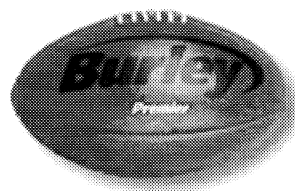


OTHER PASSIONS...

Aussie Rules for Melanie Little



It is the sound of Aussie Rules Football commentary on the radio that triggers memories for Darwin lawyer Melanie Little who inherited a lifelong love of the game from her grandmother Mavis Haynes.

"My interest in Aussie Rules Football started when I was very young. I'm from a family of all girls, but my grandmother was very passionate about the Norwood Football team in South Australian league.



Melanie Little proudly displaying her Port Adelaide beer cooler

"We lived in the country on a small farm near a small country town. My grandmother would listen to the football every Saturday afternoon and I would always sit and listen with her.

"My favourite memory is that on a nice cold day with a bit of sun my grandmother would sit in the car in the driveway. She would sit in the car, always knitting, with the trannie on listening to the game. It was all radio then, no television, so the sound of the game has special meaning for me. My really early memories are the sound of the commentators: and how excited they would get and then how excited I would get during the game.

"I do love listening to the game and I do love watching it. I watch it on the television at the weekends at home. When it is on the radio the commentators make a lot bigger effort to really explain what is happening and they get really excited which is infectious."

"Every Saturday afternoon and through to Saturday night through the winter Aussie Rules was part of my life. The game has been something that has always been very regular and very constant in my life."

Melanie not only inherited a love for the game from her grandmother, but also a passion for barracking for a favourite team.

Her grandmother was a devout Norwood fan, but Melanie ("probably rather cynically") picked South Adelaide as a child.

"In roundabout 1963 or 1964 South Adelaide were a top team. That was when I was fairly young (though I am not prepared to say how young!). They were a top team and then became my team, and I became very passionate about South Adelaide. I had a blue and white scarf and all that kind of thing."

Notwithstanding their earlier successes South Adelaide have remained fairly unsuccessful in the winning stakes since 1964, a fact which has not diminished Melanie's support for the team despite her admission that "it has been a very long road for supporters like me".

"I do love barracking for my team and I'm very, very one-eyed, I'm a terrible loser, I get very depressed when my team loses. I don't go in tipping competitions because I like barracking for teams. I have lots of favourite teams and others I love to hate. North Melbourne is one that I love to hate. Everyone hates North Melbourne!"

When not barracking for South Adelaide Melanie backs AFL team Port Adelaide.

"Because Souths were always doing so badly and have never made it to the

finals I support Port Adelaide as my finals team. They have been good to watch as they have done really well quite quickly.

"The Port Adelaide team have fostered vast numbers of Aboriginal players. They have got quite a few Aboriginal players, including quite a few from the Territory like Fabian Francis. They've also really emphasised skills and fitness whereas some of the other teams are more into being rough. The skills for Port are really starting to pay off.

Having watched team sports closely for most of her life Melanie believes there are some basic characteristics that contribute to team success.

"I think most of the teams that are really successful are from a community and have a history. That history and community tends to foster really good players. Then of course there is a having a good coach and all that.

"What is really interesting is that Australians all over the world foster these little Aussie Rules teams. It is an Australian sport and I know that in the eastern states rugby has got a big following but Aussie Rules Football has some sort of legitimacy as a national sport.

"One of my favourite memories about football, which is not really about football but about human behaviour, is from one day when I was at the football at Norwood oval watching a local South Australian game. I was getting very excited and I was blaming the umpire about something and I was yelling and screaming. I was standing with my partner Kevin and this man looked around and said directly to Kevin, not looking at me, "Can't you control her?" Kevin said "No", with this incredulous look on his face like 'you have got to be joking!' I just started laughing because the man couldn't just turn around and tell me to shut up.