

Eagles midfielder Matt Rosa sidelined for at least five rounds after being diagnosed with compartment syndrome.

thebounce

Getting footy greats to open up

BEN COLLINS

Mike Sheahan has long claimed he barracked for the story rather than a club, so it is a surprise to learn he does not miss his old job as the *Herald Sun's* chief football writer.

After all, the AFL's summer of discontent spawned an unprecedented number of huge stories. In this tumultuous period, numerous packed press conferences were held in the Mike Sheahan Media Centre at AFL House.

In another time, it is easy to imagine the man himself leading the media pack on such issues.

But Sheahan, Australia's foremost football journalist for many years until his retirement in 2011, insists he isn't suffering withdrawal symptoms.

"I'm not missing it one bit," he told the *AFL Record*.

"There has been a moment or two when I've thought, 'Jeez, I'd love to express a view about that issue' – in fact (the *Herald Sun*) has offered me the opportunity to write columns if I so choose – but I reckon once you're out, you're out. You can't be half-in.

"I'm happy just to have a bit-part role now."

However, that bit-part role – through appearances on Fox Footy

and 3AW, and his annual top-50 player lists in the *Herald Sun* – still provides Sheahan with a platform to shape opinion.

As such, the 66-year-old is really only in semi-retirement. He is content to get his fixes of footy and journalism while having enough free time to pursue other interests.

Sheahan's popular Fox Footy interview show *Open Mike* has resulted in a terrific new book of the same title.

It is Sheahan's second book – the first was *Lethal*, a biography of Leigh Matthews, which was published in 1986.

One of the 28 interviewees included in *Open Mike*, Matthews is quoted on the book's cover: "The *Open Mike* interviews have been revealing viewing – they make equally engrossing reading."

Matthews' opinion is often regarded as gospel in footy circles and, once again, he is right on the money.

Sheahan's favourite interview was with Carlton premiership player and coach Robert Walls.

"In my career, no one has been more brutally honest than 'Wallys'," he said. "I asked him some tough ones, but he openly talks about his relationship with Kevin Sheedy, kicking (Hawthorn star) Peter Knights, which blokes don't like confessing, and he was equally frank about other areas."

Asked to turn the microscope on himself, Sheahan says he thinks he is perceived as "a serious commentator who does his homework and loves his footy".

“**People don't always agree with me, but nor should they**”

MIKE SHEAHAN

"People don't always agree with me, but nor should they," he said. "How boring would it be if everyone agreed with each other? I feel my role is to provoke discussion with informed opinion."

With his spectacles, grey hair and warm nature, many footy fans would not know Sheahan was once a state league footballer renowned for his hardness and courage.

John Devine, who coached Sheahan in 1970 at North Hobart and later held the top job at Geelong, regards Sheahan as the most courageous player he coached.

Sheahan – a left-footer who also played for VFA club Werribee under three former Victorian back-pockets: Neil Crompton (Melbourne), Bruce Comben (Carlton) and Ian Bryant (Bulldogs) – is not so sure of Devine's assessment.

"I reckon he's gilding the lily a bit," he said. "But I can honestly say I was brave enough. That wasn't what let me down."

"I had the game of a bloke who was six-foot-three (191cm) but I was only five-foot-10 (178cm). I wasn't all that quick, but I had good hands and didn't mind getting knocked over."

Sheahan was not good enough to play at the highest level but has done perhaps the next-best thing by covering the game for more than 40 years.

In the process, he has retained what he describes as "a boyish fascination with the game", which shines through in *Open Mike*.¹

OPEN MIKE, BY MIKE SHEAHAN, IS PUBLISHED BY THE SLATTERY MEDIA GROUP, RRP \$34.95.



CROW NOTCHES ANOTHER PREMIERSHIP



VINCE A SUMMER SMASH

» Adelaide midfielder Bernie Vince has claimed a premiership even before the AFL season has started.

The talented Crow was part of Stansbury's premiership side in the Lower York Peninsula cricket grand final earlier this month. And it was no ordinary performance.

Stansbury claimed its 10th successive flag and Vince has played in seven of them.

Vince played district cricket for Woodville when he was drafted and, despite his AFL commitments, he still has a strong passion for the summer game.

After a strong performance in the Crows' round-three NAB Cup win against Carlton at AAMI Stadium, Vince packed his cricket gear and drove home to play in the final against Eastern Districts the next day.

Vince, a former state country cricketer in his youth, remained seven not out when the winning runs were scored, while his captain, former Adelaide rookie James Moss, top-scored with 47.

"Bernie was more talented as a cricketer as a kid in my eyes and he started playing A grade at Stansbury as an 11-year-old," Bernie's father (and club president) Tim Vince said.

"I've played in five flags with him, which was pretty special."

PETER ARGENT