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***How a Civil War Created National Football
Leagues in Australia:***
**The Transition of the Victorian Football
League to the Australian Football League
and the New South Wales Rugby League to
the Australian Rugby League**

This paper examines the development of national football leagues in Australia throughout the 1980s. The tether of tradition, regional sentiment and differing regional cultures all significantly influenced the decision making processes concerned. This analysis demonstrates the relevancy of sport history to sport management.

The competitions conducted by national leagues such as the Australian Football League (AFL) and the Australian Rugby League (ARL) now represent the elite level of on-going team sports in Australia. These nation-wide competitions evolved from competitions whose participant clubs were located within a single city and its immediate surrounding area. This evolution was achieved by the league through a systematic process of admitting teams to their competition from other cities and provincial areas.

The economic rationalist argument that these national leagues were created to develop greater sources of income has held both widespread scholarly and public acceptance. Whilst there is little doubt that there was a significant economic imperative, the strategic endeavours of both leagues and those organisations who sought to acquire an expansion licence were significantly influenced by regional sentiment and rivalry. A counter argument will be offered that these national leagues were more of an evolution than a creation and that the final stages of their metamorphosis can be seen as the culmination of over 100 years of tension and conflict between different sports and their administrators.

Hosts Stevie Chepko and Dennis Gildea

