

me if I've got six months put an estimate on it."

CANCER. BUT HE TELLS MARK ROBINSON HE'S NOT 'BAD OFF'.

DON'T MISS TOMORROW'S EMOTIONAL INTERVIEW - ONLY IN THE Herald Sun (BRING A TISSUE)

Plea to scrap the cap

Jon Ralph

PREMIERSHIP coach John Longmire says soaring interchange numbers will stabilise without the AFL's intervention.

Longmire said loosening the 80-interchange cap because of pre-season heat meant the NAB Cup trial of limited rotations would be close to meaningless.

The Sydney coach said yesterday the 80-cap trial should be carried out over a year in the VFL or SANFL.

While some clubs have hit 150 interchanges in a single game, Longmire says massive rotation becomes counter-productive.

The AFL Commission has ruled in principle for a capped rotation next year but wants more evidence.

"I think the players are at a point where it is getting to a maximum," Longmire said.

"We got to an average of 132 per game last year and we feel that's about it.

"Players themselves start to say 'I'm on the ground and the challenge is to sprint off, and by the time you get off, you sprint like anything and then sit down for two seconds and then sprint on. You are better off standing there (on the field) anyway'.

"Some things in the game find their natural level."

North Melbourne coach Brad Scott this week said he was fearful the game would become unrecognisable because of AFL tinkering.

But AFL legend and Rules of the Game member Kevin Bartlett says coaches should be ignored when it comes to changing rules.

Longmire, meanwhile, "would like to maintain the status quo" and says the AFL needs to produce evidence promoting the cap.

"In the pre-season, different clubs are doing different things and, as we have seen with the heat, are we going to get that over the next couple of weeks, which might affect the data over a short period of time?" he said. "Are there other ways of getting bigger samples over a longer period of time so you can say, 'these are the pros and cons of it over 12 months in this league?'"



Back to form: Adam Cooney's knee has responded to treatment.

Cooney a changed man

WESTERN Bulldogs great Brad Johnson says Adam Cooney is back to his 2008 Brownlow Medal form.

Cooney has endured a miserable few years, with a cracked patella deteriorating into a degenerative knee problem.

But Johnson said Cooney had returned from specialist treatment in Germany a changed man.

"He used to hobble out to even start training. Now he runs out, he's straight

Sam Edmund

into it and away he goes," Johnson said yesterday.

"He's moving the best I've seen him move for three or four years."

Cooney's return to form would be a boost for the Dogs. "They need an Adam Cooney in there to get that pace going around the contest and help generate that outside run that they do lack," Johnson said.

"They've got a lot of guys

that love winning the contested footy, but they need to retain possession when it gets on the outside.

"They need more there because the opposition will just look at them and say: 'Let's stop Ryan Griffen and we've got the Bulldogs' at the moment.

"Cooney is one who needs to get back in there to allow Griffen to get off the chain every now and then and have more of an impact getting forward."

Sheedy sits on both sides

KEVIN Sheedy is proud to be a student of history.

The problem is he just doesn't remember his own. His public spray at new Hawthorn president Andrew Newbold — or "Newbloke" as he called him — was grand theatre.

And that is Sheedy's stated aim at Greater Western Sydney, drumming up marketing opportunities and selling the brand.

As well as taunting Hawthorn about its Grand Final loss, he urged Newbold to take off his duffle coat, embrace a national vision, and stop complaining about the GWS welter of draft picks.

Sheedy's issue is two-fold.

Not only was Hawthorn's quibbling about the draft picks one of the rare diversions from almost total club-based support for the GWS list allowances, it paled in comparison to Sheedy's 2004 comments on the same subject. Back then, Sheedy was a frustrated Essendon coach very much backing self-interest as he wrote in the *Sunday Herald Sun* about Brisbane's allowances and concessions.

He argued Brisbane had been gifted three premierships through a merger and \$600,000-per-season in salary cap dispensation.

"If you look back to learn how to go forward, have we underplayed the importance of the merger between Fitzroy and the Brisbane Bears?" he wrote, as the Lions surged toward a fourth consecutive Grand Final.

JON RALPH



"When you combine the extra \$600,000 in player payments by four years, it adds up to a pretty powerful combination. Was this the intention of the extra hand-outs — for Brisbane to win four in a row, or even five? Do the (AFL) commissioners know what they have done? Do they know they have taken it too far?"

It is the identical argument Sheedy is now ripping down, but from the opposite direction.

In truth, Sheedy should welcome the AFL Commission's research into the cost-of-living allowance, because it seems sure to vindicate the current position.

But for Sheedy to argue Hawthorn wants GWS in the competition "but not if we are eventually going to be successful" is plain wrong.

Journalists seeking headlines have often gone to heartland clubs seeking inflammatory quotes about too many draft-picks.

They are often rebuffed by Victorian CEOs who say if GWS and Gold Coast are not successful, the game will not thrive.

Sheedy lobbed the bait with perfect placement and hooked Newbold with a strong reaction, but even he would acknowledge Victorian clubs have a national competition at heart, too.

Up-front answers worth a second read

HE asked the questions, but former *Herald Sun* chief football writer Mike Sheahan says re-reading the interviews in the AFL's biggest names in his new book *Open Mike* was as eye-opening as the second time.

"I'm surprised how honest a lot of them were," Sheahan

Daryl Timms

said yesterday. "Sometimes when you are doing an interview you don't actually hear the answer because you are thinking about the next question and a bit about what they said."

Sheahan said he had not

been sure about turning the popular Fox Footy series *Open Mike* into a book when he was approached by friend and publisher Geoff Slatery, but said he could not be happier with it.

"It's interesting when you do a TV show and it becomes a book," he said. "What it

does is give you a permanent record."

Sheahan said he was motivated to start the *Open Mike* series after admiring the skills of Andrew Denton, whom he rates as the best interviewer in the business.

What started out as an occasional interview in 2009,

turned into a weekly event on Fox Footy last season.

The book features 28 of his most entertaining and revealing interviews, including his favourite with Robert Walls.

Tony Charlton, the late commentator, is also featured.

Open Mike is available from today for \$34.95. Herald Sun readers can buy the book for \$32.95, including delivery, and the first 100 orders will be signed. Order at heraldsun.com.au/shop or call 1300 306 107.