

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU READ BUT THE WAY THAT YOU READ IT

BY Andrew Both

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Have you ever stumbled across an article in the sports pages which you felt made very little sense?

Possibly you haven't, because most readers of **The Advertiser** sports section read only the articles about the sports in which they are interested.

This, of course, means that the reader usually understands the jargon to which he is subjected.

Pity then, the poor reader who, for one reason or another, stumbles across an article about a sport in which he is not familiar.

He may as well be reading a stock market report, because even that would make more sense to the non-expert than the jargon found in most sports reports.

Monday's **Advertiser** on December 9 had enough sports jargon to last a month of Sundays - to use a hackneyed phrase.

Imagine an American tourist in town who somehow found himself reading the report from the cricket match between NSW and WA.

It started a mini-collapse, with Marsh being bowled and then the young McPhee buckling to Bennett, whom he sliced high in the air behind the bowler to be caught by Rod Bower at wide mid-on.

To an American who knew little about cricket, that paragraph would make as much sense as the following description of a baseball game to someone who doesn't fully understand the American national game.

The Rams did not help their cause with four errors, while the batters managed only three hits against left-hander Dave Barber.

This paragraph appeared in a summary of a local baseball game. But what does it mean - that poor Dave Barber has been hit three times by a pack of Rams.

However, that paragraph is crystal clear compared to another gem in the same article.

Fiechtner finished with the win after conceding only three scattered hits, striking out 12 Henley batters, not conceding a walk and for good measure picking up three hits himself while batting.

If you want to know what that means don't ask me. Ask someone with a university degree in baseball jargon.

Softball has a similar vocabulary to baseball. In other words, it is just as hard to understand.

Kris Trembath, out of her usual catching role, was dominant at left field, and it was she who led off the winning run at the top of the fourth, eventually being batted home by Whallin.

Imagine the few courageous readers who did not stop reading at the end of that statement, but who struggled on only to be struck by another classic piece of jargon.

Without a hint of hesitancy Jayne White deftly killed off any further threat with a dynamic double play at second to remove Carolyn Castle and on to first to undo Lisa Kwaterski's average of one hit per game.

If you know EXACTLY what this means you're either a softball junkie or you're not telling the truth.

Golf is another sport with a language all its own. Recently there was a report of an exhibition match between leading SA professionals Jane Crafter and Sue Tonkin.

After turning in two-over 39, Tonkin birdied the 13th and 16th to come home in 35 . . . She hit 13 greens in regulation.

Now, I must admit I understand what this means. I should, because I wrote it!

If you've understood every bit of jargon so far, see how you go on this description of a soccer match.

Stapleton, who suffered the ignominy of an own goal on Wednesday when United lost a Super Cup tie against reigning league champion Everton 1-0, shot home from close range after John Gidman's low cross ran loose.

Then there was the following report from a lawn bowls match.

Peter Barnes's four won by 12 shots for Burnside against Russ Martin, and Lindsay Prosser by two from Cliff Hoswood.

Now, if you've still got a 100 p.c. record you qualify to continue reading the sports section of a newspaper.

It is unlikely that jargon will ever be taken out of sports reporting, because the writer usually assumes that the reader would not be reading the article unless he understood the sport.

I'm just waiting for the next basketball season when I can write something like this.

Smith shot 65 p.c. from the floor and 90 p.c. from the charity stripe and connected with three three-point jumpers from outside before coming inside and dominating the boards.