

# *School Sport and the Amateur Ideal: The Formation of the Schools' Amateur Athletic Association of Victoria<sup>1</sup>*

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In May 1911, a new school sporting association — the Schools' Amateur Athletic Association of Victoria (SAAAV) — was formed. The SAAAV was established following an acrimonious and very public split amongst the member schools of the Schools' Association of Victoria (SAV) over the issue of amateurism in school sport. This article examines the events that preceded the formation of the SAAAV and considers why the schoolmasters who established it felt duty bound to abandon the SAV, an association which many of them had helped nurture since its inception in 1891.

## **The Rise of Athleticism**

A good deal has been written about the rise of athleticism in English public schools in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his important book on the subject — *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* — J A Mangan wrote that, from 1850 onwards:

games were purposely and deliberately assimilated into the formal curriculum of the public schools: suitable facilities were constructed, headmasters insisted on pupil involvement, staff participation was increasingly expected and the creation of a legitimating rhetoric began.<sup>2</sup>

This legitimating rhetoric has been interpreted as having its origins in the related doctrines of muscular Christianity and social Darwinism. Muscular Christianity, as promoted in the novels of Charles Kingsley and in Thomas Hughes's famous *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, linked the playing of games with the moral as well as the physical development of young men: not only did games help produce fit young men, they also built character and taught boys valuable lessons about fair play, teamwork and how to win and lose graciously.

The social Darwinist theme of 'the survival of the fittest' also played a role in legitimating the rise in athleticism because English public schools were seen as the training ground for the future leaders of the British Empire: games helped 'toughen up' boys, both physically and psychologically, in preparation for the rigours of imperial duty.<sup>3</sup>

Another important aspect of athleticism as it developed in England was its link with the code of amateurism. The moral lessons which games provided were thought to be their main benefit, but these were considered lost when sport became associated with money. The 'ideal' sportsman played for the love of the game only — never for monetary reward. He could, therefore, never be anything other than an amateur player.

### **Athleticism in Victoria**

The educational practices of the headmasters of Victoria's secondary schools were, like those of headmasters throughout the Empire,<sup>4</sup> influenced greatly by the English public school model and a games culture, similar to the one in England, quickly developed within Victorian schools.

In his article, 'Athleticism revisited: sport, character building and Protestant school education in nineteenth-century Melbourne', Bob Stewart uses quotations from late nineteenth-century school publications to show that local headmasters including Bromby, Morris, Pyne and Wilson (Melbourne Grammar School), Way and Adamson (Wesley College) and Littlejohn (Scotch College) all supported the idea that games were the promoters of character. While noting the reservations that Scotch's Dr Morrison and Xavier College's Father Nolan had about the value of games, Stewart concludes that:

By the twentieth century, Melbourne's three major Protestant public schools (Melbourne Grammar School, Scotch College and Wesley College) were all preaching the gospel of athleticism ... The Melbourne public schools had become great character and patriot builders of middle-class Victorian boys, and games were viewed as indispensable instruments of moral education.<sup>5</sup>

Stewart claims that the church-sponsored public school was the 'dominant vehicle for the higher or secondary education of young men in the Australian colonies' in the latter part of the nineteenth century. While the public schools were undoubtedly extremely influential secondary institutions during this period, many of the young men who undertook

secondary education in Victoria in the late nineteenth century did not attend them. By the 1890s, in terms of the number of boys enrolled, the private-venture school was a far more important source of secondary education in Victoria than the church-sponsored public school. The headmasters of many these schools preached the 'gospel of athleticism', too, and the development of sport in them is certainly worthy of consideration.

The formation of the SAAAV illustrates how strongly the headmasters of some of Melbourne leading private-venture schools believed in the character-building value of games and how determined they were to see that this was not spoiled by the infiltration of professionalism into school sport. As we shall see, these men believed that professionalism corrupted the aims of school sport to such an extent that even a hint that it might be acceptable to some of their colleagues led them to immediately sever established sporting ties.

### **The Development of a Secondary School 'System' in Victoria**

Before considering the formation of the SAAAV, it will be useful to look briefly at the early development of secondary education in Victoria and place the schools which made up the SAAAV and the SAV within the loose secondary school system which had built up in the period between the establishment of the University of Melbourne (1855) and the turn of the century.

The opening of the University of Melbourne helped generate greater demand for secondary schools in Victoria. In order to succeed, the new university needed a supply of students who could meet its entrance requirements and this could only be achieved by the establishment of schools that prepared at least some students for the University's entrance examination — the matriculation.

Believing that some stimulus from the public purse was required to ensure the establishment of more schools that provided university preparation, the Victorian government offered financial aid to each of the major Christian denominations in the late 1850s and early 1860s for the foundation of 'grammar' schools.<sup>6</sup> These grants helped the churches establish secondary schools that became known as 'public schools because they had been partly funded from the public purse and because they modelled themselves on the 'great' English public schools (for example, Eton, Harrow and Winchester).

From their beginning, the public schools played a prominent role in secondary education in Victoria, preparing many students for the University and enrolling the sons of the colony's elite (for example, wealthy land-holders, government officials and professionals such as doctors and lawyers).

During the last 30 years of the nineteenth century, however, the demand for secondary education grew to such an extent that it could not be met by these exclusive<sup>7</sup> schools alone. The State, which had established a system of elementary schools through the 1872 Education Act, was not prepared to establish secondary schools,<sup>8</sup> so it was left mainly to private entrepreneurs to open new secondary institutions.

A large number of privately-owned secondary schools were established from the 1870s onwards and these, together with some small church-affiliated schools (mostly Roman Catholic),<sup>9</sup> formed the major group of schools in Victoria's secondary system by 1900. It was from this group that the SAV, and later the SAAAV, drew its members. Of course, many privately-owned secondary schools enrolled girls but, in terms of the SAV and SAAAV, only those which enrolled boys are of interest.<sup>10</sup>

### **Public School Sport**

During the late nineteenth century, the public schools were closely associated in a number of activities and their headmasters had a profound influence on educational policy in Victoria. In sport, intense rivalries developed between some of them from as early as the 1860s and, by the 1890s, their sporting competitions were highly organised, being governed by detailed rules and regulations and including premierships in both cricket and Australian Rules football.<sup>11</sup> In addition, annual rowing races began in 1868 and a combined athletics sports was first held in 1905.<sup>12</sup>

Following the opening of Wesley College in 1866, the public school group usually comprised four schools for sporting competition: Scotch College (founded 1851), Geelong Church of England Grammar School (1855), Melbourne Church of England Grammar School (1858) and Wesley. St Patrick's College (1854), although technically one of the public schools, was not a strong participant in sport and, in 1900, its place in the Associated Public Schools (APS) was taken by (St Francis') Xavier College.<sup>13</sup>

Geelong College's admission to the public schools in 1908 expanded its number six and this remained unchanged for the next 50 years.<sup>14</sup> These schools rarely played matches against other secondary schools (especially at the first team level) and they were even uneasy about allowing their

students to compete against boys from other schools in individual competitions such as foot-races at athletics meets.<sup>15</sup>

The APS was undoubtedly the premier school sporting association in Victoria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: its competitions were highly regulated, there was considerable spectator interest and matches were covered extensively by the local press.

The supporters of the public schools believed that they were the premier schools in Victoria (a view which was shared by many in the community) and, by restricting sporting competition to amongst their number, they maintained their exclusivity and ensured that their premier sporting status was not upset by embarrassing losses to teams from privately-owned or small church schools.

### **Sport outside the APS and the Formation of the Schools' Association of Victoria**

As was the case elsewhere in Australia, most of the secondary schools established in Victoria during the late nineteenth century were small schools, situated in cities or towns, that bore little resemblance to the large, English, country, boarding schools (the 'great' public schools) from which they borrowed many of their ideas.

When a games culture began to emerge in Australia, therefore, the size of most secondary schools meant that the demand for competition was not usually met by organising intra-school or 'house' matches as was often done in England. Instead, games were arranged between schools in a local neighbourhood, many of which had only just enough players to field a cricket or football team.

In late nineteenth-century Melbourne there were literally hundreds of privately-owned and small church schools offering some form of secondary education and, amongst these, there was a sizeable group of boys' schools wishing to participate in organised games.

As the public schools did not usually play matches against other secondary schools, private schools formed their own sporting associations. Initially, most were content to arrange friendly challenge matches against schools in the vicinity but, by the early 1890s, there was a growing demand for matches to be played on a more formal and regulated basis.

The Schools' Association of Victoria (SAV), the first formal private school sports association in Melbourne, was established on 8 August 1891, at a meeting attended by ten headmasters.<sup>16</sup> At this first meeting, a three-man sub-committee was appointed to draw up rules and regulations,

which were later published in the local press.<sup>17</sup> The SAV decided to run premierships competitions in both cricket and football, but there was also provision for non-premiership matches if schools felt that they were not strong enough to compete in the premierships round. The rules for these competitions were similar to those already adopted by the public schools and, in 1892 (the first year of competition), six schools challenged for the cricket premiership and nine for the football premiership.

At a second meeting on 22 August, two new schools were admitted and, over the next two decades, the SAV gradually expanded with the admission of a number of privately-owned and a few small church schools.<sup>18</sup>

Until its admission to the APS, Geelong College dominated the SAV's premierships competitions: it was the largest school in Association from 1892 to 1907 and its departure meant that the SAV lost not only one of its founding members, but also one of its founding fathers, Norman Morrison (Geelong's principal),<sup>19</sup> who had played a prominent role in both its foundation and early development.

Following Geelong College's departure, two of the other founding members of the SAV — Brighton Grammar School and Caulfield Grammar School — took a more prominent role in its affairs and they headed, under the leadership of Dr George Crowther (Brighton's headmaster and another founder of the Association), a group of schools that wanted to conduct its activities along similar lines to the APS.<sup>20</sup>

In order to make up for the loss of Geelong, several new schools were admitted, including the Christian Brothers' colleges in East Melbourne, St Kilda and North Melbourne. The East Melbourne and St Kilda colleges quickly became strong premierships contenders, but their admission seems to have sparked the unrest that eventually led to the 1911 split.

As many of the leading SAV schools had links with the Protestant Church (the Church of England, in particular), the Christian Brothers' colleges, and the other Roman Catholic schools in the Association, inevitably competed against them in the general atmosphere of sectarianism which existed in Victoria at and around the turn of the century. But what seems to have created even greater tension between Roman Catholic and Protestant schools was a belief amongst the Protestants that the Roman Catholics were not as concerned as they were about keeping school sport amateur.<sup>21</sup>

### **Turmoil with the Schools' Association**

Between 1892 and 1910, the Schools' Association had had its fair share of controversy: questions had been raised about the eligibility of players; disputes had arisen over umpiring decisions and the default of matches; and there had been confusion over everything from player uniforms to the grounds used for matches. Nevertheless, as similar disputes had arisen in other school sporting associations, including the APS, these problems did not seriously threaten the future of the Schools' Association.

Amateurism was, however, a different matter. Headmasters such as Dr Crowther believed that their boys played games in the 'right spirit' and they were concerned about the growing influence of professionalism in sport. Any hint of professionalism in school sport was abhorrent to them and they could not contemplate remaining in association that was not unequivocally opposed to it.

Although concern had been raised about the amateur status of boys entering school competitions before,<sup>22</sup> the matter did not come to a head until the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association's (VAAA) 1910 school championship meeting. Before this meeting, the VAAA rejected a number of entries because it deemed the boys concerned professionals under its strict amateur rules.<sup>23</sup>

According to the *Australasian's* 'College Sports' columnist 'Old Boy', the boys in question had been barred because they had accepted prize-money in either foot-races or boxing contests.<sup>24</sup> While it is probably reasonable to assume that these were only minor breaches of the amateur rules (involving small amounts of money), they created considerable concern because they provided clear evidence that some Schools' Association members were allowing boys to compete in events that were run along professional lines.

### **The Formation of the SAAAV**

Upon hearing that boys had been barred from the athletics sports because they were professionals, Dr Crowther immediately set about adding a rule that would specify that all participants in Schools' Association competitions must be amateurs.

His campaign began at the SAV's regular meeting on 25 February 1911. At this meeting, Brighton Grammar's representative, Captain V P Stanke, gave notice that he would be putting a motion to the next meeting that stated:

That rule 10 be altered to read — ‘All members of teams shall be amateur players, and shall be under the age of 21 years on the 1st day of January succeeding the contest. The definition of an amateur shall be that contained in the constitution and rules of the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association.’<sup>25</sup>

As the next meeting of the SAV was not scheduled until May, the cricket competition proceed as usual and it had reached the half-way stage when the school delegates<sup>26</sup> met to vote on Brighton’s motion. There were fifteen members<sup>27</sup> of the Schools’ Association at this time and all but three were represented at the meeting. Captain Stanke put his motion and, after it had been seconded, a discussion ensued. The details of this discussion were not recorded, but it is clear from subsequent reports<sup>28</sup> that some delegates were not prepared to vote on the motion even though they had known about it for over two months.

These delegates proposed an amendment that would postpone voting to a special meeting later in the year. Of the twelve delegates present, only ten voted on the amendment and the result was tied. On the casting vote of the chairman, the postponement was approved. Apart from the chairman, who represented Camberwell Grammar School, all the delegates voting for the amendment represented schools run by, or affiliated to, the Roman Catholic Church, while all those voting against it, and therefore wanting an immediate vote on the amateur issue, represented schools which had Protestant affiliations.<sup>29</sup>

On 9 May, the *Argus* reported the proceedings of the meeting and made the following comment about them:

As soon as Dr Crowther ... heard what had been done he at once interviewed several other head masters, and they viewed the position with much alarm. They considered that any association governing school sport which could hesitate for a moment in declaring for absolute amateurism for boys did not command the respect of their schools, and they at once decided to withdraw from the Association.<sup>30</sup>

Seven schools withdrew immediately and their letter of resignation also appeared in the *Argus* on 9 May. Two other schools subsequently withdrew and, together, they formed the Schools’ Amateur Athletic Association of Victoria at a meeting on 13 May.

The nine original members of the SAAAV were: Brighton Grammar School, Camberwell Grammar School, Caulfield Grammar School,

Haileybury College, Malvern Grammar School, Queen's College, St Thomas' Grammar School, Trinity Grammar School and University High School.

Dr Crowther was appointed president of the SAAAV and, at its first meeting, the headmasters decided that cricket, football, tennis and swimming competitions would be conducted, in addition to an annual athletics sports. A 'strict amateur definition' (similar to that in the VAAA constitution) was adopted and a four-man committee was established to draw up rules and regulations. These were ratified (with slight modifications) at a second meeting on 29 May.<sup>31</sup>

The SAAAV arranged football matches (in two grades) during the winter of 1911, held a combined athletics sports at the East Melbourne Cricket Ground on 10 November and completed the cricket matches (between member schools) that had previously been arranged by the Schools' Association. A tennis competition and a combined swimming sports were first conducted in 1912.

The Schools' Amateur Athletic Association of Victoria only lasted for ten years. Toward the end of 1920, the headmasters of the eight schools<sup>32</sup> that had been regular participants decided that they would adopt a new name that would more clearly distinguish them as a group of schools.<sup>33</sup> They chose the name 'Associated Grammar School of Victoria' (AGSV) and this has remained a prominent entity in Victorian independent school education ever since.

The Schools' Association was severely affected by the formation of the SAAAV: the name continued to be used for a few years but, as most of the remaining members were affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church (particularly the Christian Brothers), they were usually recognised by their religious affiliation rather than their SAV membership. In reports on the athletics meetings conducted by the remaining SAV members, 'Old Boy' did not use the name "Schools' Association" after 1913 and, in 1914, he advised that these meets were now being run by the Christian Brothers' colleges — with invitations being extended to other schools, most of which had affiliations with the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>34</sup> These schools subsequently arranged other sporting contests and continued their association on sportsfield in the years that followed.

The name "Schools' Association of Victoria" was not, therefore, generally used in Melbourne sporting circles after 1911, although it was revived in the early 1920s by a group of privately-owned schools that

continued to use it until at least the late 1950s.<sup>35</sup>

### **School Sport and the 'Amateur Ideal'**

Commenting on the actions of the nine schools that had withdrawn from the Schools' Association, 'Old Boy' wrote that they should be applauded by everyone for standing firm for amateurism. He claimed that some schools had been slack on this issue in the past and added that:

The spirit of amateurism is the spirit of fair play, of honest rivalry, and it is this that boys should be taught. Unless their games are based on amateurism, there can be no hope of complete success.<sup>36</sup>

These comments show how closely supporters of the heavy regime of school sport that had developed in Victoria by the early twentieth century linked the benefits of competitive games with amateurism. They believed that the ideal sportsman was an amateur and that there was a risk that all the educational benefits which boys derived from playing games would be lost if even a hint of professionalism entered the realm of school sport.

In Victoria, semi-professionalism had existed in the state's leading game — Australian Rules football — for some time, but it was not until 1911 that payments to players were first made legitimate.<sup>37</sup> Concern amongst the supporters of amateur sport that they were losing out to professionals was heightened at this time, so it is perhaps not surprising that the issue of amateurism came to a head in the Schools' Association when it did. Although there was grudging acceptance that professionalism in senior football was inevitable, those who believed that sport should be a moral educator did not want to accept any form of professionalism in the school arena. The split in the Schools' Association clearly shows that one section of Melbourne's private school community believed that the amateurism was under threat and that they had to take drastic action to isolate their students from the evils of professionalism.

Most of the administrators of Victorian secondary schools around the turn of the century believed strongly in the English public school style of education that aimed to produce Christian gentlemen who would become leaders in society. Traditionally, the English gentleman was given no specific vocational training and was considered to be an amateur because he did not have to work for a living. As the middle class gradually infiltrated the English public school system in the late nineteenth century, gentlemen amateurs became less numerous amongst its products and the

curriculum was diversified to include subjects other than the traditional classics and mathematics.

In Victoria, the classical English model of secondary education had to be modified to meet local circumstances and it was rare for the graduate of a secondary school not to have to work for a living. Nevertheless, many Victorian secondary educators tried to imitate the principles of education developed in the English public school system and it was in England's public schools and universities that the amateur sportsman was born.<sup>38</sup> The admiration which many members of Victoria's secondary school fraternity had for amateur sport was derived, therefore, from the educational ideas of the English upper class and they shared their dislike for professional sport.

In *Pay up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain 1875-1914*, Wray Vamplew comments that social prejudice permeated all the major criticisms of sports professionalism in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sometimes this was masqueraded as sporting idealism, but there were some who openly admitted class bias, suggesting that professionalism lowered sport to the level of a trade.<sup>39</sup>

In the case of the split in the Schools' Association, class bias may have played a role but, as we have seen, religious bias was probably more important because the schools were split along religious lines.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, the arguments put forward to support the formation of the SAAV never mentioned religion. Instead they invoked sporting idealism by arguing strongly against professionalism. In general, the professional was seen as not playing the game in the right spirit and there was the suggestion that he would resort to foul means to secure victory.

R W E 'Bung' Wilmot, the sports editor of the *Argus* and the *Australasian*, was, as 'Old Boy', the foremost public commentator on school sport in Victoria in the early 1900s and he was, as has already been noted, a strong supporter of the moves made by Dr Crowther and his fellow headmasters to form the SAAV. A former student of Melbourne Grammar, Wilmot was heavily involved in the organisation of amateur sport in Melbourne<sup>41</sup> and he often used his newspaper columns to promote the value of school sport, particularly as it was played in public schools.

Drawing on the arguments developed to legitimate the rise of athleticism in England, Wilmot repeatedly claimed that sport developed character as well as health and fitness. His comments on 26 January 1907 were typical. He wrote that the main object of all sport should not only be

to develop the body, but also:

to inculcate in boys the right spirit of emulation, to teach the correct relative positions of winner and loser, and to cultivate endurance, self-restraint, courage, chivalry, and honesty.<sup>42</sup>

In the same article, 'Old Boy' stressed the need for schools to do battle honourably and his columns continually exhorted boys to play fairly and honestly. 'Fair play is bonnie play' was his catch-cry and he often wrote disapprovingly about the disputes that erupted between schools in sporting associations across Victoria. Wilmot implored both headmasters and schoolboys to ensure that there was no impropriety in their games, but the evidence that he sometimes uncovered about improper practices does not seem to have diminished his faith in the methods of the public schools and the secondary schools that imitated them. Games added a wholesome benefit to the life of a school, he claimed, and public school boys played them in the right spirit — accepting defeat and victory in the proper manner and learning from the experiences of both.<sup>43</sup>

'Old Boy' believed the benefits that schoolboys gained from participation in games were lost if they were at all tainted by professionalism. He supported amateurism in school sport strongly because, as he commented in an article on professional coaches in 1914, 'the professional very often misses the spirit of sport in his desire to gain'.<sup>44</sup> Playing the game in the 'right spirit' meant, of course, displaying attributes such as fair mindedness, honesty and chivalry and 'Old Boy' clearly associated these with the amateur player. Whether the schoolboys who did battle on the sportsfield in the early 1900s (and beyond) always exhibited these attributes is open to question, but there can be no doubt that the 'ideal' schoolboy sportsman was expected to exhibit them.<sup>45</sup> And, as far as 'Old Boy' was concerned, the ideal sportsman was an amateur!

Dr George Crowther held similar views about school sport to those of his friend and fellow Brighton resident Wilmot. In October 1911, *The Brighton Grammarian* carried a detailed account of the formation of the SAAAV, which included an editorial that argued strongly for the maintenance of amateurism in school sport and praised Crowther for leading the fight to uphold amateurism in the private school arena.<sup>46</sup>

*The Brighton Grammarian* touched on similar themes to 'Old Boy' when discussing the value of amateur sport for schoolboys. Every boy who played the game 'for the love of the game', and 'for the honour of his school', was said to naturally and inevitably conform with the amateur

rules and it was suggested that the terms schoolboy and amateur should be synonymous in the world of sport.<sup>47</sup> Professionalism, which was said to be rampant, had no place in school games, it was argued, and the Victorian Football League was singled out as maintaining practices that were particularly unsuited to the school environment:

We regret the cutting down in the number in our association since in the case of football we were reduced to four premiership matches, but we would rather see the school reduced to inter-form and other internal football matches, than have it compete in a miniature Victorian Football League.<sup>48</sup>

In its concluding remarks, the *Grammarian* made a plea for old boys to attend the first SAAAV combined athletics sports at the East Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday, 10 November. Amateur athletics, it maintained, required the support of spectators who were interested in 'clean' sport and the presence of as many old boys as possible was urged to demonstrate strong backing for the amateur movement.<sup>49</sup>

The inclusion of a strict amateur rule in the SAAAV's regulations seems to have had the desired effect because there is no record of any dispute arising over professionalism during the next ten years. For the headmasters and their supporters, however, their actions were most clearly vindicated when their boys were asked to answer the call of the nation (and the Empire) to war.

### **Amateur Ideals put to the Test**

For those educators who believed that school games built character and strength, World War I was a defining moment because it provided an opportunity for the 'real' benefits of sport to be demonstrated. As 'Old Boy' remarked on 8 July 1916:

The war has ... made sport more important — far more important — than ever before. It has always been essential part of a boy's life, but now the lessons it teaches, the spirit of rivalry it engenders, the essentials of leadership it develops are more than ever a value to the nation ...<sup>50</sup>

Team games, particularly cricket and football, were the most favoured sports for character building. They developed an unselfish attitude amongst boys, it was claimed, because they helped them learn the value of teamwork and the need for the individual to sacrifice personal glory

for the good of the team?<sup>51</sup>

In the case of football games, the physical contact aspect added to their perceived benefits because an element of danger was introduced which made the contests more 'manly'.<sup>52</sup> Football was therefore considered the ideal game to prepare boys for war because it not only developed team spirit, discipline and unselfishness, but also courage, strength and fitness.<sup>53</sup>

The value of games in preparing boys for war was highlighted many times by 'Old Boy' and he often wrote of the War in sporting terms to show that it had provided the ultimate test that had proved the worth of school sport.<sup>54</sup>

In August 1915, he defended, as he had done a number of times before, the charge that sport was being over-emphasised in Victoria's major secondary schools. He repeated the claim that sport provided many educational benefits, but also remarked that it 'had provided ... thousands to the nation in its hour of trial'. He clarified this final remark, however, by suggesting that it was really only amateur sportsmen who had provided service to the nation.<sup>55</sup> The inference being, of course, that the selfish professional was prepared to put personal gain ahead of national duty.

The contention that only amateur sport produced boys (and men) who were aware of their national duty was put even more fervently during the war years by Wesley College's famous headmaster, Lawrence A 'Dicky' Adamson. Educated at Rugby, Adamson was a firm believer in the value of both school games and amateur sport. He was president of two of Victoria's major amateur sporting bodies — the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association and the Metropolitan (later Victorian) Amateur Football Association — for many years and he helped administer a number of other sporting organisations. During his headmastership of Wesley, it became a sporting power within the APS and its champion athletes were lauded as school heroes.

While Adamson admired the champion amateur athlete he had no time for the professional. His attitude towards sport's place in life is best summarised as follows:

I hold as absolute postulates 1 / that any game, in spite of its possible advantages, is useless, and to be avoided, unless it is regarded also as moral training in controlling temper, in unselfishness, and in the virtues of hardihood, chivalry and

learning how to lose decently; 2/ that where consideration of money and its advantages enter into the playing of a game, that game can scarcely provide the moral side of play above stated.<sup>56</sup>

In 1910, Adamson conducted a celebrated debate in the Melbourne press with Wilfred Kent Hughes (an old boy of Melbourne Grammar) on the issue of the over-emphasis of sport in the APS. Kent Hughes accused Adamson of encouraging boys to remain at Wesley to bolster its sports teams, but Adamson won the day when a conference called by the public school headmasters generally supported his view that undue time was not being devoted to sport.<sup>57</sup> As Joseph Johnson comments in his history of the Victorian Amateur Football Association:

Adamson's success in 1910 was resounding, but the apogee of his vindication must wait for another four years. The acid test of his philosophy of sport came when the Empire called its sons to war — and Adamson's boys were not found wanting.<sup>58</sup>

Just before to the opening of the 1915 football season Adamson addressed his boys on the topic of football and the war: arguing that football should not automatically be stopped, Adamson nevertheless questioned its value if it offered players an inducement not to enlist. Adamson believed that the Victorian Football League clubs were offering such an inducement by paying players and he contrasted the fact that only one player from the 1914 VFL premier team had enlisted with the enlistment of fourteen players from the Metropolitan Football Association premiers.

This statistic confirmed Adamson's long held belief that professional footballers put personal gain ahead of national duty and he told his boys that they should not attend senior football matches because: 'every sixpence you pay to see a professional football match helps clubs to indirectly induce men to stay away from the fighting line'. Earlier, he had suggested that Iron Crosses be given to the VFL premiers instead of medals and that no German living in Victoria could do better than:

get in touch with the most physically fit men in this community — the most fitted for war by their practice in mimic warfare, and ... pay them 30s to £3 a week to stay here in Australia, instead of going to fight.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusions

Adamson's total disdain for professionalism in sport, highlighted during the war years by his attitude towards professionals who choose sport ahead of national service, was shared by many of his secondary school colleagues. The VFL's decision to legalise player payments focused the attention of Victoria's sports-loving public on the rise of professionalism and sent fear into the hearts of the administrators of amateur sporting bodies. Were their sports, too, soon to be taken over by paid players and coaches?

For those administrators who believed that professionalism corrupted the true moral purposes of sport, the course of action was clear: amateurism had to be defended and, as secondary schools were the training ground for society's future leaders, it was essential that school sport remained the preserve of the amateur.

The split in the Schools' Association of Victoria — and the formation of the SAAAV — highlight concern amongst the custodians of amateur sport about the growing influence of professionalism in the local sport in the early 1900s. Any hesitancy from within the ranks of sporting associations, including school associations, about the need to retain total amateurism was viewed as being an endorsement of professionalism and all the evils that went hand-in-hand with the introduction of money into sport.

The headmasters who formed the SAAAV believed that they were not only keeping money out of school sport but, more importantly, ensuring that the high ideals of clean, honourable and fair sport — which they believed were the hallmarks of amateurism — continued to be taught in their schools.

## Notes:

- 1 This article has been developed from a paper presented at the joint conference of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society (ANZHEs) and the Canadian History of Education Association (CHEA) held at Ormond College, University of Melbourne, in November 1993. For a more detailed discussion of sport at one of the member schools of the Schools' Amateur Athletic Association see Ian R Wilkinson, *The Fields at Play: 115 years of Sport of Caulfield Grammar School 1881-1996*, Sydney, 1997.
- 2 J A Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 16. Apart from Mangan's book, see D Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal*, London, 1961 and T J L Chandler, 'Games at Oxbridge and the Public Schools 1800-1880: The Diffusion of an Innovation' in *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1991, pp. 171-204 for further

discussion on the rise of athleticism.

- 3 Bob Stewart, 'Athleticism Revisited: Sport, Character Building and Protestant School Education in Nineteenth-century Melbourne' in *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1992, pp. 37-8.
- 4 For discussion on the diffusion of the cult athleticism to schools throughout the British Empire see J A Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*, Harmondsworth, 1985.
- 5 Stewart, 'Athleticism Revisited', p. 49.
- 6 C E W Bean, *Here My Son*, Sydney, 1950, p. 42.
- 7 The public schools were boys-only schools that charged high fees and concentrated on university-oriented academic courses.
- 8 The establishment of 'high' schools was suggested in Charles Pearson's 1879 Royal Commission Report on education, but it was not until after the 1910 Education Act that government-funded secondary schools were opened. Government assistance, in the form of scholarships to secondary schools, was provided for poor students in the late nineteenth century and, between 1905 and 1910, some government continuation and agricultural high schools were established to bridge the gap between elementary schools and the University.
- 9 Unlike the other Christian denominations, the Roman Catholic Church continued to maintain a comprehensive system of elementary schools after the 1872 Act. Some of these developed secondary departments and prepared students for matriculation.
- 10 Most members of the SAV and the SAAAV were boys-only schools, but there were a few that were mixed-enrolment, meaning that they operated both boys' and girls' departments. Neither association provided competition for girls, however.
- 11 The first official cricket and football premierships were awarded in 1891, but unofficial titles had been claimed before this.
- 12 Meetings titled 'United Athletic Sports' were staged in 1872, 1873 and from 1875 to 1880, but an athletics premiership was not instituted until 1905. See the *Australasian*, 8 Nov. 1902, p. 1092 for details of the united meets.
- 13 Xavier was founded by the Jesuit Fathers in 1878 and gradually took over St Patrick's (also run by the Jesuits) place as the Roman Catholic member of the APS. The change was formalised in 1900 when St Patrick's waived its right to public school status in favour of Xavier. See M A Clements, 'The University of Melbourne and Victorian secondary schools 1890-1912', PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1979, pp. 5-6.
- 14 Five schools — Brighton Grammar School, Caulfield Grammar School, Carey Baptist Grammar School, Haileybury College and St Kevin's College -were invited to join the APS in late 1957. They first competed in the combined athletics sports in 1958 and in other APS competitions in 1959. Brighton, Caulfield, Haileybury and Carey had previously been members of the Associated Grammar Schools of Victoria (AGSV), while St Kevin's had played sport against other Christian Brothers' schools.
- 15 For example, when an athletics meeting open to boys from all Victorian schools was organised by the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association (VAAA) in 1902, only one of the public schools (Wesley) competed.
- 16 *Australasian*, 15 Aug. 1891, p. 304. The founding members were: Armadale High School, Brighton Grammar School, Carlton College, Camberwell Grammar School, Caulfield Grammar School, Cumloden, Geelong College, Kew High School, King's College and South Melbourne College. These schools were all privately owned and, except Geelong College, were situated in Melbourne. Only Geelong, Brighton, Caulfield and Camberwell exist today-each having long since moved out of private hands and become corporate schools with church affiliations.
- 17 *Australasian*, 6 Feb. 1892, p. 252. These were the general regulations. Specific regulations for cricket and football were published later.

- 18 Some schools also dropped out, usually due to closure. Most of the church schools admitted were Roman Catholic, but there were some Anglican schools, including All Saints' Grammar School, St Thomas' Grammar School and Trinity Grammar School.
- 19 Morrison was vice-principal of Geelong College when the SAV was established and later became principal.
- 20 Crowther was the first honorary secretary of the SAV; Norman Morrison was its first president. They, together with John Henning Thompson (headmaster of Kew High School), drew up the first rules and regulations in 1891.
- 21 While newspaper reports do not make it clear which schools were accused of enrolling 'professionals', the centenary history of CBC, East St Kilda (Kathleen Kane, *The History of Christian Brothers' College, East St Kilda*, Melbourne, 1972) suggests that some trouble arose when a boy who had accepted prize money in a foot-race was included in that school's football team. The grammar (Protestant) schools refused to play CBC and its team was withdrawn from the competition. See Kane, pp. 101-2.
- 22 See *The Brighton Grammarian*, vol. II, no. 5, 2 Oct. 1911, p. 145 — 'For the last year or two there had been a deal of unrest, and many more or less definite rumours as to the amateur status, or lack of it, of boys representing certain schools.' See also Kane, *History of Christian Brothers' College*, pp. 101-2.
- 23 *Australasian*, 25 Feb. 1911, p. 474. The rules of the VAAA stated that an amateur was one who:
- has never competed for a money prize, staked bet, or a declared wager, or who has not knowingly and without protest competed by or against a professional for a prize of any description or for public exhibition, or who has never taught or assisted in the practice of athletic exercises as a means of livelihood or pecuniary gain.
- 24 *Australasian*, 25 Feb. 1911, p. 474.
- 25 *The Brighton Grammarian*, 2 Oct. 1911, pp. 145-6.
- 26 Each school had one delegate.
- 27 The fifteen members were: Brighton Grammar School, Camberwell Grammar School, Caulfield Grammar School, Haileybury College, Malvern Grammar School, Mentone College, Queen's College, St Thomas' Grammar School, South Melbourne College, Trinity Grammar School, University College, University High School and the three Christian Brothers' colleges — East Melbourne, St Kilda and North Melbourne. Christian Brothers' College, South Melbourne, which was granted membership at the meeting, was not represented, nor was Malvern Grammar, Queen's College or South Melbourne College.
- 28 See *Argus*, 9 May 1911, p. 6; *Australasian*, 13 May 1911, p. 1184; *The Brighton Grammarian*, 2 Oct. 1911, pp. 145-7.
- 29 The schools that voted for the amendment were: CBC (East Melbourne), CBC (St Kilda), CBC (North Melbourne), Mentone College and University College. Brighton Grammar, Caulfield Grammar, Haileybury, Trinity and University High voted against it. The St Thomas' delegate was (strangely) out of the room at the time of the vote. The casting vote of the chairman, Mr McMenamin of Camberwell, was also unusual because it obviously did not represent the views of his headmaster, Mr Hall, who subsequently joined the SAAAV.
- 30 *Argus*, 9 May 1911, p. 6.
- 31 *SAAAV Minute Book*, Minutes of the meetings held on 13 and 27 May 1911; *The Brighton Grammarian*, 2 Oct. 1911, p. 147. (Note: The entire minutes of the SAAAV (1911-20) are in an exercise book held by the Trinity Grammar School Archives.)
- 32 These schools were: All Saints', Brighton Grammar, Camberwell Grammar, Caulfield Grammar, Haileybury, Ivanhoe Grammar, St Thomas' and Trinity. All

Saints' had been admitted in 1914 and Ivanhoe in 1920. University High, Queen's College and Malvern Grammar, three original SAAAV members, did not join the AGSV. University High closed in 1912, while Malvern and Queen's College were not regular participants in SAAAV matches after World War I.

- All Saints' and St Thomas' left the AGSV in the late 1920s and were replaced by Carey (1928) and Malvern (1929). The admission of Brighton, Carey, Caulfield and Haileybury to the APS, together with Malvern's affiliation with Caulfield, led to the admission of a number of new schools to the AGSV after 1958. Camberwell, Ivanhoe and Trinity remained members and were joined first by Assumption College, Mentone Grammar School and Essendon Grammar School and later by The Peninsula School, Marcellin College and Yarra Valley Anglican School.
- 33 Caulfield Grammar School, *School Magazine*, vol. II, no. 3, Dec. 1920, p. 54.
- 34 See *Australasian*, 14 Nov. 1914, p. 1071 and 13 Nov. 1915, p. 958.
- 35 *Australasian*, 27 Oct. 1923, p. 898 reported that the Schools' Association of Victoria had held its second annual combined athletics sports at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday, 19 October. The competing schools were: Berwick Grammar School, Box Hill Grammar School, Carey Baptist Grammar School, Malvern Grammar School, Mentone Grammar School, Prahran College and Queen's College.
- 36 *Australasian*, 27 May 1911, p. 1318.
- 37 For a detailed discussion on the development of professionalism in Victorian football see Joseph Johnson, *For the Love of the Game: The Centenary History of the Victorian Amateur Football Association 1892-1992*, South Yarra, 1992, chs 1-4.
- 38 The rise of athleticism in these institutions in the late nineteenth century produced a group of men who were not only devoted to games, but who also had the means to pursue their sporting interest on a more-or-less full-time basis.
- 39 Wray Vamplew, *Play up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain 1875-1974*, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 196-7.
- 40 It is worth noting that neither the SAAAV nor the AGSV admitted a Roman Catholic school during the whole of the period from 1911 to 1958. The minutes of the SAAAV show that some Roman Catholic schools sought admission, but their applications were rejected.
- 41 Wilmot was a prominent member of the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association and vice-president of the Metropolitan Amateur Football Association.
- 42 *Australasian*, 26 Jan. 1907, p. 199.
- 43 *Australasian*, 15 May 1909, p. 1201.
- 44 *Australasian*, 23 May 1914, p. 1178.
- 45 A story in the 'College Sports' column (*Australasian*, 9 Oct. 1909, p. 924) illustrates well 'Old Boy's' concept of the ideal sportsman. At the Sydney Grammar School athletics sports, G P Barbour withdrew from the mile race because 'Tim' Lamrock was injured and could not compete. A win in the mile would have secured the school championship for Barbour, but he withdrew because he felt it was unfair to take the championship when Lamrock would have certainly beaten him in the mile, if fit. 'Old Boy' concluded: 'These are the exhibitions of sportsmanship which have made public school life all over the world the great factor it is in the development of national character'.
- 46 *The Brighton Grammarian*, 2 Oct. 1911, p. 143.
- 47 *The Brighton Grammarian*, 2 Oct. 1911, p. 143.
- 48 *The Brighton Grammarian*, 2 Oct. 1911, p. 143.
- 49 *The Brighton Grammarian*, 2 Oct. 1911, p. 143-4.
- 50 *Australasian*, 8 July 1916, p. 68.
- 51 See, for example, 'Old Boy's' column in the *Australasian*, 14 Jan. 1920. Here, he quotes from an article by H S Pritchard on 'The Best Games for Boys'. Pritchard

claimed that games for boys should fulfil three tests:

1. The individual player should not play for himself, but for his team.
  2. The game must involve some physical danger.
  3. There should be some 'collective discipline' inherent in the game
- 52 Much has been written about the development of masculine identity through playing the various football codes, particularly rugby. See, for example, the essays in J Nauright and T J L Chandler, eds, *Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity*, London, 1996.
- 53 See, for example, the views of W M Buntine (headmaster of Caulfield Grammar) as reported by 'Prefect' in the *Weekly Times*. (Reprinted in Caulfield Grammar School, *School Magazine*, vol. 1, no. 18, June 1918, pp. 355-7.) Buntine was reported:
- to have a high opinion of the value of the winter game in promoting self-reliance and general manliness among the boys. He attributes the great deeds of Australian soldiers at the front largely to their early training on the football field.
- 54 See, for example, *Australasian*, 19 June 1915, p. 68: 'the lessons of the field and the river have been most truly learned, when they produce the results we have seen in war' and 30 Dec. 1916, p. 1312:
- ... There are many young Australians who have passed through our public schools who have given their lives for the Empire. They represented their school in many a hard fought game, and now they have fallen in the great game.
- 55 *Australasian*, 21 Aug. 1915, p. 68.
- 56 Adamson as quoted in Johnson, *For the Love of the Game*, p. 46.
- 57 The headmasters made some minor rule changes, but nothing more. For further discussion on the Adamson-Kent Hughes debate see Johnson, pp. 46-50.
- 58 Johnson, *For the Love of the Game*, p. 50.
- 59 Adamson's comments are quoted in detail by Johnson, *For the Love of the Game*, pp. 50-1. They were originally reported in the *Australasian*, 24 Apr. 1915, p. 818.