

2015/15: The Adam Goodes booing controversy: Are AFL football crowds racist?

What they said...

'Adam is hurting, he feels it's racist, many, many people feel this is racist and therefore why would you do it, knowing that'

AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan

'This whole Adam Goodes drama is ridiculous. The public can boo or chant whoever's name they want! It's nothing to do with being racist...'

Former Australian test bowler, Shane Warne

On August 29, 2015, Indigenous AFL player Adam Goodes was again booed during a game between his team, the Sydney Swans, and St Kilda. The game was played at Etihad Stadium.

It was reported that St Kilda fans booed Goodes when he touched the ball early in the game then again when he kicked a goal in the second quarter.

This was Goodes first game back after taking several weeks off in response to consistent booing from opposition crowds during away games. This booing has been occurring for about eighteen months.

Goodes has been a prominent spokesperson for Indigenous rights and there are those who claim that the negative response to Goodes is racially based. Others claim it is a response to aspects of Goodes's game or to his aggressive attitude toward opposition supporters.

On September 19, 2015, Goodes announced his retirement from AFL football.

On September 24, 2015, it was reported that Goodes had declined a lap of honour to mark his retirement and his contribution to the game. The lap of honour would have occurred prior to the AFL Grand Final.

Persistent crowd harassment has been suggested as contributing to Goodes's decision to retire and to decline the lap of honour.

The issue has sharply divided social and sporting commentators and supporters of AFL football.

Background

The information outlined below has been abbreviated from two Wikipedia entries - 'Australian rules football culture' and 'Adam Goodes'

The full text can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_rules_football_culture and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Goodes

Player and spectator conduct within Australian Rules football / Incidents of vilification:

1993: Nicky Winmar reacted to overt racism from the crowd at Victoria Park, Melbourne, turning to face the offending segments of the crowd, lifted his Guernsey and defiantly pointed to his skin (at the end of a game between St Kilda Football Club and Collingwood Football Club). This act was captured in a series of famous photographs and led to far-reaching reform in the AFL in respect of racism in the game.

1994: Essendon Football Club champion Michael Long complained to the Australian Football League over an alleged racial vilification incident involving Collingwood Football Club's Damian Monkhorst which was the result of an extensive investigation throughout 1995.

1997: Sydney Swans player Robert AhMat was involved in an alleged racial vilification row with Essendon Football Club player Michael Prior.

2007: The Herald Sun launches a special investigation into racism in junior Aussie Rules, revealing several controversial incidents.

2010: Former Australian rules player Mal Brown apologises for referring to aboriginal Australian Football League players as "cannibals" and that he could not select Nicky Winmar or Michael Mitchell because "there were no lights" [at the poorly lit Whitten Oval] during a promotion for the E. J. Whitten Legends Game. The comments prompted AFL CEO Andrew Demetriou to express his disgust.

2011: P Joel Wilkinson racially vilified in multiple incidents, including by Brisbane Lions player Justin Sherman and by a Collingwood supporter in June 2012.

Majak Daw racially vilified by Port Melbourne spectators.

2013: Majak Daw, Daniel Wells and Lindsay Thomas allegedly racially vilified by spectators in a matches against Hawthorn[35] and against the Western Bulldogs.

Adam Goodes points to a Collingwood spectator in a match against Collingwood after an apparent call of "ape". The

person later apologised to him.

Video reveals Collingwood supporter racially vilifying both Adam Goodes and Lewis Jetta.

Eddie McGuire apologises for "King Kong" gaffe in reference to Goodes.

Adam Goodes and the booing controversy

Adam Goodes is a professional Australian rules football player with the Sydney Swans in the Australian Football League (AFL). Goodes holds an elite place in VFL/AFL history as a dual Brownlow Medallist, dual premiership player, four-time All-Australian, member of the Indigenous Team of the Century and representing Australia in the International Rules Series. In addition, he currently holds the record for the most games played for an Indigenous player, surpassing Andrew McLeod's record of 340 games during the 2014 AFL season. Goodes was named Australian of the Year in 2014 for his community work through the Go Foundation and advocacy against racism.

On 24 May 2013, during the AFL's annual Indigenous Round, a 13-year-old Collingwood supporter called Goodes an 'ape'. Upon hearing the abuse, Goodes pointed the girl out to security and she was later removed from the stadium. After the game, Collingwood president Eddie McGuire apologised to Goodes on behalf of the club. McGuire said that Collingwood had a zero tolerance policy towards racism, but also said that the girl, who also later apologised to Goodes, did not know that what she had said was a racial slur.

Over the following years, and in particular in 2015, Goodes was repeatedly and loudly booed by opposition fans at most matches. The motivation for the booing generated wide public debate. This dominated media coverage from both sports and political commentators for weeks at a time during the year. Many considered the booing to be unacceptable and motivated by racism-either because those booing felt affronted by his race or by the strong political positions Goodes had taken on racial issues-and called on the AFL to take direct action to stop it. Others defended the rights of fans to continue booing as a show of disapproval for Goodes' actions, including a perception that his approach in dealing with the Collingwood fan who called him an ape was heavy-handed, and for statements he had made during his time as Australian of the Year which had been seen to denigrate the history of European settlement of Australia. The booing of Goodes has also been described as a symptom of tall poppy syndrome.

During a match against Carlton in May 2015, Goodes celebrated a goal by performing an indigenous war dance in which he mimed throwing a spear at the Carlton cheer squad. Goodes said after the incident that the dance was based on one he learned from under-16s indigenous team the Flying Boomerangs, and that it was intended as a symbol of indigenous pride during Indigenous Round, not as a means of offending or intimidating the crowd. However, many spectators were offended by the aggressive nature of the spear-throwing gesture or considered it retaliatory against the booing he had received in previous weeks, and it was criticised by many commentators for being inflammatory. The booing of Goodes intensified in the months after the war dance.

Owing to the stress caused by the booing and media attention, Goodes took leave from the game in August 2015. Many clubs and players in the AFL supported Goodes in the first week of his leave by wearing indigenous-themed guernseys or armbands, and a video was prepared by the eighteen club captains to discourage the crowd from booing

Internet information

On October 2, 2015, The Huffington Post Australian published an opinion by Chris Pain titled, 'A Lap Of Honour For Sydney Swans Legend Adam Goodes'

Despite the title, the article details Goodes's decision to decline the lap of honour and suggests this decision was affected by the persistent crowd harassment to which Goodes has been subjected.

The full text of the article can be found at http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2015/10/02/adam-goodes-lap-of-honour_n_8230844.html

On September 30, 2015, The Conversation published an opinion piece by Sean Gorman, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University

The comment is titled 'Booing the messenger: Goodes is gone, but the confronting truth remains'

The piece gives an overview of Goodes's career on and off the football field and suggests that the challenge remains for the larger Australian community to accept the message of Indigenous mistreatment and disadvantage to which Goodes attempted to draw attention.

The full text of the piece can be found at <https://theconversation.com/booing-the-messenger-goodes-is-gone-but-the-confronting-truth-remains-48157>

On September 24, 2015, the AFL football supplement, The Roar, published an opinion piece by Glenn Mitchell titled 'Adam Goodes' absence on grand final day is a crying shame'

The piece condemns the negative crowd reaction to Adama Goodes as 'character assassination'

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.theroar.com.au/2015/09/24/adam-goodes-absence-grand-final-day-crying-shame/>

On September 21, 2015, 3AW football commentator Neil Mitchell conducted an interview with Bobby Skilton, former Soth Melbourne (now Sydney Swans) captain and coach. Skilton expressed his admiration for Adam Goodes as a player, his belief that Goodes was entitled to speak on behalf of Indigenous people and his regret that Goodes had been badly treated by football crowds.

A full recording and a partial transcript of the interview can be found at <http://www.3aw.com.au/news/afl-legend-bobby->

[skilton-saddened-by-hate-directed-at-adam-goodes-20150921-gjr9bu.html](http://www.watoday.com.au/afl/afl-news/former-sydney-swans-chairman-richard-colless-slams-disgraceful-booing-of-adam-goodes-20150921-gjr9bu.html)

On September 20, 2015, WAToday football supplement Real Footy published an article featuring the views of former Sydney Swans chairman Richard Colless. Colless details the abuse Goodes has received, which he considered unprecedented, and condemned football crowds for their lack of respect for the highly accomplished player.

The full text of the article can be found at <http://www.watoday.com.au/afl/afl-news/former-sydney-swans-chairman-richard-colless-slams-disgraceful-booing-of-adam-goodes-20150920-gjqsa7.html>

On September 8, 2015, The Huffington Post Australia ran an opinion piece written by Sol Bellear, Chairman of the Aboriginal Medical Service Redfern. The piece is titled 'You're Never Going to Stop Us Raising Uncomfortable Truths'

It looks at the role of prominent indigenous Australian sports people, particularly Goodes, in promoting awareness of racism and respect for Aboriginal rights.

The full text can be accessed at http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/sol-bellear/first-nations-voices-wor_b_8086394.html

On August 5, 2015, the online newspaper Spiked carried an opinion piece by London-based writer Charlie Pearson titled, 'Booing Adam Goodes isn't racist'. Pearson argues that different standards of behaviour apply to crowds at sporting events.

The full text of the comment can be found at <http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/booing-adam-goodes-isnt-racist/17265#.VeqxDZfLpEc>

On August 4, 2015, Perth Now published a comment by Nat Locke titled, 'Nat Locke: A boo is a boo is a boo and sometimes it should be taboo'

Locke defends the value of booing within sporting competitions while at the same time expressing reservations about the treatment Adam Goodes has received.

The full comment can be accessed at <http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/opinion/nat-locke-a-boo-is-a-boo-is-a-boo-and-sometimes-it-should-be-taboo/story-fnuu8wyp-1227463075030>

On August 3, 2015, the ABC's media analysis program, Media Watch, telecast a segment detailing the media's treatment of the Adam Goodes booing controversy.

A full transcript can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s4286254.htm>

On July 31, 2015, ABC News published a report titled 'Adam Goodes: Shane Warne defends fans booing Swans' Indigenous star'

The report is a general treatment of the Goodes controversy, featuring a report on Shane Warne's justification of the booing of Adam Goodes.

The full text of this report can be accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-30/warne-defends-goodes-booers/6661084>

On July 29, 2015, The Conversation published a comment by Keith Parry, lecturer in Sport Management at the University of Western Sydney. The opinion piece is titled 'Booing Adam Goodes - racism is in the stitching of the AFL'.

Parry gives an historical overview of the extent of racism in the AFL.

The full text of this piece can be accessed at <http://theconversation.com/booing-adam-goodes-racism-is-in-the-stitching-of-the-afl-45316>

On July 29, 2015, The Daily Telegraph published a comment by Miranda Devine titled 'Only Adam Goodes can stop the booing'

Devine argues that Goodes is himself responsible for the negative perceptions some supporters have of him.

The full text of this comment can be found at <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/only-adam-goodes-can-stop-the-booing/story-fnpug1jf-1227460775525>

On July 29, 2015, news.com.au reported the opinion of Sydney radio talkback host and commentator Alan Jones that the booing of Adam Goodes was not racially motivated.

The full text of this report can be found at <http://www.news.com.au/sport/afl/alan-jones-unleashes-on-victim-adam-goodes/story-fndv8ujy-1227461693270>

On July 28, 2015, The Daily Advertiser published an opinion piece by Paul McLoughlin in which he argued that most booing or barracking was not racist and that vocal crowds added an important dimension to sporting contests.

The full text can be found at <http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/3240039/banning-the-boo-may-end-up-having-the-reverse-effect/>

On July 28, 2015, Business Insider published an opinion piece by Mark O'Sullivan titled 'The way people justify booing AFL star Adam Goodes sounds just like the excuses from Gamergate's sexist taunts'

O'Sullivan argues that the justifications offered for booing Adam Goodes are not sustainable.

The full text of this comment can be found at <http://www.businessinsider.com.au/the-way-people-justify-booing-afl-star-adam-goodes-sounds-just-like-the-excuses-from-gamergates-sexist-taunts-2015-7>

On July 27, 2015, The New Matilda published an opinion piece by Chris Graham titled 'There's A Really Simple Way To Stop The Racist Booing Of Adam Goodes'.

Graham argues that the AFL could take action to control crowd behaviour.

The full text of this comment can be found at <https://newmatilda.com/2015/07/27/theres-really-simple-way-stop-racist-booing-adam-goodes>

On June 17, 2015, The Daily Telegraph published a comment by Miranda Devine titled, 'Adam Goodes isn't booed for the colour of his skin. He is booed for acting like a pillock'

The opinion piece argues that the booing of Adam Goodes is not racially motivated.

The full text of this comment can be found at <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/adam-goodes-isnt-booed-for-the-colour-of-his-skin-he-is-booed-for-acting-like-a-pillock/story-fnpug1jf-1227401141399>

On June 1, 2015, Mamamia published a report titled 'Waleed Aly owns the debate over Adam Goodes' war cry'

The report focussed on social commentator, Waleed Aly, analysis of the Adam Goodes controversy, in which Waleed Aly suggests that many Australians do not appreciate vocal minorities.

The full text of this article can be accessed at <http://www.mamamia.com.au/news/waleed-aly-adam-goodes-war-cry/>

On May 26, 2015, Herald Sun commentator Andrew Bolt posted on his blog a comment arguing that the booing of Adam Goodes was not racially motivated.

The full text of this comment can be accessed at http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt/index.php/heraldsun/comments/if_goodes_was_booed_by_racists_why_was_rioli_cheered/

On October 24, 2014, Dr Tim Soutphommasane, Race Discrimination Commissioner, delivered a speech to the Australian and New Zealand Sports Law Association Annual Conference titled, 'Australian sport and racial vilification'. The speech looks at developments within Australian sport regarding racial discrimination, especially since the beginning of the controversy surrounding Adam Goodes.

The full text of the speech can be found at <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/australian-sport-and-racial-vilification>

On September 29, 2014, The Sydney Morning Herald published a comment by Erin Riley titled, 'AFL has a problem with racism, sexism and homophobia'. Riley complained in particular about the treatment received by Adam Goodes and argued that it was only part of a more general aggressively exclusive culture within Australian Rules football.

The full text of the comment can be found at <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/afl-has-a-problem-with-racism-sexism-and-homophobia-20140928-10n7pm.html>

On September 25, 2012, Women's Agenda published a comment and analysis by Tanja Kovac titled, 'The AFL report card: Progress on women and diversity'.

Kovac examines the AFL's attempts to include women within its fan base and administration and its attempts to include the full gamut of ethnic and racial groups within Australia as supporters, players and administrators. She claims the League has been more successful than most Australian employers.

The full text of this article can be found at <http://www.womensagenda.com.au/talking-about/opinions/footy-stats-we-can-all-be-proud-of/20120924725#.VevL35fLpEc>

Arguments supporting the claim that Australian football crowds are racist

1. AFL crowds harass players of different races

Critics note that there has been a long history of racial vilification within the AFL, with racial abuse having been directed at players both by the crowd and by other players.

Keith Parry, lecturer in Sport Management at the University of Western Sydney, has stated, 'I would argue that racist behaviour and assumptions are woven into the fabric of Australian football...'

Parry observed, 'In 2013, a 13-year old girl, unaware that "ape" was a racist slur, abused Goodes during a match against Collingwood.' Another notable incident occurred in 1993 which Parry also describes. 'The St Kilda player Nicky Winmar responded to racism from the stands by raising his shirt and pointing at his chest. Allegedly, the crowd had been "reminding" Winmar that, as an Indigenous footballer, "he was one of them rather than one of us".'

On September 29, 2014, The Sydney Morning Herald published an opinion piece by Erin Riley commenting on racism, sexism and homophobia among AFL crowds. She wrote in particular of the experience she and others she knows had had at the 2014 AFL grand final.

Riley wrote, 'Friends at other points in the ground heard Goodes called a "black dog". Others were heard saying, "That girl was right about you", referring to the incident last year when Goodes pointed to the crowd after he was called an ape. Another chimed in, "I can definitely see the resemblance."'

Majak Daw, a North Melbourne player who came to Australia from the Sudan in 2003 has also been a particular recipient of racist abuse. In February 2014 Daw was racially abused by a Hawthorn supporter. The man allegedly called out, 'Go

back to South Africa you black dog.' This was the third time Daw had been abused at an AFL ground, having been previously abused during matches in 2013 against Hawthorn at the MCG and against the Western Bulldogs at Etihad Stadium. In 2011 Daw, one of the AFL's multicultural ambassadors, was racially abused at a VFL match in Port Melbourne.

There are many who have also construed the persistent booing of Adam Goodes as evidence of racism. The claims that crowds simply do not like aspects of Goodes's game have been rejected as a smoke screen concealing essentially racist attitudes.

2. The more overtly a player asserts his racial origin, the more likely he is to be abused

Many of those who argue that Adam Goodes is being racially abused claim that he attracts this negative attention because of his forthright defence of his racial identity. It is claimed that many football supporters have difficulty accepting those who proudly proclaim their racial difference.

In an opinion piece published in The Herald Sun on July 30, 2015, Warwick Green stated, 'My belief is that the origins of the hostility towards Goodes can be found in the fact that he is a forthright, candid and proud Aboriginal man, who has been prepared to challenge attitudes on indigenous issues.'

Goodes has chosen to use his profile to challenge our thinking, and for many that strong advocacy was a reason to feel uncomfortable and to rail against him.'

A similar claim has been made by Professor David Rowe of the University of Western Sydney's Institute for Culture and Society. Rowe has stated, 'It shows to me a real lack of sympathy or empathy. It shows real anger towards Goodes because he won't just take it. He won't be a nice quiet Aboriginal boy who's grateful to be a footballer.'

In an attempt to explain why Goodes has been consistently booed for over twelve months, Rowe dismissed a number of possibilities and then suggested the reason was Goodes's advocacy of Indigenous rights. Rowe states of Goodes 'Did he hospitalise someone? Was there some terrible transgression? No. The only thing I can find to have "deserved" this is that he's a prominent Aboriginal player who has stood up for Aboriginal rights, was elevated to Australian of the Year, has not been prepared to cop racism - and this is his payback.'

Nigel Scullion, a Northern Territory senator and the Abbott government's Minister for Indigenous Affairs has made a similar point. 'Those elements of the crowd that are heckling him, he takes it up to them. They don't like someone taking it up to them. Bullies don't. They don't like someone talking a stand.'

On May 31, 2015, on the ABC's Insiders program, social commentator Waleed Aly suggested that it is because Adam Goodes is not compliant about racist issues that crowds react adversely to him. Waleed Aly stated, 'Australia is generally a very tolerant society until its minorities demonstrate that they don't know their place. And at that moment, the minute someone in a minority position acts as though they're not a mere supplicant, then we lose our minds. And we say, "No, no, you've got to get back in your box here".'

3. The justifications offered for booing Adam Goodes are not sustainable.

Those who claim the booing of Adam Goodes is racially motivated maintain that the supposed reasons used to explain it are not sustainable and that it began and remains a racist act.

Among the justifications offered for booing Adam Goodes is that he stages for free kicks. In an article published on July 28, 2015, Mark O'Sullivan of Business Insider argued, 'The problem is that Goodes rarely stages for free kicks - no more than Joel Selwood of Geelong, for example, who is rarely booed.'

Herald Sun football writer Jon Ralph has analysed the statistics which do not support claims that Goodes performs for free kicks. Ralph noted, 'This year Adam Goodes - serious ducker, serial free-kick milker, seriously annoying player to many rival fans - has won a grand total of 11 free kicks. For the entire year.'

That figure from Champion Data puts him 168th on the list of AFL players. Behind a long list of stars including Joel Selwood (44), Anthony Miles (41), Trent Cotchin (39), Marc Murphy (39), Allen Christensen (37) and Todd Goldstein (33).'

Accusations have also been made that Adam Goodes is a dirty player. The Australian's sports commentator Patrick Smith has dismissed this claim by noting '[Goodes] has won two Brownlow Medals for fairest and best player in the AFL and missed just two games through suspension in a 353-game, 17-year career at the Swans.'

Mark O'Sullivan and many others have maintained that it was Goodes's opposition to pre-existing racism in the AFL and elsewhere that earned him the animosity of the crowd. O'Sullivan claims, 'I remember the game where it turned for Goodes. It was the time when a 13-year-old Collingwood supporter screamed that Goodes was an "ape". Goodes, unlike most Indigenous footballers who would have heard such insults hurled from the sidelines, decided that such behaviour was unacceptable. Ever since that moment, however, the boos started.'

O'Sullivan went on to explain the development of the phenomenon, 'I remember that to start with, the loudness and persistence with booing wasn't consistent across the league. I distinctly remember an Essendon game, a later Collingwood game and, of course, the 2014 Grand Final with Hawthorn. They weren't around before the "ape" moment, but suddenly, there they were. And this year [2015], it's grown and is more persistent than ever.'

4. There are no effective procedures in place to regulate crowd behaviour

Those who believe that the behaviour of AFL crowds is racist claim this conduct has continued because the League's administration has taken no effective action against it.

It has been noted that the League has a code of behaviour designed to discourage players and club officials from racial abuse and other forms of vilification. There is nothing similar in place to attempt to regulate the racist conduct of some

supporters.

Some critics have condemned AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan for having taken too long to speak out against the abuse directed at Adam Goodes and for behaving as though crowd conduct were outside the control of the AFL.

On July 31, 2015, McLachlan was reported as having said, 'I can't tell the supporters how to behave. Our game has always been an outlet for people to express themselves...

This is a game ultimately owned by our supporters and ultimately we need their leadership on this issue.'

McLachlan's comments have been condemned as a passive and ineffective response which allows racist remarks and behaviour to continue among spectators at AFL games.

On July 27, 2015, The New Matilda published an opinion piece by Chris Graham in which he argues that the AFL could take action to control crowd behaviour.

Graham states, 'It...happens to be the most extraordinary thing about this story - that it's been allowed to go on for so long without some sort of intervention by the AFL and other players.'

Graham proposes 'You might not be able to stop a crowd from booing a player for purely racist reasons, but you can stop a game. And that's exactly what should occur.

It's the very least the AFL can do, having sat and done nothing for a year. And if it doesn't take action, then the players should.

Both teams should simply walk off the field until it stops.'

The operators of some of the stadiums where AFL football is played have demonstrated that it is possible to take action against spectators making racist remarks.

On July 26, 2015, two fans were ejected from Domain Stadium for alleged racial abuse during a West Coast-Sydney Swans game. Perth Stadium Management, the operators of Domain Stadium, indicated that these supporters were removed from the venue after fans near them had reported racial abuse.

The stadium has a text messaging system for fans to report anti-social or discriminatory crowd behaviour during matches and two incidents were reported. Perth Stadium Management general manager, Gavin Taylor, said security staff had handled the situation appropriately.

Mr Taylor claimed, 'The alleged offenders yesterday were removed from the stadium in accordance with our match day policies and procedures. We are now discussing the next course of action with the West Coast Eagles and the AFL.'

5. The recipient of the abuse is best placed to determine its effect

It has been claimed that the person who is having the potentially racist treatment directed at him or her should have a major role in the determination of what is racist. In practice this means that a person has a right to complain and possibly take legal action if he or she is offended by racially-based comments.

There are specific laws to combat public displays of racially-based hatred in Australia. These are usually called anti-racial-vilification laws. The laws against racial vilification require that the offending words, images or actions have the potential to incite serious harm to an individual.

Judgments regarding what is serious involve both the victim's perceptions and considerations of what is generally unacceptable to society. For example, one person's idea of what is funny is often not shared by the victim of a racially-based joke. The laws are meant to protect victims from harm, including comments and actions which perpetrators may claim were unintended or inconsequential.

The persistent booing of Adam Goodes has been perceived as seriously racist by Goodes and by many others, including, ultimately, by the administration of the AFL.

AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan has stated, 'Adam is hurting, he feels it's racist, many, many people feel this is racist and therefore why would you do it, knowing that.'

McLachlan has further stated, 'I don't think anyone, if they are feeling hurt and feeling they are the victim of racist behaviour...should feel like that...'

Referring to the attitude of spectators who believe that the booing of Adam Goodes is justified, McLachlan stated, 'And there is a point where you go "regardless of how we got here, I respect that's how you're feeling ... and I'll let you play".'

A stronger view has been expressed by Sydney Swans chairman Andrew Pridham. Pridham has stated, 'Let's call it for what it is. It's racism. To stand up to it we need to correctly define it. If people think they can sit there and say it's something else then I'm telling you that's not how Adam takes it and it's not how I take it.'

Arguments opposing the claim that Australian football crowds are racist

1. There are AFL players of many races and nationalities who do not attract adverse attention from crowds

Those who claim that AFL supporters do not include a significant component of racists point to the large number of successful indigenous players that compete regularly within the game and are not booed or otherwise harassed.

Speaking on Channel Seven's Sunrise program, Sydney radio talkback host and commentator Alan Jones declared, 'I mean, there are 71 indigenous players. They are in rugby league, they are in rugby union. They are everywhere. They're playing tennis, and people don't boo them. They're booing Adam Goodes because they don't like him and they don't like his behaviour.'

Herald Sun commentator Andrew Bolt has similarly noted that the vast majority of Indigenous AFL players are well-received by supporters and so has disputed claims that the booing of Adam Goodes is race-related.

On May 26, 2015, Bolt noted on his blog, 'If that were so, why was the much-loved Cyril Rioli, also on the ground, not booed, too? Why not Lewis Jetta? Buddy Franklin?

Why no boos over in Adelaide for the great Eddie Betts?

If we were all...racists ... why no boos for those players?'

A similar point has been made by Rita Panahi in a comment published in The Herald Sun on July 29, 2015.

Panahi notes, 'Of course racism has no place in football and the AFL has been rightly applauded for leading the way in stamping out racial slurs from the game, from players and fans alike.

There are 71 Aboriginal players in the AFL; only one is routinely booed and it has nothing to do with the colour of his skin.

These days any idiot in the crowd who yells out a racist slur is set upon by other fans, reported to authorities and promptly ejected. Some have had memberships cancelled by their club, and rightly so; there should be a zero tolerance approach to bigotry whether it's racial, religious or homophobic.

But to muddy the waters between the tiniest racist minority and the thousands of fans who boo Goodes is not only disingenuous, it is counterproductive.'

2. AFL players of diverse races and nationalities have been successful within the AFL

It has been claimed that the AFL has a very successful record of inclusion. Defenders of the League's treatment of different races point to the high percentage of Indigenous players who are members of AFL teams.

On September 25, 2012, Women's Agenda published a comment and analysis by Tanja Kovac titled, 'The AFL report card: Progress on women and diversity'. Kovac noted the significant number of Indigenous players within the AFL.

'11.4%. That's the number of indigenous players employed by the AFL. It's a staggering, under-reported statistic.

Australia's indigenous population makes up only 2% of the community and the unemployment rate of indigenous people sits at almost three times the rate of the rest of the population.'

Kovac concluded, 'The AFL's indigenous employment strategy is nothing short of remarkable and should be studied by political, legal and business fields - where employment of indigenous people is tragically low - as a best practice case study of holistic support for success.'

Kovac also noted that the AFL has Indigenous representation in management positions where influence can be exerted on the game's practices. She stated, 'Indigenous employment is not just happening at a rookie recruit level. There aren't many businesses in Australia who can boast having a senior manager who's a Gunditjmara man.

In 2012, Jason Mifsud shone a light on the way some clubs treat indigenous players in their list. Mifsud's outspokenness almost cost him his job as the code's community development manager. The AFL's refusal of his resignation was an affirmation of the transformational, if at times challenging, significance of an indigenous leader being in a position to shape the game.'

Finally Kovac has comment on the AFL's attempts to represent racial and ethnic diversity more generally. She wrote, '13. That's the number of multicultural development officers that have been hired by the AFL and clubs to ensure people, regardless of racial or religious background, are playing and supporting footy. The AFL sees cultural diversity as integral to its business. That's why there has been significant investment in a Multicultural program, which is both a talent spotting and community engagement project designed to increase support for the code amongst new arrivals. Some of the biggest names in the sport - Bachar Houli, Harry O'Brien, Israel Falou, Karmichael Hunt, Leigh Montagna and Nic Naitanui - are AFL Diversity Ambassadors.'

3. There are many legitimate reasons for reacting negatively to a player

It has been claimed that football crowds have a right to boo players, aspects of whose game or general behaviour they dislike. Such crowd conduct should not be construed as racism; irrespective of the race of the player being booed.

This view has been put by former Australian Test bowler Shane Warne. Warne posted the following remarks on Twitter. 'This whole Adam Goodes drama is ridiculous. The public can boo or chant whoever's name they want! It's nothing to do with being racist....

If the public don't like a sportsman because of the way they play the game, they boo, if they like them they cheer, nothing to do re racism.'

Channel 9 finance editor Ross Greenwood, has acknowledges booing Adam Goodes and claims he will continue to do so. Speaking on the Today program, Greenwood stated, 'I've booed Adam Goodes. I've booed Adam Goodes every time Richmond plays the Swans and the reason is I'm a diehard Richmond supporter. He stages for free kicks, I boo him. It's going nothing to do with his race. It's got nothing to do with me being a racist.

I'm a football fan and therefore as a result if I see something not right on the football field I'll boo him. That has got nothing to do with the colour of his skin.'

It was noted in a Herald Sun article on May 26, 2015, following a Sydney Swans vs Hawthorn game at which Goodes had been booed by Hawthorn supporters that this was for game-related reasons. 'Some Hawthorn fans suggested on social media...that the booing of Goodes related to an incident in 2013 when Goodes appeared to trip Hawk Josh Gibson with his foot, emphatically denying racism played any part.'

The same point has been made by Sydney radio talkback host and commentator, Alan Jones, except that Jones has claimed that what crowds do not like is Goodes's supposed bullying of a 13-year-old girl who called him an 'ape'.

Jones has stated, 'They [the booing crowds] just don't like the fellow. And Adam Goodes can fix all this by changing his behaviour. But what's he say today? "Oh, I'm going to leave. I may have to resign. I can't hack it."

Jones further commented, "'The bloke's a rich Australian athlete. He humiliated a 13-year-old girl who didn't even know what she was saying, and the public haven't forgotten it. Someone's got to ask the question: why are they booing Adam Goodes and not the other 70 Indigenous AFL players? Adam Goodes can fix this by changing his behaviour. He again today plays the victim.'

The same point was made by Miranda Devine in an opinion piece published in The Daily Telegraph on July 29, 2015. Devine stated, 'It has nothing to do with the colour of his skin. It comes down to his "dobbing and sooking" after a little girl called him a rude name, as former player Karl Langdon put it this week.' Devine concluded, 'Australians don't take kindly to being accused of being racists when they are not.'

4. Vocal crowds contribute to the theatre of sporting competitions

Supporters of the right of sporting crowds to boo, note that booing is an inevitable and necessary part of sporting competitions and adds to their atmosphere.

On August 4, 2015, in an opinion piece published in Perth Now, Nat Locke explained that booing has been an important element in the interaction between spectators and competitors or audiences and entertainers for centuries. Locke stated, 'Booing has been around for a very long time and transcends sport, politics and entertainment. The crowds at the Colosseum booed if gladiators didn't put on a good enough show. Children at pantomimes boo when the villain enters. Politicians are booed, well, for being politicians.'

Locke went on to conclude, 'Booing is part of the byplay between supporters and players.'

On July 28, 2015, The Daily Advertiser published an opinion piece by Paul McLoughlin in which he stated, 'The banter between opposing supporters in the outer is part of what makes Aussie Rules so much fun. Being critical and witty about opposition players is part of attending an AFL game.'

On October 24, 2014, Dr Tim Soutphommasane, Race Discrimination Commissioner, delivered a speech to the Australian and New Zealand Sports Law Association Annual Conference titled, 'Australian sport and racial vilification'. Dr Soutphommasane observed, 'Every summer at the cricket in Melbourne, as the Mexican wave circles the vast arena of the MCG, before being punctuated in its path by the Members' Stand, the loud roar gives way to the low blowing of boos, before the wave builds yet again on the far side of the ground...'

Dr Soutphommasane went on to quote the conclusions a social scientist has drawn about this behaviour. He cites sociologist John Carroll who states, 'Look, if you think you're different or superior or better, you're not ... it's we, the people who are custodians of this ground and we're all here today, you the members and we, us, joined in our common higher enjoyment of sport, of being Australian, of the event... [T]here's a terrific, impish inclusiveness' in this ritualistic booing.

5. It would be racist to refraining from booing a player because of his race

There are those who have claimed that if the booing of Adam Goodes were to cease this would be treating him differently on the basis of his race.

According to this argument, booing is part of the traditional behaviour of crowds at most sporting contests. If it were possible to take action that would stop crowds booing Adam Goodes because as an Indigenous Australia he should be exempted from this treatment, such a ban would itself be racist.

On August 5, 2015, the online newspaper Spiked carried an opinion piece by London-based writer Charlie Pearson titled, 'Booing Adam Goodes isn't racist'. Pearson argued, '[T]he calls for Goodes to be wrapped in cotton wool and treated exceptionally seem to run counter to his own promotion of Australia as a nation in which "all Australians see each other as equals".'

A similar point was made by Miranda Devine in an opinion piece published in The Daily Telegraph on June 17, 2015. Devine stated, '[F]or sports administrators and sanctimonious journalists to denounce the crowds as somehow anti-Aboriginal is the real racism. It's that sort of patronising victim-pandering that holds Aboriginals down.

If Adam Goodes wants to be a pillock, good for him. He will be booed like any other pillock, no matter what the colour of their skin.'

There are those who have claimed that attempts to prevent crowds booing Adam Goodes are race-based hypocrisy. In an opinion piece published in The Herald Sun on July 30, 2015, Rita Panahi stated, 'There is now a laughable "solution" being promoted by an ABC TV host that proposes play be stopped if Goodes is again booed.

What sheer lunacy. Would this policy apply to all players or just Goodes?'

Further implications

There is something sadly circular about a number of the arguments put forward in relation to whether AFL crowds booing Adam Goodes are racist.

One of the claims meant to exonerate supporters of this charge is that Adam Goodes behaved inappropriately when he drew attention to the behaviour a 13-year-old barracker who had called him an 'ape'. Whatever the intentions or knowledge of the young supporter, the comment was objectively offensive and, from the perspective of a minority group which has historically been denied full human status, unquestionably racist. The age of the abuser may have evoked sympathy for her and the criticism she received; however, it in no way diminishes the offensiveness and inappropriateness of the abuse.

There is a strange paradox in condemning an Indigenous player for highlighting racism. It would appear that for at least some in the crowd, the booing of Adam Goodes is a self-protective gesture. They do not like accusations of racism and direct their hostility toward those who make them. This has been acknowledged by supporters of the mass booing, such as talkback host and commentator, Alan Jones.

If you are confident that you do not harbour racist attitudes, why is it necessary to take offense on behalf of those who do? Is this a kind of mass patriotism which sees any negative comment about any white Australian as a negative comment about all? It is perplexing that those who have continued to boo for a period of eighteen months cannot see

that this level of hostility is excessive. Even if they do not acknowledge a racist dimension, the power imbalance between a crowd and a signal individual should give the harassers pause. Once Adam Goodes and a wide range of social commentators have stated that they find the booing racist, it is surprising and disappointing that large numbers of supporters would continue with this behaviour.

What makes this incident even more regrettable is that the AFL has taken significant steps to discourage racist conduct within the League. Such behaviour from players and officials is now officially punishable by significant fines. It is harder to moderate the behaviour of all supporters, particularly when some bizarrely act in a racist manner while taking offense at what they construe as an unfair accusation of racism.

With Goodes's retirement at the end of the 2015 season it may be tempting for some to believe that the issue has now disappeared. What is more likely is that it has simply gone into hibernation, awaiting the arrival of another Indigenous sportsperson brave enough to voice the truth about his or her people's relative disadvantage and the prejudice they confront. What makes the current episode particularly regrettable is that following the treatment that Goodes has received it is going to be even harder for any Indigenous sportsperson to find the courage to speak out against racism.

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