and this confusion drove me on to seek answers.

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4 The word Moorditj is a Noongar term meaning *hard or solid*. The term itself has been relexicalised by Noongars to mean *good or special*. 
Some of the answers to my questioning has been this PhD on Jim and Phillip Krakouer, who I followed through their careers as they had come from my father’s home town of Mt Barker in Western Australia’s south-west. This analysis has come about through applying much of the academic principles and cultural awareness that I have gained in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program and teaching at the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre at Murdoch University. In this way, I don’t see this PhD simply as an academic dissertation but rather a long conversation that I have had with many non-Indigenous and Indigenous people, that has run parallel to my own internal dialogue.

Being a follower of the Australian football code, I have found that football offers many positive things to the community. Further, I have found that football as a social and cultural phenomenon is unique to Australia and Australians. The more I have studied the code the more I have come to understand what this Indigenous game means to Indigenous Australians. Specifically, I have come to understand that football provides us with a forum to view Indigenous players in a positive way, which is not reflected in the media, or history, generally. Conversely, many non-Indigenous people’s only positive interaction with Indigenous people is through their engagement with football. For example, besides the boxer Anthony Mundine and the athletes Cathy Freeman, Patrick Johnson and Karl Vander Kuyp the vast majority of high-profile Australian sports are devoid of Indigenous athletes, except football.

This thesis uses football, and Jim and Phillip Krakouer’s story, as the vehicle for that argument and offers an insight into Indigenous issues that counters many stereotypes. In doing this I take into account macro and micro considerations. One of the limitations of this thesis is the lack of women’s voices in the telling of the story. This has been, to a large extent, because the subject matter has focussed on football (and
men’s issues relating to sport and men’s social issues generally) and all except two of my interviews have all been with men.

In this thesis, I analyse the significance of Indigenous footballers’ contribution to the Australian game. I also analyse the vilification Indigenous footballers received before the implementation of the AFL’s Racial and Religious Vilification Laws in 1995 (Rule 30) to highlight the struggle that many Indigenous Australian’s have faced historically and on a daily basis.

Prior to starting this PhD I made a couple of inquiries to a number of people who I thought could help me. One of these people was Steve Hawke who had written Graham Farmer’s biography and a book on Nookanbah. I discussed with Hawke what I wanted to achieve and what themes I wanted to explore through Jim and Phillip’s story. Hawke suggested that I frame Jim and Phillip’s story around three questions:

What made them champions?
What was the nature of that emergence?
How are they and their impact perceived by their peers?

From these questions, I was able to develop their story and integrate it into the broader historical moments and Indigenous themes and issues that I wanted to analyse. I felt that because there were two of them I could engage with a wider range of issues facing Jim and Phillip. In addition, their individual stories were very different. I knew through my Mt Barker connections Jim had been in trouble with the law regularly throughout his youth. Jim’s playing style was direct and he was volatile. Off field, Jim was a gambler and he is currently serving a 16-year jail term for drug trafficking. By comparison Phillip was the opposite. He was hardly in trouble at school. He was more casual, his football style was less confrontation and his home life was quiet. These differences allowed me to discuss many issues such as Nookanbah, the 1905 Aborigines Act, Assimilation and racism in sport.
I have used the genre of biography to discuss these Indigenous themes and issues. For this, I used a similar style to Janet Malcolm’s book *The Silent Woman*. I did this because Malcolm placed herself strongly in the story, which gave her book a greater veracity, rather than the usual omniscient narrator used in many biographies. By placing myself in the role of narrator I explain the process of gathering information and the methodologies I used to tell Jim and Phillip’s story. I believe this gives another dimension because the author is up front about their intentions and their bias and how they arrived at particular conclusions through their process.

This thesis also shows how it is possible to tell stories through negotiation and dialogue, which are respectful and culturally responsible. I have broken this thesis into three chapters to follow the lives of Jim and Phillip in a coherent and linear way.

Chapter one deals with my own relationship to Jim and Phillip’s story. I tell how I came to the story through the recollections of my childhood. In telling my story I make some comparisons with the childhoods of Jim and Phillip Krakouer. I discuss the relationship I have had with daily-life in a rural setting, tertiary institutions and Indigenous Australians. I look specifically at the policies that have impacted upon them, specifically the 1905 *Aborigines* Act and the interaction between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community historically. I also discuss the importance of sport in the development and maintenance of relationships in a rural community.

In Chapter two I discuss Jim and Phillip’s transition into league football in Perth, the culture at Claremont Football Club and the culture of the Western Australian Football League. I highlight the nature of Jim and Phillip’s individual paths to playing league football. I focus on specific events that identify the difficulty that Jim and Phillip faced
through racial vilification and physical pressure. I discuss the issue of racial vilification in a broader community context and how their peers at Claremont, and in the league, regarded Jim and Phillip. I also discuss Indigenous social obligation and kinship structure from a Noongar perspective. I finish the chapter with a close reading of the 1981 grand final.

Chapter 3 tropes Jim and Phillip’s rise as footballers as they move to Melbourne and establish themselves in the Victorian Football League with North Melbourne. I also gauge the impact that other Indigenous footballers have made to highlight the rise of the modern Indigenous football demographic and the advent of the AFL’s Racial and Religious vilification laws. I discuss the changes football went through in the eighties from a suburban-based competition to the decentralisation and merging of clubs that increased money and created greater professionalism. In this context, I also discuss and analyse Jim’s increasing propensity to gamble and the problems he faced with being in the media and his status as a professional footballer.

This thesis deals with many issues that incorporate Indigenous and non-Indigenous themes. This thesis deals with racism as it has been articulated to me through the interview process with both Jim and Phillip Krakouer, their extended family and others whom have experienced it. This is done to show how it is possible to arrive at a greater understanding of how racism works in Australian society through sport. Yet, in doing this, the thesis does not purport to be a definitive account or historiography of racism in sport or Australian everyday life per se’. These themes and issues are engaged within the chapters that follow.
Truth is, in its nature, multiple and contradictory, part of the flux of history, untrappable in language. The only real road to truth is through doubt and tolerance.

Janet Malcolm
Chapter One

Town Country

1.1 Max Walker’s Moustache.

October 3rd 1981
TVW 7 commentary box Subiaco Oval

Bob Miller: Ross Capes bounces the ball for the 1981 Grand Final. Claremont kicking to the left of the screen and Rioli takes the first kick. It’s a high one straight up in the air. Beecroft’s underneath it. Ooooh and the marks been paid ooh and there’s fisticuffs already as Campbell came into it. The opening minute of play in the league Grand Final and there’s about 20 players into it as Beecroft took that knock Campbell came into him. So what a grand final it’s going to be there’s players into it all over the ground.

Arthur Marshall: And you see Stephen Michael went into cool Jimmy Krakouer. I notice too that Basil Campbell; that was a clean bump but then when the heat got on it was Basil certainly showing who was boss out there. Well, there’s a turn up. 15 seconds gone. Beecroft has possession of the ball and a 15-metre infringement has been given against South. Page on the mark. Back in the play on the half-back line it’s been a good mark to Barrett. He’s at centre-half back Rodney Barrett and already the 50,000 spectators have come to life.

Bob Miller: Yes Rodney Barrett relieves the pressure. Whatta start to the 1981 Grand Final...

Let me start by asking a question. Can you recall a moment in which you knew your life had changed forever? Do you need time to think about the moment or can you recall it easily? I don’t mean moments like your first kiss or a great birthday. I mean moments where you know that your world will never be the same again. The change I am talking about is tectonic change – life altering. In 1981, I experienced a number of these moments. I was twelve.

1981 was my watershed year as it became a continuous chain of unfolding events that I had no control over. Perhaps I remember things quite clearly because I was unable to do anything about them. I had not fully appreciated that over the years life had been
preparing me for 1981 as change had been part of my family’s collective experience for some time. These changes came in the form of my father’s work-related transfers about every three years. Dad was a stock agent who had mainly worked for the stock firms Wesfarmers and Elders, procuring livestock, mainly sheep, for the Middle-Eastern market. This is something he had done for about twenty years. Since he first joined the workforce at 16 Dad transferred from one town to another. Prior to being married Dad had spent time in places like Wagin, Boyup Brook, Lake Grace and Waroona. Towns like Carnamah, Moora, Williams, Geraldton, Albany and Northam would be places that I would come to know.

When I was 10, Dad had a brief commercial dalliance in a corner deli in Geraldton but it proved unfruitful and he returned to the only thing he truly knew, stock. The next stop was Perth. From the middle of 1979 until 1981 the family moved to Perth and for two and a half years Dad worked for the Western Australian Lamb Marketing Board. Then, just before 1981 became 1982, Dad quit his job in Perth and resumed working for Elders and we all moved south to the coastal town of Albany. As I got older, I came to resent these transfers as friendships gave way to Dad’s work. For me, the hardest move was from Albany and its beautiful and dangerous landscape. I was fifteen. I set my clock and the cycle began again.

If this type of change was foreseeable, puberty was not. Like many children on the cusp of their teen years I had these things explained to me but it was like telling someone who has never seen stars what the moon looks like. Being a bigger boy had always had its advantages – I was never really picked on. But it ensured I was at the developmental forefront, particularly of the boys in my class.
The first of the big physiological changes was my voice. It was like the tuning and volume switches were being simultaneously twiddled in my throat, coughing only exacerbated the situation. It went on for days, this crazy, throaty squeaking and so I resigned myself to say as little as possible to anyone until it had passed. A nun at the Catholic primary school I attended thwarted my plan. I hated recorder class as the instrument seemed to be an elongated reservoir for my spit. Unlike my other classmates who could play, I was pretending to play a passable tune of *Mary had a Little Lamb*. More often than not, I would simply feign playing as I could disguise my silence by the cacophony around me. Besides I had no musical ability at all. The closest I came to a virtuoso performance of any kind was a blinding tennis racquet solo of *Turning Japanese* by The Vapors. The nun raised her hand. The class stopped. I thought I had wangled it. How wrong I was. “Gorman can you please repeat the song on your own.” I looked around for a tennis racquet. “In your own time Gorman.” I was like a rabbit in the headlights. I puckered up to the foul instrument but my uneven breath, noodle fingers and complete lack of talent made *Mary had a Little Lamb* sound like a dying bagpipe version of Slade’s *Cum on Feel the Noise*. Quite a feat really. “SoRry sIsTer” was all my breaking voice could muster as the first vile pustule of my career in acne popped up in the middle of my forehead.

To my horror, the physiological gauntlet that was puberty did not stop there but thankfully, the next episode did happen at home. While I was taking a leak before heading out for a marathon innings of backyard cricket with my younger brother, the revelation came that things were on the move. With my mission-brown *Scoops* pulled down past my nether regions I felt a strange pulling sensation that combined to make a weird follicular vibration. Being a Catholic I was not in the habit of perusing my genitals as their function had become tacitly understood at the age of twelve. Goggle-
eyed I peered down and there was Max Walker’s moustache. I was amazed, shocked, uplifted, dismayed. Unconsciously I stopped the flow and ran out into the kitchen where everyone stopped and turned to meet my broken-voiced yodel and my genital goatee. I was placated and Dad explained that this was all part and parcel of the change. After a few bracing red cordials I was ok and the backyard became the WACA but the shock was profound, quick and embarrassing. What followed was a weird journey in the phenomenon of puberty - body-odour, bad-breath, more pimples and erections, which I am sure I was never told could spring up at any time for no reason what so ever. I avoided things like K-Mart bra catalogues at all costs.

At this time, I would catch things on television that left me scared or sad. This was epitomised by the death of the Irish Republican Army member Bobby Sands. In 1977, Sands was gaoled in Belfast’s Maze Prison for 14 years for illegal firearm possession and went on a hunger strike protesting the British Government’s refusal to grant him political prisoner status. Sands was seeking to restore this category, which the British Government abolished soon after he was released from the Maze in 1976 after serving four years on another matter. Unlike me, or at least how I saw it at the time, the only thing Sands had any control over was his body. Before going on a hunger strike he spent three years ‘on the blanket’; not washing, wearing a prison uniform or using toilets. Starving himself was Sand’s only means for political change and on the 66th day of his strike he died after lapsing into a coma for two days. He had gone blind and all his vital organs, after such a painful ordeal, had shut down. Perhaps the thing that struck me most was that Sands was a Roman Catholic. I was a Catholic. What did it mean? Could this happen to me? If Sands death in May represented a world gone mad, augmented by my pubescent confusion, the beginning of the year was a precursor to even stranger
things. These events were all the more confusing because they came from within a staple part of my family’s daily life, sport.

Earlier in the year I experienced the first real shock to the system. The early summer of the 1980-81 cricket season had all the familiar sounds and sights that I had grown up with. Rod Marsh and Dennis Lillee were playing for Australia and the 9 network had the catchiest ditty in world sporting history, “Cmon Aussie Cmon.” You could sing it for hours. The one-day games in particular had really captured and condensed the excitement that cricket could afford and I, like every other Aussie kid, loved it. By early February, my appreciation of one-day cricket, and sport generally, was in turmoil.

It was a sweltering Sunday afternoon, I was sitting in our lounge room in Perth watching the one-day match against New Zealand and Australia. The last over was dramatic and eventually became the most controversial bowled since the Bodyline series in 1932-33. New Zealand had played well for 49 overs and as they came into the 50th and final over they had the slimmest of chances to win. The outcome of the game came down to the last ball of the match. New Zealand needed a six for victory. The tension at the MCG was huge and made even more pronounced as Greg Chappell, the Australian captain, called his brother Trevor, who was bowling, over for the last ball. I turned to Dad and I innocently asked what was going on. All he could muster was an incredulous shrug of his shoulders as his eyes peeped through the smoke from his cigarette. I recall one of the commentators, perhaps Richie Benaud say something like “Oh no. He can’t be…Surely.” Trevor Chappell made his way back to the start of his run-up. He turned quickly, walked in an rolled the best grubber the world has ever seen; a tactic that would have seen Dad remove his belt and give either my brother or me a good hiding had we done it. The incongruity of such an action was not lost on me. With
the New Zealand batter Brian McKechnie blocking the ball, Australians let out a collective groan. Slack-jawed and wide-eyed I turned to Dad who had hastily sucked down his cigarette and lit another one. In that moment sport revealed to me something that has never really left me. It left in me a cold pea of cynicism because at that moment I knew that everything that I had been told about fair play was untrue. By 6:00pm I was in a different headspace and my childhood was as good as over.\(^5\)

By the start of October my full attention was taken up with another sporting event; one that countered the disappointment of that dreadful one day cricket international: the 1981 Western Australian Football League (WAFL) grand final. It has now become part of Western Australian sporting folklore that the opening minutes to the game are some of the most fiery ever seen. For me, that game represents the full realisation of my football consciousness. If you asked me what this actually meant I could not describe it but in some ways it was like all the planets had turned to Burley footballs and miraculously, astrologically, aligned.

I had always been interested in football and many of my first memories are about football. I must have been about four or five when I walked through the Moora Rovers’ change rooms before a game and experienced the masculine fug of liniment, sweat, cigarette smoke and flatulence for the first time. As the players warmed-up, their boot stops chimed flatly on the concrete floor. The balls and terse declarations about the opposition’s impending welfare and sexual persuasion simultaneously whizzed past my head. I looked for my father who was strapping some bloke’s fingers or kneading a taut calf muscle. During these meandering dawdles I became fascinated with the way a pair of oiled muscular shoulders pulled a guernsey tight and the numbers on a players back would follow the curve of his torso down to his shorts. To me, the numbers on those

men’s backs were perfection. Gazing around, my line of vision would be broken as a player reached down for a dropped ball and caught my eye giving me an easy, all-knowing wink or ruffled my hair.

For me, the 1981 WAFL grand final, more than anything else, allowed me to transform an avid fascination into something else, something greater. I knew Claremont, my side, had not won a premiership since 1964 and if they were going to win this was the year. To this point in the 1981 season Claremont had only lost two games. I was under no illusions though, I knew what was at stake and I wasn’t leaving anything to chance. My Hail Mary’s went on high rotation and became like enterprise bargaining meetings. I was prepared to offer a lifetime of unquestioning devotion to Catholicism for one thing - to see Claremont win this grand final. This might sound a bit over the top, and perhaps it was, but something tangible still remains with me from that game. Something I can still revisit and smile about.

My affiliation with Claremont was something I had no real control over as it was thrust on me by my Dad when I was an infant. Years later the significance of my father’s love for his football club and his child was explained to me by Bruce Dawe in his poem “Life-Cycle”:

they are wrapped in the club colours, laid in beribboned cots having already begun a lifetime’s barracking.

Carn, they cry, Carn…feebly at first
While parents playfully tussle with them for possession of a rusk: Ah, he’s a little Tiger! (And they are…)⁶

And I was. Being a Claremont supporter is not something I took lightly either. Over the years, supporters of other clubs have made it clear to me that Claremont people were

nothing more than rich snobs and players like Graham Moss, well he was just a bloody big fairy. Upon receiving my first Claremont guernsey, I traced my fingers along the gold interlocking C, F, C mouthing the word that each letter stood for. All I needed was a number on it. I had seen Claremont’s coach Mal Brown in the paper with the number 100 plastered across his big back and I was determined to do the same. We were living in Williams at the time and every few weeks we would head to the bigger town of Narrogin to shop. I pestered Mum all morning. We stopped off at a few different haberdashers in between paying bills or buying groceries but they didn’t have what I was after. More pestering was countered with threats and a final promise to stop off at the sports store on the way home.

Stepping inside the sports store I just knew we had finally come to the right place as the latest white sand-shoes, football and desert boots stood along the wall on little shelves. Rain coats, fishing vests, duffel and lumber jackets competed with ruck sacks and back packs made of thick khaki canvas were stuffed in hard against the wall. Fishing lines and scoop nets sat along side hockey sticks, cricket bats, squash and tennis rackets. Every inch of space had something that bounced, rolled or whirred and could be kicked, caught, bashed or snagged. Mum and I approached the counter made of smooth dark jarrah with thick glass panelling, which contained hooks, expensive fishing reels and an assortment of cloth badges and hunting paraphernalia. A Swiss army knife with all its shining parts at odd angles glistened like some exotic beetle. The counter had catalogues for everything; toys, bikes, trampolines and t-shirt transfers depicting Bruce Lee in kung-fu stance, blonde bombshells and cartoon characters leering out of souped-up cars with smoking tyres. Mum asked the storekeeper about numbers for the guernsey she had laid out on the counter. He disappeared and came back with two boxes with two different sorts of numbers. Big and small.
The small numbers were just like we had seen at the earlier shops. Mal Brown would not be caught dead with them on and nor would I. The shop-keeper started to place the bigger numbers on the guernsey. This was more like it I thought. My joy quickly turned sour as I realised that the numbers were to fit an adult guernsey and not that of a six year old. I didn’t care; I wanted the big numbers. Mum rationalised that if she sewed all three numbers on it would start and finish well under my armpits. I had no choice but to concede defeat. I still have the guernsey. It still remains numberless.

As I got older, my allegiance to Claremont was augmented by the prominence of two Noongar brothers who had come up from Mt Barker to play football in Perth. I was familiar with Mt Barker as it was my Dad’s hometown. My Grandparents still lived in town and my brother and I had spent our holidays there. Bill and Molly, my grandparents, would sometimes drive up to where we lived, stay a few days and then we would head down to Mt Barker. These were slow, 80 kilometre an hour torture sessions where the radio was never on, except maybe for the races, and conversation was limited. For twenty odd years Bill had been the manager of the Mount Barker Co-operative and oversaw the day to day running as well as the export of apples to places like Britain and Germany. In his day, Bill had been a tall robust man but as he got older his robustness transferred itself into a massive girth, which naturally accentuated his size. His white hair would always be combed even as he sat at the kitchen table reading the paper in a singlet and a freshly pressed pair of trousers. Whenever he talked to me I would look at his mouth and the movement it made. This impressed me no end because he had shards of gold fillings in his teeth and gold, I was led to believe, was the most precious thing money could buy.
By contrast Molly, my grandmother, was a small, calm and deeply religious woman. Her smallness was epitomised by the small white Mini she drove through town on the way to the library or church. She would peer through the windscreen of that little white capsule with her Dame Edna glasses on making driving an infinitely more difficult task because of the thin film of butter that was usually on the lenses. Relatives recall that Molly was somewhat of a road hazard around town even running a livestock truck off the main street one day and into one of Mt Barker’s hotels. Molly had taught at the local high school for as long as anyone could remember, mainly English and remedial classes. Everyone seemed to know her and when I was introduced to people in later years they would generally ask, “How are you related to Molly?”

When I was ten my first notion of celebrity came from a brief stop at the Caltex service station in Mt Barker as the family headed down to Albany. As Dad filled the car up another car pulled in alongside. Dad popped his head in the driver’s window and smiled at my brother and me. “The bloke drivin”, he announced and pointed, “Dya know who that is boys?” We shrugged. “That boys, is the father of Jim and Phil Krakouer.” We pushed our faces against the window and tried to see if Jim and Phillip were indeed occupants of the car. Of course, they weren’t but the little coloured balls in the transparent dome on the petrol bowser mimicked our excitement as the lead petrol fumes filled the car. If my faith as a Claremont supporter had ever wavered by the relentless jibes of strangers and relatives it was tempered in that wide-eyed moment.

Years later, I was to find myself living and working in Mt Barker. In 1987, I was fresh out of high-school and I had no idea what I wanted to do so I began studying to become a professional wool-classer at the Fremantle Technical College. With my social skills from years of moving tuned in to anything that was remotely familiar, I walked up to
and introduced myself to a bloke who had on a pair of red football socks. Besides Perth
and the Moora Rovers the only other club I knew with such colours was North Mt Barker, the team my grandfather, father and uncles had played for. I approached him
and introduced myself, he was from Mt Barker and he played for North Mt Barker. His
name was Brad. Having played junior football in Albany it turned out I had played
football against his younger brother and his flatmate as they were all in Perth to try their
luck playing with Claremont in the colts. Before I knew it, I found myself in an orange
Valiant heading down to Mt Barker with Brad to work and play football for North Mt
Barker in the Southern Districts Football League. This led to work, which led to more
work and I found myself becoming a resident of Mt Barker for a number of years.

Sometime during this stint in Mt Barker I got a call from a shearing contractor to see if
I’d be interested in working one weekend. He told me that the shearers would pick me
up at about 6:45am at the back of the Top Pub. The sparkling purple Holden Kingswood
arrived bang on time and a thin bloke hopped out of the glistening vehicle. As he
opened his boot so I could squeeze my esky into the already full space I noticed he had
a thick European accent. His name was Conk. I peered inside the car and there in the
front seat was Eric Krakouer, Jim and Phillip’s father. In the back was Billy Krakouer,
their brother, and another bloke who introduced himself only as Hoodle. So as Conk,
Eric, Billy, Hoodle and I headed for a shearing shed somewhere out the back of the
shire I began to recall that 1981 grand final and I don’t think the smile left my face all
day.

I had worked with the odd Blackfella here and there in my time in Mt Barker but this
was the first time I had worked entirely with Indigenous people. As we got out to the
shed I noticed immediately these blokes had a way about them that I really liked. Soft

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7 In 1991 this changed to the Great Southern Football League.
and easy. They didn’t seem to talk much but they laughed a lot. At lunchtime they quickly vacated the shed and hopped back into the car. At first I thought they were going to head back into town but I soon realised they had moved into the car to listen to the races on the wireless. I was the only one left in the little shearing shed until I pecked my head out through the doors. I think Hoodle saw me and called me over. I got in the car and noticed one of them had a form guide and they would take it in turns to pick their nag. Someone gave me the form guide to do the same. It felt like I’d done this every weekend, which was quite strange as I had never had a bet on a horse in my life. When the hour was up we eased back to the shed ready for the afternoon run. It was 1988 and Jim and Phillip were still with North Melbourne.

My recollections of October 3, 1981, the day the WAFL grand final, are of a huge crowd and the heat, I felt that my cheeks could have cooked eggs. My anxiety levels were through the roof and by the time I entered Subiaco Oval I was running on pure adrenalin. I had been to WAFL matches before, the Perth Royal Show, even Disney on Parade, but nothing had prepared me for the crowd and intense mood at Subiaco Oval. Claremont supporters were there in droves but it seemed South Fremantle had many more. Our family got to Subiaco early and managed to stake out a tuft of grass on the north-east bank of the ground. I could make out the scoreboard. As the reserves game held no interest for me I sat down to rest my legs. When I stood up some time later it was quite obvious that the crowd had grown as my view of the oval was now obscured. For the rest of the day I had to stand on the tips of my toes to gain an uninterrupted view of the oval. As the reserves match finished the tension and noise at Subiaco Oval increased. I hadn’t heard so much swearing, real swearing, in all my life and when the league sides ran onto the ground the atmosphere was charged like a hydro-electric turbine whirring in my ears.
As the announcements were boomed out over the PA the opening siren deafened us further. It was here, in those first few moments of the game, normality was completely blown away. Contained within those moments was a dramatic unfolding that drove the crowd of 50,000 to its feet as the moment exploded and the violence on the field spread like a canker. Basil Campbell, South Fremantle’s hard man, had just shirt-fronted Claremont’s ruck Barry Beecroft and a massive all-in brawl ensued. I had no inkling at the time but this was the beginning of something for me. Whatta start was Bob Miller’s enthusiastic call to the commencement of the game and the fight which followed. He had called it correctly. My journey had only just begun.

1.2 Home Ground

My most enduring memory of Eric Krakouer is of him shearing out at Johnny Wright’s farm, Preston Park, in late 1987. Preston Park was always a good shed to shear at because it was just out of Mt Barker on the Albany Highway. This meant, if you wanted to, you could fly into town, have a counter-lunch and be back in time to see the shearers grab their first sheep for the third run. In a game where early starts and long days were usually book-ended with driving in darkness, Preston Park was a little bonus that made the entire team feel like they were working from home.

Preston Park was a six-stand shed with a hungry. Eric had been shearing up the line in Narrogin, his regular run for years, so being the last man on, he was on the hungry. On this particular day Eric brought his youngest son Andrew along to rouse-a-bout. I’d heard a lot about Andy Krakouer but this was the first time I had actually clapped eyes on.

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8 A ‘hungry-stand’ is generally utilised by inexperienced shearers for practicing or it is used to increase the volume of sheep shorn.
on him because, as he told me later, he had been living and playing football in Melbourne. Short and stocky, Andy is probably the most similar in physical appearance and size to Eric. I don’t know if it was just me but the team seemed to be in a far more buoyant mood than usual. It probably had something to do with the proximity of town and the chance to have a peppered steak for lunch, but it was also because Eric was on the board and working amongst us.

As the shearers clicked their chattering handpieces into gear and started taking the belly-wool off their respective wethers the rouse-a-bouts began to pair-up to see who would work on the table and who would work the board. I teamed up with Andy. We introduced ourselves, shook hands and started to pick up the fleeces and sweep the jarrah board that would be our place of work for the next week or so. Tentatively, I began to ask Andy general questions about living in Melbourne and football. I found him easy to talk to and as we got into a good working rhythm I unconsciously began to roll the bellies that were coming off Johnny Wright's massive sheep into tight balls. Inexplicably and without actually realising it I started to hand-ball these fuzzy tight clumps in Andy’s direction. He plucked them effortlessly out of the air and then proceeded to snap them, left and right foot, into the wool bin on the other side of the shed. He didn’t miss one.

Eric, meanwhile, with no assistance from any back-supporting device, which had become standard for many shearers, would saunter into his pen and eye the catching-pen full of Wright’s woolly brutes. Upon selection, Eric would slowly ease back out onto the board and calmly relieve the animal of its fleece. Occasionally he would stop, replace a blunt cutter or have a swig of his water bottle. All the while he did this with what seemed to me to be a funny little smile on his face. Maybe this smile was
actually a gentle grimace, which belied the pain that years of shearing can inflict on the body. As I would come to understand years later through my university studies, pain was something that marked many Indigenous Australians’ lives. They dealt with it generally through humour, it was a coping mechanism one Noongar woman once told me. I would like to think that Eric, if he was in pain, was smiling because he was back in his home-town and amongst friends.

The first news of having been accepted into university came nearly two weeks after my grandfather passed away in January of 1993. I recall this moment distinctly because I had waited for it for months, not his death, but the arrival of my tertiary entrance score. I had finished working in Mt Barker at the end of 1991 and I had taken all of 1992 off to study my Year 12 again. For a couple of years I had realised that I was going nowhere wool-classing. As my frustration with work steadily increased I became disheartened. Brad, who for the past two years had been studying, saw my predicament and suggested I do the same.

As the family arrived back in Mt Barker for my grandfather’s funeral the old stories started to surface about Molly and Bill and life growing up in Mt Barker. They were generally prefaced with, “I remember when…” or “Whatta about the time…” The truth never got in the way of the story, good or bad. It was mostly kids stuff, sneaking smokes into the sleep-out, sticking lit newspaper into the lavatory pan, nicking cool-drink from the backs of shops. One story I found really interesting was told by my Uncle Bill, Dad’s second youngest brother. I forget how it started but it got onto how big the Mt Barker Co-operative’s apple operation had been. Uncle Bill said he could remember when old Bill would invite Charlie Bunnings over for dinner when he was in town. Old Bill had worked for the Co-op, as it was called, for 49 years and for 15 years
he was the Co-op’s manager. Besides, Bunnings was making such a good dollar out of supplying wooden crates to the Co-op how could he refuse Bill’s hospitality of a roast dinner, a few beers and bottle of Drambuie. I found this significant because today Bunnings is a massive chain of hardware stores, which are linked to the logging of old growth forests in Western Australia’s south-west. Back in the old days Bunnings would supply the wood to the Mt Barker Co-operative in the form of crates that shipped tonnes and tonnes of Mt Barker apples to all points of the globe. Suddenly it made the space of that little dining-room in that little house, all the more interesting as it seemed such a sad irony that acres of native hardwoods were used solely to ship European fruit back to Europe.

For several days, preparations for the funeral and old Bill’s estate were made around boozy evening dinners or trips to the pub for a counter-meal. Perhaps a day or two before Bill’s funeral my great Aunty Gwen passed away suddenly also. I had stayed in Aunty Gwen’s sleep-out for about six months in 1988 and we got on like a house on fire. Her death shocked and saddened me. My Aunty Pauline, Dad’s sister, had been staying with Gwen and found her in her own bed at peace. What was meant to be about seven days of beer-embellished reminiscences turned into a twelve-day marathon.

At Gwen’s wake Dad and I stayed for a quick cup of tea and then headed the four hours back to Northam where we lived. Arriving back to town in the late afternoon, I unloaded the car of its deceased estate brick-a-brac and headed down to the post office. My results had arrived. I sat on the red post office steps, warm with the Avon Valley’s summer heat and opened the letter. For months I had planned to go out and seriously celebrate my entrance score result, regardless of the outcome, but the previous week’s
activities and the final four hour drive had exhausted me. I read the letter. I recall yawnning. I had been accepted into University and all I wanted to do was sleep.

For me, the first 12 months of university life were miserable. I was in an alien place surrounded by aliens who spoke alien language. I believed that lectures and tutorials were designed to explicitly confuse people; to sort the wheat from the chaff. I was a mature-age, working-class male from the country. I felt like a ten-thumbed Luddite at an IBM convention. University, particularly the Humanities department, bristled with theoretical concepts that were wrapped up in a language that made no sense to me: post-modernism, post-structuralism, discourse, hegemony, paradigm. I was forced to question everything I had ever taken as fixed or normal. Family, work, religion, sex were all made strange by these theories and their jargonese.

My major was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. I do not really know why I chose this, I had read a few books leading up to my TEE exams looking at first contact and the conflict which arose soon after. I began to question the many things I was finding out for the first time; murder, kidnap, infanticide, poisoning, chains, forced marches. With each page I became more transfixed and determined to find out more. With each book or article I found myself realising just how much I did not know. The ‘whispering in my heart’\(^9\) became louder.

If the choice of my degree was something of a mystery to me, to others it was a considerable source of incredulity, humour and even ridicule. Some people were genuinely fascinated, but trying to pick these people became harder as the majority of the responses were nothing more than veiled hostility or overt insults. The type of

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question where the only answer is silence. “So are you a nigger yet?” “Still studying to be a coon?” I became a surrogate carrier for many other people’s hate, as the words on the pages that I was reading started to scream. Ironically, the veracity of these words was like a heat gun that would bubble and lift all the layers of my learned ignorance off. The jibes, along with those early investigative readings, went on for months and months and I was left with all my personal information regarding ideas, myths and long held prejudices stripped bare. I was back at the start and I had to make sense of all this information as I felt my mind was bending.

As a consequence, my university experiences were like being in a vast desert that would offer up theories like mirages. I would stumble toward the theory only to find it would disappear in front of me, leaving me bewildered. I would peer out onto the academic horizon and see some other glimmering theory and begin the process again. Words and ideas became the shifting sands of my tertiary desert until finally the sands beneath my feet stopped moving as much. In a sense, I suppose, I had been driven on by my fear of failing and I had become indignant. I had copped too much shit from too many people to give up. My only choice was to keep going.

One of the first articles that gave me hope was Stephen Muecke’s “Discourse, History, Fiction: Language and Aboriginal History.” At first I only had a vague hint of what this article was about but I knew that it was speaking to me. I just needed to persist. After about a week of reading and re-reading, something began to stick. The essence of the article was that history is constructed differently by different historians and the reader must make themselves aware of these differences. Muecke specifically discussed the way the Bunaba resistance fighter Jandamarra, or Pigeon, as he was christened by

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11 Jandamarra led the Bunaba resistance in the North West of Western Australia in the 1890’s.
the constabulary that employed him and he would later come to kill, had been perceived and written about by three different historians. By focussing on Jandamarra, Muecke shows how the concept of history can be engaged with differently depending on how that history is framed and transmitted. Muecke demonstrates how two historians interpret the Jandamarra story and actions differently.\textsuperscript{12} The third perspective comes from within Jandamara’s Bunaba community and is a transcription of a recorded conversation with a community elder, Mr Sam Umbagai. The underlying point of Muecke’s article is that the events and the way the historical account is furnished will determine how the reader, or listener, of that historical account will, or will not, make sense of it. As readers of Australian History, we need to be aware that history is pluralistic and subject to the person writing it. Truth or fact, the basis on which history is validated, is subject to the same fate.

After finishing my degree, I did my honours, an analysis of the Murri poet Lionel Fogarty.\textsuperscript{13} Upon completion of this, my wife and I went overseas. This was in part to go to Sweden for a family wedding but mainly to have a break from work and study. Basing our holiday in London where we stayed with friends we headed to Turkey and worked our way North from Fethiye. In the tourist port of Kusadasi we stayed with the mother of friends from Mt Barker. On our final night we drank Raki and Efez beer and ate fish that we had bought that day from the market. Usually after such frivolity, I sleep like a baby but I had a nightmare. I was sitting on the side of a concrete aqua-duct that was filled with milk. As I dangled my feet in the cool milk I started to notice massive cobalt shark fins slicing the surface. I heard a noise behind me and a big, naked, teenager with downs-syndrome ran up and jumped in. He thrashed about with a grin that

\textsuperscript{12} The examples given are Ion Idriess’s \textit{Outlaws of the Leopolds} (1952) and Colin Johnson’s \textit{Long Live Sandawara} (1979).
indicated he had no idea of the peril he was in. I tried to yell out but I was mute. I tried
yelling harder, nothing. A big silvery fish with the face of a dog swam up, smiled at me,
Cheshire Cat-like, and coolly said “Get him out or we’ll eat him.” I could feel the tips if
the fins touch the soles of my feet but I couldn’t move. I tried to yell out to my duck-
diving, milk-gurgling acquaintance but nothing. The dog-faced fish kept reiterating his
threat and the fins circled faster and faster. I quickly awoke and stayed awake all night.

By morning the raki and beer had taken its toll as I was parched and head-sore. We had
breakfast, packed and headed for the bus depot. I paid the fare to get to Canakkale, the
southern port at the mouth of the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles, which by ferry
takes you to Gelibolu, Gallipoli. The bus, as far as I could make out, was predominantly
full of Turks except for a group of four young men from Adelaide. I had not heard
Australian accents for a long time and for the first few hours of the trip I marvelled at
the flat dryness of the Australian accent. To add to this these buggers were funny. All
the way to Izmir their banter didn’t cease as they described everything, especially the
Turkish coastline which was quite spectacular, in minute detail. Pausing they would
sigh, “Look at all that serenity.” Further Roy and HG-like commentary ensued, then
they would stop, turn to one another and dead-pan, “Just how much is a set of jousting
sticks anyway?” The film, The Castle, obviously had a distinct impression on them.

By the time we had changed buses at Izmir I had forgotten my dream but my unease
was quickly replaced with another one - that being the driver of the bus, who my wife
and I were sitting directly behind. His Formula 1 driving technique was contrasted by
the pine-tree-riddled valley’s that sharply fell away from the snaking road. This was
complicated further by the driver chain-smoking despite big signs on each window
panel warning passengers not to. The situation was made worse by his lighting
technique, which was to steer the bus with his knees as he cupped both his hands around his cigarette as he lit it.

Besides the driver was a telephone, which after Izmir seemed to ring every 20 minutes. The driver would grab it, talk, shrug, light another smoke and hang up. This happened for perhaps the next hour until finally he handed the telephone back to me. I heard a thick Turkish accent in English say, “Is Dean on your bus?” I stood up and turned around and in my best Paul Hogan announced, “Scuse me Ladies and Gents we’re after a Dean? Do we have any Dean’s?” The Australians seeing a challenge to their ocker-ness saw my Paul Hogan and raised me a Les Patterson “Naah maate. No Deano’s here. Whatta bout a Macca, a Simmo or a Wazza, how about a set of jousting sticks?” The Turks sat there, some quizzical, some annoyed. I handed the phone back, “Sorry, no Dean here mate.” The driver nodded and put the phone back. I turned to my wife and she looked at me “You just can’t help yourself can you?” I shrugged my shoulders.

Ten minutes later the phone rang again. The driver answered and passed me the telephone, it was the friend’s mother who we had stayed with in Kusadasi. She sounded calm “Sean you need to call home as soon as you can, OK.” I said I would. Handing the phone back I felt like I should have asked why. To this day I don’t know why I didn’t.

We arrived at the port of Canakkale and already the Boys from Oz and I had a simple plan: to go to a bar that had cable tv and watch the 1998 AFL grand final between Adelaide and North Melbourne. “The Cows have got no hope. They’re gonna get flogged”, I kept chiding my new friends. My wife could not believe it. She thought we were going to pay homage to Australia’s fallen fore-fathers and here I was on a footy trip with their drunken great grandsons.
We got off the bus grabbed our gear and I made my way to a line of pay phones. I walked to the third one on the southern side facing town. I rang the international code for Australia, the area code and then the number. It rang three times. Dad answered. “Hey Pete whats going on?” I chirped down the line. He came straight to the point. “Sean I’ve got some terrible news. Chantelle has been killed in a car accident.” I don’t recall the next few minutes after this. My wife took the rest of the call. The details were sketchy, no one knew anything except that my sister had been killed and it wasn’t her fault.

As the ferry slipped out across the water I looked up at the sky. Like the dream the night before I couldn’t talk but this time I didn’t want to. We had been in that bus all day and looking up into the sky the late afternoon clouds were pink - the kind of pink that children’s cheeks are hand-coloured in old black and white photographs. In that moment I knew that I would never see things the same way again because like a man condemned to spend time in solitary confinement it was the last time I looked at the sky for years.

It seems crazy now but the death of my sister didn’t actually dawn on me until days after. Perhaps it was the shock of the moment or the alcohol that rendered me a dullard, maybe it was the massive exercise of getting back home for the funeral which I can only recall bits of. It is like people say when they are struck by such immense grief that you fully expect the deceased to walk through the door, smiling as they head to the fridge to make themselves a sandwich. It didn’t strike me when I kissed her chilled forehead at the funeral directors or as I wrote the eulogy and then delivered it at the church. It came at the cemetery as I stood by the hole which consumed the casket where her body lay. I clutched the rose that I was meant to cast down ward but momentarily I just couldn’t
bring myself to do it. It was as if, if I let that rose go I had admitted defeat and her death would be final. In some ways, it is that the death of one so young only quantifies the horrible reality. It would take me many months to come to a more positive and life affirming view of what my life and the life of my family had become. As far as I was concerned, I had two choices, work it into something positive or surrender to the pain and be shackled to it for good. I chose the former and the only way I could do this was by spending days immersed in information regarding two Noongar brothers from my father’s hometown.

1.3 Untold

I am afraid that [my wife] will commit suicide if the boy is not back soon for she is good for nothing only cry all day and night…I have a much love for my dear wife and children as you have for yours so if you have any feeling at all please send the boy back as quick as you can it did not take long for him to go but it takes along time for him to come back.\(^\text{14}\)

They forgot their children in twenty-four hours and as a rule…[were] glad to be rid of [them].\(^\text{15}\)

Many non-Indigenous Western Australians would not have heard of the 1905 Aborigines Act, why would they? The policy was designed specifically to deal with Indigenous peoples living in Western Australia. Originally designed out of the concerns of the Chief Protector, Mr Henry Charles Prinsep\(^\text{16}\) the specific theoretical purpose of the 1905 Aborigines Act was to “make provision for the better protection and care of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Western Australia.”\(^\text{17}\) What those who created the policy

\(^{14}\) Aborigines Department Files 12/1903.
\(^{15}\) Western Australia, Parliamentary Debates, 28, 1905: 425. My emphasis.
\(^{16}\) Prinsep “Was particularly concerned at the growing number of Aboriginal Children of mixed decent growing up in ‘native camps’. In his opinion, they learned only ‘laziness and vice’ and left to their own devices they would grow up to be ‘vagrants and outcast’ and ‘not only a disgrace but a menace to society.’” Haebich, Anna. For their own Good. Aborigines and Government in the South West of Western Australia1900-1940, 3rd ed. Nedlands, University of Western Australia Press. p57.
\(^{17}\) Haebich, p83.
intended it to do and what it actually did, to those who it targeted, have become very real issues of debate. Officially it promoted education, medical and housing concerns as specific provisions for Indigenous Western Australians. In reality, the 1905 *Aborigines* Act:

> laid the basis for the development of repressive and coercive state control over the state’s Aboriginal population [the] Act drove a wedge between them and the wider community and served to hamper efforts to make their own way of life.\(^{18}\)

For many Indigenous People living in Western Australia at the time the act became an instrument which significantly limited their opportunities. Every facet of an Indigenous person’s life was controlled from movement between towns, employment, marriage and family associations to the amount of dogs one was allowed to keep.\(^{19}\) The pervasiveness of this act and its amendments is difficult for anyone who enjoys their civil liberties to believe or understand. I was no different but the evidence became too overwhelming to ignore. An example of just how great the impact was on Blackfellas at the time can be found in Stephen Kinnane’s book *Shadowlines*. It details the life of Jessie Argyle, Kinnane’s grandmother, who struggled all her life with the restrictions that the Western Australian Aborigines Department put on her. These restrictions were fully borne out for Kinnane when he and his family received the file the Department had kept on Jessie all her life:

> My grandmother, and many of the women who passed away before the release of these files, would have no idea of the extent to which their lives were tracked, recorded and monitored. [As] we sat around the kitchen table as a family and pored over the file when it first arrived in the mail, was the fact that my grandmother wasn’t even allowed to buy her own underwear.\(^{20}\)

Kinnane describes this influence on Jessie as being a “constant cycle of control and entrapment.”\(^{21}\) But Kinnane goes on further, and rightly points out, that the action says more about the system which supported this process rather than the people it targeted:

\(^{18}\) Haebich, p83. My emphasis.  
\(^{19}\) Haebich, p88.  
\(^{21}\) Kinnane, p129.
There is a sexual intimacy that is breached when men in suits and hats pop off with someone else’s money to buy their knickers, petticoats and shimmies.\textsuperscript{22}

In almost every instance the implementation of these ethnically specific, state sanctioned laws were carried out by the police. This ideological state apparatus was instructed by officers from within the Western Australian Aborigines Department and described by Biskup as “mediocrities, men without courage [and] devoid of ideas.”\textsuperscript{23}

By the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century in Australia there were many theories about the plight of Indigenous peoples. Some of these theories, based around Social Darwinism and the tacit assumption that blood percentages determined a person’s character and identity, supported the idea that full-blood Aboriginal people were dying out.\textsuperscript{24} The policymakers’ perceptions of this situation at the time was twofold. Firstly, laws were deemed to be needed and were implemented to smooth the dying pillow of the doomed full-bloods. Secondly, provisions needed to be made to protect those unfortunate subjects of mixed-decent, the half-caste, the quarter-castes, the quadroon and octaroon. Western Australian Parliamentary debate raged, with the general consensus being in favour of separation to protect Indigenous peoples in Western Australia from the “‘contaminating influences’ of alcohol, immorality, and venereal disease.”\textsuperscript{25} It is perhaps these last two points, which highlight the psychosis of the government of the time and the reasons it projected it onto the broader community and the Indigenous population by truly believing segregation needed to be vigorously pursued. Whilst venereal disease was a serious by-product of casual sexual encounters, sexual assault or trade for sex, there was

\textsuperscript{22} Kinnane, p129.
\textsuperscript{24} This is shown in Isobel White’s text \textit{The Native Tribes of Western Australia} (1985). White’s introduction focuses on the well-known amateur anthropologist Daisy Bates, “The prevailing doctrines she would have encountered would have been those of evolution and social Darwinism. Mrs Bates shared a common belief in regarding them as a dying race, whose final pillow she had a duty to smooth.” This is the subject of Bate’s book, \textit{The Passing of the Aborigines} (1938) p16-17.
\textsuperscript{25} Haebich, p81.
a far greater social concern, which had the government on edge. In the minds of the authorities the products of these unions were creating an entire under-class of half-breeds in the community. According to the government, these people would display and enact the negative features and behaviours believed to be inherent to each ethnic group (eg Blackfellas were lazy and unreliable, Chinese were sly and evil and Irish were violent and alcoholic). To put this simply the thing that the government feared the most was miscegenation:

The 1905 Act was intended to prohibit both casual sexual intercourse and long-term defacto relationships between Aboriginal and ‘half-caste’ women and non-Aboriginal men. In effect, the 1905 Act created a situation in which the local constabulary could enact the law and bring charges upon those non-Indigenous men responsible for actively seeking out black velvet. In most cases, the police resisted bringing charges because of the social stigma it placed upon a respected white farmer, business or family man going out, getting drunk and becoming a gin-jockey. However, when the police did carry out their duties against a white miscegenator “some local benches acted to protect the defendants from the full effects of the law.”

A charge of co-habitation laid against a Wagin Farmer in 1907 was dismissed and the local police complained to the Department that that two of the three members of the bench had both personal and business relationships with the defendant. The man was charged with the same offence in the following year and charged £5. The woman involved subsequently lost custody of her children who were sent to the Collie Salvation Army Home and later transferred to Kalgoorlie.

We can see the inequity of the law in this case as symptomatic of a wider social and cultural indifference and contempt towards Indigenous peoples at the time. This

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26 In R Broome’s text *Aboriginal Australians: Black Response to White Dominance, 1788-1980* p93, Broome quotes from an editorial in the *Bulletin* 1901; “The half-caste usually inherits the vices of both races and the virtues of neither. Do you want Australia to be a community of mongrels?”
27 Haebich, p116.
28 It should be noted that the terms, black-velvet, gin-jockey and others like them are abhorrent as they objectify people and are reflective of some people’s negative attitudes to Indigenous women and people.
29 Haebich, p117.
30 Haebich, p117.
situation would have dire consequences and ramifications for future generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples living in Western Australia. The removal of children has perhaps played the largest role in disrupting traditional Indigenous culture and identity, because without the children any hope of passing on the language and the stories about one’s family or language group is completely severed. The appointment of A.O. Neville to the Aborigines Department was significant for two things; he had enormous control over Indigenous peoples’ lives and he had “no experience of Aboriginal people whatsoever.” Neville single-handedly tried to solve the Aboriginal problem, as he saw it, through a social experiment of his own making, which based it methods on eugenics.

From 1915 to 1940, Neville presided over the fate and welfare of the vast majority of Indigenous peoples living in Western Australia. He became the legal guardian of all Indigenous children living in the state of Western Australia. Neville’s impact on Indigenous peoples and their lifestyles was total and double-edged because his policies directly targeted Indigenous peoples’ lives. Neville also desired to re-shape Indigenous social and cultural practices and develop the broader community’s political and social consciousness towards Indigenous peoples generally. Neville became personally responsible for taking the smoothing the dying pillow mentality and reconfiguring it into a benevolent ideal that has filtered down and become embedded in the paternalistic opinions of many non-Indigenous Australian’s towards Indigenous Australian’s that still circulate today. According to Haebich:

Neville was to exert a profound influence on policy and practice in Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia and this is evidenced in evolving official policies in relation to Aborigines of mixed descent and increasing Departmental interference in their lives. He also built up a reputation nationally as a leading authority and during the 1930s his strict absorptionist views influenced policies in several states and in the federal sphere. However, Neville came to represent something quite different to Aborigines.  

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31 Haebich, p153.
32 Haebich, p156.
For Mr A. O. Neville the immorality of mixed relationships and the procurement of alcohol by Indigenous people was just part of a much greater concern. Neville believed that for the Indigenous population to stand on its own feet it would need to free itself from the missionary shackles, an alliance that he thought was unhealthy.\(^{33}\) According to Neville, the *coloured minorities’* salvation lay in their ability to think *white*, which would help *them* recognise *their* economic and social disadvantage. Neville believed that only under Government protection and institutionalised training schemes could Indigenous people begin to see the merit of life lived in a *white way*. He believed that the mission mentality adopted by Indigenous people failed to equip them for the realities of life and hence the subsidies afforded mission settlements needed to be withdrawn.\(^{34}\) In order to do this, Neville proposed that a native settlement scheme be implemented, which would cut Government spending to an “absolute minimum”\(^{35}\), while preparing Indigenous people to go out into the broader community and become employable.

In theory, and with Neville’s firm insistence, the native settlement scheme seemed to have distinct merit. Surely the Australian ethos of a *fair-go* and being *fair-dinkum* would allow “the young [Indigenous] people [to gain] acceptance in the wider community [as the] older people died off [the settlements would be shut down after] two to three generations.”\(^{36}\) In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. Neville’s native camps became nothing more than over-burdened containment areas that would process and house large groups of people while supposedly training them. The skills the


\(^{34}\) This was adopted from Rufus Underwood, Aboriginal Affairs Minister (1914 -1916), who first proposed that subsidised missions were anathema to Indigenous people as it taught them to be ‘inferior beings’ and they did not equip Aboriginal people with life-skills. Haebich. p150.

\(^{35}\) Haebich, p157.

\(^{36}\) Haebich, p157. My emphasis.
men and women learnt at the Moore River Native Settlement were gender specific. The Indigenous men would leave early each morning to go root and rock picking, shear or fence. Conversely, the Indigenous women were taught to sew, cook and do domestic duties. By the age of sixteen both men and women could be used as a convenient and underpaid work-pool, netting the Aborigines Department a fortune as all pay was placed in its account.

Neville knew that for this social experiment to work he would need to focus on those who could be effectively trained for life, the children. To ensure the training process at places like Mogumber, the Moore River Settlement, discipline was strict, the environment was oppressive and the diet was, at best, rudimentary. For Indigenous Western Australians places like Mogumber represented the systematic breaking down of Indigenous identity, language and culture. To ensure total compliance Neville went to work on the families:

The scheme was seemingly self-contradictory: based on the segregation of Aborigines on government-run farming settlements, it had as its ultimate aim their absorption into the wider community. This was to be achieved by isolating children from their parents within the settlements and bringing them up to follow a European life-style.

For Mr A.O. Neville, the process of absorption was not just about the provision of care and training, alcohol awareness or the adoption of white moral sexual codes and white societal values. It became a psychological procedure in which everything that could be documented about Indigenous people was. Through a comprehensive filing system detailing marriages, births, gun licences, hunting permits, rations, supply documents and personal associates, Neville managed to socially control almost every Indigenous person in the South West of Western Australia. Personal files and dossiers on particular

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38 Haebich, p157.
individuals allowed Neville to make better informed decisions when granting, but generally denying, licences or permits. The Department’s protectors, the police and even tram conductors gathered information on Indigenous people.  

By the time Jim and Phillip Krakouer’s father, Eric, was born, the 1905 Aborigines Act and its amendments, particularly Neville’s 1936 Act, were in full swing. Eric Krakouer was born on the 11th October, 1930, to Alf Krakouer and Sophie Smith in a place called Jam Gully near the town of Kojonup in Western Australia, Kaniyang Country. Eric was the fifth of ten children and by the time he was eight his Indigenous mother had succumbed to pneumonia:

My mother died when I was at an early age so the story of my birth was passed on through the family by my brothers and sisters. The living conditions in Jam Gully were very hard. The people living there lived a very hard life in mia mias, coornts and tents. From Jam Gully our family moved to a big farm not far away called Yeriminiup.

It was at Yeriminup that Eric would bury his mother on the adjacent reserve along with other family members. However, Eric’s time there was mostly happy and as a youngster he vividly remembers:

being there from around seven years of age and onwards. I have strong memories of me as a child running around in the bush where we were camped and sharing everything with my brothers and sisters. If one ate, we all ate, no-one starved because we all shared with one another, and it was all Noongar tucker.

Due to the policies of the time, the threat of removal was foremost in the minds of the parents and older family members of the Yerriminup reserve. The slightest hint of

39 Kinnane, p266.
40 See Tilbrook, Lois. Nyungar Tradition: Glimpses of Aborigines of South-Western Australia 1829-1914. Nedlands, University of Western Australia, p142. Alf Krakouer is listed as Australian which would indicate he was not deemed by the Aborigines Department to have an Indigenous lineage.
41 The name Kojonup is derived from the Noongar word ‘kodja’, meaning stone axe. Kojonup is located 100kms north of Mount Barker on the Albany Highway.
42 Ngulak Ngarnk Nidjja Boodja: Our Mother, this Land : Centre for Indigenous History and the Arts, Perth, Western Australia, 2000, p48.
43 Ngulak Ngarnk Nidjja Boodja, p48-49.
neglect perceived or otherwise, was all the Department needed to enforce the full letter of the law. To maintain the family unit Alf Krakouer had to comply with the Department’s rules. Education and schooling was a means of displaying adherence to the law and showing the Department that an attempt was being made on behalf of the parent to better the children. For the parents, school became more than just a means to an education, it was also a survival strategy. This is implicit in Eric’s recollection:

I never started going to school until I was around eight years old because it was too hard to get to school in those days, as it was miles away. We would have to walk, we never had horses to ride, and it was about eight miles. We would leave at sunrise and get home at sunset. There was about eight or nine of us kids doing that then. I think the Native Welfare might have given our parents a bit of a nudge and said that us kids had to go to school. The Native Welfare used to come around to our house, but they never really pestered us, but you did hear of different families being taken away to the missions. So we got the message that us kids had to go to school and that is probably why we started going more.44

School became progressively more difficult to attend for young Eric as Alf Krakouer followed the work, sustaining his family through contract labour. Eric recalls, “My old man was a real toiler and he owned a horse and cart which was quite flash for a Noongar in those days.”45 Eric’s education, and that of his siblings, took second place as Alf and his eldest son, Harold, worked around the Cranbrook area to try and purchase a small tract of land they were camped on:

[We] would be shifting around from site to site, as families followed the work. The farmers let you live on their property when you were working for them but usually when you weren’t working for them, you had to move off and camp at the reserve. Then my family got this little block of land…My father and my brother took up this bit of land and they were buying it so it could be their own.46

This desire to own land proved to be very difficult for the Krakouer family. As Alf and Harold worked the older sisters looked after the younger siblings and in July of 1939 Harold found himself in the employ of a Mr G.J. Scott of Cranbrook. Unfortunately, by the middle of October Mr Scott advised the Aborigines Department that “Krakouer was

44 Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Boodja, p51.
45 Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Boodja, p49.
no longer employed by him, Krakouer having proved unsatisfactory as he does not stick to his work.”

Harold’s situation was compounded further when on the 18th of November he was given a month and a half jail term for assaulting and being unlawfully on the premises of a Mr Egerton-Warburton at Bridgetown. It can only be speculated as to what brought about these events but this conviction produced financial hardship for the Krakouer family and Alf applied for a monthly child endowment subsidy of three pounds in the middle of 1941. With work becoming harder to find for many families in the area the class sizes of the little school where Eric went dwindled to nothing. With Alf’s itinerant working lifestyle becoming more unreliable the family had to move into the bigger town of Cranbrook and here Eric’s life changed significantly.

With Eric making his transition into adulthood at around this time the marker of that transition was work, which he gained in the Cranbrook district. With his willingness to work he left school on the day he turned fourteen. Establishing his name as a skilful horseman and farm worker Eric became increasingly well known from the football matches in the town of Mt Barker. To the wadjulars this area was known as the Plantagenet but to the Noongars before them they had traditionally called it Minang.

Arriving in Mt Barker half-way through 1987 was a heady time for me. This must sound ridiculous but my transition from school into the workforce, unlike that of many of my friends, was inverted. I left Perth behind and headed to the town of my grandparents. I found this time exciting because I was living away from home and could do as I pleased. Working and immediately enjoying the company of new friends helped this independence. Initially, things were a tad strange as I knew no-one but people seemed to know me. In the Top Pub people would say, “How are you related to Gerard

46 Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Boodja, p51. My emphasis.
47 Aborigines Department Personal Card System. File No.198/1933.
Gorman”? “He’s my Uncle.” “So who’s yer Dad?” “Peter.” Once they yoked me to my specific lineage I would be given a tale about youthful misadventure - of stolen cool drinks or a lit newspaper in a lavatory pan.

Not having a car I had to rely on the blokes I was sharing the house with to get a lift or I had to walk. Driving would have been easier and more convenient but walking helped me get my bearings. It was winter and rain-bearing depressions were fairly frequent events. On the days that we couldn’t shear because of wet sheep, I would get up late, grab a coffee, and gaze out at the normally deep grey roads that had been turned wet-black. On each side of the convex tarmac swift liquid conveyors would swell as yet another front would come from the south-west over Mt Barker Hill. Sometimes, if the rain or drizzle had not set in for the day, the sun would break through the dark plum coloured clouds. Beaming down, the light would reflect back a sharp refracted bolt off the slick-black surface requiring you to shade your eyes or close the curtains.

In the early evening the coldness of the winter and spring months was met with the sweet sticky smell of burning balga grass trees used for kindling in the chip heaters and tile fires around town. My favourite time to experience this smell was late on a Friday afternoon coming home from a shearing shed somewhere out the back of town with a bottle of beer. If you hit town just at the right time, and there was no wind, the glow from the fast-fading sun showed up the smoke that hung as soft as a sigh in the crisp evening air. In these moments you could see the smoke right up until the light was completely gone but the sweet stickiness could still be smelt. To me that smell was intoxicating. It accentuated Mt Barker’s countryness as I knew those streets and the people who lived on them would become increasingly familiar.
When my family lived in Albany, Mt Barker was seen by Albany-folk as an insignificant little backwater, a place that was driven through to get somewhere else. But the longer I stayed in Mt Barker the more I found its characters and rhythms to my liking. Barker, as the locals called it, was less frenetic than the bigger coastal town to its south which had it all and attracted everyone because of it. Barker was understated, quiet and accessible and this was why I loved it as everything just seemed so familiar - even the people I didn’t know.

Another reason I gravitated to this little town was that the summers, unlike Northam, Perth and Geraldton, were mild. The seasonal shift brought other changes and being a small town the rumours flew, around Springtime, that the two Noongar brothers who had made good playing football in Melbourne were back. There had been sightings of a placed bet at the TAB, fuel bought at the Caltex, bread purchased at the Top café, jogging out on Woogenellup Road. Stepping out of the Top Pub bottle shop the bloke I was with at the time said something along the lines of, “Dya see that Statesman? Dya know whose that is?” I shrugged, “That’s Jimmy’s car ay.” I nodded my head in acknowledgment. Mt Barker only had one Jimmy.

1.4 Boundary Line

_In the evening a strange thing happened: the twenty families became one family, the children were the children of all. The loss of home became one less, and the golden time in the West was one dream._

When Mr W.W. Chipper arrived in the small Western Australian hamlet of Mt Barker in October of 1891 he arrived with a specific job to do, survey the town-site and implement its road system. In doing this, Mr Chipper would not have had any idea his coordinates would determine Mt Barker’s social organisation for years to come. Mr

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Chipper’s coordinates ensured who would play for North or South Mt Barker in the local football competition. Prior to the 1920’s, Mt Barker’s football competition was just another recreational facet of the infant community’s “excitements”, like foot-races at picnic days. It appears football in the Mt Barker area, though mentioned in a 1895 police report, developed as an organised sport somewhat later than cricket. Pre World War 1 teams had a distinct international flavour from the men in the district at the time:

One 1910 player remembers that the game was called ‘toe-ball’ by English and American men (sometimes runaways from ships) working on the farms and coming into Mount Barker for recreation.

For Chipper, the creation of the Mt Barker street system was a straightforward process. The town was to be marked out by a grid pattern and divided into four quarters with the railway line running through the middle. The street names were given alphabetically for each quarter, from L through to O, though no reason is given for this. Essentially, the line that came to demarcate the football side one would play for was determined by two main roads, which act as Mt Barker’s North and Western corridors. Every man residing North of Muir’s Highway and West of the Albany Highway would play for North Mount Barker Football club (NMBFC) and everyone else was a South Mount Barker Football Club (SMBFC) candidate. Harry Reeves, who has been affiliated with the NMBFC since 1950 and held virtually every single position, from goal umpire to President, explained the rules governing the competition to me:

My old man was the League delegate and he was responsible for much of the implementation and regulation of such things. He would have terrific arguments with the Southies over the years about the boundaries and so on but those were the rules. So to some extent it didn’t matter two hoots who your mates played for or even who you wanted to play for. You were born North or you were born South.

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50 Glover, p365.
51 This runs counter to Glover’s perspective of the boundary system where she states that players living in the south of town played for SMBFC and those in the north of town played for NMBFC. See p365
52 Personal interview Harry Reeves 18/12/2000.
From a birds-eye-view of the town the football boundary system seems to allocate 70% of town territory to the SMBFC giving them a significant advantage in recruiting players. Reeves is quick to point out that this wasn’t quite the case:

It would appear that it wasn’t quite fair but the circumstances at the time were very different. You have to realise that South did have a bigger area but we had many of the itinerant workers that were coming into town. The Railways and the Banks all supplied us with tremendous players over the years. Stockies have also been another good source for North over the years. But even prior to that out at Mount Barker Estate, back when the apple orchards were flat-chat, we could have anywhere up to eighteen blokes to help bolster a side. Because you have to fully appreciate that the apple orchards down here at the time were huge employers.53

Indeed, the orchard industry in the South West, and in particular the Plantagenet, employed many people. Rhoda Glover in, Plantagenet: Rich and Beautiful describes the impact that the orchards had on Mt Barker:

The life of the town depended on the welfare of the farms and the smaller settlements that surrounded it. Although mixed farming was still the basic industry, the growing of apples gradually increased until by the year before World War 1 it had become a major source of income for all farmers.54

Stan Lebeck, whose family farm was in the NMBFC zone, recalls the immensity of the orchard industry and how it assisted NMBFC field a strong side, which he captained. Lebeck also vividly recalls how the boundary system was interpreted:

Well the Mount Barker Estate had the biggest orchard in Australia. They would’ve had about four hundred acres of apple orchard because it would take us three months to prune and that would be a team of twenty-five guys. North Mount Barker picked up a lot of footballers from Mount Barker Estate. Transitory people. South concentrated more on townies, like shire workers and they also had the Post Office. But I think one of the main reasons why North was always strong was because of Harry Reeves. If some bugger came into town Harry would get them a house on the North Mount Barker side. You only had to live there for a week because once you were registered and your address was in the North Mount Barker area you could then shift across to the South.55

54 Glover, p348.
The boundary system also included the two most socially prominent establishments in town - The Mount Barker Hotel (Top Pub) and The Plantagenet Hotel (Bottom Pub). In the earlier days, due to the lack of formal change rooms, the SMBFC and NMBFC players used the two pubs for this purpose. Over time, this arrangement saw both clubs use these hotels as their respective social rooms. Hence, *the Top* became North territory and *the Bottom* became a South enclave. While these unwritten social codes are still loosely recognised today, for many years they were strictly adhered to as venturing into the other club’s territory would usually result in violence. For Stan Lebeck the only reason why a player from one side entered the other’s hotel was:

For a fight. That’s all. You really didn’t step over the line. You knew the Top pub looked after the Nth Mount Barker blokes and the Bottom pub looked after the Sth Barker blokes. I probably wouldn’t have gone into the Bottom pub no more than three times and every time you went in there you got into a blue.\(^\text{56}\)

For Eric Krakouer, the growth of the orchard industry in the Mount Barker region coincided neatly with his arrival. Eric quickly found work largely for one family, the Wrights. Eric’s work on Wright’s farm, Narpyn, was in the orchard five kilometres east of Mt Barker on the Woogenellup Road.

I cannot remember the first time I met Bruce Wright. I only know that I would have enjoyed that first conversation. I don’t know what we spoke about except to say it would have been seriously inflected with some biting social commentary or politically incorrect assessment about something. For anyone who has spent time living, working or playing sport in Mt Barker the name of Bruce Wright is sure to have come up. Despite the well-worn cover Wright is an iconic Mt Barker character who in his younger days was one of the district’s most accomplished cricketers. Today, Wright is still farming but the orchards have given way to sheep and crop. With a rambling gait, ruddy, unshaven complexion and steel-wool hair, Wright starts and finishes just about

\(^{56}\) Personal interview Stan Lebeck 31/9/2001.
every sentence with, ‘yknow cob?’ It is on his family farm that Bruce and Eric developed a friendship, which still prevails. Wright explains:

In those [days] we had a very big orchard and Eric he did most of the orchard work. He used to work in the orchard all the time. We didn’t have many sheep or cattle in those days it was mostly orchard. [He] picked apples and pruned and cultivated the orchard and all that. Eric came to my knowledge, because I was only a kid then, because he came out looking for work. My father and Uncle Gordon employed him and off he went.57

Eric describes these circumstances slightly differently and while he doesn’t actually name the Wrights as his principal employer it can be strongly assumed that he is referring to the Wright Family:

When I was around sixteen I went to Mt. Barker with my father to work, and I ended up settling there. I mostly worked for dad, but one day this bloke said to me ‘You want to come and work for this farmer? He is looking for a worker’. So I did some chaff cutting and helped clear some land. He took a liking to me and I worked for him for a long time after that. 58

For Eric Krakouer the town reserve became the main site he and many Noongar families would call home. The town reserves were established between the two World Wars and came about for two main reasons. Firstly, primary producers in the south west relied on black labour for seasonal work. Secondly, many townsfolk strongly resisted the notion of having people of colour in any part of town. Many viewed their presence unfavourably, believing they were “noisy, unsightly, a menace to health [by] drinking and fighting.”59 The Aborigines Department and the powerful municipal Roads Boards realised the paradox of the situation and developed a strategy to appease both parties. They did this by gazetting specific areas just outside of the townships - far enough out of town so the Blackfellas could not to be seen but close so they could be accessed. While the Noongars were not forced to relocate to the reserve60 they were strongly encouraged to remove themselves out of town and out of the gaze of the townsfolk and

57 Personal interview Bruce Wright 12/7/2000. My emphasis.
58 Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Boodja. p51.
59 Haebich. p232. My emphasis.
60 There is one exception to this in 1922. See Haebich p233.
the police. The specific sites for the reserves were chosen by the police and road boards and never took into consideration Noongar concerns. In many cases, the reserve was located near the two most undesirable sections of the shire, the local rubbish tip or the sanitary depot. For Eric Krakouer this was no exception:

When they first set aside a reserve for Noongars it was at the rubbish dump, but no one would go there…The police would be trying to chase everyone to the rubbish tip reserve. One time my brother-in-law was going to town in a horse and cart, when the police jumped out in front of him. They told him to turn around and go to the reserve. They didn’t want him going back to the farm where he was working because the farmer used to let Noongars live on his farm when they were working for him but the police wanted all Noongars to live on the reserve. Anyway, the police wouldn’t get out of the way, so my brother-in-law hit his horse, and he had a very spirited horse, so anyway, he drove that horse and cart straight through him. That policeman never got in the way again.61

Eventually when the authorities realised that the Noongars in the Plantagenet shire would not move to these locations an alternative site was found - next to the railroad and the adjacent saleyards. The local Noongar families called this place Hollywood.

It was under these conditions that Eric managed to maintain his working life. In between working and staying on Wright’s farm, at a place called Windy Hill, he would always find himself back at Hollywood and it was here that he would eventually marry a young woman. Her name was Pheobe Miller. Eric recalls, “We met in Mount Barker. She was a Barker girl. There wasn’t much courting we more or less grew up as childhood sweethearts, but it [marriage] was a long relationship that’s for certain.”62 Phoebe was a small and painfully shy woman but her strength and resolve is evident as she would have twelve children, two of whom would die. Phoebe held her large family together for many years while Eric was shearing in the Wheatbelt, a job he did not take up until his thirties, returning home on Friday evening and going early Sunday afternoon.

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61 Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Boodja, p52.
Even though Eric was in the ongoing employ of the Wright family, to say that the living conditions for Eric Krakouer and other Noongar families, had improved or that his future was financially assured would be a gross overstatement. Life was hard for a number of reasons. With the increased viability of mechanised farming equipment, many Noongars found themselves out of their usual seasonal employment. This increased the financial burden of those who were working, like Eric, to provide some money not just for his immediate family but members of his extended family and the wider community. Money was tight and diets were supplemented with possum, kangaroo and the ubiquitous rabbits. Despite the hardship that many people encountered on a daily basis the reserve system provided for a less intrusive lifestyle than that experienced at such places as the Moore River Native Settlement and Carrolup Native Settlement. In most cases, accommodation on the reserves was well below that of the poorest town families and consisted of humpies made of flattened kerosene tins and floors of dirt or cement. Eric recalls:

When I was working we used to stay in tents on the farmer’s property, but we also used to go to the reserve a lot because we had family there...Everyone had tents or were building humpies out of tin...It was very, very, very hard indeed...There were a lot of Noongars living there at the time. The Williams, Colbungs, Millers, Dawsons, Kicketts and Edgells...They were really big Noongar families. After a while they started to make them tin humpies; cow sheds more or less. Tin all around the sides and cement floors. It wasn’t a good life but Noongars accepted it because there was nothing else for them.63

The reserve was located one mile out of town and the access road was difficult. If it had been raining or it was dark the chances of becoming bogged were greatly increased. Eric recalls this was exacerbated by horse and cart transportation as few Noongars could afford cars “A lot of people had carts to cart things back to the reserve. The road wasn’t any good, because if you went off the main track you were in trouble, so the best way to

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63 *Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Boodja*, p51.
get in and out was to walk.64 With transport being slow and unreliable it meant a town-trip needed to be made with adequate time to get back to camp before sundown if complications did arise. With the curfew in place any Indigenous person on the street after six in the evening was breaking the law. Eric remembers that “Aboriginal people wasn’t allowed in town after six o’clock…If you were caught in town after six o’clock you could get into trouble.”65

With incredibly stringent social rules, curfews, substandard living and health conditions as well as a rudimentary education, the Noongars in the south west of Western Australia faced daily struggle. For Eric Krakouer this struggle was briefly alleviated with his participation in the Mount Barker Football Association, which in 1958 became the Southern Districts National Football League (SDNFL) with the NMBFC. This was a team that he played for all his life, eventually becoming a life member, by playing well over two hundred games. The circumstances determining Eric’s association with NMBFC came about not through the boundary system but through a series of situations, some of which were beyond his control.

1.5 “See you next Sunday”.

Mick Lebeck was lying back in his hospital bed feeling cheesed off. All up he would be in hospital for two months after a farming accident involving a bolting horse saw his finger hanging by a thin gristle of flesh. Looking at his mangled hand he placed it carefully on a nearby strainer post, took aim and chopped the useless digit off with an axe. The hand became infected and he needed hospital care. As Mick gently dozed he

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64 Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Boodja, p51.  
had been constantly interrupted by the ward nurse on her hourly observations and eventually he resigned himself to staying awake and dealing with the boredom that only a hospital bed can manufacture.

Some time later the door suddenly opened and the nurse briskly made her way toward him. He was puzzled. It wasn’t time for afternoon tea or his hourly check and the nurse appeared stiffer, more upright than usual. Her fingers were tightly interlocked making her forearms appear more sinuous. She looked apprehensive and spoke in a hushed tone, “Mr Lebeck… I am sorry to bother you but we have a very sick young” she paused, “native boy in the corridor”. She paused again, “Pneumonia…He is very ill and all of our other wards are… inappropriate. I appreciate the inconvenience to you but would it be possible to accommodate him in your ward until such time as he is able to regain his strength?” Mick could hardly refuse. He had a whole room to himself and besides he could do with the company. “Yes, yes by all means. Please send the young fella in here.” The nurse gave a weak, wobbly smile. A mixture of relief and embarrassment. Mick pushed himself up and craned his neck to see if he recognised the boy. The nurse, and two others, wheeled the young man in. He was feverish. His breathing was heavy and his forehead beaded with sweat. His head lolled about and he looked uncomfortable. It was Eric Krakouer. 66

For Mick’s son, Stan, who retold me this story, it was a massive stroke of luck having young Eric in the same room for a number of reasons. Considering the attitudes that prevailed at the time, exemplified by the nurse’s request for permission to allow an *Aboriginal* into the room, Lebeck kept a close eye on the young Noongar. During their stay in hospital together, Mick could see just how sick young Eric was as the illness that

had claimed the life of his mother coursed through his veins. That evening, just after tea, Lebeck was reading back over the paper. Unconsciously and mid-sentence he stopped reading as he felt a subtle change had come over the room. Not being able to put his finger on it he went back to his paper. A few moments later he stopped again and slowly peered over the top of the paper. He squinted to adjust to the soft hue of shadowy light on the other side of the room and like the light breaking through a swiftly moving Mt Barker storm cloud, Mick swore loudly and leapt out of bed. The quiet uneasiness that had settled on the room was Eric’s life slipping away as his lungs, weakened by infection, had stopped their gentle rasping.

Lebeck, whose medical procedure when it came to amputation was crude but effective, applied the same principal to Eric’s resuscitation. Flinging Eric from his bed Lebeck battered away at Eric’s chest wall. Stopping briefly, Eric’s eyes flickered and his breathing jump-started back with a thick, gasping cough. The ward nurse ran in and Lebeck stood aside. Eric was stabilised and put back into his bed. He had survived.

One can only speculate about what would have happened had Mick Lebeck been asleep, not noticed that Eric’s pneumonia was silently killing him or was indifferent to the plight of this young man. Because of Lebeck’s quick actions he saved Eric and with his affiliation to the NMBFC it was a pretty safe bet who Eric would play football for. For Lebeck the dye in that moment was cast:

From that time on my father actually looked after Eric and made sure the footy club looked after him. No one could say anything against Eric Krakouer, he was a white headed boy as far as my father was concerned. And Eric, from the time I first knew him to the day I left Mount Barker you couldn’t find a better person than Eric Krakouer. He was tops.67

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Another strong factor in Eric’s decision to play for the NMBFC came from Phoebe herself. Eric recalls, “I came down [to NMBFC] and Phoebe’s father, he was a keen sports man and he knew everyone down there. Pom Thomas was the captain in those years and Clem Miller told him he had a good young player. Any way he teed up a game for me and I went on from there.”\(^68\) It was the start of an association that would see three generations of Krakouers and extended family members play with the NMBFC. But to suggest that the Krakouer name assured those bearing it a natural god-given football ability would be wrong. As Stan Lebeck, points out:

> I played with Eric just about all of his career. Eric was never a brilliant footballer but he tried very hard and he put everything into a game. Where on the other hand the girl that he married, Phoebe Miller, her brothers were just naturals. They were something out of this world as far as the handling of a football was concerned. There was Ossie, and little Lukie. They wouldn’t have been five foot tall but very solidly built. They had the natural ability to be able to handle a football and to kick, to do everything that was natural in football that worked. Eric was a battler, but he kept them concentrated on their football. Without Eric they were lost. So I think that the talent of Jimmy and Phillip came basically from the Miller side of the family with the tenacity coming from the Krakouer side.”\(^69\)

This sentiment is shared by Reeves:

> Eric was quite a good footballer and he played in the first colts side that the Mount Barker Football Association started in the Great Southern Carnival. They started in 1949 or 1950 and he won the fairest and best in the Grand Final up at Narrogin that year and if I remember rightly in 1950 he started his A grade career on the wing. When Eric married Phoebe well then you had this other connection with Ossie and Lukie. When Ossie died he was highly respected throughout the Great Southern for his football. To many people who saw him play and knew him they saw him every time Jimmy Krakouer ran through, because there was so much similarity in their way of playing. Particularly the arched back and the ducking and diving.\(^70\)

Wright also remembers the brilliance of the Miller brothers, “Yknow cob, Ossie Miller was a brilliant footballer, and Lukie. We used to knock off at half past four every Thursday and start training at five. Eric used to make sure the other blokes went, they

\(^{68}\) Personal interview Eric Krakouer 10/7/2001.  
\(^{69}\) Personal interview Stan Lebeck 31/8/2001.  
\(^{70}\) Personal interview Harry Reeves 18/12/2000.
were brilliant footballers.” 71 Travelling by horse to the game each Sunday was a weekly event Eric looked forward to immensely, as he enjoyed the social interaction as much as the sport itself:

We’d go out there and play the game hard and enjoy it. After the game was over we’d all have a yarn around then we’d all disappear and say ‘well see you next Sunday’.72

Eric Krakouer’s football career lasted some sixteen years and in that time football became an integral part of his life that he worked into his weekly schedule and significant family events. As Wright explains, even Eric and Phoebe’s marital arrangements were negotiated around football:

It was quite interesting because my mother and father made Eric get married because he had two kids see. He got married cause you know my Mother and Father used to go to church a bit. Any way when he was working for us you know he had a couple of kids. My mother and father made him get married, they sort of said ‘well now listen Eric do the right thing’, so he got married, he had a couple of kids, so they got christened on the same day. From there I think he ran down from the church in time to catch the footy at Souness Park.73

Even though football gave Eric something to look forward to it was still regulated and controlled by the authorities. An example of this is the curfew that Eric and other Indigenous people experienced in the late 40’s and early 50’s. As Eric recalls:

One Sunday Morning I went into town as I had to catch the bus to go and play football with my brother-in-law in another town. And he said ‘You go down town and tell the football team captain that I am up the road here waiting’. But when I went down town this old policeman saw me and because they liked to know your movements at all times, he wanted to know what I was doing in town. You see, me and my brother-in-law were going to catch the bus on the other side of the street up the road a bit. ‘What are you doing down town?’, the policeman asked me. I told him what I was doing and he said, ‘In future don’t you ever come to town, you catch the bus further up the road’. So I said to him ‘And how would you know that I was waiting up the road if I didn’t come here to tell you?’ He couldn’t have it both ways. ‘Oh alright’, he said. ‘But in future don’t ever come down town again.’ The curfew went in the end, but Noongars were still hounded for years so the race relations wasn’t too good for many years to come’.74

71 Personal interview Bruce Wright 12/7/2000.
72 Personal interview Eric Krakouer 10/7/2000.
73 Personal interview Bruce Wright 12/7/2000.
74 Ngulak Ngarnk Nidja Boodja, p52.
Unlike other non-Indigenous players who played football in Mt Barker the least of Eric’s troubles was the boundary system determining who one could play for and the pub one could drink in. For Eric Krakouer the colour of his skin meant that if he was caught breaking the law and he could be arrested and jailed.

1.6 Nosey Wadjular Business

_The anger of the man is that he can never claim who he truly is._75

The playing records of every player from 1897 to the present is recorded in; *The Encyclopedia of AFL Footballers*. In the entry next to Phillip Krakouer’s name, the encyclopedia suggests that “they were the most famous product of _outback_ West Australian town Mount Barker.”76 When I told some Mt Barker people about this description they simply laughed as one would have to drive at least 400 kms east to hit the _outback_. Fortunately, the encyclopedia is more accurate when it describes the playing styles of Jim and Phillip, “they had an uncanny ability to find each other in the most chaotic situations.” Of Jim it says, “In addition to his natural brilliance Jimmy worked hard on his game and was a reliable performer.” Phillip is described as “placid…while just as courageous as Jim he had the ability to bob up out of nowhere.”77 These descriptions are apt but only give the reader the merest of insights into who the Krakouer brothers were and what they did in the 1980’s.

My first meeting with Phillip Krakouer came about by complete surprise. For months, I had been doing preliminary research into the Krakouer brothers and their story. After arriving back in Perth from overseas, months passed and job interviews failed to reap anything. The one thing I had was time. I caught the train into town.

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77 Holmesby & Main, p359. My emphasis.
There is something hypnotic about the train-trip from Fremantle to the city, especially the section from the Fremantle Station to Victoria Street. As a kid visiting my Mum’s Mum in Perth for the holidays, we would catch the train into the city sometimes. The train these days is not the train of my childhood visits, the type that used to chunk-a-chunk along. Today the trains are space-aged, fully enclosed, silvery, tube-like things that automatically and automatically announce the arrival of each stop. The next stop is... North... Fremantle. The windows are fixed and don’t let in any air and if none of the other passengers are talking it is like being inside the silent tracking shot of your own movie. As the train curves around from Fremantle station it makes its way briefly in a north-westerly direction. Here you head over the most westerly bridge, the first of a number dotted along the Swan River, the Derbarl Yerrigan, and face the pretty port of Fremantle. At the very end and to the left, between Rous and Arthur heads is the Fremantle Maritime Museum, which looks like a massive metal Marlin rising up out of the water. At your back the water underneath the parallel Fremantle bridge flows swiftly as the mid-morning fishers come into view. Clad in flannel and terry towelling they sit on the bridge’s massive concrete clogs and their gaze, like mine shortly will be, is only for the water. As the train tracks round to head directly north, the terraced backyards and the warehouses give way to the first glimpse of the Wardandi or Indian Ocean. From North Fremantle to Victoria Street the view of the water that washes onto Leighton and Mosman beaches is uninterrupted. On clear days you can see the pines on Rottnest Island and when the Doctor is in the serious chop conspires to dislodge the sail and kite boarders from their feckless individual pursuits. In this stretch of the line I never read or look at anything else; in those few brief moments my gaze becomes the ocean and the ocean becomes my gaze. It is in this seamlessness the sea stands for many things but for me it means quite simply one thing - possibility.
Arriving at the state library I made my way to the newspaper archives. I found a reel of microfilm and tentatively scrolled toward the sports pages of a 1981 June edition of *The West Australian*. I emerged from the library hours later feeling like a prospector who had found Lasseter’s Reef. Perhaps it was reading over the old game reports and seeing the old photographs but on the train home I knew I had made a connection. The next step, the most vital one, would be trying to get permission from Eric, Jim and Phillip, knowing fully that if I did not get permission from all of them no project would eventuate. I decided to head to Mt Barker and through Bruce Wright I organised a time to meet Eric at his home. It was a Sunday morning and coincided with the local competition’s grand final between Mt Barker and one of the Albany teams, Royals.

For many reasons I was very concerned that Eric would say no to me and that months of preliminary research would amount to a nostalgic trip down memory lane. What would Eric Krakouer want with some nosey wadjular poking around in his business, a person he had only spent a few days with years ago in a shearing shed? After I arrived at Eric’s home he led me out to his backyard. We sat down. I slowly, nervously started talking about the contribution that I believed Jim and Phillip had made to football. I said to Eric I believed that this story, his story, was a relevant one and it needed to be told. I reached into my bag and I showed him a few articles I had come across to show him I was serious. All the time he seemed to be contemplating something else or looking over to where his roo dogs were. After about twenty minutes I stopped rambling on and mentally crossed my fingers. There was a brief silence as Eric looked over to his dogs again. He then turned to me and with the slightest nod of his head he softly said, “Yeah matey, you do what you gotta do.” After much animated shaking of Eric Krakouer’s hand I was at the top of his driveway and about to leave. I told him that I would contact him later to get Phillip’s contact details when he said, “Phillip will be there today”. I

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78 NMBFC became the Mt Barker Bulls in 1994.
was a bit confused and replied nervously, “What? He will be at the grand final today?” Eric nodded, “I’ll see you down there, and I’ll introduce you.” I could feel my nervousness creeping back but I knew regardless of Phillip’s reaction at least I would get the chance to meet him and a chance to explain what I wanted to do.  

As I arrived at the game I kept my eyes peeled for Eric and Phillip. I could see neither of them and proceeded to get anxious. Maybe Eric had told Phillip I would be there and he got cold feet? Eventually I spotted Eric with a smile from ear to ear as he was surrounded by a few of his daughters and a host of grand-children. I walked up to Eric to let him know that I was there. He guided me through the crowd and there with four or five other Noongars was Phillip. He had been sitting almost directly behind where I had been standing and I had not recognised him as he had a cap on, his hair was long and he had filled out from his playing days. Eric introduced us and I told Phillip what I had told him. He didn’t say much, nodded, thanked me and wrote his phone number down. I didn’t see Phillip much more after that but the word quickly spread that he was there adding, I thought, to the excitement of the day.

My first meeting with Jim Krakouer was very different from my first meeting with Phillip. Jim was four years into a sixteen-year stretch for drug trafficking so I had to go to where he was imprisoned. The dread I would feel so often in the course of this project was at its most acute at this point. Jim didn’t know me from Adam and the

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project would live or die depending on what Jim would say to me on this day. Initially I thought about writing to Jim but I thought that this was a too impersonal approach to take. I rang Hakea maximum security prison on the outskirts of Perth’s southern suburbs to enquire about visiting procedures. “Is the visit personal or professional?” the woman on the reception desk asked. I hesitated, “professional”, I said. I hopped in the car and drove out there.

At Hakea I showed my ID, filled in the form, placed my keys, watch, sunglasses and money in the locker and stood outside the front office with a posse of chain-smokers. We were led over to the main prison by a guard who checked our ID again and were led through into the prison. On the inside everything was clean and ordered. As I sat in the reception area of Hakea there can be no denying I felt strange. I had never been inside a prison before. Obviously the space itself was controlled but the mood was very different to anything I had ever experienced. On reflection I could only put this down to the metaphysical energy of the place, which like that of the inmates, is trapped. What must it be like for those inside? Feelings such as boredom, anger, frustration, loneliness, pain and happiness surely must be magnified as one’s emotions are projected inward. Strangely, despite my surroundings and the weird tension of Hakea, I did not feel unsafe.

In the reception room, I expected disinfected, clunky silence. Instead it was a sound not unlike a school canteen, the atmosphere punctuated with the breathy sighs of canned soft drinks opening, rustling chip packets and the wafting of women’s laughter. As I sat there waiting for Jim I looked around the room. Some of the inmates looked like they were straight out of a Crimestoppers advertisement. Some had their hair slicked back and their shoulders rippled from underneath their green prison t-shirts. Other inmates

looked young and nervous, some looked tired. Perhaps it was all the trapped energy in the place, or the uncertainty of how my pitch to Jim would go, but I started to seriously wonder what I was doing.

I saw Jim come towards the door of the reception room. The door opened. I stood up so he would notice that it was me who had booked the visit. He came towards the table. I introduced myself and he shook my hand, appearing slightly shy. In prison the phatic greeting of “How’s it going?” or “What ya been up to?” are distilled to ridiculousness so I said something equally stupid like “how do you do?” I don’t really know what I expected him to look like but he did look less imposing than I thought he would. I was probably expecting him to be slightly more robust, having played the amount of football that he had. His hair was clipped, combed and seemed to gleam framing his face perfectly. He looked healthy. If Jim Krakouer had been in anything other than his prison green t-shirt and tracksuit pants he would have been a picture of amiability. An ex-sport star, pure and simple. As we sat there in those early moments I babbled like a brook after a hard rain expecting Jim to look over to where the guard sat, kink his neck and raise his eyebrows. He never did. He just sat there benignly, nodding gently, sometimes smiling.

I would come to notice many things about Jim’s appearance over the four years that I got to know him. As I asked him questions about his life in Hakea, Riverbank, Acacia and finally Karnet, I would try to gauge his facial reactions. I could never be quite sure what he was thinking, except to say I never felt threatened by him. As our interview process developed, I began to notice Jim’s hands. His fingers in particular are handsome and straight like those of someone who plays a musical instrument. Perhaps it was because Jim was a one touch footballer, which ensured that his fingers were not maimed
from sodden, unruly footballs, mistiming or lapses in concentration. There is no
incriminating evidence that these hands have seen any action whatsoever. “So bro,” Jim
said quietly after I finished warbling at our first meeting, “what’s this P..d?” I explained
to Jim what a doctorate was and how I wanted to do one to tell his and Phillip’s story.
He looked at me and nodded his head.

1.7 Brother Boys & Sister Girls

Phillip Krakouer arrived home covered in mud. As he came into the light of the kitchen,
Phoebe handed him a steaming enamel mug of black tea. She quickly looked Phillip
over to see if any damage had been inflicted on her second eldest boy but all she could
make out were dried, muddy streaks across his face and skinny legs. His long sleeved
flannelette shirt was buttoned all the way to the top and had provided some warmth
from the winter cold as he walked back from Sounness Park, having just played in a
nippers game for the NMBFC. Inside his older sisters joked and talked amongst
themselves while Eric, having just returned from Wright’s farm, was preparing to skin a
kangaroo that was fastened to the makeshift clothesline. “You getta kick today brother-
boy?” asked Phillip’s sister Nola as she ruffled his damp hair. He stared straight ahead
and out of the window at the trees moving in the brisk south-wester. Staring and
transfixed he gripped the mug and took short breathy sips, allowing the steam to rise
into his eyes and warm his forehead. His thoughts like his gaze were elsewhere but he
stopped sipping momentarily, looked at her, and replied, “Yeah, gotta couple. Nearly
kicked a goal even.” Phillip was fibbing. He had not even had a touch that day and on
the way home jumped in a muddy puddle to make out that he had been in the thick of
Phillip loved his football and he enjoyed talking about it with his family but today his thoughts were elsewhere. They were with Jim who was in hospital and ill with rheumatic fever a condition which would rack him for months. Phillip’s concern for Jim came from the Krakouer family’s experience of losing two younger boys to illness. Phillip recalls:

I remember we had two younger brothers. One died from leukemia and the other died of double pneumonia. The older one I remember seeing him quite a bit in hospital, Terrance his name was. He would have been a year, eighteen months younger than me. Lawrence [the younger brother] I just vaguely remember him. I remember going to their funerals you never get over it, you never recover, it’s always apart of your life. I remember going to see Terrance a few times, he was in Princess Margaret Hospital. We’d go out and see him and make our way back and if it was too late we’d just camp on the side of the road. We done that quite a few times.81

In his mother’s kitchen Phillip wrapped his cold hands around the enamel mug and thought of Jim, watching the trees outside wondering if he would ever be able to have a kick with Jim again. As brothers, Jim and Phillip were close. They did everything together and football was their constant everyday activity. Their bond was hardened because of the closeness of their years but also because of their identity. It was this kinship obligation that would provide Jim and Phillip with their greatest asset. As they got older this kinship would also prove to be an Achilles heel and a vital factor in opposition sides breaking them down, usually by setting off Jim’s temper.82 As Phillip sat and sipped at his tea his only wish was that Jim would get better so they could head down to Sounness Park and kick the football.

James Gordon Krakouer was born on the 13th October, 1958, in Mt Barker, Western Australia. Fifteen months later Phillip Brent Krakouer was born on the 15th January, 1960, also in Mt Barker. They were the fifth and sixth children born in a family of 11.

80 “Quite a few times I used to play and not get a kick and I used to before getting ready to go home I’d just fall in the mud and just pretend I’d get a kick so to speak.” Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 31/8/2000.
and by the time they were born, they, like all other Indigenous Australians at the time, were not considered citizens. Citizenship, and the rights that went with it, like voting, were not conferred federally until 1962 with the Commonwealth Electoral Act and then consolidated with the 1967 Referendum. Prior to this, if Indigenous Australians wanted to vote, or drink, they needed to apply for an exemption requiring them to fully dissociate themselves from their family and all friends or acquaintances that identified as Aboriginal. This was a specific facet of the Assimilationist policies that were operating in Australia during the 1950’s and very much a part of Indigenous Australian’s everyday reality.

To this point in their lives, the Krakouer family had experienced the type of closeness that is borne out of a strong sense of desire, obligation and financial adversity. Phillip vividly recalls Hollywood and the difficulties associated with living there:

We went through a lot of hardship. I remember families living in tents. We lived in a shack with no water, electricity or that sort of stuff, candles burning, I remember all that. There was a sheep saleyard, later they put the cattle yard in and we were right next to the sheep pen. I remember it was quite noisy at night trying to get to sleep [and] if the sheep didn’t get you the cows would and if the cows didn’t get you the bloody train [kept] you awake.

Jim’s recollections of this time, his family and growing up in Mt Barker are far more general “[I remember] Dad just as a hard worker and Mum just looking after a pretty large family. Had a lot of relations there and things like that.” Despite the hardship of the reserve the Krakouer family was a happy one with Eric and Phoebe providing a stable family environment. The time was broken between Mt Barker and Narrogin

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82 “Anyone who messed with Phil was in big trouble and Jim would always punch now-talk later.” Personal interview Janie Pickles, 8/4/2002.
83 It should be note here that the 1967 Referendum is the popular and symbolic year that the Commonwealth gained power to legislate over such matters. The actual year that voting rights came about federally was in 1962 with the Commonwealth Electoral Act. Full citizenship rights accumulated gradually between the Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948 and the early 1970s when the last of the remnants of the various state native welfare acts were repealed.
where Eric had a shearing run. This would sometimes see the young Krakouer family spend a few months of each year in the heart of the Wheatbelt. Jim recalls that Eric would go “but sometimes Mum and all us used to go up to school in Narrogin, and when the shearing seasons finish go back to Mount Barker.”86 Jim and Phillip’s sister Nola also recalls these times:

Yeah when we was young we used to go with them and we used to stop out on the farm in Narrogin. We used to go to school up there at certain times of the year. Then when he’d finish we’d come home and then later on we used to stop home and Dad used to go up with a couple of the boys from Mount Barker. That’s what Dad did, seasonal work and that was going on for years and years.87

The one constant in the Krakouer brother’s formative years was football and it focussed Jim and Phillip’s attention on one another, honing their skills from a very young age. It would be this continual focus that enabled the Krakouer brothers to develop their individual style of play that made them stand out. Their ability to play as a consistent and devastating unit that had not been seen in football prior to them playing in the WAFL or the VFL/AFL and nor has it been seen since. It was a special understanding and spoken about in terms of telekinesis and synergy, so much so that the Melbourne football journalists came to dub Jim and Phillip ‘sonar’ and ‘radar’.88

As children, a couple of rolled up socks served as a ball until a plastic 20 cent football could be justified by the family budget. Doorways became goals and hallways became a training aid for directness, fostering precision in close, confined spaces. For Jim and Phillip’s brother-in-law Alwyn Coyne, the boys training was incessant and inventive as he recalls:

Eric would be sitting down after a hard day’s work having his tea and the boys would be just missing his nose with the football. They’d be handballing over the table and see how close they could get to Dad’s nose and Dad would take no notice because he knew they were training and perfecting their handball.89

87 Personal interview with Nola Krakouer 22/6/2001.
As the light plastic ball gave way to a heavier leather one, light fittings and windows were shattered resulting in a panicked scattering of boy’s bodies, as a broom would be wielded by an angry Phoebe Krakouer. Outside the activity would continue until the sun became so scarce that not even the faintest shard of evening light could make out the ball or those playing. Sound became the means to define where the other one and the passage of the ball was as it passed through the night air. The forks of trees it was said became targets as the boys made their way down to Sounness Park to practice their goal kicking. It was an ultimately successful training regime, generating great enthusiasm so by the time the boys reached a playing age they were primed. It would be their uncanny ability to read one another’s game, based on absolute confidence, manifesting as a unique intuition, that defined their style. It would come to be called Krakouer magic.

For Jim and Phillip, the football became a companion that accompanied them everywhere:

There’d be a footy around most times cause we used to have a lot of relations and that in town and if we didn’t have a footy and went to their place they’d have one and we’d mess around like that. Either we’d kick around home or we would go to the reserve and just get out in the paddocks and put your shirts for the goals [at] each end and have a good little rough and tumble game.

The first murmurings about the Krakouer brothers and their skill began to emerge in 1971 with a half page report in The Albany Advertiser detailing the Great Southern nipper’s football carnival. The carnival itself was held in Mt Barker and by all accounts was a complete success. Even the unreliable Mt Barker weather cleared to allow the semi finals and grand final to be held in fine conditions. The nippers’ competition was broken into two levels, under 12’s and under 14’s, with Phillip and Jim being in each one respectively for the NMBFC. Both NMBFC sides played and won their respective

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90 “One would kick it up the hallway and that would be the goals, until they got chased out of the house [then they’d] get that ball outside. They’d do it all the time’. Personal interview Nola Krakouer 22/6/2001. My emphasis.
grand finals, and Phillip and Jim both received fairest and best awards. It was Jim’s contribution in the under 14 grand final that stood out:

The grand final between North Mt Barker and Albany red was a sizzler and the best of the carnival…North got away to a flying start kicking four goals in the first quarter with the diminutive Krakouer a great player for young demons [sic].

The first time both Jim and Phillip were mentioned in the same article for their on-field contributions was in 1971 in a nippers derby grand final. NMBFC were convincing winners over SMBFC with the final scores being 15.8 to 1.1. The report in *The Albany Advertiser* highlights both the skill of the boys but also alludes to their teamwork:

They [North] had a match winner in Ironmonger who dominated the ruck throughout and…North had two clever players in the Krakouers who used their inherent skills perfectly to create openings in front of goals.

Ron ‘Ginger’ Sounness, the boys nippers coach at NMBFC, found them a delight to coach “I never had to dress them down.” This was because Sounness was unable to teach the boys anything that they couldn’t already do with a football. Sounness regularly used Jim or Phillip to demonstrate what he meant by a certain drill. “[They] were very unselfish players the both of them, but Jimmy could win matches on his own you know as a junior footballer. I think the greatest thing was what they did with the ball when they got it. It was a pleasure to see.” Jim and Phillip’s colts coach, Allan Ballantyne, reiterates these sentiments:

There was nothing you could teach them as far as ability or skills were concerned. Sixteen year old kids don’t take marks [like that] but Jimmy took some screamers, so did Phillip too [but] the basic ideas of football you couldn’t teach them.
A former junior team-mate, Wayne Hammond, also alludes to the Krakouer brothers understanding of each other and the team ethic:

I wouldn’t say they were selfish but they definitely had that thing between them that everyone talks about. Not being a runner I’d get stuck at full forward and Jimmy or Phillip would be changed in the forward pocket. They’d swap on the ball and when they would have probably kicked 3 or 4 goals and then they would say ‘righto Wayne, it’s your turn now’. So they would pass the ball to me for the next 3 or 4 times.97

Sounness believes that the Krakouer boys had ‘it’ but he also points out that, for Jim especially, training wasn’t just something you did to stay fit, it was part of the game, “He would never joke about while training. Everything was done as if it was a game and for Jim you trained the way you would play.” 98

Perhaps one of the main reasons the boys stood out in the junior competition was their size. Their physiques were quite different, Jim was small but robust and Phillip was a “skinny little kid.”99 Due to their young ages, their size, the heavier grounds and the likelihood of rain or heavy dew, it meant there was a distinct possibility that the game ball would become slippery quickly and eventually sodden. These factors posed tricky obstacles that both Jim and Phillip dealt with differently. Because of the conditions Jim and Phillip developed the skill of acquiring and accurately delivering the ball, ensuring the team maintained first use of the ball as often as possible. Jim developed his foot skills in a unique way so that at the point of kicking he was stooped very low over the ball. This ensured a more accurate delivery but it also meant that Jim’s boot would make regular contact with his fingers. Often at the end of a game Jim’s fingertips would be grazed and bleeding because they had made contact so often with his bootlaces the skin had come off.

97 Personal interview Wayne Hammond ND 1999.
98 Personal interview Ron Souness ND 1999.
Phillip on the other hand developed a style, to get some distance from his kick, of throwing the ball onto his left boot. This highly unorthodox and awkward style saw him drag the ball across his body before kicking it. As ungainly as this looked Phillip’s effectiveness in passing the ball was so good for his age coaches like Sounness and Ballantyne never tried to correct it.

These early individual differences did not end with their stylistic approach to football. For many people there was a distinct difference in Jim and Phillip’s characters. Sounness recalls that while Jim was a brilliant junior he also seemed to be more unsettled than Phillip:

I think it was Jimmy’s nature at that stage. I think he was fighting society a bit. Phillip was a different kettle of fish. Jimmy wouldn’t look you in the eye, he’d shake hands with you and always have his head down. It wasn’t until he had come back after being with Claremont [that] he was a confident young bloke. I always remember when we were going down on the bus and setting the side I could just ask Phil what he thought about placing’s of guys. He was far more approachable than Jimmy at that stage. He [Jim] wouldn’t communicate.

Sounness also alludes to the absolute passion that both the boys had for the game. For them it represented something more than just a sport:

I think football was where he [Jim] showed that he was someone. Material things didn’t hold a great deal of value. As long as they had their football. If you wanted to punish them you took away their football. I don’t think people realised that, the teachers didn’t anyway. He was always in trouble. My boys used to find him on the [school] verandah. I don’t know whether he spent much time in class at all.

Jim’s mystery was compounded by a number of factors. Other students at school, who were NMBFC team-mates on the weekend, would be the brunt of Jim’s overt aggression at school. Paul Gillam was one such team-mate. As a player, Paul Gillam

99 “Phillip was a really skinny little kid you know really tiny. Jimmy was a lot more robust at that age [and] I suppose that sort of showed up.” Personal interview Jim Gilbert 19/12/00. My emphasis.
100 Allan Daniels described this style as a double-handed jam-down style. Personal interview 7/5/2001.
101 Personal interview with Ron Souness ND 1999. My emphasis.
102 Personal interview with Ron Souness ND 1999. My emphasis.
was very similar to Jim, a nuggetty rover he was blessed with a good football brain, speed and skill.\textsuperscript{103}

As Paul recalls, his relationship with Jim was at best awkward:

He was a funny bloke Jimmy. When he was good he was very, very likeable but he could turn on you and I reckon that showed on the footy field too because any little bit of intimidation, whether it was racial or whatever Jim would turn. He’d snap. You’d walk up the corridor and he’d bang you in the head, or bang, in the guts and that’s what it was like at school even though you played footy with him. I reckon Jimmy just had a chip on his shoulder and I don’t know if it was because he was black or what but that’s the sort of nature he was. And yet when he was good he was brilliant when he was in the mood for being nice\textsuperscript{104}.

Paul’s brother Ken, who would later play for Western Australia in the Teal Cup, recalls the ‘playground blues’ and Jim “wasn’t someone you’d want to get on the wrong side of” going so far as to say that at times Jim was “quite scary.”\textsuperscript{105} In saying this Ken also points out that Jim did have a compassionate side albeit an arbitrary one:

I [was] still in primary school and I was on me way home. There’d been a bit of strife at lunchtime and I knew it was going to be on. When I walked out of the school grounds, there was a good ten, twelve young fellas there. Anyway the bus from the high school pulls up [and] another Northie, Wayne Donohoe, arrived. I mentioned to Wayne that it would be a pretty good idea if I walked home with him [but] I was getting pushed and shoved and prodded by Keith Punch. Anyway I wasn’t keen [to fight] on this particular day and the next thing Jimmy walks up, he got off the bus as well, and basically he said to me did I want to have a stoush with young Punchy. I said no and he just turned to Keith Punch and all them blokes and told them to nick off. So they did.\textsuperscript{106}

Jim’s aggressive, brooding behaviour must have been something that confounded Jim’s school acquaintances and NMBFC teammates. His youthful volatility combined with his complete devotion to the football process, his passion to play and his outstanding ability made him somewhat of a character. As a staunch team player he showed a random indifference to some of his team-mates during the week, which was

\textsuperscript{103} Mt Barker local and former NMBFC champion Jim Gilbert recalls both the Gillam brothers and the Krakouers, “I’ve got good recollections of 1973. On Saturday mornings I used to umpire junior football. [I] thought how unbelievable they were. There was those boys [The Krakouers] and there was Ken and Paul Gillam. They used to play these unbelievable games of football which were dominated by these four people [with] the best two being the Krakouers, but the Gillams were brilliant as well”. Personal interview 19/12/00. My emphasis.

\textsuperscript{104} Personal interview Paul Gillam ND 1999.

underpinned by a pathological responsibility for the welfare of his brother both on and off the field. Jim Krakouer, even at such a young age, was nothing short of an enigma.

The clock on the north wall of the Mount Barker Municipal Library and Shire offices said ten past eight. Situated at the snaking T junction in the middle of town, the face of the clock was bathed in crisp winter sunlight. But the sun’s warmth was lessened due to the chilly south-wester, which blew off the Southern Ocean and across the south west tip of the state. From here the wind whistled down Muir Highway past Manjimup, past Rocky Gully and the first building it hit was the Mount Barker Municipal Library and Shire offices. In front of the library an orange school bus, half-full with thirteen year-old boys, was parked horizontally across the parking bays. Some boys stood on the footpath talking and spitting, their hands jammed down hard into their pockets. Other boys kicked the footy on the lawn of the library, pitting themselves against the strong, chilly wind which parted their hair at strange angles and made their noses run.

In front of the bus several men huddled out of the bluster and were shielded except for the wind that tunnelled under the bus and caught their beige and chocalate corduroy flares. Like the boys they had their hands jammed in their pockets. Someone looked at his watch and then he turned to Sounness “We’ll have to get a wriggle-on shortly Ginger. If we don’t we’ll never make the game in Perth.” Sounness shook his head and raised his eyebrows. “Five more minutes” he replied.

Mount Barker had chosen a combined side and heading to Perth to play a Claremont under 14 side. They needed to leave Mt Barker shortly after 8 am if they were to travel, change, play on time and return to Mt Barker at a reasonable hour. All of the side was assembled except for two players, Jim and Phillip Krakouer. Looking at his watch

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Ginger waved to the wild-haired, dribbly nose mob to get on the bus. The bus fired into life and sat idling for a few minutes warming-up for the slow five hour trip to Perth. As the last of the boys got on the bus a loud cheer erupted from inside the bus. Sounness looked up and saw the loose gait of Phillip coming towards him but Sounness was only half relieved “Where’s Jimmy?” he shrugged. “It’s ok, he’s up the road a bit.” Phillip said smiling stopping to look Sounness in the eye. “You weren’t gonna leave me here were ya? It’s too far to walk yknow and I haven’t got me licence yet.”

The doors closed behind them and the bus chugged off. Phillip slid into a seat and Sounness followed him “So where on the road is he Phil?” “You’ll see”, Phillip replied. As the bus slowly started to build up its revs the town of Mt Barker fell out of sight. Sounness looked concerned as the bus went past all the usual sidings and drop-off points. The Kendenup turn off, Tenterden, Cranbrook, Slab Hut Gully and Tunney. Nothing. Passing through Kojunup Sounness again turned to Phillip and asked where Jim would be and Phillip’s reply was the same as before. 10 kilometres out of Kojunup there was still no sign until suddenly there on the side of the road stood Jim Krakouer. Years later Sounness would recall the incident as I sat at his kitchen table and drank tea:

[We] thought he’d go to a town, Kojonup or Williams, something like that. Not on your life, he was halfway between the two. [He] just came out of the bush, out from behind a bloomin jam tree.107

Jim stayed true to his word but to the other kids on the bus Jim’s feats were exotic and esoteric and only added to his mystery.

Janie Pickles was the epitome of a good country girl. She was from an established Mount Barker farming family and a prefect in primary school. Janie’s father, Ross, was an upstanding member of the community, President of the primary school’s Parents and

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107 Personal Interview Ron Souness ND. My emphasis. The reason Jim was on the road was because he had gone to stay with his sister and partner for the night.
Citizens Association and on the board of the Co-op. As Janie sat outside her classroom on the jarrah bench she felt sick, not because she was suffering any illness but because she had been sent outside for, in her own words, “mucking up.” She looked down at her feet tapping incessantly as her flushed, freckly face cracked a nervous twitchy smile. It was a physiological response to Janie being in completely unfamiliar territory. As her mind raced she turned to the person who sat next to her. He was composed and relaxed as he stared out at the schoolyard. For Jim this was all part of a daily ritual. Despite their obvious differences, Janie and Jim had much in common. They were born on the same day in the Mt Barker Hospital. This connection saw Janie and Jim develop a close friendship, which still continues. At this particular time in their young lives, standing outside Doc Rowe’s nature class, all Janie could think of was the punishment her parents would dish out and the embarrassment her behaviour would cause them. As Janie and Jim sat awaiting their fates, the arrival of their grade teacher Mr McGuiness posed a further conundrum for Pickles, as she explained to me years later:

Along walks Mr McGuiness our teacher, as scary as all hell, [he] came back and saw the two of us there, and because I was a prefect, [said] ‘It’s okay Janie you can go inside now, come with me Krakouer. I would have thought that by now you could at least stand by yourself without having a minder’. And to this day I remember his smile [he] winked at me and pointed to the door. Jim wasn’t going to lag that I had been sent out there as well.108

In that instant Janie began to see how things were very different for different people. Janie’s friendship with Jim grew as did her fascination for the stories and culture of the Noongar people who surrounded her at school and at home:

My Mum employed the Krakouer girls. It was because Eric worked for Bruce Wright, so it was okay…[I] used to try and stay home from school when I knew that one of the girls was coming [to work] because their stories were fascinating to me. I used to follow Carol [Krakouer] around from room to room. I used to sneak off over the railway line to the reserve, it was really interesting. Like they would put kangaroos on the coals, they weren’t tribal but they still had all the stories to tell.109

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Despite Janie’s avid interest and the arrangement of the Krakouer sisters working as *house girls* for the Pickles family a situation arose regarding stolen money. Suspicion and blame were placed squarely on the Krakouer girls and the arrangement was terminated. Pickles explained to me what really happened:

Mum blamed Kerry [Krakouer] and that was the end of her but it was me all along. They had no chance, no chance to defend themselves at all, because there’s an Aboriginal person in the house ‘they must have been stealing the money.’

Despite this incident, Jim and Janie’s friendship grew, although the common perception of Jim at the time was he was:

someone you just didn’t associate with. But then if you sat down and spoke to him he warmed to you. It just took a while. No one was prepared to do that no one would take him on and I think all he was crying out for was someone to point him in the right direction. Whereas they were quite happy to talk to Phil because they knew they wouldn’t get a fist full of fives.

Janie Pickles recognised that the Krakouer brothers were very different people and they approached life differently, qualifying this by explaining their individual personas:

Phil was more like Eric, he would shrug his shoulders and laugh it off. Very easy going, [Phil] would come up and speak to you and look you in the eye. Jim always hung his head. Jim took it more seriously, he also faced incredible adversity. I can remember him being called a black cunt and a coon from that age and the only way he knew how to deal with it was to fight. He just had trouble in dealing with it all. He just had this flame and fire in his eyes and he just wanted to beat them to a pulp.

Ironically it was the game of football, and its violent potential, that Jim was allowed space and he could express himself. This situation revealed itself to Pickles and her thoughts echo those of Sounness:

It was the one thing that he was better than anybody else at. He’d twirl it on his finger he was just so talented. You’d go past Sounness Park and he’d be kicking goals until the dark of night. It was the only thing he could do to make everybody sit up and take notice.

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Pickles does allude to the problems Jim had and how these impacted on his personality, “To me he seemed really angry that he was black because he couldn’t ever be the kind of person that I think he wanted to be acknowledged for.”\textsuperscript{114} Perhaps because of this Jim became more determined than ever to prove himself to others and gain their respect and the only way to do this from his perspective was to win - everything.

The \textit{Berrinba} is the Mount Barker High School annual yearbook. Inside the \textit{Berrinba} 74 the year is chronicled, the teachers lampooned and the students photos have been cut, pasted and fixed as a reminder of their youth. These photographs are accompanied with class notes revealing each students interests, capabilities or potential. In Phillip’s year nine class photograph he is sitting in a central position sporting the cheeky grin of a relaxed and happy boy with an expression that says ‘come and get me.’ The class notes allude to Phillip’s preoccupation, “Philip Krakouer [sic] barracks for Perth.”\textsuperscript{115} Jim’s year 10 class photograph shows him as seemingly nonchalant. His grey long sleeve shirt reveals a well-developed set of shoulders and upper arms. His hair is quintessential 70’s. Slick, long and combed down. Unlike Phillip’s notes Jim’s class, 3/1, and their status, is a bit more revealing:

This is the form that can re-arrange a classroom in 15 seconds and can drive a teacher all the way to England. With big blokes such as Krakouer, McKenzie, Loxton this is understandable. 3/1 enjoys English immensely and each day different students are rostered to cause an upset. 3/1 is something of a mixture [sic] of breeds with 8 French students, an Italian, a South African, an Australian, and we are still trying to find out what the others are. While first years will be turning into second year forms, and second years into third years, we are not sure what 3/1 will be turning into; but one thing is for sure. It wont be 4/1.\textsuperscript{116}

One of the other students in Jim’s 3/1 class was Kevin Draper. Unlike the \textit{Berrinba} prediction Kevin, as well as Jim, went on to other things. As a brilliant cricketer from

\textsuperscript{114} Personal interview Janie Pickles 8/4/2002.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Berrinba} 74. p19. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Berrinba} 74. p10.
Narrikup, a tiny hamlet 15k’s south of Mount Barker, Draper was at one stage in line for Terry Alderman’s bowling spot in the Australian cricket side. However, a series of incidents and the lack of total commitment to cricket saw Draper participate mainly in exhibition matches playing against such greats as Colin Croft and Michael Holding and state country games. Sport, while a very important part of Kevin’s life, had to compete with his other interest, art, a passion born out of feeling, in his own words “socially inept at so many things.” Draper would have made an interesting sight as he sat in with the grannies in their mid-week-water-colour classes at the Narrikup Hall.

Sitting in his dusty studio in the heart of one of Perth’s light industrial zones, Draper struck me as a completely unassuming person. If I didn’t know who he was I would never guess Draper is a leading Western Australian sculptor and in the final stages of welding together a huge copper work for the Chinese Consulate in Perth. Draper distinctly recalls the Mount Barker High School and the role sport played at school and the community:

Barker in the Seventies was actually quite an aggressive place from my perspective. It was like very much cricket, football. I played sports because what else do you do? That was part of your social set-up. If you played sport, you were generally okay. If you didn’t you’d probably get quite a hard time at Barker High School. It was pretty full-on, pretty aggressive and I think about all the elements of racism and aggression, because our school was pretty aggressive, you know gangs. Jimmy knocked you around a bit [but] I think he really liked us. It was an odd thing.

Draper has come to understand that the tension at school perhaps reflected wider social mechanisms, which underpinned Mt Barker as a town:

Mt Barker is in some senses was quite a snobby place. There is an element of the grazier there and it has a different sense of history. I suppose coming from Narrikup we didn’t have that history [but] there was an element of that segregation and Aboriginal people would have certainly felt they were on the bottom rung of that. I can remember a separate bar at the Top Pub which had a

slide-door, certainly financially [Noongars] would have been segregated and the kids coming to school would have, one way or another, absorbed that.\textsuperscript{119}

Draper, like many of his high school peers, also found the Krakouer brothers to be two very different people. In regards to Jim, he recalls:

> You were never quite sure that you said the right thing or whether you should say something to be funny or to shut up. It would almost be like ‘on guard’ so when you are in that kind of situation and even later when we got older playing football most people were quite frightened of him. I think even that some of his North colleagues were quite frightened because there was that brilliance there. There was a kind of genius and maybe because of that he was very sensitive. I never thought of him as sensitive as a kid but I look back and maybe he was extremely sensitive because of that idea of genius and maybe he didn’t even understand it.\textsuperscript{120}

To Draper, Jim was a very intense person who would treat people according to how he felt at the time. But Kevin believes that because Jim couldn’t articulate the way he felt about certain things he resorted to aggression to deal with his frustration:

> I had to deal with Jim directly, sometimes on quite aggressive levels. A lot of us used to get pushed around by him. I can’t say I ever really respected him. I feared him. There was a parallel character in Jimmy running through him that could switch like that [but] there was that competitive edge that Jimmy needed. In a sense he had the physicality and he was into boxing, he was pretty much a gun boxer and he would get in the ring with people at the shows. I think that was the bit that frightened us, he really could fight.\textsuperscript{121}

Jim’s competitive nature manifested itself in a number of ways and in a variety of situations. Sometimes Jim would seek Draper out to go and have a kick of the football. Once they used the unconventional means of a basketball hoop to practice their kicking. As Draper recalls he employed a drop punt and Jim a torpedo. Neither succeeded.

On another occasion Jim \textit{picked} Draper during a metal-work class. As Draper recalls he was concentrating on hammering out a copper bowl. This irony is not lost on Draper as he stops mid sentence, admitting to me that he has hardly worked with copper from that time until now:

Jim’s come up and bang bang and I don’t know what made me do it, I just lifted the hammer, he ducked and I laughed. I was putting the bowl back [and] bang. So I turned around and punched him with an out-swing right between the nose and that shook him enough for me not to get cut to shreds. I remember Jimmy taking a swing at us and hitting the metal vice with his hand and I kept on hitting him. So finally we stopped and Jimmy’s just seething and crazed. But the fucking teacher, after we have calmed down, grabs me and Jimmy gave me three rippers in the guts so I latched back onto him again. So there is this strange little threesome moving around this really dangerous space with fists and swearing. Anyway half an hour later it’s like High Noon he’s on one end of the verandah, I’m at the other, and he comes up and goes, ‘how’s your ear’? I said ‘Ok, how’s your head’? He says, ‘all right…do ya wanna finish it?’ I said, ‘no’. There was no point and he never picked on us again in that same way.122

Draper recalls another incident in which Jim made what was, to him, a telling comment.

Jim had his shirtsleeve rolled up and was showing off his biceps:

It was a very strange conversation, Jim was saying something about ‘I’m sort of brown.’ It was just one of those strange things like you might say ‘look how hairy my legs are.’ He started off talking about muscles and then we were talking about skin. Well he then said, ‘I’m in between, I’m the in between kid’.123

In this strange way, Jim could be seen to have a deeper understanding of his own identity. Even though he was Noongar he grappled with what it meant to be Indigenous in a white world. Many Mt Barker people who I talked to over the course of my research believed that Jim did not like wadjulars and had a “chip on his shoulder” because he was Noongar. But this can be to some degree challenged as Jim’s best friend for many years was a young wadjular named Chris Back.

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The name of the game was Kill. The rules were simple. Two mobs. One ball. Final rule. No sooking. It was a hybrid game between Rugby and British bull-dog in which one mob had to get the ball down the other end by any means. It was one of Chris Back’s favourites “I still remember it quite vividly actually. It was one of those games that

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123 Personal interview Kevin Draper 12/11/2001. Noongar author Kim Scott also looked at his own identity and his ambivalence to it “My own sense of Aboriginality was a strange mix of pride, shame and isolation. A private thing. A thing at the heart of me, albeit a thing I could not put into words.” “Disputed Territory”, (eds) Brewster, Anne. O’Neill, Angeline. Van Den Berg, Rosemary. Those Who Remain will
hardened us all up. Hit each other as hard as you could.”

For Chris Back and his younger brother Jamie life growing up in Mt Barker was fun and free of the fears and constraints of today. Like Draper, Chris Back’s memories of Mt Barker revolve around sport:

For me sport was your life. Sport was everything. Basketball, football and cricket basically. Just your man’s sports the ones that Dad would let you play none of this girlie shit, even hockey was stretching it.

The Backs and the Krakouers, particularly Chris and Jim, became friends. This friendship was so strong that Jim did the unthinkable and actually switched over and played at least a season with SMBFC in the under age competition “He was like part of the family. He was treated like one of the family. He’d come around and have a wash and a feed. Mum and Dad loved him there was no doubt about that.” Jim concurs, “We were pretty close friends. I used to get on with his brothers too. They used to treat me good.”

Chris’s younger brother Jamie also recalls that Jim was accepted into the family and became so close that he referred to the Back’s grandmother as Nanna. This situation was, however, a unusual one; at least in regard to Chris Back’s recollection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in the early 70’s:

He [Jim] was a very proud Aboriginal boy, no worries about that. He had mates who were white and that didn’t happen a lot back then.

As Jim’s relationship with the Back family developed, he began to experience different things for the first time. Perhaps the biggest of these experiences was a trip to Perth to see the 1970 grand final between South Fremantle and Perth. This was an incredible time for Jim as the Krakouer family rarely went to Perth for anything. It would be the


125 “As kids we were allowed to ride our bikes all around without fear of some stranger picking you up”. Personal interview Jamie Back 7/7/2001.
126 Personal interview Chris Back 9/7/2001.
129 Personal interview Chris Back 9/7/2001. My emphasis.
first time Jim would stay in a motel with a pool and TV. These things paled by comparison as the most exciting aspect of the trip for Jim was to go to the grand final and watch his idol Barry Cable play. Chris recalls:

We had a bloody ball. I still remember staying at the Flag Lodge and jumping all over the beds.\(^{130}\)

Jim’s recollection was also a positive:

Yeah it was a good little experience. I’d hardly ever been to Perth before and [I’d] never seen a league game in Perth so it was all new. Big crowds, just the experience to come up and see a game like that was good.\(^{131}\)

Despite this Jim would experience a racist attack, perhaps for the first time from people he trusted and loved. The experience is one that Jamie Back vividly recalls:

As kids he did something to upset me [and] I distinctly remember calling him a black cunt. It upset him that much that he cried. It wasn’t something that was malicious. I think he was just upset by the fact that we were his family and for me to put him in that category upset him greatly.\(^{132}\)

From this point the relationship between the Krakouers, particularly Jim, and the Back brothers deteriorated into heated physical attacks at school and on the football field. As Chris Back recalls it was some time on from the Flag Lodge incident that “We ended up having a bit of a fight and what happened he booted me in the head and bloody knocked me right out. It was the fight that kind of ended our friendship.”\(^{133}\) Though neither brother can remember what age they were when it happened Jamie recalls the incident and its ramifications:

I’m not absolutely certain but I would say that the crux of the whole thing developed and it got worse. He [Jim] would intimidate people you see. I mean he tried it on. It was just a challenge to him to see who he could fight and who he could beat.\(^{134}\)

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\(^{130}\) Personal interview Chris Back 9/7/2001.

\(^{131}\) Personal interview Jim Krakouer 20/7/2001. My emphasis.

\(^{132}\) Personal interview Jamie Back 7/7/2001. My emphasis.

\(^{133}\) Personal interview Chris Back 9/7/2001.

\(^{134}\) Personal interview Jamie Back 7/7/2001. My emphasis.
These attacks and fights became so pronounced that Jim was increasingly bringing himself to the attention of the police and other agencies. At one point, Jim was removed from school and taken to Perth to the Mount Lawley Reception home, a place for wayward youth. Who can say what sort of impact this would have had on Jim at this age?

1.8 Common Denominator

Many outside of Melbourne may not have heard of Martin Flanagan. This is probably because he lives in Melbourne and writes for *The Age*. A Tasmanian and a Law graduate, he left his island home and pursued a career in journalism specifically writing about football. Don Watson, the writer for the satirist Max Gilles and speechwriter for Prime Minister Paul Keating, described Flanagan thus:

> Martin Flanagan must never be allowed to stop writing about football…I say this because he is the only football writer I have read who is so good I think he could nearly describe a heartbeat – and that, if you want to touch the essence of football, is what you have to do.135

I mention Flanagan because for me he was perhaps the only reporter at the time who made a deep engagement with the Krakouers and their football. Flanagan saw the Krakouer’s contribution to football by understanding what Jim and Phillip represented to one another and how that was reflective of the wider Indigenous community. How can I make this claim? Because I have read the majority of articles written about the Krakouers from their playing days in Mt Barker, Perth and finally Melbourne. Nothing, not even the match reports that dealt entirely with the notion of ‘Krakouer Magic’ or Jim or Phillip’s individual exploits ever came close.

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Flanagan read the Krakouer’s game not just from a statistical point of view, a ledger of game time against possessions. Nor did he just stare wide-eyed and gawping at their marvellous double-jointed exploits and sycophantically regurgitate them onto the broadsheet. Flanagan perceived of something else. He was able to read their style differently through analysis and empathy and so he was able to reach a greater interpretive level based on understanding and not just in regard to football:

> It was I think, watching the Krakouer brothers playing football, on television, when they first came to Victoria that I first realised, with any force, that there was another people in this land whose thinking was radically different from my own.136

Flanagan was able to read the significance of the Krakouers on a deeper level, as Indigenous brothers, because when they played they allowed people to connect with their Indigineity. Flanagan also recognised that the kinship obligation the Krakouers displayed to one another was part of Indigenous social organisation even though they had crossed the white line. This was no flowery reading of a couple of brothers who were turning on a bit of a show on a cold Saturday afternoon. For Flanagan, this was both an event and an epiphany and he bloody well knew it:

> Their vision, which at times seems to transcend what is understood by that term and suggests another sort of awareness. Who can forget the first time they made mayhem in Victoria after coming from Western Australia, running where no one had run, handballs hooping and looping between the pair of them and the Fitzroy defence utterly perplexed and unnerved as a new version of a hundred-year-old game unfolded before their eyes? It was anarchy and art rolled into one.137

Yet in celebrating the Krakouers as a social, cultural and historical phenomenon, Flanagan also engaged with the negative forces which manifested themselves around Jim and Phillip. Flanagan could see that Jim’s combative nature was born out of his role as a guardian to Phillip and any untoward play visited upon Phillip would be dealt with in a quid pro quo fashion:138

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Jack Dyer, one of the older generation of commentators, got it right. He said ‘He’s the best player I’ve seen, the Krakouers.’ Each week, the Krakouers unravelled and reinvented the game while people leaned across the fence and spewed hatred on them. Don’t know why, but I took it personally. Began getting into arguments. At the same time, I started seeing there was another system of thought at work in this land. Phil was the younger brother, Jimmy the older, but if anyone hit Phil, Jimmy evened up. Then or later didn’t matter. Jimmy left no debt unsettled. He had his own law.139

In my initial discussions with Jim about these issues he was a bit guarded. I think it was because he thought I was passing judgement on him and I wasn’t. The more we talked about it the more I got to see a vulnerable person whose main method of engaging with people who didn’t accept him or respect him was to use force. Jim’s kinship responsibility to Phillip accentuated this much to the exacerbation of the teachers and parents who had no hope of seeing Jim’s vulnerability. From my discussions with Jim, his problems stemmed from his insecurities and seemed to intensify as he got older “we were always close, probably because of the age difference and probably growing up in a small country town you have to try and stand up for yourself.”140 Perhaps Jim’s issues arose when he felt he was threatened and he would do what he thought necessary to alleviate this. He articulated this at a VFL tribunal hearing in Melbourne in the Eighties:

> It has been in my make-up since I was a kid not to let people stand over me and I will never change that until the day I die.141

Sitting in the Mount Lawley Reception Home Jim had plenty of time to reflect. Jim recalls the incident he was sent away for, “I’d been in trouble a few times fighting around. I remember we had a faction sports and I had a fight with one kid, I was thirteen or fourteen and they sent me away for that.”142 One teacher who arrived on the scene was Jim’s math teacher, Morrie Thiel:

> The kid was from Rocky Gully, Frankland River way, I don’t know how the blue happened but it was where the athletics carnival was happening. When I got down there Frank Harding had taken him up to the cop shop because [he] had

141 The West Australian. 28/10/1995, p9.
smashed this kids mouth and broken all his teeth and I think they actually kept him in the lock-up for a short time.\textsuperscript{143}

As far as Jim’s reputation at school went Morrie Thiel acknowledged that Jim was regarded as having, “a pretty short fuse”, “quite aggressive” and “easily stirred.”\textsuperscript{144}

He was only a pretty small kid compared to some of them, but he could handle himself pretty well. But his aggression got him into trouble in the playground. He had another fight with Tom Chappell I think his name was. I didn’t see any of it but the end result was this bloke had to be carted off to hospital.\textsuperscript{145}

Despite this, Jim never gave Thiel any problems in the classroom:

Jimmy was really very shy, but Phillip was quite the reverse. Jimmy would bury his head [or] looked at the ground when you spoke to him. Jimmy and I got on very well because he knew I was tangled up in North Mount Barker and I [had] played footy with his old man. Our common denominator was football and so you could talk to him about football and for that reason I didn’t have any strife with him luckily.\textsuperscript{146}

It was this \textit{common denominator}, which allowed Thiel to see some of Jim’s mathematical ability. When it came to school:

Phillip was just not interested what so ever. Jimmy would go through the motions, never did his home work or anything like that but [I] showed him how to factorise algebraic expressions but he always sat in the classroom and never stepped out of line.\textsuperscript{147}

Thiel points out that in other subjects and with other teachers:

Jim would just walk out of a classroom or he refused to cooperate. He did that quite a bit. He was just an individual that was never going to be a scholar and school didn’t really interest him. School doesn’t cater for that sort of kid.\textsuperscript{148}

Perhaps Jim felt as if the world he occupied could only give him a limited number of skills he could use. Perhaps he thought the only way to prove himself was by pitting himself against his peers and the only way he could do that, thus harnessing his aggression, was by playing football. It was through the NMBFC that he would be able

\textsuperscript{143} Personal interview Morrie Thiel 17/8/2001. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{144} Personal interview Morrie Thiel 17/8/2001.
\textsuperscript{145} Personal interview Morrie Thiel 17/8/2001.
\textsuperscript{146} Personal interview Morrie Thiel 17/8/2001. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{147} Personal interview Morrie Thiel 17/8/2001. My emphasis.
to achieve this. Through NMBFC he would make a name for himself other than the reputation which had grown around him.

1.9 Waiting Rooms

At 3:30pm Dr Bourke knew he could expect a knock on his surgery door. He also knew who it would be and the nature of the person’s visit would entail. Soft, but audible, Dr Bourke heard the knocks. He stopped what he was doing and quickly peered through his venetian blinds. Out on the footpath Phillip stood with a few mates. Phillip was handballing a dull plum coloured football into a light pole while two other Noongar boys jocularly sparred around one another. Dr Bourke snapped the venetian’s back into shape. “Come in.” The door opened and Jim Krakouer walked in and sat down. “Hello Jimmy, and what can I do for you?” asked Dr Bourke. Jim came straight to the point. “Doc can I play footy this week?” Months had passed since Jim had got out of hospital for rheumatic fever and he had regularly dropped into Bourke’s surgery on the way home from school. For some, perhaps the constant refusal would dampen their enthusiasm, but it only made Jim determined to play. “What’s it been? Just over three months I believe?” quizzed Dr Bourke. Jim looked up from the floor and nodded. “Well I suppose if you eased into it a continuation with your sport wouldn’t be entirely out of the question. But remember Jimmy rheumatic fever is very serious and any return of the symptoms must be reported immediately.” A brilliant smile lit up Jim’s face and he was gone. Dr Bourke rested his finger back on the venetian blind. Jim jogged out to meet Phillip who was by now standing further away from the light pole and kicking the ball into it. Seeing Jim, Phillip snapped a handball around his back with all the confidence of a footballer twice his age. Jim caught it, bounced it once, and drop kicked it into the light pole. It shot back at him and just as quickly he marked it on his chest.

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Bourke watched as the little group moved out of the frame that was his window and made its way toward Souness Park.

Jim’s older sister Nola spoke to me about Jim’s rheumatic condition and his time in hospital. According to Nola, Jim spent a great deal of time in the Mt Barker Hospital recuperating and during this time she said to me Jim escaped on a number of occasions.\textsuperscript{149} Jim missed the familiarity of being home and amongst his family and being couped-up for hours only heightened his desire and determination to get out. Nola explains:

\begin{quote}
After the sister or the nurse walked out he put a piece of paper or something on the door so it wouldn’t lock.\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}

According to Nola, Jim would wait for the nurses to have their lunch or afternoon tea, sneak out of the hospital, and make his way into town:

\begin{quote}
[He’d] be sitting and waiting for Mum and Dad in his pyjamas in the Barker betting shop.\textsuperscript{151}
\end{quote}

Why didn’t he just run straight home? As Jim waited for Eric or Phoebe to be notified by the hospital of his escape he could catch-up and see many of his relatives and family friends. In this way the TAB represented to Jim a safe, welcoming environment and a much needed respite from the boredom of the hospital ward. Jim explains, “Yeah I went there to hang around because that’s where everyone used to go.”\textsuperscript{152} Unlike the pub where Noongars were by law not allowed to go, the TAB was a place which alleviated the drudgery of daily life while providing a chance to win some easy money. It was a

\textsuperscript{150} Personal interview Nola Krakouer 22/6/2001.
\textsuperscript{151} Personal interview Nola Krakouer 22/6/2001. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{152} Personal interview Jim Krakouer 29/5/2003.
social place where people caught up and talked. For Jim the TAB was a place that those social and family connections could be made and where he felt secure.

1.10 Northie’s & Southie’s

In Mt Barker, the football team one played for or supported determined the social group that one would be involved in for six months of the year. Unlike some towns that only had one football side and could rally a whole community or bigger towns that had three or four sides Mt Barker is a town that in many ways is polarised during the football season. One was either a ‘northie’ or a ‘southie’. This division creates an immense rivalry throughout the town but it also fosters deep passions and a community culture.

Being a northie, I still recall a NMBFC function where a group of young southies attended uninvited. They were asked to leave and politely complied with the request until some minutes later the lights at the clubrooms died immersing everyone in darkness. A quick check of the fuse box found that the fuses had been taken out.

During the week NMBFC players or supporters were are not openly hostile to SMBFC players and supporters (or vice-versa) but everyone knew who everyone supported in town. Being a southie Kevin Draper experienced the football rivalry whilst working as a Stock Agent:

I ended up in Elders and the North, South thing, that’s when it really hit me. I never took it seriously but it was far reaching, more than I thought. Because you had farmers who would deal with you differently whether you were [associated with] North or South. We even had Stockies allocated to different areas. If you had a Stockie who played for North he would not then go and see a farmer who was a staunch South supporter. The town was always split on Derby day [due to] that rivalry and maybe a bit of fall-out that night in the pubs depending who won.153

Jamie Back, a southie, is far more explicit about the rivalry between South and North:

South was always the blue collar club and North was always the fucking white collar ‘heads-up-their-own-ass-type’ of club. They [North] had rich cockies who thought their shit didn’t stink. We had rich cockies who were salt of the earth types. We have and are still willing to accept people from every walk of life whether they were the dregs [or] they had just come out of jail. Whereas they were very picky and choosy.154

For Ken Armstrong, the reason he came to be involved with NMBFC as a coach during the 1960’s was NMBFC’s professionalism. As a high profile player in the WAFL from the mid fifties to the 1960’s, Armstrong had a long and illustrious career at league level as well as playing and coaching state football in Western Australia. 1963 turned out to be Armstrong’s last year of playing league football due to nagging knee and groin problems. Armstrong distinctly recalls how his association with NMBFC started:

two very fine gentlemen from Mount Barker arrived at our house in the summer holidays and they told me that I was going to coach North Mount Barker Footy Club. They would not take no for an answer. They were both very confident guys and I think that’s what sold it, they were there not to muck around.155

Armstrong took over from another WA State footballer, Laurie Kettlewell, who was coaching NMBFC at the time. Armstrong’s recollections of the rivalry between North and South was similar to Draper’s and Jamie Back’s:

Totally parochial. It intrigued me. We couldn’t believe the first local derby the cars were queued up at the gate to Sounness Park the night before the game. We’d go down town on a Friday afternoon shopping [and] everybody wanted to talk football. It gave that town a huge amount of life, humour, verve and tradition.156

For Jim and Phillip the NMBFC provided them with the environment that would enable them to foster their talent. By all accounts the NMBFC was a good club to the Krakouer brothers and this was reciprocated by the Krakouer’s on-field performances in the Thirds competition.

154 Personal interview Jamie Back 7/7/2001. My emphasis.
By 1973, Jim was 15 years old and Phillip was 13 but the pair were regulars in the Thirds competition. The Thirds was a learning curve for Phillip who, being a skinny teenager, was quite mindful that:

Every step that you made it was a different level. I think how you would probably describe it was it was just a lot quicker, as you go up [each grade] the bodies are a lot stronger, a lot bigger. People run a lot faster and you’ve got less time to make a decision.  

For Allan Ballantyne, NMBFC thirds coach, this didn’t seem to pose much of a problem for either Jim or Phillip. “They had more ability than any of the [other] boys, but there were some good footballers amongst them because we got into the Grand Final twice in two years.” The Krakouer brothers’ days in the Thirds competition were not long. Their time there was long enough to establish themselves as stand out players for their club as well as to develop relationships with players from other clubs in the competition.

### 1.11 Dangerous Sorts

For over twenty years Gary Stocks has been a sports writer in Western Australia. Before starting work with *The West Australian* in 1984 Stocks wrote for the *Western Mail* and *West Side Football*. Today Stocks is the media officer for the West Coast Eagles but his passion for football started as a young player in Albany with the Royals Football Club. Realising that he was, in his own words “short and slow” meant that Stock’s chances playing at the elite level were going to be limited. For Stocks, writing was a chance to be involved with football and at the elite level. On the muddy wet ovals of the SDNFL Stocks saw first hand just how good the Krakouer brothers were:

Phil is the same age as me so I saw him right from very early on. I saw them play first hand quite a bit. They were always just exceptional players and even at

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158 Personal interview Allan Ballantyne ND. My emphasis.
that age Phil was far more talented than I was. You knew that if you were going
to beat North Barker you basically had to shut Phil Krakouer down or at least
minimise his impact as much as you could but you never really did. I don’t
know how many times you drove through Barker and glanced across at the
ground and there they’d be kicking those impossible goals. They were clearly
better than the rest [and] there was never any doubt these two blokes were going
to be superstars.  

Other Royals’ players who would go on to have careers at a higher level were Darryl
Panizza and Allan ‘Shorty’ Daniels and they also recall the Krakouer brothers from a
very early age. Panizza elaborates:

I remember Jimmy getting the ball in the middle of the ground and he’d kick a
spiral and it would go straight through the middle of the goals. Phillip was also
very skilled. Kicked a lot of goals because he played in the forward line. Phillip
used to be able to read the ball to the point that he was a step ahead of the rest of
us because he knew where the ball was going. He just seemed to be always on
the receiving end of it.

For Daniels the Krakouers were “right from the beginning of my football memories. I
can even remember [their] father and uncles playing against my Dad”. Specifically
Daniels recalls:

The first time I actually encountered them was in grade five at the Mount
Lockyer Primary School, we played Mount Barker Primary school in an inter-
school match, and Jimmy Krakouer was playing then and carved us. Jimmy was
everywhere. I can remember in a colts game when we played at Kojonup when I
was about sixteen. I was on one side of a bloke and Jimmy was on the other and
he was just about to kick it and he reached out and with two fingers tapped the
ball off the blokes boot and into my hands, that was pretty surprising. But about
twenty minutes later the same bloke was about to have a kick and before he
knew what was happening, in between the ball leaving his hand and hitting his
boot, Jimmy had grabbed it off him and kicked a goal. It was just lightning. In
the same game in the last quarter, he took about seven marks over their ruckman
in the back pocket to save us the game. He was just phenomenal Jimmy when he
got going.

Allan Carpenter, the current minister for Sport and Recreation, Education and
Indigenous Affairs in Western Australia, was also a Royals’ player whose memories of

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159 Personal interview Gary Stocks 31/7/2001. My emphasis.
160 Personal interview Darryl Panizza 18/12/2000.
Jim and Phillip are vivid. Strangely, Carpenter mainly recalls Jim and Phillip’s older sister Nola:

I remember being at an inter-school athletics carnival in high school and there was a champion black girl athlete, Nola Krakouer, she was a great runner, great athlete. But the thing about them [Jim and Phillip], particularly Jimmy in those days was he used to kick a lot of goals. They were dangerous sorts of players.163

At this stage both Phillip and Jim were progressing very well with their football. Yet despite their obvious ability in the Southern Districts competition neither of the Krakouer’s seemed to think that football was a means to a life outside the country. As Phillip explains:

At that stage all I guess both of us wanted to do was just play football for the local side and emulate what Dad had done and play for North Mount Barker in the seniors. Play senior football for North Mount Barker and maybe [be] a shearer. Exactly what Dad was doing, that’s all I ever wanted to do.164

For Phillip the whole notion of going to Perth, let alone Melbourne was “just not even a thought, not even a dream.”165 Jim concurs “I didn’t know anything about much else [I] probably would have stayed down the country. I didn’t know much about Perth football let alone Melbourne footy…It was all a bit far way.”166

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For the NMBFC the Krakouer brothers were the embodiment of their future success. For Reeves, the Krakouer’s path was assured when it came to football “They both only played a few years in colts, but that was only because of their size at that stage and their class told out from then on. We [NMBFC] were standing there waiting for them to get old enough and big enough to go in [the league].”167 At North Mount Barker’s wind-up in 1974 Jim, as he had done in 1973, won the Thirds Fairest and Best and it became increasingly obvious that the junior ranks were not going to hold him or Phillip for long.

The next challenge would be that of the seniors of the SDNFL, against grown men, and the first to take that challenge was Jim. In 1974, Jim made his league debut for North Mount Barker against Railways on his own turf, Sounness Park. If he had any nerves the score sheet at the end of the day did not indicate any because he kicked five goals. Fellow NMBFC team-mate Jim Gilbert also kicked five goals that day and he recalls how the game went:

He went well. Because he was so young everyone wanted to see how this kid would go and he was probably a little bit wary at first, probably a little bit tentative early. [But] in the second or third quarter he just bloody flew up onto the top of the pack and he just perched. He was just cat-like.168

With Jim having played two league games in 1974 he was primed to take on the 1975 SDNFL season and establish himself amongst the best players in the competition. Before Jim would play another league game for NMBFC he would experience something that not many young men of his age have done. Something, which on the face of it seemed to be a progressive continuation of the trouble he found himself in at school except it was much more dire. According to Reeves:

Everyone said that Jimmy had a bad streak. I think it was a fairly commonly held thing [and] I’ve sometimes wondered and I think maybe at that age one or two things broke badly for him and he never really, character-wise, recovered from it. Perhaps if those things hadn’t of happened it might have been a different story.169

The first of what Reeves called bad breaks occurred in September of 1974 just as Jim was on the cusp of establishing himself as an outstanding country footballer he was also on the cusp of spending time in gaol.

With Jim’s school days now behind him and the summer months about to commence Jim did what many young 16 year-olds do, he got on the move. Getting lifts with friends

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168 Personal interview Jim Gilbert 19/12/2000. It should also be note that Phillip Krakouer also kicked 5 goals in the thirds that day. My emphasis.
169 Personal interview Harry Reeves 18/12/2000. My emphasis.
and relatives Jim headed down to Albany as the coastal town was bigger and more exciting. It was around this age that Jim recalls trying alcohol and cigarettes for the first time but by his own admission he said that they “didn’t seem to agree with me.”

Heading to Albany with a cousin Jim found himself at an elder cousin’s place one evening. From Jim’s accounts there was himself, two male cousins and two women, one older, one younger. Jim recalls the older cousin ‘getting on’ to the older woman. Jim, and the cousin he travelled to Albany with, then propositioned the remaining woman “[We] thought we’d try to get onto this girl. [And] she consented with us.” The act, it appears, had been mutual. The next morning as the boys were sleeping a loud knock at the door could be heard. One of them opened the door. It was the police. At some stage afterwards the girl at the centre of the allegations had gone to the Albany police and filed a charge against Jim and his cousin saying she had been raped. Jim and his cousin employed the services of a well known Albany lawyer, Kevin Prince. Jim recalls telling Prince what happened:

We had this lawyer [and] told him what happened, that she’s let us [have sex]. The trial started, the first session got out of the way and he comes around next session and said ‘I think you better plead guilty’. We kept telling him ‘No she let us’. Being young and not knowing much about law we said we’d plead guilty. That was the wrong thing we done because she consented with us. He should have fought our case out for us properly because I don’t believe that we were guilty of that crime. The judge sentenced us to two years with a six month minimum.

The trial of Jim and his cousin is interesting for a number of reasons. By employing the services of a lawyer with their limited means, it is clear that Jim and his cousin respected the gravity of the charges and felt their case needed to be handled professionally. From Jim’s perspective at the start of the trial, it was clear that Prince understood Jim and his cousin’s position but something made him change his mind.

Why didn’t Prince advise them to plead guilty before the trial? It is unsure. What I am sure of is that Jim and his cousin still maintain their innocence.

1.12 Long Road

Despite missing a third of the 1975 season, Jim’s return to football would prove to be one of the most amazing seasons of any footballer in the history of the district. In one game Jim was described by one reporter for the *The Albany Advertiser* “as the most exciting young player to come into league ranks in this area for many years. He has pace, skill and a tremendous leap for a small man.”173 Jim’s skills were not only talked about in terms of his brilliance but also in regard to his adaptability, tenacity and focus:

[He] was an effective rover combining with his team mates to clinch a great victory…Jim Krakouer played a great game, roved brilliantly and kicked five goals and adapted himself splendidly to the conditions.174

The effect that Jim had in the SDNFL was such that in 1975 he won the Kleeman Medal175 by 5 points, The Sunday Times Award, the Claremont Football Club award, the 6VA Football Forum award and the Commonwealth Bank award. At a club level, Jim romped home in the Fairest and Best by 27 votes and was also named the best player under 21. Phillip was also proving to be an outstanding prospect by winning the goal-kicking in the Thirds competition. Jim’s old NMBFC team mates still recall the effect that Jim had in his first proper league season. As a ruck, Gary Sandilands had a close on-field relationship with Jim and found that playing with him was a joy:

He was a good fella to ruck to because it didn’t really matter if you won or lost [the tap] he still got it. He just had that ability to get it which makes your job pretty satisfying if you’re a ruckman. He never wasted a kick whether it was in front of goals or one of his team-mates forty or fifty yards down the field.176

175 The Kleeman Medal is given to the fairest and best in the SDNFL now the Great Southern Football League.
176 Personal interview Gary Sandilands. 31/10/2001. My emphasis. Gary is the father of the Fremantle Dockers ruck Aaron Sandilands.
Another old teammate Ross Skinner also describes Jim’s style:

Even though he was a little fella he could do what he liked. He used to take some magnificent bloody marks, real speckies and he’d hit the ground and off he’d bloody go.177

At this stage, Jim’s stellar season with NMBFC would seem to indicate that, despite his problems at school and the six months in jail, he was determined to make amends for his past transgressions. In theory, and to all those who had witnessed Jim’s 1975 season, 1976 would prove to be even better than the last. Unfortunately, like many young men who attain their drivers licence the combination of inexperience, impatience and speed would prove to be fatal.

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George Scezney stood in the Barnesby Motors doorway allowing the sun to warm his broad back. Scezney, a SMBFC stalwart since 1961, was in the middle of selling a car to the SMBFC coach David Mills. Scezney and Mills talked cars but inevitably the conversation swung around to football. As the two men chatted over the road in the adjacent car park Jim sat in his EG Valiant joking around with Phillip and a few mates. All of a sudden Jim turned the engine over, revved it up a few times and as Scezney recalls:

He took off spinning his wheels and David Mills said to me, ‘That silly bugger, he’s going to bloody hurt somebody yknow’. I mean a lot of young people go off spinning their wheels and a couple of hours later we heard he had run this guy over. That’s why I remember that incident so well because of that comment. If Jimmy had gone down that road an hour later it would never have been a mark on his life.178

If Jim’s life to this point had been tumultuous for a young man it was about to get much worse. What started out as a simple two-car joy ride down to Albany turned out to be the most diabolically tragic situation Jim would ever find himself in. In the first car was

Neil Williams, a close friend of Jim and Phillip’s with Phillip as a passenger. Jim followed in his car with his girlfriend Barbara Wynne and a cousin, Marlon Miller. Jim had had his licence for three weeks.

Realising he needed fuel Jim quickly pulled into the Caltex service station on the south side of town. He filled the car, paid and jogged back to the vehicle. With each action Jim was unaware that by moving quicker than usual he was synchronising himself with a serious fate. He turned over the ignition, the Valiant fired, and pushing the accelerator to the floor, he roared out of the service station “I tried to catch him up. At the five mile hill I came around the corner and saw these signs and I tried to stop.” The signs Jim saw belonged to the Main Roads Department warning him to slow-down. Not knowing just how fast he was going, Jim could see that he was going to run into Neil’s car, which had stopped for the worker on the stop/go sign “I tried to swerve and go to the left. I hit the gravel and just lost control. I just saw a flash when I hit the poor fellow, finished up I ran into a front end loader.” Phillip’s recollections of the incident were much more vivid:

I remember being parked at this particular spot. This guy was holding the stop sign. I remember seeing Jimmy coming out of control down the side of the car. I saw the poor guy being hit by the car. It’s just something that words can’t describe. I’ll never forget it. It’s just sadness, it only seems like last week. I remember he sat there for at least an hour on the side of the road. He kept everything inside him, which was probably a mistake and to be honest I have got no idea how it affected him. It was something we never spoke about ever. I’ve never had anyone speak about it.

1.13 Unfolding

The loss of life brought about by Jim’s recklessness relegated him to the very outskirts of many people’s opinion. Nothing could detract from the horrible reality that Jim had

created. Jim’s age, his previous transgressions and his sporting profile, all of which were underpinned by his identity, further accentuated the swirling undercurrent of negativity in the community. I found many of these negative sentiments still prevailed in the interviews I conducted through the course of this project. Many people, but not all, said that Jim seemed to be destined for his fall from grace simply because he was bad. Many of these prevailing opinions resonated with the understanding that Jim, despite his prowess as a footballer, had blown any chance that his ability would afford him. Alan Carpenter recalls the time distinctly:

I suppose there’s underlying negativity towards a lot of Aboriginal people in all country areas in Western Australia. His convictions and so on would have reinforced some peoples views of Aboriginal people so any incident like that gives them a chance to externalise their pent up racism. I have a clear recollection that there was a very negative reaction. Jimmy was fairly well known because he was an outstanding junior footballer. Even though it was not an act of intent then there was a perception Jimmy was an angry man. He'd done something a couple of years beforehand and that kind of overlayed the previous perceptions of him in a lot of people’s minds. I distinctly recall people talking about the fact he was a champion [footballer] but this was the end of him. There was a general view that he was angry and he was going to be a bad man and this was all unfolding before people’s eyes.182

Chris Back reiterates Carpenter’s sentiments “I suppose Jimmy was always going to get into trouble with his nature [and] it was like with the accident ‘he’s gone too far this time’ and ‘he’s got to pay for his crime.’”183 For Scezney, the incident was a distinct turning point for many in the Mt Barker community:

I’d have to say that it was a great shame and tragedy in Jim’s life because I think it tainted him for life and it will always taint Jimmy because people will remember him locally more for that than they will for his sporting achievements.184

For Jim and his family the whole incident was devastating as he entered the wider public domain spectacularly and for all the wrong reasons. Incredibly, it wouldn’t take

183 Personal interview Chris Back 9/7/2001. My emphasis.
long for that local hostility to increase even further except this time the roll Jim would take in its construction would be, at most, minimal.\(^{185}\)

It was Thursday night and Gary Sandilands was in a good mood. He had been shearing all week and football training that night had not been easy. As Sandilands stood in the saloon bar of the Top Pub the atmosphere was relaxed but expectant. Sandilands was relaxed because the combination of the roaring fire in the corner and the beers he had consumed numbed any pain from work and the gruel of training. The expectance Sandilands felt came from the talk of his assembled teammates about the vital game coming up against North Albany on the Sunday. The 1976 season for the NMBFC had been nothing spectacular. They would probably make the finals but they sat at number four on the ladder, nothing too flash in a six side competition. A win on Sunday would improve the Demons’ chances in the finals providing the team with that most desirable football trait, confidence.

As Sandilands stood at the bar and talked tactics with team-mates for the Sunday game one could tell that he had an air of satisfaction. The hard work and training had paid off simply because he was named in the league side pinned on the board opposite the bar. Sandilands looked at his watch, it was getting on. Finishing his beer he lay the glass on its side and held up two fingers to the publican. The publican gave a gentle nod of his head, a simple and silent acknowledgment that he knew what Sandilands wanted. The publican reached in and grabbed a brown paper bag that already had two bottles of beer in it. He had pre-packed several like it because it was a Thursday night and with training and the finals it could get busy. Sandilands gave the publican 83 cents, grabbed the brown bag and lay it down on his left forearm, like one would a new-born baby and headed for the door.

\(^{185}\) Jim received an 18 month custodial sentence.
Huddled tightly in the corner, next to the fire, was the NMBFC selection committee. Robbie Scott, the coach, would intermittently stop squinting at his clip-board, lift his head and peer over the room mentally going through the equations. As a champion sports identity in the district he knew NMBFC needed to improve their chances on Sunday and what was required. Committee member John Bray stood to Scott’s left. His hair was tussled and his face was flushed. His eyes darted about and his shirt was hanging out. Bray looked dishevelled, particularly before the big games, but he was good for the club because he got things done. Next was the President John Dennis. Having played for South Fremantle in the 1950’s Dennis had moved from his family’s Wheatbelt farm in Cunderdin. In making his way down to the Plantagenet district he established himself as a respectable community member and, like Bray, was a doer. Dennis was however the antithesis of Bray because, as always, he was neat and composed dragging slowly on a cigarette. The fourth member of the committee was Butch Gilbert. Standing between Scott and Dennis, Gilbert’s expression was hangdog. His body was slightly convex, like he was trying to push his stomach out, which in turn seemed to dangerously lower the seat of his pants. Gilbert glanced lazily at Scott’s clipboard and then just as casually looked over the room, gulping from his middy. He lit a cigarette.

With his bottles of beer cradled safely in his arms Sandilands was a picture of amiability, a reflection of his popularity in the club and amongst his team-mates. As he moved towards the pub’s heavy front doors he politely interjected into the small groups of men talking amongst themselves, smiling and winking as he bid them goodnight. As he finally reached for the front door Sandilands was level with the huddle. He turned his head and raised his hand to bid them goodnight but Sandilands
could see they wanted to have a word. Something was up. Sandilands recalls walking over and Scott saying, “you’re actually named in the side but we are getting Jimmy Krakouer out to play this game. You’re going to appear that you’re playing, but you are not actually getting a game.”186 Sandilands was devastated by the news as playing league for NMBFC was something he took great pride in. The NMBFC hierarchy was resolute, believing that their chances of winning would be significantly increased with the exclusion of a fit young ruck, and the inclusion of Jim. With the finals approaching there could be no question, Jim had to play. What the NMBFC committee had not gauged was that their actions would cause an outcry not just throughout sporting circles within the district but the broader community. This was in part due to the secrecy surrounding Jim’s release from minimum security prison and the shock it created when the game was broadcast on the local radio station, 6VA, on Sunday afternoon.

It appears that the plan was instigated by John Bray.187 Bray was aware, through club connections at Pardelup prison farm188 that inmates in low security prisons participated in various weekend sporting activities. The idea was floated to other members of NMBFC’s hierarchy, like Dennis, Gilbert and Scott, and a plan was put in place. Dennis recalls, “In those days the boys that were in Pardelup they used to be able to get out and do these things. I just thought they can borrow [Jim] out for the afternoon, play his footy and go back again. As the president I never thought much of it. So he was duly picked in the side.”189 On the day of the game, Jim was ‘smuggled’ into North Albany’s home ground wearing an army great-coat, broad-brimmed hat and dark sunglasses. Such was the level of secrecy that even established members of

186 Personal interview Gary Sandilands 31/10/2001.
187 “I was a bit of the instigator”. Personal interview John Bray 13/7/2001.
188 Pardelup Prison Farm is situated approximately 40 km’s West of Mt Barker on Muir Highway.
189 Personal interview John Dennis 19/12/2000. My emphasis.
the league team like veteran Fred Mentha, were unaware of Jim’s inclusion as Mentha recalls “[It] shocked quite a few people when he ran out onto the ground. We only knew just before the game.”190 The shock Jim’s presence created was not to be underestimated as many of the locals, particularly those supporters from opposition football clubs, were completely incensed.

On the Tuesday the front page The Albany Advertiser made it very clear what it thought of NMBFC’s tactics describing it as an outrage and dubbed the affair - ‘The Jimmy Krakouer Incident’:

James Gordon Krakouer, a young Aboriginal football hero, was allowed out of Padelup Prison last Sunday to play for a Mt Barker club in an important game. Krakouer was convicted in the Albany District Court on June 11 of dangerous driving causing death. He was sentenced to 18 months jail with a four month period before being eligible for parole…Krakouer’s inclusion in the team has met with strong disapproval from many sporting people. Some claim it is wrong that a convicted person serving a jail term be treated “like a celebrity”. Some outraged sportsmen have written to the Premier telling him exactly what they think.191

The article went on further to discuss how the situation was, incredibly, facilitated by a Government agency:

The Director of the Department of Corrections, Mr Campbell, said in Perth today “I received an approach yesterday, and as a result of enquiries made, Krakouer will not be playing football any more this season. He said that there were probably dozens of inmates all over the State who played football last Sunday. He described this a “normal practice” for some inmates to play sport…One sportsman said “It appears football opens all doors–even jail doors.192

This theme was followed through in The Albany Advertisers ‘Letters to the Editor’.

Disgusted of Albany wrote:

I was rather amazed last Sunday when listening to the football broadcast on 6VA to hear that the Department of Corrections had allowed North Mount Barker footballer, J Krakouer, out of jail to play football. It is obvious that if a person can play football, all doors are open to

him…One wonders if Krakouer had been white and a non-footballer in jail for a minor offence, whether he would have been allowed out of prison to visit his family. It is little wonder there is racialism in this world. Its about time there were equal rights for whites.\(^{193}\)

In a more localised context Scezney points out the reason for the negativity towards Jim and the NMBFC was because:

> The thing that made the community even more angry was the fact that North Mt Barker had a fair bit to answer for. They got him out of jail to play football and that just sort of topped it off.\(^{194}\)

During my interview process, many in Mt Barker still felt that despite it being a common-practice, NMBFC stepped outside of the law by allowing Jim to play football.\(^{195}\) The actions of the NMBFC selection committee are still remembered and scrutinised by Mt Barker locals today and much of the blame is directed towards Jim.

1.14 Mr Magic

It would seem to this point that much of this story has been dedicated to Jim and not enough to Phillip. This is true, but true for the simple reason that on many occasions when I interviewed people, Jim seemed to dominate the topic of conversation. This is not to say that this was all people talked about but people’s memories seemed to locate Jim more readily than Phillip. Obviously this was because Jim became better known because he was older, he arrived on the sport scene earlier and his transgressions assured his local notoriety. Many people that I did interview from this period of the Krakouer’s life do remember Phillip but their recollections are more benign and less frequent. To put simply, Phillip is not seen as a threat.

\(^{193}\) The Albany Advertiser. 26/10/1976, p2.
\(^{194}\) Personal interview George Scezney 11/8/01.
\(^{195}\) Despite the controversy that this incident caused, legally neither the NMBFC or Jim had done anything wrong. It was an avenue that was pursued through the correct channels and the Department for Corrections. However, the level of secrecy compounded the negative sentiment around the incident which was exacerbated further locally [particularly in Mt Barker] due to the SDNFL President being a Mr Bert Henderson who is a life-long South Mt Barker supporter.
Phillip’s life to this point was a contrast to Jim’s as his profile slipped underneath the radar except when it came to football. Unlike Jim it had taken Phillip a while to develop mentally as a footballer. Skill-wise he had excellent ability, incredible speed and agility. Phillip’s handball was deadly accurate, likewise his foot passing. The area where Phillip markedly diverged from his brother was in his easy demeanour and on-field stylistics. Where Jim revelled in the clinches and always aspired to the next level. Phillip was just happy to play - to be on the ground and get a few kicks with his mates. With Jim’s elevation into senior ranks and his legal transgressions it meant they had not played together for the best part of two seasons. Content to be playing juniors Phillip was seen by his mates as very easy-going, standing him in stark contrast to Jim’s volatile and unpredictable machismo. As a boy from the neighbouring coastal town of Denmark, Mark Watson would see the Krakouer’s development and become good friends with both of them, particularly Phillip. This friendship developed so much that when both boys got older and began families of their own, Watson would be the godfather to two of Phillip’s four children:

I can recall going to what they used to call the cabbage-patch in [Mt] Barker which is where the race-course is now and I remember running into Jim and Phil there. I would have been ten or eleven. I always felt Phil was a very light person, like he never took too much very seriously. He had a wonderful understanding of the ball and how it fitted into his hand, a natural symmetry. I just felt he loved the game. Like he had a real exuberance to play the game and I recall times where he played very well and other times not playing so well. That didn’t seem to bother Phillip it was more just being out there.196

Paul Gillam also recalls Phillip’s easy demeanour “Phil was always [a] cheeky, funny bloke he was a good fella.”197 Murray Hammond, who is the same age as Phillip, knocked around with him at school. Hammond’s recollections of Phillip confirm his standing at school but he also adds that Phillip was “Just very shy, he was real quiet

197 Personal interview Paul Gillam ND. My emphasis.
but he never missed too much. He was never not listening.” Both agree that Phillip was different to Jim in many ways but when it came to football the Krakouers loved it. Jim and Phillip would often be seen walking around town with a football; chipping passes to one another across the street, looping handballs over panel vans, kicking into walls and reading the ricochet as they walked. The football was hardly ever out of their hands.

Phillip Krakouer stood out to his friends and peers because he was different to his older brother and because when it came to football Phillip had the ability to do two things: read the play and evade overt physical contact. Despite his size Phillip became a master of moving through human traffic at top pace while deftly avoiding collisions by shimmying his hips and turning blind to create classy, inventive movement of the ball. He became so good players would sometimes stop just to watch what he was doing. Some did it to marvel, others to analyse and emulate. Playing close in football at such an early age, Phillip was able to develop an intuitive facet to his game much earlier than many of his peers. This intuition meant that instead of just watching the ball arrive and then moving towards it, like many young footballers, Phillip orchestrated his movements organically with the passage of the football. He was able to regulate his momentum to be precisely where the ball was going to be while simultaneously summing up his obstacles and, more importantly, his options. In football parlance this is referred to as reading the play. Reading the play became a feature of Phillip’s game in which he was able to avail himself of a course of play, that, in a temporal sense, had yet to actually occur. Yet despite these inherent skills Phillip was reluctant to make the shift into the senior ranks as Jim had done. This

199 From my interviews with people from NMBFC and the SDNFL, this was also a skill that Jim had developed from a young age.
transition was not something that Phillip was willing to embrace for a number of reasons:

Quite honestly I didn’t want to be there playing seniors at 16 and a half because I was enjoying it where I was playing under 18’s. At the time I was doing alright [but] they put the pressure on me to come up and play half way through 76. They never approached me they approached the parents. Mum didn’t want anything to do with it. I wasn’t a big boy so Mum was always worried that something was going to happen. Dad? That’s what he always wanted.200

While Phillip admits his initial move from junior ranks was not as outstanding as Jim’s two years earlier he is quite modest in describing the half a season he did play as one in which he ‘did not struggle’. The match report of his first senior game against Denmark paints another picture and was assisted by Jim’s presence before being jailed for the driving offence:

Phillip Krakouer, playing his first senior league game ripped the Denmark defences to shreds. Phillip Krakouer knows what the game is about and his quick reflexes and same balance and skills of his brother points to a bright future for him in football.201

In retrospect, Phillip acknowledges his move into the NMBFC seniors was the start of a mental shift enabling him to take his football to even greater heights in the future:

It [the game] was quicker. It was everything I thought it would be and looking back at it that probably kick-started my career making that move. Moving from where I was comfortable, in the comfort zone, to going up and getting extended, that half a year in 1976 probably set my career up. Just that little move because I had to go back and start all over again [and] I had to work.202

♦

If Phoebe had reservations about Phillip playing senior football in the SDNFL she would be justified. Being small, yet nimble and smart, Phillip would have initially been without the protective presence of Jim and playing against men. These bigger, stronger opponents could inflict serious damage to a under-developed body and cast doubt in the mind of a fragile 16-year-old. This meant Phillip, in order not to get hurt,

played in a heightened state of awareness. For Stocks, Phillip’s ability to adjust was inherent to his playing style:

I guess when you’re that good and you’re playing senior footy in the bush at the age of sixteen you become a target very early on. You’ve got to develop an awareness [and] it was already built into Phil and Jimmy because playing senior footy and embarrassing grown men they are going to try and find a way to stop you. The awareness that the Krakouers had set them apart.203

The half season Phillip played in 1976 saw him become a vital member of the senior NMBFC side so that by the commencement of the 1977 fixtures age belied his seasoned touch. Playing in a variety of roles, as a follower or on the wing, any doubts he may have had seemed to fall away as Phillip revelled in the senior competition. For the local press Jim Krakouer’s younger brother was proving a source of considerable interest:

Mr Magic of the SDNFL and a bundle of talent. His marking is sensational and kicking nanchalantly [sic] delightful. Also has pace to burn.204

In the third term the Demons put the issue well beyond doubt with a five goal quarter where the busy Krakouer was the most prominent player...Phillip Krakouer gave his roving rivals a lesson with a class display.205

North Mount Barker, spearheaded by Krakouer, who all day had kicked goals from everywhere to finally kick 9.3 for the match was too much for the visitors.206

During the 1977 season, Kevin Draper, Jim’s high school sparring partner, could see how damaging Phillip could be on the football field and recalls playing against him in a Mt Barker derby:207

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203 Personal interview Gary Stocks 31/7/2001. My emphasis.
204 The Albany Advertiser. 7/7/1977, p23.
207 “For the most part it was a kick and hope affair interspersed with some excellent handling of the wet ball by a few players. In this bracket came Phillip Krakouer and Kevin Draper. They were the two outstanding players in the game and watching these two handle the conditions while still maintaining their skills was worth the entry fee alone”. The Albany Advertiser. 9/8/1977, p27.
I remember they put Phil in the centre for some reason which didn’t please me at all. In those days you were allowed to be a roaming centre man and you weren’t accountable as much as you are now.208

Draper, realising the potential for Phillip to wreak havoc, thought he would employ a simple strategy and try to judge Phillip’s line toward the football:

[The] first couple of times I thought I’ll just try and anticipate him [it was] just hopeless. In the end I worked out, and it didn’t work brilliantly, that I could just go in one direction and not change. Generally players would try and follow them and anticipate, hopeless. I’d just go ‘I’m going to go there and if he doesn’t turn that way ok.’ But a couple of times he did.209

Phillip’s stylish moves on the field endeared him to many of the NMBFC people who were regularly treated to his skill and bravado in taking on bigger opposition and beating them. NMBFC President, John Dennis recounts, “I used to refer to him as the gazelle because he used to run, jump and leap. He was very athletic.”210 As Phillip developed his performances were sometimes complimented in 1977 by appearances from Jim who was playing in Perth for Claremont and was allowed to return to play for his old club on a country permit system. For some opposing teams this was not a welcome sight as the two Krakouer brothers took to the field and tested back-lines with their unique type of sibling rivalry, goal-kicking.

Like so many other facets of their playing careers, Phillip’s 1977 SDNFL season closely emulated Jim’s in 1975. Phillip took out the leagues Fairest and Best, the Kleeman Medal, plus a host of other awards.211 Phillip had made a significant mark in a short amount of time on the local competition and the choice was now his. He had reached his goal of playing league for the club his father and brother had played for.

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209 Personal interview Kevin Draper 12/11/01. My emphasis.
210 Personal interview John Dennis 19/12/2000.
211 These included the leading goal-kicker for the league and for his club. The Byfield Trophy for the fairest and best in the Country Week B section. The Warburton trophy for the Great Southern Carnival, The Sunday Times Medal, the Cobber Cook medal for fairest and best in the grand final and the NMBFC fairest and best. North Mount Barker Football Club 1992 Year Book p32.
but the question remained, would he continue to settle for the country life? Family, friends, football and work were all there. Everything around Phillip Krakouer at the time was all he ever wanted and aspired to. Others were far more fatalistic about Phillip’s path. Dennis explains, “It was always a foregone conclusion. Never any doubt. They just had stardom written all over them.”

Perhaps it was inevitable that the Krakouers would eventually wind up in Perth playing football together but the transition was like their individual development with the NMBFC. Jim grabbed the chance but Phillip was more reticent about moving.

The Krakouer unit would not begin in Perth until 1978 but the foundations for their movement there had come about some years earlier. The principle architect in their transition from Mt Barker was, one of the most notorious football identities to come out of Western Australia, and regarded by many as one of Western Australia’s most intriguing football characters. Revered by many as a football visionary but derided by others as a damaging and unpredictable opportunist, it would be his early influence which would see the Krakouer brothers come to the Claremont Football Club. At Claremont, these two young Indigenous brothers would come to make a name for themselves and set the football fraternity in Western Australia alight.

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212 Personal interview John Dennis 19/12/2000.
Chapter Two

The Big Move

2.1 Tigerland

Unlike traditional working-class football clubs like Swan Districts, East Perth, East Fremantle and South Fremantle, Claremont Football Club’s (CFC) reputation has historically been associated with position and privilege. In many ways Claremont’s reputation as college boys and silvertails and its political associations with the Liberal Party, could be compared to that of Carlton or Melbourne in the VFL/AFL. Tucked in neatly against the Swan River, the suburb of Claremont buttresses Western Australia’s affluent and leafy old money suburbs, Dalkeith and Peppermint Grove. Adjacent to Claremont in a westerly direction is Perth’s ‘picture postcard’ beach suburb, Cottesloe, and just to the north lies the other prized coastal suburbs of Swanbourne, Floreat and City Beach. Historically, CFC has honed its college boy reputation, largely due to CFC’s feeder schools being the established private institutions of Christ Church Grammar, Scotch College, John XXIII and Hale.

The Claremont/Cottesloe Football Club entered the Western Australian football competition for the first time in 1926. Due to their late arrival into the WAFL their first known moniker was that of the Babies, used alongside the equally pejorative description, the Riversiders. Today the CFC is known as the Tigers but there remains a belief that CFC still suffers from being ‘soft’. Even though the majority of football identities I interviewed about this perception believed it was nothing more than a myth,

214 Casey, p22.
215 This general perception is validated in a 1964 Rigby cartoon where a Claremont footballer is depicted hitting an opposition player. It is a reference to a game against West Perth where fights broke out all over the ground. The caption at the bottom reads and refers to Claremont Football Club; “Reprimand him somebody! He’s completely out of character.” Casey, p102.
it is something that football followers in Western Australia do, to some degree, believe.

Kevin Casey, in *The Tigers’ Tale: The Origins and History of the Claremont Football Club*, acknowledges economic markers as determining factors of CFC’s soft image. Casey historically attributes this to the lack of an overtly intimidating identity in any of Claremont’s playing sides:

An associated theme that recurs throughout the history of the club is the lack of an ‘enforcer’ who could distract opposition players…This is not to say that Claremont hasn’t had its fair share of courageous or tough players during its history, but none of them consistently intimidated opposing teams to the extent that champion players were protected enough to be able to give full rein to their talents.216

Despite this, Claremont throughout its history has had an eclectic mix of college-educated players, country footballers and Indigenous players. John O’Connell, Wayne Blackwell and Ben Allan have played alongside Alan Mycock, Tom Pearce and Alan Daniels. Indigenous players such as Larry, Derek and Dale Kickett, Brett and Dean Farmer, Michael Mitchell, Irwin, Cameron, Clayton and Chris Lewis and the Krakouer brothers have further enhanced this. Claremont’s association with Indigenous players stretches back to its earliest days with Maley Hayward in 1928.217 Hailing from Tambellup in the state’s south Hayward became “the first Aboriginal player to play league football in Western Australia.”218 Hayward, who played one season with Claremont, would go on with his brothers, Billy and Tommy to establish their names with South Fremantle. It is not known why Hayward changed clubs after only one season at Claremont but his role has been acknowledged. Casey says that Hayward, was:

the forerunner of a great contingent of Aboriginal players who were to entertain the Tiger’s supporters with magnificent displays of football skill. Many of these Aboriginal players went on to make their names household words not only in

216 Casey, p (x). My emphasis.
218 Casey, p22.
Western Australia but also in Australia when they graduated from Claremont Oval to the hallowed turf of the M.C.G.  

Ironically, this Indigenous association with the CFC has been alongside some of the most significant names in conservative politics who have been long time members, patrons and supporters of the CFC. People such as Hasluck, Hassell, and the Courts have all sought too, at some stage, impose their political will on Indigenous peoples' land, rights and interests.

2.2 “Come up and have a crack”

My first round of interviews in Melbourne were in August 2000. Three months prior to going I drew up, with Jim and Phillip’s consultation, a list of people I believed were fundamental to the project. Through various means I procured prospective interviewee’s facsimile and phone numbers. In the facsimile I stated who I was, what my intentions were, (ie to write the biography of Jim and Phillip) and gave my contact details. The very first reply I received was from Malcolm Brown. Excited and relieved I was further buoyed by a succinct piece of encouragement he had scrawled at the bottom of his facsimile back to me - “It’s about time” Brown wrote. Brown’s interview was the first I conducted in Melbourne and I was immediately struck by his friendly nature.

Knowing Brown’s colourful past I couldn’t help feeling wary of him, like the time he lost the toss to Polly Farmer before the 1971 WANFL second semi final and cockily indicated he would kick with the breeze. At South Fremantle Brown was a prodigious developer of Indigenous talent. With names such as Stephen Michael, Maurice Rioli, Benny Vigona, Willy Roe, Basil Campbell and Nicky Winmar, Brown’s handling of

219 Casey, p190.
220 My main source for contact details for this project came from Ron Joseph.
Indigenous players was phenomenal, long before Kevin Sheedy’s method of using Indigenous players in the VFL, which has seen Sheedy and Essendon become a force in the game’s development of Indigenous footballers, issues and welfare. For Brown, this association with Indigenous Australia stemmed back to his childhood in the small Wheatbelt town of Dowerin, 150 kilometres north east of Perth, where he was a boundary umpire:

Probably the best player I’ve seen in any capacity [was] a bloke called Lionel Walley. He was just a super star. He used to talk to himself and I can remember him saying things like ‘go for it Lionel’, ‘fly for it Lionel’, ‘good mark Lionel’, ‘long kick Lionel’. I thought what have I struck here? He was sensational. I mean Gerovich was my idol but I reckon that this bloke took as many marks as Gerovich did, he was a genius.\(^{222}\)

It was in Brown’s coaching role for the Claremont football club in 1975 that he would first come to see the Krakouers, and several others, in the SDNFL. Brown, himself a product of country football, believed that the key to Claremont’s future lay in its country zones:

It was my belief that if you want to develop a shocking club, and Claremont were a shocking club, you’ve got to go and get country players. They [Claremont] produced good individual juniors, but never collectively. So we started the process with Baden Harper, the Panizza’s, Alan Daniels and the Krakouers.\(^{223}\)

For Jim, Brown’s 1975 recruitment drive coincided with his stellar SDNFL season and would prove to be his path out of Mt Barker and an antidote to his seemingly recidivist behaviour. Jim recalls the time, “I had not a bad year in the country and then Mal Brown and I think Peter Rule from Claremont came down. Brownie was coaching at the time and we had a yarn and decided to come up the next year and have a crack.”\(^{224}\)

What impressed Brown was obvious:

They had outstanding ability. They were very skilled, very cat-like on their feet. Jimmy, because he was more aggressive [was] more electrifying. Phillip did the


same job week in, week out. Phillip always seemed to be out on his own. You’d wonder how the hell he was out there on his own when someone was on him”.225

Ironically, despite his eye for talent and vision for Claremont’s future, Brown would never coach the Krakouers at club level. A series of incidents plus poor team performances reduced Brown’s standing with the CFC board and his position eventually became untenable. The most famous of these indiscretions occurred in 1976 when he sent John Colreavy back onto the ground in a game against West Perth, resulting in Claremont having an extra player on the ground. For the Claremont board it was typical of Brown’s, “unsettling and erratic behaviour.”226 Yet his legacy at the club is still felt and regarded as a turning point for later success:

Many would claim that he was the best developer of youth that the club had had to that time…He also nurtured country zones and generally strengthened the club’s ties by visiting country clubs and conducting coaching clinics [and] over the years helped to lift Claremont to a power in the League.227

While Brown’s input into the team cannot be denied, CFC started to take on a different shape from within. In 1976, Wal Maskiell, became the president and with this appointment Maskiell “immediately brought about a certain speculative and entrepreneurial flare [sic] to the role.”228 This flair was a deliberate tactic by Maskiell to engender a more professional sporting outlook, both on and off the ground, for the CFC.229 Many people at the CFC saw this was needed because for too long CFC had developed a reputation as a social club that played football.230 Claremont had not experienced a premiership victory since 1964, despite coming tantalisingly close in 1972, and they were desperate for success. Luckily, Graham Moss had established

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226 Casey, p134.
227 Casey, p135. My emphasis.
228 Casey, p135.
229 Maskiell’s vision for the game must be recognised. In 1979, Western Australia’s sesqui-centenary, The WANFL produced a book to celebrate the game. Out of all the WANFL presidents Maskiell was the only one who could see the game going national, “Maybe it is also time to question the viability of WA being able to support eight semi professional teams. A national competition seems the logical eventual solution”. Football 150. WANFL, Promotional Graphics, Perth, 1979, p73.
230 This was the sentiment conveyed to me by both Roger Barns and Lloyd Christopher who had been specifically recruited from other WAFL clubs to instil in Claremont discipline.
himself as one of the VFL’s best ruckmen and was looking to return home to the west with his old WANFL club, Claremont. Fresh from his 1976 Brownlow medal win, the first by a Western Australian, Moss would be the major coup of Maskiell’s appointment, proving to be a decisive development in a long process of acquiring on-field success. It was also crucial in procuring the thing that Claremont had struggled to earn from other clubs for many seasons: respect.

It is perhaps a mark of Moss’s character that he was prepared to make significant personal sacrifices when he agreed to come back to Western Australia and coach his old struggling club. Returning to the WAFL in 1977, it is certain Moss relinquished the chance to win perhaps more Brownlow Medals considering he was a runner up in 1973, his first VFL season. Further, having played with Claremont until 1985, if Moss had played with Essendon for the same period of time, he would have played in three Grand Finals and won two premierships. His football legacy, on paper, would have rivalled Polly Farmer’s and Gary Dempsey’s, the starting and resting rucks, in the AFL’s team of the Century. But Moss explains his decision, “It was always my desire to return to Perth to finish my football career and I felt that if I didn’t take that opportunity then the opportunity might not present itself in the future.” Moss offered Claremont more than just the prestige of being the first West Australian to win a Brownlow. He was a figure other players could aspire to play with and learn from by bringing leadership to a club floundering during Brown’s years.

Maskiell orchestrated fiscal direction and Moss was back in the fold as “1977 heralded a decade of stability both on and off the field at Claremont.” For Jim it was also a time of change and adjustment that saw him leave Mt Barker voluntarily and pursue his goal

231 Personal interview Graham Moss 31/10/2000.
232 Casey, p139.
of playing football at a higher level. In moving to Perth Jim became part of a world where the everyday was unfamiliar and his family hundreds of miles away. This was not lost on Jim:

> It was pretty hard. We used to try and get back as much as we could to [Mt] Barker. I had always been around the family and Perth was a lot different to the country. Everything was new, bigger and busier. More people. [I] just had to get used to it.233

Initially Jim and his girlfriend, Barbara Wynne, stayed with Jim’s sister, Pat, in the suburb of Wilson. Travelling costs and a lack of money saw Jim and Barbara move closer to Claremont Oval where the club organised a flat on Davies Road in Claremont.234 Here Jim could concentrate on his football because he was closer to the club and its facilities. Jim also had an arrangement where he could head home after the colts match and return mid-week to resume training. Despite missing his family, it appears that Jim was happy to play his first season in the colts competition. Realising he was new to the club Jim wanted to establish himself as a player first and foremost. He explains:

> I guess you had to start off down the bottom. Start off in your age group and then just see what happens from there. I’d have probably been happy enough to play in the colts that year and see what eventuated out of that.235

For anyone from Mt Barker interested in following Jim’s progress it was a stark contrast between *The Albany Advertisers* sharp attention to *The West Australian’s* meagre coverage of colts matches. With Jim playing and regularly contributing goals, the distance between him and his family was a constant issue. Driving down home after games was a welcome relief and a chance to see friends and family but Jim was fully aware that he would always have to return to Perth.

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234 This is the same road that CFC is situated on.
Being caught between a burning desire to play football and the urge to move back home was torturous. Going to training and staying fit and focussed was weighed up against being with family, playing local football and pursuing such activities as kangaroo hunting. Jim’s desire to play football at WANFL level became his driving force. Without it Jim would probably have done what so many young men from the country do, return. The CFC perhaps did not know that Jim was on the very cusp of returning to Mt Barker for good. The reason for his intended departure had nothing to do with his immense homesickness he felt but actually came from within the club itself.

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The colt’s game had just finished. Inside the Claremont change-rooms the mood was as up-beat as possible after a win. Some colt’s players milled about sipping cans of Coke, others attended cut knees, a testament to the summer hardening of the oval. Others just sat staring blankly, cheeks flushed, exhausted. Jim emerged from the showers barely wet. He dressed quickly and quietly not glancing up or acknowledging anyone else in the room. The only indication of Jim’s mood was the way he punched his football gear into his bag. Short, angry motions. All up, with hair combed and shoes tied, it had only taken him a few short minutes. In future years fellow team-mates would come to realise that quick showers were Jim and Phillip’s post game modus operandi. After the game Jim and Phillip’s obligation was to be with their family, who in many cases had driven up from the country or flown from the other side of Australia to see them play. Why waste time? Outside the change rooms Barbara waited and as soon as she saw Jim she could tell that something was not right.

Saying nothing and walking a few steps behind Barbara followed Jim to the car-park. Jim flung his bag into the back seat. In one movement he got into the car and unlocked the passenger side door. Barbara opened the door and nervously sat down. Jim sparked
the car into life by revving it a few times. Each rev screamed more than the last, a reflected echo of his rage. He banged the car into reverse then into first causing its wheels to spin, flicking bitumen up in a dusty spitting fan. Jim ripped out of the car park and without so much as a glance, he gunned it. Claremont had seen the last of him. The reason for Jim’s rage was the verbal dressing-down he had copped at half-time from the colt’s coach Syd Dufall. Dufall, an old style hot gospeller, had singled Jim out for his lack lustre performance:

I was nearly going to chuck it. I mustn’t have played that good that day. Old Syd Dufall he came out and said that I came up with a big rep[utation] and all this sort of business and got stuck into me a bit. He probably said a few more nastier words but. I was nearly going to give it away that day. I don’t know what made me stay but it’s good that I did.²³⁶

Perhaps the drive down to Mt Barker tempered Jim’s resolve to stay on and assuaged his anger. Perhaps seeing his old mates or playing on the Sunday for the NMBFC made him realise that the WAFL competition was where he needed to be if he truly wanted to pursue his football career. Thankfully, Jim Krakouer made his decision to return because if he had not the football public of Western Australia would not know how good he actually was, and more importantly nor would he.

2.3 Better-than-average ability

If Moss was under any illusions that any success he had achieved in the VFL would transfer neatly to Claremont’s team they would be quickly dispelled. By round seven of the 1977 WAFL season Claremont were sitting in last position. They started the season off with a twenty seven point loss to Perth but then rallied to a unconvincing five point away win over Subiaco. Moss was leading by example but the assistance he required on the field was found wanting:

How long Moss can continue to handle such a workload remains to be seen. No player has dominated the ruck in such manner since Graham Farmer was at his top in his early days for East Perth. Moss is making mediocre team mates look good but needs a lot more support.237

By contrast East Fremantle had raced to the top of the ladder thanks to the contribution of a young Jim Sewell who had, in three games, destroyed back lines by kicking 27 goals. In the third game of the season against Claremont Sewell kicked 12.1. The only stand-out players for Claremont in the first three games were Moss, Ken Hunter and John Hayes, and the signs for the CFC was ominous. For The West Australian’s chief football writer, Geoff Christian, the 1977 season had become a polarised affair:

The 1977 football season is only four matches old, but already it has been established that there are four top-class teams in the competition and four others destined to make up the numbers. East Fremantle, Perth, West Perth and East Perth have left no doubt they are quality football sides….South Fremantle, Swan Districts, Subiaco and Claremont all crashed badly on Saturday leaving the distinct impression that none of these sides has the capacity to sustain a winning run long enough to upset the balance of the top four.238

By the middle of the season CFC’s fortunes, both on and off the field, were in tatters. In one game against South Fremantle where Claremont led at half time, the eventual full time score showed that South emerged the victors by 23 points. Colin Hopkins, a football writer for The West Australian had followed most of Claremont’s games for the season and he was scathing in his appraisal:

Claremont are a team that lacks organisation, ability and dedication to a cause. Some Claremont supporters rated Saturday’s performance as one of the best in recent weeks and put it down as an improved effort. If that’s the case I hope I never see a poor one.239

Maskiell could see his vision to make the CFC a power in the WAFL competition unravelling. If success was to spring forth at Claremont hard decisions were required. For Maskiell the situation was so grave that he began to think that he may have to do

238 The West Australian. 18/4/1977, p52. My emphasis.
239 The West Australian. 9/5/1977, p58.
something he had never contemplated doing before, discuss the selection of the team with the selection committee.

With a quarter of the season gone Claremont were playing marginally better football but it was only being played in bursts, a half here, three quarters there. Moss was running himself ragged in the ruck and Hunter was dashing and effective across half-back. A fearless, untidy sinew, Hunter some days looked like he had just got out of bed and because of this he was my favourite Tiger. I remember going to a game at the age of eleven and waiting patiently at the gate with a black texta and a *Budget.*240 I got a few of Claremont’s league players but by far my most prized scribble was Hunters. Later, just before the league game, my Dad had managed to get both of us into the Claremont change-rooms. I could not believe how lucky I was to be in this inner-sanctum. I remember Hunter sitting on the bench in front of the lockers putting his boots on. Dad gently pushed me forward and I nervously approached Hunter again to sign my book. Hunter looked at me “Didn’t I give you one of these earlier?” I was shocked and nodded quickly. Hunter’s loose gait, messy hair and permanent ankle-hugging socks disguised an astute ability to read the play which was coupled with a brazen indifference to his own well-being. Hunter inspired me as he regularly backed into sweating, heaving rabbles. Sailing like a thin spinnaker across the face of a hairy muscular front, he would emerge on the other side unscathed, in possession and running hard.

While some of Claremont’s areas of concern were slowly being resolved they were still having problems in other areas. The most notable of these was in the roving division. If Moss had not been as dominant in the ruck perhaps the roving position would have come under scrutiny at a later time. Moss’s class in the ruck was glaringly obvious but Claremont were not converting on the scoreboard. This was because the positions that
linked up from Moss’s palm to the full-forwards foot came under the microscope. For Claremont, getting first use of the ball was the lifeline to any attack and was being compromised by a weakened roving division.241

By the end of the second round CFC were demoralised with no relief in sight. Claremont’s season had become one of patching leaks as they battled to win games and tried to ward off finishing last. If that wasn’t bad enough they were sailing into a storm against the side who were on top of the ladder by two games and would finish the season as premiers: Perth.

Perth Football Club’s season had been a picture of determined, ruthless consistency. Playing attractive attacking football the Demons would go into the game as ‘hellishly’ hot favourites against the Tigers ‘snowflake’s’ chance. Claremont’s only advantage was it was a home game. In the end this offered very little benefit as Claremont went down by 98 points. The match report reflected the gravity of CFC situation “Claremont gave in very weakly. While they offer such limp resistance as this they will continue to be a chopping block for top sides.”242 It was in this game that Perth’s bristling roving department highlighted the ineffectiveness of Claremont’s smaller brigade:

Perth’s explosive division is headed by State rovers Robert Wiley and Chris Mitsopoulos. They also have Gary Gibellini and Doug Farrant, two of the most talented and experienced players of their type in WA…Mitsopoulos and Farrant were the work-horses on the ball in this [first] half. Wiley and Gibellini came into their own in the second.243

With this loss there were no more excuses for Claremont. With too many passengers, injuries to players like Hunter, and Moss running himself into the ground, there needed

240 A Budget is a record of all the news and statistics about the clubs and players in the WAFL.
241 “Barry Price…has been given the role of second rover, an area of concern for most of the season for Claremont”. The West Australian. 1/7/1977, p56. I would further add that Claremont’s first rover Bennett was consistent but not outstanding at this point of the season.
242 The West Australian. 11/7/1977, p74.
243 Rob Wiley was the stand out for the game kicking ten goals. The West Australian. 11/7/1977, p74. My emphasis.
to be changes. These feelings emanated to the very top of the CFC. Maskiell started to
make a beeline towards the only person who could make the changes, Moss, and that
change amongst other things would be in the shape of Jim Krakouer.

So why did Maskiell break the golden rule and approach Moss about playing Jim in
Claremont’s league side?\textsuperscript{244} There can be no doubt that Maskiell had a variety of
reasons. Perhaps if Claremont had been more aware of Jim’s homesickness, the Dufall
incident and the potential that had in influencing Jim’s departure perhaps his transition
into league may have come sooner. At the hub of Maskiell’s concerns was the reality
that Claremont’s on-field performances had been dismal and something had to be done.

In my interview with Maskiell I felt there had been a personal sense of urgency about
playing Jim because he was simply not fulfilling his potential:

When Jimmy first came up they put him in the colts and he worked at about fifty
percent of his normal rate. Then for the first time in my football life I interfered
with the selection committee by saying ‘it’s ridiculous leaving Jimmy play colts
when we all know he is an outstanding footballer’. He really was. He didn’t
have a fair go [in the colts] because if he had he would have run all over them
with skill. So when they promoted him to the league, because he’d been playing
with men’s teams, it was easier for him playing football I think. When he got
promoted he just blossomed right out.\textsuperscript{245}

Allan Daniels, who was playing with Jim in the colts, recalls the onus was placed on
Jim, “I can remember Graham Moss came in at half time and said [to Jim], ‘Look if you
have a good second half we’ll play you in the league next week.’ In the third quarter he
had seven kicks, four handballs, took four marks and kicked four goals.”\textsuperscript{246} In my
interview with Moss he recalls the situation differently. “In 1977, we had a very poor
year and there was a policy in the club to go for youth. These players were all being

\textsuperscript{244} When administrative staff, even the club president, interfere in the game plan it can cause massive
complications within a football club. A similar incident occurred with Barry Cable who was coaching
East Perth in 1978. In round 18 Cable used his ruckman Wayne Duke sparingly much to the dismay of the
East Perth administration who thought Duke should be taking more of a role in the game against East
Fremantle. That night at the presentations Cable said that if such actions were employed again he would

\textsuperscript{245} Personal interview Wal Maskiell 11/12/2000. My emphasis.

\textsuperscript{246} Personal interview Alan Daniels 7/4/2001. My emphasis.
looked at.” After sixteen games Jim and another young colts player, Ken Wright, made their league debut for Claremont against Subiaco.

Monday’s match report in *The West Australian* referred to it as a game displaying “a few rays of hope for the future”, which Jim could rightly claim was in part a reference to his contribution:

Claremont have struggled to produce a top rover since Bruce Duperouzel left the club but former Albany player Jim Krakouer offers them something. He was promoted straight into the league side from the colts and was obviously nervous. His kicking was a little disappointing, but this will improve. Krakouer and Greg Bennett were no match for the accomplished Subiaco pair of Vin Catoggio and Graham Shultz. But Krakouer showed when he flashed into the play at times that he did have better-than-average ability and he has pace.

Jim finished the game with a goal and a point and a recollection of a passage of play involving one of Claremont’s more senior players, Dalton Gooding:

Yeah it was good. I adjusted well. Just remember one part Dalton Gooding come out of the centre and was running past me. I kicked it and he said a few things, something about ‘fucking hand ball it’. I was under pressure myself so I just kicked it long. Just got the ball onto my boot quick as I could. Maybe I could have got the hand ball off. I’m not sure.

One person who relished Jim’s debut, probably as much as Jim himself, was Maskiell, as his dangerous pitch to the selection committee had paid off:

Thank god, Jimmy got one of the best players on the ground in his first league game. That was my consolation. They gave him his chance and he grabbed it and never looked back.

For Jim the feeling was mutual. The opportunity to play seniors had given him a chance to play football at a league level. He had proven to everyone that he could do it. The time away from home, the nagging pain of missing everything that was familiar, the training - it had all been worth it. It was a chance to make something of a life that only

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247 Personal interview Graham Moss 31/10/2000.
248 *The West Australian*. 18/7/1977, p70.
249 *The West Australian*. 18/7/1977, p70.
several months before had been looking increasingly predictable. Jim had a chance to
develop as an athlete and to strive for the highest level that his sport had to offer:

I always wanted to just keep playing for Claremont. So once I’d been able to
play seniors I just wanted to keep playing for Claremont because of the higher
challenge to play against the better players.252

The reality for Claremont was they faced a difficult time ahead. Described variously as
flops, hardly sighted, and waiting on the fringes253 Claremont’s soft tag was being given
a powdery make-over as they waited for their nails to dry. It seems that the youth policy
Moss was referring too in my interview with him was not considered until after a 41
point flogging by East Fremantle. The reason I suggest this is because the sub-text of
the article points directly towards the distinct lack of blooding young talent at this point.

“The Claremont selectors should take a good look at their colts side which has now won
16 of their 17 games.”254 To further validate this point Jim was used as the prime
example:

New rover Jim Krakouer, a product of the North Mt Barker club, but a colts
player earlier in the season, showed ample skills and ball handling ability to
finish with 22 kicks and three goals.255

It seems from the newspaper articles at the time Jim was at the vanguard of CFC’s push
for success. Jim revelled in the challenge coming up against rovers like Rob Wiley, Les
Fong, Rod Barrett, Wayne Otway and the nuggetty Tony Buhagiar. Jim’s selection as
the starting rover for Claremont would rarely vary. In just three games he had gone from
a colt’s player to playing league; given the quality of the WANFL, it was something
that many youngsters rarely did. It was acknowledgment that Jim met the standard
required and more importantly he became, with Moss, a member of one of the most
significant rucking combinations the country had seen.256

256 In the six games Jim played in the 1977 season Claremont won two games and he averaged just over
two goals a game. He also won the 6IX award for best first year player receiving $500.00.
From twenty one games played in 1977 Claremont won a paltry six. The good news for CFC supporters was that in Jim they had found an answer to their roving woes. But 1978 would usher in another Krakouer into the CFC. The word around the CFC was that one Krakouer was good but with two in the side, well, anything was possible. Maybe even a premiership.

2.4 X2

Historically, a feature of Western Australian football is its free flowing, open style. Bigger ovals and the drier conditions ensured that football played in Western Australia was fast and attractive. Victorian football, prior to better curatorial practices, drainage techniques and retractable roofs, was seen as a superior competition but at the mercy of the elements. For years rain in Victoria would render playing surfaces marsh-like and reduce contests to dour muddy slogs. With the advent of State of Origin Football, the differences could be seen first hand as players vied for national honours while adapting to the host state’s localised hostilities and seasonal idiosyncrasies. For Martin Flanagan, the place a footballer comes from is a significant determiner of the style of play and player types:

It seemed to me that the Victorians were more practiced, more rigid in their ways. They prided themselves on the physicality of their game...At the time all the best rovers in the game originated from outside Victoria I thought that was significant because the game has to be essentially skill-based for the little man to have a chance. The more overtly physical the game becomes, the more it generates into a litany of bruising encounters, the less chance rovers have. I also thought the Krakouers played less creative footy the longer they were in Victoria, and they were the most creative players I’ve seen. Western Australian footy has tended to be different again theirs is an agile, long running game which has presumably has a lot to do with their larger ovals and the greater proportion of Aboriginal players.257

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257 Pascoe, p218. My emphasis.
When Phillip joined Jim at Claremont in 1978 they joined the well established ranks of Indigenous players in the WANFL. In players such as the Hayward Brothers, Polly Farmer, Square Kilmurray, Syd Jackson, Irwin Lewis, Jack Hunt, Bill Dempsey, Kevin Hill and John Mcguire, Western Australian football followers had witnessed many talented Indigenous footballers. In 1978, South Fremantle’s Indigenous player group was perhaps the most potent, consisting of Stephen Michael, Maurice Rioli, Benny Vigona and the imposing Basil Campbell. Swans had the Narkle Brothers, Keith and Phil, and East Fremantle had the live-wire Kevin Taylor. East Perth were served by Larry Kickett and Barry Cable, who had returned to coach the Royals after securing a premiership with North Melbourne in the historic 1977 replay against Collingwood in the VFL.

For Phillip, his outstanding year in the country awakened a greater desire to play football at a higher level. Over the course of 1977, Phillip’s enthusiasm and confidence was slowly percolating. This could be attributed to his development as a player in a strong country league but it was also influenced greatly by Jim’s WAFL experiences:

I think once Jimmy made that initial step and give it a go, that’s where I wanted to be. I wanted to do the same. It wasn’t until the end of 77 that I had the confidence that I could do it. It was exciting to travel up and see him play and I, for one, never ever thought that I’d be up there until the year I had in 77 then I realised I could be a chance to join him.\textsuperscript{258}

The differences in the way Jim and Phillip approached such matters were as different as the way they kicked a football. Jim’s \textit{front and square} approach was as marked as Phillip’s evasive, loose style. Jim’s competitive drive was marked even further by Phillip’s laissez-aller approach. For Jim, football was a serious business that required serious attention to detail, adhering to the principal, ‘you only get out what you put in’. For Phillip football was a game he loved to play, but it was just that, a game. Only as

\textsuperscript{258} Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 31/8/2000.
Phillip began to work at his game did he take it more seriously as each stage required more commitment, discipline and concentration.

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Pre-season training for any football player is a gruelling experience. New, generally younger players must prove themselves against those who are more established. Youth is met by experience. Speed by resilience. Brashness with maturity. It is a competition within the player group to determine who will, and will not, remain. Drills are designed to increase a player’s physical fitness but they are also employed to see who is mentally up to the task. Through training, a player’s strengths are acknowledged and their weaknesses exposed as sprints and long distance running, sit-ups, push-ups, medicine balls, weights, skipping ropes, plastic hats and stop-watches conspire to sort the ‘men from the boys.’ The only thing the player group has in common is that they will all be scrutinised.

For young, raw country recruits pre-season training has the added dimension of taking them away from home for the first time. Strange new frontiers, like cooking meals and shopping, are vital as is the task of trying to get a job or stay busy in between club commitments. For country recruits the culture-shock of a city and all of its foreign conventions and distractions can trigger a strong desire to return to a more benign rhythm. Ultimately the pre-season period for a young country footballer is a time in which they are at the greatest risk of returning home because the onus rests squarely with the individual. They either make the most of their opportunity or become just another in a long line who came up short.

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In many ways, the move to Perth for Phillip mirrored Jim’s experiences the year before. For the recently turned 18-year-old this was his first time away from the family and
feelings ranged across from homesickness, frustration and alienation. Fanned by the strong easterly winds that carried with it the essence of the Great Victoria Desert, Phillip’s emotional state was delicate as he pined for the milder climes of his home-town and his family. Claremont organised accommodation, a unit in North Fremantle, in an attempt to assist Phillip’s acclimatisation to Perth and Jim’s consolidation. While the presence of his younger brother may have had, as some suggested a “calming effect” on Jim, Phillip was under no illusion about how hard life was going to be away from home:

The move to Perth was difficult. Football-wise, as a footballer, I was 17 going on 18, but up-top [mentally] I would have been 13 or 14. The pre-season with Claremont was quite hard but I wasn’t carrying any weight. I never smoked or drank so it used to take 6 to 10 weeks to get super fit, so really I had no [fitness] problems.260

For Phillip the main issue was focussing on the long-term goal of playing league football. The coaching staff made sure that Phillip was going to be able to handle the pressures of league football and regardless of his reputation there were concessions for Phillip throughout the pre-season. Rather than putting Phillip straight into the league team the selection committee played him in several colt’s scratch-matches. For Phillip, tasting success in the country fostered a new found confidence in his football ability, which was frustrated by playing colts. Phillip’s exuberance to play seniors early ran counter to Jim’s first year acceptance of an established pecking order. Phillip, believing that he could handle the pressure in the seniors, didn’t subscribe to this process:

I was getting frustrated because I knew I could do better than what they were giving me credit for. At the time they were looking at me playing under 19’s where I felt I could have played at least reserves. I’d do the training and after you finished training on Thursday go back to Mt Barker for the weekend. I’d speak to Mum and Dad and say ‘it’s just not working’.261

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259 Casey, p142.
Returning to Mt Barker Phillip started talking with Eric about his situation and a suggestion was made that maybe he should return home and pick up where he left off. It was a tempting offer. All the pre-season training meant he would be fitter than anyone in the SDNFL. It would be a chance to cover himself in glory again, maybe even win a premiership for the NMBFC. He would be able to catch-up regularly with family, friends and there would be no strict schedules to meet. But then there was Jim. How would he react? What would he think? Phillip thought hard. He desperately wanted to play football with Jim but he’d also had a gutful of playing colts. He made a promise to himself, he’d give it a few more weeks and if things didn’t change he was off

2.5 Saturday Night Tuesday Afternoon

There are many things, which can curtail a young footballer’s ambition to play league football. For many their underdeveloped bodies can crack and give way to injuries. Burnout, the physical and mental cocktail that reduces youthful vigour to a wisp can have a life-long impact. Any number of family obligations, peer pressure, personal expectations, relationships and social and professional commitments can also conspire to diminish a young footballers chances of playing league football. For Phillip, like Jim, the chances of playing league for Claremont were nearly dashed before it began. Phillip’s biggest hurdle was a mental struggle to harness and maintain focus throughout the punishing pre-season. Discipline and commitment over the long, hot weeks began to melt as indifference and anomie took hold. To top things off Claremont had organised a training camp in which attendance for all players was compulsory. As the names of the players required to join the training camp were read out Phillip’s head was bowed and he scratched his boot sprigs into the dry Claremont Oval:

I was going up and down. I wasn’t happy. I was training here and training there and things just wasn’t working out. I think they [Claremont] had about 90
players and they were trying to reduce it [the squad] down to fifty or sixty. Anyway I decided, and I’m pretty sure Jimmy decided also, that we would go to the Linda Ronstadt concert instead.\textsuperscript{262}

It seems comical that Phillip’s career was nearly cut short, not because of injury or any physical malady, but the siren-like effect of Linda Ronstadt. As Phillip and Jim enjoyed the concert the training camp was the last thing on their minds. But as Saturday night turned into Tuesday afternoon, and training, the consequences of Phillip not attending the camp became very real. He was cut from Claremont’s playing squad:

They read out all the names, and because Jimmy played the year before his name got read out. They probably thought I wasn’t ready for it and I didn’t make the sixty at Claremont, so that was it. They more or less thanked us for all the effort that we put in for two, three months and [said] ‘we’ll see you later’. So, in effect I got my marching orders. Someone, one of the coaching staff, could have been Graham Moss himself, spotted me there and I think they just said ‘we’ll give him one more chance’. Looking back now I can understand why, but at the time I couldn’t. It was just a stupid training camp. Linda Ronstadt was much better.\textsuperscript{263}

Despite being given a chance things from Phillip’s perspective did not improve greatly in the immediate future. Further pressure was mounting on him with the upcoming 1978 season only a matter of days away. Having played irregularly in the intra and inter-club scratch matches, Phillip’s despondency began to manifest itself as doubt. For four weeks he would play the first half of a colts match or sit on the bench in the reserves until playing out the second half of that game. This lack of a consistent senior berth pushed Phillip to breaking point:

It was getting close, [there was] only about another week to go for the season and I said to myself ‘I’ve had enough’, that was it. I ended up in Mt Barker and I sat out all week. I never trained I just sat down in Mt Barker. On Saturday morning something made me get up. So I drove up that morning to play u/19’s and when I got there about 8 o’clock and went in to get changed for the u/19’s then Mossy or someone said, ‘What are you doing? You’re playing seniors’. I was totally unprepared. Bassendean Oval against Swan Districts was the last chance because it was the last practice game before the first [league] game.\textsuperscript{264}

\textsuperscript{262} Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 31/8/2000. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{263} Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 31/8/2000. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{264} Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 31/8/2000. My emphasis.
From that first league scratch-match against Swan Districts Phillip’s league career with the Tigers was sealed. Jim kicked 3 goals straight and Phillip booted five from nine scoring shots. Their inherent knowledge of one another’s playing style prompted the match report to describe it as a “promising roving display…The Krakouers showed plenty of speed and combined effectively.”265 The match report, while positive, belied Phillip’s unrest in the previous weeks and the chance the CFC match committee took despite Phillip’s lack of discipline and preparation. Unlike today’s player support networks, in the AFL or WAFL, the Krakouer brothers were very much alone, having to rely on their own devices when dealing with the smallest of issues.266 The lack of any support structure meant that the only place that they could find any sort of respite or advice was home and those who knew them best, their family.

It would not be the last time that such doubts and mysterious absences occurred with Claremont’s Krakouer brothers. Yet each dealt with their personal malaise differently. In one sense there were similar themes to Jim’s near departure at Claremont as there were to Phillip’s, but the differences in the detail and the way they dealt with specific issues set them apart as people. However, on the field they synchronised; no one knew their full potential but one thing was certain: for CFC to succeed they needed the Krakouer’s.

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For Claremont, the opening round of the 1978 WAFL season could not have been any more different than their 1977 finish. Playing East Perth, Claremont would emerge as forty one point victors and race to the top of the ladder. Robbie Melville, Jim, Moss and Phillip were all best on ground, with Jim’s performance described as, “dazzling.” The match report indicated that Claremont had done a lot of hard work over the summer and

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on the strength of this they were likely to become “a football force this season.” Bigger things for Jim and Phillip were also predicted:

Claremont certainly have roving finds in the Krakouer brothers…They could prove the sensation of the season. Jim (19)...and Phil (18)...were a delight to watch with their high-powered action around the goals and their deadly footpassing midfield. And they can only improve as the season progresses. They will be a great complement to the game of Moss, the top ruckman in Australia.267

This game was significant for Phillip, not just because it was his first WANFL game but it was also the first time he had started a season wearing new boots. It would also be the first of many times that the media would mistake one brother for the other, indicating just how enmeshed the Krakouers became in terms of a playing unit.268 From a club point-of-view this dynamism is something that people quickly tapped into as Phillip’s arrival had a positive influence on Jim. Maskiell explains, “It would not be apparent to me at that time [1977] that Jim was sort of missing Phillip, but later on when you saw both of them play together you could see their uncanny skill and how that influence went further back.”269 This ability to combine set the Krakouers apart. Even though they had played limited football together for some time those formative years had created a potent notion of confidence in Jim and Phillip’s individual and collective abilities. By the second game of the 1978 season however an insidious tactic was employed to break that unit down. A tactic that focussed in on the thing that neither Jim or Phillip had the means to change or ignore - their skin.

Throughout the course of this project, and of my study generally, I have often wondered why it is I have experienced many non-Indigenous people’s incredulity at what I was doing. Initially this caused me a great deal of anguish as all I wanted to do was to tap

268 This is despite the back page photo, which clearly shows Phillip, wearing the number seven guernsey, taking the mark and not Jim as reported. *The West Australian*. 28/3/1978, p72.
into people’s sense of fairness and goodwill. I wanted to explain to people some of the things that I had read, based not on hearsay but on evidence. I also railed at the petty nastiness that some people employed towards Indigenous people who were part of my social, sport or work networks at the time. I distinctly remember an incident on my summer holiday in 1996 when I returned to the country to work. I enjoyed these stints as I could catch up with friends and earn good money quickly. One morning, at smoko, I stood at the shearing shed door with one of the shearers. A rouseabout, one of two Noongars working with us at the time, came up and inquired about the use of the toilet. I told him it was down at the house, some 100 metres, and to go straight in as the farmer said it was ok.

The shearer engaged the young Noongar in talk, asking him questions about football. It was a convivial, civilised moment, as an older man showed some interest in a younger one about a mutual interest. The young Noongar then headed down to the house. He had got some twenty metres away, out of earshot, when the shearer sneered, “fuckin nigger.” I couldn’t believe what I heard. The thing that struck me about this and other experiences like it, and I have had many, was that when I started my study it was like the wax in my ears started to dissolve. So whenever I headed to the country for holiday work I found myself engaging in people’s conversations about Blackfellas differently to the way I had done previously. Before, racist comments were like water off a duck’s back to me, now they stuck in my craw.

Invariably conversations would come around to an Indigenous issue and I would find myself holding conversations up to the light to see what was actually being said. I found that the vast majority of people based their views about Blackfellas on media reports and stereotypes. Hence, when some people saw me at holiday time, I would became a
focus for the bristling irritation and insecurities that ranged from native title to stolen cars.

For me, these discussions challenged my understanding and seemed to reflect a broader cultural and political pathos when it came to Indigenous issues. Heated conversations and arguments became building blocks that I stuck together with the information I had gleaned from study and reading more broadly than I otherwise would have. In some ways my lack of knowledge was driven by guilt, not so much for what had happened historically, but because I knew more about the Russian Revolution than I knew about any Indigenous issue or person. This disturbed me. I kept finding out through my studies at university more and more things I did not know. This, in turn, explained peoples incredulity and hostility towards me simply because they, like me, were not told or taught such things at school. I found that Government sanctioned policies had been designed to remove, silence, contain, control, change, breakdown and limit the way Blackfellas and Whitefellas could come together and learn from one another. It also started to dawn on me that one of the areas in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people worked together was sport.

Sport was an area where issues of race and racism could be investigated and analysed. For example, in 1993, the same year that I started my studies, I saw the photograph of St Kilda’s Nicky Winmar lift his guernsey and point to his skin. The reason why Winmar did this was because he and Gilbert McAdam had worn the brunt of many racial insults throughout the course of the game by Collingwood supporters. At the end of the game, Collingwood had been beaten and the insults reached a crescendo forcing Winmar to answer with his historical action. This is probably one of a few photographs in sport that have transcended their own realm and gained political, social, historical and
cultural meaning. The photograph of Winmar spoke to every Australian, even those that did not want to listen, and what it said was, ‘you cannot ignore me anymore’.

According to Darren Godwell in his paper Playing the Game: Is sport as good for race relations as we’d like to think?, sport becomes the microcosm for the broader community as it plays out the broader community’s perceptions and idiosyncrasies throughout the course of the game. Sport, he says:

> provides an opportunity to view the mechanics of a society at work. So why don’t instances of racism in sport in Australia prompt us to consider the possibility that Australian society is also racist? Much of the frustration of stories on racism in sport lies in the repetitious ‘he said/she said’ nature of reporting. Yet the issue does not go away. The targeted grow suspicious of ‘official’ versions, and the transgressors tire at the inferences. 270

The issue does not go away because there are two competing ideas from opposing groups. One bases its assumptions on denial and the other bases its perspective on redress. Many non-Indigenous people have no concept of what it consciously feels like to be framed and negatively judged because of their skin. Conversely, many Indigenous people become a prophecy that is self fulfilling or they become more readily identifiable in their struggle against discrimination and labelled *stirrers* or *activists*. For example, one non-Indigenous person I interviewed said Michael Long was nothing more than a trouble-maker for his stance against being vilified. This person could obviously not understand what Monkhorst’s words meant to Long which eventually brought on the AFL’s racial and religious vilification laws in 1995.

It was somewhere at the start of my university life that my assumptions become so challenged that I simply could no longer ignore them. Perhaps the moment that specifically drove this point home came about completely by chance and chrystallised

270 Godwell, Darren. “Playing the game: is sport as good for race relations as we’d like to think”, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*. Spring-Fall, 2000, p12.
for me the differences that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people face daily. As I drove home one day I fiddled with the tuning dial of my old car’s AM radio and 6PR’s Bob Maumill came on. 6PR is not what I would call my station of choice as it mainly deals with staid talk-back topics and horse-racing results. Instead of switching over I stayed tuned because Maumill mentioned the word *Aboriginal*. I pricked up my ears, believing I was about to listen to yet another radio-announcer put on his boots and give the issue a good kicking.

Maumill talked about how he was the manager of the South Fremantle colts football side that was playing against another WAFL team one weekend. At the end of the first quarter, the South Fremantle side were being out-played by the other team. One Indigenous teenager playing for South Fremantle was given express instructions to play his man tighter “Get on bloody number 18 and stay on him, he’s cutting us to shreds” he was told. As Maumill recalled, the instructions of the coach were not heeded by the young Indigenous man in the second quarter as ‘number 18’ kept on running amok. At half-time the South Fremantle coach made a point of dressing the young man down for not adhering to his instructions and letting his team down. As the South Fremantle side made its way out onto the ground to start the third quarter Maumill pulled the young man aside because he could see he was upset by the coach’s tirade. “C’mon mate all you have to do is stay on him and we’ll beat this mob.” The young Indigenous man looked at Maumill and tried to explain, “Tell me what he looks like? What colour is his hair?” The plea was at first confusing but Maumill soon realised that this young man had no idea what the number 18 looked like because he could neither read nor write.

I understand that sport, particularly that played at a high level, is a combination of physical and mental disciplines and the crucial thing that any player tries to get against
an opponent is an advantage. Part of the psychological jousting and mind-games that go on in sport is the way a player can employ *sledging* as a means to get that edge.\(^{271}\) Sledging has become, like drugs, a modern phenomena that many sports’ people use in their pursuit to win at all costs. When racist sledging is used in sport it is problematic because it diminishes both parties involved in the speech act. These themes are taken up by Dr Greg Gardiner in his discussion paper on Football, Racism and the AFL’s implementation of the vilification rule, Rule 30. Gardiner claims that:

Racial abuse on the football field cannot be equated with other forms of on field chat, or sledging, designed to put an opponent off their game. In any context the verbal abuse of a person on the basis of race represents slander against the group and strikes at the heart of a person’s identity, while at the same time denying that person their individuality. In the Australian context racial abuse of Aborigines comes with a history: a colonial history of violence and dispossession. So when a white footballer racially abuses a black footballer that abuse connects to our Australian history; a history that was never a level playing field for Aborigines. And this is not simply a matter of the abuser uttering an anachronism, or of being unconsciously held or fixed by the past. It is about words with the power to wound; words that can open old sores and perpetuate stereotypes – language of bad race relations."\(^{272}\)

### 2.6 Shaking Hands & Shrugging Shoulders

Going into the game against East Fremantle Claremont could be assured that they would be provided with a hard contest. Buoyed by the home ground advantage ‘Old Easts’ boasted a resilient centre-line, a strong defence and their full-forward, Jim Sewell, was leading the WANFL goal kicking tally. Both Jim and Phillip were set for good games. Jim would line up on Buhagiar to commence a great rivalry between two of the state’s roving tyros and Phillip took his place in the forward pocket. Upon reaching his position Phillip acknowledged his opponent with an outstretched hand “I put my hand out to shake this guy’s hand to wish him all the best and [he said] ‘I don’t shake hands with black people.’”\(^{273}\) Phillip, while shocked and hurt, shrugged his shoulders:

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Stuff like that happened full-on for two, three years. They targeted us with physical pressure and abuse. It probably mellowed in 81 once people started to respect you more.274

It would take time for that respect to be shown but for now the mind games had started and it would now be up to Jim and Phillip to deal with them as best as they could.

By round four Claremont were in the top four and any complacency Phillip Krakouer may have had just a few weeks before had gone with a best-on-ground performance describing him as “one of the best rovers at Claremont for years.”275 The article went on further to describe Jim and Phillip as valuable conduits into Claremont’s forward line with a 74 point thrashing of Swan Districts:

The Krakouer brothers, Phil and Jim, were the driving force behind Claremont in the second term, when the game was won and lost...The dominance by Claremont was epitomised by coach Graham Moss in the third quarter. At one stage he did not even bother to contest a centre bounce down and was content to watch as his rovers and centreline [sic] players scurried away with the ball. If the Krakouer brothers continue to fire—specially [sic] if the team is behind—then Claremont should establish themselves as a top force in league football this season.276

The following week, the Krakouer brothers would play in front of a crowd of 13 560, their biggest to date, against South Fremantle. The pressure on Moss to perform must have been immense as he tried to juggle the responsibility of his dual role while ultimately being accountable as a player.

Outwardly, the pressure did not seem to show as Claremont were sitting in second place on the ladder and the newspapers confirmed their position:

Claremont who had been in tatters for several seasons are now working as a united body, blending skilfully and showing a fierce desire to win the ball or help a teammate win it. Moss is the man who sets the standards…The superb ruck performance by Moss was complimented by three factors.277

The main complimentary factor was the support Moss was receiving from his rovers who produced “sparkling work around the packs by the Krakouer brothers…the most exciting roving pair in this state for many years.” Despite regular and glowing media reports an area of concern began to emerge for the CFC because of Jim and Phillip’s increasing media profile.

For the CFC officials, securing and maintaining employment for both brothers was something that the Claremont administration took very seriously. The other matter they took seriously was the increased presence of family and extended family members who seemed to be constantly around Jim and Phillip. This concern was borne out of a situation of unfamiliarity. While Claremont had a long association with country recruits this was the first time that many in the administration had had anything to do with Indigenous Australians. Many simply could not understand the cultural expectations, social obligations and Indigenous kinship structure that Jim and Phillip were apart of.

Claremont’s concern was that Jim and Phillip always seemed to have a coterie wherever they went. Moving and congregating in groups, while uncomfortable and unfathomable for some Claremont administrators and supporters, is an undeniable part of the maintenance of Indigenous societal practice and processes. Claremont officials felt that ultimately the boys were wasting their time by ‘hanging around’. It was also a strong concern that extended family members distracted them from what they had come to Perth for in the first place - football. Moss elaborates:

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278 The other factors listed were the improved performances by key position players Robbie Melville and Norm Uncle and the support Moss was receiving in the ruck from David Rawlinson. *The West Australian* 24/4/1978 p58.

As far as football was concerned they ate and breathed football so getting them to training wasn’t a problem. They were delights to coach from a football point of view. The biggest problem was their off-field situation. Jimmy and Phil, and I don’t mean this in a derogatory way, were really bush Aboriginals and they were coming from a bush Aboriginal background into the big smoke. They liked to look after their family, so we weren’t just providing accommodation for Jimmy and Phil we were providing accommodation for the extended family and that would cause problems. Particularly with neighbours when a lot of them would rock up and [they’d] stay for lengthy periods. There are dogs and cars and noise. It was just [their] Aboriginal culture that was providing difficulties for them living in the city.280

For Maskiell the off-field situation was also frustrating because from his point-of-view there was the potential for disruption and chances squandered:

We desperately tried to get them both jobs. We tried to get Jimmy about three or four apprenticeships, but he never turned up to any of them which is a shame because he would have had something to fall back on, a trade. Phillip we tried to get him a storeman type of job because that’s what he wanted. He was employed by a Claremont supporter, [but] all his mates and cousins used to turn up to work so he never really got much done. To me, that was disappointing because we were trying not only to acknowledge their football ability but to give them some trade or position in life that would have helped them when their football days were over.281

What Moss and Maskiell could not perhaps fully understand or appreciate was this is how the Noongar way-of-life operates. For Jim and Phillip their extended family and friends were their support network, their way of identifying. With Noongar kinship structure, “there is a heavy investment of time involved in maintaining membership in a family community. One must regularly visit and be visited by kin…Visiting, regularly and often, is the means to”282 maintain social organisation, kinship structure as well as maintain individual identity within the families social constellation. For Jim or Phillip to stop their family from visiting either their house or place of employment would bring considerable resentment not just from the family but also the broader Noongar community. The consequences of such actions hence would be far more dire than

280 Personal interview Graham Moss 31/10/2000. My emphasis.
simply being sacked.283 While Claremont were making the Krakouers part of their club the Krakouers were involving Claremont, both on and off the field, in Noongar societal practices and cosmology. Jim and Phillip, through their actions, were not being overtly ungrateful or disrespectful of CFC’s efforts but when it came to family, the obligation was to them.

The CFC hierarchy felt that something needed to be done to ensure the Krakouer’s were not unduly distracted. To maintain some sort of equilibrium, both on and off the field, Claremont engaged the services of someone who was prepared to give up his time when it was required. Someone who would not judge them and could listen. Even if the CFC did not fully understand Noongar cultural processes and practices, what they did understand was the role and the person required to assist the Krakouers. To do this the club did not seek out any affiliated elder states-person or some flaky evangelistic supporter. CFC knew the role would require someone who was a bit more savvy, and so they turned to a man who sold cars.

2.7 Four acres and a river view

You can only take so much, then you’ve got to tell them either to be quiet or do something about it. 284

At first glance the house, and everything about it, seemed to be in order. The pencil pines looked like perfect frozen green flames and the lawn impersonated a billiard table. The other houses in the street were all beautifully complimentary, finished with smooth cream renders or ornate leadlighting. Some houses were identifiable by shining brass name-plates that sparkled with names like Sunningdale or Bethhaven: an

283 A sub-text of Birdsall’s article highlights that issues in Indigenous society such as pregnancy out of wedlock or unemployment did not carry the same social stigma as it does in non-Indigenous society.

acknowledgment of the family farm in the Wheatbelt or the English dale their ancestors
had come from.

The party at the back of the house had been going for some time. Laughter and music
was picked up by the breeze off the Swan River and wafted over into the street where
several gleaming vehicles were parked. On close inspection there was a piece to this
picture that was puzzling. It was the solitary figure on Denis McInerny’s front verandah.
With his head slightly bowed and his hands by his side the person was completely inert.
Not knocking on the door or turning to move away. He looked neither anxious or
fidgety, just patient. Several minutes passed until the door finally swung open.
McInerny emerged casually dressed and smiled broadly as he pumped Jim’s hand. In a
swift movement back, befitting that of a matador, McInerny invited Jim in
“Jimeee…Come on. Come in side. There are a few people here who would love to meet
you.” Jim shook his head, whispering, “No bro, I just come over to see if you could
spare a few bucks? I’m going to the races this arvo see.” There was no desperate tone to
Jim’s voice, no wavering. McInerny could either help him or not. Looking back now
McInerny explains the incident:

[Jim] didn’t want to impose himself upon you, so he’d stay and wait for you.
Rather than intrude he’d wait until you came out, then he’d say, ‘can I see you?’
He never wanted to intrude on anybody’s life and he didn’t want to be a part of
white life. He didn’t have white friends. He didn’t knock around with white
people.285

McInerny became friends with the Krakouer brothers, particularly Jim, not because he
enjoyed basking in the glory of well-known sporting identities, but because he could
empathise with the challenges they faced. With a father who owned a boarding house in
the Melbourne suburb of Collingwood, a young McInerny was able to see those who
were not as fortunate as himself: alcoholics, gamblers, drifters, migrants and members

of the local Koori community. Having travelled extensively, his move west brought with it a few surprises “I came [to Perth] with no preconceived idea of racism whatever. I’d never heard of the word ‘boong’ until I came to Western Australia.” With connections to Claremont, McInerney would come to a deeper understanding of what life was like for Jim and Phillip and he tailored his assistance accordingly:

So I met the club [and] they said to me ‘the boys are having a bit of trouble settling. Would you look after these couple of blokes from Mt Barker’? I had no idea of Aboriginality, and I think Claremont had no idea of where these people had come from and how alien it was for them to be living in the ‘silver-tail’ set. When I was asked to do it I suddenly twigged that I knew nothing of any of this so I actually made it my job to understand. It was no good me trying to do something if I didn’t understand what the problem was.

After many discussions with the boys McInerney began to gain a greater understanding of Indigenality and the way it pervaded every aspect of Jim and Phillip’s daily lives:

I love their sense of kinship entirely. Their communistic approach to sharing. I like the idea of living for today and not having a banking mentality. Their riches are about knowing people and knowing family and being part of that family. That’s their thing, not about building a brick wall around your four acre block with a river view.

At the football, McInerney witnessed the vilification Jim and Phillip suffered and expressed his dismay about it in my interview with him:

The worst bit of luck you can have in this world is to be born Aboriginal in Western Australia. I went to the umpires and I went on radio and I said ‘do you know what these people are subject to every time they run out onto the field?’

McInerney understood that each brother dealt with the situation differently but it was to Jim that he offered very specific advice when it came to dealing with racial vilification:

When I saw all of this happening I told [Jim] never ever turn the other cheek or think its God’s will or any of that bull shit. Don’t treat it that you are above it, you’re not. You’re not entitled to cop it, pay them back and be as nasty and as brutal as you can.

286 Personal interview Denis McInerney 3/7/2001. My emphasis.
287 Personal interview Denis McInerney 3/7/2001. My emphasis.
290 Personal interview Denis McInerney 3/7/2001. My emphasis.
To say that the Krakouers had all their games in the 1978 season their own way would be a gross overstatement. The reason they stood out was because of their quick rise and their ability to combine so wonderfully together and compliment Moss’s rucking. They also brought other players into the game by sharing the ball around. Their unselfishness became a feature of their game and an extension of their own Indigenous social practices. Furthermore, their crisp skills meant they hardly ever fumbled the ball, providing fast reliable delivery into Claremont’s forward line. But coming up against quality opposition weekly meant that both Jim and Phillip could not take anything for granted even if they were one-touch players.

One opponent who Jim and Phillip came up against regularly was West Perth’s Les Fong. Fong recalls the ability of the Krakouer’s, saying Jim was:

Bloody fast. Quick of foot, quick of hand. Blistering speed. Jimmy just had explosive speed off the mark and if he had a yard on you you would never catch him. Phil had that real laconic ability about him, he was quick when he needed to be. Terrific evasive skills. He seemed to have a lot of time to get rid of the ball and was able to evade whereas Jim did it with speed. Jimmy, in particular, and Phil were probably as good as I’ve played against and I started roving against Barry Cable and Bill Walker. I mean these guys [Jim and Phillip] played football as if they had been around for a while.291

Another opposition player, East Fremantle’s Tony Buhagiar, also recalls the Krakouers and the standard of the WANFL in the late 1970’s.

It was really strong. There were no easy games. Jimmy was your real true rover. He had quickness, speed, ability to read the play, ability not to get caught. Once they got the ball it was really hard to tackle them, they could really fend other players away well. Very rarely would they create a turnover, it was always [a] spot on pass to a team-mate. It would be amazing the amount of times they got it, that a goal resulted.292

For Fong and Buhagiar, playing close to the Krakouers meant that things could turn volatile quickly. As both were from ethnic backgrounds they could both see how racial

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vilification could rouse Jim in particular. Fong whose father is of Chinese ancestry, received more than his share of racial abuse in the 70’s and 80’s:

I copped everything from ‘slant-eye’ to ‘chopsticks’. Anything that was loaded at Asians I copped to a point where some guys [were] running around the ground saying, ‘we missed your dad but we should have shot him’. It got to me I suppose but I just tried to control it. I didn’t want to let them see it got to me.293

Even though Fong focussed his aggression on the ball after being vilified he believes that this pressure applied to the Krakouers had a different outcome:

Phil reacted to a lesser extent. Phil seemed to be the laid-back one of the two. It was a lot harder to niggle or rile him both in a physical and a verbal sense I suppose. Jimmy was very aggressive and if you could niggle him in a physical sense that would tend to put him off his game.294

Buhagiar concurs with Fong’s thoughts. But unlike Fong, it wasn’t just the physical pressure but the psychological edge that sledging produced that distracted Jim. Consequently, Buhagiar experienced the full compliment of Jim’s anger:

The theory was that if you wear them down and put shit on them you’d get to them. I remember one game he wanted to take me on outside after the game. I made sure I was surrounded by other players when I left because I didn’t take that to be just a loose comment. He was quite emphatic and said, ‘I’ll meet you outside in the car park after’ and I have no doubt he would have killed me. 295

For Buhagiar, Phillip could also react to physical and verbal pressure but the consequences were not as serious. Buhagiar recalls a specific incident:

The ball was in a pack and Phil just gave me two punches where I had no idea where they came from. They were that quick. They genuinely could fight [but] they didn’t chase trouble they were more retaliators.296

This retaliatory pattern was something that Jim would follow throughout his football career. Phillip, while not backward in coming forward, would simply use the negative energy of the incident, like Fong, to spur himself on. One Claremont teammate said that Phillip’s general retort to racist comments was along the lines of, “Yeah I’m black, but

doesn’t this red ball look good in my black hands?” Conversely, Jim only knew one way as he explains:

I guess when people have said anything racist about me I just get wild straight away and retaliate. Probably because from schooldays you used to get sick of people calling you names and I’d just get wild straight away.  

With McNerney’s words ringing in Jim’s ears, any abuse of Phillip or himself was seen by Jim as a green light to defend himself. McNerney explains Jim’s actions:

That’s the only way he could defend himself, he wasn’t eloquent, he wasn’t interested in having an argument with you. Part of the problem was they tried to curb his temper rather than stop the actual thing [racism]. So they tried to put a band-aid over the top rather than trying to attack the root problem. Jimmy Krakouer’s career was cut short by racism.

The recurring comment made by many of the people I interviewed was that Jim’s greatest weakness was his inability to control his actions to physical pressure and racist taunts. The sticks-n-stones theory simply wasn’t in Jim’s psychological repertoire because he was proud of who he was and what he had been able to achieve. Generally, if Jim was ever threatened in anyway he would react. This was even more pronounced if Phillip, in Jim’s eyes, was at risk. As the elder brother he was simply exercising an Indigenous social trait that meant he had to protect himself and his brother regardless of the consequences. Not to do this meant that he had failed and failure leads to shame, a major factor rendering a great many Indigenous Australians dysfunctional and dying.

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300 “In a Nyungar extended family the oldest child in a group…is held to be responsible for the younger ones…This child is duty bound…The children thus learn very early that that they are accountable for their actions to each other, because individual actions have consequences for the group”. Birdsal, 1991, p143-144. My emphasis.
301 For Indigenous Australians ‘shame’ can be characterised in a number of ways. Generally shame or a ‘shame job’ is when one member is identified for their individual actions whether they are positive or negative. In a broader socio-historical context shame can be seen as the way non-Indigenous policy makers have sought to reduce or diminish the relevance of Indigenous society and practices.
Having won six of their first seven games Claremont’s slide from the top spot was as innocuous as the coming of night. At full strength and with the right balance of players it was believed that the Tigers were going to have an important bearing on the outcome of the WANFL premiership. So strong was Claremont that Phillip, who was coming back after an ankle injury mid-way through the season, was named on the interchange bench to play Perth. However, Claremont, would not make the finals for two reasons. They were not destroying sides who were well below them on the ladder and they were losing to teams who were above them. This combination saw Claremont slip two entire places by round 14 because the two other teams in the race for the finals, South Fremantle and West Perth, were winning the crunch games. The smokey of the competition was East Perth who through sheer hard work and resilience began to make perhaps the latest run for the finals in WANFL history. A 13 point defeat of Claremont would prove to be a watershed game for both the Royals and the Tigers. Going in against East Fremantle the pressure of losing and dropping out of the four seemed to be too much for Claremont. The Tigers, without Jim and the seasoned Barry Price, named first year players Wayne Blackwell and Lindsay Kanther in the roving departments to come up against Buhagiar and the speedy Mario Turco. The results were disastrous. A 61 point flogging meant the Tigers dropped to sixth spot and in the following week against the Cardinals Claremont lost by 32 points. Continued see-sawing form saw Claremont struggle to regain their earlier consistency as they only had good wins against Subiaco and Swan Districts who were out of the final’s hunt.

In the last game of the season, Claremont came up against premiership favourites Perth. Luck was also required by the Tigers who desperately needed Swan Districts to beat South Fremantle. In the end, despite having a better losing margin on the day than South Fremantle, a side they beat three times during the season, two things beat Claremont,
Robert Wiley with a four goal, four quarter performance and percentage points. Claremont had missed out on their first finals appearance in the WANFL for six years by 0.1%, two points.\textsuperscript{302}

The only thing that Claremont could do now was swallow the bitter pill of such a fickle fate. For Jim and Phillip the season had been a prosperous one, Jim being named in the State squad for the first time, as was Maurice Rioli. A decision interestingly described as “refreshing.”\textsuperscript{303} Despite a sustained ankle injury which disrupted the latter part of his season, Jim kicked 41 goals and developed as a rover of the future and was described in one post-match report as, “A football excitement machine.”\textsuperscript{304} In his first season Phillip would finish with 52 goals to his name and the distinction of being the top WANFL debutant of the season.\textsuperscript{305}

The night of the Sandover Medal count Phillip Krakouer looked around the room at the people who had come to acknowledge the WANFL’s fairest and best player for 1978. His eyes were like saucers as he recognised many past champions. Needing to go to the toilet, Phillip made his way to the mens. As he walked through the tables of players people acknowledged him with a quick handshake or pat on the back. He couldn’t believe he was there. As Phillip was about to leave the toilet the East Fremantle opponent who had refused to shake his hand in only his second game met him in the doorway. Lazy-eyed, smiling and with his hand extended he slurred, “Put it there

\textsuperscript{302} If Claremont had of kicked two more points or Perth two less Claremont would have played finals football.
\textsuperscript{303} \textit{The West Australian}. 3/7/1978, p80.
\textsuperscript{304} \textit{The West Australian}. 19/6/1978, p66.
\textsuperscript{305} “WA football has an inherent ability to produce more talent per head of population than any other State in Australia. Last year (1978) saw an outstanding crop of first year players headed by Phil Krakouer”. \textit{Football 150}. 1979, p63.
mate.” Phillip froze momentarily, looked at the hand, and shaking his head walked away.  

2.8 Family Plans

The sight of Jim and Phillip jogging along the Woogenelup Road late on a summer afternoon was nothing out of the ordinary. Usually the Denmark Doctor was in and the cool sea wind was at their back as they took the first leg of their run. Jim and Phillip jogged past the old familiar places. The high school, the sale yards and the old campsite that used to be Hollywood; Duck Road where Janie Pickles lived, and Bruce Wright’s farm. Eventually they reached the Carbarup turn off. As they turned to run the 6 kilometres back into Mt Barker the breeze was now on their faces and slowing their progress. It was like an invisible palm was placed on their chests; Jim strangely enjoyed this feeling as it was a resistance he could push through and beat if he kept going. Phillip enjoyed the space and being with Jim.

A dark green SLR Torana slowly followed Jim and Phillip. The driver was a young Yamatji woman from Carnarvon. She was Jim’s new girlfriend and her name was Fiona Augustsson. Augustsson met Jim at the Davies Road flats where he lived with Phillip. Like many footballers’ spouses, football and Jim’s career would take centre stage in Fiona’s life, becoming the means by which they would survive. Fiona never submitted to a passive role with Jim’s career and throughout his playing days she assisted him in a number of capacities. For example, at the game Fiona would act as Jim’s personal statistician, but only documenting those possessions that went directly to a team-mate. With Jim’s on-field consistency and Fiona’s side-line dependability, the only games missed were those spent in a labour ward.

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During the off-season Phillip and Jim would maintain a certain level of fitness. Not being drinkers or smokers they could stay reasonably fit over the break and were able to step-up for the pre-season a bit easier than some. Interestingly, if Jim did not train during the off-season he would lose weight. With Phillip’s weight at around the 65 kgs, Jim’s generally hovered at just over the 60 kg mark making him one of the lightest players ever to play the game.\(^{307}\) The general way Jim and Phillip maintained their physical fitness in the off-season was running, as Jim recalls, “I’d go for three four runs a week, around the golf clubs and courses or just around the streets.”\(^{308}\) Phillip also recalls maintaining his fitness when not playing:

> You very rarely had a kick. Very rarely kicked the footy around because of the pre-seasons [but] you used to give yourself a fitness test and [running] the race course was pretty popular for that. Mt Barker hill, we also used to run up that a few times.\(^{309}\)

Like other footballers at home, the off-season meant being with family. In Mt Barker both Jim and Phillip could simply unwind, relax and spend extended time with family and friends rather than experience rushed, piecemeal visits. Phillip explains:

> Because you miss it so much you spent all that time with the family [and] when you’d go back it was like it never changed. It was just good to go back and get away from the big cities and take it nice and easy. We’d go around to a few places and get as much fruit as you can, cherries were very popular [and] do a bit of fishing.\(^{310}\)

Sometimes training and family outings could actually be combined. Jim recalls, “We probably did a little bit together, running. But we used to go hunting all the time. You’d walk for miles in the bush and you wouldn’t realise just how far you walked, and there was a bit of running too so it was good.”\(^{311}\) Returning home with a yongar\(^{312}\) was a massive treat for everyone, Phoebe cooking it up for the family. Jim’s recollections of this period are happy:

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\(^{307}\) By comparison John Platten weighed in at 70kgs while Tony Buhagiar one of the shortest players to play football weighed in at 74 kgs.

\(^{308}\) Personal interview Jim Krakouer 18/4/2002.


They’d mince it all up, put onion and gravy in it, make the gravy out of water and flour with damper and fresh butter. That was pretty good. Mum always cooked up good feeds.\textsuperscript{313}

These times helped Jim and Phillip ground themselves. They were no longer Jim and Phillip Krakouer \textit{the footballers} but someone’s brother, cousin or uncle.

Family was the cornerstone that maintained the positive energy required to withstand the increasing pressures that league football placed on them all. Eric explains:

They’d come home for a couple of weeks. They’d more or less take it in turns because the house wasn’t big enough for everyone. As soon as one bloke moved out the other one would move in, they always came home.\textsuperscript{314}

Eric remembers that homecomings were fairly low-key affairs with just “a shake of hands and we’d have a yarn.”\textsuperscript{315} Inevitably, the time came when the return to Perth was required, and in early 1979 Jim and Phillip’s return was galvanised by an old family friend, Neil Williams. Williams, an exceptional footballer in his own right, recalls that the chance to try-out with Claremont came about through his association with Jim and Phillip:

They never approached me. All of us were good friends [I] just went up in company with them. Used to travel around and hang around together. I just sort of stayed up there over the pre-season and did the pre-season with them. It was very hard. Hardest I’ve ever done. I had one scratch match with Claremont against Swan Districts at Bassendean. They gave me a run and I really enjoyed that but then after that, that’s when the trouble started.\textsuperscript{316}

The \textit{trouble} that Williams refers to was the rivalry between the Krakouers and another group who were jealous of the Krakouers increasing football success and profile. The sad irony of this was that the tension was not racial. Nor was the threat by this rival

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item[311] Personal interview Jim Krakouer 18/4/2002.
  \item[312] Noongar word for kangaroo.
  \item[313] Personal interview Jim Krakouer 18/4/2002.
  \item[314] Personal interview Eric Krakouer 10/7/2001.
  \item[315] Personal interview Eric Krakouer 10/7/2001.
  \item[316] Personal interview Neil Williams 18/12/2000. My emphasis.
\end{itemize}
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group some benign puffing of the chest and a bit of base language. The threat was very real and the consequences serious enough to inflict permanent harm and even death. This was yet another pressure that Jim, Phillip and friends like Williams had to endure, as the people who wanted to harm the Krakouers were from within, they were family.

The feud between the two families had been simmering for a number of weeks. Early in 1979 The West Australian reported that while, “neither of the gangs involved was an organised entity [the] feuding was considered a dangerous nuisance.”\textsuperscript{317} Justice T.R.McGuigan promptly fined five men and two youths (none of whom were Jim, Phillip or Williams) $50.00 each for disorderly conduct. The only notion of where the feuding groups were from was the ambiguous reference to “Albany Aborigines and Perth Aborigines.”\textsuperscript{318} Just under four weeks later in a house leased by Claremont in North Fremantle, the violence escalated.

By 8:30 pm Fiona had finished washing up the last of the dishes from dinner. She dried her hands on a tea-towel, folded it once and then hung it over the grill handle of the oven. She looked over to the game of Pontoon that Jim, Phillip, Williams and a few other cousins had been playing for about an hour. There was no talking until someone had acquired the number 21 from the worn suit each player held. The only sound heard was the sliding of one and two cent pieces over the laminated table. By 10:00 pm a pot of tea was put on the table and poured steaming into enamel mugs. By 11:00 pm the game was all over. Jim and Fiona had gone to bed, the cousins had laid some mattresses out on the lounge floor and only Phillip and Williams sat at the table talking about going roo-shooting when they got home. The conversation didn’t last long and both

\textsuperscript{317} The West Australian. 6/2/1979, p9. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{318} The West Australian. 6/2/1979, p9.
men headed for bed. As Phillip’s finger flicked off the light switch in his room, the inside of the house fell into darkness.

At around 12.40 am one of the cousins was woken by a sound. He got off his mattress and walked into the kitchen. The only sound he could make out was the low whirring sound coming from the old fridge; but this was not the sound that had woken him. He heard a car door slam shut, swearing, and then more car doors slam. The voices got louder and he realised that everyone in the house was in immediate danger. He turned to move and just as he did a brick flew through a window and the sound shattering glass rang in his ears. The first Phillip knew of any threat was when he was being shaken awake. For Williams the chain of events were somewhat more vivid “The only way out of there [the house] was a window. We barricaded the door so they couldn’t come in. Put a couple of cupboards and that there. They come to the house [and] they were using axes, meat choppers on the door.”\textsuperscript{319} Phillip remembers:

\begin{quote}
We were in the room and we seen someone chopping away on the door. You could see this axe blade coming through the door. We just waited for a while and when we could see they were ready to chop the door down with this axe we jumped through the window and just ran.\textsuperscript{320}
\end{quote}

Getting a few kilometres away from the house as it was being ransacked Phillip, Williams and the cousins stopped. Sucking in the still night air into their lungs they took stock of the situation and it was obvious that Jim and Fiona were not with them. For Phillip there was only one thing to do:

\begin{quote}
I realised that Jimmy was still back in the house and so we did a u-turn back over the North Fremantle bridge. [We] went back and got him out of the house as the guys drove away. There would have been at least fifteen of them.\textsuperscript{321}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{319} Personal interview Neil Williams 18/12/2000. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{320} Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 31/8/2000.
\textsuperscript{321} Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 31/8/2000. My emphasis.
As they ran back to the house the uncertainty about Jim and Fiona’s well-being must have been excruciating for all concerned, especially Phillip. According to Williams both Jim and Fiona were spared due to quick thinking:

At the time Jim and his wife were still inside [but] they hid behind the cupboard you see. If they had got behind the cupboard they would have got them and who’d know what they would have done to them. They meant business.322

Magistrate McGuigan had been right on both counts. The lack of organisation of both parties perhaps saved anyone in the house from being seriously hurt but the danger posed by such behaviour could not be underestimated as the report from The West Australian shows:

Three Claremont footballers fled from their home early yesterday when several car-loads of youths went on a wild rampage causing thousands of dollars worth of damage...An artist, Mr George Duerden, who lives next door to the Krakouer brothers, said he was woken at about 12.40am by voices outside his bedroom. The louvre windows of his bedroom were then smashed by the raiders. “I was as frightened as hell”…Mr Duerden said. He then heard the youths shout: “Wrong house” and a few minutes later heard windows being smashed in the Krakouer house.323

So concerned was Williams for his own well being, he returned to Mt Barker, putting an abrupt end to any WANFL career he may have had. Jim, Fiona and Phillip’s domestic lives became distinctly unsettled as the next few weeks were marked by self-preservation and urban transience. Jim recalls:

Well we didn’t really have anywhere to stay so we used to drive around until pretty late until we got tired and just pulled up near a park and slept in the car. That went on for a fair while. I don’t think Claremont knew, it was pretty tough.324

These were the types of distractions that Moss and Maskiell feared mainly because they had no control over them. At the CFC Maskiell went so far as to engage the SAS as security “a good majority”325 of who were Claremont supporters and conveniently based

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324 Personal interview Jim Krakouer 17/1/2003.
325 It is not known how long this arrangement was maintained but Maskiell admits that the SAS were used at “one stage”. Personal interview Wal Maskiell 11/12/2000.
in the adjoining suburb of Swanbourne. There can be no doubt that these incidences
were incredibly upsetting for Jim, Fiona and Phillip. This type of extra pressure the
Krakouers had to deal with was just one of many difficulties confronting them daily.
Jim and Phillip would either persist in their sporting pursuits or, like William’s, return
home.

By the start of the 1979 season, some notable names began to appear in the ranks of the
WANFL. Perhaps the two players who would have lasting yet different impacts were
Gary Buckenara and Mark Jackson. Buckenara, a freckle-faced stick, belied his physical
characteristics as he could take fabulous aerial marks, had a prodigious kick and would
be part of Hawthorn’s Uber-teams of the eighties. Jackson on the other hand had an
Uber-ego, which he utilised to maximum effect, particularly when he returned to the
VFL. Jacko would perhaps be the last of football’s absolute individuals and despite his
lack of speed, he was strong and reliable in front of goal. After a year on holiday
overseas Gerard Neesham also made his debut for Swan Districts against his old club
East Fremantle. For the CFC, their stocks also started to change around this time as
many of the younger players pushed up through the ranks into the league team namely
Ray Smith and Darryl Panizza.

After the first four games of Claremont’s season an unsettling pattern was emerging. If
Jim and Phillip were not able to play offensive football or they had an off day, Claremont
were generally beaten. This mainly boiled down to the amount of latitude
that was given to the Krakouers by the opposition. This is not to say it was the only
factor, as the conversion rates by CFC forwards was also erratic, but it was a significant
element in CFC’s fortunes.
In their first game Claremont played away against premiership favourites East Perth and emerged 18 point winners with Jim kicking five goals. A significant factor in the win was Claremont’s perseverance highlighted by a “six-goal final quarter surge against the wind.”\textsuperscript{326} In the following game however East Fremantle won by 42 points as Jim and Phillip were “cut down to size”\textsuperscript{327} by Buhagiar and Kevin Taylor through physical pressure. But here was the rub. Against weaker sides like West Perth and Swan Districts, Claremont could rely on Moss, Hunter, Melville, Jim and Phillip to steer them out of trouble. When it came to South or East Fremantle, with their strong following divisions and impressive back-lines, Claremont found themselves floundering.

Claremont’s playing unit was evolving slowly. Malaxos was making steady progress coming off the bench and Panizza and Smith were also contributing. Daniels was also slowly weaned into the league side but unlike other debutants for that year, Daniel’s first game took place in the Escort Cup competition at VFL Park against the powerful Hawthorn. It would be a game that would be remembered for a number of things. For the CFC, and Jim Krakouer, it would be remembered for all the wrong reasons.

I have only ever been to Waverley, VFL Park, once and saw Fremantle get beaten by Hawthorn. I don’t recall the game particularly but I do remember an experience of gargantuan proportions. It was a massive drive to see a really big oval in a massive cement stadium on a fantastically cold day. Built to emancipate football from the purse strings of the cricket stronghold, the MCG, Waverley would come to present the VFL/AFL with its biggest white elephant. Waverley became a potent metaphor for the

\textsuperscript{326} The West Australian. 2/4/1979, p67.
\textsuperscript{327} The West Australian. 9/4/1979, p102.
VFL’s grand and miscalculated plans, located miles from anywhere and without the supporting infrastructures that football supporters and the MCG enjoyed.328

For Jim and Phillip this was the first time they had ventured onto the Waverley surface and the space seemed to suit both of them. With Hawthorn fourth on the VFL ladder they were at full strength with the likes of Knights, Matthews, Tuck, Don Scott and DiPierdomenico. Claremont had come to play and were seemingly undaunted by the collective might of Hawthorn. On this night the calibre of the opposition inflated Jim’s performance to such an extent that under the Waverley lights, Claremont and Jim shone:

For most of the game Claremont had much if not most of the play…The hero of the match was Jim Krakouer. He kicked four goals showed vibrant pace and was the most exciting player on the field. Claremont were also well served by Moss…and had the better of an entertaining duel with Hawthorn’s iron-man Don Scott.329

Claremont, who were down by two points with only moments to go in the game, were starting to rally against Hawthorn. Jim’s bustling enthusiasm had got Claremont to the point where they “were running hot and looked as if they could go onto win the match.”330 Receiving a kick in front of goals Jim lined up for an easy shot. At this point something strange happened - Waverley’s automatic sprinkler system mysteriously burst into life.

For the next three surreal minutes, Jim and the rest of the players stood around waiting for the problem to be fixed. The flow from the sprinkler was eventually stemmed and Jim again lined up for goal but the kick missed as his concentration had been shattered. Claremont’s momentum suffered a similar fate and the Hawks emerged 21 point victors. Claremont’s request to Hawthorn officials to play a re-match fell on deaf ears. The

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result stood and the question had to be asked, were the Krakouers CFC’s performance barometer?

2.9 Physical & Verbal

Out of the Escort Cup and back in Perth, Claremont set about focussing in on the 1979 season. By round nine Claremont were in third position and poised to play top placed East Fremantle. The key to Claremont’s success, according to experienced football commentator Geoff Christian, lay in the Krakouers ability to convert their opportunities into goals:

There is a touch of genius about Phil Krakouer’s goalkicking. Claremont need goals from him and his brother today to break away from East Fremantle.331

In a match that Claremont trailed in all day in it was the persistent efforts of Moss, Hunter and Jim and Phillip “who cut loose with devastating effect.”332 This allowed the Tigers to manufacture a solid 20 point win. Their performance was good enough for Christian to bravely predict that the type of football Claremont were playing would see them play finals football:

The quality of their performance in the last three games cannot be denied. On Saturday not only did they become the first team to beat East Fremantle at East Fremantle Oval this season but they came from behind to do it.333

At this stage of the season Claremont were playing consistently good football. Despite a few troublesome areas Claremont’s goal to goal line was impressive and their half-back and half-forward lines were solid. Injuries were down and morale was up but as Casey makes clear the devil for Claremont was in the detail:

They played a free-wheeling type of game that produced outstanding results when it was allowed full rein, but was vulnerable to highly disciplined sides that would tag the brilliant midfielders. There was no real strategic plan to cope with

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331 *The West Australian.* 26/5/1979, p76.
the stopping tactics of the opposition teams and it was hoped that the brilliance of the Claremont players would eventually prevail.  

It was becoming well known that an effective way of stopping Claremont was to shut down its runners. In most instances, this was just a case of playing them close and spoiling any chance Claremont had of winning the ball. In the West Perth game Claremont experienced what it was like to be frustrated when they were not permitted to play their brand of football. In a game in which Claremont won by just two straight kicks their losing pattern came very close to being realised against a fast finishing Cardinals outfit; Phillip kicking a goal and Jim a paltry point. To add to Claremont’s concerns, Jim was reported for the second time that season and was facing substantial time on the side-lines.

In a season running for twenty-one fixtures a four week suspension is substantial. Jim pleaded guilty to one charge for striking and one for abusing an umpire as he was hoping for a lighter sentence. On the first charge involving West Perth wing Ian Logan *The West Australian* reported that “Krakouer…claimed he was provoked into striking…He said Logan had hit him in the jaw with an elbow and he retaliated. There is evidence from at least two other individuals before that there was something that triggered off Krakouer’s action.”

Seeing this, umpire Graham Fogarty approached Jim and informed him he was on report and Jim proceeded to abuse him. CFC’s advocate John O’Brien asked the tribunal to understand that the action was purely retaliatory. This, combined with the pressure of a close game in the last quarter, created a volatile mix. The pressure O’Brien stated was, “not only physical but also verbal”.

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334 Casey, p142.
335 Previously Jim was suspended for one week on the charge of unduly rough play against Subiaco in round 6.
an insinuation that vilification of some sort had been employed. The tribunal did not consider this to be excusable behaviour and Jim was out for three weeks.

If those at the CFC thought that Phillip’s game would be affected by Jim’s absence they were mistaken. In the following game against Swan Districts Phillip would be named as best on field. This he achieved not in his usual roving or half forward role but as a ‘sweeper’ in Claremont’s back-line. Finishing the game with 32 kicks, 14 of which came in the last quarter alone, Phillip:

…thrilled the crowd with his exceptional talent as he repeatedly turned back promising attacking moves instigated by Keith Narkle, Stan Nowotny, Gordon Casey, Gerard Neesham and Ian Williams. Earlier, Krakouer had given a sparkling display of midfield roving capped off with four goals. Few of his 32 kicks went astray.338

Generally, when Jim came back from suspension he would play well. Training hard to make up for the lack of match fitness meant that Jim had two or three weeks specifically to focus on his earliest possible contest, by which stage he was primed. The game was against Perth who had picked three rovers to try and counter the Krakouer’s possible impact.339 This game was important for another reason as it was the last fixture before the State match against South Australia, a game that both Jim and Phillip were desperate to play in. Starting in his usual roving position for Claremont, Jim seized his opportunity:

Jimmy Krakouer…repeatedly drove the team out of trouble in the first half and continued to play a dominant second half. He finished with six goals…Krakouer, resuming after a three-week suspension, appeared to be anxious to make up for lost time and kept his volatile temperament under control.340

338 The West Australian. 11/6/1979, p73.
340 The West Australian. 2/7/1979, p81. My emphasis.
Jim played so well that Christian was compelled to write that he would start the state match as Western Australia’s lead rover:

Krakouer’s explosive return to the competition on Saturday not only earned him a place in the squad of twenty but practically guaranteed that he will make his interstate debut next weekend...The State selectors who already had four rovers in the squad did not include Krakouer simply for the exercise...Krakouer will lead the roving battery.341

Despite this glowing assessment, Buhagiar led the battery and Jim would start the game in the forward pocket alongside Peter Bosustow and Stephen Michael. Phillip was unlucky not to have also made his state debut and Noel Carter was also left out after sustaining a thigh strain, as the selectors went with Fong. From a Western Australian perspective the game was a disappointing 30 point loss but Jim and Buhagiar’s game was an even contest with their South Australian counterparts. For Jim this game represented a positive start to his state career and the recognition that he was one of the best small players in Western Australia.

With their confidence high and a full compliment of players, Claremont went into the 1979 finals series looking good. In the second semi-final against South Fremantle, Claremont would go in as favourites due mainly to Claremont's late form and the potency of their attack. Claremont, however, did not have history on their side, as they had not won a second semi-final since 1938. But another positive for Claremont was the question of fitness of some of the South Fremantle players. The most notable of these was South Fremantle’s captain, Noel Carter. Centre-half back Mckay had been dogged by injury all year and was in doubt as was the rugged back Delmenico and a 16 year-old red-head by the name of Brad Hardie. In the end only Hardie would not take to the field. Basil Campbell was also out with a fractured skull that he sustained against Perth in round fifteen. This caused Campbell from that time on to take to the field with his

341 The West Australian, 2/7/1979, p84.
distinctive bulbous helmet making him look like the most fearsome button mushroom in football history.

The difference in the end was twenty points in South Fremantle’s favour and a match winning second-half by Stephen Michael who combined effectively with Carter. A slow start and inaccurate kicking also let Claremont down. Despite leaving the ground late in the game Jim roved strongly, as did Phillip, but it was in attack that Claremont failed. Claremont’s hopes took a further dive when it was realised that both Jim and Ken Hunter had sustained leg injuries. As the week wore on it came down to a 5pm deadline on the Friday and even though they were both named in the side only Hunter made the grade.

The question now was who would be Claremont’s starting rover against the East Fremantle roving division of Buhagiar and Turco. Down by two straight kicks at the first break, Claremont’s margin at half time blew out to an unhealthy 32 points. It was decided in the third term that to take full advantage of the breeze Moss would move to the centre-half forward by providing a focal point. It worked and Claremont were two points down going into the last quarter. In the end Claremont had left their run too late and lost by 27 points with East Fremantle’s Buhagiar, Peake and Turco all blitzing. With their number one rover sidelined, Hunter not fully fit, Moss stretched to the limit and Phillip receiving an early ankle injury, it was left up to veteran Norm Salomons and the inexperience of Blackwell, Kanther and Malaxos. The young Claremont side were no match and were simply out-gunned by experience, forcing the CFC to go back to the drawing board and work out a plan for the 1980 season.

342 Claremont’s centre half-forward Ross Ditchburn kicked 2.5 while Full-forward finished the game with one mark, one kick, one goal.
2.10 Words & Sounds

The destruction of the idyll may be treated, of course, in a multitude of ways. The differences are determined by differing conceptions and evaluations of the idyllic world rapidly approaching the end, as well as differing evaluations of the forces that are destroying it – that is, the new capitalist world.343

The best theatrical drama provides profound insights into its characters by placing them in extreme situations that reveal their true natures and the forces that motivate them. On rare occasions a community or a nation will throw up, as if by chance, a set of circumstances that provides similar insights and revelations about itself. Nookanbah was such an occasion.344

If the death of Bobby Sands, Trevor Chappell bowling underarm and my exploding pubescence all conspired to end my childhood years, there was one distinct event that would arc my political and personal worlds together - Nookanbah. I think the reason for my initial interest in Nookanbah was because of the word itself. It was the first Indigenous one I had heard and it transfixed me. To me its phonetics were strange, exotic, and so Nookanbah to me seemed not so much a place but a sound. As an event, Nookanbah was significant because it cracked something open inside me and brought me face to face with a home-grown conflict for the first time, a conflict that involved Indigenous and non-Indigenous faces.

Every night for months television reports would up-date the days events. Footage of truck convoys were juxtaposed with groups of Indigenous men345 sitting in front of gates and in river beds or being dragged off into police vans. I would stare at the black, passive picket lines that became thick with red swirling dust as the police dragged the people away. I didn’t understand what was going on but I knew that these people seriously believed in what they were doing enough to risk arrest or being run over. Even as an eleven year old I was compelled by their strength and their patience.

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345 Hawke points out the lack of women’s voices in his text as being “dictated by circumstances, and that the dispute was treated by the Community as being primarily men’s business.” p16.
While writing this project I tried to think of an event that I could compare Nookanbah to, enabling people, particularly younger people now, to understand the significance of the time and the event. I racked my brain for days to come up with a specific event that could be compared, as if it was, “thrown up by chance”, testing the nations sensibilities to the underlying issues that surrounded it. I wanted to use an Indigenous issue or event but which one? I was not born at the time of Charlie Perkin’s Freedom Rides in 1965 or the 1967 Referendum. I was too young at the time to remember of the Tent Embassy in 1972 or the famous pouring of sand through Vincent Lingiari’s hands by Gough Whitlam in 1975. Then it slowly dawned on me. Tampa.

The episode of the refugees on board the Norwegian freighter just before the 2001 Federal election is perhaps the closest phenomenological event to the Nookanbah dispute I can think of. I understand they are not comparable simply by placing one event on top of the other, but instead they need to be read as one would a note that is written backwards by using a mirror. This is because Nookanbah and the Tampa are socio-political inversions of one another but where they align, and they do, is in their ability to invoke the same sense of shame and unconscionability that only political bloody-mindedness can manufacture.

As events Tampa and Nookanbah are similar because instead of the Howard Government ‘defending’ Australian borders it was the Bunaba people who wished to protect their sacred sites. Instead of the ‘threat’ looming out of the water as a boat-load of refugees the threat was an American oil company. Furthermore, in place of completely powerless subjects fleeing their war-torn homelands the fight was taken to the guardians of the Bunaba land, the land of their Bunaba forebears. For 200
generations the Bunaba People’s Country had provided them with food, stories and Law. Now it was pitted against the Court Government, who in early 1980 had been returned to power for the third time. Ironically, oil was not at the heart of the Nookanbah dispute. Nor were sacred sites or politics. At the heart of the matter was the struggle over perception and what differing perceptions meant to those engaged in it. Tampa was no different.

Just as Tampa challenged Australian notions of egalitarianism, refugees challenged perceptions and were deemed either *illegals* or *asylum-seekers*. Nookanbah also divided Australians into two camps, pro-drilling or pro-sacred site. Why was Nookanbah so important? Nookanbah was important because it was a microcosm of the socio-historical relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia since 1788. This is made clear by Steve Hawke in his book *Nookanbah*, which looks closely at the competing ideologies, value systems and histories of the two groups, involved:

> In its unfolding…the dispute was a parable of the nationwide dispossession of the first custodians of the land…The Court Government was a throwback to the days of the righteous colonists of the Empire.346

What the Court Government perhaps thought would be a straight forward exploratory drill became months of human blockades and impasse. The resolve of the Bunaba people was something that the Liberal coalition had seriously underestimated and never looked close to understanding. The main problem was the socio-political differences that the two sides represented.

On one hand Sir Charles Court, whose ties to big business and intimate working knowledge of the resource industry, made him a perfect facilitator for mining interests

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346 Hawke, 1989 p327. My emphasis.
in Western Australia. On the other hand was a group of people that had dealt with great social and cultural upheaval for many years and were simply not going to give into the Government without a fight. Drilling eventually went ahead because the State Government amended the 1972 Aboriginal Heritage Act allowing the multinational, Amax, to proceed with exploration. According to Hawke, by the end of this sad historical chapter, the Nookanbah mob were seen by the wider Australian community as either “stalwart defenders of tradition against the ruthless power of the State, to shiftless untrustworthy niggers manipulated by devious subversives.” For Court this was his last big political issue to contend with, that if he had lost, it would have only served to emboldened the ‘shiftless and untrustworthy’.

This was not before some truly farcical situations, which showed the Court government up, Sir Charles particularly, by revealing “a meanness and lack of charity” in their outlooks. Perhaps the most revealing of such incidents occurred when a delegation of three ministers, Peter Jones, Bill Hassell and Bill Grayden went to Nookanbah on the 14th of March 1980. As a boy, I remember seeing this on the television and it struck me then that these three men looked very uneasy and out of place – they didn’t belong and nor did their language, their law or their government. Their ineptitude was best displayed by Grayden who not only showed his lack of cultural empathy but seriously insulted the Bunaba people by reducing their sacred symbols to everyday items and the merely decorative. As Grayden, in his negotiations, said:

…but under the protection of Culture we have things like Aboriginal culture, which we want to see developed, such as drawings you have in various caves and other places. They are of tremendous importance, and we’ve seen the designs, you

347 “It seemed that to Premier Court the reputations of himself and his Government as allies of big business and sound avenues of investment and development were absolutely paramount”. Hawke, 1989, p164.
348 Hawke, 1989, p327.
349 Hawke, 1989, p322.
have the dresses the women wear, you have the patterns on the curtains and other materials, and they are very popular throughout the world.\footnote{Hawke, 1989, p176-177.}

As the meeting wore on maps were produced by the ministerial delegation to try and ascertain where the drilling could specifically take place. In trying to explain the Nookanbah mob produced a *darrugu*, an ancient stone map, to show the holistic understanding and importance that Country represented to them. In the end the arguments presented were as different as both maps and the value systems that they represented. The Ministers, angry and disappointed by the lack of an outcome, finished up the conference. This produced a childish outburst by Hassell who revealed what the issue was about for him:

Punching his fist into the palm of his hand, saying in fervent tones, ‘This Government is dedicated to getting some exploration and finding some oil. This is an oil hungry world’.\footnote{Hawke, 1989, p179.}

The drilling went ahead and no oil was found.

### 2.11 New Directions

By the start of the 1979 preseason Jim’s life had taken a turn for the better. This was because Jim and Fiona had a daughter, Karla, and were married. Phillip’s personal life also took a significant turn as he met his future wife Lynne at the CFC. This proved to be a settling period for Phillip as he was permitted to stay with his future parents-in-law in the spare bedroom as the courtship with Lynne developed. For Jim and Phillip, Claremont had become a significant part of their football and social life. Like many country footballers, the club came to represent something more than just a facility and the people were more than acquaintances. It was a stable environment that could be utilised in times of need with the people becoming friends. Phillip explains:

The people there [Claremont] couldn’t do enough for you. A lot of them just wanted to get to know you better. Some of the celebration nights after a win
would go until the early hours of the morning. You never used to sleep. It was wonderful. Social things, meeting different people, all sorts of people. It was a very exciting place to be.352

The disappointment of Claremont’s successive finals campaigns was starting to pose serious questions for the coaching staff. For Claremont, the only way that they were to achieve success, so it was thought, was through hard work. The person in charge of the implementation and coordination of Claremont’s physical fitness was Lloyd Christopher. For Christopher, Claremont’s solutions to its problems lay not just in getting and keeping the players fit but addressing the increasing myopia of the older player brigade who were starting to voice their concern about the direction CFC was taking. Christopher explains:

[Maskiell’s] brief was to get the best team possible and the committee at the time were very supportive of everything that was happening. Having got Mossy back they obviously wanted to be successful [and] I think when Graham came back there were a lot of his old mates still playing. There were a couple of players that said ‘the fun’s gone out of it’ because they played football and that was a sideline of having fun around the football club. If we wanted to be successful we had to reverse that.353

With the changing face of the WAFL 354 increasing professionalism became the focus of many of the clubs and this was instilled through strict discipline and increased commitment. For the clubs to encourage a more professional ethos changes to entire processes, like training and the player’s attitudes, needed to be addressed. To be physically fit wasn’t enough, playing also, needed to be a state of mind. This mental discipline was something that Christopher was very aware of, previously having worked at the very successful Perth Football Club. As Claremont ‘upped the ante’ with everything from pinch-fold tests to time trials, other means were used to incorporate off-field discipline. For this Roger Barns was wrested away from the staunch East Perth Football Club and employed as Claremont’s team manager. Barns recalls:

353 Personal interview Lloyd Christopher 15/2/2002. My emphasis.
354 On the 14/11/1979, due to a recommendation by marketing consultants, The Western Australian National Football League became the West Australian Football League.
The first year possibly was my hardest because we had to format discipline if they [the players] misbehaved. All the players then understood that if they were found drinking or not turning up to training there were certain fines. But at the same time for the Claremont Football Club to do that Claremont had to do something for the players. We redeveloped the change rooms. We put in a sauna and spas, new lockers where we put the players names on after they played a hundred games. This sort of brought something back to the club and the players started to realise that the club was looking to the future.\textsuperscript{355}

For many of the Claremont players a fine system was implemented. Initially this represented a distinct and unwelcome incursion into their lives but it acted as a safeguard for the younger players who could get, in Christopher’s words, “messy.”\textsuperscript{356} With all the physical conditioning and off-field stop-gaps in place the Claremont team became more professional. A major side-effect of this demanding regime was the pressure it created for the players and for Jim and Phillip this was no different.

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On a blistering hot Saturday morning the training session was going into its third hour. The Claremont squad had been broken into four teams, which for weeks had been involved in a points system. The team that won on the day was rewarded with finishing training early, cold drinks and the undeniable fact that they had been better at the tasks than the other three groups. Winners and losers, this was all there was.

The drill was simple.\textsuperscript{357} The groups were arranged into four single-file lines and given a number from one to four. The ball was then placed 15 yards in front of the four groups. When the group’s number was called the first member from each line would break towards the ball. The idea was to gain possession and then get the ball back to Russel Reynolds who stood a further twenty yards away. It was a sharp and intense physical drill designed to emulate the one-on-one clashes experienced in a game. As Reynolds stood in front of the four groups he filled his lungs and bellowed random

\textsuperscript{355} Personal interview Roger Barns 14 /2/2002. My emphasis. Barns also points out that since this time Claremont have rarely been out of the top four in the WAFL.

\textsuperscript{356} Personal interview Lloyd Christopher 15/2/2002.

\textsuperscript{357} The drill described is used as an example due to the differing recollections of the interviewees.
combinations, “2,4”, “1,3.” In the two middle groups and at the head of their respective lines stood Jim and Ken Hunter. “2,3” Reynolds yelled. It was the third time that their numbers had been called together and each time Hunter had managed to tackle Jim and retard his progress. Jim broke first, taking off quickly with Hunter right behind him. As Jim met the ball his torso was low to the ground and moving at pace. With Jim’s outstretched arm he flicked the ball up into his right hand and was about to sprint off. Just as Jim started to straighten up he could feel Hunter’s arms around his waist and the ball in his right hand locked to his hip. Jim tried to balance with his free left arm but it was no use as Hunter’s body weight brought them both to the ground.

With his competitive drive frustrated yet again, Jim unconsciously reverted to an old tactic which in his eyes would see him emerge as the victor. Meeting the ground together Jim, with his left, punched Hunter in the face. Hunter released his grip and both men sprung to their feet and started to trade blows. The team converged on both of them and restrained them. Hunter’s body went limp indicating to those holding him he had had enough. Jim wanted to go on with it and was having trouble settling down. According to teammate Mike Aitken, Jim was taken from the ground by an official, possibly Barns. With players milling around and their collective concentration gone, Reynolds filled his lungs again and called off training. For Hunter, who was in his last year before going to Carlton and a senior member of Claremont’s side, the incident was over. For Jim it had only just begun.

With emotions still at a premium Hunter stood in the shower cooling off, relieved that the hit had not exacerbated the jaw that had been broken several times before. Hunter could hear voices getting louder until he saw Jim a few feet away, his jumper off, in a sparring stance “I’m gonna make you piss”, Jim seethed. Phillip was close to Jim, trying
to placate him, but may as well have been invisible. John Annear stepped in between the two team-mates. Before Annear could even take a breath Jim cracked him just above the eye with a lightning left and issued Phillip with an order “You get that cunt, I’ll get this one.” The power of numbers quickly overwhelmed Jim and he was told to go home and settle down. For senior player Rob Melville the whole incident was an unfortunate, yet understandable, situation. He explains:

> It was born out of fatigue and exhaustion from the training environment. It was a reaction. Jimmy had lots of prejudice issues that he’s never come to terms with. I think at the end of the day Jimmy was an Aboriginal first and will always be an Aboriginal first. It was never an issue of Jim against us, it was just a hard tackling pre-season training session. I think there was a lot of pressure in Jim. There was a lot of tension just below the surface. A lovely guy to meet in a convivial environment but there was always a powder keg there born from a whole range of issues. There was just this back-to-the-wall reaction.358

During this pre-season a similar incident involving Jim and Daniels happened at a training camp. Similar to the altercation with Hunter, it was something that instead of being brought on by the heat of competition came from a senseless jibe. Daniels, known for his beguiling humour, foolishly underestimated what racial taunts and jokes meant to Jim:

> I’d just come in from the dam and the water polo [and] Jimmy was just coming to it and as we walked past one another I just said ‘how’s the black flash going to go in the water polo.’ And the next thing I knew I was on the ground. He king hit me from behind and sunk the slipper into my ribs and some one had to grab hold of him. I never mentioned the term ‘black’ to him again.”359

For Annear Jim’s persona meant he only engaged with him on a very basic level:

> I guess with Shorty he said two things extra that he shouldn’t say and so you’d say he copped his right whack [sic]. But when it was Ken Hunter everyone sort of made a gentle step back. That’s where you sort of thought ‘Jimmy you’re a great player but that’s bullshit’. That’s where you thought you can’t get too close to Jimmy whereas with Phil you could.360

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358 Personal interview Rob Melville 14/12/2000.
359 Personal interview Allan Daniels 7/4/01. My emphasis.
For some the altercation with Hunter was the painful transition of increased professionalism in football. Mark Watson, in just his first year at the CFC, saw it this way:

"You know a lot of people said it was a bad thing. For me it was a case of the top bulls clashing in the paddock, a bit of a test of wills. I don’t think things like that are bad, I think they are there to determine the fabric of the club. And I think the fabric of the club went from being pussy-cats to all of a sudden we were fighting for our fucking life. I give credit to Jim and Ken because they bought that to the club they lived and died by the way they played."

For Jim, professionalism wasn’t the problem, it was the pressure that he himself felt when those around him did not pay him the respect he thought he was owed. Daniels, despite the incident, recognises this himself:

"The way his race has been treated since white settlement has and always will weigh heavily on him. Unfortunately he often personalised it and brutalised it and that was the only way for him in many respects. What other way was there? Jimmy’s idea of equality and retribution came at the end of his arm."

This pressure was not just reserved for and directed at wadjular team-mates or opponents, it was also vented on those close to Jim. For the young Steve Malaxos, who greatly respected Jim as a footballer, there was always an aura of the unpredictable about Jim:

"With Jimmy there was a slight degree of tension when he was around. You just weren’t sure someone was going to say something, he’d snap and you’d be embroiled in it. You didn’t tell jokes related to Aboriginals because there was no funny end to the joke."

According to Malaxos Jim was a protector of Phillip but he was also “hard on him as well.” Jim had the expectation that his team-mates would adhere to the same standards he set for himself and for Phillip those standards were non-negotiable. To

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363 Personal interview Steve Malaxos ND.
364 Personal interview Steve Malaxos ND.
ensure these were met Jim employed both verbal and physical means, particularly if
Phillip was having a quiet day. Malaxos explains:

At half time he’d say [to Phillip] ‘how about getting a fuckin kick’. Just a quick
comment. I don’t know if it happened before the game or after the game but I
saw Jim give a short one to Phil in the guts to sharpen him up. If Phil was lining
up for a goal Jimmy would just walk past and say ‘kick the fucking goal’. He
was constantly driving him to perform well only because Jim had a fierce desire
to win.365

2.12 Face in the Crowd

If Mark Watson felt any apprehension about heading to Perth he might have been
justified. “Why would you go there when they’ve got the two Krakouer brothers?”
his friends asked him. Instead of diminishing Watson’s resolve it spurred him on and
made him more determined. Watson could see how the Krakouers had adjusted to Perth
and WAFL football and he realised what was required to break into Claremont’s ranks:

their football was just starting to draw a lot of attention. Jimmy had been very
good earlier and Phillip was very good in his first year. 1980 was probably the
year that they really started to hit their straps and they became big-name
players.367

Watson’s hard pre-season work was paying off with some good early form in practice
matches, allowing Phillip to be freed up from his roving roles and experimented with on
the wing. Claremont had also gained the services of reliable Collingwood back Gerald
Betts but the area that had Claremont officials smiling was that of full-forward. In a
practice match against South Fremantle a young spindly reserves player by the name of
Warren Ralph would boot six goals prompting Christian to write:

Claremont’s search for a full-forward came to an end last night…[Ralph] led
well, marked cleanly, though at times a little casually, and kicked straight.368

365 Personal interview Steve Malaxos ND. My emphasis.
In Claremont’s first round Escort Cup match against East Perth, Ralph kicked five goals and they won by 102 points. A further win against Subiaco saw Ralph kicking four goals and sealing the game. Claremont’s search had indeed come to an end.  

With Phillip suspended and losses to West Perth and a vastly improved Swan Districts alarm bells sounded at Claremont. By contrast, one area where Claremont were winning was at the turn-style. In the game against Swan Districts 14,547 spectators turned up to watch the match. These figures had been unheard of three or four seasons previously. The standard of the competition and the large score-lines created an environment that meant that a day at the football was money well spent.  

The exciting running football that Western Australia was known for was on full display in its small players. This situation was not lost on many of the powerful Victorian clubs who were constantly sniffing around Western Australia and South Australia for quality roving talent. Losing both Graham Melrose and Barry Cable back to the west, North Melbourne were keen to pursue any possible avenues to securing quality rovers. The first public hint that North Melbourne were interested in the Krakouers came about early in the 1980 season but just how long they had been watching the Krakouers for is unknown. But somewhere in those swelling WAFL crowds sat an inconspicuous man who travelled Australia looking for footballers. There in the outer he sat smoking incessantly. As the siren sounded, ending each quarter, he made his way to the ‘Mr

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369 This was an important turn of events for the future of Claremont’s success as the chain of action from the centre bounces was on many occasions so good as to be textbook perfect with many football commentators using the catch cry “Moss, Krakouer, Ralph” to reflect Claremont’s efficiency into attack.  

370 By round nine of the WAFL season attendance figures were up by 5% on the previous year. Swan Districts had the biggest increase with 31,000 more people attending their home games than in the same period in 1979. *The West Australian*. 30/5/1980, p60.  

371 For example all the best players for round four were rovers or ruck-rovers – Neesham for Swans, Wayne Cormack with East Fremantle, South Fremantle’s Noel Carter and Les Fong for West Perth.
Whippy’ van behind him and ordered a double soft-serve cone.\textsuperscript{372} With his eyes shaded by big dark sunglasses, it was impossible to tell what he was looking at exactly. What is certain is that in the weeks and months he had been tracking Jim and Phillip Krakouer, Ron Joseph liked what he saw.

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The recruitment of football players is a task that requires a variety of skills and approaches. Tact and praise are used by some along with humour and a projected vision of riches, fame and even immortality. In his time, Joseph would use all of these things.

“I can see you in a North Melbourne guernsey…I can see you with the No 16 on your back at centre half-forward for North Melbourne I can see you on the MCG playing in a premiership side.”\textsuperscript{373} With Jim and Phillip how would such grandiose ego-massaging go? Joseph procured Jim and Phillip’s address and paid them an informal visit knowing that direct canvassing of players by eastern state’s clubs was viewed very negatively by WAFL clubs:

I was never a very popular figure over in Perth. Because of my recruiting methods but the reality is that if you telegraphed your punches some one would get in and undermine you. My philosophy was win the player first and then worry about the club.\textsuperscript{374}

As Jim, Phillip and Joseph stood out on the front verge of the Krakouer’s home, Joseph gave them his pitch about ‘seeing’ them in a North Melbourne guernsey. Josephs recollects the boys seemed to be a mix of scepticism and indifference. As Joseph talked he noticed Jim and Phillip look up over his shoulder and lock onto something in the distance. Joseph stopped, turned and noticed an approaching car. Jim and Phillip started to acknowledge the occupant of the vehicle. “Whose that fellas?” Joseph inquired nonchalantly. “Wally Maskiell”, Phillip chirped. Like a top Joseph spun off down the

\textsuperscript{372} “Joseph smoked two packets-plus of Stuyvesants a day and ice-cream…He sat puffing a Stuyvesants…his digestive system at full throttle following an ice-cream overdose”. Crosswell, Brent, “Dreamtime Touch”, The Best Ever Australian Sports Writing: A 200 Year Collection. (ed) Headon, David 2001 p 560.

\textsuperscript{373} Crosswell, 2001 p560. My emphasis.
drive-way. Coming to a fence he executed a pedestrian scissor-kick and hid like a field
mouse being pursued by a wedge-tail eagle. As Joseph recalls Maskiell “was none the
wiser that I was there. He sort of gave them a wave and kept on driving.” Emerging
from the Krakouer’s back yard slowly and stealthily, like a fighter pilot shot down
behind enemy lines, Joseph nervously smiled at the boys who had never seen such
impromptu vaudevillian behaviour. They smiled back:

That broke the ice. They got a laugh out of it and eventually I saw the lighter
side of it and we became pretty friendly.

For Joseph the Krakouer brothers represented the best chance North Melbourne had of
reclaiming their glory days of the mid-to-late seventies by re-establishing their roving
department. In the weeks and months Joseph had been gauging the progress of a number
of players it was the Krakouers who represented for North Melbourne the best option:

I think Cabes [Barry Cable] was the first one to alert me of these two Aboriginal
boys playing at Claremont. I’d been watching them from 79-80. I can’t really
remember what my first impressions were, but you never make a judgement on
blokes with one game, you’ve got to watch them over a whole series of matches.
As I kept watching you could see their understanding of one another as brothers,
but you could see Phillip’s absolute class as a finisher and you could see Jim’s
hardness.

For both Jim and Phillip a move to the VFL was a massive step and a consideration that
was not taken lightly. For Phillip particularly, the whole notion of going to Melbourne
was:

not even a dream. I was flattered that a club was interested in you playing
AFL[sic]. In my mind I just wanted to make my parents and family happy. For
the Claremont supporters and Graham Moss I just wanted a premiership. I never
really started to get interested in AFL football until 1980.

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376 Linnell, Garry. Football LTD: The Inside Story of the AFL. Ironbark, Sydney, p244.
Jim agrees with this “I didn’t know much about Perth football let alone Melbourne footy. It was all a bit far way.”

It would become clear to Joseph, however, that he was not alone in trying to acquire the services of Jim and Phillip. Geelong were also in the hunt for the Krakouer’s and employed the services of one of the most respected footballers ever; a man who could identify with the problems they faced in football and would continue to do so throughout their careers.

2.13 Polly and the Krakouers

With a loss to North Melbourne knocking CFC out of the Escort Cup, the Tigers could focus in on the remainder of the WAFL season and in their first game back trounced the Lions by 109 points. For Claremont it showed what they could achieve and how well they played when they shared the ball around as Ralph kicked seven, Malaxos four, Ditchburn three and Moss, Salomons and Blackwell kicked two apiece. Jim finished the game with five goals and set up several others, particularly Ralph’s, with “bullet-like passes [that] rarely missed their target.” For Subiaco’s coach Ken Armstrong his team’s performance was so bad he ordered the players back onto the ground after the game for a twenty minute training session. Furthermore, Subiaco’s President, Kevin Merrifield announced that each Subiaco player would be fined $100.00, each saying it was the worst display he had seen in twenty three years.

Despite his quiet form against Subiaco Phillip was being seriously considered for his state debut against Victoria. With Rob Wiley carrying a thigh injury and viruses to John Dimmer and Peter Spencer it was thought Phillip was up for state duties. The task at hand for Phillip was perhaps more daunting than Jim’s first state game, for a number of

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reasons. Firstly, playing Victoria at home was always a hard assignment for visiting interstate sides as the ‘Big V’ prided itself on its superior players, which fostered a certain bullish arrogance. Secondly, it was reported that with Phillip’s inclusion on the half-forward flank it would mean he would play on one of two players, Bruce Doull or Keith Greig.\footnote{Both Bruce Doull and Keith Greig are selected in the AFL’s team of the century.}

The game itself show-cased some of the best assembled football talent in the country and if Phillip was nervous, he certainly didn’t show it. Being without Jim didn’t seem to hinder his ability to perform in the biggest game he had played in to date:

One of the highlights of the game was the cool and polished display by Claremont rover Phil Krakouer who was given the difficult job of playing on a half forward flank. Krakouer more than lived up to his growing reputation as one of the most skilled players in the game when he had 17 kicks and scored three straight goals.\footnote{The West Australian. 7/7/1980, p81.}

Yet despite the efforts of Rioli, Hunter, Monteath and Glendinning the sheer might of the Victorian contingent was just too strong and the Sandgropers lost by 21 points.\footnote{This was the closest that a Western Australian side had come in eight matches with the average losing margin being 87 points per game.}

For anyone looking on in the McInerney Ford workshop it would have been tempting to sidle up next to the three men as they sat and talked. What an interesting little group they made; Jim with his head down, Phillip sipping his tea regularly and Polly Farmer the epitome of patience. The main topic of conversation was of course football. Farmer knew the Krakouers from Claremont where his son Brett, and later Dean, played in the reserves. Farmer was also in the employ of McInerney Ford, where he worked as a mechanic. Having established himself as a household name on either side of the Nullarbor, Farmer explained to the Krakouers what would be expected of them and what they in turn could expect. Grounds, players, crowds. They talked about it all. In
these discussions there were no grand gesticulations or boisterous comical asides. They just talked quietly sometimes they just sat not talking at all “You know”, Polly explained, “Geelong is just like a big country town. It’s away from the city. It’s quiet and not so rushed. Easier to get away from.” Jim and Phillip nodded. They truly respected Farmer’s insights, his achievements and standing in the community. If they went to play in the VFL living away from Melbourne would be a definite bonus but their decision could not be based purely on lifestyle alone. There were many things to consider and it was vitally important they did not choose fishing spots over the right club for them. 384

The main advantage that North Melbourne had over Geelong was the long affiliation that McInerney had with Arden Street. With his business acumen and friendship with the Krakouer brothers, McInerney was the obvious choice to broker any VFL deal. Unless Geelong made an outstanding offer the boys were destined for the white and blue stripes of a North Melbourne guernsey. McInerney explains:

> Geelong were in the hunt and Polly was working here. I used to pull rank on Polly a bit when the Krakouers came in. I also knew what Geelong’s offer was. I didn’t tell anybody about my real involvement with North until afterwards but I always told the boys and I told Ron Joseph I wanted them with North. But we had to go through the procedures and they had to give us the best deal otherwise I wouldn’t have been doing my job. 385

The negotiations went well and McInerney and his team of experts shaped what was to become one of the biggest deals in football, even by today’s terms. Phillip in particular was amazed by the amounts that were being discussed:

> I didn’t realise at the time how big the football scene was. At Claremont the most amount of money I’d seen in a game was $300.00. These guys [North Melbourne] were talking thousands and thousands for something that you’d do for nothing. I thought they were mad. 386

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384 While Polly Farmer told me he could not actually recall talking to Jim and Phillip about playing football for Geelong he does admit that he would have talked to them at some stage regarding playing football in the VFL. Personal interview Polly Farmer 28/2/2002.  
For Jim the money was important but so too was the way the contract was drawn up. The added bonus was that Jim’s boyhood idol, Barry Cable, coached North Melbourne:

> It was very close. The money was more or less the same but North Melbourne’s was guaranteed and Geelong’s was sort of a performance-based contract. So North Melbourne’s was guaranteed and I think they knew that Cabes was going to take over as coach so that sort of helped to persuade us too.387

For McInerney, it was a case of playing ‘hard ball’ to see how far North Melbourne would go to secure the services of the Krakouers. He explains:

> They had a huge media confronting them with the contract going on but only because every time we said ‘no’ the price would go up. I would have signed them for $250 000. I had the best solicitor the best accountant and I was doing the crunching. In the end they got them for $750,000.388

On the weekend of the three-year contract being signed, the Krakouers gave Joseph a taste of what was to come. In a close fought nine point victory over a dogged East Fremantle, Jim kicked 4.2 and Phillip 2.1, consolidating their spot in third position and their final’s chances. As the season wore on with only four games to go, Jim and Phillip’s work-rate went up as did Ralph’s position on the leading goal kicker’s table as he led Simon Beasley by three. This set the stage for the following week’s match between Swan Districts and the Tigers as Swan Districts were on top of the ladder and firing. With the finals looming it would be crucial test to see if Claremont could beat a side that had beaten them in two previous encounters.

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Coaching for John Todd has always been a process of developing talent. As a player Todd has the distinction of being the youngest footballer in the WAFL to win a Sandover Medal.389 But a serious knee injury shut down his playing days opening the way to his coaching career. Todd admits he has had to change as football has evolved

387 Personal interview Jim Krakouer 10/10/2002.
388 Personal interview Denis McInerney 3/7/01.
389 1955.
but he has always felt that football could provide something other than just a ratio of winning and losing:

The ultimate with me has always been development, give people an opportunity and see where it leads for them. If we get a group together that has a little bit of fibre you normally achieve something.390

Finishing fifth in 1979 and last in 1978, Todd had developed Swan Districts into a highly aggressive and competitive unit. This was achieved through the usual processes, but it also came through using players from opposing clubs to educate his player group. Two players that Todd believed needed extra tuition were Craig Holden and Bill Skwirowski, and to make sure that the facilitation of information was achieved he used them on Phillip and Jim respectively:

They just had outstanding talent and they were constantly put under pressure. I was contemplating whether it was worthwhile going on with Bill. He wasn’t going very far playing mid-field because he couldn’t find the ball and didn’t read the game well, his angles were all wrong. But by putting him into that [tagging] role our belief was that he had enough going for him. Jimmy was so talented he’d always take him to the contest and he developed Skirowski enormously because he taught him how to play the game. Craig Holden was the same, not going very far playing midfield because he couldn’t find the ball, so by putting them on good players it made them play because they [the Krakouers] took them to the ball.391

This tagging tactic would prove to be a constant source of frustration for both Jim and Phillip. In the game against Swan Districts it would prove to be a decisive one in curbing the Krakouers influence who “at no stage threatened to take control of the match with their dazzling skills…Todd’s ploy worked perfectly.”392 Going down by 25 points both Jim and Phillip could only manage 31 possessions and three goals between them. With Moss out of touch, Blackwell beaten and Ralph and Ditchburn down on form, it was a healthy reminder that more effort would be required for the oncoming finals.

Claremont’s run into the 1980 finals was difficult to gauge. With the loss to Swan Districts they would come up the week after against South Fremantle who were one position higher than Claremont on the ladder in second place. There was a general improvement in Claremont’s overall team performance and, despite leading by 13 points at the 15 minute mark of the last quarter, they would be beaten by a mere four points. Giving away a thirty point lead to South Fremantle at the first break did not help and eventually South Fremantle won the game which saw a total of 13.5 scored in the last quarter alone.

In the second last game Claremont annihilated last placed Subiaco. Phillip had only a few kicks to the main break. After half time he lifted so by the end of the game Ralph had kicked 11.6, many of which were supplied from Phillip’s deadly left foot. In doing so Ralph became the first first year player since Austin Roberston in 1962 to top the goal kicking list. The accolades, however, were saved for Phillip who was deemed best-on-ground because “The Claremont rover uses the ball to such devastating effect that one of his kicks is worth two to anyone else’s.” This was a glowing reference to Phillip’s skill and an acknowledgment that he rarely wasted a possession, preferring to pass to a team-mate in the right position rather than blaze away. For Jim however the news was not so sound. A heavy clash resulting in a fall saw him aggravate a thigh injury placing him in serious doubt for the last game of the season and the final’s series.

Intensive treatment throughout the week failed to bring Jim up against Perth who were essentially playing for that precious thing that makes up for not making the finals - pride. For Claremont it would be the last time they could tinker with their side before the first semi-final against East Perth. In only his fifth game for the year, Watson kicked

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five goals with Annear, Panizza, Harper, Hunter and Melville all contributing. Unfortunately for Jim his leg was too damaged and the Claremont selectors opted to rest him in the hope that they would make the preliminary final. Christian in his pre-match assessment believed that Claremont would be hungrier for success than the Royals as their build up to the finals had been more of a mental struggle. For Christian, Claremont’s ability to win this game came down not to their ability to kick goals but rather to their ability to defend.

Going into the first semi-final Claremont wasted no time with first use of the breeze and were leading East Perth by 25 points. Phillip was proving to be a problem for his opponent Curtis as he was instrumental in four of Claremont’s first five goals. Some increased close checking by Curtis gradually shut Phillip out of the game as he was reduced to just three more kicks for the remainder of the match. East Perth were unrelenting as full-back John Hayes had the better of Ralph, Claremont’s veteran rover Salomons had no support and Moss was unable to run due to a shin injury. Claremont’s 32 two point loss was perhaps the hardest of the previous two campaigns to handle as Moss was rumoured to step down as Claremont’s coach. For Moss the situation was one of utter bewilderment brought on by physical and mental exhaustion:

> Our players don’t seem to have the same obsession with winning a final-round match as players from other clubs…We are not mentally tough enough for these big games. At Claremont it’s almost become hereditary.\(^{394}\)

Maskiell’s attitude was much the same:

> We have shown that we have the ability to succeed in qualifying games and Escort cup matches [but] the attitude of our players was very disappointing. Defeat doesn’t seem to mean anything to them and I can’t understand this trait.\(^{395}\)

\(^{394}\) *The West Australian*. 8/9/1980, p68

With Claremont set to lose Hunter to Carlton, other Claremont players were also highly sought after by Victorian clubs over the summer. As the older player’s services were no longer required, the approaching season started to resemble a *re-building phase*, which is football-speak for being back at square one.

**2.14 Sticks & Stones**

*No Vietcong ever called me nigger*.396

…it is impossible to cordon off sport from politics...as with any social institution, sport and its heroes are political entities whether they choose to be or not* .397

There is an old saying that ‘sport and politics should never mix’. Colin Tatz has written extensively on politics and sport and their intersecting pathways. For Tatz, sport is a vital space for socio-cultural and historical investigation because it, “is intrinsic, not peripheral to society.”398 Tatz looks at sporting moments historically and instead of gilding those moments in Bruce McAvaney-exuberance399 he shows us the chinks in our socio-historical recollections. Tatz engages with issues such as Cathy Freeman cloaking herself in the Aboriginal flag at the 1998 Commonwealth Games and points out “Those who deplored her ‘un-Australian’ behaviour have no understanding of Aboriginal history.”400 Tatz brings into question issues like the Australian myth of *egalitarianism* by using sport as a sociological petri-dish to show how systemic and institutionalised racism manifests itself historically and culturally.

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399 Bruce McAvaney is a well regarded sports commentator who is known to become very excited during dramatic sporting moments, particularly in the football.
For others, like Darren Godwell, sport provides us with an interesting and crucial field of analysis that enables us to see how societal mechanics work when it comes to racial issues. Unlike Tatz, who looks at specific sporting moments, Godwell investigates sport as a socio-pathological field of enquiry. Godwell also critically engages with the discourses surrounding sport and looks at the “deeper philosophical insights into celebrated human and/or national character” in the world of sport. In doing this, Godwell shows how racism, historically and within the contemporary media, has been an issue and claims that it has not been dealt with in any real way. Godwell suggests that racism in sport needs to be understood at a deeper societal and pathological level and only when this is achieved can steps be taken to improve the situation. Both Tatz and Godwell challenge Australian notions of egalitarianism, and despite things like the Michael Long incident and the introduction of the AFL’s rule 30 in 1995, they believe the worlds of sport, politics and the everyday need to become sites of greater investigation. This is, Godwell explains, because when racist acts or comments have arisen in sport in the past they have been explained away as being in ‘the heat of the moment’:

The issue was simplified to a clash of personalities, or maybe just a hot-headed jibe. This tendency understated the seriousness of the issue and distracted from critical conclusion. Accordingly, Pakistani cricketers became ‘whingers’; Aboriginal footballers ‘can’t take a ribbing’; black basketballers have ‘chips on their shoulders’.  

For many well-known Indigenous sportsmen and women, racial vilification has not just come from opponents but from the sporting institutions themselves. During his career, Polly Farmer was regularly goaded about his identity. It was his comment in response to a request from a teammate to buy a round of drinks after an interstate match did Farmer reveal his thoughts about being racial vilified. Being a teetotaller and thrifty, a dangerous combination in any sporting circle, Farmer light-heartedly refused to ‘shout

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401 Godwell, 2000, p3.
402 Godwell, 2000, p 3.
the drinks’ saying, “the difference between me and those blokes is that when I retire from football, I’m just another boong.”

Doug Nichols, Fitzroy’s champion and later a Governor of South Australia, was declined a guernsey at Carlton because it was thought he smelt. In other words he smelled because it was common-sense that Aboriginals were dirty and lived in squalid conditions.

Eddie Gilbert, a devastatingly fast bowler and one of the few people to bowl Bradman for a duck, spent his final days in a Brisbane sanatorium because of the “great mental concern” that racism had caused him. Gilbert was made to take his meals away from the team when he was on State cricketing duties. Some team mates even refused to shake Gilbert’s hand after he had taken a wicket. Furthermore, Gilbert was branded a ‘chucker’ because of his distinctive action costing him greater acceptance and recognition within cricketing circles. Evonne Goologong, perhaps the most internationally famous Indigenous sportsperson before Cathy Freeman, also experienced racism. During the 1980 Wimbeldon the Victorian Premier said he hoped she “wouldn’t go walkabout like some old boong.”

Despite these morally and socially repugnant incidents, sport does offer us many other avenues into what it means to be Australian. Tatz engages with sport and politics because he understands that sport is sacrosanct to many Australians and it provides a road into the collective Australian consciousness by providing a space to effect real social and political change. According to Tatz though, many Australians, in reconciling our Indigenous history, still have a long way to go:

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Sport creates the illusion that all is well with the world. Embracing Cathy Freeman, appropriating her achievements, makes everyone feel good…It tells us we’re progressing but it simply isn’t so…Although sport has been the passport to respect for a few, the odds have been monumental. Genuine racial equality in Australian sport remains disturbingly out of reach.406

This is because Australians do not know, or do not want to know, the broader historical divergences from the official narrative - because to do this would create a sense of culpability and strike at the heart of the Australian ‘fair-go’. Only when the broader Australian community becomes aware that there is not one truth, but many truth(s), to the Australian experience, will our collective thinking be more tolerant about difference. It is because of Australia’s unresolved tension between its Black and White members that Australia’s identity is ‘an identity hindered’. Our gaze is focussed on our greatness, which is confined to the familiar theatres of curated cricket pitches, football ovals, glistening swimming pools and green tennis courts. Our culture, like our history, resists any divergence from the ‘common-sensical’ and so we are left with this dreadful tension between Indigenous and non-Indigenous realities. This in turn accounts “for the uneasiness that characterizes [sic] Australian identities and which requires Australians to expend so much energy on telling themselves who they really are.”407

2.16 Old Boys New Boys

For Phillip Krakouer the developments over the break did not instil any confidence that Claremont would make the 1981 finals, let alone the Grand Final. Not only had the Tigers lost Ken Hunter to Carlton, other players such as Ross Ditchburn, Kevin Worthington and John Annear also decided to pursue careers in the prestigious VFL. In total, Claremont had lost some 14, players due either to retirement or transfers. Of the

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players who joined Claremont, Peter Jamieson was the only one who had WAFL experience with East Perth. Phillip recalls the situation:

I remember at the start of pre-season training and they were introducing the new guys and I thought we were gone, we’d missed the boat. We got a few recruits but no big names. I thought we’d lost too many players.408

One of the recruits that did grace CFC’s door was a diminutive Queenslander by the name of Gary Shaw. Shaw, a rover, was contacted by Maskiell after his name was dropped in conversations around the club. Shaw knew little about WAFL football and its players and arrived with no pre-conceptions of either. All Shaw knew was that he would be in for some hard work, much harder than he had experienced in the Queensland Football League. This became clear from the first training drill that Shaw did with Claremont, where he inadvertently teamed up with Jim. Shaw recalls:

Graham Moss was right into competitive circle work. The other blokes knew what was going on and moved away from Jim and I was stuck with him. Jimmy always treated training like a game and they knew how intense Jimmy was at training. If I was chasing after a ball he knocked you around a bit just to get the ball. Whenever you got near the ball you just sort of watched them [Jim and Phillip]. I learnt a lot off them just watching and I think a lot of players did too.409

Claremont’s fortunes, while at first appearing bleak, were bolstered in the coaching department by the return of a Tiger ‘old-boy’, Murray Ward. Ward, a state sprinter in his youth, had played for Claremont during the 1950’s and 60’s and had developed into somewhat of a junior coaching phenomenon. Ward coached Aquinas College to thirteen consecutive wins in the Alcock Cup.410 During the 1980 break Moss and Ward talked about ways that they could get to the next level in the WAFL and the areas that they thought needed refinement. Despite coming in at such a late stage Ward’s input into the CFC was huge and instrumental in fine-tuning the player body and culture at Claremont.

410 Perth’s private school football competition.
Ward believed Moss’s role as captain-coach was compromised. In playing one role, he neglected the other. This situation was compounded by the lack of individual attention that Moss could give to the players. Moss also had trouble communicating effectively to the player body. Ward’s vision for Claremont had all the usual ingredients but the key element that was lacking, at both a team and club level, was that Claremont were not operating as a synchronised, self-regulating mechanism. Ward explains:

I think in 1980 they [Claremont] were a side with some talent that perhaps could have or should have done better. It was a side that was built on good average players and some high quality players. The high quality is determined in two ways, reliable and outstanding, and we had some of both. But there was never a thought in the workings of the eighty-one team where team-work wasn’t the most important factor. There was never a thought that we were going to win off skill alone. We developed the skills as a group, and applied them as a group so we could sustain them under pressure. What was missing was a determination to get to a higher level. There had to be some order come into the way they [the players] played the game as a group. The mix of players we had needed to be refined so that as a group they could develop a power and apply that to the opposition so the game was played our way and not theirs.411

The specific areas that Ward wanted the players and the coaching staff to focus on were a strictly adhered to game plan and greater self-belief. The game plan, which was quite innovative at the time, was predicated on the strategy of offensive football. For this strategy to work it required two things - speed and endurance, as both these elements were vital to what is known in today’s football parlance as kicking or running through the lines. Ward explains:

The theory was if we could run faster than they could we can apply force. At no time do you kick the ball to the half-forward line when you’re in attack unless you are deep in defence. You should be looking to go through the ground with pace and get the ball on the other side of the half-back line. That’s why [in 1981] we often kicked twenty-five, thirty goals because we were taking shots from twenty, thirty metres out. I insisted that everybody run as fast as they could and kick as far as they could. If he [Ralph] didn’t get it you had Watson or Farmer coming behind or Malaxos coming off the pack.412

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412 Personal interview Murray Ward 25/3/2002. My emphasis. With this style of football played the potency of Claremont’s forward line was remarkable as Ralph would kick 127 goals for the season Malaxos 82, Brett Farmer 67, Jim 53 and Phillip 50. Claremont’s average score for the season was 160 points a game.
The other thing Ward was determined to change was the notion that Claremont only had a small nucleus of players that could win the game. He said, “it was never going to be that [the opposition] could pick off two or three people and [we would] crumble.” For Ward, the Claremont players needed to see themselves as valuable interchangeable parts of the total team. In this way players would not become reliant on a few and nor would the players see their positions as a given. The players therefore became more personally resilient, a trait which was projected as a collective. According to Ward, a strong mentality, had to be developed over time. For Ward this development began “in October when we started the pre-season and didn’t come to its final test until the last quarter of the last game [the grand final].”

As I sat at Ward’s dinner table he stressed to me that Claremont’s 1981 season needed to be more than just a game of presence, tactics or fitness. It needed to be a game of the mind and in Ward, Claremont had a person who could take a Zen-like approach to Claremont’s mind-set. This reconciled itself, not as 20 individuals, but recognised the individual roles players would make to the gestalt of the team. Ward’s vision for CFC to operate as a collective is actually the foundation of Indigenous social organisation and kinship structure. Without perhaps even knowing it, Ward had developed a strategy that would allow Jim and Phillip to play offensive football in a culture that was fundamental to their Indigenous sensibilities.

For Claremont to be successful the pressure had to be taken off certain points and redistributed. Ward’s role was to take pressure off Moss, Claremont’s hub, so he could

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concentrate on his game. With Moss playing his own game he could rally his running division, led by Jim, and play assured, attacking and direct football. With Ralph leading quickly and his confidence high, Claremont’s ability to score was better than average. Further, Claremont’s younger brigade of Aitken, Blackwell, Daniels, Kanther, Morton, Panizza, Malaxos and Reynolds were all now coming into their third or fourth playing year and maturing into seasoned footballers.

For Jim and Phillip, the philosophy of Ward worked for a range of reasons. It allowed the Krakouers to see that their roles were simultaneously vital but just as important as everyone else’s in the side. In other words, Jim and Phillip were not relied on as much to consciously produce a win. Ward understood that:

> with the Krakouers you had to allow the brilliance to bubble over for your own benefit…You’d think of instances and [say] ‘well I saw it and there was no plan to it. How on earth did it happen?’ that was the brilliance of them.

Other Claremont players who had come to rely on this factor began to take more responsibility for their own game and hence Claremont became a better team.

With a new era in professionalism dawning, Claremont began to package information for its player’s differently. Instead of stereotypical coaching practices of threats and spitting diatribes at training or half-time, Claremont developed a culture of learning, not recrimination, helping to foster responsibility. Moss was not a great orator, this process was left to Ward, and he explains its rationale:

> There was a sort of orderliness that came into the side. There was no ranting or raving…There was always a learning curve in whatever was discussed so there was a peacefulness about Claremont’s intensity. No less discipline. But when you opened your mouth you had something that was beneficial to the team…no detrimental personal abuse. And in that framework I think the Krakouers worked

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415 Ward says of Moss’s coaching/playing role, “If you’re playing yourself it’s hard to come off and assess what’s happened around you. If you are playing you really just don’t have those opportunities”. Personal interview Murray Ward 25/3/2002.

best. Allowing them to develop their football and to live in a community that was orderly, it complimented their football.417

With many of Claremont’s older players retired or at other clubs both Jim and Phillip represented the established ‘player-brigade’ with Jim given the extra responsibility, along with Wayne Blackwell, of being made a vice captain.

The new order helped develop CFC’s style based upon attacking, running football. With players like the Krakouers, Daniels, Panizza, Reynolds and Shaw their ability to run and share the ball was something that other sides found difficult to counter. Even Claremont’s taller players like Betts, Harper, Van de Beek and Beecroft were excellent athletes who could be relied upon for stints in the ruck if required. The question was would all these factors translate onto the field?

In the pre-match report before the season opener against South Fremantle Geoff Christian didn’t seem to think so. This was probably because in the practice match the week before, strangely also against South Fremantle, Claremont not only played badly but the coaching staff appeared to be flustered as “they chopped and changed their players around the ground.”418 Coming off a premiership, South Fremantle had not lost a game since early June of the previous year and it was strongly predicted that Claremont would be their 15th consecutive win. South, however, would be denied victory, going down to Claremont by 22 points in a three way strategy designed to curb South Fremantle’s potent following triumvirate of Michael, Rioli and Carter.

It was not the win itself but the way they won. Persisting with frequent rotational changes of their players, a “new found desperation” and, “a willingness to work harder

around the packs” 419 Claremont came from four goals down in the first quarter to overwhelm South Fremantle. With Ralph kicking eight goals Claremont had no shortage of options going into their forward line as Phillip, Shaw, Malaxos and Farmer all kicked goals. The most satisfying thing for Moss was Claremont won with only 18 fit players. 420 This would seem to indicate that Ward’s plan of interchangeability and self-belief was working. Despite Jim’s absence for over half the match Claremont simply persisted with their game plan.

Going into the second game against Subiaco, Claremont were without Jim and Malaxos but retained the services of Beecroft and Watson. It wasn’t enough as Subiaco, led by Buckenara, wiped the floor with Claremont, beating them by 30 points. Retrospectively, this was an important game that Claremont needed to lose. With their justified but unexpected win over South Fremantle, the Subiaco game presented itself as an easy win. With Claremont’s psychological guard down Subiaco had come to play and with their win jumped from second last to third on the ladder. Conversely, Claremont went from second to fifth. In the following games Claremont would beat lowly placed Perth by 96 points and the dogged Royals by 33 points without the services of Jim who was out with injury. Jim’s absence for three fixtures was a blessing in disguise for Claremont as players like Panizza, Watson, Kanther and Daniels were able to step-up and gain confidence reversing the previous season’s no Krakouer/no win pattern. 421

By round five and having missed three weeks of game-time Jim was raring to go. Against West Perth, Claremont, led by Jim with a best-on-ground performance, the

420 Both Jim and Kim Bevan were injured in the second quarter and took no further part in the game.
421 This was also general knowledge amongst the sports press prompting Christian to write “Claremont play their best football when the Krakouer brothers are in form…they are the bonuses of which victories are made.” The West Australian. 16/5/1981, p84.
Cardinals didn’t stand a chance going down by 93 points. Team football was played in symphony with individual performances, as Farmer continually drifted into space kicking nine straight goals. Ralph could have kicked more finishing with 4.4 and the centre-line of Daniels, Blackwell and Panizza was a bona fide success.

By round seven Swan Districts were on top of the ladder and set to play Claremont at Claremont Oval. The significance of this game was not lost on the football public as 16,154 people went through the turn-styles to see the two best teams in the competition. It would prove to be Claremont’s most evident team display for years as they beat the Swans by 46 points with “dominant followers, tenacious backmen, efficient forwards and a centre-line that held sway.”\textsuperscript{422} The game was significant because it also showed what the Krakouers could do when they were able to play their style of football, which complimented Moss and the team:

\begin{quote}
Moss Tapped the ball intelligently and Jim and Phil Krakouer finished off his good work with deft passing to the forwards, perfect accuracy in front of goal (they kicked 7.0 between them) and skilful use of handball to open goalkicking opportunities for other players.\textsuperscript{423}
\end{quote}

For Jim and Phillip it would be the start of their personal purple patch that would eventually see both brothers selected for the State clash against South Australia. In the following game against Subiaco, Claremont would exact revenge for their earlier loss and beat the Lions by 35 points. It was a game that Christian wrote:

\begin{quote}
it is a joy to watch Jim and Phil Krakouer play league football, especially when they work brilliantly in tandem.\textsuperscript{424}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{422} The West Australian. 25/5/1981, p80.
\textsuperscript{423} The West Australian. 25/5/1981, p80.
\textsuperscript{424} The West Australian. 1/6/1981, p75.
With the state match against South Australia looming the Western Australian side was trying to come to grips with injuries to Moss, Brian Peake, Rioli and Beasley. Not having won a game against South Australia since 1978, the reputation of Western Australian football was that it was trailing Victoria and South Australia as they only produced a win against Tasmania in the previous year.\(^\text{425}\) Claremont’s contingent in the state side consisted of Moss, Jim, Phillip and Ralph who took the place of the injured Beasley. With a strong South Australian side consisting of Carey, Cornes, Abernethy and Aish a win over the ‘Crow-eaters’ was no certainty.

By 5.00pm on a miserable Perth afternoon in late June, Western Australia had “completed the rehabilitation of their interstate football reputation”\(^\text{426}\) with a 87 point victory. Coached by Brown, the Western Australian side was characterised by:

- quick tackling, smart handpassing and a high degree of cooperation...WA won this game because of the sheer skill of their smaller players notably Jim and Phil Krakouer, Noel Carter, Alan Johnson and Gary Buckenara.\(^\text{427}\)

With a combined tally of 58 kicks, Jim and Buckenara would finish the game tied for the Simpson Medal.\(^\text{428}\)

By 11.00pm, after all the awards had been handed out and all the hands extended shaken, McInerney rounded-up a small group of friends, including Jim, to go out and celebrate the victory and Jim’s award. As he stepped out of the taxi and headed to the door-way of the inner city night-club, the bouncer motioned the small party to proceed inside. Just as Jim was about to move through the door-way, the bouncer placed his

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\(^{425}\) This is despite a 29 point win against Victoria 54 days prior to this state match. In the 1980 season WA lost twice to Victoria and were beaten by SA by 81 points.

\(^{426}\) *The West Australian*, 22/6/1981, p64.

\(^{427}\) *The West Australian*, 22/6/1981, p64. My emphasis.

\(^{428}\) Jim also won the Town and Country award as WA’s best player with Buckenara taking out the WAFL’s Past Players and Officials award.
hand on his shoulder “No mate, not you.” The reason why Jim was not allowed in was obvious. Regardless of his sporting profile and the reality that he had just received a coveted sporting prize, Jim Krakouer was denied participation for one simple reason. Even though Jim was impeccably dressed, groomed and sober, he was not allowed into the night-club because it was ‘house policy’ not to admit blacks.429

By the middle of the season, against Swan Districts, Claremont jumped to a five goal advantage in the first quarter. With Skwirowski holding Jim to 16 kicks and 1 goal and Phillip having Fogarty and Langsford in rotating tagging roles, Claremont would persist and win by two points. As Swan Districts bore down strongly, the Tigers produced a “victory of enormous consequence”430 inflicting on Swan Districts their second home ground loss in two years:

It was Claremont’s ability to produce one of their best rear-guard actions in the last 26 minutes of the last quarter against the wind that denied Swans the victory that had been anticipated early in the term.431

The hero of the game was Malaxos who scouted around the packs and finished the pressure match with 7.3, producing goals at crucial stages and playing on rugged Swan’s captain Stan Nowotny. With further wins against South Fremantle and Subiaco, Jim was named best onfield in both contests. The round 16 clash against the last placed Perth was of special significance. Ralph, who all season had been the lucky recipient of Ward’s new strategy, saw him go into the game against Perth six goals short of one hundred.

My initial meeting with Warren Ralph came about somewhat by surprise. At an engagement party of a friend I thought I spotted Ralph through the crowd. I asked my

430 The West Australian. 20/7/1981, p76.
431 The West Australian. 20/7/1981, p68.
friend if Ralph was invited to the party and he explained Ralph was a relative of his fiancée’s family. I couldn’t believe my luck. I introduced myself to Ralph and proceeded to tell him of my project. We chatted for a few minutes and I asked if I could conduct an interview with him at some stage in the future and he gave me his contact details. After about a year of preliminary research I had come to the interview stage. I had formulated a range of questions and I was ready to conduct interviews with a variety of people who had had anything to do with Jim and Phillip. Overnight, my phone bill tripled as I spent hours tracking people down, introducing myself, explaining the project and then politely requesting an interview.

After ringing Ralph’s mobile number that he gave me at the party, I reintroduced myself. At the time he told me he could not commit to a fixed date to be interviewed as he would be working interstate. This was the last real conversation I had with Ralph for months as every time I rang his mobile I would get his pre-recorded message. Something was up, but just what I had no idea. On reflection, I tried to work out if I had done or said something to upset Ralph as it was clear he did not want to talk to me. Over the course of my ring-around I had some people who turned me down point-blank for various reasons. Some I tried to cajole, others I realised didn’t want to know or be involved in any way. Out of all the people I contacted only seven turned me down and Ralph was the only one playing possum.

Reflecting further, if it wasn’t for the success that Ralph had had in such a short time or the obvious on-field relationship that he had with Jim and Phillip, perhaps I wouldn’t have pursued him so hard. In the end I was forced to ring the firm that Ralph had conveniently, but perhaps mistakenly, scribbled down next to his mobile number. When I rang his place of work he sounded irritated that I had not ‘got the message’ by his not
answering my messages. Ralph back-pedalled as he explained that my project some how compromised him because of Jim’s imprisonment for trafficking.

With Ralph I had to proceed with kid-gloves as I explained to him the importance of his contribution as CFC’s full-forward while intimating that he received more than his fair share of goals from the boots of the Krakouer brothers. This point was brought up in a number of my interviews with other people who said that Jim and Phillip essentially established Ralph’s career. Finally Ralph agreed, we met at a pub, he bought me a few beers and it was one of the best interviews I did. When I told Jim about the difficulty that I had with Ralph he was genuinely hurt “Why wouldn’t he talk?” He kept asking as he searched my face for an answer. I could offer Jim no real explanation other than the one Ralph gave me. “I made that bastard”, was Jim’s terse reply. It struck me when I transcribed the interview later that this was the only piece of self-promotion I heard Jim utter in nearly four years.

In the game against Perth on the 8th of August nowhere was this making more apparent. Not only would Ralph kick one hundred goals but Claremont would kick 254 points against a hapless Perth who could only score 81 points. From the television footage the first person to congratulate Ralph was Jim. With a huge smile across his face he jogged in, tapped Ralph gently on the shoulder and turned away just as Ralph was gang hugged by team-mates and supporters. The post-match report in The West Australian said:

But for the benevolence and skill of the Krakouer brothers, Ralph may not have been rewarded with his 100th goal and Claremont with their record. The Krakouers went to extraordinary lengths to ensure Ralph kicked the six goals he needed to bring up his century. At times they passed to Ralph when they were in a better position to finish off their own excellent work with a goal.

432 “Claremont’s final tally of 39.20 beat the previous record for open competition set when Swans kicked 40.11 (251) to beat Subiaco in 1979”. The West Australian. 10/8/1981, p92.
Phillip would also kick seven for the game and was a close second best to Jim whose best-on-ground performance was the latest in a line of consistent efforts and described as, “Again”.434 In the following week against the Royals Phillip would take out the best-on-ground in a game that described their antics as a “delightful romp.”435 This was combined with the versatility of the Claremont team who experimented against West Perth with Beecroft in the ruck and Betts used exclusively in the full-back position. With rucks Harper, Beecroft, and Van de Beek all in top form Claremont were allowed the luxury of leaving Moss in the true centre-half forward position. For the Cardinals it was “a black day in the[ir] history”436 and only got uglier as Jim, who had a 32 kick, four goal game was abused by a drunken throng outside the West Perth members as he left the ground at full-time. One of Claremont’s trainers at the time, Bill Sutherland, who is now the chief trainer of the West Coast Eagles, recalls the incident:

The Krakouers were playing particularly well this day. There’d been a few things happening on the field also. Now all day these drunks were giving the Krakouers hell. So at the end of the game someone said something to Jimmy and he vaulted the fence and landed in amongst them. Well you’ve never seen a scatter. All these brave men were falling over each other, getting jammed in the doorway and here’s Jimmy standing on his own with no one anywhere near him.437

In the last game of the season against Swan Districts at Claremont oval 18,106 people were there to witness a match that was Claremont’s best for the season. In amongst the crowd the cigarette butts at Eric Krakouer’s feet grew steadily as he patiently chain-smoked, awaiting the bounce-down. With just minutes played and the game still to find a discernible rhythm a clearing kick from Beecroft dribbled over the boundary on Claremont’s half forward line. As Moss jostled for position and beat Sidebottom in the ruck contest Jim crumbed the ball and then handballed it off to Phillip. Phillip turned

and instinctively summed up the immediate dangers. Swan’s Sutton bore down quickly on Phillip and he handballed it in front of him. Phillip did this to avoid initial contact but did not see Fogarty who had came from the opposite direction at speed. In trying to ride the bump and keep his feet, a skill Phillip is a master at, he mistimed his leap and instead of a ricochet he cannoned into Fogarty. Phillip was *out* before he even hit the ground as his downward velocity was increased as Sutton who has chased the flight of the ball, clipped Phillip’s left shoulder and he fell, as if sleeping, backwards onto the ground.

Jim’s reaction was immediate and he swung violently at Fogarty. Jim stopped momentarily and peered down at Phillip but there was no sign of life. Neesham removed Phillip’s mouth-guard as the trainers and the doctor arrived. A minute passed and the players who had milled around could see blood trickling out the corner of Phillip’s mouth. Then the convulsions started. Malaxos had never seen anyone convulse before and thought Phillip was about to die. Peter Jamieson recalled Jim going “berko”\(^438\) but Watson distinctly remembers it differently, saying that Jim resigned himself to the fact he could not help his brother and got on with the game. The pressure Swan Districts applied was immense as Claremont trailed by a massive 35 points going into the third change.

With Phillip and Reynolds injured and Jim reported to be “inconsolable and unable to concentrate”\(^439\) for three quarters Claremont were facing their third defeat for the season. For Watson, Phillip’s injury merely spurred the Tigers on as he and Kanther “produced second-half performances that were essential to the victory.”\(^440\) With

\(^438\) Personal interview Peter Jamieson 18/2/2002.
Claremont running hard and handballing, Jamieson was switched to centre-half forward and kicked two goals. Malaxos, Aitken, Shaw, Beecroft and Pearce all turned in inspiring efforts, helping Claremont get up against the Swans by 15 points - all without Jim and Phillip or Moss who was nullified by Sutton all day.

For Claremont, bolstered by news that Phillip was out of hospital, this game was significant because it unofficially represented the start of their final’s campaign. A campaign made $30 000 sweeter by finishing on top of the ladder and winning twelve consecutive games. For Swan Districts, this defeat represented a psychological turning point from which they never recovered as they lost to Claremont in the second-semi final by 27 points and then lost to South Fremantle in the preliminary final by 73 points. The 1981 WAFL grand final would be played out by Claremont and South Fremantle.

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In the lead up to the 1981 grand final Wal Maskiell had all the verve of an expectant father. Everything he touched seemed to tingle with anticipation. There was only one more goal to achieve, the premiership. It was around 7:30 am and as he headed into the city for work the car radio was abuzz with grand final chat on the talk-back programs. Maskiell smiled inwardly knowing that this had been Claremont’s year. The gate receipts were exceptional, the professionalism around the club had increased, the performances had been remarkable and the confidence of the players was brimming. Surely this was the year? Claremont had not played in a winning grand final since 1964, a game in which they snatched victory by four points from the hot favourites, East Fremantle, in the dying moments of the game. Eight years later Claremont would come up against, and be beaten by East Perth. For Maskiell the wait for victory had been long, too long.
Maskiell sucked in the early morning air that had yet to be corrupted by fumes and noise and made his way to the office with a short walk up Barrack Street. As he got closer to the Rural and Industries Bank, Maskiell made out a figure that seemed familiar. As he got only a few feet away he could see it was Jim, sitting patiently on the bank steps. Even though Jim was well dressed and his hair neat he looked tired. Maskiell asked Jim what was going on and he soon found out that he had been to a place called Gingers, a sly gambling-house in Northbridge, and was waiting for a lift home. Maskiell scratched his head. What could he say? Reaching into his jacket Maskiell pulled out his wallet and gave Jim some money for a taxi, making sure he was only suffering from lack of sleep. Maskiell then made his way to the office but he was a different man to the one who had driven to work just moments ago. He walked in to his office and calmly placed his brief-case on his desk and slowly sat down. Turning towards the window of his office he looked at the Perth morning’s magnificent blueness and let out a long sigh. Maskiell did not want to believe what he had just seen. ‘Surely this is the year…Surely?’ He clicked the brief case open and sighed again.

2.16 Milk & Beer

For Claremont, October 3rd, the day of the grand final, was a who’s who, both on and off the ground. In the Golden Nugget room at Gloucester Park, Claremont were hosting their inaugural grand final breakfast with the former Federal Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Andrew Peacock, the invited speaker. Other political and sporting luminaries were Claremont’s number one ticket-holder Sir Paul Hasluck, Sir Charles Court, ‘the Geelong flier’ Bob Davis and Lou Richards. By early afternoon the assembled players in Claremont’s and South Fremantle’s change-rooms was also
impressive. No less than eighteen players who had either played, or would end up playing VFL football were there as either side oozed interesting mixes of desperation, poise, experience and youth. But the component that made this grand final so engaging was the calibre of its Indigenous players. For South Fremantle Rioli, Michael, Vigona and Campbell provided a potent source of drive. Claremont had the Krakouer’s and Brett Farmer, the mercurial but inconsistent son of Polly. It would be these players who would provide the game with its initial spark and the reason why this game is still remembered.

The tone of the 1981 grand final would be decided by one person. Brown. The majority of the Claremont players and officials I interviewed subscribed to the view that Brown was up to something, anything, to get the advantage. Having had a history of clandestine strategies that he produced like hatted rabbits, the Claremont players could be justified in thinking that something was afoot. Brown of course, denies anything but this is where his genius lies: in the unspoken. The counter argument is that some of the South Fremantle players do recall things would get heated sooner rather than later. In my interview with Bruce Monteath he recalls Brown coming into address the South Fremantle players prior to the game:

Maybe the whole plan was to basically get the Krakouers off-side because the Krakouers were going to be the key. They could ignite Claremont on their day. So I think that could have been the grand plan, not that anyone will ever admit to that. Brownies words were, ‘I’ve had to calm Basil down’. I reckon Basil was actually primed and cocked but who ever primed and cocked him, I dunno.

The first and most obvious thing that is noticeable from footage of the 1981 grand final is the tremendous sunlight beaming down on the crowd on the eastern side of Subiaco

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442 It cannot be suggested in any way that Brown was able to orchestrate the initial melee of the 1981 grand final.
443 Personal interview Bruce Monteath 10/9/2002. In my interview with Brown he does contextualise Campbell’s anger by saying: “We’d heard that Basil was having a bit of strife living on his own. I think he may of split with his wife and he was pretty aggro.” 24/8/2000.
Oval. I’m in there somewhere, squinting. Claremont are kicking to the left of screen. My end. As Ross Capes holds the ball high the siren for the first quarter sounds. With a quick glance over his left shoulder Capes bounces the ball. It is a text-book bounce, high and straight. Beecroft runs straight. Michael from the opposite way is slightly angled but Beecroft wins the contest with a massive thump. Rioli swoops and gathers the ball cleanly but he is under pressure from Jim and he slightly mistimes the kick, forcing it high. As the ball comes down Beecroft is under it and he takes the mark. Beecroft must know that he is vulnerable as the noise in the corridor is like a free-way at peak hour. To the right of screen, Campbell has locked onto Beecroft like a heat seeking missile. In the instant after the mark Beecroft has just turned to go back for the kick and in doing so is collected by Campbell. Beecroft has not seen Campbell come in from behind him and the effect is as if Beecroft has run into a white-gum strainer post.

The collision is a perfect, late shirt-front and Beecroft goes down faster than a bottle of beer in a bush fire. Basil stands his ground and is surrounded by Panizza, Morton and Kanther who remonstrate with chesty bumps and threats of physical reciprocity. But one thing is clear, these boys are no match for Campbell. Sprinting and weaving through the bodies and towards Campbell, Jim has a deflective left up while throwing rights at the red and white antagonist. No sooner can Jim wind up than a cluster of bodies restricts the space in which he can do this. In one very quick movement South’s Stephen Michael manages to wedge his frame between Jim and Campbell who is on the outside of the milling pack. This is very dangerous for Jim as Campbell has room to open up his shoulders and inflict some serious damage. This action by Michael provides the game with its great symbolic moment. A moment which sees two great Noongar athletes trying to achieve the same thing, protection; Jim his teammate, Michael his countryman.

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As Michael has tucked Jim snugly under his left armpit he acts like a great shield. But to Campbell, whose home is surrounded by the Timor and Arafura seas, these Noongar protocols are not recognised, and like a huge human piston Campbell doesn’t relent. Some blows connect, some do not. In the South Fremantle coach’s box Brown would recall someone wondering out loud why Michael had done this, wondering further that if Campbell did connect with Jim “he would have landed in Rottnest.”

As the cluster of bodies starts to disperse Jim and Campbell want to go on with it but the spot fires from the main detonation have started. South’s Neil Randall has grabbed Ray Smith by the collar forcing Smith to spin around. Randall’s blow misses, but such is the force it causes him to lose balance and triggers something off in the usually placid Smith. He becomes a thrasher, smashing Randall around the head “I was a monster for a minute” he would later confess. Only a sharp right elbow in the head from a running Monteath snaps Smith back to reality.

Meanwhile Benny Vigona and Phillip are a cigarette paper away and mouthing unspeakable acts of physical harm to one another. Blackwell is in Phillip’s ear like a bug. Finally they split and run off as the game is about to resume with a fifteen-metre penalty awarded to Beecroft. To this day Beecroft cannot recall the game and his floating kick reflects his clouded state as his kick falls short and into the reliable hands of South’s Rod Barrett. The ball is moved on quickly by Vigona and Rioli in the first clean piece of play. It is a smooth and fluid passage executed to the running, diving McKay. McKay marks well but in getting to his feet swipes Betts across the face with a backhander. It is in retaliation to Betts who in the first violent flurry ripped a couple of rights into McKays well-publicised injured rib-cage. A closer inspection of Bett’s

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446 Personal interview Ray Smith 13/12/2000.
knuckles shows they are without skin and will be so for months because of Mckay’s mysterious protective rib-casing. Betts is awarded a fifteen metre free. The play from now is like watching the uneven kinetic expectation of human popcorn. A little piece of play here, a grappling of arms there. Jim has gathered twice and blasted the ball down to Ralph who cannot mark. For a player who has kicked over 100 goals for the season Ralph looks nervous and unassured. A throw-in sees Watson run onto the ball with Panizza providing a good shepherd. His pursuer Page has no eyes for the ball-carrier and lands a crude elbow squarely on the right side of Panizza’s jaw. The whistle blows. Claremont have another 15 metre free.

As the whistle sounds another fight has flared. Vigona and Jim trade sparring slaps as Phillip, clings like a kid on a Hills Hoist, to Carter who impersonates one. Phillip is prized off by Moss but it is like there is and invisible revolving door that Phillip and Jim are on, which brings them around, again and again to Vigona as they try to land a punch. Vigona’s feet have not moved until Rioli like an emancipated Sisyphus grabs him and pushes him out. Panizza lines up and produces the first score of the match. A goal. Running back to his wing Panizza is like a horse eating a carrot, trying to masticate away the pain.

Centre-bounce. Beecroft is still on the ground and with his leap gets greater elevation than Michael but in making the contest misses the ball completely and it spills free and heads toward South’s goal-line. Phillip has taken off after it like a rabbit but out of nowhere Vigona bears down on Phillip and lays a crude bump canvassing most of Phillip’s back. The whistle has not yet indicated the free-kick and nor has Phillip’s torso touched the ground and Jim arrives. In a flash Jim has seen Vigona’s push and raised him an elbow to the right side of the head. It’s on again. Only this time Doc Aitken
squeezes himself in between Campbell, who has run in, and Jim. Campbell seems happy to throw insults at Jim who wants a more physical confrontation. The camera cuts to Brown who has the phone pressed to his ear. He is gnashing a toothy snarl. Phillip receives his free-kick and to a huge cheer from the Claremont supporters he kicks a long raking left up to Claremont’s half-forward line. From here the quarter settles into a series of ball gathering exercises, some assured, others less so.

Umpires Capes and Powell wrest back control of the game and award anything that they think is too rough. They are kept busy. At the 20 minute mark of the first quarter South’s have two straight points and Claremont have kicked 3.1. At this stage, Beecroft is taken from the ground and Moss is swung into the ruck. The game is being played at a frantic pace but time is ticking down. Late in the quarter South’s need a score but every time it enters their attacking fifty the desperation of Claremont’s defence is evident. South earn every kick.

With seconds remaining Morton takes a great mark and kicks long to Claremont’s centre-half forward mark where Jim waits. The kick is too high and Jim is spoiled from behind. Rioli gathers cleanly and darts off. Needing to assess his options Maurice applies his wizardry. Stopping and propping his body is a contradiction as his legs seem to operate in easy lucid movements and his torso and arms are rigid. He holds the ball as one would a child away from the gaping jaws of a crocodile. He snaps the ball around the corner but it is repelled back. Jamieson marks and the siren sounds. Claremont’s centre-line has been winning because it is running harder than South and its back-line is desperate and cohesive. At the end of the first term the score-line reads South Fremantle 1.3. Claremont 4.5.

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The second quarter has none of the spite of the first and the tempo is more subdued. This works well for South as their confidence with each minute grows. Whatever Brown has said to his players at the first break it is working as South through McKay, Carter, Monteath and Michael have found purpose in their play. It is Rioli however, who has gone to another level producing “some of the most scintillating football ever seen at Subiaco Oval.”\footnote{The West Australian, 5/10/81, p87.} With the liniment on his shoulders Rioli has the sheen and aura of a panther and he provides constant bullocking drive into South’s forward-line. Brad Hardie starts to come into the game and so is Vasoli. Claremont have gone missing and despite some drive from Jim and Phillip it has barely broken into the Tigers forward line. It is the back-line, led by Betts, which has kept Claremont alive.

The advantage is starting to tell in the rucking duels with Michael challenging Moss to go harder and higher. However, South are having trouble in their conversion rate. Wasteful kicking is duly recorded by points as South are too far out when they are going for goal. Having shots from 65 and 70 metres out proves costly as do their blazing snap-shots. They have no time in such pressure. An example of this pressure is in a play for goals by Rioli who gathers a loose ball and baulks slightly to get onto his favoured left. In trying for distance Rioli sprays it to the left for a minor score. This forces the channel 7 commentator Arthur Marshall to say, “Rioli is a great champion but how good would he have been if he had of been able to kick on his right as well”.

The first cracks in South’s fitness start to show as they make simple errors. Claremont have reverted to basic football and if they cannot cleanly take the mark they destroy it. Noel Carter has decided to stamp his authority on the game and ten seconds later he has slammed a sixty metre drop-punt straight through the middle. It is his second. A captain’s goal. Despite Claremont only kicking 3.2 for the quarter South’s have kicked
6.12. The score is Claremont 7.7 South Fremantle 7.15. The siren sounds for the half-
time break.

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Kicking against the breeze South Fremantle have made a few adjustments to the start of
the second half. With Randall and Campbell warming the pine Outhwaite is moved to
the half-forward flank. Regardless of any changes what is most notable is that all the
players look tired. There are exceptions as Harper looks good for the Tigers and for
South’s Monteath looks focussed and is moving freely. It is at this point of the game the
significance of Jim Krakouer’s subtle abilities are brought to the fore. As the play
unfolds and the ball is brought slowly down to Claremont’s half-forward line there is a
ball-up and Baden Harper is jumping as if he can catch the moon. He propels himself
over Michael and the ball is expertly sharked by Jim who with a delicate little handball
goes to Malaxos who is on the outside running and kicks a goal. South’s margin is
reduced to eight points.

At the 11 minute mark South make their first surge and Michael instigates it. South are
one point ahead but Harpers athleticism is becoming a feature of the game. The next
ruck contest is a virtual carbon copy of the games first bounce as Harper smashes it to
the waiting Rioli who snaps it around to Monteath. South are expending vast amounts of
energy and Michael, after a clash with Harper, is on one leg.

South’s second offensive move comes at the 15 minute mark when McKay is awarded a
mystery free and kicks it goal-ward. A running Michael surges up over Aitken to take
the mark of the day but his set shot from 40 metres out is inaccurate. South’s inaccuracy
is starting to tell. As the siren sounds for the last break of the game South have a one
point advantage.
The fourth quarter starts as a slow burn. With Harper winning the ruck against Michael a free is awarded to South and sees them running towards their goal in a pack. Blackwell is slowly coming into the game as is Phillip. Add to this the youthful vigour of Smith, Watson and especially Pearce who runs the lines to clear the ball. But South have responded and are running on pride. They will not lay down.

At the 12 minute mark the game looks like blowing out in Claremont’s favour as Harper conjures up the driving run of a cheeky sixteen year old. His kick lands bang on Ralph’s chest but he cannot goal. South rebound twice and are repelled twice, once by Phillip and once by Moss. Phillip has now dropped back and is playing as a defensive sweeper. A goal to Vasoli sees South get back in it with only five points the difference.

Within a minute of Vasoli’s goal Malaxos scores for Claremont. With Pearce and Blackwell running relentlessly South can’t seem to penetrate their forward line. This reality is borne out and reduced to the comical when South are running toward their goal. Joe Mckay kicks the ball but it travels a mere 35 metres and limply connects with the back of Ray Smith’s head as he is running towards Souths goal and has anticipated the ball’s flight to be greater. Smith gathers and clears for Claremont. Minutes later Blackwell blasts a fifty metre goal.

With Harper playing as if it is the first quarter Kanther too is running hard. He gathers and lays a handball off to Watson who does the same to Jim. The ball falls short and Jim is tackled without the ball. Jim takes his free-kick from 30 metres out. For Jim Krakouer this is a bread’n’butter shot and for a moment he is 14 years old on Sounness Oval. He cannot see or hear the crowd. He goals and upon kicking it he does something he rarely
would before the full-time siren - he smiles. Jim smiles because he knows Claremont are twenty three points clear and South are slowing down. Technically this goal is the sealer. Claremont retain possession and slow the game down. South need four more goals but with points to Vigona and Carter their chances become even slimmer. The last score for Claremont is a point by Shaw who can only manage a lairising over-head snap. For South, Monteath passes to a running Brad Hardie and he registers the last score of the game, a goal. As he makes his way back to his pocket the siren sounds. Claremont have won by fifteen points.

South Fremantle would come to rue this game as the one that got away. 24 points proved the difference ‘We kicked ourselves out of it’ they would say but this only comes about by two things. Either the pressure applied was too great or South simply were not up to it as a group. For Ward South Fremantle played what he calls, “Smart-ass football. They had enough players, enough individual champions in that side to beat us just on pure skill. It’s just about the day.”

Jim’s recollections are of individual passages of play where he should of handballed instead of kicked and of individual performances from players like Pearce and Smith. Ultimately Jim, who had kicked 1.1 in the grand final, the same as in his first game for Claremont, was looking further afield “We’d given our best to Claremont and we sort of had to move on to another challenge”. In the post match euphoria the exhaustion is etched on Phillip’s face and he is in the hands of the trainers. He distinctly remembers how he felt directly after the match:

Relieved, ecstatic, tired. You just felt so happy for what you’d achieved for your family and supporters. The joy on the faces on people that had been around the club for such a long time. We had three years of near misses. It was great.

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448 Personal interview Murray Ward 25/3/2002
449 Personal interview Jim Krakouer 18/4/2002
450 Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 31/8/2000
As the players are called onto the dais at Subiaco Oval it becomes noticeable that this
great team is an eclectic mix of individuals and this is epitomised by three players who
walk up to accept their grand final medallions. The first up is Phillip and his reaction
with the medallion safely around his neck is immediate as he executes a perfect star-
jump. Like a boy who has got the bike for Christmas his joy is unbridled. The next is
Shorty Daniels. Daniels has immediately started to accessorise himself in post-match
splendour and upon reaching the dais’s summit he has a lit cigarette in one hand and a
can of Emu Export in the other. Four players later Jim’s name is called and he rises up
out of the throng to a thunderous applause. Jim has a beverage in his hand but his
poison, unlike Daniel’s, is milk. As Jim slides up past the presenters and pushes to get
off an Indigenous man jumps up onto the small, crowded platform and frantically waves
a North Melbourne guernsey. He then dismounts and disappears into the crowd. It is the
last symbolic gesture of the game. Jim and Phillip are now Kangaroos.
Chapter Three

Another Country

In Yuendumu, as in Melbourne, the game implies kinship, exalts reciprocal obligations and responsibilities (the essence of Aboriginal law) and is played within striking distance, quite literally, of open conflict. Aborigines play football with minimal body contact. They play without hurt...because hurt means aggression and aggression means war.  

Originally Melbourne was a water place, a marshy flatland between two rivers...The Wurundjeri say the place belongs to an eagle. That means eagles once hung motionless in the sky above the marshy plain. Once that was the reality of this place, but now it can only be imagined.

3.1 Arden Street

On my first research trip to Melbourne in 2000 I based my stay at a Richmond hotel on Punt Road. Staying close to the city was vital to getting around because public transport was my only real option when travelling. Initially I disliked the unsexyness of it but it turned out trams and trains became handy mobile offices. Here I could prepare for an interview, make notes or read as I went. Public transport also provided me with a place to gather my thoughts before an interview or reflect on the one I had just had. In these moments, I would gaze out upon Melbourne; it’s tight terracing, it’s sprawl and grey soupy-ness. Compared to Perth’s country town feel, Melbourne seemed so much more a city in the business of being one. Every day I would go past the MCG. Some mornings I got up earlier than usual and made a pedestrian detour just to look at it without the swarms.

It is because of structures like the MCG that one notices that Melbourne is a place, perhaps unlike any other city in the world, where sporting pursuits have transcended their specific realms. As I sat in my shunting offices I would eavesdrop on many

conversations, trying to tune into the Victorian psyche and the way that sport is interwoven into Melbourne’s cultural tapestry and its language. The one thing you discover quickly about Melbourne is that regardless of whether it is Lleyton Hewitt’s poor form, John Elliott’s financial problems or Telstra Dome’s unreliable surface - if it is sports related it is written, read and talked about.

I had been to Melbourne a few times before but this was in the capacity of _tourist_. As a researcher I realised my 2000 approach needed a more pro-active slant if I was to get from Olinda to St Kilda or from Broadmeadows to Frankston. Before I could get to know this city I needed to shake its hand. Getting my bearings at the Flinders Street station, I headed up Swanston Street where I found a musty subterranean book shop specialising in the pre-loved. Every shelf was like a pack-horse, dutiful and silent. Somewhere in amongst the old Phantom comics and Margaret Fulton cook-books I made my acquaintance with a compact 52$_{nd}$ edition of _Morgan’s Official Street Directory_.\(^{453}\) It became my textual Tenzing and it was the best four dollars I ever spent.

As my first point of interest was getting to North Melbourne Football Club’s (NM) home ground, Arden Street, I got my bearings and hopped onto a tram on Queen street and put my _Morgan’s Official_ straight to work. Nearing the Arden Street ground I alighted and walked the last few kilometre’s up Queensberry and down Abbotsford. I stopped at a nondescript pub for a quick pot and sat in disbelieving awe of its sepia dinginess - it felt like I was on the set of the cop shows of my childhood, _Homicide_ or _Division 4_. Three pots later I made my way up Dryburgh Street. I passed the swimming pool on the corner and walked up the grassy embankment. There it was – Arden Street.

Immediately my attention was drawn to the playing surface which was laid out like a picnic blanket. I stood for a moment and thought of all the remarkable players who had run onto that unremarkable oval. For years it had been the home of the Shinboners, so named because of Arden Street’s association with the men who worked in the abattoirs. The Shinboner’s moniker then became the Kangaroos and now NM are simply known as the Roos. Even though the names have changed and the ground’s malevolent gasometer needs to be conjured up in the mind, it has simply been known throughout the years as Arden St.\textsuperscript{454}

As many Melburnians would appreciate, Arden St lacks the traditional prettiness of Richmond’s Punt Rd or art deco-oblong-ness of Hawthorn’s Glenferrie. In many ways Arden Street seems to defy a specific description as it is more akin to open parkland, like that of Fitzroy’s Brunswick Street oval. Arden St stands in contrast to the other Melbourne based clubs. Arden St is not the fortress that is Victoria Park. It doesn’t loom, ocean liner-like, out of the suburb, as Windy Hill does. And unlike Moorabbin, NM’s home ground is not the world’s largest receptor for pigeon faeces and dust. At Arden Street the old grandstand is fenced off for the public’s safety and the social club fails to get the superlatives rolling off the tongue. In my note-book, I have marked the occasion “So. This Is Arden Street…?”

I walked around the ground’s outer and sat down on one of the bench chairs that ringed the oval in between the grandstand and the player’s race. To the back of me a gaggle of septuagenarians in blue tops were busily frying some sausages and onions on a BBQ. The smell was intoxicating, I bought a ‘dog’ and waited for the Roos to run out and train. I looked out at the green ground and imagined the NM faithful here every second.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{454} North tried to relocate to Coburg in the 1964 but it was unsuccessful. A VFL report published in 1985 recommended that North Melbourne relocate to Princes Park but this was not done either.}
Saturday back when it was the VFL. Today, the one thing many of these grounds have in common is that they are all remnants of an era, which has passed as suburban football buckled and gave way to the national game. Even Princes Park, the only suburban oval still played on by the AFL, creaks like an old whaler - even it cannot escape the contagion of corporate infection; it is now known as Optus Oval. On the other side of the CBD, digital technology and state of the art design block out the sun and rain. Football is not what it used to be.

In 1925 both Hawthorn and NM were admitted to the Victorian Football League.\textsuperscript{455} This temporal commonality and their associations with the respected coach John Kennedy, are perhaps the only things that the clubs have in common. In the Eighties, Hawthorn, more than any other club, dominated with a style of football that was aggressive, disciplined and stylish. Along with Essendon and Carlton they provided the modern game with the blueprints for success. Historically, NM have represented everything that Hawthorn were not - inner city, working class, Catholic. What differentiates these two clubs historically is that NM seem to be perennially yolked to struggle.\textsuperscript{456} NM, perhaps more than any other club, have had more than their fair share of hurdles to straddle. Not a season seems to go past when NM’s financial accountability is not brought into question and their viability looked at with one eyebrow raised. One only needs to go to Arden St to see the lack of \textit{flash} in the demountables that house the Roos’ football department making Arden Street, at a quick glance, resemble a miners’ camp. This dispensation of veneer seems to work as NM’s strength has been in its ability to endure great hardship and still produce great football and camaraderie despite their early lack of success. This was best described

\textsuperscript{455} Footscray were also admitted into the League in this year.
\textsuperscript{456} Some recent examples of this were the marital scandal involving their captain Wayne Carey and the Bali bombing where their centre-half back Jason McCartney was nearly killed.
by Denis Pagan, who played for NM in the 1970’s but found greater success as the league coach in the 1990’s, “Always at North there was this sense of belonging even when the club was winning one game a year.”457

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If the electrifying Eighties were characterised by Hawthorn the sensational Seventies were NM’s. One only needs to turn to the North Melbourne Football Club’s history, *The North Story*, and to see just how innovative and successful NM were during this time. To fully gauge their success in this period *The North Story* dedicates six chapters to NM’s campaigns in the 1970’s. By contrast the 1980’s, the entire decade, gets one. This is understandable as NM’s performances for many years were marked by failure:

North Melbourne had a history of poor achievement. In the twelve years between 1961 and 1972 it finished no higher than seventh, and it took the wooden spoon four times. Along with South Melbourne and Fitzroy it was in many respects the whipping boy of the VFL.458

Despite having a traditionally strong supporter base NM’s recruiting zones were not providing as good a harvest as other VFL clubs Essendon, Carlton and Collingwood. With its country zone being the Murray Border district, NM’s metropolitan zone consisted of the thin strip snaking its way to the city’s north. NM’s luck changed in 1972 due to two developments, the first being the changes in the VFL’s recruiting laws. The second was NM’s creation and development of financial initiatives that had not been pursued by other clubs in the VFL.459 The result was that NM were cashed-up and legally looking to spend big money on quality players through what was to become known as the VFL’s “ten year rule.”460

During the 1970’s the football adage, *success comes when preparation meets opportunity* could be perfectly applied to NM, as the ‘ten year rule’ enabled them to secure the services of some of the most experienced players in the competition. Suddenly players with ten year’s experience, or more, became free agents. Those that desired clearances to NM received them as the Roos opened the chequebook and let market forces take effect. NM’s player stocks were boosted overnight as players such as Barry Davis, Malcolm Blight, John Rantall, Doug Wade and Barry Cable were all lured to a club that already had the players Keith Greig, David Dench and Wayne Schimmlebusch. The benefits were undeniable; from the mid-seventies NM played in five grand finals in a row, winning two premierships including the 1977 replay against Collingwood. In this time they also produced two Brownlow Medallists, Keith Greig and Malcolm Blight.\(^{461}\)

The main impetus for this new direction came from a former NM champion, Allen Aylett. Aylett was instrumental in gathering people around him who could produce the best football side possible and here, in the Seventies, Aylett would develop his skills as the president of NM before moving onto the presidency of the VFL.\(^{462}\) Aylett got Ron Barrassi to coach and he based his coaching on total professionalism. To recruit, Aylett had Ron Joseph and to raise the money ex-NM player and club stalwart Barry Cheatley was used. With all the big appointments at NM secured, the Roos projected success was assured and their whipping boy image was shelved for good.

\(^{461}\) Keith Greig won the Brownlow in 1973 and 1974 and Blight won the Brownlow in 1978. North forward, Doug Wade, was the VFL’s highest goal-scorer in 1974. For more about North Melbourne’s success in the seventies refer to chapters 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27 of *The North Story*.

\(^{462}\) It was Aylett’s vision which would assist North Melbourne to become one of the most successful modern clubs and the VFL to go national. One of Aylett’s great legacies was the way he was able to attract corporate dollars into North Melbourne which is epitomised by the Melbourne institution that is North Melbourne’s grand final breakfast.
From the very start Ron Joseph put everything he had into NM. Appointed as NM’s club secretary in 1964 he lied about his age so he could secure the position. He told them he was twenty. He was eighteen. Since then, and until 1996, he was NM’s general manager and recruitment officer. Today he is one of the AFL’s most respected player managers with an impressive stable of players. As a young man Ron Joseph looked nothing short of cherubic. Today he epitomises the avuncular. Despite these descriptions, Joseph’s dermal layer hides a fiercely determined businessman who doesn’t suffer fools gladly but understands, better than most, the quirks in human behaviour. The paradox that is Joseph was perhaps best borne out to me, not by anything he said, but by the juxtaposition of his immaculate attire to his chewed fingernails.

To understand Ron Joseph one needs to turn to his youth and the realisation that he was a South Melbourne die-hard. As a consequence Joseph’s idol was the South Melbourne champion, and three time Brownlow Medal winner, Bob Skilton. Being a fan of the VFL’s perennial under-achievers in the prime of ones youth would seem like an existential oxymoron but the constant jibes about his beloved ‘Bloods’ tempered Joseph’s resolve, replacing teen complacency with something steelier. An example of Joseph’s resolve, that also hinted at his acquisitive skills, came about in early September of 1963, the year before he joined the workforce. Listening to the broadcast of the Brownlow count, Joseph became aware that Skilton was on his way to securing football’s biggest individual honour for the second time. Hearing the last round of the season counted, Joseph rugged up and made his way to his idol’s home a few suburbs away. His purpose? To ask Skilton if he could borrow his guernsey to wear to school the next day. South Melbourne may have broken young Ron’s heart on
many cold Saturday afternoons and the comments by his school-mates may have cut, but with that guernsey all was forgiven. Joseph’s resolve became his code.\textsuperscript{463}

With the ten-year rule NM began to restructure their club and refine their processes. Players, particularly those from interstate, had individual requirements that would need appropriate support mechanisms, the most fundamental being accommodation. NM’s prize recruit in the seventies was Malcolm Blight, who was lured from the South Australian club Woodville. One of the greatest names to be associated with NM, Blight recalls coming to NM to play football and the development of NM’s professionalism:

\begin{quote}
North were very much called the foreign legion. We’d come from everywhere. It was strange because every state was represented. I remember we got put into all sorts of pretty average housing when my wife and myself first came over.\textsuperscript{464}
\end{quote}

Most of the responsibility for the relocation of players fell at Joseph’s feet. Each player’s circumstances needed to be considered, everything from the proximity of the house to Arden St to the number of bedrooms. The scope of the detail would for many have been the catalyst for a breakdown but for Joseph it was all part of the job of a VFL club general manger. Jim arrived early in 1982 there was one unforeseeable hitch. Of the concerns that Joseph had to deal with over his many years in football, this would be the most esoteric and challenging. This particular concern was devoid of anything remotely related to footballs, meat pies, kangaroos or Holden cars\textsuperscript{465} but had a distinctly ghostly feel.

\begin{quote}
♦
\end{quote}

If truth is the first casualty of war then optimism among football supporters was the first casualty of the early 1980’s as the nightmare of club decentralisation became a reality.

Nowhere would this be more evident than if one was a supporter of ‘the Blood Stained Angels’ - South Melbourne. In 1982 South Melbourne were, incredibly, relocated into the heart of enemy territory, Sydney. As the red and white balloons were released at the Sydney Cricket Ground for South Melbourne supporters it must have been like some surreal haemoglobinual experiment. The cold reality of the Swans move North became motivation for the weaker clubs to get their houses in order as survival and growth could only come from change - inertia meant death. In the early 1980’s the VFL was pointing to the future but it was in the past that the very institutions that held the game together had also ripped it apart - the 12 clubs. Garry Linnell in his text *Football Ltd: The inside story of the AFL* reveals this situation:

Between 1972 and 1980, player payments had leapt an incredible 1826 percent. In comparison the average weekly wage had grown from $97.30 to $270, an increase of 262 per cent. In 1972 1867 spectators had been required through the gate to pay the average VFL player. When the 80’s began, that figure had rocketed to 13,422 spectators...A task force bringing together members of business, politics and football had been appointed to investigate the broad direction of the game. But nothing could disguise the fact that the competition would always be endangered as long as the clubs themselves continued to have the ultimate say in the running of the game. They had shown enough to prove that they could not be trusted.466

The VFL wrested control back from the twelve-headed monster and order was eventually restored; today it sees a more socialist/marxist approach to salary caps and national draft picks. It is because of this Australian football has survived its darkest days and the AFL continues to be not just the most powerful sporting entity in Australia but a corporate juggernaut.

While changes were taking place in the VFL another political development was also occurring that would have huge ramifications for Australians and Australian history. Jim and Phillip and their respective families arrived at football’s holy-land on the cusp

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of a dawning political epoch as 1982 heralded the commencement of one of Australia’s longest legal battles. This battle started in 1788. In 1982 Eddie Koiki Mabo commenced his legal journey that would culminate in an over-turning of the legal falsehood that Australia was *terra nullius: no man’s land*, at the time of European arrival. Could it just be a social and political coincidence that just as Jim, Phillip and Maurice Rioli commenced their VFL careers the trial that would recognise 40,000 years of Indigenous occupation was taking place? The correlation of such events is impossible to ignore and needs to be seen as a social, cultural and political process in which struggle for Indigenous Australian’s occurs in a variety of forums. Whether they are played out in the court-rooms or on the football field it doesn’t matter - the struggle never stops and has never stopped for Australia’s Blackfellas.

### 3.2 Settling in

Arriving in Melbourne in a new silver Holden Statesman, personally delivered by Joseph and Keith Greig in Perth a week before, Jim and Fiona were ready to start life in Melbourne. With them were Phoebe, infant daughter Karla, younger brother Andrew and ‘Butch’, Jim’s bull terrier. Joseph greeted Jim on the front step of the Mt Evelyn house. Joseph had organised the house through Father Gerard Dowling, NM’s historian and spiritual attache. The handful of cigarette butts at Joseph’s feet indicated that he got there early to be sure that everything was in place.

As the Statesman appeared and came to a stop in front of the house, Joseph nervously sucked in the remainder of the cigarette and then relegated it to his heel “Jimmy you made it. How was the drive? The car? Was it ok?” Jim smiled briefly answering with a nod, as he made his way towards Joseph who was opening the front door to the house.

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Phoebe looked uncomfortable. As the rest of the party made their way inside the house Phoebe remained outside and walked slowly around the house, eyeing it suspiciously. As Joseph moved with Jim and Fiona from room to room he caught glimpses of Phoebe through the windows; pacing and eyeing. Phoebe’s movements were making him nervous. Partially convinced that Jim and Fiona were satisfied, Joseph made his way outside.

Perhaps it was the plumbing or the exterior colour, Joseph thought as he made his way outside. Casting his eye over the house, no such problems seemed to exist. Joseph engaged a pragmatic approach but he couldn’t make eye contact with Phoebe.

“Ahh Mrs Krakouer…Ah would you like to come inside or is there…is something outside here that…umm is a concern?” No reply from Phoebe came, “I’m sure if you come inside you’ll…”

“This house is no good. It’s got bad spirits.” Phoebe cut Joseph off in a tone indicating she was deep in thought. Of all the interstate recruits Joseph had dealt with before their concerns generally had solutions: plumbers, painters, pest control. Phoebe made it clear to him “Somebody died in here.”

“Mrs Krakouer, I’m sorry… Please let me look into it.”

Scratching his head and doing his best Cliff Young impersonation, Joseph went inside and placed a call to Father Dowling “Father? The Krakouers are not happy with the Mt Evelyn home, something about someone dying inside.” Joseph’s concerns were confirmed with a pregnant pause from Dowling “Yes Ron. Somebody did pass away inside.” None of the Krakouer family would spend a night in the house. Jim explains:

We were sort of settling in and then Mum said she had a funny feeling, that someone had passed away. She could sense something. So we ended up getting a
flat in North Melbourne. Flemington Road I think it was and stayed there for about a week. 467

By contrast Phillip and Lynne’s arrival by plane a few weeks later was less troubled. Jim and Phillip had decided that they didn’t have to live in one another’s pockets and Jim and Fiona began living in Gladstone Park and Phillip and Lynne decided that Templestowe would best suit them.

Back in Western Australia it was thought that the move to Melbourne for Jim and Phillip would be a huge test. The size and pace of Melbourne, combined with the weather, would be hard to handle. Many also believed that the immensity of the relocation process would prove to be too difficult for the Krakouers, given the tyranny of the Nullarbor and the closeness of the family. For Joseph, the transition of Jim and Phillip and their families did not present a concern:

I don’t think they had a day’s worry. Everyone talked about them having difficulty adjusting. I was very conscious to watch they settled down and they didn’t have any problems and they knew their way around. They just took to Melbourne like a duck to water.468

Joseph also says that Eric and Phoebe were very supportive of Jim and Phillip and they visited regularly, treating their time in Melbourne as a holiday. For Jim the transition to Melbourne was easier than expected with flights to Melbourne from Perth relative to the drive from Mt Barker to Perth:

We were pretty lucky really. I think the hardest move was when we left Mt Barker to come to Perth. Then when we went over there [Melbourne] it wasn’t as hard and we adjusted pretty well straight away.469

Phillip concurs:

It was quite easy moving over. I’m pretty sure the contract said that I could stay in Melbourne for 30 weeks and twenty two weeks back in the West. That was one of the deals. As it turned out I enjoyed Melbourne so much

469 Personal interview Jim Krakouer 17/1/2003. My emphasis.
anyway. I used to go back to Perth for eight, nine weeks but not the twenty two that I planned.470

Jim and Phillip’s successful transition was due to NM’s professional relocation program but it also down to Jim and Phillip’s ability to see the challenge of playing football in Melbourne in perspective. This came from their family, particularly Eric and Phoebe, who engendered in their sons a sense of perspective and humility. It was Phillip’s recollection of his parent’s reaction to him playing in the VFL that I found the most insightful:

I think they were proud [of us] but we never really discussed the VFL, ever. It was never discussed that North Melbourne were interested in me. The only advice that Mum and Dad used to say was ‘we just want you to be happy’. To them being part of North Mt Barker was big. North Mt Barker and North Melbourne was exactly the same.471

This understated expectation is reflected also in Jim’s initial reaction to meeting his NM team mates for the first time. This team boasted players from NM’s glory days of the 1970’s - Blight, Briedis, Dempsey, Glendinning, Greig and Schimmlebusch. New recruits could be excused for feeling overawed but Jim took it in his stride:

I wasn’t really intimidated by the champion players with the big names. You just hope that you could try to prove yourself and be amongst them. It was sort of an honour playing alongside the players with names. 472

By contrast, Craig Holden, who was recruited from Swan Districts at the same time recalls his transition to the VFL as more challenging:

I think I may have suffered in the fact that I might have become too overawed by it. I mean I remember walking into the rooms and there was Keith Greig, and David Dench. Wayne Schimmlebusch. I thought ‘what the fuck am I doing here’? 473

Holden’s starry-eyed induction was countered however when he saw the state of NM’s facilities:

When I went to North [Melbourne] I was expecting things to be ten-fold and I got there and suddenly the facilities are worse, the grounds are worse, the [opposition] supporters are worse. Everything’s worse - and this is a club that had been a power-house in the AFL [sic] for the past decade. So I was a bit bemused by this.474

Holden’s bemusement was something many footballers coming to NM would also experience. Perhaps the demountables were a project that NM never got finished? Perhaps they have been maintained as a means to get the NM players to focus on the task at hand? Perhaps they are used to remind the NM footballers that in Melbourne there is only one game in town and it’s not who has the best looking change-room?

♦

The first game of football Bob Ansett ever saw was a match between St Kilda and Collingwood. Ansett recalls this game for two things - it was the first game at Moorabbin Oval and the physicality of the game was reflected in the drunken brawls that eddied throughout the crowd. For a person who had spent twenty years in America, much of it in the armed forces, it was a shock to his understanding of sport and sociability:

Half the attraction of going to the footy, particularly for those in the outer, was to wipe themselves out and then stand on a couple of dozen beer cans so they could see better. They’d drink all the beer cans and then there were fights all over the place. I mean real tough fights. Just extraordinary. Then afterwards we went to a hotel right on the intersection of the town of Moorabbin and that was my first introduction to the six’o’clock swill. By the time we got our drinks we only had fifteen minutes to drink six beers each. Then the guys yelling ‘time gentlemen’. So that was my introduction to Aussie Rules Football.475

Despite the brawling and beer-induced indigestion, by 1979, Ansett was the president of NM. With his famous family name and his distinctive American accent, Ansett bolstered his profile further by being the owner of Budget Rent-a-Car. For me growing up it seemed like a commercial break on television was not complete without Ansett in front of a squadron of gleaming vehicles saying, “At Budget, we’ll drive

your dollar, furtherrr.” For Ansett the acquisition of the Krakouers was not just about football, it was also about business, and business was something Ansett knew about:

At North Melbourne we were coming to the end of a golden era. We needed to do two things. We wanted to carry on the reputation that we had developed as being a very professional club in the seventies. To ensure that we didn’t lose our supporter base that was starting to gain momentum, we needed some headline players that would see us through the next five or six years as our other [headline] players were near the end of their career.476

This is an intriguing insight into how the Krakouers were seen by NM at the time, as traditionally clubs focussed on their key forwards or rucks to generate a profile.477 Ansett recalls the pre-season buzz around the club in early 1982, “I thought it had a very therapeutic effect on some of the older players that saw these two young guys that had these incredible skills. It was a stimulant for the club.”478 For established players like Blight this seemed to ring true:

North had been through this great era. There was this litany of terrific players and North had always, in my time, had this rover combination of Cable and Melrose and there probably weren’t ready made replacements coming through the junior grades. So to see two small quickish players at the club again I thought was exciting. Just the way they [Jim and Phillip] moved on the training track. They could kick it. They could mark it. They could get it and they were pretty swift. So they looked pretty good packages as youngsters.479

For Keith Greig and David Dench the arrival of Jim and Phillip seemed to have a corresponding effect. Greig recalls, “They’re probably the better rovers that North Melbourne have had and North Melbourne has always had good rovers, when you look at the Aylett’s, Cable, Melrose all those guys the Krakouers would be right up with them.”480 Similarly Dench recalls the Krakouers early days at NM:

I remember just watching them train and eventually play the game. Just the natural ability, skill and talent that the guys had – sensational.481

477 Paul Daffey suggests that the coming of Jim and Phillip to Melbourne was one of the most noteworthy opening rounds in football history. *The Sunday Age.* 28/3/2004, p30.
480 Personal interview Keith Greig 18/7/2002.
481 Personal interview David Dench 15/7/2002.
These impressions were not lost on the media who were mystified by the Krakouers from the very start of their days in the VFL. In an early photograph of Jim and Phillip in The Age, their first appearance in NM guernseys, the most notable thing about them is they appear physically underdeveloped. One report makes this point:

You ponder whether Phil and Jim could take on the likes of Carlton’s fleet of ruck rovers in Rod Ashman, Ken Sheldon, Alex Marcou, Jim Buckley and Wayne Harmes - not to mention Hawthorn powerhouse Leigh Matthews.\footnote{The Australian. 20/2/1982, p43.}

The photograph hints at the differences in the Krakouer’s style. To the left Jim jogs straight at the camera, his hair trimmed and parted is barber-shop perfect. As the light catches his left arm it betrays a sinewed forearm and a cable-like vein protruding from his shoulder. Jim is more defined but only because Phillip provides the contrast. Like Lewis to Jim’s Martin, it is as if Phillip has run into the shot at the wrong time and is trying to extricate himself. This is accentuated by Phillip’s hips which are angled, making his body look awkward and proppy. The contrast becomes more pronounced with Phillip’s general appearance particularly his hair, which is longer and wilder. His arms are like that of a sixteen year old. Yet the thing which defines both of them in this moment is their gaze. Their expressions are fixed and unflinching, “We’re still finding our way around the place”,\footnote{The Age. 9/2/1982, p37.} Phillip is reported to say in the tiny blurb at the base of the shot.

3.3 Concerns & Entertainment

In the AFL today it is not uncommon for any AFL side to have any number of Indigenous footballers in its player ranks. In 2003, the Fremantle Dockers played seven Indigenous players against the Roos, making it historically the biggest contingent of Indigenous players to play for one team in a single VFL/AFL fixture. Since the Thirties
the game has only seen a few Indigenous players in each era, Doug Nicholls (1932-37), Norm McDonald (1947-53), Polly Farmer (1962-67) and Syd Jackson (1969-1976). The early Eighties would see an influx of Indigenous players with the arrival of the Krakouers and Maurice Rioli at Richmond. With their arrival the Indigenous player stocks in the VFL jumped by 300%. There were now 5 players.484

Finishing eighth in the previous season NM were keen to get their 1982 season off to a good start and the first fixture didn’t get much bigger: Richmond at the MCG. Richmond had finished one spot above NM on the ladder in 1981 and had a very good balance of players with the likes of Jess, Bartlett, Cloke, Raines and Brian Taylor. Having already played and won a game against Fitzroy in the previous split round, Richmond were favourites to win. Jim was named as NM’s starting rover and set to line up on Dale Weightman. As Jim recalls he actually started in the forward pocket and lined up on the fierce Michael Malthouse. This was because Jim had dislocated his shoulder five weeks previously in a practice match. With Jim’s preparation restricted, Cable and the selection committee didn’t want to throw him to the Tigers first up.

If NM had any doubts about Jim’s ability they had to wait no longer than 10 seconds into the game. As the ball came into NM’s forward line both Jim and Phillip broke in opposite directions across the immaculately clipped MCG surface. Jim received the ball and Phillip, who was on Jim’s left, called for a handpass. Jim ignored it and straightened up. In one fluid movement from fifty-five metres out Jim unloaded with a torpedo punt. It bounced once, two metres out, and went through for a goal.

484 This is taking into account Robbie Muir (St Kilda) and Kevin Taylor (South Melbourne) who were playing in the VFL around this time.
In another passage of play that hints at the Krakouer’s combined potential Phillip crumbed a dropped mark from team-mate McCann. As he gathered the ball Phillip backed out of trouble in the shape of Jess; in doing this he was immediately confronted by a raised Malthouse elbow. The intended area Malthouse was aiming for was Phillip’s temple but a quick movement of Phillip’s head rendered the blow a mere glance. Many other first game players perhaps would have panicked in the frenetic action but poise and vision saw Phillip through. All the time he kept one eye on Malthouse and another on Jim who ran into NM’s goal. Phillip widened his stance to balance and in one looping motion the ball arrived as neat as a boiled egg into Jim’s cup-like hands. If anyone was miffed they could refer to the innovative Diamond Matrix scoreboard for a replay.

NM supporters didn’t have it all their own way as Rioli in the second half eclipsed the opposition with his speed and deft handling. But the post-match article was focussed mainly on Jim and Phillip’s capacity to combine:

> What we have to decide for ourselves however [is what] impact the Krakouer brothers are going to have on North Melbourne and League football. The brothers teamed brilliantly. Francis Bourke said later that he had been concerned by the Krakouers. The rest of us were entertained by them.\(^{485}\)

If the fuse was lit on the MCG against the Tigers, the explosion occurred at Arden Street against the Swans the following week. Having emerged as victors against Melbourne in their first encounter at the SCG, the Swans travelled back to Melbourne. The first six minutes of the game was all Swans.\(^{486}\) At the seven minute mark Blight would mark and goal and in the next eleven minutes the Roos kicked seven goals. The Krakouers had arrived and the headline said it all: **Krakouers sink a dream**:


\(^{486}\) The Swans were still referred to as South Melbourne.
In those eleven minutes in stepped the Krakouer brothers. A game and a story that might have belonged to South Melbourne had now become the exclusive property of the Krakouers. Jimmy Krakouer, the elder booted four of the 13[goals]…the rest came from the most scintillating team work. The quickness and skill of these two men is extra ordinary. Wherever they went the ball seemed to follow.\textsuperscript{487}

Perhaps it was because Eric was in town that the boys decided to give their father a show? Maybe it was the Arden Street crowd they felt they owed or was it Joseph’s faith? The footage of the game is remarkable as it show-cases the tacit confidence that the Krakouer’s had in one another, a combination that rendered many opposition back-lines impotent. With subtle little taps or gathering possession of the ball on a half-volley, both Jim and Phillip satisfied all those who witnessed them, even the sceptical.

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In July 2002, my second and last research trip to Melbourne, I had no plans to go to Essendon’s home ground, Windy Hill. My time in Melbourne was dictated by the lack of time. If interviews coincided with being at Glenferrie or Whitten Oval it was a bonus, as I could make notes as I conjured up Peter Knights or Doug Hawkins in my mind. In Melbourne I needed three interviews a day over a three week period to fill my quota. All I had in lieu was a forty-eight hour period at the end of the three weeks. This I put in place to make up for any interviews postponed or other people I needed to contact. Two of my interviews, with umpire Glen James and Carlton’s Rod Ashman, was postponed due to viruses they had. Another, with Fitzroy’s fullback, Gary Pert, was postponed because he was busy with work. I had to push them back and hence a day, the Friday of my third week was lost. Or so I thought.

Despite this setback, I was excited because my time in Melbourne was coming to an end and I was desperate to get home. My wife and I had just had our first child and she had sneakily placed photographs of him in my diary. I had not been going to take any

\textsuperscript{487} The Age. 5/4/1982, p38. My emphasis.
sentimental distractions with me but, ironically, they became a major source of comfort. My initial unease and frustration at seeing these photographs soon melted as I recognised that I could at least kiss his little head every night - be it only in a photograph. It was a reassuring action, a reaffirmation, that made me take stock of the selfishness required to engage in a project such as mine but a project that I had to stay true to nonetheless. This stage of the project had taken on a momentum of its own. I was making calls, booking appointments, conducting interviews, checking my questions and the train timetable. This was juxtaposed with acquiring the skills of becoming a new father. To me it now seems that the management of the two roles was like steering a truck down a hill with no brakes. But I simply didn’t have time to think about these exclusive and demanding activities - I just hung on and kept going.

I was excited that I had a mid-morning interview with the most famous football identity in the history of the game. Ronald Dale Barassi. Barassi was never in my mind as someone I needed to talk to but Joseph insisted that it would be good for the project generally. How could I refuse? It was Barassi after all. I rationalised that in the early Eighties Barassi was coaching Melbourne and had seen the Krakouers arrival and some of their talent. Prior to leaving Perth I had not actually spoken to Barassi as contact was made through message banks and answering machines. My wife spoke to him when he returned my call one afternoon when I was not home; a point she casually dropped while preparing a salad:

“Oh yeah, Ron..uh Barassi? He called while you were out.”
“What desaywhatdesay?”
“He said he’d do the interview and to call him when you get to Melbourne. He’s quite charming isn’t he?”
“Do you know who Ron Barassi is?” I asked.
“No”, she replied unconcerned.

After my morning interview with Barassi in a St Kilda café, I resigned myself to recouping my thoughts and worrying about the Ashman, James and Pert interviews
later. I rang Jim’s wife Fiona and she invited me out to Gladstone Park. Catching the train out to the Broadmeadows station I then treated myself to a taxi. Fiona boiled the kettle and we sat down and talked. Two hours later Jim’s old opponent and current Richmond development officer Dale Weightman arrived. As Weightman was only dropping by and I had finished speaking with Fiona, he offered me a lift to the train station.

I had interviewed Weightman on my research trip to Melbourne in 2000. I liked him as he was friendly and knowledgable and we chatted freely about Andrew, Jim and Fiona’s eldest son, and his progress with Richmond in the AFL. I don’t remember exactly where he dropped me off but it was somewhere near Oak Park. I consulted my Morgan’s Official. Windy Hill was on the way. Initially I procrastinated. I had been in Melbourne three weeks making appointments, meeting deadlines and fitting in with other people’s schedules. I was tired and felt like I had sand in my eyes.

I thought about my situation, I would never get the opportunity to get to Melbourne during the course of my project again. I consulted my Morgan’s Official and I got off at Glenbervie. I made my way south along Napier Street. This is the heart of Essendon territory and in the September months of the 80’s, 90’s and 2000 this street would have simply crackled. I trudged along, head down crosschecking my Morgan’s Official until, the streets as tight as pack ice, gave way to Windy Hill. As I stood there, the July sun broke through the cloud and warmed the bricks of Sheedy’s barracks. I would find out later that historically many of the Bomber faithful had been members of the fire brigade and this, ironically, was how Windy Hill presented itself to me. Clean, reliable, efficient, brave.
I walked into the main gaming room of Windy Hill and slowly, amid the buzz of pokie-machines, I walked around looking for an elevator, stairs, anything to get up to see this famous oval. I found an elevator and noticed it’s inner walls were clad with graffitied cardboard. I took the elevator to the top. The doors opened and directly in front of me there was a cosy, pokie-free bar where two older men relaxed in cushioned chairs enjoying a quiet pot. I bought a beer and made my way to the big windows, which looked eastward towards the city. I felt like I could reach out and touch it.

From this point I saw the city-scape and the clouds with bruised underbellies that hung in the sky like spaceships. The sunlight refracted off the skyscraper’s windows and they sparkled like lame. I then noticed how Melbourne’s CBD was cradled by two major icons; one natural, one man-made. To the left the Dandenongs pushed out like a massive forearm and to the right the West Gate Bridge, partially obscured by the AF Showers pavilion, looked like it was constructed from match-sticks. Even though I was tired I was struck by this view and just how encompassing it was. I stood there for about an hour. Forget the Rialto, Windy Hill on this day framed all of Melbourne simply magnificently.

So why was I here? What did this have to do with anything? Part of my desire was the aura of Windy Hill, the other reason was something that Melbourne forward David Schwarz had said on his retirement. Schwarz said that one of the highlights of his playing career was playing against and beating Essendon. The thing he would miss the most was silencing the Bomber supporters. These moments probably stood out for the ‘Ox’ because it would not have happened too many times. The main reason I was here

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488 This pavilion was named after Essendon president Arthur Showers who was also president of the fire brigade.
though was a torpedo punt that Jim Krakouer had kicked here one afternoon. Sometime during the game’s hundred minutes came a moment that Jim can recall. Jim revealed to me that it was one of a handful of moments, not games, that he remembers from his entire career. Those big windows would have been the best vantage point from which to see him kick that goal.

The footage of the goal starts with a ruck contest between Dempsey and Simon Madden. Madden gets his fingertips to the ball and flicks it down toward a poised Essendon player, Buhagiar I think. From the left of screen Jim bursts through the pack and intercepts the ball. In doing this he has moved his way through a space that is only centimetres wide. He has read the ball so well that Buhagiar has not anticipated it and he is moving so quickly that Buhagiar’s strength is of no use. Jim’s gone. The camera tracks Jim who is at full pace and without breaking stride he unloads a torpedo from three metres inside the centre square. The ball goes out of screen but the camera keeps tracking and the faces in the crowd look skyward. The ball splits the NM goal and lands out of screen into the unmoving, voiceless black and red moat. Is this the silence that Schwarz was referring to?

For Phillip this game also gags the Bomber faithful as his bag of tricks are not just his speed but his hips as they provide him with space. The photograph from *The Age* was a clue. If Phillip’s speed was his bankable commodity and his vision an insurance policy, his disco hips were his party trick. As Phillip is sprinting towards NM’s forward line, it appears he is running straight into trouble in the form of Kevin Walsh and Paul Van der Haar. It is a train wreck waiting to happen. Then at the last moment Phillip swerves like a slalom skier around them as they fling themselves like Olympic divers and miss by a nicotine stain. It is a brazen act and one Phillip employs unconsciously. It can be read as
bravado or luck, but either way it raises the ire of many of the Essendon supporters.  

3.4 Hard Knocks & Lessons

By the time the fire alarm stopped Rod Austin and I were the only two people in the MCG. The reason for the siren was the bomb drill the MCG did as part of the preparations for the 2000 Olympics. They were hosting the soccer. “Cmon Rod” some of Austin’s co-workers joked as they tapped on his clear windowed wall, “You’ll get blown up.” A year later perhaps, the AFL’s Football Administration Manager may not have been as phlegmatic about the drill. I know I wouldn’t have been. When I initially contacted Rod Austin he was reluctant to speak to me. “You want to speak about the ‘incident’ don’t you?” “Yes”, I replied, I did want to speak about the ‘incident’ but I also wanted to talk to Austin about a range of things regarding my project and I told him so. He accepted. The game against Carlton and NM provided it’s fair share of drama and emotion. This was evident in both Cable’s and Carlton coach David Parkin’s post-match grievances about some of the umpiring decisions. With the home ground advantage NM led at every change but inaccuracy in front of goals saw the Blues run out nine point victors. Jim spent the game in the grandstand with his shoulder injury. Austin lined-up on Phillip as he recalls:

Phillip didn’t have a real good day. I think he was injured before half time. I just said [to him] at half-time, “Phil if you don’t want to come back I understand. It’s not embarrassing. Let it go.” Some blokes you’d chat, some you wouldn’t. Like Leigh Matthews was a complete waste of time he wouldn’t respond. [I] probably spoke six words to Leigh Matthews in ten years of footy. But he came back on and I said, “I told you not to come back.”

From an article in *The Age* 26/4/1982, written by Michael Gawenda, now the editor, the Essendon game was significant because it showed just how hostile Melbourne crowds could get. In one particular incident someone from the crowd threw a can which hit Jim as he stood in the goal square. Every time he went towards the ball he was sprayed with abuse. This is interesting considering Essendon today considers itself the champion of Indigenous causes by developing players like Long, Wanganeen, Rioli, the Kickett’s, Williams, and Cockatoo-Collins.

As the game progressed an incident occurred on the field to Phillip that caused Jim to seeth. It is not clear what actually occurred and from my interviews it involved everything from a kick in the shins to a raised elbow. Some people even denied anything happened at all. Regardless of the act, Jim’s aggrieved state was compounded by not playing. Blight, who was thirty metres from the incident recalls it being a tough one but well within the confines of the game:

He [Austin] was a hard unit but he actually didn’t do that [play dirty]. When it happened I thought ‘Gee, that’s a hard one’, and then went on. That’s footy.491

When the full-time siren sounded Jim decided to take matters into his own hands.

The after-match function was a VFL tradition for many years. It was a chance for players from both sides to have a beer and a chat. Austin was keen to catch up and have a few with NM players such as Schimmelbusch, Dench, Blight and Glendinning. Blight recalls Austin, Phillip and he were standing around having a relaxed conversation when Jim flew in and hit Austin in the face. Austin’s memory is that he “went to grab a pie and Jimmy has just come and gone bang, he’s hit me. He said, ‘you kicked my brother.’ I said ‘Fuck off I didn’t kick your brother.’ I thought I’m not staying here. So I went over to the social club.”492 Jim was restrained by some of his NM team-mates who took him aside to diffuse the situation and Austin was accompanied by Shimmelbusch to NM’s social club. But as Austin recalls the incident for Jim was far from over:

The next thing I’m surrounded by about three or four Aboriginal guys and Jimmy wanting to go again. Then Peter Jonas and Denchy came and sort of said ‘Come on Jimmy’ and he was going to have a go at them too. It broke up and went out side, then he was downstairs waiting.493

For Cable the incident reflected Jim’s personality:

If one of them got hurt or one of them was provoked in any way you knew straight away there would be trouble. If it was Phillip, Jim would not hesitate.

Phillip was a bit more the lets-work-it-out type. Jim was never like that. Jim was straight in headfirst.\textsuperscript{494}

Jim recalls the incident was borne out of his inability to take his place in the NM side. To him it was an opportunity lost to test himself against the reigning premiers and in Austin it was a chance to vent his disappointment:

I don’t know if it was something I saw on the ground. I went up to Curly after and said, “watch your kicking” and he told me to, “get fucked”, so I just fired-up a little bit. I wasn’t playing that day. It was just out of frustration.\textsuperscript{495}

The Austin incident is interesting because of what it did not contain. There was no racial vilification of Jim or Phillip by Austin. Ironically, through this very public reaction to Austin, Jim had revealed his hand.\textsuperscript{496} If any of the opposition teams in the VFL were looking for avenues to break down the Krakouer unit it had been given to them. Articles began to appear in the press about ways the Krakouers should handle the attention they were receiving and would continue to receive:

Irrespective of your society strata level, judgement is based solely on the performance on the field. When an opponent can’t beat you in the physical duels, he will scratch at the veneer looking for a chink in your armor [sic]. They [the Krakouers] have got to realise that if an opposition player resorts to these tactics you have got him – he has explored every other physical avenue to upset you and his last chance is a verbal assault.\textsuperscript{497}

While I disagree with the broad generalisations of this quote, what is interesting is the way vilification in the early 1980s is rationalised. That is, the onus is taken from the addressee and it is assumed the Krakouers are in a position of ‘power’. Did players checklist, as it is being suggested, the ‘chinks’ of their opponents? Racial vilification was the quickest way to break the concentration of two of the highest profile recruits Melbourne had seen for some time and it was in most cases guaranteed to produce

\textsuperscript{494} Personal interview Barry Cable 9/5/2002.
\textsuperscript{495} Personal interview Jim Krakouer 17/1/2003.
\textsuperscript{496} By this I mean that Jim had a reputation that he could be riled into reacting against abuse or physical attention. In many of the interviews I did people said this was a flaw in Jim’s game plan as it broke his attention and incidences like what happened with Austin would have only fuelled that unwanted attention.
results. I would suggest that vilification and physical pressure were used from the outset simply because the Krakouers were so dangerous and unlike anything the VFL had seen. For two players whose lives were inextricably linked to one another and their identity it would be a case of just how they would handle the pressure week-in, week-out as the seasons ticked on.

With a “clawing, scratching and biting”\textsuperscript{498} 19 point defeat against Richmond in the last game, NM went into the elimination final against the Bombers determined to win. The game was significant as Blight was on the precipice of kicking 100 goals for the season, needing six but only getting four. It was a goal by Phillip in the second term, which would signify NM’s fate:

The most poignant moment in the elimination final at VFL Park came at the 24 minute mark of the second quarter. Phil Krakouer, 35 metres out, had just snapped an incredible goal, the ball turning as much as any leg break seen at the Park during the tumultuous days of Packer cricket. As Essendon defenders lunged desperately and the crowd let go a collective gasp, the ball bounced yet again, straightening and gently plopping over the goal line.\textsuperscript{499}

In the first semi-final, NM were set to play their nemesis Hawthorn at the MCG and things seemed to be going well in the lead up for the Roos. This transferred itself into the first two quarters as NM were up by two goals at either break despite the loss of Glendinning early in the game. For a while all the time and money spent to get NM back to the glorious Seventies seemed to be justified. A goal kicked by NM’s Phil Kelly seemed to click his opponent into attack-mode. This would not have been so bad if that opponent had been anyone other than Leigh Matthews. With over 250 games played, Matthews used all his skill, power and desire to attack the ball. Eventually Matthews would finish with four goals and even though Blight managed to reach his tonne, it was the debut game of Dermott Brereton who kicked five that saw NM lose by 52 points.

\textsuperscript{497} The Sun. 10/6/1982, p20. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{498} The Age. 30/8/1982, p22.
3.5 Streets & Homes

In the early days of football, and even before, following a footy team seems to have been uncomplicated. Loyalty was generated by things tangible and immediate...You walked on its streets. You were in fellowship with its other residents – at the pub, at church, at school. You loved your footy team...Once the relationship was formed you took it with you, everywhere. 500

The start of the 1983 VFL pre-season was marked by some developments regarding recruitment. From the outside the pre-season jousting by the clubs was something that many football followers expected. At the time the two clubs that had the biggest followings, Collingwood and Richmond, engaged in aggressive poaching campaigns involving Richmond captain David Cloke. Cloke was frustrated at Richmond and for that Collingwood were prepared to spend $160 000 to alleviate his malady. Cloke commanded this type of money because he was a key position player and he was a leader.

Jack Hamilton, the VFL’s crusty general manager, was also facing some stiff resentment from South Australian football clubs because of the VFL club’s recruitment of South Australian players. So hostile was this resentment Hamilton was instructed by the Victorian League’s directors to go to Adelaide in an attempt to calm the waters between the VFL and the SANFL. 501

It was, however, the story of a young Swan, Silvio Foschini, that warranted greater attention. Foschini, disgruntled with the move to Sydney, chose to resist the VFL’s desire to push north. Citing family reasons Foschini applied for a clearance to play with St Kilda in a bid to stay in Melbourne. The Swans and the VFL believed that this

compromised the standing of their organisations as individual concerns needed to fit the club and league line. Foschini stood firm and argued in the Victorian Supreme Court that denial of a transfer to St Kilda presented an unreasonable restraint of his trade. Foschini won the case forcing the VFL to send delegates to America to devise a system which would be equitable to all parties regarding player transfers.\textsuperscript{502} Though Foschini was cleared to proceed with his club of preference, he should have been found guilty on all counts with regard to his dress sense in court. Sadly unworkable player transfers, bad fitting beige slacks, coiffeured mullet-cuts and ugly ties were the least of the VFL’s worries as they faced a catastrophe on the shopfloor. This was because for the first time in years the unthinkable happened; attendances at VFL fixtures fell.

With the bitter wrangling that ensued between the new breed of football presidents and the old guard at the VFL, the Foschini case was a high profile loss of innocence for football. Surely football was played on an oval on a Saturday afternoon not in the courts? The Swan’s move north was seen by many of football’s diehards as the VFL’s betrayal of moral and social codes regarding their allegiances. For many Victorians the club one followed and the streets, the schools and pubs which the club was inextricably linked too meant little to the VFL:

> This policy decision [to send the Swans to Sydney] revealed how little the factors underlying the game’s success were understood at the highest level of it administration. Attempts to create a national competition were based on some doubtful assumptions…The VFL was also saddled with the presumption that private clubs were the thing of the future despite the game’s strong record of public ownership.\textsuperscript{503}

The Sydney experiment became a public relations disaster as the general perception was that the weaker clubs were being forced out or cut-loose, be it only geographically. The

\textsuperscript{501} This was because the Adelaide clubs were threatening to impose minimum transfer fees of $100 000 per player with a further condition that the transfer would only be for three years. \textit{The Age}. 10/3/1983 p39.

perspective, particularly for the weaker clubs, of – “if it could happen to them it could happen to us”, became a horrible reality for many football followers and they voted with their feet.504

When David Williamson wrote *The Club* there was only one club that he could have based it upon, Collingwood. Collingwood has the biggest profile of any VFL/AFL club; driven by its fan-base Collingwood football club is the largest and most parochial of any Australian sporting entity. This is why the most daunting of all football tasks in any previous football era was to go to Victoria Park to take on the Magpies. Known for their dour, muscular, unattractive football, Collingwood always seemed to be a team of extreme personalities. Rene Kink had the name, complexion and build of a porn actor. Whenever he ran to meet the contest I expected the TV to shake. The, “angry bullant”505, Tony Shaw had a street brawlers courage which he accessorised with a busted nose and spiky hair-do. Similarly, Collingwood’s captain Mark Williams had a look that American Vietnam Veterans called *fugazi*, or crazy, which he employed even when standing still.

For me, the Collingwood player who was the most interesting by far was Peter Daicos. Daicos seemed to be at odds with the new breed of footballers coming through. His strange gait seemed to indicate lethargy but Daicos’s skill lay in his skilful ball handling and timing. I thought Daicos was like a big-wave surfer, the kind who pride themselves in the late take-off, as Daicos could squeeze the last possible seconds out of the moments between stillness and action. Daicos was so dangerous because when he did

504 “The values of the 1980’s could also be seen in the changing organisation of football. Football executives spoke the language of marketing and corporate management…The plans to relocate and merge clubs and rationalise grounds reflected the Thatcherite view of society”. Hess and Stewart. p220.
move no back-line could contain him as he made “circles where others only saw straight lines.” Leading into round six the Pies were in the lower half of the ladder and NM were just outside the five. Collingwood’s expensive import David Cloke had failed to produce a performance anywhere near his transfer salary as he was averaging a mere six kicks a game working out at cost of $6666.66 a kick for the season so far.

NM carried their bad kicking against the Bombers into the Collingwood game producing 2.10 to lead Collingwood by a mere six points at half time. In the second term, the Magpies slammed on seven goals and the Roos six but the home side were up by three points at the main break. With various injuries to Dench, McCann, Good, Dugdale, Greig, Abernethy and Shimmelbusch, the Roos line up was spent ‘on the pine’ or hobbling. Despite kicking four goals Jim came increasingly under the attention of Magpie Mark Hannebery who played him frustratingly close. NM’s runner, Laurie Dwyer, recalls Jim’s reaction to these particular tactics:

He [Jim] was tagged by Hannebery and it sort of got to the stage of, ‘Oh why don’t you leave him alone.’ The ball could have been in the back pocket and Hannebery would still be niggling him, it went on all the time. This surprised me and I said to someone that Jimmy should give him one and they said, ‘haven’t you seen his nose?’ He [Jim] broke his [Hennebery’s] nose.

Taggers and tagging were becoming an increasing facet of the game. For players like the Krakouers the prospect of playing against a player whose sole purpose was solely to stop them became a weekly event. Playing against Phillip in the WAFL Craig Holden knew how Phillip dealt with tagging:

If you go back to the early Eighties you used to play on blokes more so than tag, and the super tag was something that was not yet standard. So Phil suddenly had to confront this bloke chasing him around all day who was basically there to negate him and not worry too much about the footy. Phil’s reaction was

508 Personal interview Laurie Dwyer 23/7/2002. My emphasis.
probably a submissive reaction whereas Jimmy’s was to come swinging. I think [Phil] once the tag was on him he tended to accept it.509

Phillip would reflect on the tactic later in the year in a rare interview in *The Sun*. The main subject of the interview was how he dealt with taggers. The interview was a valuable insight into Phillip’s personality and approach to the game generally, “If I’m up forward and the ball is at centre half-back they start grabbing at you then [but] I’m getting used to being tagged.”510 This fatalism was never part of Jim’s approach to football. Jim concedes that the use of taggers was the prerogative of opposition coaching staff but he retaliated when he felt the tagging became so limiting and the mental games so personal as to be repugnant. Dwyer corroborates this as he went with Jim to many of his tribunal appearances:

He just wouldn’t cop it. He just wouldn’t cop any of that sort of stuff. They [NM] had a worry with that because they couldn’t control him with that side. Jim always felt there was something done for him to do it. Deep down he didn’t want to do it but if something happened it wouldn’t have stopped him.511

Jim constantly found himself in a tension to which compromise was never an option. To be tagged meant limited use of the ball resulting in frustration. To be vilified meant shame, which for a proud man like Jim, was not part of his emotional repertoire as it was a slur against himself and his family.

With a hamstring injury sustained in the Collingwood game Jim didn’t take his place with NM against Hawthorn, a game NM were not expected to win. Hawthorn played a poor, uncharacteristic game devoid of their usual confidence and lost by 51 points. With Dempsey winning decisively in the ruck and the Kangaroos, marshalled by Shimmelbusch, it was to mark a significant increase in NM’s fortunes for the season. In the following game against Footscray, both Jim and Phillip would score four goals each but it would be Phillip’s hand skills, which proved a stand out:

What made North’s strategy so devastating was that so many handballs were given at a furious pace and always to a man in a better position. Phil Krakouer whether ruck-roving or at half-forward, started so many moves that resulted in goals with his exceptional ability to deliver the swift, telling handball. Graham Framer, Bill Goggin and Cable were always regarded as three of the greatest exponents of the decisive handball. Phil Krakouer does not rank too far behind them.512

By the middle of the season NM were coming off a hard fought win against Melbourne and a tough win over a young, last placed St Kilda at Moorabbin. Both Jim and Phillip were amongst the best players but the game turned sour for Jim who was reported by field umpire John Morgan late in the fourth quarter. Things got further out of hand when Jim was kicked in the ankle by a St Kilda spectator after the final siren. The report came about after a series of incidents, which saw Morgan witness St Kilda’s Graham Gellie “reel out of the pack.”513 Gellie’s team mate John Favier is reported to have come in from behind and dragged Jim to his feet in a headlock and Jim has tried to break the hold by punching Favier in the stomach. Jim’s defence at the tribunal was based around his attempt to break free from the headlock which Favier himself conceded would not have happened if he had not rushed in. The VFL tribunal did not see it this way and Jim received two weeks.

As the finals approached the top three positions were occupied by NM, Fitzroy and Hawthorn. With Essendon and Carlton making up the fourth and fifth spots respectively, it was going to be a tough finals campaign for all sides. With a loss to Carlton, Hawthorn took second place over Fitzroy with Essendon and Carlton finishing fourth and fifth respectively. This meant that NM finished on top of the table and secured the minor premiership with 16 wins for the season.514

511 Personal interview Laurie Dwyer 23/7/2002. My emphasis.
513 The Age. 15/6/1983, p34.
514 The closeness of the season was indicative of the next three sides which all had 15 wins and seven losses with percentage the only thing separating them.
Despite the closeness of the final five the main headache for the VFL was the rainfall experienced in Melbourne at the time. With a 50 millimetre deluge falling in a week the under-19 curtain-raiser before the Hawthorn and NM second semi-final was rescheduled to be played at Princes Park for fear of deterioration of the Waverley surface. The perception by many in the media was that Hawthorn perhaps had a better chance than the Roos whose game suited fast attacking football played in dry conditions. In the end it was desire and supply that proved to be the difference between these two teams.

With NM taking an early, slender lead at the first break the Hawks rebounded and led by three goals at the main break. Described as a game of, “no risk, no flair, only dreariness” the most telling damage was inflicted by Matthews whose bustle and strength in these conditions was ideal:

Matthews powerhouse style produced his second goal early in the third term when he shrugged off a tackle by Jim Krakouer as if he were an insignificant irritation. Three minutes later, in the other pocket, he gathered the ball while others fumbled and booted his third goal.

The difference in the end was symptomatic of the new style of football in which strong teams in the Eighties were able to attack and defend effectively due to the strength of their midfield and half back lines. Matthews, despite the conditions, was able to capitalise on the strength of Hawthorn’s lines and the turn-overs made by NM, which translated to forty points. The loss to Hawthorn meant that NM would end up playing the Bombers for a place in the 1983 grand final. So bad was NM’s performance that Joseph wrote a memo to all the players expressing his disappointment in their inability to play as a collective. As ‘payback’ at training on the Tuesday, the players rallied as

517 “In the letter Joseph accused the players of lacking commitment to the club and of playing for themselves.” *The Age.* 14/9/1983, p1.
a ‘collective’ and picked Joseph up, suit and all, and dragged him several times through the Arden Street quagmire.

The previous day a significant article appeared in *The Age*, which dragged Jim and Phillip through the mud. The article focussed, not on NM, but on *the* Krakouers inability to match it against *the* Hawks. The article alluded to Jim and Phillip’s innate ability, which had not been borne out as expected at VFL Park on Saturday. The overall tone of the article is loosely pseudo-anthropological:

> Do the brothers possess the temperament and discipline required for finals football? ... It is well known - and documented - that fundamentally they play by instinct…To a large extent the Krakouers base their football around half chances, the mere suggestion of an opportunity and the hint of error by an opponent.

The article seeks answers to why the Krakouers did not play well on this occasion. It does this by reducing the Krakouer brothers playing strengths in one game, unfairly I believe, to the instinctive. With Jim and Phillip’s abilities defined as ‘instinct’ rather than the product of rigorous training, it conflates their ability to their identity, their Aboriginality, and is therefore a stereotype. What comes into question is the mental side of the Krakouers game; their ‘temperament and discipline’ are placed under the microscope as historically Indigenous footballers’ have been viewed as ‘physical not mental players’. To put simply they are epitomised by their id; they act and don’t think. Historically, Indigenous footballers’ abilities have been reduced as skill and style are explained away as ‘flair’ and ‘magic’. The implication of this article is that, ‘we know that they have it - why didn’t they use it’?

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519 *Roget’s Thesaurus* list similar words to *instinct* as “absence of intellect, absence of thought, habit, non-design” p595.
The article also implies that Jim and Phillip based their play around half chances (read: half-heartedness), alluding to the perception that Indigenous athletes are unreliable, ‘they go walkabout’, or when the going gets tough they go ‘missing’. This ‘common sense’ that Indigenous players, in this instance Jim and Phillip, play by ‘half’ chances is too easily bandied about and unfair. Surely any game that has two teams and one ball and played in a 360° fashion becomes just that, a game of half chances?

For Bob Ansett the scheduled fixture for the preliminary final against Essendon was going to be a compromise because of the condition of the Waverley surface. In a bid to change the venue to the MCG Ansett argued that the Waverley surface would be reduced to a “quasi rugby, mud wrestling match.” The VFL conceded that the ground was not in good shape but were making arrangements for the surface to be improved. Jack Hamilton explained that there were a number of commercial and contractual arrangements, which needed to be met and it would be unlikely the venue would change. In the end the VFL’s board of directors voted 11-1 to keep the game at VFL Park.

NM were faced with the unpleasant reality that going into this final they would be without seasoned veterans Dench, Greig, Briedis and Dempsey. By contrast the

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520 While I understand that the reference to ‘half chances’ is meant as a compliment to Jim and Phillip’s skill in this instant the meaning is unstable and invokes other possible meanings. As the general tone of the article is a critique of the Krakouer’s game it can be assumed that the use of the term ‘half’ could imply; half-hearted, half-caste, to do things by halves, half measure and as such it reflects the reporter’s preferred reading that Jim and Phillip did not give one hundred percent effort during the games.

521 “A non-Aboriginal player, like Gary Hocking, who physically challenges opposition players, is usually described as a ‘tough player’. On the other hand, the physical play of very similar types of footballers, such as Chris Lewis and Nicky Winmar, is frequently described as a ‘savage attack on a player. Further, a ‘classy’ non Aboriginal player like Darren Jarman is often lauded for his brilliance and match winning ability, and yet his blatant inconsistencies are not remarked upon by the media. Again similar types of Aboriginal footballers are typically identified as ‘enigmatic’ and ‘hot and cold’…Hence the colonialist desire to assimilate Aboriginal people is undermined by the recurring resurfacing of what are construed as inherent, racially-determined flaws”. Fielder, John and Humphries, Ross Hey you get off Mcleod:Stacking and Centrality in Australian Rules. Unpublished.

Bombers had waited 18 years for premiership glory and were primed. To make things worse for NM they made a late interchange switch, incurring a hefty VFL fine and then Essendon’s Billy Duckworth booted a “75 metre goal less than two minutes into the game.”523 With first quarter reports to Phillip and Demetriou NM seemed rattled. As Stephen Carey played on Jim and Foulds on Phillip NM’s running game was frustrated. Even the ‘magic’ seemed to go awry as in one passage of play Phillip lobbed a handball in Jim’s direction and it bounced opposite to Jim’s anticipation. After half-time it was reported that NM were “simply a spent force”524 as Essendon had no less than ten players in their best player list while NM could only muster five.

The pain of this loss was slightly lessened a few days later as Ross Glendinning won the Brownlow medal one point clear from Rioli. Glendinning and Rioli headed back to Perth to catch up with their respective families over the summer but it was Rioli’s return which did not go as he would have liked. Having spent a night out on the town with his former South Fremantle team-mates Brad Hardie and Michael Cockie, Rioli experienced the same rejection that Jim had experienced a few years earlier. After having dinner and kicking-on to celebrate his achievement in the Brownlow, Rioli was denied entry into Pinocchio’s nightclub because of the colour of his skin. Rioli sought legal advice and Pinocchio’s management declined to comment. In my interview with Rioli he sounded as incredulous about the incident as if it had only happened the night before:

It was the only place I’d experienced racism in the way of being refused service. It was just unbelievable, a smack in the face.525

525 Personal interview Maurice Rioli 121/11/2002.
3.6 Squaring the ledger

In 1984, I turned 15 and during this time I developed a distinct paranoia of the telephone. For me the telephone was an apparatus where things could be easily organised. I never saw it as a device by which one could talk incessantly, but here was the rub - the girls loved them and I started to like girls. Ringing potential girlfriends was without a doubt the most nerve racking task of all my teenage days. I would get anxious pangs and the only way to try and alleviate them was to go into a psych-up routine. I’d hyperventilate to get myself mentally prepared until finally I’d lift the receiver. Repeating the number out loud, I would dial and hope like hell that the girl’s mother, or worse her father or older brother, didn’t pick up. Strangely, these feelings would revisit me some fifteen years later when I contacted people to interview for my project. Instead of trying to talk cool to a prospective girlfriend, I had to sound at least half intelligent to people like Malcolm Blight, David Parkin, John Kennedy, Dr Allan Aylett, Wayne Shimmelbusch and Barassi.  

After sending off a letter of introduction to my intended interviewee, I would wait for two weeks to hear back from them. If I didn’t receive contact I would ring to see if an interview would be possible. I could feel those pangs of teenage telephonic fear as I spoke like an anonymous tele-marketer to some of the most well regarded people in football. Some were sceptical. Some had questions, mostly inquiring about Jim. Some promised to tell me a great story that involved the Krakouers in Noumea, London or the change rooms at the MCG. Mostly people just told me to contact them when I was in Melbourne to organise a time. Hanging-up, I would place a tick next to their name. One neat, little, satisfying tick and the pangs of doubt would dissipate until I needed to make the next call.
From all the information contained in the NM’s 1983 Annual Report the only expected course for the Roos in 1984 was an upward trajectory. With all three grades in the 1983 finals, NM’s people could feel confident and hopeful about the upcoming season. Ansett’s Chairman’s Report, while identifying the clubs inability to capitalise on its 1983 fortunes, finished positively:

On any judgement, North Melbourne had a successful season but we are not satisfied and we can do better. So with renewed enthusiasm, we move toward the 1984 season and of course will continue to seek your continued support for the challenging year ahead.\(^{527}\)

In hindsight, a photograph that was shown on page 5 perhaps should not have been as it depicted a post-match scene from the preliminary final loss to Essendon. The reason for the photograph’s inclusion is clear, to remind the players of an opportunity lost. In the photograph Keith Greig is on the floor undoing his laces, his lips tightly pressed and his eyes fixed on his muddy left boot. To Greig’s right and seated on the bench is Schimmelbusch who seems to be talking to Greig. Schimmelbusch’s muddied knees look like they are bleeding and his jumper looks like that of an apprentice butcher. How many moments of unfettered joy and disappointment must these two team-mates have shared? How many conversations about team-mates, opponents and umpires would they have engaged in? Schimmelbush looks disgusted and is about to swear. It is a private moment between NM’s great champion and his captain away from the fans, wives and children but caught by the prying eye of the press.

The photo exudes defeat and loss and it does so by framing NM’s two champions from the previous decade. Joseph refers to it in his opening sentence and uses words like

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\(^{526}\) After drafting up a list with Jim and Phillip of people that I needed to talk to and I would contact Joseph, or to a lesser extent, Barry Cheatley the names I required.  
“disappointment”, “shattered” and “bleak.” Further down, Joseph talks about NM’s “recognisable weaknesses.” In no way is Joseph inferring that Greig and Schimmelbucsh are recognisable weaknesses, and nor am I, it is just that the first third of the GM’s report exudes Joseph’s palpable frustration. As a consequence, it is the reference to the vision, as football is foremost a celebration of the visual, of Greig and Schimmelbusch, which lingers. It cannot hide the terrible reality that NM’s players like Dempsey, Dench, Cowton, Henshaw and Briedis are ageing and with that age comes transition and uncertainty. The only certainty there is for NM is that pre-season training will be long and hard.

The 1984 VFL pre-season had all the usual stories about trades and recruits. Paul Salmon, who was just 19 and in his second year, was establishing himself as a future champion and Tom Alvin commenced his season with Carlton. Phil Narkle was signed by the Saints and Brian Peake had been re-signed by Geelong, and described in five tight paragraphs in *The Age*. The single sentence following those five paragraphs would change football and Geelong’s fortunes for the next twelve years “He [Peake] will be joined by former Hawthorn winger Gary Ablett, who was cleared yesterday for an undisclosed sum.” Perhaps more than any other football figure Ablett is the game’s great enigma and irony. With thinning hair and slightly stooped shoulders he could jump impossibly high and kick seven, eight, nine freak goals in the course of a game. Some days he did nothing. Off-field Ablett embraced Christianity and the fastest fast-lane he could find. A superstar who lived in a house with only a dart board and a drum kit with a sheep tethered in the back yard to be sacrificed for Christmas lunch. But during his playing days kids with the number five on their backs would pour through the

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529 *The Age*, 24/3/1984, p40. My emphasis. This was also the same year that Greg Williams played his first year of football at VFL level.
turn-style on their fathers’ shoulders and reconfigure their afternoon into an event. Hawthorn were reluctant to let Ablett go but the form four was signed: Ablett was a Cat.

Jim’s 1984 pre-season schedule was hectic. In a practice match against Geelong in Echuca, Jim was reported by field umpire David Howlett for striking Geelong’s Ray Card “on the back of the head from a round arm swing.” According to Howlett Jim made no attempt to get to the ball carrier and took his frustration out on Card who was shepherding. Schimmelbusch recalled the event to me as he was no more than ten metres away and claims no punch was thrown:

I was adamant that he didn’t actually throw a punch and the bloke [Card] was just staging. I went in [to the tribunal] and stuck up for Jimmy believing that he didn’t throw the punch. That’s how I saw it, and on the strength of my evidence he got off.

Shimmelbusch recalls leaving the tribunal:

Jimmy had his usual big smile on his face and he informed me that he did actually hit the bloke. Often he was so quick that nobody saw the punch. It must have been absolute lightning because I didn’t see it.

This incident could be described as a lucky one for Jim as it was reported that something happened and Jim retaliated. All of Jim’s team-mates have maintained that Jim was never a player who actively sought out violent situations. Jim himself always saw himself first and foremost as a ball player. However, when this role was compromised or his identity ridiculed, he would, according to Schimmelbusch “take it upon himself to square the ledger. From day one, Jimmy would become very aggressive


A form four is a clearance document used by the VFL/AFL.

The Age. 20/3/1984, p50.


and if he could get a punch in he would, especially if they started calling him names."535

This is precisely what Jim said to umpire Howlett who put it in his match report:

I told Krakouer he was reported and he said nothing. But when we were walking off at half-time shortly afterwards he came up to me and asked me why I had not reported Card in a skirmish three minutes earlier for something he said [to Jim]. “I said I couldn’t.” Howlett added.536

For Shimmelbusch, and others at NM, Jim’s retaliatory style was something of a concern as Jim’s actions were seen to be his direct responsibility. Many simply could not understand that these taunts were impossible for Jim to ignore. At times, this placed Jim in a highly tenuous position with the club and some of his team mates as ‘payback’ was inevitable. Shimmelbusch concurs:

He hated being beaten by any opponent so he was always going to keep working right until the end of the game. Jimmy was just somebody that wanted the best out of himself. I think he, being the older brother, had a thing in the back of his mind that he had to sort of set the example for his whole family. But he seemed to have a chip on his shoulder about the racial vilification. Phil hardly ever weakened and fell for it and I don’t know why Jimmy did it because he knew he got himself into trouble and let himself down.537

The predicament Jim found himself in over such incidents was agonising. In Jim’s eyes, not to react would compromise his identity, Phillip and his family. Reacting meant there was a distinct possibility of being reported and suspended from the thing he loved and was his only source of employment. These scenarios would seem to indicate the great divide between what the game represented to Jim and many who had not experienced, or could not understand, what the abuse meant to him and Phillip. Jim understood that when the game finished he could not step out of himself. What went on on the ground didn’t stay there, it was with him all the time and therefore he needed to be true to his guiding principles.

536 The Age. 20/3/1984, p50. My emphasis.
Payback was Jim’s only means for satisfaction as it adhered to Indigenous principles of aggrievement and recompense. Payback, characterised by its immediacy and swiftness, gave Jim some ownership back in the situations in which he felt he had been unfairly treated. This way was Jim’s way - Blackfella way. The laws of the game prevented Jim from doing this and led to his frequent tribunal appearances because the laws of the game could not protect him from taunts, which denied him the respect he craved. Football was still ten years away from addressing racial vilification so for now Jim and Phillip would deal with it the only way they knew. This would prove to be a great source of frustration for some of Jim’s team-mates, particularly Schimmelbush, NM’s captain. Jim’s hair-trigger reactions were because of frustration at being racially vilified which impacted upon his ability to act naturally. It also ensured, that in many peoples eyes, Jim became the antagonist. Shimmelbusch explains:

I always had a feeling that there wasn’t a lot of nastiness in it [the abuse].
It had more to do with competitive sport and getting you’re opponent in. I mean they weren’t really racist they just knew it got the opposition in. He [Jim] was his own worst enemy in that he let it get to him. If he had of just gone about his football and ignored it it would have happened a hell of a lot less. It would have disappeared completely if Jimmy hadn’t of fallen for it.538

It is interesting here that Schimmelbusch’s position is like that of many footballers of the era. In my interview with him he said that he too was vilified because his name was European and he just got on with it. Jim simply could not do this and he was prepared to sacrifice his sport and his job, to make that stand. At this time, Jim is starting to become a pariah because of his actions. Jim’s actions define him because he acts illegally and not with the team in mind. But for Jim the words are as violent as any physical act; calling Jim a ‘nigger’ not only insults him, it insults Phoebe, Eric, Fiona, Karla, Phillip and every Indigenous person he knows and is related to because they are what he is.

538 Personal interview Wayne Schimmelbusch 4/9/2000. My emphasis. Perhaps more than anyone Schimmelbusch was disappointed by Jim’s actions. At the tribunal hearing the year before in the Favier incident it was reported that umpire Murray Williams in his match report wrote; ‘players arrived on the
This predicament is described by Michael Long who in 1995 changed the political and cultural landscape of football after refusing to ignore the insults:

Racism denies people the fundamental human right to be judged by their character, by what is inside. This is why it is not easy to experience a lifetime of racial abuse, be constantly reminded of it and yet be expected to ignore it.539

This point is picked up by Mark Duffield of The West Australian as he explains that due to increased professionalism in sport perceptions need to shift if we are to reflect a more open and tolerant society:

The most disturbing thing about racial vilification is that every time a case is raised people want to use arguments like ‘everyone did it in my day’ or ‘what happens on the field stays on the field’…These people ignore the fact that the football field is a workplace and racial taunts are a form of discrimination.540

After a handful of games and only one win things for NM were looking dire. Having played two games for the season Dench, NM’s champion full back, retired. By Round nine NM’s ruck, Dempsey, had also retired and veterans Gary Cowton and Kerry Good were sacked. To add to this, Phillip was also expected to miss three weeks with ligament damage to his knee.541 After round 5 NM would lose eleven games straight by an average of four goals.542 NM’s only strategy was to fast-track younger players and they did with a total of 16 new players making the seniors list for the 1984 season.543 Players such as Tim Harrington, Darren Steele, Peter German, Matthew Larkin and Mark Arceri all made their debuts in this year. For these young players Jim and Phillip stood out in terms of their football abilities and for German, it was his interaction with the Krakouers that highlighted the value of Jim and Phillip to NM’s side:

I guess early on I knew they were good but I never appreciated how good they were until I played with them down the track. I think people marvelled at their skill and ability but they tackled and chased and did all the other things that

scene from everywhere and he heard North captain Wayne Schimmelbusch say to Krakouer: ‘Why did you have to do that.’[sic] The Age. 15/6/1983, p34.
540 The West Australian. 9/4/1999, p74. My emphasis.
541 The injury to Phillip was quite sever, as he would make only 7 appearances for North Melbourne over the course of the 1984 season. North Melbourne Annual Report 1984, p25.
543 Of the sixteen three players had played with other VFL clubs that season.
coaches wanted. They had great awareness and were magnificent at making the correct decision and using the ball creatively, that’s what made them stand apart from anyone else.\textsuperscript{544}

Harrington also appreciated the Krakouer component of NM for different reasons:

I maintain that, even to this day, pound for pound Jimmy was the most courageous player I’ve seen because when you are only sixty kilos and you’re playing against blokes who are one hundred kilos he would put himself into the hurly burly. Phil was always feted for his ball skills and could work into space, but I always thought that until Carey came along Schimmer and Jimmy Krakouer were on par our best players.\textsuperscript{545}

Of all the young players it was perhaps Arceri who got on the best with Jim and Phillip.

A small, but strong and tenacious player, Arceri was able to learn the finer arts of roving from Jim and Phillip:

He [Jim] was totally dedicated to his sport. Jim was very determined, very persistent as a footballer. Phil was probably more natural and had more of the magic. Phil wouldn’t go out of his way but he did what he had to do to continue his brilliance. Phil and I got into a little habit where we’d do a hundred kicks and a hundred handballs after training each night on either side. Phil wouldn’t say lets do 20 laps. Phil wouldn’t enter the gym whereas Jim would be constantly skipping, running, riding a bike, sit-ups, gym work.\textsuperscript{546}

From all this time spent in their company, Arceri built up a strong rapport with Jim and Phillip, focussing on their mutual love of football:

We spoke a lot about football, always spoke about opponents. We would have a chat on a Friday night before the game. After a game we might have had a little chat about it [the game] if we weren’t happy.\textsuperscript{547}

Talking would develop into further discussion and Arceri was introduced to the Krakouer family, allowing him to appreciate Jim and Phillip’s role within it. Coming from an Italian background, Arceri knew the difficulties associated with people’s negative perceptions of and discrimination against ethnic minorities. Arceri explains:

Unfortunately they [Jim and Phillip] had to deal with it all the time. I look back and think that I did become emotionally involved. I tended not to react immediately if I didn’t have to, I certainly wouldn’t forget it. But I saw how Jim

\textsuperscript{544} Personal interview Peter German 28/8/2002.
\textsuperscript{545} Personal interview Tim Harrington 16/7/2002.
\textsuperscript{546} Personal interview Mark Arceri 29/8/2000. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{547} Personal interview Mark Arceri 29/8/2000. My emphasis.
reacted and how my Dad reacted when I was growing up. He wouldn’t back down so I could see where they [Jim and Phillip] were coming from.\textsuperscript{548}

Harrington expands:

\begin{quote}
Jimmy didn’t accept the bull shit sort of statement, ‘what happens on the field stays on the field’. If you crossed the line with Jimmy anywhere you were going to pay a price.\textsuperscript{549}
\end{quote}

In the previous weeks, the retirements and sackings at NM were overshadowed by the forced retirement of “itinerant and volatile”\textsuperscript{550} St Kilda half-forward Robert Muir in a game against Carlton. In one of the more overtly physical situations ever witnessed in any one game Muir, a Koori, was reported on seven different charges from striking to abusive language. Only one charge, that of head-buttting Bruce Doull, was cleared. The tribunal hearing frames Muir as the aggressor:

\begin{quote}
[Umpire] Smith had told the tribunal that Muir, when pursuing a loose ball at speed, had taken his eyes from the ball, looked at Perovic, raised his left forearm and struck the big Carlton defender a severe blow to the right side of the head.\textsuperscript{551}
\end{quote}

The implication of this is that Muir has played the man rather than the ball and has done so in a very deliberate way because he \textit{looked} at Perovic. This gives the impression that Muir was specifically \textit{looking} [read: head hunting] for a Carlton player. From my perspective what the footage reveals is Muir running at top pace. The time it took for Muir to change his field of vision from the unreliable bouncing ball to that of Perovic is only a split second. The reported \textit{look} was no more than a glance as there is no discernible player Muir is \textit{looking} at until the very last frame before the clash. What is interesting about this particular incident is that Perovic has come into Muir not with the ball in his field of vision but underneath him, literally at his feet. This lends me to conclude that Perovic has simply over-run the ball and hence made Muir his target creating an instantaneous quid pro quo for Muir.

\textsuperscript{548} Personal interview Mark Arceri 29/8/2000. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{549} Personal interview Tim Harrington 16/7/2002.
\textsuperscript{550} \textit{The Age}. 8/5/1984, p46.
In his defence, St Kilda’s general manager and three time Brownlow winner Ian Stewart claimed Muir “had been subjected to racist taunts and remarks” and was playing highly aggressive football as a result. Perovic claimed that he saw “a St Kilda player out of the corner of his eye”, but from the footage it distinctly looks like Perovic had full view of Muir when he made the contest. The reason the Muir/Perovic case is interesting is because of the way it situates either player. Muir was seen at the time, and has gone down in VFL folklore, as a crazed aggressor. The wild darkie, the mad-dog who cannot be reasoned with. If Muir’s claims of racial vilification are true, and it could be argued, are due to Muir’s animated state post-collision, they fuelled his anger and frustration at being reported. Muir’s status as the aggressor are then problematic. In contrast to players like Brown, Ditterich, Lockett, Rhys-Jones, Brereton and Hocking who have been celebrated for their hardness and tenacity at both the ball and the man, Muir’s status and character has been put into another category – why? The stigma that has followed Muir around because of this incident frames him automatically and by implication stereotypes Indigenous men as violent, thuggish and unreliable. With no video, no bio-mechanics, no rule 30 and despite Muir being 16 centimetres shorter and 16 kilograms lighter than Perovic, Muir was given a twelve match suspension and his VFL career was finished.

With Jim named in the forward pocket after returning from a three week suspension, occurring the same week as Muir’s, NM were set to take on first placed Essendon. With their season effectively over NM blooded new players and experimented. Without the finals to spur them on and a distinct ‘changing of the guard’, NM put their “future

551 The Age. 8/5/1984, p46. My emphasis.
552 The Age. 8/5/1984, p46.
553 The AFL’s Racial and Religious vilification laws.
largely in the hands of zealous and impetuous young men.” Essendon, with players of the calibre of Van Der Haar, Watson, Daniher and Hawker seemed, on paper, to be too strong for NM. In the end, the young Roo’s fell short by two points in an intense game that was made more poignant by Dench and Dempsey running a lap of honour before the game.

After fifteen rounds, NM were set to play a fourth placed Melbourne. With NM without Phillip, Glendinning and Schimmelbush, the Demons were spurred on by the fact that they had not beaten NM for eight years. The final siren would show that Melbourne won by 43 point and as the match report shows Cable was forced to concede his team’s dire situation:

There was a hint of resignation in Barry Cable’s voice as the North coach explained: We are at a stage where we want to have a good foundation for 1985. We know what we have been doing is the right thing to do. The boys desire and courage has never been questioned but we obviously lack depth.

NM’s woes were compounded when Jim was reported for tripping Melbourne’s Graeme Yeats, making it his third appearance at the tribunal for the year. Players advocate Bob Stewart asked for the tribunal to be lenient with Jim as he had pleaded guilty to the charge, not knowing that tripping was a reportable offence. As Stewart points out:

Krakouer was pleading guilty to ignorance…Stewart said: “I spoke to 20 senior players after last Saturday’s game and not one knew that tripping was reportable…It gets back to a lack of communication. Krakouer thought he was only giving away a free or at most a 15 metre penalty…It was not in the list of guidelines on reportable offences made available to players and coaches at the beginning of the season.”

With Jim suspended for two games NM were beaten by 45 points against Collingwood. In the following game NM had a two point win against second last St Kilda, a game that had the added significance of being Keith Greig’s 276th game, a club record and NM’s only source of celebration.

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554 The Age. 4/6/1984, p24.
555 The Age. 9/7/1984, p22.
With the last game against Essendon at Windy Hill NM were no match for the Sheedy machine. Going down by 38 points, it had been a long gruelling year for the Roos, finishing with five wins from 22 outings; their position meant they were spared the wooden spoon by percentage. In what had been NM’s worst season since 1972 and Cable’s worst in a 24 year career, he tabled his resignation. For Joseph this meant the next few months were going to be much busier and more demanding than usual. The recruitment of players was one thing but coaches, that was a completely different process, as Joseph admitted:

We’ve just got to sit down and start asking ourselves a lot of hard questions. Now we are confronted with an enormous problem because there aren’t too many coaches around.557

The word around Melbourne in early October was that Swan Districts coach John Todd was considering the NM coaching position.558 The big news, however, was that one of football’s doyens and founder of modern coaching practice, John Kennedy, was considering a proposal to coach Collingwood.

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As the summer approached, Ron Joseph sat out in the old grand stand at Arden Street sucking slowly on a cigarette and sipping on a cup of tea. It was mid morning and as the big sprinklers were wheeled out and hooked up their sound seemed to sooth Joseph’s ever-ticking mind. Ssshhup ssshhup ssshhup. This brief moment of solitude, combined with the aluminium tapping against the water pressure gave Joseph an idea. He grinned to himself, “John Kennedy” Joseph firmly announced as he looked up to the strutting pigeons on the main cross beam of the old grand stand, “Now there’s a bloody coach.”

556 *The Age.* 10/7/1984, p46. My emphasis.
Joseph got up, smiled again, and headed for his office. He was going to make a phone call.

3.7 Up & Down

Footballers...are young men, who - statistically - take more risks than any other group in society and are certainly less prudent. Counselling and advice can only partly redress that. The rest of the learning will necessarily be from mistakes.\(^{559}\)

There's a flag that's flyin up on Jolimont Hill
Above the MCG so cold and so grey
The stands are all empty
The outer is bare
For Jimmy Krakouer it's been a bad day.

Jimmy Krakouer Jimmy Krakouer
He roved all day till he could not stand
His name was heard all across the land
In his heart lived the spirit of a wild wild man.\(^{560}\)

According to my 2000 diary, I was set to meet Ron Joseph on a Friday late in August. On a gloomy Melbourne morning, I got off the train at Middle Brighton station and made my way to Joseph’s office. Even though I had spoken to Joseph a few times on the phone he struck me as being friendly but slightly wary about my intentions. Once I began to speak with him about the project that wariness dissolved and I found Joseph accommodating and very helpful. We sat and talked about his role at NM and despite the phone constantly interrupting us, it was a long and insightful interview. Joseph then gave me access to all of NM’s annual reports and offered me the use of his photocopier, saving me hours of work.


By the time I had finished it was about 2pm and as I packed away all my gear we chatted generally. Joseph offered me a drink. I had to decline explaining that I had a meeting with ‘the great man’ John Kennedy at four that afternoon. I noticed Joseph stop what he was doing and momentarily he looked up and out the window and the light caught his fleshy face “Yeah”, he said softly, “the great man.”

Sober and focussed, I was just about to step out of Joseph’s door when he said, “By the way are you going to the game?” I mistakenly thought he was referring to the grand final and I lamented that scalpers prices in the Herald Sun were about $750.00 a ticket and out of my means. Joseph had actually meant the two preliminary finals, one being played that night and the other on the Saturday. My reply was similar to the first. Joseph turned and trundled over to an ornate side table and opened a drawer. He pulled out a two-inch wad of tickets and handed me two - one was for the preliminary final of my choice and the other was for the Grand Final. Taken completely by surprise, I shook Joseph’s hand like I had just received news that I was the recipient of a life-saving organ, and I suppose in some ways I was. Walking back to the suburban train station the sun broke out for the first time that day. Life was good.

Back at Flinders Street Station I caught a connecting train out to Kennedy’s suburban home. I was early so I found a park down the road from his house, checked my questions and basked in the glow of grand final expectation. I looked at my watch and frowned. I was still about ten minutes too early for Kennedy’s scheduled interview so I slowly got up and dawdled to Kennedy’s house. I checked his address with my Morgan’s Official and my palms started to sweat. I decided to knock on his door but there was no answer. I walked back out to the footpath and hooked my backpack over Kennedy’s fence and just stood there. Technically I was loitering.
Bang on 4pm an innocuous white Japanese ute swung into the drive and there at the wheel sat Kennedy. As ‘the great man’ turned into his drive he glared at me with his trademark granite cracking gaze. I wanted to smile the smile that says ‘its me’ but my facial muscles were rendered useless by that unblinking, unmoving, all consuming stare. I clumsily removed my backpack from his fence. What had I been thinking? This was John Kennedy’s fence. What sort of an idiot does such a thing? Getting out of his ute Kennedy facial expression did not really change but he invited me inside and I met his wife Dulcie who was preparing coffee. I waited five minutes or so while Kennedy chatted briefly to Dulcie. I mentally blocked my ears to their conversation but I still noticed Kennedy’s voice. It was like a cathedral bell. Resonating and deep. He popped his head into the lounge where I was waiting “I usually take a drop of grappa with my coffee, could I interest you in one?” he softly boomed. “Why not John”, I replied, as if we were old friends. With a hot black coffee in one hand and a grappa in the other, Kennedy and I moved into the formal dining room and chatted about football. Turning on the tape recorder I subconsciously reached inside my jacket and touched the top-pocket of my shirt. I wasn’t dreaming, the tickets were still there and the grappa hardly touched the sides.

Turning to appendix 27 of The Oxford English Reference Dictionary (1995) one is able to see the array, positions and dimensions of different sporting fields and pitches as they are played in different parts of the world. Association football, tennis, baseball, cricket, ice hockey and Australian Rules are shown. When I first came across this page and the Australian Rules oval something caught my eye. The markings on the oval looked skew. This was because the centre square was not square but placed as it originally was, on the diamond. This poses the question why there is a centre square, or diamond at all. The
answer to that is Kennedy. Probably more than any one person it is Kennedy who has influenced the modern game in the widest possible way. The coaching style of Kennedy in the 1960’s lay the blue-print for the physical and tactical aspects of the game as it is played today. Coaching Hawthorn to its first premiership in 1961, Kennedy’s main focus was on supreme fitness coupled with numbers at the ball and underpinned by total adherence to team play.561

So daunting and demanding was Kennedy’s style that even the player regarded as the best modern day footballer and certainly the toughest, Leigh Matthews, was intimidated by Kennedy’s presence calling it “god-like.” Under Kennedy’s influence the game’s free-flowing style became congested around the stoppages, in particular the centre bounces as Kennedy believed that his players needed to play a close, harassing style of football. Hawthorn’s physical presence yolked to continual pressure forced errors by the opposition to be made and the ball to be turned over, but it made for a less spectacular brand of football. To alleviate this unattractiveness the VFL decided to implement the diamond as a means to decrease the congestion around the ball at centre-bounces.562

By the mid Eighties, Kennedy, who had not coached in the VFL since 1976, was ready to get back into the cut and thrust of league football. Joseph needed a coach and who better to take the helm and promote the club at the same time than Kennedy. Hawthorn’s icon was in charge of the Roos and this delicious paradox was not lost on Joseph as it was a recruitment coup of the highest order. For Kennedy, the task ahead of him at NM would be no Sunday stroll, but he could see potential in the list of players

561 “Kennedy…took the unconventional step of commencing training in early January instead of the usual March. On the field, Kennedy encouraged his players to engage in close checking and constant harassment of their opponents…When combined with fierce tackling and relentless pressure, it put the opposition off balance and heightened error rates but also made the game unattractive to watch”. See Hess & Stewart 1998, p183.
and the Krakouers were very much part of his plans. For the Krakouers, Kennedy’s appointment, while welcomed, would be overshadowed by another concern that threatened to end Jim’s playing days in the VFL for good.

In early 1985, Jim Krakouer was ordered by magistrate Maurice Duncan not to enter the suburbs of Fitzroy, Northcote and Collingwood. Jim had been charged with unlawful imprisonment, several counts of assault and twenty counts of sexual penetration of a girl under the age of sixteen. Jim’s defence council, Mr Brian Flynn, in seeking bail, argued that consent had been sought and agreed to by both parties in the penetration matter. Flynn also added that because Jim’s name had been leaked to four newspapers and a number of radio stations it, “calculated to prejudice” a fair trial.

The next few months would be calamitous as Jim, who while on bail, had further charges laid against him, including the very serious charge of trying to pervert the course of justice. Jim was remanded in custody and recalls spending two weeks in Pentridge. Despite the seriousness of these charges and the time spent inside, Jim’s domestic and professional life was played out in the media. It would be hard for many people to gauge the pressure that this sort of attention creates but it might be compared to the recent situations of sporting identities Gary Ablett and Shane Warne. Unlike Ablett and Warne, however, the thing that set Jim apart in this situation was that he was viewed through the dual prisms of his identity and the age of the girl. Perhaps the latter factor compounded the negative perception of the former? Certainly it would not have helped matters and the only thing Jim could do was put up with the conjecture until his day in court came.

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563 Further charges were laid a few days later but it is debatable whether or not they were connected.
With Jim’s public profile the highest of any VFL footballer at the time, the public perception of Jim was made more evident at the scheduled inter-club practice matches were taking place all over Melbourne. Jim and Phillip’s NM teammate, Donald McDonald, specifically recalls a practice match at Chelsea. McDonald cannot recall whom NM were playing but he does recall what was draped around the boundary line.

McDonald explains:

There was a sign on the fence at the time because you had the Dominator [Wayne Johnston] at Carlton and I think it was the time when one of the [VFL] players was caught masturbating in his car.\(^{565}\)

According to McDonald, the sign effectively read, *Carlton have the Dominator and the Masturbator. The Roos have the Penetrator*. McDonald could not believe his own eyes and sensed Jim was going to react negatively:

I looked at it and I just thought ‘oh no’ because it [the banner] must mean Jimmy. I looked at Jimmy and he goes, ‘Mac did you see that sign?’ I thought he was going to jump over the fence and belt those blokes but he just took it in his stride. He had copped a fair bit over the journey and it was a bit like water off a duck’s back but those were the things he was subjected too.\(^{566}\)

A notable exception to the adversity Jim was experiencing at the time came in a scratch match held in the Goulburn Valley in the town of Tatura. This game could be described as a precursor to future exercises involving VFL/AFL clubs playing against Indigenous representative sides and symptomatic of the increased interest Victorian football clubs had in Indigenous players. With an Indigenous side playing Essendon in the heart of Taungurong Country, the sense of occasion was not lost on one reporter:

From the support they gave one another in the dressing rooms and the spirited display they gave on the field, it was clear there was a special sense of unity among this conglomeration of Aboriginal footballers...they combined better than Essendon and went close to beating the reigning VFL premier.\(^{567}\)

Jim was amongst the best for the Indigenous side as was Greg McAdam who would go on to play for St Kilda that year. The game also introduced Victorian people to a 19 year

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\(^{565}\) Personal interview Donald McDonald 15/7/2002. My emphasis.

\(^{566}\) Personal interview Donald McDonald 15/7/2002. My emphasis.
old Noongar who “showed remarkable poise and maturity.”\textsuperscript{568} His name was Nicky Winmar.

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Due to the nature of the charges and the media attention surrounding him, Jim’s preseason became a game of cat and mouse. With the first game looming Kennedy and Joseph hit on an idea to diffuse the situation. As the NM squad trained at Arden Street, Jim and Kennedy engaged in a kick-to-kick drill on a nondescript suburban oval while Joseph kept a look-out for the media. Kennedy and Jim would have made interesting viewing as they speared stab passes to one another. Football’s myopic elder and his troubled champion engaged in their first training night together in a backyard drill reminiscent of a thousand suburban childhoods. After sometime the kicking stopped and the two came together. They talked. Kennedy imparted some advice, Jim nodded and they shook hands. Kennedy then headed down to Arden Street to finish off training with NM and Joseph drove Jim home. As they drove to Gladstone Park Joseph waited a while and turned his head slightly to Jim who was staring out the passenger window, spinning a football in his hands, “What do you think of the new coach?” Jim straightened his head and said, “I think he respects me.”\textsuperscript{569} Joseph smiled and drove on as Jim turned his head and stared back out at the road.

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In the lead up to the season, Jim had been in Pentridge for nearly two weeks and was granted bail to play football in the first four fixtures. It was reported in \textit{The Age} that Fiona had submitted evidence that the girl at the centre of the allegations had become infatuated with Jim and was allegedly pregnant to him.\textsuperscript{570} Justice King released Jim on

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\textsuperscript{567} \textit{The Age}. 18/2/1985, p42.  \\
\textsuperscript{568} \textit{The Age}. 18/2/1985, p42.  \\
\textsuperscript{569} Personal interview John Kennedy 25/8/2000.  \\
\textsuperscript{570} \textit{The Age}. 29/3/1985, p4.
\end{flushright}
$5000 bail and ordered him to stay away from the girl, her family and friends, and report to police three times a week.

NM’s first game of the 1985 season didn’t get any bigger as they were set to play Collingwood. This game was in itself a historic match as it was the first game under lights at the MCG on a Friday night. Without any pre-match entertainment many fans turned up later than the VFL expected, causing a grid-lock at the turn-style. Frustration begat chaos as football fans desperate to get into the MCG started to break down the gates leading into the ground. By the start of the game 65,628 people officially had gone through the turn-style, a majority of whom were Collingwood devotees. Much of the usual Collingwood hostility was directed largely towards NM’s starting rover. One person who was there at the game was Brian Bourke, Jim’s and NM’s legal representative, who went to the game with Joseph. Bourke vividly recalls the night:

It would be hard to describe the reaction of the crowd because everyone hates Collingwood but they [Collingwood supporters] reacted by really giving Jimmy the works when he came out onto the ground. The leading ruckman for Collingwood, David Cloke, I saw him run past Jimmy and he just touched him on the head.571

The game itself saw Collingwood adjust better to the atmosphere to lead by five goals at half time. As Bourke and Joseph made their way to the NM change-rooms Bourke’s curiosity got the better of him and he went up and asked Jim what Cloke had said to him as he ran past. Bourke said to Jim, “I saw you talk to Clokie, what did he say to you?” Jim’s reply, as Bourke recalls, was Cloke said:

I can’t do anything about the crowd Jim but if any Collingwood player says anything to you you come too me.572

If this story is true it is very interesting. Cloke, who is an established football identity and about to take on an opponent in an incredibly important game takes time to acknowledge the adversity that Jim, who is yet to have the charges against him heard, is

facing. It is a reassuringly sporting gesture because it shows respect for a fellow sportsperson. Furthermore, given the time, the place and the activity, it identifies Cloke’s courage to defy the Collingwood supporters and Jim is validated by a peer for whom he is - a human being.

The Roos were let down by the lack of a team effort which was perhaps exacerbated by the greater than usual hostility and the slippery night conditions. For Jim the game must have been a welcome relief as he was NM’s best, which is surprising considering the attention he is reported to have received from the crowd:

Jimmy Krakouer was one of the few to make the adjustment [to the conditions] but despite a brilliant goal at the six minute mark of the final quarter his undoubted football skills were forgotten by a crowd intent on booing him every time he touched the ball.573

Phillip was also amongst NM’s best as was a 21 year old called Matthew Larkin, “whose display indicated a warm future ahead.”574 However, the Magpies, with a 7 goal haul by full-forward Brian Taylor, were too strong.

Facing a committal hearing on Monday the 22nd of April, Jim’s season and future were on the line. Four charges, two relating to attempting to pervert the course of justice and one count each of unlawful imprisonment and abduction, were dismissed. The assault and sexual penetration charges were to be heard the following day. On the 24th, Jim sat outside the East Brunswick Office of Corrections Attendance Centre in Nicholson Street. The day before he had pleaded guilty to the sexual penetration charges and was found guilty of the assault charge. In his deliberation of the case, magistrate Bill O’Day conceded that the case was, “an unusual matter” as Jim and the girl, whose name was...

574 The Age. 30/3/1985, p40.
withheld “shared a mutual affection.” This point was argued by Bourke who was reported in *The Age* to say that even when charges had been laid “there was an effort by the girl to continue the relationship.” O’Day ordered Jim to report to the Office of Corrections the following day and serve two 50 hour community service orders, one for the assault and one for the penetration charges.

It seems at this point that Jim’s public and private profile have taken on notorious proportions. Jim is readily identifiable because of who he is and what he has done. By contrast, Phillip’s life seems somewhat pedestrian as he is able to slip stealthily away from the public eye. Why is this so? Perhaps it had something to do with the differences in the way Jim and Phillip individually approached life and sport. Jim’s front and square approach to football carries itself through into the public domain. Jim is a punter and enjoys the track and the TAB where he inevitably comes into contact with a range of people - NM fans, the police, loan sharks, Blackfellas, bookies and football fans - in a front and square way.

By comparison, Phillip moves in less frenetic circles. Just like on the football field Phillip finds space and time and his life seemingly doesn’t become caught up in a series of unfolding dramas. Many of the people I interviewed said Phillip would attend training and club functions otherwise he would be home with his nuclear family. This is not to say that Jim did not take his family duties as seriously because he did. But at least from the public perception Phillip’s life is less stressed and therefore less prone to the heat seeking damage his elder brother’s life seems to be attracting.

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576 Brian Bourke explained to me in our interview that Jim had been given the community service order for the sexual penetration charges and not a custodial sentence because the act had been deemed by the judge as being consensual.
With six games played NM were starting to find the momentum and confidence that had been lacking in the earlier games. Sitting in eighth position, they had a one point win over seventh placed Melbourne, but it was the way NM were going about their football which was making the Arden Street faithful smile. The press described them as “eager and determined…North has blended experience and youthful enthusiasm in its process of rebuilding.” This blend was put to the test in round seven when NM were set to take on Essendon who were sitting on top of the ladder. The game itself was fast, unrelenting and inventive.

For Kennedy, who espoused the team game above everything, NM’s performance against Essendon must have been a joy to witness as they had a winner in every department. Given his ethos, it was Kennedy’s response in the post match conference to a specific question regarding Jim and Phillip’s form, that surprised many:

When John Kennedy was asked…to explain the improved form this season of magic-makers James and Phillip Krakouer, the North coach found his answer in the sacred tracts of socialism: “As Lenin or Marx said ‘from each according to his ability’.”

This was a ringing endorsement from Kennedy who recognised the pressure that Jim and Phillip had faced. Jim’s influence was also starting to be recognised, particularly in the Melbourne media. Perhaps the best gauge of this at the time was the prestigious player of the year award in The Age.

With nearly half the season played The Age award was hotly contested by Ablett, Terry Wallace, Peter Morwood, Tim Watson and Jim. It is around this time the Krakouer’s influence is starting to be dealt with differently in the media. Indeed Indigenous football players contributions were being written about in a way that did not dwell on their

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exoticism or novelty. This, to some degree, could be put down to the Krakouers influence. For example:

Apart from Fitzroy’s Sir Douglas Nicholls and Essendon’s Norm McDonald Victoria has been bereft of top black footballers…Rioli is perhaps the most elegant player in the game [and] plays a fairly classical game. The Krakouer’s seem to have a more magical, or lateral approach…Both Rioli and Jim and Phil Krakouer have that special ability to be by themselves a lot, to sense where the ball is going to be, how a passage of play is going to unfold. But it’s in the imagination, the understanding of the possible futures that the Krakouers stand out.  

So why did the Krakouers, in football terms, stand out? On the surface there appeared to be this ability to combine in a seamless way, confounding but heightening, people’s appreciation of the game. Everyone I spoke to throughout my interview process, and even people I spoke to generally, mentioned Jim and Phillip’s ability to find one another by using the ball effectively in very congested and fast passages of play. In my interview with Rioli, he said Phillip could play in a telephone box, because his style seemed to defy a reasonable explanation. Descriptions of Jim and Phillip’s innate sense of where the other one was hardly varied from, ‘You’d be looking and the ball would come out of nowhere and like lightning they’d be off.’ Jim and Phillip had played football together since childhood and had developed a deep understanding of one another’s responses, rhythms and use of space and time. However, people viewed their skills from the outside - even those who were on the same team. Their skills were so enmeshed and complementary that the Krakouers’ seamless play confounded many. It seems that for many people it was easier to understand their play in terms of their skin colour rather than it being the outcome of a long and intimate process. Their play was described, or explained away on many occasions, as Krakouer magic. Their ‘mysterious’ abilities became aligned with their ‘mysterious’ Blackness and thus with an essentialist notion of ‘black magic.’ A deeper reading, one that took into account the

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hard work and commitment of Jim and Phillip’s football, was therefore denied. People watched the hat and cheered the rabbit, never thinking about where the hands and minds of the magician might be.

Conversely, Jim and Phillip’s lateral approach is looking at the action from the other perspective; shifting it from question to possibility, from past to future tense. ‘How did they do that?’ shifts to ‘what can we do?’ Having intimate knowledge of one another’s game gave Jim and Phillip a distinct advantage in positioning themselves in accordance with the ball, the action and the other players. This is why, unlike Rioli, who was a brilliant player in his own right, they stood out because there were two of them and they tacitly complimented each other’s style and abilities. Jim and Phillip were individually mindful of the imagined football drill that they had actualised many, many times since early childhood. Sometimes the combined effect did not work but on many occasions it did and when it did people scratched their heads because it was a phenomena that the VFL had never seen before. It is even more remarkable that it has not been seen since.

With the Krakouers riding high and NM sitting in second spot, the season was set for Kennedy to take on his old club Hawthorn. In what was a VFL split-round the game was played on the Queen’s Birthday long weekend and moved to the MCG to capitalise on the gate receipts. From the VFL’s perspective the crowd was a disappointment as only 39 084 went. The game itself stood out because it was more akin to a final as Kennedy was pitted against his old club, coached by his friend Allan Jeans. One commentator even went so far as to say that the game was so exciting “Dino de Laurentis could have filmed the game for $50 million and still made a profit at the box office.”

\( \text{\footnotesize 581} \)
For NM the games against Hawthorn presented a particular psychological challenge and this was made clear to me in my interview with Craig Holden:

North as a club had no other agenda in their life but to win games of footy. They feared no-one apart from Hawthorn who they were paranoid about, because Hawthorn had belted them in the 1976 and 1978 Grand Finals. Every time North played Hawthorn everyone went around with a mad look in their eye.582

In the NM change-rooms, the usual tensions hung in the air alongside the bad language and the liniment. Some players hollered and shouted encouragement, externalising their aggression and anticipation. Others paced around looking at the floor. Jim, after he had warmed up, sat on the bench with his head down and spun a ball in his hands. Phillip stood in the far corner firing handpasses into the wall, stopping only to sit down, close his eyes and say a prayer.583 It was his way of switching on and connecting to the power inside and around him. Finishing his prayer he stood up looked around the room and fired the ball into the wall again.

Hawthorn took an early four goal lead at the first break and things were not looking good for NM who had not registered a score until the 19 minute mark of the first term. By the third break NM were trailing the Hawks by one goal. Hawthorn’s forward line was strangely off key as both Matthews and Brereton were “unusually quiet.”584 By contrast NM were oozing tenacity which was facilitated to a large degree by the Krakouers, whose games were described as, “superb.”585 Kennedy recalls the game and how it played itself out:

I had [Jim] at full forward against Hawthorn because he was just cutting them to pieces. Jeansey had Richard Loveridge chasing him everywhere because he knew what a good player he was. So I thought, ‘we’ll fix em, we’ll put Jim at

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582 Personal interview Craig Holden 15/8/2002.
full-forward’ and he put Lovereidge at full-back. That’s how much Jeansey respected him [Jim].

With the game producing nine goals in the last quarter it would be the last score of the day that caused an unexpected, but perhaps deserving, result. Harrington recalls the action in the last thirty seconds of the game “I remember Ken Judge kicked a freak goal from near the boundary.”

The NM back line had a quick on-the-spot conference about their plan of attack should the ball come down “We were all just saying, ‘If the ball comes down here, whatever we do kick it to Phil.’” As Harrington remembers, Phillip drifted up from his usual half-forward position and on to the wing:

Somehow, I don’t recall how this happened, but the ball got out to Phil and he just bounced, weaving in and around people, they couldn’t stop him. Goal. The siren goes and it’s a draw. He was that sort of player.

Strangely, this would be the closest Kennedy, Hawthorn’s icon, would ever come to beating his old club while coaching NM.

By round twelve NM and the Krakouer’s seasons, particularly Jim’s, were in Kennedy’s words “sunny and bright.” Jim had bolted to a fifteen point lead in The Age award and many pundits in the football media had him earmarked for the most prestigious individual football award, the Brownlow medal. No Indigenous Australian had won the coveted award in the game’s history. Maurice Rioli had come close in 1983 but it would be another 10 years before Gavin Wanganeen would be successful. For NM’s team manager, Jim Carter, the Brownlow was something that Jim had talked to him about for some time. Carter had developed a strong relationship with both Jim and Phillip since

587 Personal interview Tim Harrington 16/7/2002.
588 Personal interview Tim Harrington 16/7/2000.
589 Personal interview Tim Harrington 16/7/2002. Another freakish twist to the outcome of this game was it was the same score to a draw from the first round of 1982 where Carlton and Fitzroy finished with 113 points.
590 This was because North were going for their eighth victory in a row (seven and an half if the draw was counted). This had never been achieved by North Melbourne not even in their halcyon days of the mid to late seventies.
they arrived at Arden Street. His relationship with Jim, not just confined to training and match days, also included off-nights where both of them would go for a ten kilometre run. Carter recalls, “He stated to me from day one that he wanted to be the first Aboriginal to win the Brownlow. He often said that to me and he had it in the bag that year [1985].”\(^{591}\) Despite two significant losses to Footscray and Carlton, the word around Melbourne was that Jim was even money to become the first Indigenous footballer to secure the Brownlow Medal.

In Monty Millson’s super-box at Flemington Racecourse, Ron Joseph could not recall the last time he had felt as relaxed. Monty Millson was a well known Melbourne property developer and on the committee at NM. Millson’s first love though was horses, and the track was where he felt most at home. Joseph had earlier bumped into Jim’s younger brother Andrew and promised he would go to the tote and put $5.00 each way on one of Millson’s horses, Longwood Lad. As he laid the bet, Joseph kept an eye out for Jim but he was nowhere in sight. From the considerable advantage of Millson’s super-box Joseph eventually spotted Jim and called out to him to join them. Jim accepted the impromptu invitation and made his way up, meeting all and sundry with his typical smile.

As the race drew nearer to start time Jim only had eyes for the track. Joseph recalls the final 100 metres of the race “The horse he had backed was winning and just had it’s nose in front as there was this other thing coming on the outside at 100 miles an hour.”\(^{592}\) Longwood Lad won by the moisture on it’s nostrils as the crowd around them

\(^{591}\) Personal interview Jim Carter 6/7/2002. My emphasis. Carter’s optimism in this regard was warranted as Jim was polling consistently well in several other media awards including The Herald football award, TVW 7 World of Sport award and 3UZ and 3AW awards.

erupted into a cacophony of swearing and cheering. Jim turned to Joseph and brushed
his forearm with the back of his hand. Joseph recalls the moment:

    His horse had just won and I was sitting right there and he turned to me and said;
    ‘Did you back that one mate?’ ‘No but I backed it for the kids. Did you back it
did you? What did you have on it?’ He said ‘five’.\textsuperscript{593} 

Joseph paused for a few seconds and replied, “What $500?” Jim shook his head,
“$5000”, he calmly replied. The odds for the bet were 6 to 1 and Joseph could not
believe what he was hearing. Furious, Joseph told Jim to take his winnings and get
home. He turned away and stomped down to the tote to collect for Andrew. Lighting up
a cigarette and swearing under his breath Joseph looked around. Joseph couldn’t believe
his eyes as there in the queue right behind him was Jim, grinning “I thought I told you
to get home straight away and not have another bet”, Joseph said in his sternest possible
voice. “Easy bro. Just as soon as I collect from here as well”, Jim calmly replied,
irritating Joseph even further. Jim had won $30 000 at the TAB and a further $1700 at
the tote.

Millson had a head start on both Jim and Joseph and coming out of the tote noticed both
of them standing in the line. Millson had picked up $42 000 on Longwood Lad and
stopping, Millson reached into his winnings. Producing a crisp one hundred dollar note
Millson handed it to Jim and said cheerily “stop off on your way home and buy the kids
some fish and chips.” Jim graciously accepted the note and Joseph closed his eyes and
gently shook his head.\textsuperscript{594}

It was from this type of incident that Ron Joseph, perhaps more than anyone at NM,
knew Jim and Phillip the best. With Joseph being at the club for the better part of the
day, Jim and Phillip could always find him. Sometimes they would drop into his office
to spend time or they would specifically meet to discuss things like money-matters. For

\textsuperscript{593} Personal interview Ron Joseph 25/8/2000.
the most part Joseph’s relationship with Jim and Phillip was amicable but disagreements would arise and Joseph wore the brunt of the Krakouers frustration:

We had some pretty fiery arguments. My arguments with Jim were all about trying to get him to see that football was only a short moment in his life because as fast as we ever seemed to get in front we’d get behind [financially]. There was always this constant pressure of overcoming a financial problem to ease his worry so he could get on with the thing he was good at, playing football. 595

For Ansett, the Krakouers were as different off the field as they were on it:

I found Phil very introverted and shy. They were both shy but Jimmy was straight and he would have no hesitation in saying whatever was on his mind. If he wanted something or wanted you to find out something for him there was no messing around. I know we tried hard to get them jobs. Phil went with the Aboriginal Service and he was fine. Jimmy took a few jobs, warehouse work and he did have visions of owning his own truck and being a contractor. John Kennedy’s policy was if you didn’t have a job you didn’t play footy but every rule has an exception. I know we got him a truck and he started off but thinking back no player took more time over the history of the club than Jim did. 596

Jim’s concerns stemmed not just from money troubles but how he perceived the financial role of NM. With Jim and Phillip’s profile and professionalism they commanded big money. If NM didn’t pay it another club would have, and NM needed the Krakouers as they were vital to the team and marketing of the club. Joseph believed if Jim went to the track or illegal two-up schools operating in Melbourne’s inner-city suburbs he would not control himself as well as others. This, Joseph believes, was because Jim saw the club as his financial back-up. When I asked Jim about this he denies it:

I probably went to see him [Joseph] a few times but nowhere near what they are saying. I liked to have a punt but I was not compulsive. I didn’t really see much money. It was a few hundred bucks every week and not a lump sum. It seemed like window shopping. All the money is here but you didn’t get much of it. I used to bet with a couple of bookies, one bookie we got in a little bit of trouble with but he cleared the deck with me and another bookie paid him out eleven grand or whatever. 597

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I then asked Jim did the money come through him or the club when clearing any debts that he owed and his response was “I’m not sure.”

Joseph’s role was accentuated in both Jim and Phillip’s eyes because of his negotiation of their contracts; going from $400 a game with Claremont to $150 000 per season with NM. This was green light for Jim to push the boundaries of his interests; from a $20 loan from McInerney to betting $5000 at 6-1. Jim, because he didn’t drink or smoke, saw gambling as his recreation. This was how Jim socialised and relaxed. But with Jim’s profile and personality combined with those involved in racing circles, Jim could be led down an unreliable path. Joseph explains:

Football clubs are full of people that want to ingratiate themselves with players. Blokes that know the next horse to back, they’d get him tickets to the races and that sort of thing. Unfortunately Jim would fall in with them and if he’d lose on the punt he was always chasing the next dollar and I suspect that he might have been getting in debt with some of the worst type of people. Jim would come in the office and someone had gotten into his ear and he [said he] liked this bloke and usually the bloke turned out to be pretty strong on the punt. So there was always this constant ‘chasing your tail’ situation and in the end I was in the middle of it…Jim’s life was his family, his football and the bloke that might make him the next $20 000. That was Jim’s life.

Joseph was in the unenviable position of trying to build and maintain the team on which much of the club’s success and marketing potential hinged. So when Jim knocked on Joseph’s office door, how could he refuse? Here was his champion rover in need and Joseph needed him on the track doing what he did best. Meetings were arranged with Ansett to discuss with Jim his short and long term future but according to Ansett these could be hard work:

Ron set up a meeting with me one day and we talked at length with Jim but when he turned off he was very difficult to talk to. I tried to do it on a friendly basis but he found it difficult to be lectured too. I said to Ron after that I didn’t think what I said had any impact on him at all.

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Perhaps the day-to-day running of the NM football club and civic commitments of Ansett required Joseph to shoulder the bulk of Phillip and Jim’s off-field requirements. This would have stretched Joseph at times, simply because of his already heavy workload. When this was weighed-up against Jim and Phillip’s contributions on match-day, Ansett and Joseph perhaps begrudgingly believed that things were in hand and Jim would eventually realise his folly as a costly distraction and temper it. With six games to go NM were firmly entrenched in the top five and Jim and Phillip’s form was both spectacular and consistent. Despite all the early off-field dramas and monetary problems the football days were indeed ‘sunny and bright’, but the storm clouds were gathering in the distance.

By round seventeen Melbourne were sitting in second last place and set to play NM. The Demons had played so badly that Barassi announced his five-year plan had failed and he would resign at the end of the season. With the Demons trailing by three to four goals throughout the course of the match a series of quick goals by the Demons saw them get two points up late in the game. Phillip plucked victory from the jaws of defeat with a soccer goal in the dying minutes of the game. It was, however, an incident in the first quarter that became a significant turning point in Jim’s season as he was reported for kicking Melbourne’s Alan Jarrott.

From the match report Jarrott, who was once a NM player, was involved with Jim in a bit of, “push and shove.” Witnessing Jarrott and Jim jostling field umpire Rowan Sawers ran in and told them to cease their activity. It was reported that Sawers then noticed:

Allan Jarrott turned to walk away and I saw Jimmy kick Alan to the right leg as he turned away. Jarrott was yelling out ‘he kicked me he kicked me’.

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601 The Age. 30/7/1985, p50.
Jim’s reported defence at the tribunal was that he denied:

He had kicked Jarrott and said he had not heard the umpire to tell them to stop jostling. “The only time Alan and I came together was when he was shepherding me from another player”, he said. Krakouer agreed that he may have brought his knee up as a defensive action when grabbing Jarrott “but I didn’t try to kick him.”

In his testimony Jarrott recalls the incident:

My initial reaction was that I thought he’d tried to knee me or kick me but on reflection I only felt a brush above the thigh…He added that he may have influenced Sawers by yelling out to Krakouer “You bleep, you little bleep” (sic).

Was Sawers influenced by Jarrott’s ‘bleeping?’ Would Sawers have done anything at all had there been no gesticulation or pleading on Jarrott’s behalf? One can only speculate about a different outcome had the circumstances leading up to the report been different.

After 16 minutes the tribunal chair, Mr Jack Gaffney, announced Jim was guilty and handed him a six week suspension. To this day, Jim alleges that he did not kick Jarrott at all but simply tried to step across Jarrott’s body and flip him forward so as to get to another Melbourne player who had the ball. For Joseph the whole incident is still painfully vivid. At the time Joseph was so incensed he went to Gaffney’s house and confronted him over the matter:

It was the most disgusting decision that I’ve ever heard and I just get furious about it. I get furious every time I see the tribunal chairman at an AFL function now. I reckon that any analysis of the Brownlow Medal voting that year, had he not been suspended I think he would have been the first Aboriginal Brownlow Medallist.

At this point in our interview, I asked Joseph how the tribunal would have viewed the evidence if Malcolm Blight had been up on a tripping charge and all the factors had been the same. Joseph replied:

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602 The Age. 30/7/1985, p50.
603 The Age. 30/7/1985, p50.
604 In the same article as Jim’s tribunal hearing Gary Ablett was found guilty of striking St Kilda’s Danny Frawley. Ablett by contrast received no suspension because the evidence given by goal umpire Kevin Andrews had said Ablett received “un-necessary attention” from Frawley and Ablett was only reprimanded.
If Malcolm Blight had done what Jim Krakouer had done Malcolm Blight would have got off. I can always remember when we got in my car and he said to me ‘it’s because I am black mate’ and I do too now I’ve thought about it.  

For the next three weeks, NM sought a range of strategies for appeal. This included the lodging of a writ in the Supreme Court claiming Jim had been denied natural justice. This was based on the fact that he did not have legal representation at the hearing and VFL officials were present at the time of the deliberation. After much legal wrangling in the Victorian Supreme Court the final result came on the 21st of August after an unprecedented 105 minute hearing. New evidence was tabled by NM’s vice-captain, Ross Glendinning, who witnessed the incident describing it as an, “insignificant matter.” Unfortunately, none of it was enough. The 6 weeks remained, Jim’s season was over and NM had blown $35,000 on legal fees.

Despite this outcome, it was overshadowed by a greater development, which occurred two days after Jim was suspended. Geoffrey Edelsten, the high-rolling Sydney doctor became the first private owner of a football club, the Sydney Swans. With his vivacious wife Leanne, pink helicopter, pink Lamborghini and a glass of imported champagne seemingly always in his grasp, Edelsten represented the strange metamorphosis of football at the time.

Another permanent fixture of Edelsten’s was his, ‘trust me I’m a doctor’ smile. But this only seemed to grate with the average football fan as Edelsten had all the substance of a CWA meringue. This became evident, as more emphasis seemed to be placed on Warwick Capper’s shorts, the Swan’s full-forward, than on football. The Swan’s to many football fans just seemed to be too flash for their own good. What cannot be

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607 This was a similar strategy that Collingwood adopted just a few days earlier when one of its reserve players John Bourke was suspended for 10 years for attacking a field umpire on the 28/4/1985.
criticised was Edelsten’s drive and ambition. Even though Edelsten’s vision was an idealistic one he knew if he could marry his business interests with a sporting team, the only football team in Sydney, he would be on a winner. This is why he bought the Swans. Edelsten, however, put the cart before the horse as the $6.5 million dollar cheque he agreed to pay for the Swans didn’t actually exist. Edelsten’s hubris and lack of hard cash meant his plans were always going to be manifestly impossible to sustain. Still, Edelsten was in the business of football and this meant he went after the elements that would make the Swans the most marketable. For Dr Edelsten no player was out of reach, not even Jim and Phillip Krakouer.

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It was in the last game of the year against Hawthorn that NM’s weaknesses, mainly the lack of a quality ruck, were exposed. Without first use of the ball NM’s drive was stymied because “Compared to Hawthorn North Melbourne looked like a side of rovers”, a point made even more glaring with Jim suspended:

McDonald played well but his efforts were frustrated as often as his sides. No matter how hard they tried and how many times little Mark Arceri threw himself into packs North could not penetrate the Hawthorn wall.

With NM set to play Carlton in the elimination final, the task was all the more daunting as the Blues’ Justin Madden was the VFL’s in-form ruck and had firmed as a favourite in the Brownlow. If NM lost this game Jim would have to wait for the following season to play. NM were expected to lose.

As had been predicted, Madden did indeed control the centre bounces and the stoppages throughout the course of the game. By half time NM were down by 31 points but inaccurate kicking by Carlton meant that only half of their twenty shots registered as majors. By the third break NM were still 17 points in the red. Coolly and methodically

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NM pegged the lead back, kicking 8.1 to Carlton’s 2.1 in the last quarter as the ‘navy blues’ faded with the afternoon sun. In the dressing rooms after the game Jim sat quietly in between Phillip and Arceri as they changed with a grin from ear to ear.

NM had everything to play for in their first semi-final against Footscray. It was Keith Greig’s 300th game, Jim was back in the side, and the Bulldogs had been softened up with a, “shameful hiding” by Hawthorn the week before. Jim’s input to the side was a vital element to NM’s success, not just in the way he himself played or could combine with the team, but in the way the NM players responded to Jim’s physicality. For German, Jim’s:

reputation certainly preceded him on the football field, there’s no doubt about that. He had six foot four blokes shaking in their boots. I reckon that [our] players walked taller when we knew Jimmy was around us.613

McDonald, one of NM’s bigger and more aggressive players agrees:

He [Jim] just had a presence about him. I was a relatively big boy and I didn’t think I was scared on the footy field but you’d run out on the ground with a five foot six player [Jim] and you just felt better running out on the ground with him.614

The Roos were renowned for their ability to concentrate for the full 100 minutes and it was believed that Footscray would not be up to the task. NM were not without their concerns as Schimmelbusch, who had played over a season of finals, was not picked due to injury. With NM leading at the first break by 7 points at half time Footscray were up by 3 points and playing an emotional and bustling brand of football. In contrast, NM’s team game was lacking and as a consequence the expected last quarter revival never came:

North Melbourne’s moments of hope came largely from John Holt, Matthew Larkin, and Jim and Phil Krakouer…The Kangaroos began to rely on individual

614 Personal interview Donald McDonald 15/7/2002. My emphasis.
efforts, like the torpedo kicked by Jimmy Krakouer from the boundary line for the majority of their goals.  

For Kennedy this must have been particularly frustrating as the team ethos, bereft of Schimmelbusch’s marshalling, was not adhered to. For Jim it was a chance to redeem his season and partly he did, picking up over twenty disposals and kicking three goals. The hard reality for Jim and NM was that the season could be characterised as a series of opportunities missed.

The 6 weeks cost Jim the chance to fully gauge his contribution to the season. Polling sixty five votes in The Age Footballer of the year award, Jim beat Hawthorn’s Terry Wallace by one point. For this Jim received a plague and $2000. After attending a small reception at The Age Jim gave Joseph the plaque. Joseph protested saying that it was his to keep but Jim replied, “No Ron, I want you to have it, I’ll win another one next year.” Jim also won the TVW 7 World of Sport award, picking up $10 000 in the process. Broadcast on a Sunday morning, most of Melbourne’s televisions were tuned in to see Jim receive his prize. To celebrate Jim went around to Arceri’s place:

Jim had been on the telly and straight after that he came around with his kids and acted as if nothing had happened. He didn’t mention football, he just casually sat out the back watching the kids play and mentioned not a word of it.

With Jim’s competitive nature it would be plausible that he would have been disappointed not winning the coveted Brownlow Medal. For Jim Krakouer football was always a team game and not one where personal glories were sought. In an interview in The Age Jim reflected on his season:

You could hear it [the abuse] but I just ignored it. I expected it. I wouldn’t chuck it in. Things have been bad but I wont quit. I always think that when I’m down, 

615 The Age. 16/9/1985, p34. My emphasis.
618 Jim came tenth in the Brownlow Medal polling. In my analysis of it, prior to being suspended Jim had accrued 14 points, an average of 1.2 votes per game. With five games missed from the season proper, if Jim had of maintained his form over 22 rounds he would have polled 26 votes four more than the eventual winner Brad Hardie.

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that no matter how bad I’m down, there always someone worse off. I found that helped me a lot.  

3.9 Krakouer Uncanny

By my reckoning, there are three players who occupy a corresponding altitude in Australian football and the Krakouers are two of them (G. Ablett makes up the party). What they have to offer enhances the sport immeasurably and should be bigger than partisan loyalties. Watch them and enjoy them. We may not see two such individuals again.

Throughout Jim and Phillip’s football career there were many superlatives used in the media to describe their individual styles and combined abilities. One word, perhaps more than any other, was attached to the Krakouer’s names when it came to a post match analysis of their performances. That word is *uncanny*. I always thought that the word uncanny meant something like ‘unexplainable’ or ‘indescribable’. My dictionary definition states that uncanny means, “seemingly supernatural; mysterious.” All these words have a natural applicability to the Krakouers game. And then there is Sigmund Freud’s theory about *the uncanny*. Freud’s theory allows for a deeper interpretation of Jim and Phillip’s time in football by viewing their legacy in a much wider political context. As Gelder and Jacobs point out in, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*:

Freud’s primary concern is certainly with the psyche, but is also about one’s sense of place in a modern, changing environment, and it attends to anxieties which are symptomatic of an ongoing process of realignment in the post-war modern world.

Freud’s uncanny means something all together different and is arrived at through the German words *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. Essentially *heimlich* means “home” and is defined by the familiar. By contrast unheimlich means “unhomely” or that which is “unfamiliar, strange, inaccessible…It is specifically the combination of the familiar and

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the unfamiliar - the way the one seems always to inhabit the other." In essence, the uncanny is the way meaning shifts from its distinct meaning to the demarcation of that meaning becoming conflated with its binary. This creates a paradoxical slippage as definitions are resisted and taken-for-granted constructions become unstable. With the familiar becoming strange and the strange becoming homely the effect of the uncanny is one which ultimately unsettles.

Gelder and Jacobs apply Freud’s uncanny to white Australia’s ambivalence and discombobulation regarding the 1992 Mabo decision. This ambivalence is created because socio-political history regarding Australia’s terra nullian status prior to 1788 is reconfigured thus forcing a socio-historical revaluation. The Mabo trial may have taken ten years but it changed the political and historical landscape of Australia for good overnight. For Gelder and Jacobs this has had a massive impact upon the Australian psyche:

In this moment decolonisation, what is ‘ours’ is also potentially, or even always already, ‘theirs’: the one is becoming the other, the familiar becoming strange.

If one takes this notion of unheimlich as tabled by Freud and reworked by Gelder and Jacobs, it is possible to read the way the Krakouers played as something other than just simply “magic.” Jim and Phillip’s play unsettled many, oppositions and supporters alike, purely because they had never seen the game played this way before. In my interview with Martin Flanagan he described the coming of the Krakouers as something that happens:

once in a lifetime. I’ve only seen that alteration to the game once. Maybe I was too young to appreciate fully the 1970 grand final. I didn’t see Farmer when he first came over and transformed Geelong. Sheedy’s changes to the game were

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624 Gelder, Ken. & Jacobs, Jane M. 1998, p23
625 This notion of ‘Krakouer magic’ is something that irritated me over the course of this project. The reason why it irritated me was because it all too easily explained away Jim and Phillip’s individual and combined skills and as a consequence I have grappled with its meaning, applicability and appropriateness.
gradual. It was like someone bowling backwards in cricket or something. It was totally without precedent.\textsuperscript{626}

It was perhaps Flanagan’s enthusiasm, surpassing even my own, that forced me to look at the way Australian Rules was played and how the Krakouers added to the code’s principal conventions.

The Krakouer’s reading of the play and of one another was so brilliant it appeared to tap into a secretive \textit{otherworldlyness}. Jim and Phillip’s abilities unsettled many because they did things which many thought were beyond rationality and hence \textit{unexplainable}. For Jim and Phillip, a deft piece of ball handling or a teammate delivered to in an impossible position was not viewed in the same way had another player done it. It wasn’t a fluke simply because they did it too often.

The Krakouer’s skill and abilities were positioned in terms of their mystery and further framed, I would argue, because of their identity. Through their abilities, they became \textit{shamanistic}, conjuring up magnificence through ancestral incantations, their skill not \textit{earned} but bequeathed by some \textit{other-worldly} power. The Krakouers were uncanny but what made them so unnerving to oppositions was that whenever they got the ball they rarely wasted it. This is what set them apart - their ability to effectively use the ball almost every time they got it. For Carlton coach David Parkin the Krakouers were a vital part of the NM machine and Carlton paid due respect when planning contingencies for their games against them:

Carlton and North were playing classical contests in the Eighties [and] our planning in those days would have been very much focussed on those two as a combination. We used to do the “what ifs?” We would spend considerable time working out who the best match ups would be. So if we fell off the bike with one we’d already have a second nominated player to close them down. We spent oodles of time working out the combinations of players who would be given the job to try and cut those people out. Players who were instructed to do their level best to minimise the effect of those two players...They gave North Melbourne an

\textsuperscript{626} Personal interview Martin Flanagan 28/8/2000.
enormous amount of media and exposure and were the sort of people that you would have pay for a ticket to the football. I mean that puts them in [with] the Royce Harts, the Gary Abletts, those sorts of players.627

The Krakouers were respected because they could unsettle an opposition game plan quickly but it was how they did it that caused the responses of celebration and consternation to become blurred. The Krakouers were playing a game that came from their consciousness, and their reality, and not that of anyone elses:

Slight in stature but quick in mind and blessed with an uncanny mutual understanding, the Krakouer Brothers undid opposition defences as simply as if they were shoelaces. Responses ranged from delight to anger and while the Krakouers received more media attention than any other players before them it seemed they also received more abuse. While there had been Aboriginal footballers before them, none had played in such an obviously, and threateningly, Aboriginal way.628

According to Flanagan, Jim and Phillip played a brand of football that was ‘strange’ to the football public’s way of thinking because it was, ‘‘ours’ [but] is also potentially, or even always already, ‘theirs’”:

Watching Gary Ablett is like watching a thoroughbred race horse in the mounting yard: his every movement quivers with athleticism which, in turn, engenders a sense of apprehension and anticipation…Initially at least watching Jimmy Krakouer is puzzling, almost disappointing…Like all great magicians, the Krakouers are nothing so much as subtle. In a sport which thrills to the highest and longest it is a quality that is all too easily missed.629

Here the Krakouers, particularly Jim, and Ablett are compared. Ablett’s physicality is made overt by the potential of his body. Ablett is anticipated to do something because he adheres to a football tradition, which requires a presence. Ablett becomes a motif for the game based on the principal of what can/will he do? The Krakouers’ physicality is the opposite of Ablett’s. It is puzzling and subtle. The Krakouer’s presence is understated but as Flanagan admits this is because the code’s memory more easily and more often recalls bigger and longer. Subtlety is not as easily remembered. Whoops of delight are replaced with whispered questions of, “how did they do that?” With no

627 Personal interview David Parkin 16/7/2003. My emphasis.
logical explanation the moment passes and so too does the collective gaze, taking the memory with it:

There is also their vision, which at times seems to transcend what is understood by that term and suggest another sort of awareness. Who can forget the first time they made mayhem in Victoria...Running where no one had run, handballs hooping and looping between them and the Fitzroy defence utterly perplexed and unnerved as a new version of a 100-year-old game unfolded before their eyes? It was anarchy and art rolled into one.630

The last line of this paragraph adheres neatly to Freud’s unheimlich as the binary folds, or is *rolled* in on itself to produce a *strange* code within an already familiar and existing code. A style that defies a specific description because it is both anarchic and artistic in the same moment; it is a style which threatened the game’s order because of it’s seemingly strange and sacred unknowability. Even Jim and Phillip’s individual identities became enmeshed, confounding and intriguing people. “The Krakouers are the best player I’ve ever seen”, Richmond doyen Jack Dyer supposedly once said.631 This is what made the Krakouers so valuable to NM; they could create play not just for themselves but for others around them. It was undeniably strange but incredibly reliable, dangerous and threatening.

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During my interview process, I would come to understand that it was the simple things that set Jim and Phillip apart. When it came to training Jim’s attitude was deadly serious. Regardless of the drill, or how long it would go for, Jim would treat it as if he was playing in an actual game. A game to be won. He would chide team-mates who messed around or encroached over the starting line in a running exercise. When running laps Jim would always run outside the boundary line. Sit-ups were done on the outside benches around the ground to make the exercise more acute.

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Phillip on the other hand was far more casual. Like his brother, Phillip hated losing but nothing seemed to unsettle him “I’ve always prided myself on being casual and laid-back. Not too much worries me.” While Jim spent spare moments working on his game, Phillip was comfortable to maintain his standing without the increased workload. Some NM team-mates I talked to can not recall Phillip in the weights room at all. Phillip preferred little games and skills sessions in which he could use his baulking, evasive style to weave in and out. He enjoyed the feeling of finding space where there was seemingly none. Phillip loved streaming down a forward flank, bouncing the ball with a few burly backs in hot pursuit and pinpointing a pass or kicking a goal. Being a left-footer, a molly dooker, added to Phillip’s mercurial style as he was able to, on many occasions, wrong-foot opposition players who seemed to be within arms reach of bringing him down. Parkin explains:

Left-footers, because of their movement, are less predictable…Which in doing so gives them more time and space to actually do better with the ball. So they take the pressure off themselves.

Phillip in many ways seemed to have the pressure off. His public profile was not notorious and he kept his private life just that. Even though Phillip’s easy going style was in stark contrast to Jim’s overt determination, Phillip went about his training in a very different way to Jim:

Not too much worries me and I’ve probably given people that impression. But I worked extremely hard behind the scenes on my skills or whatever. I was always trying to perfect them. I used to go down and have a kick around the park for hours so I guess I did a lot of things people didn’t know I was doing.

For Phillip, like Jim, horses and horse racing were something that he was interested in on many different levels. Eric had been a highly accomplished rider and being around

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632 Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 8/2/2003.
634 Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 8/2/03.
horses had been part of their growing up. Phillip even went as far as applying horse
training techniques to himself in his pre-season:

> I grew up in a family that just loved, not just horses, but the Melbourne Cup. Every year you’d look forward to putting a dollar on and having a bet on the Melbourne Cup. I used to read about the trainers and what they used to do and I tried to take that approach into my training. Slowly but surely I’d get myself right for the first bounce the way they get a horse right for the Melbourne Cup. I’d do enough just to get me over the line but I never peaked until March-April.

Early in the 1986 season, many of the VFL players probably felt like prized Melbourne Cup starters as an aggressive buying campaign was undertaken by the Swans and orchestrated by Edelsten who set up a meeting with Ansett. Edelsten’s ethos when it came to marketing the Swans was simple; success attracted money, sponsorship dollars and ‘bums on seats’ enabling one to raise the Swans profile even more - the trick was not to slow down. Initially Ansett was confused about why Edelsten wanted to see him. Edelsten had bumped into Ansett at a VFL function a few weeks previously and said he wanted half an hour of Ansett’s time. In reality, the meeting would last no more than a few moments. As Edelsten strode into Ansett’s Budget offices his smile exuded a quiet confidence and a blue chip ego. In his left hand was a chunky black box, a prehistoric cousin of today’s mobile phone, while his right hand extended towards the Budget and NM head. Edelsten engaged Ansett in small talk, mainly about the VFL and the commission, but no sooner had he started talking than he stopped. Edelsten reached into his top pocket, unfolded some paper and pushed it across Ansett’s table. It was a cheque for a one million dollars made out to the NM football club. Ansett looked at the cheque making certain what he was looking at. He looked at Edelsten and asked, “What’s this for?” “We want the Krakouers,” Edelsten replied. Ansett had expected a different answer from the rival president:

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635 Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 8/2/03.
It really did stun me because I had no anticipation, no suggestion they were interested in acquiring them. When I thought about it I could understand why [but] I said ‘look thanks but no thanks’ and gave him back the cheque.636

By coincidence, Ansett had a NM board meeting with vice president Albert Mantello and Joseph straight after his Edelsten appointment and he enlightened them about what had just happened. Mantello, according to Ansett, played ‘devils advocate’637 and couldn’t believe that Ansett didn’t accept the Edelsten offer as financially NM could use the money. Joseph disagreed and said that Ansett had made the correct choice. Ansett knew that the money would have been very welcome but only in the short term:

We were going through a transition and during that transition we just needed to maintain our membership base and if we lost the Krakouers, it would have been too damaging for the club. It really would have been extremely damaging for the club.638

This was a defining moment in the Krakouer’s careers even though when I spoke to Jim and Phillip about the Sydney proposal neither of them had any knowledge of it. It is clear that despite any of Jim’s off-field problems or Phillip’s perceived casualness, the powers at NM thought they were vital to the survival of the club in both the short and long term.

Despite Ansett’s and Joseph’s position on maintaining the Krakouers at NM, Mantello’s incredulity was understandable as the Roos along with Fitzroy were facing bleak times. Money was tight and there was talk of mergers and relocations.639 NM’s 1986 pre-season was a “low-key, no-nonsense affair”640 with a concern about star youngster Matthew Larkin who had a serious back injury. For Jim and Phillip the focus

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637 Ansett’s words.
640 The Age. 27/2/1986, p30.
was on football as neither injury nor controversy hindered their preparation. This was evident in an early Fosters Cup match against St Kilda:

Among the stars in the North charge were both Krakouers, Ross Glendinning and Peter Jonas…Phil Krakouer moved stealthily around the packs, picking up the odd ball and then disappearing to reappear in front of goal.\(^{641}\)

Unlike the previous season’s prediction that NM would perform badly, many people had a renewed respect for NM, with many in the media predicting NM would hold their course or do better despite their money woes. NM followers would not have to wait long to find out with the first game of the season set down against the high profile Sydney Swans. The irony that the Swans had become in the mid-Eighties what NM were in the mid seventies (ie a band of football mercenaries) was not lost on many. NM came out firing, kicking the first three goals in the first five minutes. NM’s lack of a quality ruck was exposed early as Sydney’s John Ironmonger got first use of the ball, palming it down to the Swan’s smaller players like Williams, Healy, Bolton and Neagle. The Swans played cohesive mid-field football, which meant that Capper had a field day.

For many in Melbourne, Capper’s profile and ego assured his status as football’s most hated player. Not only did he have the confidence of a brash, spoilt 14 year-old he could fit into a 14 year-old’s shorts. With his white boots and blond streaked hair Capper was a cross between Edelsten’s precocious love-child and the lead singer of some bad Nordic soft-metal band.

Unlike the fatherly composure of Fitzroy’s Bernie Quinlan or Capper’s youthful comparison, the sensible looking Paul Salmon at Windy Hill, Capper just seemed to be nothing more than a smart-arse. It didn’t matter what the Melbourne football public thought of him because Warwick could kick goals and in the opening game against NM he kicked 8. In contrast, NM could only kick two goals in the next hour, eventually going down by 25 points.
Two games later, against a struggling Collingwood, one of the more memorable photos of Phillip’s career was taken. I like it because it has a certain archaeological quality. Like two creatures in the wild, frozen by liquid amber, the action and immediacy of the moment is wonderfully captured. It depicts Collingwood strongman, the late Darren Millane, bearing down on Phillip with an ugly, Mr McGregor-like determination as the only thing Millane does not have is a pitch-fork. Millane’s expression is nothing short of terrifying, promising certain harm for Brer Krakouer as he scampers off with his ill-gotten gains. Millane’s intent is so fierce and imminent that it provides the viewer with a sense that Phillip could smell Millane’s hot breath.

Phillip’s feet are not touching the ground, which accentuates the immediacy of his situation. Incredibly, in a shot taken milliseconds after and by a different photographer, Phillip’s right foot has made contact with the ground and his body is angled at 45º, his eyes are shut and he is turning, quite literally, blind. Millane’s right finger-tips grapple for Phillip’s guernsey as his left hand touches the ball. Millane is at full stretch. Both are at top pace and both mirror their side’s fortunes as Collingwood’s first half is epitomised by Millane’s body language, “grim [and] ferociously determined.”642 In the second half, even though they are down, NM display, “alacrity” and imagination which sees them take risks, as Phillip is doing, they remain in the contest and produce a 43 point victory.

For Collingwood the season has barely started and their performances, both on and on the field, resemble Darwin after Cyclone Tracey.643 For NM it “demonstrated both their

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643 It is after this game that Collingwood’s president Ranald Mcdonald resigns. Bob Rose who is the coach steps down and Leigh Matthews begins his coaching career with Collingwood.
fragility and their exhilarating potential... The odds are against them, but when the conditions are in their favour, catch them who can. 644

By round twelve, the importance of Ansett’s decision to refuse Edelsten’s offer was becoming apparent, as NM had won seven games in total and the Krakouer’s contributions were marked. NM had beaten all sides in the top five, bar Hawthorn, but were sitting in sixth due to their percentage. NM had a slight scare in round seven as Jim was reported for eye gouging Footscray’s Doug Hawkins, the first time such charges had been laid in the VFL. Jim beat the charge, thanks to Hawkins emphatic denial that any action of this type had taken place. Jim’s frustration bubbled to the surface as umpire Peter Howe told Jim he was reported and took his details. With the Jarrott memory perhaps still fresh, Jim’s exacerbation saw him shout obscenities at Howe and try to knock his notebook out of his hand. But despite Jim’s malcontent Hawkin’s intentions towards him were clear. Hawkins sidled up to Jim and putting his arm around him whispered in his ear, “Listen bro, you’ll be right. I’ll look after ya.” 645

The Hawk stayed true to his word and Jim luckily received no suspension or fine.

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In a match report after the round eight clash between NM and Fitzroy the significance of the Krakouer’s abilities is discussed. For almost the entire article the Krakouers contribution to the game is analysed, particularly Phillip’s, who was named best-on-ground:

There are athletes in every sport who defy the limitations which both nature and the rules of their sport impose on them. To watch them perform is, in the true sense of the word, a transcendental experience for they push back the boundaries of what we believe was possible. They set the outer limits... Both of them are blessed with a special grace and the sort of natural instincts and skills possessed by no other footballers in Australia today. They [the Krakouers] are the Pele and Maradona of the VFL... 646

645 Personal interview Doug Hawkins 18/7/2002.
In a game that was tight and fast-moving these two sides epitomised desperation. For Fitzroy Paul Roos, Gary Pert and Richard Osborne were turning in marvellous displays but it was Phillip’s efforts for NM that was the difference between the two sides:

It is instructive to compare Phil Krakouer’s second half to the sort of football Conlan, Barwick and Richard Osborne played for Fitzroy in the first half. No doubt the three Fitzroy players have a great deal of natural athletic ability…But they are not capable the way Krakouer is of bringing every player around them into the game, of constantly creating space, of never wasting a kick or a handball.647

Two weeks later, NM were set to take on the Bombers. With the Bombers going through an uncharacteristic form slump, losing four games in their last five encounters, they were set to turn their fortunes around. 40 531 people turned up to see yet another close encounter between these two great rivals, a game which was controlled for a large part by the Bomber’s sheer strength. The game was close and in a creative move to try and make more of Essendon’s opportunities, Sheedy moved Salmon from full-forward into the ruck and then down to full back. Going into the last quarter, NM held a two point advantage. It was here that Phillip came into his own. Over the next eleven minutes NM scored five goals to put the game in their favour. The first was typical of Phillip’s arm swinging, hip wiggling disco skills, but the second goal was a classic and would become the VFL goal of the year.648

At some stage during the game, Phillip gathered the ball on the MCG’s outer flank, right in front of the Great Southern Stand. To make the degree of difficulty greater Phillip was running away from his goal line because Bomber back, Frank Dunnell, was pursuing him closely. The conditions looked difficult. The players looked like they are

648 Phillip received $5000.00 for this.
in between showers and the ground has little divots in it from the movement of players and boots.

Taking possession of the ball, Phillip is trying to get Dunnell to invade his personal space and he does this by slowing down rather than accelerating. Phillip’s movements are like a matador tempting a bull. By closing the space Phillip increases the risk of being caught but his advantage is that he has the ball and is in control. Dunnell tries to anticipate Phillip’s actions but the loose ground and Phillip’s slick unpredictability make Dunnell look like he is ice-skating for the first time. As the distance between Phillip and Dunnell becomes increasingly restricted, Phillip stops momentarily, softly placing the ball down with two hands. He waits until the moment that Dunnell is in reach, shows the Bomber defender the ball and then moves in one fluid motion to his right. In American football, it is called a fake-out but the Australian code calls it selling the dummy. A seemingly simple skill, it requires great skill and pin-point timing.

Dunnell who is desperately trying to read Phillip’s movements, slips over, effectively buying Phillip a couple of seconds. It is all he needs. Straightening up, Phillip’s line is now like that of a guided missile, making his goal-ward advance assured. From Phillip’s right and bearing down quickly is another Bomber player. At the moment that Phillip kicks, contact is made, making this not just a brilliant goal but a brilliantly courageous one. It is an incredibly creative piece of play on an impossible angle and under immense physical pressure in difficult conditions. One reporter said it “defied understanding” and they were right, but everyone who saw it understood and Phillip would finish the night with six. With this loss Essendon were on the verge of tumbling out of the top five.
Mark Arceri was expecting a visit. Who it was from he didn’t really know and the nature of the visit was equally mysterious. All Arceri knew was that the night before, when he was at training, three men had paid his family home a visit. They wanted to make sure that Mark would be home at 9:30 the next night and made sure that Arceri’s father, Tony, understood this. Tony became worried. What had his boy been up to? What did these mysterious men want with him? Tony decided that the only one who would be able to answer his questions was Jim. Jim didn’t know and in turn tried to pry it out of Mark but he too was completely confused. The next day Arceri became increasingly wary until finally the knock came. It was 9:00pm: they were thirty minutes early.

Arceri swung the door open and there in the night air stood Jim smiling. “Just thought I’d come to catch up with you bro, play some cards.” Jim had driven fifty minutes from Gladstone Park to Williamstown to be with his team-mate. Arceri made Jim a cup of black tea and they sat in the kitchen for the next few hours playing cards and talking. No knock at the door came and Jim went home. According to Arceri they were just some young street louts who got Mark Arceri confused with another Mark who lived on the same street. For Arceri it showed what Jim was made of and what his friendship meant “To see him come around off his own bat, it just summed him up. I’ll never forget that.”

As the Krakouers continued playing solid football the VFL was trying to come to terms with the unpopularity of a proposed expanded competition. For many football fans in Melbourne this was not what they wanted to hear. As Sydney sat in second place on the ladder the prospect that South Australia and Western Australia were being sought as

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future prospects was hard for Melbourne people to fathom. The suspicions of the clubs and supporters were heightened because of the lack of detail of the proposed expansion. This was countered in some way by the money these new clubs would bring into the competition, saving the struggling VFL clubs. With the Swans paying $4.5 million for their operating licence, two further interstate teams stood to bring in $9 million worth of salvation overnight. Football was going to the next level as big money was offered for VFL clubs, seemingly on a weekly basis. Clubs were floated on the share market and prize players were approached to return and play for their home-based state sides.

The most prominent of the Western Australian players at the time was NM’s Ross Glendinning who was strongly tipped to take over the captaincy of the composite Western Australian team. Phillip also recalls this time and what he would have done had a contract with the West Coast Eagles come his way:

> Just before the Eagles came into the competition North Melbourne extended our contracts. But if it [an Eagles contract] would have come up and we had the chance to move back to Perth we would have.651

With Phillip out with a broken hand, Jim was in the Western Australian state-of-origin squad to play Victoria in early July. As Collingwood was just out of the five and in a similar situation to NM, it was set to be a classic contest. In the previous week against Hawthorn Jim and Arceri had been placed under “blanket surveillance.”652 This placed further pressure on the NM side because their two main ball-carriers were forced to dispose of the ball quickly and NM lost by 60 points. Collingwood, now coached by former Hawk Leigh Matthews, decided to execute a similar strategy by playing the “strong, durable tagger”653 Shane Kerrison on Jim. Collingwood had NM on the ropes from the first whistle. By half-time the gap had blown out to 42 points in Collingwood’s favour and by the third change they had maintained a 44 point lead. Jim had plenty of

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651 Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 8/2/2003. My emphasis.
possessions but had been outpointed by Kerrison who was “stylish in defence”\textsuperscript{654} all day. That was until he left the ground in the fourth quarter holding his face. Jim had broken his nose.

Reported by goal umpire Kevin Andrews, Jim faced the tribunal knowing that things were not in his favour. Andrews said that he saw Jim throw three connecting uppercuts to Kerrison’s face. Kerrison could not recall the incident. Jim’s defence was that the punch was a body blow as Kerrison had him in a headlock. Andrews agreed that Jim was in a headlock and that Kerrison tried to sling Jim to the ground. In trying to divert the attention away from Jim NM’s runner Arnold Breidis stepped in and proceeded to berate and push the umpire for which he was also reported. Breidis copped a $750 fine and Jim received four weeks and missed out on a chance to represent Western Australia against Victoria.\textsuperscript{655}

Even though Jim was in a headlock and being slung, a point admitted to by umpire Andrews, it wasn’t a factor in the tribunal’s handling of the matter. Should Kerrison have been charged also with undue rough play? Would in fact any report have been made if Jim had not retaliated? Was it because Kerrison’s instructions were to play Jim close? With Phillip out with his hand and Jim suspended, it was clear that NM would experience some difficulty in the following weeks.

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At training the following week things at NM were more subdued than normal. As the old faces gathered in front of the old grand stand at Arden Street, the players limbered

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\item Holmesby & Main. 2002, p349.
\item The Age. 30/6/1986, p30.
\item Despite Jim being suspended a precedent had been set two years previously regarding suspended players and state matches as Ross Glendinning who was on suspension was able to play in a state match. The WAFL’s chief executive, Mr John Walker, was confident that Jim could play because of the Glendinning precedent but the National Football League president argued that the two cases were entirely
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up for a hard night of training, partly to run out any soreness but mainly to atone for their loss to Collingwood. Kennedy’s voice boomed a few instructions “Alright now bunch up and run a few laps. I don’t want any stragglers. I want to see a team”. The players responded and fell into a reasonably close group. “Tighter… get in tighter” Kennedy roared. The group bunched up even further as if it had been wrangled by an invisible lasso. After two laps at three quarter pace Kennedy broke with his normal routine and led the group down to the far corner of Arden Street. This was a no-man’s land, where not even die-hard supporters dared go due to the possibility of getting hypothermia.

This made the players think - what was going on? Usually they could set their watches by Kennedy’s drills. It had even become a bit of a joke when a player at training one night requested a change to the circle-work drill. “Change the drill?” Kennedy replied. “Yeah, something different,” the player nodded enthusiastically. With a cold stare Kennedy pressed his lips to the whistle. Then in a booming directive he said, “Send the balls around the other way and use your non-preferred side.” So tonight as the group headed down into one of the outer pockets they knew something was up.

Kennedy cleared his voice:

With the finals approaching, I can not stress enough just, how important these next couple of weeks are for this football club. We all must do what we can to ensure that every thing we do, our every action, is accountable to the team and to the club.

Some players nodded in agreement as they looked straight at their coach. Others had their heads down, their jaws rhythmically pulsating as they chewed hard on their PK different and that the decision would be up to the VFL. Ironically the game was against Victoria. The Age. 1/7/1986, p54.
gum. As Kennedy spoke, the warmth of the player bodies met with the cool night air, causing a steaming chemical reaction, a metaphor for NM’s smouldering expectation.

Kennedy chose his words carefully but was direct in saying that the team needed to improve, everyone needed to lift their rate and if you were on the sidelines you were no use regardless of how good you were. “After last week’s loss there is one of our number who has let us down.” The players staring at Kennedy blinked, the mastication of others either ceased or became more rigorous. The steam kept rising. “If one of us is out for whatever reason it weakens the team. The team suffers. The club suffers. We are only as strong as our weakest link.” There could be no doubt about who Kennedy was referring to. As Kennedy’s message began to take hold the invisible lasso lost some of its grip and the group loosened to create a human furrow between the coach and Jim who was standing at the back of the group. Jim, not known for his oratory skills or for backing down, didn’t wait for Kennedy to finish and he launched into an angry retort, “I’ve been puttin up with this shit all of my life you old prick. I’m just fuckin stickin up for myself cos none of these weak pricks here fuckin will. Whatta ya fuckin expect me too do lay down like a dog?” Perhaps for the first time in Jim’s life he publicly voiced to his football peers how he felt about the verbal abuse and physical attention he received weekly. The trick now was going to be Kennedy’s response to such a potentially volatile situation, a situation which threatened to destabilise the playing group even further. As Peter German recalls, Kennedy diffused the situation by talking Jim’s character up “Then John Kennedy said, ‘See at least the little fellas got some passion for the game, he’s got some heart.”

656 Personal interview Peter German 28/8/2002.
For German, Kennedy turned the situation around so that the attention was not focussed on Jim’s transgression with Kerrison but on his ‘passion’ for the game and his club. In my interview with Kennedy, he acknowledged that Jim preferred to:

> settle it on the spot and in the context of life there is something pretty honourable about settling it on the spot rather than brooding on things. But in football you can’t afford to do that because you might have a run on and the next thing the game stops and you’ve lost momentum. I was angry and he was angry too [saying] ‘I might get someone to do the fighting for me’, and he had a point, but I guess it got around that ‘you can get him in’ as they say.\(^\text{657}\)

Kennedy’s frustration stemmed from the realisation that Jim and Phillip made significant contributions when they played. With Phillip out injured Kennedy needed to maintain his best 18 and if Jim was ‘got in’ NM’s starting 18 became significantly weakened:

> Jim was an enormous footballer really. I mean Phil was a gifted footballer, he could twist and turn and make the crowd gasp. Jim was perhaps less spectacular in that sense but I don’t think that I’ve ever seen a bloke that could handle the ball as well as Jim Krakouer and so quickly with the possible exception of [Wayne] Carey.\(^\text{658}\)

With Jim and Phillip back for the last hand full of games the chances of playing finals football were greatly enhanced. In the last six games of the season NM won five averaging 33 points a win, but it wasn’t enough.\(^\text{659}\) With NM set to take on Essendon in the last game of the year Essendon’s spot for September action was secure, essentially making this game NM’s last and only ‘final’. Both sides were coming off losses and needed to finish their seasons off in a positive way. By the end of the first quarter, NM had gone on a football blitzkrieg taking advantage of the howling gale to score 8.5 to Essendon’s one point. Jim was reported for striking Mark Harvey in the first quarter. The footage from this particular encounter is perhaps the best documented example of just how quick Jim’s hands were.

\(^{659}\) *North Melbourne Year Book*. 1986, p22.
Having remonstrated with one another before, Harvey proceeds to follow Jim who is being partially restrained by NM’s runner Arnold Breidis. Breidis recalls saying to Harvey “I think you should disappear”\(^{660}\) but Harvey keeps moving toward Jim. Jim to this point seems composed, even relaxed, and gives no indication about what his intentions are. With no transfer of his body weight or movement of his shoulders Jim launches a left hook into Harvey’s face. It is so quick not only does Harvey not have time to bring his hands up to protect himself, his facial expression remains the same until the blow actually makes contact. Restrained by Breidis and dragged by Kennedy, Jim Carter, NM’s team manager at the time, recalls what Jim said as he made his way onto the bench “Mate I’m a bit disappointed about that.” Carter thought Jim was referring to being dragged but he wasn’t, “He’s still on his feet, the left hook, she normally puts them down.”\(^{661}\) In what was Glendinning’s last game for NM they accounted for the Bombers by 22 points with Jim kicking four goals in a best-on-ground performance.

The emotion of the game was taken into the VFL Tribunal on Monday night. In a strange twist of fate the field umpire that reported Jim, John Russo, also provided Jim with a “heartfelt last-minute statement”\(^{662}\) claiming that Jim’s attitude throughout the season was vastly improved from previous seasons. Jim in his defence broke down and asked for leniency even though he admitted striking Harvey stating:

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Everytime I have been before the tribunal it has been through retaliating. It has been in my make-up since I was a kid not to let people stand over me. I will be like that till the day I die.'\(^{663}\)
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\(^{660}\) Personal interview Arnold Breidis 18/7/2002.
\(^{661}\) Personal interview Jim Carter 6/7/2002.
\(^{663}\) The Age. 2/9/1986, p48.
To make matters trickier the tribunal chair was Jack Gaffney who had suspended Jim for six weeks for kicking in 1985. Being a betting man Jim could be excused for expecting the worst but Gaffney’s deliberation was somewhat sympathetic:

Nobody here tonight who has listened to the evidence and heard what you have had to say could not be moved. You can’t be given a licence Jim, to go around over-reacting but umpire Russo has spoken up for you and umpires don’t do this lightly…It is clear to us that you are the subject of severe close attention.\textsuperscript{664}

Jim was given a one week suspension. In 1986 Jim won his first and only Club Champion award, the Syd Barker medal. Since their transfer from Claremont, Jim and Phillip were rarely out of the top half-a-dozen in the club voting and the leading goal scorers for NM. In a broader context, Jim’s contributions were also acknowledged with the inaugural VFL coach’s team of the year. As part of the VFL’s promotion and marketing with that of Bond Brewing all the VFL coaches were approached to pick their top side for the 1986 season. This was done on a 3-2-1 voting system with the coaches able to pick anyone with the exception of players from their own club. Jim was selected as the number one rover. Other players to be selected included some of the most celebrated players of that and any era, including Greg Williams, Paul Roos, Dermott Brereton, Gary Ablett and Michael Tuck. Jim was the only one selected from NM. For Jim it indicated just how he was viewed by the VFL coaches and rendered Gaffney’s comments about “severe close attention” even more poignant.

3.9 A changing game

\textit{...his primal talent of navigation and speed over the ground, the numb, easy talents of the senses in contact with terrain, these restored him.}\textsuperscript{665}

Walking out of the St Kilda change rooms for the first time the young Noongar looked out onto Moorabbin Oval. He squinted as the sun broke through the ashen cloud. “So

\textsuperscript{664} \textit{The Age}, 2/9/1986, p48.
\textsuperscript{665} Keneally, Thomas. \textit{The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith}. Fontana, South Australia, 1972, p104.
what do you think Nicky?” the coach Darryl Baldock said in a flat tone. “Yeah…its..all right ay” came Nicky Winmar’s whispered reply. As Winmar slowly made his way down the player’s race the ground’s green vista became secondary as he noticed the steel and wire enclosure that went from the change room door to Moorabbin’s grassy edge. Nicky stopped. He was puzzled. He turned to Baldock and said, “What are the cages for?” “You’ll find out”, Baldock said matter-of-factly. Walking out onto Moorabbin oval Nicky sucked in the air. So this is what a VFL ground was like. He’d only ever seen these hallowed bits of turf from television shows like *The Winners* on the ABC and now he could see the grass under his feet and smell the air. For Nicky, place and how one fitted into that place, was all important. Walking back up the race he stopped and looked quizzically again at the wire and steel. As Baldock said, he would know soon enough.666

In the change rooms, Nicky met a few of the younger players such as Rod Owen, Stewie Loewe and Tony Lockett, admitting in our interview that:

> I didn’t even know who Tony Lockett was at the time. St Kilda were always on the bottom [of the ladder]. I was a North Melbourne supporter and all of a sudden this guy comes up and says. ‘G’day I’m Tony Lockett’. That year he won the Brownlow Medal.667

For Winmar, there would be many things in his first year that would leave him slack-jawed. Like his first night series game against Essendon:

> The first game I played at Waverley I run out onto the field and here’s these guys, Tim Watson, Van Der Haar, Bill Duckworth. It was a bit unsettling, what with where I came from.668

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If Nicky Winmar’s presence in 1987 indicated a small Western Australian dot on the Victorian landscape, the presence of the newly formed West Coast Eagles (WCE)

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represented a formidable presence in a new era in the VFL’s history. Like a diseased patient with a pathological fear of needles, the VFL could no longer resist the inoculation-inclusion of the WCE, the Brisbane Bears, and their money. Within three years the VFL competition, as it had been known since the 1890’s, would cease operations and rightly assume it’s new name, the Australian Football League (AFL).

The WCE and the Brisbane Bears were a concept I was at odds with for some time. Being a Richmond supporter, for no other reason than they shared the same club song and had similar colours as Claremont, meant that I didn’t got on the WCE bandwagon. I think this was because I was confused by them. Their name seemed too explicitly market-orientated, a bit American, while remaining geographically vague. Personally there was nothing for me to lock onto. The name West Coast said to me that the Eagles were trying to monopolise the entire state’s allegiance simply through a vague and cheeky association based on a nomenclature over which they had no real claim. My suspicions about them were confirmed years later one night when one of the WCE suits was being interviewed on TV. He kept talking about the product – he was actually talking about the team.

Despite this, I did enjoy the WCE style of football especially my favourite Eagle, Mark Zanotti. Having played most of my football in the back-line I loved Zanotti’s irrepressible zest. Part pirate, part bogan, part Andalusian, he looked like he had been hastily designed by some crazy football scientist who suddenly died just as he was to give him the final tune up. With his jet-black mane he would dash off with a mad look of anticipation in his eyes, bouncing the ball with grafted robot-like arms. When Zanotti
got the ball you could hear his V8 motor going through the gears and the screeching his unoiled arms made as he flew up a back flank and onto a wing.669

By contrast the Bears, I thought, took a bit of Victorian hostility off the WCE simply because of their clubs corporate motif was nothing more than a angry Caramello Koala. This alone would have riled Victorian stalwarts at Brisbane Bears games into states of spittle-lashed crimson. Brisbane’s only vestige of respectability was their coach, my favourite player, Peter Knights, but their playing stocks were considered somewhat suspect and the media drove this point home:

Players not regarded as good enough were shunted off to Brisbane. Others who might be classed as trouble-makers were packed off too. The Bears picked the best of them.670

Consequently, not many things were expected of Brisbane who had all the kudos of a football leper colony. Out of the six individual pre-season predictions by journalists in The Age only one picked Brisbane not to finish last. By contrast the WCE were not expected to finish any lower than fourth.671

The new VFL teams not only spelt the beginning of the end for Victorian suburban football that also meant the dawn of a new epoch in Australian football, that of the modern Indigenous player. The WCE had three Indigenous players in Phil Narkle, who had transferred from St Kilda, Chris Lewis and Wally Matera, the elder brother of Peter and Phillip. Footscray had Les Bamblett and Michael Mclean. Richmond had Rioli and signed rover Michael Mitchell from Claremont. With Winmar at the Saints, Jim and Phillip’s roles, along with Rioli’s, provided something of an old guard. The presence of these footballers and their development within the game gave

669 Coincidently, Zanotti would go to Brisbane, the other new team in 1987 and then to Fitzroy who would later become the Brisbane Lions.
many non-Indigenous Australians the only access to Indigenous people and culture they had ever had. Perhaps this is not such a pertinent point until one understands that football, or more broadly sport, is an area Indigenous Australian’s are popularly known to excel in. As a social phenomenon sport provides one of the few positive experiences that allows both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to come together for a few hours during the week. This is particularly evident in rural communities where both black and white people participate in a common community practice. This is a sad reality when all the other social and economic indicators charting Indigenous Australian peoples existence put them at either the highest or lowest parts of those indicators (for example: high infant mortality rates and low life expectancy).

In 1987, the trend of many VFL clubs to involve more Indigenous players into their ranks appeared to gain momentum. This factor was not lost on some sports writers in Melbourne who could see the game being played in new and different ways:

The more complex the game of Australian football becomes the more precious and valuable it seems are Aboriginal footballers…The style of the Eagles Chris Lewis is so understated as to be almost hidden. Phil Krakouer has the appearance of a semi-interested schoolboy…What distinguishes Aboriginal footballers is not so much physical as mental. It is the genius of their thought…When St Kilda played Collingwood a month ago…it was as if Winmar saw opportunities that were not apparent to the other players. It was…his awareness of what surrounded him…the clarity of his thinking in the fury of the moment…As we approach our bicentennial year it seems to me that it is Aboriginal footballers who are giving our burgeoning national game its most innovative moments precisely because they are the products of a culture with dramatically different notions of time, space and place. There is a splendid irony in that. Were we to acknowledge it, might it not constitute a rapprochement of sorts?

North Melbourne’s pre-season had been solid but unspectacular. Infused by youth the Roos future looked bright as they added to their player list names such as Brett Allison,
Alastair Clarkson, Craig Scholl and Michael Martyn. NM had also recruited John Mossop, a quality ruck from Geelong, to help bolster an area where they had been lacking in previous years. Missing out on the previous seasons finals by percentage, the Roos were keen to atone for 1986. The ‘experts’ though were sceptical about NM’s abilities in the coming season as they had crashed out of the night series to Hawthorn and then experienced a 100 point flogging to Footscray. With a full squad of players to pick from, the only chink in the NM team was they were without Phillip who had a groin injury.

In the first game of the season against the Bears NM had an unexpected and embarrassing loss. Perhaps NM expected to win. Perhaps too many of the NM players had read the Melbourne press during the week and were lulled into a state of over-confidence. The Bears had perhaps not expected to win because they stood around after their victory singing the club song from hastily made photocopies. Either way the night was a disaster for NM as they lost by 33 points. If losing to Brisbane was not bad enough, NM had John Holt and Jim reported for striking and pushing an umpire respectively. The game had not been spiteful and Jim had played well, kicking two goals. Jim recalls the incident:

I forget his name, who I was playing on, but he kept holding on and I kept warning him but he wouldn’t let go so I just hit him and the ball came into the forward pocket. Then Fidge [Brisbane half back] came in and tried to hit me. He didn’t get reported but I did.

The player Jim initially struck was Brisbane rover Dale Dickson. As the play unfolded Fidge tried to square-up for hitting Dickson. Reported by goal umpire Sinclair, Jim’s frustration got the better of him. Exacerbated by the scragging of Dickson and the added physical pressure put on him by Fidge Jim pushed goal umpire Sinclair and was

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reported again. At the tribunal on Monday night Jim was cleared of the pushing charge and of striking Fidge but received a two week suspension for striking Dickson.

By Monday morning, *The Herald* ran a story with the headline, **The flaw in Jim’s magic**. This was comparable to another article in *The Herald* that ran a similar story in late July of 1985 when Jim was suspended for six weeks on the kicking charge with the headline: **The $40 000 jinx on Jimmy Krakouer**. Each article has a different theme. The 1985 article details the amount of money Jim stood to lose for his suspension. The 1987 article deals with Jim’s suspension and cost to the NM team. The articles are similar in the way they deal with Jim’s character and his inability to “stay out of trouble”. Jim, as a footballer and as a person is reduced to a standing which is *flawed* or *jinxed* - what he has lost and what he stands to lose:

For five seasons, plus one 22nd of a season, Jim Krakouer has been part of the Victorian Football League. Alas, he has been eligible to win the Brownlow Medal in only one of those seasons. During this period he has been close enough to the prettiest player in football, yet on Brownlow medal night he is the perennial ugly duckling.

The article goes on:

Krakouer [Jim] is about the best thing North Melbourne has got. He is also their biggest problem. **Problem**, because he can’t keep away from the umpires report pad despite the efforts of people at Arden St to temper his attitude in hot situations…For North supporters last Friday the absence of injured Phillip Krakouer was bad enough; the sight of his brother being reported three times was the last straw…Unless he [Jim] changes his outlook, football, unfortunately will not allow him to be a participant on a full-time basis. 676

The message is clear. The onus is on Jim to **clean up** his act for his sake and the sake of the team. It is his problem. **He** is the problem. Jim’s actions are brought into question by the journalist who engages with them in a way that is, on the surface, understandable and reflects the opinions of many. None-the-less they are typical of someone who only

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wants to focus on the reactive aspect rather than the provocation, which renders the other parties in the matter blame-free and guiltless.

In many ways, Jim’s situation is historically linked to that of many Indigenous sports people in Australia who have chosen to do things their own way and experienced criticism in the process. It is also the way many non-Indigenous Australians view Indigenous issues and impose their value system on a situation that means something vastly different to those Indigenous Australians at the interface of daily life. There can be no doubt that many of NM’s heirachy and supporters felt that Jim’s volatility was cause for concern but could they not see that Jim’s frustration was borne out of provocation, a reaction to the very rule that he and other footballers in any grade are protected by – that rule being playing the man. To hang onto, to scrag or to retard a player’s progress when they are not in possession of the ball is, by definition of the code, illegal. It is clear that Jim’s combative nature did not help his situation, which was further compounded by the umpire’s inability to see the initial incident and enforce the law of the code. This situation would later become simply farcical.

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In a further twist to Gelder and Jacobs reading of Freud’s uncanny, Jim and Phillip’s careers mirror the actions played out by two Indigenous brothers over 100 years earlier. Jimmy and Joe Governor were the last official outlaws in New South Wales. The reason for this was because they, along with their friend Jacky Underwood, killed five people in 1900. They then went on a murder and robbery spree which lasted for months and a manhunt that involved some 2000 people. When I read Laurie Moore’s and Stephen William’s text *The True Story of Jimmy Governor*, the historical intervention into Keneally’s fiction, *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*, I was literally transfixed to the social, political and personal parallels that Jim and Phillip’s story had with that of
Jimmy and Joe Governor’s. For example this quote from The True Story of Jimmy Governor could easily be applied to Jim Krakouer’s on-field dramas:

At one level Jimmy could be seen as any man caught in a situation beyond his control, suffering years of unfair treatment, finally snapping when faced with his most recent tormentor and a situation he could not control.677

Both Jims came from large nuclear families, were excellent at sport and spent time in juvenile homes. For both the Krakouers and the Governors their identities were the source of derision, intrigue, awe and notoriety and this played itself out from their childhoods and into their adult years. Early in the twentieth century the Governor’s skill at evading the constabulary, physical feats of endurance and cunning could be neatly compared to the 1980’s and the Krakouer’s sublime and daring displays to outwit their opponents on the football field.

Jim Krakouer did not go looking for trouble on the football field. Many people, and by this I mean just about all, I interviewed, said trouble found Jim and he dealt with it in the only way he knew, which was based “within a more ancient tradition of Aboriginal payback.”678 I found Moore and Williams account of the Governor’s transgressions, including murder, stealing and rape, and the factors that fed into them, racism, denial and ignorance, intriguing to my own research.

Moore and Williams posed the same sorts of questions about the Governors as I was about the Krakouers. Moore and Williams make the leap by asking at what point did the authorities take responsibility for the Governor’s inequity and “for the whole ghastly affair?”679 The same proposition could be made for the umpires and the VFL commission regarding racial vilification of Indigenous players and the “close attention”

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678 Moore, Laurie. & Williams, Stephan. 2001, p168.
679 Moore, Laurie. & Williams, Stephan. 2001, p 168.
Jim and Phillip received every week. In retaliating Jim Krakouer and Jim Governor stayed true to themselves. Hence, Jim Krakouer created his own destiny in the same way his namesake did at the turn of the 1900’s, with the main difference being that Jim Krakouer survived to tell the tale.

Less than a two months after the report on Jim’s flaw *The Herald* printed another article by the same journalist. In this article it indicated why the Krakouers were so vital to NM and the increased chances they had when Jim and Phillip played together:

The statistics concerning the brothers are amazing. They have played in the same team 83 times from a possible 123 games. The Roos have won 51 one of those games and have managed just 15 wins from the other 40. That means North has won 62 percent of games with the Krakouers working in tandem and only 38 percent when they have been separated because of injury or suspension.\(^{680}\)

The value of Jim and Phillip to NM’s fortunes was proven with the first three games of 1987 as NM lost two. On Jim’s return from suspension and Phillip playing with Jim for the first time in the season, NM won their second game for the year. In what was a close game, the most enthralling match-up was that of Schimmelbusch, playing his 300\(^{th}\) game, on Gary Ablett. Shimmelbush not only kept Ablett to three goals he practically dominated the game from centre-half back. As for Jim and Phillip they:

Made their impact on the game, Jim roving, and Phil, roaming the forward line, once again weaved dazzling magic against a flustered opposition. The brothers shared only 20 kicks but their impact twisted the match in North’s favour… No matter how much abuse these two footballers receive from the crowd, the Krakouers seem to broaden the horizons of the game with every match they play. Geelong, Ablett aside, had to rely on mere mortals.\(^{681}\)

Coming into round eight NM were set to play Carlton. NM were not expected to win as the Blue’s form had been exceptional and they sat in second spot. Captained by Stephen Kernahan, in only his second year, the Blues rippled with talent and boasted the likes of Rhys-Jones, Silvagni, Johnston, Bradley and Madden. In many ways this game against


Carlton was very similar to the season opener against Brisbane. Shimmelbush played a Captain’s game, NM’s performance was poor, they lost and Jim was once again reported for striking.

Eight players were reported from this round in what seemed to be a crackdown by the VFL on every conceivable illegality with charges ranging from striking the groin, undue rough play to spitting at an umpire. At first glance Jim’s report evoked a collective “tut-tut” until the nature of the charge was revealed. Jim had been reported for striking Carlton’s Wayne Johnston in the chest with his forearm. The frivolousness of the charge, one journalist asked his readership to forgive his “bemusement”, 682 was not lost on Kennedy either who in the post match interview said:

Who was charged with striking? Jimmy? With a forearm to the chest? I mean its just I’m speechless. Normally I would say ‘no comment’ but in answer to that I say ‘no comment whatsoever’. 683

It was also revealed in the post-match report that Jim had become somewhat of a pariah as the opposition supporters booed and heckled him every time he went near the ball. The report would not have helped his situation.

On Monday night at VFL House, the tribunal viewed the video evidence some 20 times and deliberated for half an hour before finding Jim not guilty. The whole incident prompted Flanagan in The Age to question just what impact the VFL tribunal and the umpires were having on the game and the players whose fates were in their hands. He wrote:

Football is two hours of collisions occurring at speed...The responsibility for both the detection and reporting of offences rests with the umpires, who cannot possibly see all of them, let alone assess them...The apprehension of football’s offenders is arbitrary and unfair but that is not the only problem. The sports whole disciplinary system-one which relates to people’s professional livelihood-is bedevilled by uncertainty. Last Sunday, North Melbourne’s, Jim Krakouer was charged with striking with an elbow to the chest. What did it mean? How

682 The Age. 18/5/1987, p31.
683 The Age. 18/5/1987, p31. My emphasis.
many times are footballers struck by an opponent’s elbow in the course of a game? I would have thought about once every two minutes. What makes it an offence in one case and not in another? More importantly: who does one go to for answers to such questions? \footnote{The Age. 21/5/1987, p36.}  

What is clear is that despite the ambiguity of this case Jim Krakouer stood to lose more than just a few weeks of football had he been found guilty. Considering Jim’s past convictions and the vagaries of the tribunal in a number of Jim’s other cases Jim’s character would have been besmirched beyond repair. Did Jim Krakouer act irresponsibly on the football field? Possibly. Did Jim Krakouer deserve the treatment he received on the football field? No. Did Jim’s reactions to the provocation he receive cost him? Definitely, but just how much only Jim would ever really know.

After 8 rounds, Jim and Phillip’s form had been exceptional which prompted NM to renegotiate their contracts for the next four years. At a VIP luncheon, Bob Ansett announced the news that Jim and Phillip would effectively remain Roos for life:

Their latest agreement should just about see out their League football careers. Jim will be 29 later this year and Phillip is 27…The magic of Jim and Phil Krakouer gives class to North. Without their exciting play North struggles. \footnote{The Age. 13/7/1987, p35. Both Jim and Phillip played 100 games for North Melbourne in 1987.}

It would seem that Jim and Phillip’s profile as VFL footballers couldn’t get any greater. They had become household names in the way that Andrew McLeod, Michael Voss and Nathan Buckley are today. Responding to an 11% drop in game attendances in Melbourne\footnote{The Age. 8/7/1987, p40.} the VFL grasped the initiative. One the 17th of July a full page advertisement was taken out in the print media. With the headline: TAKE THE FAMILY TO SEE SOME ABORIGINAL ART TOMORROW.\footnote{The Age. 17/7/1987, p30. The VFL’s rationale was to use players with a high profile to attract more people to Melbourne games. Along with Jim and Phillip the VFL wanted to use Hawthorn’s DiPierdomenico and Platten and Sydney’s Warwick Capper. This was a strange choice as Hawthorn had a traditionally small membership and Capper was due to play four of his next seven games in Sydney.} The graphic below the headline shows Jim and Phillip. Is this the first time in Australian sporting
history that Indigenous Australian’s have been used to promote an entire sport? It 
encapsulates not just their tandem abilities as play makers but also the social obligation 
that they have to one another. In the foreground Phillip is running with the ball, his eyes 
fixed on its flight. His body seems balanced and relaxed as the ball is about to pop up 
into his waiting hands. Jim is at Phillip’s rear and is shepherding out a non-Indigenous 
opposition player.

In this advertisement the Melbourne football public received the promise of a running, 
kicking cross-cultural awareness lesson before such programs became more readily 
available. This photograph is intriguing because of the subtlety of its politik. It is an 
implied inversion of the realities faced by Indigenous Australians as it is the Indigenous 
figures who are in control; the non-Indigenous face peaks in trying to gain some sort of 
access. Indigenous themes are fore-grounded and non-Indigenous representation is 
marginalised. Perhaps unknowingly the VFL pre-empted a social and political zeitgeist 
that was played out in 1995 with the introduction of rule 30 (that is the racial and 
religious vilification laws), and the change in attitudes to Australia’s Indigenous history. 
This advertisement was a precursor to other symbolic acts recognising the importance 
of Indigenous Australians and their history like the the Sea of Hands and the Redfern 
Speech.688 It was before Mabo and Wik and prior to the Bicentenary, Reconciliation, 
and rule 30. The Krakouers were before their time.

688 The Redfern Speech was delivered on the 10th December 1992 by Prime Minister Paul Keating: “It 
begins, I think with that act of recognition. Recognition that it was us who did the dispossessing. We took 
the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We bought the diseases. The alcohol. We 
committed the Murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practiced the discrimination and 
exclusion. It was out ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to 
us. With some notable exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their 
hearts and minds. We failed to ask, how would I feel if this were done to me? As a consequence, we 
failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us.” Watson, Don. Recollections of a Bleeding 
Heart: A portrait of Paul Keating PM. Random House, NSW, 2002, p288-289. The Sea of Hands was 
part of the Reconciliation movement whereby people could place coloured plastic hands as recognition of 
Australia’s Indigenous People’s.
With several games left to play of the season, NM’s fortunes were maintained and despite a shock loss to St Kilda in round 18 coming after a 97 point flogging from Geelong, NM were in fourth position. With these two losses it would seem like sporting suicide to give up a home ground advantage and travel to Western Australia to play the WCE in Perth, but this is exactly what NM did. As part of a deal to secure more night games at the MCG and to get a better dividend from the gate receipts, NM ventured West.\textsuperscript{689} This was a dangerous move considering NM had been to Perth previously and were thrashed by 74 points and their spot in the finals was in no way assured.

In a night game at the WACA the game was a close affair at the first break with both teams on the same score. The second term saw NM go up a gear early in the second quarter as Jim kicked the first four goals of the second quarter. With a twenty one point advantage at the main break NM’s third quarter saw them slam on eight goals with the WCE not scoring until the 28\textsuperscript{th} minute. The WCE eventually came good in the last quarter but couldn’t bridge the gap, going down by 11 points. The gamble for NM had paid off.\textsuperscript{690}

The following game against Footscray was described as being “like two semi-trailers speeding down hill with no brakes. It was a game of attack: defence was never an issue.”\textsuperscript{691} Phillip had played well all day kicking four goals and Jim had work tirelessly for two. NM had let a 17 point advantage dwindle away after some loose checking in defence. As the siren sounded the game was determined by the accurate 50 metre foot skills of Stephen Macpherson and finished a draw.

\textsuperscript{689} \textit{The Age}. 21/7/1987, p54.
\textsuperscript{690} In North’s previous game in Perth against the WCE the post match analysis was about the WCE except for the last sentence which shows just how well respected Jim and Phillip were in their home state, “The crowd of 28,330 had come to see the Eagles win. But they had also come to see the two most skilful Western Australian brothers ever to leave the west produce their magic - the Krakouers.” \textit{The Age}. 4/5/1987, p30.
\textsuperscript{691} \textit{The Age}. 17/8/1987, p36.
After trouncing an inaccurate and 13th placed Richmond at the MCG, NM’s final game was against the league leader Carlton. NM had not beaten Carlton since an exhibition match in London late in 1986. The game itself took on added importance as the draw to Footscray meant that NM’s chances of securing a second semi-final berth, and two chances at the grand final, was now in the hands of others. NM were reliant on 10th placed Fitzroy beating the Swan’s who were in 3rd, the position NM wanted. On the face of it, Fitzroy’s chances were diminished against the Swans except for the historical quirk of the Swans form at Princes Park, the ground where the fixture was to take place. The Swans had not won there since 1965 and Fitzroy had beaten them in their last three games.

By the half time break in the final game of the season, NM had a handy three goal advantage. The third term, often referred to as the premiership quarter, was just that. Carlton piled on 10 goals during this quarter to NM’s five to lead the Roos by 14 points. As expected for two sides in the top five it was played at break neck pace with sublime skill. For Carlton, Kernahan was on fire kicking six for the game and for NM their doggedness was complimented by Jim and Phillip:

Above all, it had Jim and Phil Krakouer. Words can never do justice to the inherent genius of the North Melbourne pair, but suffice to say that while Jim was running loose all over the ground picking up kicks, Phil was conjuring his own spectacular brand of magic in the forward line, booting four goals and handing off several others. Phil Krakouer has had his critics for lack of consistency but on Saturday he was equally as damaging as his elder brother, and that is saying something. North might have won had Jim not limped from the ground four minutes into the final term with a sprained ankle. It was during Jim’s enforced rest in the forward pocket during the third term that Carlton’s runners, Craig Bradley, Wayne Johnston, Bernie Evans and David Glascott took control around the packs.

As the clock ticked down at VFL Park the drawn Footscray game would come back to haunt NM and replay itself to some degree in the final seconds against Carlton. With
NM two points up Kernahan took a “peerless one-grab mark” and the siren sounded. On a difficult angle, twenty metres out Kernahan produced the kick that distinguishes champions from little French mushrooms. Carlton won by four points.

The football gods were not smiling on Arden Street because even if NM had won the Swans also beat Fitzroy at Princes Park to break a 22 year old drought. NM’s bad luck worsened as Jim’s ankle was badly sprained, placing doubts on his chances of playing in the elimination final against Melbourne. NM had further injury concerns over ruck McDonald, ruck-rover Stephen Hickey and Ian Fairley with a hamstring problem. The questions now were who was going to replace them, how many injuries did Melbourne have and how bad was Jim’s ankle?

By Friday all was revealed. NM had made two changes Darren Crocker and the injury prone Peter Jonas were in. Both Crocker and Jonas had been out for eight and 5 weeks respectively and rumours that Arceri would find his way back into the side proved false. Melbourne were not without their injury problems either. Their ruck Steve Turner was out, as was forward Gary Lyon with a broken leg. Brian Wilson was deemed fit on the Friday but less than 24 hours later he had ruled himself out. Jim’s ankle injury had been so bad that in the early part of the week his leg had been placed in plaster and he was only the slightest chance to play. By Friday night Jim’s determination was evident and he was named as NM’s starting rover. With both teams having players out with injury and other players either playing with injury or coming in underdone, both NM and Melbourne were evenly poised except for one glaring difference. Melbourne, with Wilson’s late withdrawal, had no player who had played finals football at league level.

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The Demons were epitomised by their hard-working and stylish captain Robert Flower - who had not played a final in a 271 game career. John Northey called on his side at three quarter time to ‘destroy’ NM, and that is what they did. Leading by 80 points at the last break Melbourne did not slow down and piled on another 38 points to finish with a record winning margin in an elimination final. By contrast NM’s season was finished and the loss compounded by recording the lowest elimination final score. So bad was NM’s performance Joseph was compelled to admit after the game that “I’ve never felt so ashamed in my life.”

3.10 Nobody stops anybody

...gambling may be less an entertainment than a metaphor, a symbolic enactment of the frailty of human existence.

Yes, good morning Sydney. Hello Australians, Party-goers. Thanks for joining us on that one day in 200 years wherever you are; by the harbour, in the nick, by the pool, under the weather, behind the barbie with the apron on as we re-enact, yes that’s the word, re-enact two centuries down under.

1988 marked the biggest national, post-war undertaking in Australian history. The Australian Bicentennial. Despite the glaring historical oversight, that Australia only became a Federal nation-state at the turn of the Twentieth Century, the Government decided that almost every facet of Australian history, culture and achievement should be recognised. Not a day seemed to go past in the media without some ripper bloke cooking a barbie or some bonza sheila bashing out a few lamingtons or a passionfruit drizzled pavlova. Every street became a party, every quarter acre a shrine as we tossed gumboots and tapped a Slim Dusty tune on an empty beer carton. Whether it was

694 The Age. 7/9/1987, p35.
696 Roy and HG in Australian Daze. Director Pat Fiske, Australian Film Institute, 1988.
playing golf with a cane toad or just drinking large amounts of beer, if it was *Australian* it mattered.

Words like *community* and *identity* suddenly became important catch-cries but also points of great conjecture, as Australians grappled with what it was these terms did and did not mean. The spirit of the Bicentenary was invoked to bring together the quintessential elements of the Australian experience, stories and culture. Visions of our collective selves were projected to saturation point.

The *unification* of the Australian experience was always going to be a polemically charged situation. This situation was made even more problematic because of the historical, social and political divergences of different social and ethnic groups. In his 1986 lecture entitled, “The Politics and Management of Australia’s Bicentenary Year”, Professor John Warhurst, pointed this out:

> Any reflection upon national identity, whatever its nature cannot be apolitical…Whatever is chosen for presentation and special attention in 1988 will involve judgements which will have implications for contemporary political contests…In preparing for a bicentenary year which would focus on Australia’s national identity, the Australian Bicentennial Authority [ABA] was hamstrung by the fact that there was no agreement within the community about key elements of that identity. The Authority adopted its own position but it was inevitably sandwiched between other political actors attempting to enshrine contesting versions of that identity.697

The Bicentenary created not just the frothing over of national pride but a great amount of national debate. Australia, perhaps for the first time since Federation, or Vietnam, became a massive hotplate of discussion. Arguments sizzled away and like the veritable BBQ snag burst open, to reveal the soft sausage meat of years of untouched/unspoken discussion. Some no doubt would have adhered to the mythological version of events and characters in Australian history: Bradman, Phar Lap, Ned Kelly, Anzac’s, Banjo

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Patterson. But what about women, migrants, trade unionists, gay people and the disabled? For Indigenous Australians, the Bicentennial was a golden opportunity to launch large scale protests about the inequity they had endured for 200 years.

Of all the events which marked the 1988 calendar it was perhaps the re-enactment of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 that was the most visually striking but historically flawed. This single event encapsulated everything that was amazing and sad about the Bicentenary, as it tapped into Australia’s still unresolved tension and pain between the invading colonialist culture and that of Australia’s Indigenous Peoples.

The re-enactment was the dream of Jonathan King, journalist and ancestor of Phillip Cidley King, one-time Governor of the territory of New South Wales, who died in 1808. In his book *The Battle for the Bicentenary* which recounts his battle with the ABA to get funding for the re-enactment, one is left with a feeling that King saw himself in the mould of Captain Arthur Phillip; bold, brave and a battler. King saw the re-enactment as a “great educational opportunity” by drawing attention to Phillip’s maritime achievement, the toil of the convicts and the first fleet’s multi-cultural cargo.

For Australia’s Indigenous population, particularly Koori Peoples in Sydney, the day started at Redfern Oval where they assembled for the Freedom Justice and Hope march that would take them to Hyde Park and then down to Sydney Harbour. I have often wondered what the Kooris must have thought about as those ships sailed in 200 years ago. Awe, wonder, suspicion, fear? In 1988 there could be little doubt what many Indigenous people’s sentiments about such events; anger, indifference, sadness, incredulity. This stood in stark contrast to the great many non-Indigenous

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Australians who celebrated this moment as it was captured in the documentary film *Australia Daze*. Documenting the actual day, one couple in their fifties walked on a Sydney beach as the woman expressed her views on the Bicentenary and any protest that may occur:

I’m not really sure what they [Indigenous people] are all on about. Nobody stops anybody from getting or doing…If you want work you can work. If you want to go somewhere to eat you can go somewhere to eat. If you want to buy a house you can buy a house. Nobody stops anybody because of their colour.699

Indeed, Indigenous people across Australia were in many ways celebrating – celebrating survival from incarceration, disease, poverty, unemployment, premature death and infant mortality. Unfortunately, many Australians didn’t understand this, many never would, many didn’t want to. But how could they ever understand what it was like to lose their language, their mother, their land, their child? How could they understand what it was like to wake up everyday knowing that your day would be marked, not by your job, your car or the house you lived in, but by the colour of your skin.

In the re-enactment of the First Fleet arrival, there was something that was not quite right. Something which signalled a strange modern day perpetuation of colonialism to this great southern land, as the manifest destiny of our forefathers had mutated and taken on a more post-modern form. Instead of the first fleet bringing with it a law, a language and inappropriate animal husbandry and farming practices, the re-enactment brought with it something else. For weeks talk-back radio would crackle with debate over this one issue: flying from the topgallant of the flag ship Soren Larsen was a massive advertisement for Coke. The re-staging of Australia’s

699 *Australia Daze*. Director Pat Fiske, Australian Film Institute, 1988. My emphasis.
defining moment, on Australia Day, at the start of our Bicentennial year, had been brought to us courtesy of an American multi-national.

♦

In January of 1988 Ron Joseph sat at his desk. As the chaos swirled around him he was a picture of calm efficiency. Phones rang incessantly. People knocked on his door and put forms on his desk to sign. Players dropped by regularly to get some advice, pick up signed documents and drop off keys. Sometimes it abated for short moments but still the chaos swirled. It was like he was in the eye of a cyclone, it was enough to make your head spin, but not Joseph. This was his world and he could do it standing on his head. Many thought that out on the football field was where it all happened but they were only half right. The two hours on the weekend were the showcase that was the culmination of a week of meetings, deadlines and schedules.

The expanded competition, while good for the game, just made Joseph’s task bigger, longer and harder. But this is where he chose to be because he loved NM and he loved the people who were part of it. Besides, in many ways it was like being in the game itself. You had to be prepared for anything. You had to have a range of contingency plans up your sleeve and you had to be able to read the play and anticipate the moves of people.

Ron lit a cigarette and for a moment his sub-conscious went on random selection. The tribulations he had experienced as a general manager of a VFL club could fill an entire sub-section of a council library. What would it come under he thought? ‘Football management?’ ‘Handling the modern footballer?’ ‘Teaching the VFL athlete how to wipe his own arse?’ He started to chuckle. What about, ‘Wiping the
modern footballers bum specialising in binge drinking, promiscuity and how to kick the perfect torpedo punt…oh and don’t forget the paranormal.’

The tears of mirth began to well up in Ron’s eyes. The phone rang. He pulled himself together and in a slightly higher pitched voice than normal answered the phone. “Ron Joseph.” The voice on the other end was not recognisable but it was blunt, direct and threatening. Jim owed money, lots of money and Jim had also said NM were good for it. The voice implied the debt had been outstanding for some time and they wanted to collect otherwise Jim could find himself in a bit of difficulty. By now the tears in Joseph’s eyes had dried. The voice on the other end ceased and the phone went dead. Joseph didn’t even have time to reply. What would he have said? “Look, leave me your number and I’ll get back to you.” These people operated on a different level to society. They wanted their money and if they didn’t get it they would take it in kind. There was no discrimination in these circles. The only prejudice shown was for those who didn’t pay up.700

As if Ron Joseph didn’t have enough on his plate. NM had a very young side with 17 players having played in one season or set to make their debuts. They were also without Schimmelbusch and now some loan shark was ringing up demanding money or Jim would get it. Lighting a cigarette, Ron had to think about how he was going to approach this and who he told. He stood up, grabbed his jacket and made his way to Bob Ansett’s office.

♦

It is easy to see, particularly today, why punting or gaming as it is called by the gambling industry, effects so many lives. With the prevalence of poker machines and

casinos in all major Australian cities\textsuperscript{701} gambling has never been so accessible and alluring. In Tim Costello and Royce Millar’s book \textit{Wanna Bet?} it focuses on the variety of ways people engage with, whilst maintaining and rationalising, their \textit{gaming} habits:

People are looking for something transcendent. I think people hanker for mystery and they think ‘maybe there is someone out there who will notice me and draw me into a more meaningful place’…I think gambling for some is still an experience of mystery, surprise, gift and magic. ‘I may be fated with a win!’\textsuperscript{702}

Perhaps Jim saw his gambling at certain points as a simple recreation:

I wasn’t a compulsive gambler like everyone makes out to be. I wasn’t someone who mortgaged their home and bets what they haven’t got. I would never dream about mortgaging my home to have a punt. If you couldn’t afford to pay it back [at the time] you might bet on credit. I just enjoyed it because I didn’t drink or smoke or things like that. I just enjoyed having a punt.\textsuperscript{703}

To corroborate this, Jim and Fiona still own the house that they bought when they first moved to Melbourne. In a story conveyed to me by NM’s long time property manager Aub Devlyn, Devlyn explained that Jim was always good for money. Devlyn, besides being NM’s property manager, was also a registered mechanic. Jim would always get Devlyn to do the automotive work on his vehicles “I used to work on his car and he always used to pay you. A few footballers didn’t pay you. He always paid. Jimmy never let you down.”\textsuperscript{704}

Then there was Jim’s on-field performances, consistent and brilliant in an era in which NM rode a football roller-coaster. Perhaps if there were chronic money problems Jim’s match day performances would have suffered considerably. Even moderate gamblers identified by Costello and Millar are 60\% more likely to suffer depression which can dramatically increase the chances of self-harm and lead to

\textsuperscript{701} Except Perth.
\textsuperscript{703} Personal interview Jim Krakouer 29/5/2003. My emphasis
\textsuperscript{704} Personal interview Aub Devlyn 16/7/2002.
things like suicide.\textsuperscript{705} Then there are the physiological problems related to pathological gambling practices. These can range from alcohol dependency, smoking related illness and drug problems. Jim had none of these. He certainly never smoked, drugs were out of the question and even people who had known Jim and Phillip for years can never recall them drinking.

Perhaps Jim’s gambling was both a means of recreation as well as an established social practice, which could emulate in some way the rush of running onto the MCG in front of 50,000 people? Perhaps because Jim saw himself as a professional footballer there was enough time in the day to indulge in gambling and he enjoyed it. In one interview I got Jim to describe for me the different feelings of playing football and gambling:

Two different feelings, because one’s where you’re punting it’s one for your pocket and when you’re playing footy it’s one for the pride.\textsuperscript{706}

Maybe with punting Jim found something that appealed to him on many levels? The TAB perhaps had positive memories of when he escaped from hospital and was able to catch-up with relatives and friends. It was a recreation away from his football profession and something he could use to unwind in the same way many footballers used alcohol, cigarettes and recreational drugs. Yes he could lose, but when one actually won, and won in the way that Joseph witnessed in Monty Millson’s super box, the rush must have been heady, regardless of Jim’s outward lack of zeal. He probably thought that like football, gambling was a sport. Because it was a sport it needed to be worked at and maintained over a length of time and eventually, money, glory, respect, they would all come. Persistence and determination were after all Jim’s strengths and maybe he became obsessed with mastering the gambling process. Perhaps Jim decided that he could beat the system by just sticking with it,

\textsuperscript{705} Costello & Millar. 2000, p222.  
\textsuperscript{706} Personal interview Jim Krakouer 29/5/2003.
remaining focussed and not getting carried away with big wins, and losses surely
they could be covered by NM until he cracked it? All these questions have many
answers but I am unable to draw conclusions; what is intriguing is the way Jim and
those around him perceived his gambling.

The rush was to beat the system through a process and once he had done that he
would be accepted by everyone. He would no longer be the half-way kid and no one
could deny him because he was the winner. Because for Jim, in life, as with
football, there are only two things - those who win and those that do not. Costello
and Millar make the observation:

> Our culture has reduced society to the individual, to the self as the site of
> meaning. When the self is everything, success and achievement are about
> how fit you are. What you’re wearing, whether you’re having good sex, and
> so on. In this culture individual winning and losing are everything.707

Still, for Joseph, there was that mysterious phone call.

♦

By round one NM were in the same boat as they were in round one of 1987 with one big
difference. Wayne Schimmelbusch was not fit and had played his last game. With John
Law promoted to acting captain, Jim filled the role of acting vice-captain. NM’s team
strengths were it’s skill level and its brigade of middle sized running players.
Conversely, NM’s weakness was its inconsistency and this was made clear in the pre-
season media predictions:

> The Roos still look suspect under pressure and lack aggression in the crunch.
> There are not enough physical players around the place to back up the smaller
> men, and the forward line has little depth.708

Even with this harsh critique of NM’s players, the Krakouers were a source of hope
“The Krakouers will once again be expected to provide the team with their typically
brilliant forays on the ball and around the goals.”709

The first game against Essendon was embarrassing as NM went down by 82 points.

With further losses to Geelong and St Kilda NM’s season after the first three rounds was not looking good. The only thing that was saving them from the bottom of the ladder was Richmond and Brisbane’s similarly poor percentages. NM beat Footscray but lost to Hawthorn the week after. NM had two very good wins over a fourth placed WCE and a hapless second last Richmond and with the small fires of confidence lit after a bad start to the season they were quickly extinguished as the next four rounds failed to produce a win. Narrowly missing out against Sydney by 7 points NM’s record stood at 8 loses and three wins. It was going to be a long season.

Joseph knocked on Ansett’s door and came straight to the point “Bob an issue has come up with Jim and we need to deal with it immediately.” Ansett stopped what he was doing and leaned back in his chair “I’m all ears Ron, shoot.” Joseph proceeded to tell Ansett about the call he had just received. While not appearing nervous Joseph did seem agitated. This was Melbourne in the 1980’s, many knew the names of Dennis Mr Death Allen, Kath Granny Evil Petingill and Dale Rentakill Flannery. The underworld in Melbourne moved in mysterious yet highly efficient ways. Life had a price and it didn’t take much to work out that if debts from certain tax-free enterprises were not recovered then certain consequences would arise. Joseph and Ansett were under no illusion about the gravity of the situation, as Ansett describes:

> There were real threats of really significant damage to his body, threats that he had to cope with during that time. He was in debt to these people who took bets so we were concerned.710

For NM it was not just a case of using the club’s chequebook to assist Jim with his financial difficulties. As a club that struggled each season with memberships and

fundraising, extra money spent that was not directly related to the day-to-day running of
the club hurt NM. The irony that Jim and Phillip’s skills were in many instances what
got people through the turn-style in the first place was not lost on the club; figures
didn’t lie and money at NM was tight. Ansett explains:

> From a cash flow point of view anything that was an addition to what our fixed
costs and expenses were was always difficult because we had a very fine cash-
flow line. We had a guaranteed overdraft of about four million dollars and we
could control the payment we paid to Jim with the following year and we would
deduct what we’d advanced him. It was more the cash flow side of it that was
awkward for us.711

For Joseph the question was not only about money but also how he was to maintain
Jim’s standing within the team and not foster any jealousy amongst the other players:

> There were a couple of substantial things along the way, a couple of major debts
that we helped him out of. I constantly had this balancing act and I think that it
created a bit of jealousy at North, the time and attention that I probably gave
them. The fact that I was probably always sticking my hand in the club’s pocket
to get Jim out of the next drama. Some might say that Ron Joseph handled Jim
badly in that he always pandered to his next mistake and I’ll cop that.712

After discussing the situation with Ansett, Joseph spoke to Jim as he always did by
going “into my lecture mode for fucking two hours.”713 After the lecture Joseph would
have to wait for the sun to go down before he could enact his next plan, the very
prospect of which was terrifying.

Just before midnight Joseph pulled up outside a nondescript alley somewhere in
Carlton. He hadn’t eaten for hours and the pit of his stomach felt like it had staged a
continuous cockfight. His mouth was parched, which was not helped by the steady
stream of filtered cigarette smoke. Not even when he fronted Bobby Skilton about
wearing his South Melbourne guernsey as a teenager had Joseph felt so scared. He
killed the headlights and checked the address again. This was the place. He had one last

smoke before going in as he didn’t want his shaking hands to betray his unease. Joseph walked up the alley and came to a door that was only visible because of the light escaping the door frame. He pushed the door and went in. Just inside was a massive bald man with a goatee beard. He nodded to Joseph. In the far corner of a large, clean warehouse-like room a group of about 20 men stood. Like a dream, the room contained more shadow than light. Above the men a fluorescent light illuminated a strange smoky halo above the fixated masculine ring. It was one of the two-up schools Jim frequented but on this night he was nowhere to be seen.

For years the Melbourne two-up scene was run by the legendary Nappy Ollington. They were underground affairs that police raided now and then but they were run on a strict code of no drinking or bad behaviour. Winners paid the ‘shop’ ten percent and losers were given a taxi ride home. Ollington’s philosophy about the game was that “two-up players will play anywhere, as long as there is nowhere better.”714 From the time that Ollington got his first break in the late 1950’s he was Melbourne’s two-up king with games being played all over the city. By the early 1980’s raids had become heavy-handed and common-place as political force was being exerted to stamp out two-up:

Police pressure had driven two-up so far underground that few legitimate people wanted to play. By criminalising it, the authorities had ensured only criminals risked playing.715

Joseph sized up the situation and made his way towards the ring. He clearly recalls the situation “I thought I was going to get bloody murdered. They were the roughest looking lot of blokes I’ve ever seen.”716 Clearing his throat with a deep cough, Joseph consciously deepened his voice to make himself heard:

Look fellas I know Jimmy comes in here a fair bit but if he starts asking any of you for a wedge can you not give it to him…OK”.

For a few brief seconds the machinations of the group became seized, requests of this nature were unheard of and usually met with violence or mocking laughter. Everyone knew why Joseph was there “Yeah Ronnie, good as gold” someone growled, their tone indicating their eagerness to get back to the game and for Joseph to piss-off. “OK Ronnie”, someone else replied in an equally hollow retort, and the game, as if Joseph had said nothing, was back on.

For Joseph this was it, what else could he do? Besides physically restraining Jim from these types of venues he was fresh out of ideas. He made his way back to the door and past the bearded behemoth. Back out in the alley Joseph shakily lit a hard-earned cigarette, got in his car and turned the engine over. Gripping the steering wheel he felt a sense of relief and composure come over him as the engine idled briefly and he sped off. It was the first time in three hours that his hands had stopped shaking.

By the middle of the season many people were starting to ask questions about Jim and Phillip’s form, which they felt was symptomatic of NM’s tenth position on the ladder. One writer to The Herald wrote in to canvass this topic with two of the games greats, Don Scott and Robert Flower, who wrote for the Melbourne daily. The unknown writer posed the question:

The Krakouer brothers have been kept very quiet this season and North Melbourne has slid down the ladder. What is wrong with Jim and Phil?

Don Scott answered:

I don’t think there is anything wrong with the Krakouers. We cannot expect them to win games singlehandedly [sic]; those who think they can probably have the wrong idea of how they played in the good North Melbourne sides of recent years. In those teams North Melbourne had plenty of big man strength… North
Melbourne’s most glaring weakness now is its shortage of key position players and ruckmen.717

For Flower the problem was the lack of a quality ruck and age:

Jim will be 30 later this year and Phil is 28 and that must hamper the Krakouers. Now rather than being the icing on the cake they are expected to be the bread and butter both setting up chances and finishing them off.718

Both commentators were right. The combination of age, the lack of bigger players to protect their ageing bodies and provide opportunities for them was a concern. Injuries had also taken their toll on Jim and Phillip and while still having the capacity to produce great games the effort required to do so was increasing with each season.

Jim and Phillip’s form had been so good in the previous weeks that both were selected in the state game against Victoria to be played in Western Australia. The game itself had all the usual bantering with perhaps the best quip coming from Mal Brown:

‘We’re pleased the Victorians have bought the best players from Queensland with them,’ Brown said, in a veiled reference to the inclusion of Hawthorn full-forward Jason Dunstall, a native Queenslander. ‘They’d bring them in from Singapore if they could’.719

In the end, Dunstall’s presence would have little bearing on the game as it was the movement of the ball by Victoria’s smaller players that out-scored Western Australia by 50 points. With Gerard Healy picking up the Simpson and Whitten Medals with 37 possessions and five goals, Barry Mitchell weighed in with 46 touches. Dale Weightman picked up 40, Greg Williams 38 and Healy’s co-ruck rover Darren Millane picked up 27. Western Australia hung on until the last quarter but the big ‘V’ piled on seven goals. The game finished with all the usual injuries making many of the VFL clubs hierarchies shake their heads in frustration but perhaps none more so than NM’s Ron Joseph as the game produced one report, Jim, for striking Healy in the first quarter.

718 The Herald. 6/61988, p22.
With North’s season precariously balanced outside the top five, the timing of this report could not have been any worse. Western Australian field umpire, Grant Vernon, gave evidence that Jim had bumped Victorian captain Weightman before *tangling* with Healy. “I saw Jim Krakouer run into Gerard Healy and strike him with his left fist” Vernon said. “It was a blatant blow and I don’t think it was warranted.”\(^{720}\) In the very next sentence reporting the tribunal proceedings, “Vernon conceded that the punch struck Healy a ‘glancing blow’ and had not made full contact.” \(^{721}\) Here one can see that the umpire has given two completely different answers to the same incident. Why? Vernon is reported to go on to say that Jim was retaliating to a situation which had occurred earlier, a situation which was corroborated by “several of his Western Australian teammates.” Jim denied making contact with Healy’s head but admitted he had fended Healy off to the chest.

To top things off Healy was not even at the tribunal to give evidence. The only evidence the prosecution had from Healy was a statement about the incident as Healy was back in Sydney. The Tribunal chair, Mr Neil Busse, said this was “very unsatisfactory from the tribunal point of view that he is not here.”\(^{722}\) Despite the inconsistency of the evidence and incongruence of the tribunal procedure, Jim was given a two game suspension. He was also given a further 2 games to be served if he was found guilty of a further offence before the end of the 1989 season. With this latest development came a startling realisation. From the time of Jim’s transfer to NM in 1982 Jim had been suspended for 22 games. An entire season.

\(^{720}\) *The Age*, 7/7/1988, p34.
\(^{721}\) *The Age*, 7/7/1988, p34.
\(^{722}\) *The Age*, 7/7/1988, p34.
With eight fixtures left to play NM’s season would only deteriorate. Without Jim for the next two fixtures NM lost badly to Essendon and Footscray. Over the next four rounds the best NM could achieve was a draw against second placed Collingwood. With one win in the second last game against Sydney NM’s season went quietly to a 95 point loss to Hawthorn. NM’s 1988 season had been one to forget. NM’s lack of consistency brought about by inexperience and a lack of players was made keener by a trading loss of $231,427.723 The thin hope that Schimmelbusch might return for season 1989 was again bandied about but the chances of it were remote. Kennedy made light of the situation boasting that he may himself make a comeback for NM in the following year. He jovially dismissed it in the same breath saying that if the ball hit his pace-maker it would cause, “a few problems.”724 Kennedy was jovial because he knew that NM had a long road to hoe and rebuilding, not comebacks, were what was required for future success.

With salary caps and the draft being significant factors in a team’s on-field success, the recruitment of key players and the off-field manoeuvring was becoming just as important as that which took place during a match. The game was becoming more specialised as the days of driving out to the country and plucking some young gun off a tractor and slotting him in at centre-half back were now a thing of the past. Football was becoming a science - a series of processes, procedures and strategies all underpinned by the buzz-word; professionalism. For Jim and Phillip 1988 marked a distinct shift in the path that their careers would take. Having played 19 and 21 games respectively, 1988 was the last time that Jim and Philip would play what would resemble a full season for NM. Injury and age would see 1989 become the hardest season for Jim and Phillip. The doors that had once been so willingly open to the Krakouers were now starting to close.

3.11 Turning point

The opening round of the 1989 season was not expected to reap much of a reward for NM. With the retirements of their two rucks, John Mossop and Stephen McCann, NM were still introducing young players into their league ranks. Predicted to finish in the lower part of the ladder, NM’s strength was based on the reputations of their talented mid-sized runners as the emerging names at Arden Street were those of Schwass, Martyn, Longmire and Romero. Another recruit was a fellow countryman of Jim and Phillip’s, a Noongar by the name of Derek Kickett. Kickett had a gait not too dissimilar to Phillip’s, casual and at times ungainly. Yet with a football in his hands Derek Kickett was mercurial and explosive.

By contrast Geelong, the team NM were set to meet in round one, was saturated with talent and size. Brownless, Yeats, Couch, Bews, Bairstow, Russell and of course Ablett. Ablett had played the majority of the 1989 pre-season games in the back-line but for the first game was named on a half forward flank alongside Stoneham with Hocking on the other flank. With Phillip unable to make the NM side due to his knee injury, things were not looking good for the Roos.

By half way through the second quarter Geelong had a healthy 27 point lead over NM. By the last break NM were back in the game and trailing by three points. With several minutes remaining in the last quarter and the ball locked in Geelong’s forward line, NM’s backs did everything against the taller Geelong forwards and incredibly, it worked. NM won, Jim kicked three goals and had thirty possessions and was named
man of the match. Even a report on Jim for striking Ablett was dropped at the tribunal on Monday night. Could this have been the best start to a season for NM in 5 years?

After five rounds NM had won three games and were set to play Essendon at the MCG. NM’s lack of a quality ruck was predicted to pose problems but was weighed up with Jim’s return from injury and the league debut of Derek Kickett. Kickett’s debut, ironically against the club he would go to and establish his name, was memorable as he “zipped dangerously across the half-forward line and proved a handful for the Bomber defence.”725 At the final siren NM’s pace had defeated the taller Essendon side and NM were finding something that had been missing for some time, consistency. With a further win against Sydney, NM continued with a win-loss pattern right up to round 12 bringing their ratio to 7 wins and 5 losses.

With Phillip coming back in round 9 and playing well it was thought by many that NM had turned a corner. Round 11 also unearthed “an 18-year-old key forward from South Australia who is built like Carlton’s Stephen Kernahan.”726 His name was Wayne Carey. Although not an instant sensation, Carey’s arrival into league ranks marked a new and prosperous era for NM and one that would take them through into the 1990’s as a power-house. Carey would become to NM what Ablett was for the Cats, a franchise player; a player who was incredibly valuable to any club as they drew people to the game. Carey therefore would not only become the captain, he became the public face of NM and football.

With a loss against Collingwood and a win over the luckless Saints, the Roos tenacious luck was about to run out. A thirty-six point pasting by Melbourne showed the gaping

725 *The Age*. 8/5/1989, p34.
holes in the NM team as they were without a cohesive forward line and no discernible rucks. Another loss to Fitzroy, led by Alastair Lynch, was met with the further bad news that Phillip would be out for the rest of the year with medial ligament damage to his left knee. Twenty-four hours later the news for NM had gone from bad to worse to diabolical, as Jim and Arceri were out with injured knees, effectively ruling them out for the season. Both Arceri’s and Phillip’s knee injuries resulted directly from the condition of the playing surface as their feet became stuck in the MCG mud. In the space of one game NM’s finals chances had been dashed “Without rovers, North Melbourne is nothing. Running little men are its bread and butter.” With Jim and Arceri injured NM were left no choice but to bring into their league side developing players, one of which was Jim and Phillip’s younger brother, Andrew.

Making his debut against Hawthorn at VFL Park, Andrew Krakouer showed those characteristics that had made his older brothers so exciting since their debuts in 1982:

At just 18, Andrew Krakouer gathered 15 possessions in his two and a half quarter league debut displaying more than a glimpse of the delightful slick grace that has been his brother’s trademark. Andrew Krakouer would play the following game against Brisbane at Cararra. This game was perhaps NM’s worst for the season as they were still in eighth spot and flogged by 83 points to the last placed Bears. Andrew Krakouer would play another 6 more league games with NM but sadly Jim and Phillip had played their last. Like the vast majority of sports people, injury and age were fast becoming significant factors in Jim and Phillip’s ability to keep playing at the highest level. For two players who had become renowned for their timing and precision on the field, the months leading into Christmas would be messy. Wholesale changes were also under way at NM where the club was facing serious financial difficulty that threatened their viability within the

727 The Age. 29/7/1989, p36.
728 The Age. 31/7/1989 p34.
competition. Kennedy retired from his coaching position and was replaced by one of
NM’s most respected and admired players, and for Jim and Phillip this is where their
problems started.

By early February 1990, the full toll of what NM had gone through over the summer
break had become apparent. With Bob Ansett toppling from the corporate summit NM
were starting to feel the ramifications of the 1987 stock market crash. After Budget
collapsed, the merchant bank Tricontinental became the largest shareholder in the NM
Football Club and Tricontinental’s tenuous financial footing threatened to drag NM
down with it. To add a further spin to these developments the whisper around the
boardrooms of Melbourne was that Carlton were buying NM shares from Tricontiential,
effectively threatening a takeover by the Blues of the Roos. Mergers with other clubs
also became a talking point as player contracts were renegotiated to slash one third of
the salary cap to save the club from becoming insolvent. NM’s captain was John Law
and Wayne Schimmelbusch was now the new coach of NM.

Schimmelbusch’s playing record alone made sure he was the obvious choice for the
coaching role after Kennedy’s retirement. Schimmelbusch held the record for the amount
of club games and finals appearances for NM, had played a great deal of state football
and won two premierships. His experience alone was immeasurable. Schimmelbusch
could also bring to the coaching role a raft of personal traits, which were desirable in a
time of need and which flowed on from the Kennedy era: discipline, courage,
determination and unwavering Shinboner spirit.

As with all clubs, a change of coach brings with it a change in a club’s machinations
and with Schimmelbusch this was no different. With the immense problems NM had
faced in the off season perhaps Schimmelbusch felt the need to stamp his authority on the club that he had been a part of for many years. Being the first year of the AFL, and with a new board and coaching staff at NM, the old practices needed to be reassessed. NM needed to become more professional if they were to move successfully into football’s new era. For Schimmelbusch this meant taking on Kennedy’s philosophy that the team above all else came first. Except unlike Kennedy there would be no exceptions to the rules, not even for Jim and Phillip Krakouer.

♦

At the end of each season Jim and Phillip’s itinerary was fairly predictable. They would return home and spend time with their families in the West. While Jim would head back to Mt Barker directly, Phillip would spend time with Lynne’s family in Perth and then head down to Mt Barker. According to Shimmelbusch, Jim would always return at the latest possible date but Phillip would arrive on time for the pre-season training to start. He explains:

In my first year as coach, as most first year coaches do, I set a few ground rules. One of the ground rules I set was that Jimmy had to train with us all of January and not do his own thing and come back when it suited him. He never really wanted to come back until practice games started during February. Phil was different. I think there was one year when Phil had something special on over in Perth and he came back a week later but by- and-large Phil was always there first night of training. Jimmy was never there first night of training, he was very tardy in getting back.730

This was the first time throughout the course of my project that I heard anyone mention that Jim had not taken his training responsibilities seriously, but Schimmelbusch assured me that this was the case. Jim’s pattern forced Schimmelbusch to assess the situation and make it clear what was required at NM under his coaching regime:

I basically said to him before Christmas, before he left, that he had to be back on the first night of training otherwise he wouldn’t be welcome back.731

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Jim did not handle the ultimatum well but Schimmelbusch remained steadfast in his resolve, making it clear to Jim that he would not have the same special treatment that he had had under Cable and Kennedy:

There was no reason why the rest of the side should be over training in the heat, trying to get ready for the first game. His [Jim’s] argument to that was always the same saying; ‘look I’ll come back fit’. But he never came back fit in his life. He was always last in the runs. He worked hard to try and catch up and we didn’t want him catching up this year because he was getting older.\(^\text{732}\)

After the cuts to player payments this ultimatum was greeted by Jim as a slap in the face, and compounded by Jim’s inability to let people dictate terms to him. Jim went back to West Australia and returned to Melbourne in mid-February only to find that Schimmelbusch had stayed true to his word. In the first Foster’s Cup match to be played against the WCE in late February, neither Jim or Phillip’s names were in the starting line-up. With Phillip still recuperating with his knee injury, Shimmelbusch had drawn a line in the sand for all to see and regardless of reputations or past performances the team would be picked as he saw fit. Despite Phillip’s injury, Jim refers to himself as \(\text{we}\) and when recalling this period:

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\text{We were as ready as we could be for the pre-season I guess and when we played in the first night game Shimmer left us out of the side. The next day I went and spoke to Ron Joseph and said I needed to get a clearance. I don’t think he was that sympathetic with us and was more or less willing to play along with them.}\(^\text{733}\)
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After years of being in the football business, Joseph knew that mixing different departments within a football club was taboo. His hands were tied as he was in no position to negotiate the ground rules for players that had been set down by the coach. Joseph merely went out and got them. For Joseph the whole matter had come to a head because of the personalities that were involved and the perceptions that each one had of the other. Furthermore, the situation was compounded by the shifting power dynamic of

\[^{732}\text{Personal interview Wayne Schimmelbusch 4/9/2000. My emphasis.}\]
\[^{733}\text{Personal interview Jim Krakouer 29/5/2003.}\]
two old team-mates as Schimmelbusch was now the coach and his word was the law at NM. Joseph makes this clear:

Shimmer was a different sort of bloke. Shimmer was intolerant of blokes that had weaknesses and he would have seen Jim’s gambling as a weakness and Phil’s moods and up and down form as weakness. Shimmer’s a hard-nosed guy that had little tolerance of people that didn’t have the professional standards that he had but that’s why Shimmer didn’t succeed as coach. I mean he learnt the hard way that 42 people aren’t like Wayne Schimmelbusch. Shimmer’s as straight as a gun barrel but intolerant of people’s weaknesses and he had very few personal skills with people.734

Schimmelbusch is adamant that had Jim arrived back on time he would have played in the Fosters Cup against the WCE. As a new coach he was bound by his ground rules and by the match committee, which didn’t feel that Jim was right to play and risked injury if he did. Perhaps Jim acted out of haste but when he was confronted with the choice between spending time with his family and returning early for pre-season, it placed him in a delicate position. One he could not or did not want to resolve. Either way, on the cusp of a new epoch in Australian football, an era at Arden Street ended. The two names that had been synonymous with NM were looking further afield.

Within a week the Sunday Herald ran a story, which was perhaps written at the wrong time of Jim and Phillip’s career, the end of it. With the headline: Black but Unbowed the reader is given a perspective on the difficulty that the Krakouer’s faced throughout their lives, due largely to their identity. Initially the article talks about their inherent skill and the tacit understanding that they had for one another. It then goes on to talk about the current predicament that they found themselves in with Jim seeking a clearance and Phillip trying to maintain some semblance of a football career with a badly injured knee. The subject of the article then turns to the issue of racism and the way that it has marked their lives. Initially both are reported to be reluctant to talk about

their experiences of prejudice until Phillip relates an incident that happened to his
daughter only a few days previously:

It hit home with a devastating impact on Phil only a week ago when his five-year-old daughter Jacyntha came home in tears from her first day at school after other children had taunted her for being black… ‘It just reminded me so much of what happened to me when I started school. I said to myself, ‘Here we go again.’ I copped it at school and now I’m 30 and it’s still going on.

Phillip then goes on to relate another story which had a similar impact on him:

When we first came here someone wrote in the paper that my mum and dad walked across the Nullarbor. They called us bush Aborigines who had never had any communication with whites. It wasn’t true but I suppose they thought it was funny.

At this point Phillip begins to externalise just what the colour of his skin has represented to those people who have vilified him and his family all their lives:

It seems that black is just a dirty word in this world. Look at what is associated with black, have you ever heard of a black angel? No, black is meant to be sad, bad or ugly, When I was home [Perth] there two years ago they [the police] pulled me up twice in a day. I had borrowed a mechanic’s car while he fixed mine for the day, they just made me feel like a criminal and after the second time I just took the car back [to the mechanics].

In just a few sentences Phillip had summed up the reality that he, Jim, his parents, his children and Indigenous people experience daily. Despite his fame or what he had achieved in his sport it was his skin colour, which marked, defined and altered him as a black person living in a white community. The article went on to pose a few simplistic scenarios about Jim and Phillip finishing their football careers. Phillip alludes to a return to Perth but Jim it was assumed would “go home to Mt Barker, settle down and probably play footy until he’s 40.”

Even though many thought that Jim and Phillip would return to Western Australia immediately after their playing days with NM, this was not part of Jim and Phillip’s

plans. They were both determined to go out on the same terms as they had started, playing football together. With Jim and Phillip delisted from NM it was now a process of staying fit, or in Phillip’s case recuperating, and allowing the internal player draft to help them stay together.

For Jim the choice of his new club was no random selection, it was a careful and measured consideration. Jim started training with St Kilda as he thought that of all the sides in the competition St Kilda was the side that offered the most. He recalls:

I just thought they had a side that could go places with big Plugger, Stewie Loewe, Nicky Winmar, Bourke and Harvey. I thought they were a good chance to make the finals.\textsuperscript{736}

As the internal March draft got under way, so too did St Kilda as they picked Jim up at number three for a reported $85 000. For Ken Sheldon in his first year of coaching the availability of Jim in the March draft was a valuable opportunity to bring some experience into a talented, young side:

We needed somebody to get front and square of the packs that both Lockett and Loewe were dominating in the St Kilda forward line. It was discussed and we decided to take him as one of our picks... He taught a number of our players the art of roving. We had nobody in our club that could sit in a pocket and draw a good player on him. Jimmy could take a good player out of that location and still hit the pack front and square or over the back and still kick two or three goals in a game.\textsuperscript{737}

With Phillip’s knees still cause for some concern it was going to take time to fully assess whether Phillip would also be able to join Jim at Moorabbin. For Sheldon, however, it was clear that the differences between Jim and Phillip’s physical condition meant those chances were slim:

I suppose Phil’s injuries, particularly with his knees, were probably one of the major factors why we weren’t prepared to take that gamble, whereas Jimmy was more physically sound. We would have loved to have the two of them but Phil

\textsuperscript{736} Personal interview Jim Krakouer 29/5/2003.
\textsuperscript{737} Personal interview Ken Sheldon 31/7/2002. My emphasis.
just couldn’t cope. He tried. He came down and did some training but it was evident that he was really going to struggle with his legs.\textsuperscript{738}

In the first practice match the Saints took on Brisbane and Jim repaid Sheldon with a scintillating display. With Lockett coming on in the second quarter his impact was immediate and in:

25 minutes, Lockett kicked 5.4, took 10 marks, disposed of three different opponents and got himself on the end of every kick Jimmy Krakouer collected…He combined with Krakouer in such a way which suggests that the pair will become a potent force in the competition this season.\textsuperscript{739}

With other forward line players such as Loewe, Rod Owen and Nicky Winmar the St Kilda offence looked dangerous, one commentator saying that after the Brisbane game Saints fans were “almost delirious.”\textsuperscript{740}

That delirium would only become headier as St Kilda’s potency and potential was realised with a 63 point thrashing of Footscray in the first round. Jim finished the game with 37 possessions and played so well Footscray’s new coach Terry Wheeler said “This was the worst afternoon of my football career.”\textsuperscript{741}

After three rounds Saint Kilda were in third position and were playing a, “Hawthorn-style” of football.\textsuperscript{742} Locket had kicked 21 goals and the season for the Saints looked assured. For Phillip the news was not so good as another operation on his damaged knee looked certain to end his career. Despite this, he remained hopeful of playing for St Kilda in the following year “I will see what happens in November…it is disappointing but there is always someone worse off.”\textsuperscript{743}

\textsuperscript{738} Personal interview Ken Sheldon 31/7/2002.
\textsuperscript{739} The Age. 18/3/1990, Sport Extra p3. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{740} The Age. 19/3/1990, p34.
\textsuperscript{741} The Age. 2/4/1990, p29.
\textsuperscript{742} The Sunday Age. 8/4/1990, Sport Extra p19.
\textsuperscript{743} Sunday Herald. 29/4/1990, p35.
The faith that St Kilda had shown in Jim was repaid with solid performances. Sitting in a forward pocket Jim was unable to amass the big possessions he had in his primary roving role at NM but he was able to contribute when called upon to do so. For Danny Frawley, St Kilda’s reliable and hardy full-back, Jim’s physical presence was still something that was very much to be reckoned with:

When Jim came down to St Kilda I didn’t realise he was so tough. His ability to hit the pack hard and for the size of him he was really strong. Pound for pound he was probably the strongest player I’ve ever played with.744

By round six St Kilda were set to play fourth placed Hawthorn. Jim and St Kilda shared a dubious distinction – they had not beaten Hawthorn for a very long time. Jim had never played in a winning NM side against Hawthorn and St Kilda had not beaten the Hawks since round one of 1979. Played at Moorabbin, it was a classic contest before it even started as the key match ups were some of the best that money could buy, with Frawley pitted against Dunstall and Langford on Lockett. With Tuck, Platten and Brereton playing brilliantly for Hawthorn and the Saints were ably assisted by Winmar, Loewe, Harding and Nixon. At each change there was no more than a few points the difference, which set the last quarter up to be ferociously fast. With the game in the balance it was Jim’s dexterity in front of goal which helped the Saints get over the line:

Turning point: Only four goals were managed in the torrid last quarter. Jim Krakouer’s left footer at the twenty minute mark snapped after he brushed aside several Hawthorn defenders was the most crucial, giving the Saints a 10 point cushion that they clung to.745

The scenes at Moorabbin were riotous as even the warnings of the ground announcer went unhindered as the St Kilda faithful spilled out onto the ground. As the players made their way up the race, Nicky Winmar smiled to himself. He smiled because he had played well. He smiled because he had taken mark of the day on top of Michael Tuck’s

744 Personal interview Danny Frawley 30/7/2002.
745 The Sunday Age. 6/5/1990, Sport Extra p15.
shoulders on the member’s wing. He smiled disbelievingly as the fans clamoured over the wire cage, threatening to crush him and the rest of the St Kilda team in pure unadulterated excitement. As the cage became a human tunnel Nicky could only now truly appreciate the significance of Baldock’s words.

By Friday of the following week that delirium had turned to dire concern as news of a injured medial ligament in Jim’s ageing knee would require surgery and he would miss at least three weeks. The following week St Kilda lost to last placed Fitzroy and had an unconvincing win the following week against tenth placed NM. Things got worse for the Saints as after the NM game Lockett was to be sidelined for 10 weeks with a damaged knee. With the Saints dropping out of the top five and Winmar axed for poor form, the Saint juggernaut had come to a halt.

As the season ticked on so too did the AFL’s impending 1990 mid-season draft. Phillip’s knee injury was starting to heal quicker than expected as he had been training on his own and going down to Moorabbin to touch up on his skills. It was his belief, and of the media, that he would resume his playing career with Jim at St Kilda and their careers would finish the way they had started, together. The night before the draft the phone rang at Phillip’s Templestowe home. On the line was the Footscray coach Terry Wheeler and the news he had for Phillip was not good. For Phillip the memory is still vivid:

I got a call out of the blue from Terry Wheeler and he just said to me that they were going to draft me as Footscray were one pick before St Kilda. I more or less pleaded with them not to do it. I wanted to play but I wanted to finish off my career with Jimmy and I asked them not to take that away from me.746

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746 Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 8/2/2003.
Sadly, just as there was a slim chance of the Krakouer brother’s being able to play at Moorabbin, with one draft pick the next day Footscray’s recruitment manager Garry O’Sullivan said the name: “Phillip Krakouer.” That rekindling became impossible.

I always knew I was going to enjoy interviewing Terry Wheeler, not so much for what he had done to Phillip during the 1990 mid-season draft but for what I had read about him in the lead-up to our interview. The thing that sealed it for me was Martin Flanagan’s book *Southern Sky Western Oval*, which chronicles the 1993 season that Flanagan spent with the Bulldogs. Flanagan foregrounds the action like a documentary film-maker introducing the cast and the history of Footscray town, allowing an insight into one of the AFL’s most maligned, but staunch, working class clubs. The year before Phillip was drafted to Footscray, Wheeler filled his chest to address 12 000 people at Footscray’s Western Oval as the club was on the verge of extinction. Footscray’s President Peter Gordon had rung and asked him to be Footscray’s new coach. Wheeler accepted. Turning to the crowd, Wheeler had a message usually spoken at a rally to prevent clear-felling of native forests or to stop uranium mining. The sentiment was the same but Wheeler’s plea was for his football club and the love he had for it “I don’t believe we own anything.” He told the crowd. “I think we just hold it in trust for our children.”

I had arranged to meet Wheeler at Fremantle Oval when he was in Perth to oversee the national under-sixteen football championships being held there in early August 2002. Effectively it was my last interview and fortunately it was just down the road from where I lived. I was glad that this element of my process had come to an end.

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and I wouldn’t have to bother with the phone for some time. Wheeler, the head coach of the Australian Institute of Sport’s Football Academy, and I made our way across the bitumen to the historic Fremantle grandstand. He was everything I could recall from post-match interviews - smiling, big brown eyes, deep clear voice - but the thing I noticed about him was that he walked with a slight limp making him keen somewhat. Playing for Footscray from 1974 to 1983, Wheeler developed a fearsome reputation as an uncompromising back pocket player. Perhaps the limp was a legacy of his playing days? Wheeler and I sat down and began to talk about the Krakouer brothers, just as the opening siren sounded to start the game between Tasmania and Queensland. The conversation I had with Wheeler was easy. Over the course of my interviews, I had to expect a range of differing perspectives. Some interviews were like trying to prise a man-hole cover open with my bare hands. Others were like dealing with a 98 kg ego. Wheeler was emotive but measured in the way he recalled his final years of football, as a Son of the Scray, and witnessing the beginning of Jim and Phillip’s VFL careers:

Jimmy was tough and Jimmy was fierce and once he had won the ball Jimmy was extremely skilful and extraordinarily quick. Then from inside the contest he’d get it out to Phil who didn’t miss a step and got it [the ball] onto that little left foot. It was quite unique Phil’s kicking style. If I saw it now at these national championships you’d shudder and you’d go to the coach of that state and say; ‘we gotta fix this’. No-one tried to fix Phil’s kick because those Indigenous boys they just play and their training is just doing it and doing it. So whatever style it is and how technically correct or incorrect it is it doesn’t matter because through continually doing it they hone it in.\footnote{Personal interview Terry Wheeler 2/8/2002. My emphasis.}

Wheeler was coming to the end of his VFL career just as the Krakouers were coming through and he could see the sort of impact they could have on a game. It was an influence which was not based purely on brute force or sheer skill but was in many ways an organic, unencumbered style:

Playing back-pocket for Footscray I’d stand alongside the second rover and at the eight minute mark the first and second rovers would change. So I’m standing alongside blokes like Leigh Matthews and Peter Crimmins at Hawthorn. Normie
Goss and Peter Bedford at South Melbourne, Gary Wilson at Fitzroy and Paul Sara at Geelong and coming through is Phil and Jimmy. So my comparison would be against those guys because what I think there is difficulty in playing against is straight creativity, spontaneity and invention inside a game. A lot of the guys I played on, even Leigh Matthews, it was predictable what was going to happen. \(^{750}\)

Wheeler doesn’t discount the skill of these other great players but he does contextualise it in terms of the Krakouer’s and their *invention*:

Jim and Phil didn’t have that [predictable] component, they’d actually create the game at the moment and it would be hard to predict what was going to happen. As the game was coming down that wasn’t necessarily the way in which they were going to react to the play. They’d invent something. \(^{751}\)

It was for these reasons that he rang Phillip the night prior to the mid season draft. For Wheeler it was an opportunity which would perhaps not come along again:

I just thought that whatever players were playing with Footscray at that stage to have the opportunity to play with Phil Krakouer, to train with Phil Krakouer, to be touched by Phil Krakouer was too great to ignore. There was those concerns with his knee but there was never going to be any real huge expectations on Phil. I could also see in a playing context that we couldn’t get our hands on a player who could play in close around the goal mouth and with four kicks kick three goals, there just wasn’t anyone else around. \(^{752}\)

Having trained and been around the players and coaching staff at St Kilda, Phillip was comfortable with the notion of finishing his time at Moorabbin. But the game was changing. The machine was different now and the cogs which made up that machine had to change as individual choice gave way to the will of the machine. For Phillip, who was perhaps still reeling from the messy break with NM, the phone call from Wheeler was traumatic because the Krakouer unit would never again play together. Once again Phillip would be out of his comfort zone, only this time instead of being a supple twenty year old with the world at this feet he was a veteran with bad knees going to a new club where he hardly knew anyone.

\(^{750}\) Personal interview Terry Wheeler 2/8/2002.
\(^{752}\) Personal interview Terry Wheeler 2/8/2002.
For weeks St Kilda hovered just outside the five and were in a head-to-head battle with Footscray and Geelong. With losses to sides further down the ladder than themselves and without Lockett, Winmar and Jim, the latter part of the season was going to require a great deal of effort and concentration to keep St Kilda in final’s contention. By round 13 St Kilda welcomed Jim back into it’s senior side to play a third placed Melbourne where he was named in the forward line alongside Loewe and Harvey. With a focal point to kick to, a determined mid-field, a good following division lead by Harding, a strong attacking half-back line and Winmar running amok, St Kilda exemplified the team game. By the full-time siren the Saints had beaten Melbourne by 33 points and then proceeded to walk off arm in arm in one long line. In the St Kilda dressing rooms after the game the emotion of the win produced a great photograph, and one of my favourites of Jim. He stands wedged in between Russell Jeffrey and Winmar. Jeffrey, the Saint’s half-back, is smiling as he looks over to someone in the dressing room. Winmar’s gaze is on Jim and his left fist is poised on Jim’s jaw as he gives Jim a gentle knuckly rub, a dangerous move had it been performed by anyone else or in any other context. Jim, like Jeffrey, is looking elsewhere in the room, just slightly off from the centre of camera. His eyes are soft as if he is relieved, another small battle is won and he looks happy as if for the first time in his life.

As the season moves on, injuries and further losses see St Kilda slip further out of the hunt. Wins only come against lower sides and by round 18 St Kilda are set to take on Collingwood at Victoria Park. With the Pies in second spot, St Kilda are ninth and from the opening minutes of the game the writing is on the wall. Collingwood are playing a determined run-on style of football and are pressuring a, “distracted and undisciplined St Kilda side.”

A still from *The Age* sports pages shows Jim in an all too familiar

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pose, his fists are up and he is remonstrating with a Collingwood fan. The black and white ghouls are everywhere. To add to this, Jim has been reported for striking his old adversary Shane Kerrison with a, “copybook left hook.” The evidence is irrefutable as trial by video is now becoming an art form. Jim pleads guilty. He gets three weeks.

The following week against Hawthorn, Nicky Winmar is reported for kicking and assaulting Brereton after the two are involved in a heated scuffle. Nicky gets ten weeks for kicking and assault and becomes St Kilda’s “leitmotif of a century of passion and failure.” Which poses the question, “What if he hadn’t been wiped out for what we know now, thanks to Dermott Brereton’s belated honesty, was a response to racist abuse?”

Without Winmar, Krakouer and Harvey, the side that walked off conga-style against Melbourne is depleted and it’s confidence shot. Finishing the season in ninth position, the coaching staff vet their frustration on the players. Sheldon’s last words for the season ring in the player’s ears as he assures them that no one is untouchable, not even Tony Lockett who is fined $5000.00 for discipline and the Saints look to next year

3.12 Final sirens & full-time scores

[When] you played footy everybody wanted to be your friend, everybody loved you, everybody cared for you and when your footy’s finished nobody wants to know you.

Apart from a few ground staff there was no-one else at the Flemington Race course. As the solitary figure limbered up it was clear that he had come to prove a point to no one

754 The Age. 8/8/1990, p32.
but himself. Could he do it? The white cotton singlet was taut around his girth but this was of no real concern to him as he was more worried about his knees and how they would hold up. For years his body could do what he had wanted it to without even thinking about it. He could twist and turn out of a pack of bodies leaving in his wake flailing muscular arms and swearing masculine voices. He could swoop on a ball like a wedge-tail eagle gathering a rodent in a paddock full of stubble and fly down the Arden Street flank making the old grand stand holler and quake. Sprinting, he would run directly at an opponent and subtly arch his back or at the last moment put in a longer step and bounce his body in the opposite direction to the anticipation of the oncoming human traffic. Either way they would miss him by centimetres, it was all he needed, and like light he would squeeze through the cracks bursting out into a bigger space that could not contain him. But that was then - now things were very different. He could no longer do what he was so adept at because even though he knew the moves his body simply, cruelly, couldn’t accommodate him.

With his limbering up complete, Phillip Krakouer started off slowly around the Flemington course and for the first three hundred metres he went at half pace. As the blood began to circulate around his body he felt looser and he increased his pace slightly, just enough to hear his puffing breath. With each step his body’s memory recalled what it felt like. Phillip began to find his rhythm and he began to enjoy himself so much that he passed the point he had started as if it were just moments ago. He kept running. The singlets tautness began to give way as the sweat broke through the fabric. It was as if he had blinked and he had run another lap. He kept going:

I just visualised the horses running around, some of the Melbourne Cup winners and the big [horse] races that were inspirational. That was probably my best training session ever. I was just out on my own and I just pretended I was winning the Melbourne Cup. After the run I just felt there was nothing going to stop me from making my comeback.\footnote{Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 8/2/2003. My emphasis.}
Despite Phillip’s initial reluctance to resume his career with Footscray, he decided that this was his last shot and even if it wasn’t the way he had wanted it to end, at least he would not die wondering. He had played in a handful of reserve’s games in 1990 but if he played he wanted to play league. Phillip says his time at Footscray was, “sensational”, but no one, not even Phillip, was under any illusion that he was going to be a walk-up start. He would have to work and he would need luck to go his way even if he was to play even one senior game with the Bulldogs.

In practice matches leading up to the season proper both Jim and Phillip were putting in reasonable performances for their respective sides by making the goal scoring or best player lists regularly. With slight injury clouds over both, they were not named in the round one teams for the start of the season. It would not be until round five that Phillip was named to play for Footscray against Hawthorn at Waverley. With Hawthorn just out of the five and Footscray in the middle of the ladder, the Hawks were expected to easily account for the Bulldogs but went down to Footscray by 11 points. Despite starting on the bench and only getting three kicks Phillip made it through unscathed.

The following week Jim was rushed back into the St Kilda team where he had a dreadful game finishing with the statistics of one kick and one mark. Phillip had a better match in round five against the AFL’s new team, Adelaide, where he kicked three goals and took a spectacular soaring mark. Jim played much better in round 7 against Brisbane picking up 24 possessions and helped the Saints to a 69 point win. By round 13 Footscray had clawed their way back from a slow start to the season and were sitting in ninth position. Playing the WCE at the WACA was going to prove a

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758 Personal interview Phillip Krakouer 8/2/2003.
difficult task for a number of reasons, the main one being the WCE’s were now under the firm rule of Mick Malthouse. With Malthouse as coach the WCE star was on the rise, they had won all of their home and away matches to that point of the season. The brand of football they played was based around their defence by keeping opposition sides to lower scores than their own. On the hard WACA surface the WCE had no trouble accounting for Footscray as it was in attack that Eagles full-forward Peter Sumich kicked thirteen goals and the Eagles won by 118 points. Their product was assured.

From the match report there is no indication that this is any different to any other game. The only reported injury is to Worsfold with a groin, but the game is much more significant for Phillip Krakouer. Phillip would spend nearly the entire game on the bench with less than half an hour of actual match-time. It is his last game. His record with the Bulldogs stands at seven games: seven goals. His legs had finally given way.

At St Kilda Jim’s name is featured heavily, not in the post-match reports, but in the injury lists with descriptions such as “Jim Krakouer-hamstring strain-three weeks” or it crops up occasionally in the semantic wastelands of the reserve’s lists. I hoped to find his name in another context but it just wasn’t to be. Going through the match statistics in The Age, names from the decade before were becoming increasingly more difficult to find, with Tuck, Ironmonger and Cloke the only ones that were identifiable. The names of this new era are different; Mainwaring, Hocking, Liberatore, Burke and Kelly. As the names change so too do the attitudes and political themes of the day, as racism in sport is starting to become an issue of real debate in the media. Chris Lewis becomes the recognisable face of this new development with
the caption underneath a full page advertisement in *The Age* reading “Some footballers get abused for more than just the colour of their jumper.” Under this a few questions are posed, “Racism is illegal in every aspect of society except on the football field. Why is swearing a reportable offence and not racism?”759 This is a precursor to a story to be run by Caroline Wilson the next day in *The Sunday Age*. It is in this article that Collingwood’s captain Tony Shaw says:

> It’s a business out there, I’d make a racist comment every week if I thought it would help win a game…If they’re [Indigenous players] going to get upset by taunts then they shouldn’t be playing. We’re men not kids. It’s no different calling a bloke a black bastard than him calling me a white honky and it only lasts as long as the game.760

The article goes on to report that Troy Ugle, Michael Long and Derek Kickett had all received anonymous hate mail. Furthermore, Chris Lewis had received counselling due to the negative treatment he had received during the season, particularly after an incident with Melbourne’s Todd Viney. Viney’s finger had mysteriously ended up in Lewis’s mouth, he bit it, resulting in Viney taking a very public AIDS test and Lewis being framed as the aggressor. The AFL is still four seasons away from making racial and religious vilification of any player illegal.

By the end of the season Jim’s name is not even in the injury or reserves lists and it is clear that he will be axed from St Kilda’s side. For Sheldon, Jim’s career at St Kilda was over:

> He worked pretty hard when he came to St Kilda. He got off to a real good start and unfortunately with most players in the twilight of their careers they try to do too much physically and something gives way. Jimmy had a bit of a hamstring problem and he probably wasn’t able to maintain that hard edge that he’s set himself when he first came down. I think it dwindled over the next twelve months to the point where he knew that he had had enough.761

761 Personal interview Ken Sheldon 31/7/1991.
As Sheldon recalls he contacted Jim and asked him to his office early in 1992. As Jim made his way up the stairs to the coaches office Sheldon was coming out and they met at the top. “You know” Jim said, “We don’t have to go in there, we can do it here.” Sheldon made it clear that Jim’s services would no longer be required. There was no acrimony in the discussion as Sheldon points out:

    Our communication was always very open. We’d stand in the change rooms while Jimmy’s kids would be kicking the footy and we’d have a chat. He always knew where he stood at St Kilda, he was very open and I think everybody appreciated that.763

As Sheldon and Jim talked they finally shook hands. Sheldon wished Jim all the best. Jim acknowledged Sheldon with a nod and then turned and walked back down the stairs. Sheldon paused for a moment and then walked into his office. Jim was no longer a Saint. The magic was over.

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762 Personal interview Ken Sheldon 31/7/1991.
763 Personal interview Ken Sheldon 31/7/1991.
4.1 Enjoyment & Understanding

If it makes some of our supporters sit back and work out the last 10-15-20 years that they have been barracking for Collingwood that things haven’t been quite right; and I reckon we’ve turned that around and when I say we’ve turned it around, Leon Davis has turned that around because he is almost adored by our crowd and when you think about what happened to Nicky Winmar at this ground not long ago we’ve come along way. 764

When Donald Bradman died in 2001 Australia mourned the death of the world’s most famous cricketer. The print media was chock-full of Bradman statistics, sayings and commentary, and television replayed highlights from the Bodyline series and past interviews with Ray Martin. On the ABC’s Lateline program three men sat and talked about the Bradman legacy for sport and Australia as a nation. They were Bradman’s biographer, Roland Perry, Gerard Henderson from the Sydney Institute and an academic who had just completed his PhD on Bradman, Brett Hutchins.

The majority of the program consisted of Perry defending any suggestion that the Don had been anything other than a pillar of society. Henderson, while acknowledging Bradman’s sporting prowess, had taken up a position opposite to Perry’s, raising several points than ran contrary to the Bradman myth. Unfortunately, Hutchins did not get much air time but what he did say perhaps summed up the essence of the debate and how historical events and figures, like Bradman, are seen. When asked by Lateline’s presenter, Tony Jones, whether Australians wanted to know the truth about their sporting heroes, Hutchins replied, “I suppose you could choose to enjoy or choose to understand.” Hutchins’ remark struck a distinct cord with me because for the first time I

heard a succinct articulation of what it was that I was trying to do with Jim and Phillip’s story. Furthermore, Hutchins’ remark encapsulated the way that many of us enter into issues that are politically or personally challenging. But the question remains; should one just enjoy things because they are culturally sacrosanct or should one choose to understand something that they know will cause them emotional harm or unease?

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Waiting for Barassi in a St Kilda café I made sure my recorder was working and scanned my questions for the hundredth time. When Barassi walked in he was in no doubt who was there to meet him; I was the only one in the café. He shook my hand, ordered two coffee’s and warned me that he only had 45 minutes to talk. I didn’t waste time. Barassi answered all my questions honestly and fully and he struck me, football legend aside, as a likeable sort of person. Then Barassi did what no other interviewee did throughout my process. Halfway through the interview Barassi started asking me the questions. I was somewhat taken aback by this because Barassi seemed to become slightly frustrated at my line of enquiry:

Barassi: “What’s the idea of this...book?”
SG: “It’s essentially trying to engage with their story to try and come to grips with why Jimmy is where he is now as opposed to Phillip.....Basically I am trying to read their story prior to things like racial vilification laws so we can come to a further understanding of Indigenous Australia.”

I went on further and talked about my studies and about sociological, political and cultural perceptions regarding Indigenous issues as I saw them. I could sense Barassi perhaps wanted to be somewhere else but thankfully he indulged me. I told Barassi that I felt that Indigenous and non-Indigenous issues needed to be viewed in context of historical and contemporary themes. I could hear myself rattling on until I framed for Barassi what I meant by this:
SG: “I am trying to bring together all those things that I have learnt in the last nine years to tell the story. Particularly when you look at, say, the 1967 referendum where Aboriginal People first got the chance to vote.”
Barassi: “67? That late?”
SG: “And prior to that Aboriginal Australians fell under things like the Flora and Fauna Act.”
Barassi: “Really? 67? God that’s unbelievable.”

On reflection I wish I had said to Barassi that by the time Carlton’s Syd Jackson played in the historic 1970 grand final, in which Barassi was a coach, he had only been a citizen of this country for three years.

A few months later I watched as Barassi’s fifty years in football was celebrated with a huge star-studded dinner televised on Channel 9. Eddie McGuire hosted the evening as past football champions mildly roasted Barassi or waxed lyrically about Barassi’s influence on them and football. At the end of the evening Barassi got up and thanked everyone and then philosophised about his own contribution to football and life:

You can count on me for a few things – I’ll be fair dinkum. I have a dip. I won’t play favourites. I’m not scared to try untried things and I won’t play politics. I believe in Norm Smith’s definition of success which is, “It isn’t what you achieve. It is what you should achieve with what you have.”

It is easy to see why Barassi used this reference because it’s from Smith, his mentor, and it is applicable to the football-minded person as it adheres to the principles of the game. I have used it not because Barassi said it but because it has a greater application when expanded upon. In analysing this last sentence I think it could be developed further; ‘It is what you should achieve with what you have come from; had to endure; witnessed.’ At many turns Jim and Phillip could, quite plausibly, not have been successful at all. They could have walked away from football for a range of personal and cultural reasons, become injured or simply stayed in Mt Barker. That they persisted says something about them as people and the difficulty of being an Indigenous
person living in Australia for the last 216 years. Jim and Phillip’s story is no different to many Indigenous Australians, except their profiles were greater because they played, and were very good at, the highest profile sport in Australia.

The adversity that Jim and Phillip faced is something that many non-Indigenous Australian’s simply do not have the capability of understanding, as racism has no personal bearing on them in their daily lives. But racism is not just about what is expressed. It is ignoring someone; denying one access to an everyday activity; refusing to shake one’s hand; assuming one is guilty. Racism is ideological, systemic and institutionalised and as such it marks us all. One chooses, as Hutchins rightly says, to enjoy or ignore that this happens or to understand and act upon that understanding.

In his book, Hutchins describes the apolitical nature of Bradman’s character and how his heroism is something we, as Australians, tacitly appreciate and understand:

> Stripping away this apolitical visage is important as it is through figures such as Bradman that the political character of social life – ‘of authority, legitimacy and power’ – is played out.  

The binary to this is Phillip’s, and especially Jim’s, position because their identity is politically marked by their skin. Hence, Jim and Phillip’s apoliticalness is never guaranteed as they are characterised through their actions and by their frustration, invalidity, and powerlessness. Jim and Phillip’s input into the game was perhaps best explained to me by Flanagan:

> Phil had no violent dimension of his game whatsoever. Phil was pure genius, pure skill, thought and anticipation. Of Jimmy I’d say two things. He did not accept the restrictions of white society. The other is the blokes who played with him, speak well of him. That’s a really important consideration because that means something.

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765 Personal interview Ron Barassi 26/7/2002.
To get a further understanding of this meaning we need to go to a football match played on the 11th May 2001 between Essendon and Richmond. This is Jim’s eldest son’s, Andrew Krakouer’s, first AFL game. For a young man playing his first match it was big, not just because 80,000 people turned out to watch it, but because the hype about it being his first had also been big. Danny Frawley, Richmond’s coach, decided to start Andrew on the bench. The expectation of the Channel 7 commentator Ian Robertson was palpable, stating Andrew must be champing at the bit and itching like blazes to play. It was perhaps the two special comments men Doug Hawkins and Richard Osbourne, who had played against Jim and Phillip in the 1980’s, that were more excited. “Get the boy on and let’s see what he can do” one said, “I spoke to Danny through the week and I told him ‘just let him run’” said the other. Unlike his father, Andrew Krakouer would not score a goal with his first kick in league football, it would be his second.

By late in the second quarter it was clear Richmond were going to suffer a big defeat as they were 40 points down and had no method going into attack. As the ball fumbled and bumbled its way into the Richmond forward line Andrew is trying to judge the ball’s movement which he has followed for about twenty metres. The ball cannot be picked up by anyone as it pops through one player’s grasp and through another’s legs and finally into Andrew’s hands. In a flash he has it on his boot and scores a goal. The Richmond supporters erupt as it will be the only bright light on an otherwise dark day. As Robertson enthuses loudly, “Just like his old man.” It could be just as easily be said ‘just like his uncle’ as in that moment the crowd got to see something of what Jim and Phillip Krakouer could create. Joy, applause and incredulity as somewhere in the crowd a supporter with his mouth half-full of a meat pie turns to his mate and says, “How the bloody hell did he do that?” And sprays him with pastry and sauce.
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GLOSSARY

Balga: Noongar word for grass tree.
Banjo Patterson: Australian poet who wrote The Man from Snowy River.
Barbie/BBQ: Australian meal cooked outside.
Battler: Australian colloquialism for someone who has little money or opportunity.
Blackfella: Australian colloquialism for Pan-Indigenous Australian identity.
Black velvet: Derogatory term used to describe Indigenous women
Board: The specific place in a shearing shed where the sheep are shorn.
Bonza: Australian colloquialism meaning good.
Bradman: Famous Australian cricketer
Bruce McAveney: Australian sports commentator known for his exuberance.
Bunaba: Famous Indigenous Language group from the Kimberley in Western Australia.
Conk: Noongar word for Uncle.
Colts: Under-18 football competition.
Fair-go: Even chance
Fair dinkum: Honest
Gin-jockey: A derogatory term used to describe a non-Indigenous man who regularly seeks out Indigenous women for sex.
Hungry: Temporary shearing plant used on or near the board.
Lamingtons: Sponge cake covered in chocolate and coconut.
League: The highest level of football in any grade.
Moorditj: Noongar word that means both dense (ie hard) and good (ie special).
MCG: Melbourne Cricket Ground.
Nag: Horse.
Noongar: South-West Aboriginal person (ie man).
Nippers: Underage football competition that precedes colts or thirds.
Ned Kelly: Famous Australian Bushranger.
On the pine: Waiting on the bench during a game of football.
Phar Lap: Famous Australian race horse.
Ripper: Good.
Roy and HG: Famous Australian sports commentators and media personalities.
Reserves: The football competition between colts and league.
Sheila: Woman.
Snag: Sausage.
Scratch match: A football match played before the normal season commences.
Scoops: Shorts that were fashionable in the 1970s.
Thirds: See colts
VFL: Victorian Football League that became defunct in 1990.
WAFL/WANFL: Western Australian Football League.