

5 Minutes with Tony Hardy, author of *Finding Jack Dyer*

1. Who do you follow in the AFL?

Richmond, of course—all the good people do.

2. What is the best footy match you've seen and why?

Well, as I just said I barrack for Richmond, so there hasn't been many crackers—more frustration and pain than anything else. If I were a misery guts, Richmond would be the best side in the world to follow. The best game I've seen was probably when Richmond played Essendon, in the second semi-final in 1995. Why? We got up.

3. What inspired you to write about Jack Dyer?

Even though Jack Dyer is a massive name at Richmond, I knew nothing about him when Geoff Slattery asked me to write this book, other than the almost cartoonish public image of an old-school football hitman. I felt that this had to be too simplistic; that there had to be more to him. Given he was a schoolboy and a footballer in the Great Depression, and his life coincided almost exactly with the 20th century, I decided there must be some fascinating stories to discover and tell. Thankfully there were.

4. What was one of the most unique/unusual things you discovered about Jack when writing the book?

Oh, there was a lot actually. The terrible poverty in Richmond in the 1920s and '30s; the violence of football in the '30s and '40s, the occasional racism; the gentle nature of Jack Dyer off-field; his talent; the public's love for him; and his influence in Melbourne and Australia. For instance, he held so much sway that during World War II he was able to ring the Prime Minister and ask for a meeting, which he was given. Jack Dyer truly was an incredible man.

5. Do you think the book will only appeal to Richmond fans?

No, not at all. Richmond people will love it, but the book tells stories that go far beyond the club. Jack was an incredibly entertaining man, and the people who loved him were just as interesting, as were the times in which he lived.

6. If you could visit one place in the world where would you go and why?

I reckon I'll head to Tokyo one day soon, but really I'm not a massive fan of travel (see my first book, *Race Around the Sports World*).

7. Who has been the greatest influence on your life?

Lately, an Aussie called Scott Neeson, who founded and runs the Cambodian Children's Fund (CCF) in Phnom Penh. About 10 years ago he quit a seven-figure job as head of a major film studio in Hollywood and sold all his possessions, to go and save abandoned garbage-dump children in a Third World country. He knew no one and didn't even speak Khmer. CCF now educates, houses and feeds over 1700 children and their families, and offers the only free health and dentistry clinic in Phnom Penh. It was such a completely selfless act and a humbling sacrifice. Quite frankly, it's annoying because he makes you feel lazy and selfish and that your priorities are vain and idiotic. Damn him.

8. What is your favorite food?

Roast Potoooooties!!

9. If you weren't writing books what would you be doing?

Nothing at all, except watching *Fox Footy*, reading, sleeping and daydreaming. Wooohooo!

10. What is your favorite book and why?

Can I mention two? First, *The Santaland Diaries* by David Sedaris. Hilarious, honest and it launched Sedaris' career. The man's my literary hero. Secondly, *All My Friends are Superheros*, by Andrew Kaufman. He has such an incredible imagination, and says so much in so few words.