

Scandals in sport

AN ACCOMPANIMENT TO

ON THE TAKE

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The events that enveloped the Victorian Football League (VFL) generally and the Carlton Football Club especially in September 1910 were not unprecedented. Gambling was entrenched in Melbourne's sporting landscape and rumours about footballers "playing dead" to fix the results of certain matches had swirled around the city's ovals, pubs, and back streets for decades. On occasion, firmer allegations had even forced authorities into conducting formal inquiries. The Carlton bribery scandal, then, was not the first or only time when footballers were interrogated by officials from either their club or governing body over corruption charges. It was the most sensational case, however, and not only because of the guilty verdicts and harsh punishments handed down. As our new book *On The Take* reveals in intricate detail, it was a particularly controversial episode due to such a prominent figure as Carlton's triple premiership hero Alex "Bongo" Lang being implicated as the scandal's chief protagonist.

Indeed, there is something captivating about scandals involving professional athletes and our fascination is only amplified when champions are embroiled, and long bans are sanctioned. As a by-product of modernity's cult of celebrity, it is not uncommon for high-profile sportspeople to find themselves exposed by unlawful, immoral, or simply ill-advised behaviour whether it be directly related to their sporting performances or instead concerning their personal lives. Most cases can be categorised as somehow relating to either sex, illegal or criminal activity, violence, various forms of cheating (with drugs/doping so prevalent it can be considered a separate category), prohibited gambling and match-fixing. Whereas some of these themes are closely aligned to what happened to "Bongo" Lang and Doug Fraser, others have no direct correlation. What all the following cases share in common, however, is that they help us to locate the Carlton affair of 1910 within the wider historical context of major scandals involving elite-level athletes. It reminds us how so many sports stars have transgressed on or off the sporting arena, and yet the consequences for their careers and legacies can differ dramatically.

Oftentimes an isolated unsavoury incident may leave a stigma even if it does not derail a playing career. In some cases, repeat offenders may bring a certain notoriety on themselves and damage their hitherto glistening reputations, and yet still be able to carry on competing. In other cases, longstanding patterns of concealed inappropriate or illegal behaviour eventually get discovered and careers are ended. Or, as what

happened to Lang and Fraser, a singularly controversial episode can ruin a career and subsequently alter the person's life and legacy. A lot depends on the nature of the transgression, of course, and match-fixing appropriately ranks among the most unforgivable offences in sport. It is nonetheless important to remember that Lang and Fraser were accused of a single infraction—for which the degree of their guilt remains shrouded in mystery and open to conjecture—and yet, comparatively speaking, they paid an extraordinary price.

The following survey of prominent scandals and their ramifications (if any) is divided into two main categories. First, a wide variety of mistakes and misdeeds that have occurred in professional athletes' personal lives during the past few decades are summarised, ranging from extramarital affairs and lewd acts or other public humiliations through to illegal behaviour and even more serious criminal activities. It establishes that, whether tried judicially in a court of law or informally via the court of public opinion, “off-field escapades” need to be astonishingly bad in order to end a professional sports career—and even then, it is not always guaranteed. Second, a slew of infamous “on-field antics” including cases of extreme violence, cheating, and match-fixing along with athletes partaking in prohibited gambling are documented. It becomes clear that, although wrongdoing associated with actual sporting competition is far more likely to result in serious career repercussions such as lengthy bans (rightfully so), nonetheless it is not always cut and dried. Whereas some cases have led to ramifications similarly harsh to the 1910 Carlton bribery scandal, in other instances outcomes have been remarkably lenient.

Affairs of the heart

The list of 21st century professional athletes whose sexual endeavours have made headlines reads like a veritable who's who of international superstars. Some of the most iconic soccer players in Europe and England, for instance, have failed miserably at monogamy. In 2003, Bayern Munich and Germany captain and legendary goalkeeper Oliver Kahn admitted to having an affair with a 21-year-old barmaid, which was an especially shocking revelation given that he publicly confirmed it while his childhood sweetheart and wife Simone was in hospital preparing to give birth to their second child.¹ Even so, the “brilliant, brazen, and belligerent” Kahn continued to enjoy a revered status as a player until 2008, and in retirement has worked as a prominent television pundit.² In April 2019, furthermore, it was confirmed that from 2021 Kahn will assume the plum role of replacing longstanding Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, thus putting him in charge of running one of the world's wealthiest and most successful and popular sports clubs.³

Chelsea and England captain John Terry failed in his 2010 application to be granted a super injunction by the High Court to prevent UK tabloids from reporting that for months he had conducted an extramarital affair with the former girlfriend of his teammate and close friend Wayne Bridge (just one of several scandals that plagued Terry throughout his career, including on-field racial abuse allegations).⁴ In the wake of this affair Terry was temporarily stripped of the England captaincy, but returned to the role the following year and otherwise his career for club and country continued unaffected.

Former Manchester United and England striker Wayne Rooney started dating his future wife Coleen while still a teenage prodigy playing for his boyhood club Everton. Throughout his career, however, Rooney has been hounded by tabloid stories about a string of affairs and being caught out sleeping with prostitutes.

One of the earliest and most persistent stories is that in 2004, when he was 16 years of age, Rooney visited a massage parlour where he paid £45 to have sex with 48-year-old grandmother Patricia Tierney who was known as the “Auld Slapper”.⁵ Despite Rooney’s reputation being further tarnished by leaked CCTV footage of him visiting brothels and multiple women giving tabloids tell-all interviews about their trysts, he has continued to earn millions per season (and the Rooneys remain married and have four children together).⁶

Another Manchester United favourite son Ryan Giggs also failed in attempts to secure gagging orders to prevent media coverage of his extra-marital affair with former Miss Wales and *Big Brother* contestant Imogen Thomas.⁷ Even more sensationally, Giggs’ serial infidelities during his playing days included carrying out an eight-year affair with his brother’s wife.⁸ It may have devastated his family and disappointed some of his fans, but Giggs’ stellar career carried on and in retirement he has enjoyed prestigious managerial stints with Manchester United and the Wales national team.

These European soccer scandals from this century are demonstrably different from the baseball affair that titillated Americans back in 1973. Phil Pepe of the New York *Daily News* reported from the Yankees’ spring training camp that two pitchers, close friends Fritz Peterson and Mike Kekich, had “traded lives” by exchanging wives, children, homes, and even dogs (a poodle and a terrier respectively).⁹ The amicable swap occurred after the two couples, who had socialised together for years, came to the realisation that they much preferred the company of each other’s spouses. Peterson moved in with Susanne Kekich and her two daughters, while Kekich moved in with Marilyn Peterson and her two sons. The pair continued to play baseball on the same team without incident until the Yankees traded Kekich to the Cleveland Indians. Whereas Mike and Marilyn soon decided it was a mistake and separated, the unconventional “husband swap” proved the right move for All-Star Fritz and Susanne who have remained together for more than forty years.¹⁰

Sexual escapades

Some more recent American sex scandals have been far less salubrious. For instance, sordid stories about the Minnesota Vikings “Love Boat” controversy of 2005—when a chartered yacht cruise on Lake Minnetonka attended by 17 players and dozens of their guests apparently turned into a wild sex party—exploded all over the internet via reputable news agencies and what was at the time the burgeoning new trend of sports blogs.¹¹ The unsavoury incident sullied the NFL’s reputation and four players were charged with misdemeanours, but no playing careers were ended (although some sports journalists believed the scandal played a key role in Vikings head coach Mike Tice getting sacked at season’s end).¹²

Since at least the 1990s, the past and present NBA players whose sexual escapades have landed them in trouble are legion, with extra-marital affairs, paternity suits, and sexual assault allegations common effects of rich and famous athletes visiting dozens of cities while spending half their seasons away on road trips.¹³ To cite just one prominent case, Michael Jordan reportedly paid hush money to keep affairs secret for years, but eventually his adultery ended his seventeen-year marriage culminating in a 2006 divorce settlement that cost him in excess of \$US 150 million.¹⁴ Since retiring, Jordan continues to be hailed by many commentators and fans as the greatest of all time (or GOAT). Jordan remains heavily invested in the game, and in 2010 became the first African-American majority owner of an NBA franchise.

Countless other sex scandals have plagued American sports in recent decades, but none have been more explosive than the case involving Tiger Woods. After turning professional in 1996, for over a decade Woods enjoyed unparalleled success and was one of the most idolised athletes on the planet. His entire life was turned upside down in 2009, however, following sensational revelations of extra-marital affairs, sex addiction, prescription drugs dependency, and increasingly erratic behaviour.¹⁵ Before the scandal, Tiger won 14 major championships. Afterwards, his indifferent form saw Woods remain in the golfing wilderness for much of the next decade as he failed to win another major and his reputation seemed to have “crumbled forever”.¹⁶ In April 2019, Woods finally claimed his first post-scandal victory in a major when he won his fifth Green Jacket in the Masters Tournament at Augusta.

Cases of sexual assault and other alleged criminal activities

When retired basketball superstar Kobe Bryant and his 13-year-old daughter Gianna were among the nine people who died in a helicopter accident in January 2020, the shocking news ushered in a worldwide outpouring of grief among fans. Bryant’s phenomenal accomplishments between the baskets was celebrated as one of the greatest playing careers not only in basketball but all of sports history. Meanwhile, what was largely airbrushed out of the picture, if not altogether ignored, in most news coverage was the sinister case dating from 2003 that saw Bryant facing the possibility of life imprisonment following rape allegations made against him by a 19-year-old hotel employee. With his wife Vanessa publicly standing by him throughout the ordeal, the self-anointed “Black Mamba” admitted to the adulterous encounter but claimed it was consensual.¹⁷ Whereas the criminal case was dropped, Bryant also faced a separate civil lawsuit from his accuser. He settled out of court for undisclosed terms. Furthermore, in exchange for his accuser not testifying in the earlier criminal case that eventually was abandoned, Bryant also penned a public apology that in part read: “Although I truly believe this encounter between us was consensual... I now understand how she sincerely feels that she did not consent”.¹⁸ Bryant lost some sponsors but his glittering career with the LA Lakers continued until 2016 when he retired as one of the NBA’s most decorated players. For the remainder of his life (and now seemingly in death), in the two decades following this incident Bryant overwhelmingly was afforded the benefit of any doubt in the court of public opinion. He nonetheless occasionally faced some fierce criticism. When Bryant surprisingly won an Oscar for his animated ode to basketball at the 2018 Academy Awards, critics were quick to point out the appalling hypocrisy of it happening in the wake of the #MeToo movement and in the year that Time’s Up was launched.¹⁹ Maeve McDermott of *USA Today*, for instance, described Bryant’s Oscars triumph as “a tragedy”.²⁰

Other prominent international off-field episodes over the years have resulted in major criminal cases. Not only past and present players but also officials have been implicated, and convictions have often resulted in prison terms. Arguably the most infamous case in history involving a sports star is the O. J. Simpson double murder trial, which ended in controversy when “The Juice” was acquitted in 1995 (although he eventually served time for unrelated crimes of robbery and kidnapping).²¹ Another high-profile case in the 1990s resulted in former world heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson being convicted of rape and sentenced to six years imprisonment.²² After serving less than three years, Tyson was free to return to the ring but was never the same boxer. After he was disqualified for biting off a piece of Evander Holyfield’s

ear during their June 1997 rematch, the influential Nevada State Athletic Commission unanimously voted to rescind Tyson's boxing licence (a decision it revoked a year later).²³ In 2007, NFL quarterback Michael Vick was sentenced to 23 months in federal prison for coordinating an elaborate interstate dog-fighting racket.²⁴ Upon release, Vick returned to the gridiron and enjoyed a successful and lucrative second phase to his career—including winning the coveted NFL Comeback Player of the Year award in 2010—before finally retiring in 2016.²⁵ The world's most (in)famous Paralympian, the double-amputee sprinter Oscar Pistorius, is serving time behind bars after he was convicted of murdering his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp on Valentine's Day in 2013.²⁶

Former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky disgraced Penn State in 2012, when he was found guilty of 45 charges of sexually assaulting young boys over a period of 15 years.²⁷ In a story that first broke in 2016, players and officials from several sports programs including football, basketball, and volleyball at Baylor University in Texas have been indicted over sexual assault allegations dating back several years.²⁸ In perhaps the worst case of a single sex predator in a sporting context, Larry Nassar, a long-term doctor of the USA Gymnastics national team, was found guilty of molesting more than 150 girls and young women athletes in his care over a period spanning more than two decades. Nassar received federal sentencing in July 2017 (for child pornography), followed by state sentencing in January 2018 (for the sexual assault charges), and is serving consecutive sentences running in excess of 200 years.²⁹

The Nassar case is most appalling due to the longevity and overall number of victims involved, but singular sports-related sexual assault cases also have resulted in prison sentences. In 2016, for instance, soccer player Adam Johnson (capped 12 times for England) was handed a six-year term after being found guilty of grooming and sexual activity with a minor.³⁰ Released early in 2019, the convicted paedophile reportedly plotted to resurrect his career even if it required relocating abroad to either China, Turkey, or the Middle East if no British clubs would employ him.³¹ In a rather intriguing case, striker Ched Evans (capped 13 times for Wales) was accused of raping a woman in a hotel in 2011. He was convicted the following year and served over two years in jail but, after new evidence was discovered, Evans was cleared in a retrial.³² It was reported in late 2018 that Evans, who had been earning £18,000 per week at the time of his arrest, was seeking damages and intended on suing his former defence lawyers for loss of income.³³ In April 2019, they reached an out-of-court settlement for an undisclosed sum.³⁴

Back home: from sexting to sexual assault and rape allegations

When Dally M medallist Jarryd Hayne left the NRL to pursue his NFL dream and made the final cut with the San Francisco 49ers in 2015, what started out as an Australian feelgood story with an American twist soon unravelled into a horror show. Not only did Hayne's NFL career end after one faltering season but, moreover, a Californian woman accused him of raping her during a drunken night out in San Jose in December 2015. No criminal charges were laid after a police investigation, but civil proceedings hung over Hayne's head for years with a judge scheduling a five-day trial set for January 2020.³⁵ It was reported by *The Sydney Morning Herald* that Hayne finally settled the US civil rape case against him in August 2019, paying the claimant "just under \$100,000".³⁶ Since returning to Australia and reigniting his NRL career, Hayne's fall from grace has continued. In November 2018, he handed himself into NSW police in relation to an

alleged incident with a woman whom he first met via social media. After Sex Crimes Squad detectives questioned Hayne for more than nine hours, he was charged with aggravated sexual assault.³⁷ It is alleged that the woman resisted as Hayne “ripped her clothes off”, and then after he had so “savagely bitten” her genitalia she required surgery.³⁸ Out on strict bail conditions, at the time of writing Hayne was maintaining his innocence and intending on pleading not guilty when the case goes to trial (scheduled for May 2020).³⁹

Australia’s sporting landscape has experienced at least its share of sex-orientated controversies in recent years. In the NRL, Hayne is simply the latest blow to a code regularly embattled by sexual assault allegations against high-profile players. Most notably, in 2009 a New Zealand woman claimed to be suffering severe emotional trauma stemming from her participation in a group sex session with Matty Johns and several other Cronulla Sharks players during their pre-season camp in Christchurch seven years earlier at a time when she still was a teenager.⁴⁰ No careers were curtailed as the only player identified had retired before the story broke. It did, however, cost Johns his assistant coaching position at Melbourne Storm and lucrative role at Channel Nine (though he has since re-established a media career). A decade later, the 2019 season could not commence soon enough for NRL executives after an off-season plagued by controversies was capped off by explosive revelations of players bonding “over group sex sessions” and a spate of leaked sex-tapes meant that Rugby League’s “woman problem [was] at crisis point”.⁴¹

Andrew Lovett was traded from Essendon to St Kilda at the end of the 2009 AFL season, and just weeks later he faced allegations of raping a woman while she was asleep and intoxicated at new teammate Jason Gram’s apartment. Although Lovett was later acquitted of two counts of rape, his chequered AFL career was effectively over.⁴² While still at Essendon in 2007, Lovett had breached an intervention order taken out by his ex-partner Kimberlie Watson following domestic abuse (including physical beatings), and St Kilda’s recruitment of him two years later was considered risky.⁴³ When the rape allegations first surfaced in December 2009, the Saints reacted by suspending Lovett indefinitely.⁴⁴ Once he was arrested in February 2010, St Kilda immediately terminated Lovett’s contract before he had played a game for the club.⁴⁵

Before recruiting Lovett, St Kilda already had players subject to an ongoing police investigation into rape allegations dating back to March 2004. Intoxicated after a club pre-season family day, Leigh Montagna and Steven Milne spent the night with two women whom they had just met. Two couples had consensual sex, but after Milne swapped partners the woman later claimed that she had been misled in the dark room to believe it was Montagna again and that she had never given Milne consent. This incident periodically resurfaced in the media for the next decade, most notably due to:

- a live broadcast of Collingwood coach Mick Malthouse calling Milne a “fucking rapist” during a heated exchange at quarter-time of a round three clash between the Magpies and Saints in April 2010⁴⁶;
- the Office of Police Integrity and Victoria Police’s Ethical Standards Department reviewing the case after Scott Gladman, the former detective who led the initial investigation, claimed in June 2010 that his case against Milne had collapsed amid a campaign of threats and intimidation from within Victoria Police and by powerful club backers⁴⁷;
- Milne subsequently being charged with four counts of rape in June 2013, at which time St Kilda announced he would remain a listed player but would take an indefinite leave of absence; and, finally, Milne avoiding the rape case by instead pleading guilty to indecent assault in November 2014 (more than a decade after the incident in question, by which time he had retired from the AFL as a dual All Australian with 574 goals in 275 games).⁴⁸

Lovett and Milne were not the only AFL players facing serious sexual assault allegations early in the 21st

century. When news broke of the Milne case in 2004, reports surfaced that on two separate occasions the recently retired three-club player Adam Heuskes allegedly had committed rape in the presence of teammates during his playing days.⁴⁹ An expat Australian living in Britain accused Heuskes of raping her in a London hotel during an end-of-season trip in October 1999. She further claimed that four of his Brisbane Lions teammates watched it happen. The players had returned to Australia before Scotland Yard investigated the alleged incident, however, and charges were never laid.⁵⁰

Heuskes again was investigated for rape in August 2000, following a night out in Adelaide with two former teammates from his playing days with Port Adelaide and the Sydney Swans. On this occasion, both Heuskes and Peter Burgoyne were charged with sexual assault but the case was soon dropped (although Port Adelaide CEO Brian Cunningham later admitted the club fined Burgoyne over the incident for placing himself “in a position of risk”).⁵¹ The story resurfaced in the wake of the Milne news. On 19 March 2004, the ABC reported that an anonymous woman was claiming that four years earlier she had been sexually assaulted by Heuskes, Burgoyne, and “an unnamed player from the Sydney Swans” and subsequently was paid \$200,000 “to keep quiet”.⁵² As rumours swirled, two days later Michael O’Loughlin released a statement confirming he was the Swans footballer in question. Stressing that he “was not ever interviewed, let alone charged, with regards to the alleged incident”, O’Loughlin defended himself against any wrongdoing and insisted that he had only helped with the hefty pay-off in an attempt to avoid public embarrassment and to “save my family from the trauma which would have come from defending my innocence”.⁵³

Heuskes never returned to the AFL following the second investigation in 2000 (but he later played for North Adelaide in the SANFL). Despite playing more than 100 AFL games and receiving All Australian honours for a stellar 1997 season, Heuskes is mostly remembered for these accusations of heinous off-field behaviour. Burgoyne and O’Loughlin survived their temporary association with Heuskes with their reputations and popularity firmly intact. Both players ended their long and distinguished careers as premiership heroes, and also were honoured with selection in the Indigenous Team of the Century—announced by the AFL in 2005.

In the so-called Information Age, particularly since the advent of social media, the electronic dissemination of controversial comments, the leaking of lewd or private images or texts, and assorted public *faux pas* have caused no end of trouble for Australian sportspeople. In 2013, for instance, Newcastle Knights five-eighth and half-back Ryan Stig caused a furore through bigoted comments he posted on social media against homosexuality in the wake of the ACT passing same-sex marriage laws.⁵⁴ In one of the more bizarre NRL scandals of recent years, in 2014 Cronulla-Sutherland terminated Todd Carney’s multi-million-dollar contract after a lewd photograph of him urinating into his own mouth at a local nightclub was leaked on social media, leading to the term “bubbling” entering the popular lexicon. It was the third time in six years that an NRL club had sacked the 2010 Dally M medallist for off-field behavioural issues, and this episode proved the final straw. Carney’s NRL career was effectively over when the League’s COO Jim Doyle warned that no other club should attempt to recruit him because it was “most unlikely” that the NRL would re-register Carney.⁵⁵ Since his “bubbling” incident, Carney has played professionally in France and Britain but the NRL has continued to block him from returning.

Conversely, Shane Warne’s sexting habits and myriad other off-field improprieties probably cost him the opportunity to captain the Australian Test team.⁵⁶ Yet, banned diuretics apparently provided by his mum notwithstanding, nothing prevented the great bowler from enjoying a spectacular career and he remains

one of Australia's most beloved sports characters (despite shady dealings with a bookmaker detailed further below).

AFL footballers naturally have not proven immune to sexting, revenge porn, or other social media scandals. Brownlow medallist Dane Swan and his premiership teammate Travis Cloke were among four Collingwood players who unwittingly opened themselves up to being victimised by *Woman's Day* publishing their so-called "dick pics" in 2016.⁵⁷ The following year, Swan emerged as the victim of revenge porn after a South Australian woman posted a "sex tape" of the former Collingwood star online.⁵⁸ Although her home state had not introduced revenge porn laws, after Swan asked Victoria Police to investigate the matter the young woman was charged with two offences: "visually capturing genitals" in unreasonable circumstances; and "distribution of an intimate image."⁵⁹ After Swan indicated that he did not wish to proceed, the charges were dropped in June 2019.⁶⁰

In light of this episode and Victoria's 2014 introduction of laws against distributing an intimate image of another person without their consent, Richmond's Nathan Broad should consider himself incredibly fortunate. On the night of the Tigers' drought-breaking Premiership in 2017, Broad took a photograph of a topless female friend wearing his winner's medal. Then, without her consent and after falsely promising he had deleted it, the young defender shared the image. It subsequently went viral after being leaked on the internet, and Broad faced likely criminal charges and possible imprisonment until the distraught victim withdrew her complaint from Victoria Police in order to protect her privacy.⁶¹ An "ashamed and embarrassed" Broad issued a statement in which he apologised for his actions, and subsequently escaped with a three-game suspension imposed by his club.⁶²

Clearly none of these Collingwood or Richmond players learned anything from "the 'harsh lesson' on the perils of social media" back in 2010, when a nude photo leak saw Sam Gilbert unwittingly drag teammates Nick Riewoldt and Nick Dal Santo into the wider controversy surrounding the "St Kilda Schoolgirl" Kim Duthie—a scandal that also engulfed disgraced player-manager Ricky Nixon a year later.⁶³

No stranger to scandalous publicity, Brendan Fevola had an extra-marital affair with teenage model Lara Bingle in 2006. It hit national headlines when Bingle's privacy was violated four years later, after a nude photograph that Fevola had taken of her stepping out of the shower went viral.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, an intoxicated Fevola had been photographed wandering around central Melbourne streets wearing a pink dress and brandishing an oversized dildo as part of Carlton's "Mad Monday" celebrations in 2008, and he made another public appearance with the sex toy twelve months later.⁶⁵ Whereas Collingwood, Richmond, and St Kilda stood by their players during the aforementioned episodes, Fevola's ongoing antics eventually proved too much for Carlton to bear. He was traded to the Brisbane Lions in 2009, where his off-field problems continued, his on-field performances nosedived, and his contract was terminated early.⁶⁶

Another star player whose career at his original club sensationally ended due to off-field scandal is Wayne Carey. Often rated the game's greatest-ever player, the North Melbourne captain was forced to leave Arden Street immediately in February 2002 after it was discovered that he was having an extra-marital affair with the wife of his close mate and vice-captain Anthony Stevens. After sitting out the 2002 season, Carey resumed his career with the Adelaide Crows. Like Fevola, after relocating interstate Carey failed to recapture his previous form and his career ended with two very mediocre seasons for his new club. Another similarity the two former power forwards share is that both Carey and Fevola have managed to carve out prominent media profiles despite—or perhaps due to—continually exhibiting controversial behaviour.

AFL players: illicit drugs and brushes with the law

To date, Travis Tuck, the son of Hawthorn legend Michael Tuck, remains the only player banned by the AFL under its three-strikes illicit drugs policy.⁶⁷ But plenty of other AFL footballers have found themselves in trouble through involvement with illicit drugs during their playing days. Examples include, but are by no means limited to:

- Mathew Stokes' arrest on charges of possession and trafficking of cocaine in 2010 (he pleaded guilty to possession in a deal to avoid the trafficking charge)⁶⁸;
- Harley Bennell, when a Gold Coast Suns player, photographed as he allegedly prepared to snort five lines of white powder during a “wild night” out in Launceston in March 2013 (the photographs were made public in July 2015, and Bennell was put up for trade in September that year following a drunken altercation in Surfers Paradise)⁶⁹;
- holidaying in Las Vegas in 2015, Jake Carlisle snapchatted friends a video of himself snorting a white powdery substance—purported to be cocaine—and within 24 hours of his trade from Essendon to St Kilda, Channel Nine broadcast the leaked footage⁷⁰;
- in August 2019, news broke that Gold Coast's Brayden Crossley was under ASADA investigation and facing a possible four-year ban after allegedly testing positive for cocaine metabolites in a matchday sample⁷¹; later in the same month, it was announced that Collingwood's Sam Murray was free to resume playing in the AFL in the 2020 season following an 18-month ban after he was provisionally suspended by ASADA for a positive test for a banned substance, which is believed to have been the result of taking an illicit drug in the days leading up to a game (although the club soon thereafter released a statement saying that Murray had been informed he would not be offered a new contract)⁷²;
- during the 2019 finals series the West Coast Eagles' premiership defence was thrown into upheaval when electrifying small forward Willie Rioli was provisionally suspended for tampering with his urine sample; it subsequently was reported that he also allegedly failed a match day drug test owing to the detection of cannabis metabolites following the team's elimination final victory over Essendon, and what Rioli initially described as a “lil mistake” may cost him a four-year ban that effectively ends his career⁷³;
- and, of course, the ongoing saga surrounding Ben Cousins, whose life has spiralled out of control ever since his playing days at the West Coast Eagles when a clique of teammates fostered an unhealthy drugs culture.

Yet another VFL/AFL all-time great with well-documented off-field problems, Gary Ablett Snr, found himself in the middle of a police investigation after 20-year-old infatuated Geelong fan Alisha Horan died of a drug overdose in Ablett's room at Melbourne's Park Hyatt Hotel in February 2000. Ablett plied Horan with ecstasy and heroin (which he told her was cocaine).⁷⁴ After he awoke to discover that Horan had overdosed, Ablett called paramedics and then fled the scene because, as he later exclaimed to police, he had been “concerned about media and stuff”.⁷⁵ Ablett evaded criminal charges, and after pleading guilty to drug use and possession received only a \$1,500 fine.⁷⁶ It is widely suspected that his manifold off-field transgressions are the reason why Ablett Snr is yet to be elevated to Legend status in the Australian Football Hall of Fame.

In 1996, former North Melbourne champion Jim Krakouer was busted for trafficking amphetamines with a street value of \$500,000 and spent nine years imprisoned.⁷⁷ In between stints at Richmond (102 games, 2001-07) and Collingwood (35 games, 2011-13), Krakouer's son Andrew received a 32-month sentence in

the Perth District Court after he was found guilty of assaulting a longstanding rival during a night out in Fremantle.⁷⁸ Krakouer, who was delisted by Richmond following the incident and then served 16 months behind bars, mostly kept silent about his ordeal upon his release as he set about making the most of his second chance in the AFL with the Magpies. In May 2019, Krakouer opened up in a remarkably candid interview for Fox Footy's *On the Mark* as he cut an impressive figure taking full responsibility for his actions and speaking about how he has turned his life around since jail.⁷⁹

In October 2012, Carlton's freshly announced John Nicholls medallist Heath Scotland narrowly escaped conviction for his role in a "wild pub brawl" at the Mulwala Water Ski Club.⁸⁰ Scotland did so by dusting off the "fireman defence" he had first used in 2006 to avoid a criminal record when facing charges over assaulting a woman at a Melbourne nightclub (on that occasion the magistrate took into account that Scotland could not be accepted into the fire brigade for a decade if convicted, so he ordered him to make a donation to charity and submit a written apology to his victim instead).⁸¹ CCTV from the Mulwala fracas showed Scotland "king-hitting" his victim, and he was facing a possible five-year sentence. Although local Albury magistrate Tony Murray admitted that it was "highly unusual" for such offenders to escape conviction, he nonetheless slapped Scotland with nothing more than a two-year good behaviour bond (whereas three other men involved in the brawl received convictions).⁸² Murray not only considered Scotland's apparent dream of becoming a firefighter, but also factored in the possibility that a criminal conviction could prevent him from attending a pre-season camp in Arizona.⁸³ Scotland's good fortune was relatively short-lived, however, for in February 2013 the NSW Director of Public Prosecutions successfully appealed his original two-year good behaviour bond without conviction. It was retracted, and Scotland received a 12-month bond with conviction.⁸⁴ In September 2019, it was announced that Scotland's old teammate Rhyce Shaw had recruited him to be part of his new-look coaching panel at North Melbourne.

Additional off-field controversies involving AFL footballers that have made headlines include two rather bizarre cases. First, Collingwood's Alan Didak found himself tagging along on a drunken gun-toting joyride with Hells Angel and Melbourne CBD killer Christopher Hudson after a chance meeting in the Spearmint Rhino strip club just days before the latter's murderous rampage in June 2007.⁸⁵ Second, after St Kilda's "Mad Monday" celebrations got out of control in 2013, Clinton Jones received a \$3,000 fine "for setting a dwarf entertainer on fire".⁸⁶

Ostensibly more mundane cases also have made headlines when former VFL/AFL stars have become "fallen idols" imprisoned for corporate crime. North Melbourne Team of the Century and AFL Hall of Famer David Dench received a 14-month jail sentence in 2008 for his role in a multi-million-dollar fraud scheme that targeted his employer Victoria University.⁸⁷ And 244-game Sydney Swans club champion Daryn Cresswell, whose pathological gambling addiction led to him committing aggravated fraud, was subsequently imprisoned in 2010.⁸⁸ Aaron Lord, who kicked 185 goals in 150 games for Geelong and Hawthorn between 1994 and 2003, was lucky to avoid jail after pleading guilty to obtaining a financial advantage by deception. In other words, between 2014-17 he was a "dole cheat" who lied on no less than 74 occasions while rorting almost \$60,000 from Centrelink.⁸⁹ Lord's defence lawyer David Grove painted a picture of what he described as "the perfect rags to riches story" whereby his client had survived a "troubled upbringing with alcoholic parents" to become a professional footballer and after retiring he secured the coveted role of sports attaché at Australia's embassy in France. On returning home, Lord "turned to a party life of drugs and alcohol [and] his life spiralled out of control" after his marriage collapsed.⁹⁰ Magistrate Jonathan Klestadt acknowledged that Lord's "crimes were serious enough to warrant prison time", but in

sentencing he also considered how Lord's "life had fallen into disarray". Klestadt concluded: "From the sensation of your football career until things fell apart, the fragility of your life went unrecognised". He ordered Lord to pay back all the money he fraudulently claimed and also complete 150 hours of unpaid work on a Community Corrections Order but spared him from imprisonment.⁹¹

Australian footballers and domestic abuse

As alluded to in the earlier coverage of Andrew Lovett's downfall, domestic abuse is another prevalent issue. Other AFL footballers shamed by cases of physical or emotional abuse include Nathan Bock, Jason Gram, Shannon Grant, Nick Stevens, and Brian Lake. Whereas some of them are guilty of isolated incidents, others have carried out sustained abuse against current or former partners, and their punishments have varied considerably. For instance, Bock slapped his girlfriend Carlie Matthews, threw beer in her face, and damaged her property during a mid-season drunken altercation at an Adelaide hotel in 2009. The Adelaide Crows fined their reigning Malcolm Blight medallist and All Australian key defender \$5,000 and announced he had been "suspended indefinitely".⁹² Bock missed only one match, however, and was reinstated to the team within a fortnight of his actions.

In October 2012, St Kilda released a statement that it had terminated Gram's playing contract after the 154-game veteran "failed to honour repeated undertakings to the club concerning his behaviour".⁹³ The Saints added that they had been working with the AFL and AFLPA in an attempt to help Gram cease his "inappropriate behaviour" after charges had been laid about six weeks earlier. The club's statement vaguely mentioned "the breakdown of a personal relationship" as the trigger but did not divulge any further details. Within days allegations surfaced that Gram was facing stalking charges. Two weeks later, it was reported that Gram had faced the Magistrates' Court and was convicted on six counts, but the details could not be revealed "due to the nature of the offences".⁹⁴

The cases involving retired stars Grant and Stevens are even more disturbing. In 2018, Grant appealed the six-month prison sentence he received after admitting to assaulting his former partner on multiple occasions. Judge Susan Cohen stated that the former 300-game North Melbourne and Sydney star "had a responsibility as a role model to football followers of all ages", and further stressed: "Sporting celebrity does not entitle you to any special treatment or leniency under the law".⁹⁵ Cohen nonetheless overturned Grant's jail sentence, replacing it with 200 hours of community service (despite the court hearing that he was facing further allegations of assault against the same ex-partner).

Stevens, the former Port and Carlton star, was sacked as Glenelg coach in the 2015 pre-season after he was found guilty of 12 domestic violence charges (five counts of assault, three of threatening to kill, two of intentionally causing injury, and one count of threatening to inflict serious injury).⁹⁶ Stevens subsequently was sentenced to eight months in jail, but appealed. After years of protesting his innocence, accusing his former partner Laima McKenna of lying (despite evidence from more than 2,500 messages he had texted her, many of which were threatening), and dragging his victim through years of courtroom anguish, Stevens finally admitted to wrongdoing. He pleaded guilty to three charges resulting in him serving a lesser prison term of three months.⁹⁷ Grant, the 1999 Norm Smith medallist, and Stevens, a former Carlton vice-captain, both had established promising coaching careers before their shameful actions.

At the time of writing, the life of another Norm Smith medallist continues to unravel with triple

premiership Hawk Brian Lake bouncing from one controversy to the next. Lake courted drama during his playing days, and following retirement he has found himself in increasingly troublesome situations. In July 2018, Lake made headlines when he was detained in Japan. Lake spent six days in a Japanese police cell after an altercation with a local while he was in Osaka to participate in an AFL Asia football tournament.⁹⁸ In an exclusive interview in Melbourne's *Herald Sun* a few months later, Lake explained that his bizarre behaviour in Japan had coincided with him hitting "rock bottom" after news of his mother's terminal illness coupled with his wife leaving him.⁹⁹ Things were to go from bad to worse in the ensuing six months, however, with Lake arrested in early 2019 following an allegedly violent "rampage".¹⁰⁰ He faced a series of charges relating to stalking, trespassing, theft, property damage, unlawful assault, breaching the peace, and committing an offence while on bail.¹⁰¹ It was reported that Lake had become mentally unstable and started stalking his estranged wife following their marriage breakdown, and another target of his harassment was "a woman he believed to be his ex-wife's new lover".¹⁰² Lake's efforts to seek clinical help for his mental health issues, combined with his early guilty plea, were influential factors in magistrate Jennifer Gabrissa deciding against a jail term despite acknowledging that "his behaviour was 'inherently serious' and had a 'profound and protracted' impact on the victim".¹⁰³

In a recent high-profile Australian case of domestic abuse ending a star's playing career, in February 2019 the North Queensland Cowboys sacked controversial recruit Ben Barba before he even played for the club. After the NRL's Integrity Unit examined CCTV footage of a physical altercation between Barba and his partner Ainslie Currie at a Townsville casino, chief executive Todd Greenberg told reporters the former Dally M medallist had been deregistered by the League and he could not see "any time in the future when he'll be welcomed back".¹⁰⁴ It was not the first time the NRL's Integrity Unit had investigated Barba over allegations of physical violence against a woman. Signing for the Cowboys was meant to be Barba's redemption story after he returned from playing in England following his ban from the NRL due to testing positive to cocaine shortly after playing in a Premiership with the Cronulla Sharks.¹⁰⁵ Instead, it ended abruptly and in disgrace. Initially, it was expected that the exiled star would attempt to resurrect his professional rugby career by retreating to Europe yet again, but within weeks of his sacking by the Cowboys it was being reported that Barba was switching "from \$500k [per season] to \$27 an hour" by starting a new career as a truck driver.¹⁰⁶

A female exception that proves the rule

The peculiar case of American soccer star Hope Solo is illuminating in several ways. As an Olympic dual gold medallist, FIFA Women's World Cup champion, and arguably the world's best female goalkeeper in history, Solo has been one of her nation's most prominent female athletes this century. In 2014, Solo was arrested on two counts of assault against her sister and a nephew.¹⁰⁷ When the National Women's Soccer League allowed Solo to continue playing while her court case was pending, the US media debated whether it represented double standards in American professional sports given that male athletes previously facing similar charges had been temporarily suspended. As Solo remained on the national team's World Cup roster, furthermore, the US soccer federation faced a backlash over its apparent failing to suitably address the issue of domestic violence.¹⁰⁸ The case dragged on for almost four years before all charges against Solo were dropped in 2018. It nonetheless serves as an exceptionally rare case of a high-profile female sports star

hitting the headlines for alleged off-field indiscretions. Indeed, the examples surveyed above have shown how such scandals almost always involve male athletes (whereas the following discussion reveals how that is certainly not the case when it comes to on-field transgressions).

Spanning from Europe and the United States to Australia, and covering a multitude of sports, the above discussion of sex scandals, lewd acts, assaults, domestic abuse, illicit drugs, and other illegal or criminal activities illustrates how the repercussions for athletes can differ markedly. Although many reputations have been tarnished (at least temporarily), off-field indiscretions typically do not end careers. If star players are forced to join new clubs or move overseas for different leagues, they are nonetheless afforded the opportunity to restart their careers more or less immediately. Depending on the nature of the offence, it usually takes repeated behavioural issues before lengthy or lifetime bans are enforced—especially when champions are involved. In some instances, not even convictions or imprisonment necessarily finish off a professional athlete’s career, with a shot at redemption—and another major payday—awaiting them upon release. As the following examples show, sporting bodies and authorities understandably are far less forgiving when it comes to on-field incidents that damage the integrity of their competition. Close parallels can be drawn between many of the following cases and the Carlton bribery scandal of 1910.

Excessive and unprovoked violence

Traditionally, fighting has been considered an intrinsic part of many contact sports. Ice hockey arguably is the most brutal mainstream sport in the world, and violence is so systemic that it takes something exceptional to trigger lengthy suspensions. The NHL has only ever handed out one lifetime ban in its long history. The 1927 Stanley Cup ended in chaotic scenes when the Boston Bruins’ Billy “Wild Beaver” Coutu tried to change the momentum of Game Four by attacking two referees and causing a bench-clearing brawl. His tactics failed, however, as the Ottawa Senators were crowned champions and Coutu never played again.¹⁰⁹ In 2016, Europe’s leading ice hockey League, the KHL, handed out a lifetime ban to Damir Ryspayev after the Kazakh player attacked multiple opponents—some on the ice, others on the bench—at the start of an exhibition game. It forced the promotional event to be cancelled after just three minutes, which clearly worried KHL president Dmitry Chernyshenko from a popularity and financial perspective:

We are constantly working to attract a new audience and broaden the game’s geographical reach and Ryspayev’s behavior is not merely harmful in a sporting context, it also blackens the image of the league.¹¹⁰

In banning Ryspayev for life, the KHL described his actions as having “systematically and grotesquely violated” its rules and standards. It then lifted his ban little more than a year later, anyhow.¹¹¹

Not all violent attacks related to sports on ice rinks have been spontaneous outbursts. A premeditated assault on figure skater Nancy Kerrigan, “masterminded” by the ex-husband and a former bodyguard of her rival Tonya Harding, shocked the world in January 1994. Four men involved in the botched plan received prison sentences, and after Harding agreed to a plea bargain for hindering the prosecution, she subsequently received a lifetime ban from the USFSA in 1994.¹¹²

As the Coutu case outlined above suggests, even if violence between competitors is normal there is no tolerance for attacking umpires or officials. Cuban athlete Ángel Matos, a gold medallist at the 2000 Sydney

Olympics and 2007 Pan American Games, was handed a lifetime ban by the World Taekwondo Federation (ratified by the IOC) after he deliberately kicked a referee in the face during his bronze medal tie at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.¹¹³ Similar offences against referees have resulted in comparable outcomes in various sports around the globe. The three most notorious cases in VFL/AFL history saw:

- “Fabulous” Phil Carman suspended for 20 matches after headbutting boundary umpire Graham Carbery while playing for Essendon in 1980;
- Carlton’s Greg Williams rubbed out for nine matches after “Diesel” pushed away field umpire Andrew Coates in 1997;
- and Collingwood’s John Bourke receive a ten-year ban (later reduced to six years) after his meltdown during a televised Army Reserve Cup match at the Lakeside Oval in 1985, which included him tripping/kicking an umpire and then jumping the fence to attack a spectator.

During the VFL’s early history footballers often received lengthy suspensions for on-field acts of violence and particularly when they occurred behind play. Indeed, as documented in *On The Take*, the 1910 season was especially violent—including the Grand Final—but ultimately it served as something of a watershed as the League moved into professionalism the following year and the game started to make some inroads toward stamping out blatant thuggery. Even so, it took another century for the AFL to really clean up the game and for the “biffo” so common in earlier generations to be consigned to history. Striking cases remained commonplace over the decades, and some of the most (in)famous cases saw star players pay especially high prices by missing Grand Finals.

John Coleman was rubbed out for the entire 1951 finals series after retaliating against Carlton full-back Harry Caspar’s rough-house treatment, ultimately missing Essendon’s 11-point Grand Final loss to Geelong. During his Collingwood days, Carman struck Hawthorn’s Michael Tuck in the 1977 second semi-final and his two-game suspension meant that he missed both the drawn Grand Final against North Melbourne and the subsequent replay. And, in perhaps the greatest injustice in VFL/AFL tribunal history, Richmond ruckman Neville Crowe missed the Tigers’ 1967 premiership after he was found guilty of striking Carlton’s John Nicholls even though replay footage indicated Nicholls had staged for a free kick (video was inadmissible at VFL tribunal hearings before 1976). It was the first time Crowe was suspended during his ten-year, 150-game career and the former Richmond captain never played League footy again.

In the televised era, two off-the-ball incidents stand out as especially unsavoury acts of violence to occur on VFL/AFL football fields. In 1985, Leigh Matthews’ “unforgivable moment of madness”, in which he king-hit Neville Bruns and broke his jaw, led to the League taking the extraordinary step of deregistering arguably its greatest-ever player for four weeks.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, it resulted in Matthews being saddled with the ignominy of being charged by Victoria Police with “assault causing grievous bodily harm”.¹¹⁵ Matthews hung up his boots a few months later, so the egregious act did not have a lasting impact on his playing career. Upon retiring, Matthews furthered his already esteemed reputation by becoming a four-time premiership coach followed by a long media/commentating career. Among his many accolades and honours, the AFLPA’s MVP award is named the Leigh Matthews Trophy. In 2008, repeat offender “big, bad, bustling” Barry Hall received a seven-game suspension for what he later admitted was a punch that “could have killed Brent Staker”.¹¹⁶ Hall continued his controversial AFL career until retiring in 2011. Reflecting on this vile incident at the time of his induction into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in June 2017, Hall spoke openly about his lasting regret over what he conceded was an inexcusably “low act” against Staker.¹¹⁷ Three months later, an unprovoked Hall decked an opponent twice during the QAFL Grand Final.

Impish and ingenious cases of cheating

Cheating in sports can fall into a multitude of categories. Sometimes athletes react in the spur of the moment. One of the best known such examples is Diego Maradona's so-called "Hand of God" goal against England in the 1986 World Cup. A lesser known case stems from the marathon at the St Louis Olympic Games in 1904. Raced in extreme heat, most competitors bowed out along the route and were collected in vehicles to return to the stadium. When the vehicle carrying the New Yorker Fred Lorz broke down outside the arena, he summarily jumped out and jogged inside. Unnoticed and caught up in the excitement, Lorz finished a lap and crossed the finish line first. He had his photograph taken with president Teddy Roosevelt's 20-year-old daughter Alice and was about to receive his gold medal when the truth emerged, so the jovial Lorz dismissed it all as a bit of a lark.¹¹⁸ Lorz's fellow American Thomas Hicks, to whom trainers had administered brandy laced with strychnine during the race, was elevated from the silver to gold medal.

Three-quarters of a century later, another marathon runner Rosie Ruiz was far more calculated in her cheating. Ruiz stunned opponents, spectators, and journalists alike when she won the female category of the 1980 Boston Marathon in the remarkable time of 2 hours and 31 minutes. Suspicious officials investigated and it was confirmed that Ruiz had taken short cuts after spotters had not seen her pass certain checkpoints along the route. It was then discovered that Ruiz had cheated in similar fashion during the New York Marathon the previous year by taking the subway.¹¹⁹

A case of premeditated cheating that involved great ingenuity stems from the Soviet pentathlete Boris Onishchenko, who won Olympic silver at Mexico City in 1968 and gold (team) and silver (individual) in Munich four years later. During the pentathlon's fencing event at the Montreal Games in 1976, British competitor Jim Fox became suspicious when the electronic sensor on Onishchenko's épée was recording scores without even touching him. Fox and Onishchenko had competed against each other for almost two decades and had developed a "decent friendship", so initially Fox suspected that his opponent's épée was malfunctioning.¹²⁰ Fox asked a judge to examine the weapon, and it was then discovered that the épée had been illegally modified. It was "deliberately fabricated" with concealed wiring so Onishchenko could touch a pressure pad near his grip to record a score without registering a proper "touch" (which occurs by contacting an opponent with sufficient pressure to depress the tip). The disgraced Soviet was vilified in the media as "Dis-Onishchenko" and banned for life.¹²¹ Rumours that he was exiled to a salt mine in Siberia were never confirmed.

David Robertson was betrayed as a serial cheater when his caddie quit in disgust mid-round after the Scottish golfer moved his ball to a better lie on at least five occasions during qualifying for the 1985 British Open. It was the fourth time Robertson was disqualified from an event, and this time the 28-year-old Scot was banned for 20 years.¹²² In a case of history repeating itself, in 2011 Elliot Saltman, another 28-year-old Scottish golfer, became the first player suspended or banned from the European Tour in almost two decades after he was caught cheating in an event in Russia. Saltman was suspended for three months.¹²³

In winning their sixth Super Bowl together in 2019, Bill Belichick and Tom Brady cemented their status as the NFL's greatest-ever coach and quarterback respectively (with Brady emphatically ending the GOAT debate among all NFL players). The New England Patriots have enjoyed unparalleled success during the Belichick-Brady era, but the dynasty has not been without its controversies. Opposition fans and media critics are quick to point out that "The Patriot Way" may have created and sustained a winning culture for two decades, but it includes bending the rules if not blatant cheating. Most notably, in 2007 New England

went through “Spygate” after Belichick’s staff was caught videotaping the defensive coaching signals of the New York Jets, and in 2015 Brady was suspended by the NFL after the Patriots were found guilty of so-called “Deflategate” for providing their opponent with balls lacking proper air pressure. For “Spygate”, the NFL fined Belichick \$US 500,000 (the largest fine for an NFL coach in history), and also fined the Patriots as well as docking their first draft pick.¹²⁴ The fallout for “Deflategate” was uglier, with Brady successfully challenging his four-game suspension via the US Circuit Court of Appeals before losing a rehearing. It meant Brady eventually served his suspension at the start of the 2016 season, which culminated in the Patriots winning Super Bowl LI as their quarterback was named the championship game’s MVP.¹²⁵

When Greg Chappell ordered his younger brother Trevor to bowl underarm for the last delivery in the ODI match against New Zealand at the MCG on 1 February 1981, technically it was not cheating because it did not contravene cricket’s rules in Australia at the time (although underarm bowling was outlawed in England). It was universally panned as poor sportsmanship, however, and in Channel Nine’s postgame coverage Richie Benaud labelled it a “disgraceful performance from a captain who got his sums wrong [and...] one of the worst things I have ever seen done on a cricket field”.¹²⁶

There was absolutely no doubt that cheating had occurred when Steve Smith, Dave Warner, and Cameron Bancroft brought the game and Australian cricket’s reputation into disrepute through their ball-tampering fiasco in a March 2018 Test match against South Africa in Cape Town.¹²⁷ As the senior figures embroiled in so-called “Sandpapergate”, captain Smith and his vice-captain (and the apparent ringleader) Warner both received 12-month bans from Australian domestic and international cricket and forfeited their leadership roles. Bancroft, the junior culprit (who did the actual sandpapering of the ball), was handed the lighter sentence of nine months.¹²⁸ The immediate backlash saw coach Darren Lehmann resign (despite not being privy to his players’ plan to cheat), and more than a year later Cricket Australia continued to struggle with the catastrophic fallout on and off the field. Fronting the media at a press conference upon returning to Australia, a mortified Smith admitted: “I know I will regret this for the rest of my life. I’m absolutely gutted. I hope in time I can earn back respect and forgiveness”.¹²⁹ Smith’s incredible performance during Australia’s tour of England in 2019, in which he more or less single-handedly retained The Ashes by scoring a Bradmanesque 774 runs at an average of 110.57, quickly secured his redemption in the eyes of many (but certainly not all) Australian cricket journalists and fans.-

One of the more bizarre cases of premeditated cheating unravelled in comedic circumstances during the 2009 Heineken Cup quarter final between English side Harlequins and their Irish opponents Leinster. According to the competition’s rules, players could be substituted only if they were injured. Harlequins player Tom Williams was replaced when trainers helped him from the field with what appeared to be a serious facial injury. Upon closer inspection, it was discovered that Williams had been supplied with fake blood capsules so he could feign injury. It took four months of inquiries for the real story finally to emerge. What eventually was dubbed “Bloodgate” ended with Williams copping a 12-month suspension (reduced to four months on appeal) and several high-ranking Harlequins officials who were behind the plan receiving lengthier bans.¹³⁰

Another example that involves both players and team officials conspiring to cheat occurred at the Sydney Paralympics in 2000. Spain won gold in the intellectually disabled (ID) basketball tournament, but then it was discovered that ten of the team’s 12 players had faked mental impairment. This shameful episode led to a subsequent change for all future Paralympics with ID events scrapped and physical disability left as the only criterion. Thirteen years later, Fernando Martin Vicente, the former head of the Spanish Federation for Mentally Handicapped Sports, was found guilty of fraud and ordered to pay back almost \$US 200,000 in government subsidies as the Sydney Paralympics scandal finally reached its conclusion.¹³¹

Back office breaches

Numerous NRL and AFL clubs have been caught in salary cap breaches, but typically they are considered only minor indiscretions that result in comparatively small fines (especially when clubs self-report breaches exposed by internal audits). Some cases have been far more serious, however, resulting in much heavier repercussions. In 2010, NRL salary cap auditors discovered that Melbourne Storm had gone to “elaborate lengths” to hide deliberate “massive breaches” over the previous five years totalling \$1.7 million in illegal extra player payments.¹³² Not only was Melbourne Storm hit with punitive fines but, moreover, the club was stripped of its 2007 and 2009 Premierships. The Storm has recovered and continues to be a perennial NRL powerhouse, making four Grand Finals and winning another two Premierships this decade. In some respects, then, Carlton’s punishment for earlier salary cap cheating has proven even more severe than Storm’s lost flags.

Like several other AFL clubs during the 1990s, the Blues copped some moderate fines for minor salary cap breaches. Apparently not heeding the warning, undisclosed payments to captain Craig Bradley resulted in the club getting fined \$125,150 and forfeiting two picks in the 2001 national draft. The following year, the situation worsened when an AFL investigation revealed that under John Elliott’s presidency the Blues had systematically breached the League’s salary cap regulations to the tune of \$1.37 million between 1998 and 2001. AFL Commission chairman Ron Evans remarked:

Carlton’s latest salary cap breaches were a deliberate, elaborate and sophisticated scheme to break the player payment rules. Carlton members and supporters ought to feel betrayed by the actions of their club.¹³³

The Blues were fined \$930,000 (the largest sum for a salary cap breach in Australian sports history) and also were stripped of their early selections in both the 2002 and 2003 national drafts (but later received a priority pick in 2003). Carlton got fortunate with its first selection (pick 45) in 2002, choosing future 300-game club legend Kade Simpson, and used its priority pick a year later to nab 200-gamer Andrew Walker. In forfeiting so many high draft selections, however, the Blues’ playing list was eviscerated for at least a decade. During this period Carlton “won” the first wooden spoons in its long and illustrious VFL/AFL history (2002, 2005, 2006), Elliott’s 20-year presidency ended in disgrace as he became a reviled figure at Princes Park, and the Blues had to be saved from financial ruin by billionaire supporter (and former Under 19 ruckman) Richard Pratt. Indeed, the draft sanctions imposed by the AFL in the early 2000s proved so crippling that Denis Pagan, who coached the Blues in their darkest days, claimed as recently as July 2015 that Carlton “still hasn’t recovered”.¹³⁴

PEDs and dope cheats

Doping, one of the most prevalent and hard to combat forms of cheating, continues to undermine the integrity of virtually every sport at the elite level. After Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson blew away the field to win the 100M gold medal at the 1988 Seoul Olympics in world-record time, within hours it was confirmed that he had tested positive for anabolic steroids.¹³⁵ Johnson served a two-year suspension, competed at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992, then received a life ban following another positive test in 1993. American

track sensation Marion Jones won three gold and two bronze medals at the Sydney Games in 2000. Unlike Johnson, who had been caught and disgraced immediately, Jones did not test positive at the time and she departed as one of the most celebrated superstars of the Olympics. During the subsequent BALCO scandal, Jones publicly lied for years vowing that she never took PEDs. In the wake of the BALCO investigation, Jones was proven to be a liar and a drug cheat and finally was stripped of her Olympic medals in 2007. Following her role in the BALCO scandal and a cheque fraud scheme, Jones eventually spent six months in prison in 2008.¹³⁶

The Oswald Commission hearings into alleged widespread doping violations by Russian athletes at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi resulted in the IOC Disciplinary Commission handling 46 individual cases by December 2017.¹³⁷ Approximately two-thirds of the 43 Russians who were disqualified (and stripped of their medals if applicable) successfully appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and had their Sochi results reinstated. Eleven athletes either had their sanctions upheld or saw their entire team disqualified. Several cross-country skiers and bobsledders counted among the Russians whose sanctions were upheld by CAS, while the women's ice hockey team was disqualified with six of its players failing to appeal their life bans from the IOC.¹³⁸

Russia's systemic cheating at Sochi triggered memories of an earlier case of state-sanctioned doping involving East German athletes during the Cold War. The GDR was not caught at the time, but following Germany's reunification in 1990 it was revealed that East German female swimmers had been unknowingly subjected to a doping program (they were given PEDs disguised as vitamins).¹³⁹ After a period of mediocrity, the GDR's female swimmers dominated the Olympics between Montreal in 1976 and Seoul in 1988, winning 32 gold medals. Swimmers were not the only East German Olympians who were doped by the state, with a particularly galling case for Australians involving Renate Stecher beating Raelene Boyle in the 100M and 200M events at Munich in 1972. It is an injustice that Boyle, understandably, has never let go. Receiving an Australian Olympic Committee Order of Merit in the presence of IOC president Thomas Bach in May 2019, Boyle used her acceptance speech to express how "disappointed" she remains in the IOC for its poor handling of the GDR doping scandal that robbed her and many others of gold medals they rightfully deserve:

There are a lot of people out there that really deserve medals they didn't get... They should all be redressed—the whole East German thing needs to be redressed... I do in many ways feel let down by both the IOC and WADA.¹⁴⁰

Cycling is the sport most commonly associated with doping. Lance Armstrong may be the most notorious drug cheat in sports history, but armchair sceptics suspect that more or less the entire peloton has been "juiced up" for decades. The Armstrong affair and myriad other doping offences of recent years sit within a long lineage of drug scandals in cycling. The three Pélissier brothers Henri, Francis, and Charles made news after they abandoned the Tour de France (TDF) in 1924. Admitting that while racing they had used all kinds of substances—strychnine, cocaine, and chloroform—their story was printed in *Le Petit Parisien* newspaper under the piquant headline "The Convicts of the Road" (*Les Forçats de la Route*).¹⁴¹

The five-time TDF champion Jacques Anquetil openly admitted to taking drugs, which was a common practice during his era in the 1950s and 1960s, as later detailed in Paul Howard's 2008 biography *Sex, Lies and Handlebar Tape*.¹⁴² One of Anquetil's contemporaries, British rider Tom Simpson, died while ascending the legendary Mont Ventoux during the TDF in 1967. An autopsy revealed drugs in Simpson's system, and investigators found more drugs in his hotel room and jersey pockets.¹⁴³ Even the legendary

Eddy Merckx, still widely considered the greatest cyclist of all time, technically should be considered a drug cheat because he tested positive on multiple occasions. But Merckx enjoys some benefit of the doubt because testing was only in its infancy and thus was very rudimentary and unreliable at the time.¹⁴⁴ In any case, whereas Armstrong's ignominious ending included a life ban and being retrospectively stripped of his hitherto record-breaking seven TDF titles, nostalgia has seen champions of yesteryear like Anquetil and Merckx continue to enjoy mostly untarnished legacies because they are deemed to have raced in a bygone era beholden to different standards.

Banned substances have continued to pose a problem for baseball ever since MLB was rocked by its so-called "steroids era" throughout the 1990s. Released in December 2007, the Mitchell Report listed 88 former and then still-active MLB players alleged to have used anabolic steroids, human growth hormone (HGH), or other banned substances.¹⁴⁵ Two of the greatest baseballers in history, pitcher Roger Clemens and slugger Barry Bonds, were each named dozens of times in the Mitchell Report.¹⁴⁶ Both vehemently denied all such allegations, and even ended up facing perjury charges. Based on their playing records Clemens and Bonds would have been first-ballot inductees into MLB's Hall of Fame, but due to tainted legacies over doping neither have been welcomed to Cooperstown. More recently, another superstar Alex Rodriguez was suspended for an entire season after he was embroiled in the Biogenesis scandal of 2013.¹⁴⁷ It cost him a year out of his MLB career and the corresponding \$US 25 million salary for the 2014 season. As with Clemens, Bonds, and any other all-time greats tainted by PEDs, it will at least delay if not prevent A-Rod's entry to Cooperstown.

In the same decade that MLB was facing its steroids problem, the first AFL player tested positive to anabolic steroids when Richmond ruckman Justin Charles turned to boldenone in a desperate attempt to overcome a spate of muscular injuries in 1997. He was aware it was a banned substance, but Charles had just enjoyed a brilliant year (finishing only four votes behind dual 1996 Brownlow winners James Hird and Michael Voss) and was struggling to get his body healthy during pre-season. The AFL had introduced its first Anti-Doping Code in 1990, so Charles knew he was taking a calculated risk. But Charles rationalised the decision in his own mind by saying that he simply wanted to "get back to doing my job".¹⁴⁸ Charles saw no ethical difference between taking boldenone six times over four weeks to repair injuries during the pre-season or receiving "20 penicillin shots" in two days leading up to games during the actual season, because both actions were predicated on using drugs to overcome injury or pain in order to play.¹⁴⁹ The difference, of course, is that one was a banned substance. Once caught, Charles bemoaned in his press conference that he had been "poorly advised" but nonetheless accepted full responsibility for his actions.¹⁵⁰ The AFL handed him a 16-match suspension, and although Charles recommenced playing in 1998 his comeback was injury-riddled, short-lived, and his AFL playing days ended abruptly. Intriguingly, between switching from Footscray to Richmond earlier in his career, Charles had taken a break from football in 1994 to play minor league baseball in the Florida Marlins' farm system—an experience that coincided with MLB's burgeoning "steroids era".

Interviewed by Radio National's *The Sports Factor* presenter Amanda Smith in 2004, Charles remained adamant that even though he was the only player to be suspended for PEDs he was not Robinson Crusoe in adopting such practices within the AFL:

I may have been the first person caught for using steroids, but if you think I'm the only person that's used steroids, if you think I was the first or the last, you are absolutely kidding yourself.¹⁵¹

Charles' comments about other AFL footballers becoming embroiled in PED use proved prescient words, indeed, when nine years later Bombers coach James Hird, club president David Evans, and CEO Ian Robson fronted a press conference on 5 February 2013. The triumvirate broke the news that their club had self-reported to the AFL and ASADA over internal concerns relating to what soon became known as the Essendon supplements saga.¹⁵² A few key officials and football department personnel including Evans and Robson soon fell on their swords, but their martyrdom failed to save Windy Hill from one of the greatest scandals in Australian sporting history. Besides the AFL and Essendon, the episode involved the Australian Crime Commission, ASADA, WADA, and CAS.¹⁵³ Eventually, inter alia the drawn-out Essendon supplements saga:

- cost Hird his dream job and almost his life;
- saw 34 players cop two-year suspensions for using the banned substance Thymosin beta-4;
- forced captain Jobe Watson to hand back the 2012 Brownlow;
- and embittered Mark “Bomber” Thompson to such an extent that his increasingly erratic behaviour has seen his life spiral out of control.

As well as being barred from the 2013 finals series, this episode cost Essendon draft picks plus \$2 million in fines and untold millions in legal fees and compensation claims.¹⁵⁴ Much like Carlton following its salary cap woes, years later Essendon is yet to fully recover from its devastating supplements saga.

In July 2019, another major doping scandal in which multiple Australian athletes filled central roles unfolded in front of a global audience. Following Chinese swimmer Sun Yang's victory in the men's 400M final at the World Swimming Championships in South Korea, Australia's silver medallist Mack Horton refused to stand on the dais next to the winner during the medal ceremony. Horton's defiant stance was in protest against FINA's decision to allow Sun to compete at the championships despite a scheduled hearing into allegations the Chinese superstar smashed (or had others smash on his behalf) vials of his blood during a drug test in 2018.¹⁵⁵ After Sun was again victorious in the 200M final, British swimmer Duncan Scott, who won bronze, likewise refused to stand next to him on the dais. Horton and Scott received a great deal of support for their very public protests, strengthened by the fact that back in 2014 Sun had served a three-month ban for taking an illegal substance (trimetazidine), which he claimed was to treat a heart condition. The controversy surrounding Sun in July 2019 was rather unique as an example of athletes themselves protesting against competitors as alleged drug cheats and thereby demanding authorities to take appropriate action.

In response, Sun's supporters were quick to point out that Australian swimming had experienced its own share of recent controversy, including Horton's teammate Thomas Fraser-Holmes serving a 12-month suspension in 2017 for missing three drug tests—and further highlighted that Horton had been conveniently quiet about his countryman's indiscretions.¹⁵⁶ China's incensed state-operated media accused Australia of being racist and merely a “second-class citizen of the West”.¹⁵⁷ Even more embarrassingly, just days after Horton's protest it emerged that Queenslander Shayna Jack had tested positive for the anabolic agent Ligandrol a month earlier, and Swimming Australia authorities had kept this news under wraps until after the four-time world champion's follow-up sample confirmed the banned substance was in her system.¹⁵⁸ Swimming Australia's president John Bertrand was quick to explain, however, that the governing body could not have handled the situation any differently due to confidentiality regulations surrounding ASADA test results.¹⁵⁹ Initially, the scandal nonetheless left Horton exposed to derisive comments about him being the poster-boy for a hypocritical country that can no longer claim “hard but fair” is the Australian way in

sport.¹⁶⁰ Yet, at the time of writing in February 2020, it seemed that Horton and Swimming Australia had the last laugh when it was announced that the CAS had banned Sun Yang from competing in the sport for eight years.¹⁶¹

Match-fixing: it's not just cricket

Attempts to fix results can infiltrate any sporting contest that is subject to betting. Fixing can be coaxed through bribery or coerced via blackmail. As described in *On The Take*, it can be as simple as a stranger approaching a footballer such as “Bongo” Lang in a local street leading up to a big final. Conversely, it can be orchestrated by complex organised crime syndicates at a trans-national level. It can take the form of match-fixing, whereby the overall result is affected, or variants of spot-fixing that attempt to determine particular aspects within a wider contest so that more “exotic” bets can be influenced. Cricket and soccer are sports that easily lend themselves to all kinds of gambling, and consequently they have been plagued with match-fixing and spot-fixing scandals in recent decades.

New Zealander Lou Vincent is one of the rare cases in which a cricketer banned for life over match-fixing has not vehemently protested his innocence.¹⁶² Instead, after being found guilty Vincent accused his former captain and Kiwi superstar Chris Cairns of approaching him with spot- and match-fixing offers while playing for the Chandigarh Lions in the now-defunct Indian Cricket League.¹⁶³ Another New Zealander Brendon McCullum made similar claims about Cairns allegedly approaching him with a “business proposition” to fix matches.¹⁶⁴ Cairns has denied any involvement in fixing, nothing was ever proven against him, and in retirement he has continued the fight to clear his name and reclaim his reputation through years of expensive litigation. Cairns won a libel suit and also successfully defended himself against claims of perjury and perverting the course of justice.¹⁶⁵ Ali Martin, chief cricket reporter for *The Guardian*, concluded that Cairns’ acquittal painted “a worrying picture for the game at large”.¹⁶⁶

Some of the most notorious cases of corruption in cricket have centred on India, South Africa, and Pakistan, not least because these nations have had captains handed lifetime bans. The Proteas’ ill-fated tour of India in 2000 saw both Mohammad Azharuddin and Hansie Cronje implicated in match-fixing and spot-fixing scandals involving multiple players from each nation.¹⁶⁷ Although the BCCI imposed a life ban on its disgraced skipper, Azharuddin’s reputation did not seem to take much of a hit as he switched to politics and summarily was elected to the Indian parliament in 2009.¹⁶⁸ Cronje unsuccessfully appealed against his lifetime ban before he died in a plane crash in 2002. Conspiracy theories persist that Cronje was murdered by “mafia betting syndicates” before he could reveal secrets about match-fixing in cricket.¹⁶⁹

In 1995, Shane Warne, Mark Waugh, and Tim May alleged that Saleem Malik had offered them bribes to play poorly during Australia’s tour of Pakistan the previous year. It took five years for the case to be concluded, with Malik receiving a lifetime ban—not only from playing, but also any involvement in the game from an official capacity—in 2000. Malik continued to deny all allegations of corruption, and later succeeded in having his ban overturned by Lahore’s civil court in 2008.¹⁷⁰ It was a moral victory of sorts, and he is free to be involved in coaching or other official roles, but nothing erases the fact that Malik was the first international cricketer handed a lifetime ban for corruption and his reputation remains tarnished. Malik has always felt especially aggrieved that his two main accusers—Warne and Waugh—were embroiled in their own gambling scandal around the same time, and yet they escaped virtually unscathed because it

was covered up so that their credibility as witnesses in his case was not compromised.¹⁷¹

Malik, of course, is referring to the so-called John the Bookmaker controversy of the 1990s. While touring Sri Lanka in 1994, Warne and Waugh had accepted considerable sums of cash from a stranger apparently in exchange for nothing more than general information about things such as weather and pitch conditions. When interrogated about it later, both players claimed they had only discovered afterwards that “John” was an Indian bookie and they denied providing more confidential information such as team selection or strategies.¹⁷² The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) decided to fine Warne and Waugh \$10,000 and \$8,000 respectively but kept the whole episode secret, supposedly because they were key witnesses in Pakistan’s case against Malik. But when journalist Malcolm Conn’s investigative reporting led to his Walkley-winning exposé of the John the Bookmaker controversy making headlines in December 1998, the revelations about Warne, Waugh, and the ACB’s secretive handling of the affair became public knowledge.¹⁷³ Warne was injured at the time, but days after the news broke Waugh copped a barrage of boos as he walked out to bat in an Ashes Test at the Adelaide Oval. One sign in the crowd exclaimed: “The weather’s hot. The pitch is flat. \$500 just for that”.¹⁷⁴ Australia’s cricketing public shared Conn’s abhorrence, suspecting that cash had been exchanged for more sensitive information. The resentment did not last long, however, and both players continued to enjoy glittering careers followed by rewarding media gigs in retirement.

Soccer invariably finds itself battling match-fixing allegations, with a long history of cases involving individual players, teams, and officials.¹⁷⁵ By way of illustration, prominent examples from the past decade alone canvass Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The Croatian Football Federation announced that “at least 15 players, two coaches and one club official” were embroiled in a match-fixing scandal in 2010, which led to state criminal proceedings.¹⁷⁶ South Korea international representative Choi Sung-Kuk was one of ten players (from multiple clubs) handed lifetime bans by the K-League in 2011.¹⁷⁷ Three teammates in the Guatemala national team, including former captain Gustavo Adolfo Cabrera, were found guilty of match-fixing and banned for life in 2012.¹⁷⁸ The El Salvador Football Federation gave lifetime bans to 14 members of its national team in 2013.¹⁷⁹ Sanel Kuljic, capped 20 times by Austria, and his former Kapfenberger SV teammate Dominique Taboga were charged with match-fixing in 2013. Taboga initially claimed that Kuljic had blackmailed him to fix matches, but later admitted he had freely tried to persuade four other players to become involved. They apparently received between 7,000 and 25,000 euros per match from their backers in Austria, Albania, Serbia, and Chechnya.¹⁸⁰ Found guilty of fixing 18 matches in the first and second divisions of the Austrian Bundesliga over several seasons, Kuljic received a five-year prison sentence. For his lesser role, Taboga got three years (two suspended).¹⁸¹

Corrupt soccer officials can be found on and off the pitch. Ghanaian referee Joseph Lamptey was banned for life by FIFA (upheld by CAS) after he was found guilty of manipulating the result of a 2018 World Cup qualifier he officiated between South Africa and Senegal in November 2016.¹⁸² Similarly, Saudi referee Fahad Al-Mirdasi was handed a lifetime ban on the eve of the 2018 World Cup (FIFA had selected Al-Mirdasi to officiate at the tournament prior to banning him).¹⁸³ Despite such actions, FIFA itself continues to suffer from a deserved reputation for longstanding incorrigible officialdom after US federal prosecutors followed up on work conducted by the FBI and the IRS Criminal Investigation Division, which led to a much-publicised court case against FIFA corruption in 2015.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, it was proven that corrupt officials in soccer went all the way up to FIFA headquarters, as evidenced by separate proceedings against its president Sepp Blatter that finally led to his “resignation” in December 2015 and a subsequent six-year ban from any official FIFA activities.¹⁸⁵

As lower-ranked players struggle to make ends meet travelling the world to stay on the tour, tennis is

another global sport with major problems linked to gambling. The game's stop-start nature and peculiar scoring system means tennis readily lends itself to all kinds of exotic spot-fixing bets. Established in 2008, the Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU) is an initiative of the sport's major stakeholders—the ITF, ATP, WTA, and the Grand Slam Board—all of whom pledge a “zero-tolerance policy on betting-related corruption”.¹⁸⁶ The TIU has imposed dozens of sanctions ranging from suspension for a few months (for very minor betting offences) through to lifetime bans (for contriving the outcome of play), mostly to players but also some chair umpires.¹⁸⁷

Off to the races

Race tracks are synonymous with gambling and so betting scandals are commonplace. Experienced punters are especially wary of stories relating to greyhound races and the trots, but historically Australia's biggest stories have centred on thoroughbreds. Darren Weir's highly publicised fall from grace in 2019, amid his illegal use of electronic “jiggers” and other matters investigated by Victoria Police's Sporting Integrity Intelligence Unit, is merely the latest in a long line of controversies in Australian horse racing.¹⁸⁸ On 1 November 1930, criminals fired shots at Phar Lap when the “Red Terror” was heading to the track.¹⁸⁹ Unscathed, the champion won the Melbourne Stakes (renamed the Mackinnon Stakes from 1936) later that afternoon and as short-priced favourite doubled up with the Melbourne Cup three days later. It is widely believed—but not provable—that Phar Lap was deliberately poisoned while racing in the United States two years later.¹⁹⁰

Big Philou won the 1969 Caulfield Cup after champion jockey Roy Higgins had a contentious protest upheld. Weeks later, Big Philou was a strong chance to claim a coveted Cups double when trainer Bart Cummings found him scouring on Melbourne Cup Day and, upon veterinary advice, was forced to withdraw him from the race. He was not sick naturally. Someone feared financial ruin if he won the double, and so Big Philou was nobbled.¹⁹¹ Rumours circled around high-profile bookie Bill Waterhouse, but an AJC investigation cleared him of any wrongdoing. Terminally ill in 1997, Cummings' former employee Les Lewis confessed to having accepted \$10,000 to dope Big Philou with laxatives on Melbourne Cup morning.¹⁹² But the identity of who bribed Lewis remains a mystery.

The patriarchal Waterhouse eventually lost his bookmaker's licence when he and his son Robbie were two of the most prominent racing identities implicated in the Fine Cotton affair that unfolded in calamitous fashion at Brisbane's Eagle Farm in 1984. Fine Cotton was at 33-1 odds in a restricted handicap event, and the ring-in scam involved substituting him with the far superior open-company sprinter Bold Personality. Officials became alarmed by the unusual betting plunge on such a long-shot—which came into 7-2 odds by the time they jumped—and immediately after the horse won an investigation was underway.¹⁹³ It did not take long to uncover the amateurish plot, with an especially comedic aspect being that the scammers forgot to bring peroxide to the track so they resorted to using white paint to give Bold Personality similar markings to Fine Cotton's distinctive socks. The Queensland Turf Club “warned off” (that is, banned for life) six people involved in the scam including trainer Hayden Haitana, who also spent time in jail for his role (in 2013, Haitana became the last person involved to have their lifetime ban lifted).¹⁹⁴ The Waterhouses lost their licences for having prior knowledge to the scam and failing to report it to the track stewards, and were banned from entering racetracks worldwide until their exile was lifted 14 years later.¹⁹⁵

A more sophisticated racehorse “ring-in” strategy was employed in May 1972 at the Casterton Racing Club, in western Victoria. The Muntham Handicap at Casterton was won—easily—by Royal School that year, a surprise victor given the horse had in its previous four runs finished no higher than third-last.¹⁹⁶ It quickly emerged that Royal School had been substituted by its owner Ricky Renzella for another of his horses—the top-class sprinter Regal Vista, which had won the prestigious Liston Stakes in 1970.¹⁹⁷ The odds for Royal School tumbled from 50-1 to 7-4, but it was only the discovery of forged registration papers that revealed the lucrative scam. Unlike Fine Cotton and Bold Personality, Royal School and Regal Vista looked very much alike, were a similar age, and shared identifying features.¹⁹⁸ Renzella, who received a two-year jail sentence for masterminding the scam, remained officially “warned off” racetracks for 47 years until his death in June 2019.

The punt strikes

The quintessential journeyman Ryan Tandy played for five NRL clubs between 2003-10, while also fitting in a season for Hull Kingston Rovers in the northern hemisphere’s pre-eminent competition the Super League plus short-term stops at four additional clubs in the UK’s National League system (the two tiers below the Super League). Playing for Canterbury-Bankstown against the North Queensland Cowboys, Tandy found himself enveloped in a spot-fixing scandal after he gave away possession by knocking on in the game’s opening moments and then gave away a penalty. These two actions combined meant that a Cowboys penalty goal was the most likely outcome, but North Queensland was more venturesome and scored a try instead. It mattered little, however, for prior to the kick-off the TAB had notified authorities that 95 per cent of bets placed on the match’s first scoring play were for the unusual option of a Cowboys penalty goal.¹⁹⁹ It made Tandy’s actions highly suspicious, and in due course he received a lifetime ban from the NRL. This game, which ended Tandy’s professional playing career, occurred on 21 August 2010—just four weeks short of the centenary marking the fateful day on which the lives of Lang and Fraser were irreversibly ruined. Just as “Bongo” had repeatedly appealed to the VFL for reinstatement 100 years earlier, Tandy’s pleas fell on deaf ears. Three months after his final appeal was rejected, in April 2014 Tandy was found dead of a suspected overdose at his parent’s home in picturesque Saratoga on NSW’s Central Coast.²⁰⁰

When the NBA discovered one of its referees Tim Donaghy had been betting on games in which he officiated between 2003-07, it resulted in him being sentenced to 15 months in prison.²⁰¹ Around 125 years earlier, MLB umpire Dick Higham was handed a lifetime ban after a suspicious team owner hired a private detective who uncovered evidence that he had been fixing games through dodgy calls. Higham remains the only MLB umpire banned for match-fixing.²⁰² There have been numerous cases involving players, however, since George Bechtel became the first Major Leaguer banned when he was blacklisted before the 1877 season.²⁰³ At the end of that year, four players received lifetime bans after being found guilty of costing their team the National League pennant by accepting bribes to throw games in what is known as the Louisville Grays scandal of 1877.²⁰⁴ A charter member of MLB’s National League in 1876, the Grays folded in the wake of this scandal after just two seasons in existence.

Hal Chase, an elite first baseman and excellent hitter, was one of his generation’s greatest ballplayers. But for much of his MLB career, which spanned from 1905-19, Chase was dogged by persistent widespread rumours of corruption.²⁰⁵ Along with Heinie Zimmermann, his close friend and New York Giants teammate, Chase

was even linked to the “Black Sox” scandal as possible middlemen between an illegal gambling syndicate and Chicago White Sox players during the 1919 World Series against the Cincinnati Reds.²⁰⁶ Although nothing could be proven with irrefutable evidence, the long-suspected Chase and Zimmermann were blacklisted following the 1919 season. In the same year, two of baseball’s icons Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker apparently had joined forces to fix at least one game and maybe more between Detroit and Cleveland. This accusation was later made by a disgruntled former teammate in 1926. It was enough for the Tigers and Indians to release them, but they were cleared in a hearing the following year and carried on their illustrious MLB careers.²⁰⁷ Cobb and Speaker were elected to baseball’s Hall of Fame in 1936 and 1937 respectively.

Meanwhile, one of the most infamous episodes in sports history played out as MLB’s first Commissioner of Baseball, federal judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, oversaw the “Black Sox” scandal’s fallout during 1920–21. Despite the accused players being acquitted of all charges in a public trial, Landis installed lifetime bans against the “eight men out”.²⁰⁸ Their roles in the conspiracy varied greatly, just as their varying positions in the team determined the degrees to which they could affect the outcome of games. Pitcher Claude “Lefty” Williams, for instance, lost all three of his starts in the World Series with an inflated ERA of 6.63, and the performances of centrefielder and outstanding hitter Oscar “Happy” Felsch were noticeably poor. Conversely, utility infielder Fred McMullin was only a bench-player and thus could not have a huge bearing on the series. But McMullin was accepted into the fold after he overheard conversations and threatened to tell. The apparent ringleader Arnold “Chick” Gandil later expressed remorse, but also claimed that they had in fact changed their minds by the time the series commenced. In a similar vein to “Bongo” Lang’s account from a decade earlier, then, Gandil swore that even though bribes had been accepted the players ultimately could not perform below their best once they took the field.²⁰⁹

Of the “Black Sox” scandal, to this day the case against legendary figure Joseph “Shoeless Joe” Jackson remains especially contested. It is indisputable that he was aware of the fix because he was offered bribes, but Jackson’s lifelong protestations of innocence are supported by his excellent statistics during the nine-game series (including a .375 batting average that surpassed all other players on both teams, and he made no fielding errors). Jackson’s case is especially problematic because he was illiterate and thus disadvantaged in defending himself.²¹⁰ A century later, “Shoeless Joe” remains on MLB’s ineligible list but there are persistent widespread calls for his reinstatement so that he can be posthumously enshrined in Cooperstown.²¹¹

Prohibited gambling

Authorities responsible for upholding the integrity of their sporting competitions, quite rightfully, adopt a hard-line stance against players and coaches gambling on matches—especially contests directly involving their own teams. Even if such betting does not include attempts at match-fixing, it is a grey-zone considered far too dangerous to be allowed. Another remarkable case stemming from baseball involves MLB’s all-time hits leader Pete Rose. As suggested by his nickname “Charlie Hustle”, no Major Leaguer ever played the game harder than Rose. As a gambling addict, however, during his playing days Rose could not refrain from betting on baseball and this habit extended to betting on Cincinnati Reds games while he was the team’s manager in the 1980s.²¹² Predictably, with the “Black Sox” scandal casting a long and permanent shadow, MLB adopts a hardline stance on betting, deeming any misdemeanours as automatic exclusions from the game as outlined in Rule 21 (d), which in part states:

Any player, umpire, or Club or League official or employee, who shall bet any sum whatsoever upon any baseball game in connection with which the bettor has a duty to perform, shall be declared permanently ineligible.²¹³

Like “Shoeless Joe” Jackson, Rose would be a first-ballot inductee to the Hall of Fame. But, alongside Jackson, he remains the most notable name on MLB’s permanently ineligible list. Rose’s blacklisting has devastated him, as noted in his 2004 autobiography *My Prison Without Bars*.²¹⁴ Rose is an intriguing comparison for “Bongo” Lang, because he admitted to betting on his own team (repeatedly) but has always maintained it never affected his effort as a player or decision-making as a manager.

Despite the AFL conducting comprehensive programs, in the past dozen years the League’s Integrity Unit has dealt with numerous cases of players getting caught betting on football games. Following a lengthy investigation in 2007, the AFL announced that it had fined three players, Melbourne utility Daniel Ward, Kangaroos ruckman David Hale, and Adelaide captain Simon Goodwin, while Sydney rookie Kieran Jack was reprimanded.²¹⁵ In a candid interview with Mike Sheahan a year later, Goodwin opened up about the gambling addiction that had threatened to ruin his life.²¹⁶ A raft of other players have been fined for gambling on AFL matches, including Melbourne’s Addam Maric (fined \$5,000 for backing Collingwood to defeat the Bulldogs in 2009), Jack Crisp (fined \$5,000 for placing various bets totalling \$129 during his days in Brisbane), and Collingwood youngster Brayden Sier (handed a suspended \$5,000 fine for bets totalling less than \$50 placed during the 2017 season).²¹⁷

The two most publicised cases have involved Collingwood players. In 2011, the Magpies decided on a surprise tactic against the Adelaide Crows by starting captain Nick Maxwell up forward instead of his usual place in defence. Upon receiving this confidential news in a team meeting, Heath Shaw bet \$10 on Maxwell to kick the first goal of the game at odds of 100/1. Shaw passed on the inside information to friends who also placed minor bets on Maxwell. The AFL fined Shaw \$20,000 and suspended him for 14 matches (eight to be served, six suspended).²¹⁸ Shaw made a public apology for what he conceded was “a stupid thing to do”.²¹⁹ The AFL’s investigation also discovered that Maxwell’s family members had placed similar bets totalling \$85. But he was only fined \$10,000 (half suspended) rather than being rubbed out for any games, because AFL Football Operations Manager Adrian Anderson was satisfied that Maxwell had told his family without any “intent that that information would be used for betting purposes”.²²⁰ It is the kind of benefit of the doubt that was not afforded to Lang and Fraser 101 years earlier.

Most recently, in May 2019 Collingwood youngster Jaidyn Stephenson received a ten-match suspension following revelations that he had placed three same-game multi-bets totalling \$36 on separate AFL matches—and the games had involved Collingwood. The third of these games was the round 9 clash against St Kilda, in which Stephenson played and one leg of his multi-bet required him to kick a goal (he ended up booting three). Stephenson placed two of these bets through a friend who paid cash and placed one bet via a friend’s betting account.²²¹ After the match, which Collingwood won by 41 points, Stephenson apparently made the casual remark that one of his teammate’s match stats had cost him his multi-bet. Hearing this comment alarmed senior teammate Jeremy Howe, who advised Stephenson to inform the club’s Head of Football Geoff Walsh, which in turn resulted in Collingwood and Stephenson self-reporting the bets to the AFL.²²² Stephenson apparently was not suspected of match-fixing due to one crucial piece of evidence: one leg of a same-game multi-bet was for Collingwood to win by 1-39 points. With little time remaining in the game, Stephenson slammed home a long bomb to increase the Magpies’ lead to 46 points, which virtually guaranteed his bet would lose.²²³

The Stephenson case brought intense scrutiny on the AFL for its supposedly hypocritical stance on gambling.²²⁴ Critics argued that the League is only too happy to bank the millions that betting companies pay for lucrative sponsorship deals and ubiquitous advertisements, but then handed down a lengthy suspension to a young man who parted with the paltry sum of \$36, eventually self-reported the offence, and was cleared of match-fixing. Yet any such claims surely miss the point: namely that the amount wagered essentially is irrelevant, and Stephenson and all other AFL players are bound by a completely different set of standards when it comes to betting on matches in their own competition—and they are educated about and reminded of this fact constantly from the moment they enter the system until the day they retire. The average punter sitting in the outer is free to bet on football matches because they cannot affect the outcome, whereas the League needs to safeguard against the potentially corruptive mix of a player gambling on his or her own performance and his or her team's result in the AFL or AFLW as such bets could compromise their play (e.g. going out of their way to pass the ball to a particular player to boost their possessions or enable them a shot at goal, or deliberately missing a shot at goal themselves to keep a winning margin under a certain line). Consequently, the League had no choice other than to impose a reasonably lengthy ban, and more astute thinkers may feel that Stephenson actually should consider himself lucky to have gotten off so lightly after the AFL conducted its own investigation into the matter rather than seeking an independent probe.

Indeed, an exclusive report by Michael Warner of the *Herald Sun* in September 2019 revealed that the Stephenson case was one of several AFL scandals at the centre of a whistleblowing inquiry into the state's gambling watchdog the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR). The *Herald Sun* report reported whistleblowers' claims that the organisation was "beholden to the AFL" and thus conducted inadequate investigations on the League's behalf.²²⁵ The three major football sagas in question are: Stephenson's betting on his own performance in Collingwood matches in 2019; allegations made by the Western Bulldogs that their disgruntled player Michael Talia improperly shared confidential information and tactics with his brother Daniel, whose team the Adelaide Crows was preparing to face the Bulldogs in an elimination final in 2015; and the Melbourne tanking scandal in which it is widely suspected that the Demons actively sought to lose matches towards the end of the 2009 season to secure draft concessions and higher picks. After the two whistleblowers approached independent federal parliamentarian Andrew Wilkie, claims of corruption within the VCGLR in regards to its dealings with the AFL over these matters were referred to the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC), Victoria's anti-corruption agency that holds jurisdiction over the public sector. The League was panned in some quarters for not conducting a far-reaching inquiry into gambling and match-fixing in the immediate wake of the Carlton bribery scandal of 1910, and more than a century later it faces similar criticism over its handling of certain cases with the Melbourne tanking episode an especially farcical situation.

Products of their times?

No fewer than 120 separate episodes (involving many more athletes) have been outlined above in what is an extensive yet by no means exhaustive summary of sporting scandals. Over 50 cases covered here have seen professional athletes or former superstars make headlines for immoral or illegal activities, including more than a dozen that resulted in criminal convictions and sometimes even imprisonment. Even so, no matter

how serious an offence might be or how badly a reputation might be sullied, it is relatively rare for off-field indiscretions to end sporting careers. For every Andrew Lovett, Travis Tuck, or Ben Barba there are many more fortunate athletes who continue to thrive in long, distinguished, and lucrative careers (e.g. Wayne Rooney, Shane Warne, and Mark Waugh) or other professionals who have the opportunity to resurrect their careers after stints in jail or time in the wilderness (e.g. Mike Tyson, Michael Vick, and Tiger Woods). Understandably, it is more common—but not guaranteed—for performance-related offences to result in more serious implications for sporting careers. Violent actions have led to life bans (“Wild Beaver” Coutu and Ángel Matos) or suspensions that can result in missed Grand Finals (John Coleman, Phil Carman, and Neville Crowe). Yet, some notorious instances of blatant thuggery have not prevented players from being honoured in retirement (Leigh Matthews and Barry Hall).

Furthermore, a long list covering over 50 cases of cheating—involving competitors and/or officials from soccer, athletics, golf, the NFL, cricket, rugby league and union, the NBA, the summer and winter Olympic Games, cycling, the VFL/AFL, tennis, MLB, and horse racing—provides damning evidence of how dishonest, duplicitous, corrupt, and shameless acts prevail in the sporting world. Flying in the face of the old adage that “cheats never prosper”, state-backed doping programs have reaped benefits (East Germany) while isolated incidents of unsporting conduct have seen antagonists like Maradona, the Chappells, and the New England Patriots emerge victorious (although Leinster defeated the cheating Harlequins in their so-called “Bloodgate” quarter final and went on to win the championship). Other athletes, clubs, or countries caught cheating have been retrospectively stripped of their titles or medals (e.g. Lance Armstrong, Melbourne Storm, and Spain’s Paralympics basketball team), faced punitive fines and draft restrictions that have crippled them for years thereafter (Carlton and Essendon), or been banished forever more (e.g. the Chicago “Black Sox” and other baseballers on MLB’s permanently ineligible list). Match-fixers in cricket, soccer, and tennis along with knavish trainers and rogue bookies in the horse racing industry often have paid heavy prices including life bans, although shadowy gangsters and nobblers have tended to escape punishment.

Whereas many professional athletes can enjoy a harmless punt from time to time, a select minority find themselves in serious trouble by betting on their own sports. On the one hand, it may be due to being so hopelessly addicted to gambling that they cannot stop (like Pete Rose). On the other hand, numerous cases from the AFL over the past decade indicate that some players simply lack the intelligence or good judgement to realise why it tears away at the competition’s integrity—whether it be from making use of confidential team information or, worse still, the danger that it may lead to spot-fixing or even “playing dead” to lose a game as what was widely suspected in the dark old days. Speaking of which, in light of the manifold examples canvassed in this accompaniment to *On The Take*, how does the Carlton bribery affair sit within the wider contours of sporting scandals? There is no definitive conclusion that can be drawn, so perhaps it is a question best left to each individual reader to answer for themselves upon finishing the book.

What can be said with certainty, however, is that after they were found guilty both Alex “Bongo” Lang and Doug Fraser were turned into pariahs by the League—despite, or maybe because, what they were alleged to have done had been part and parcel of elite-level football in Melbourne for decades. Indeed, as *On The Take* makes abundantly clear, when it came to the bribery scandal of 1910 the superstar rover “Bongo” Lang and his lesser-known co-conspirator Fraser were very much products of their times. Whether that means they nonetheless should be proscribed as confirmed match-fixers whose dishonesty brought the game into disrepute, or perhaps can be pardoned as victims of circumstance, is open to interpretation and debate. Either way, comparatively speaking Lang and Fraser paid an enormous price for a single offence.

Their playing careers were ruined, their lives were upended, and their legacies were blackened as footballers shunned by the League for being on the take.

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