

La Trobe University Union

**Entertainment & Events**  
May 27-June 4

**Tuesday June 1**

Comedy!! 1pm *Agora Cinema*  
**Dave Grant**



**Wednesday June 2**

Free Midday Movie  
12pm *Agora Cinema*



**KILL  
BILL**

**Thursday June 3**

Bar Night Eagle bar  
*Last bar Night for Semester 1*

Top Cover Band

**Coupe de Ville**

**La Trobe  
University  
LIBRARY**

"Lending and all services  
(including photocopying)  
cease 15 minutes prior to  
the Library closing time"

**Extended  
Weekend**

**Opening Hours**

Saturday 29 May &  
Sunday 30 May  
11.00 am - 5.00 pm

Saturday 5 June &  
Sunday 6 June  
11.00 am - 5.00 pm

Saturday 12 June &  
Sunday 13 June  
11.00 am - 5.00 pm

Queens Birthday Holiday  
Monday 14 June  
11.00 am - 5.00 pm

**'The Moat' goes head to head with  
Computer Scientist and Former  
AFL Umpire**

**Ian  
Robinson**

**Moat** - How did you first get involved in umpiring?

**Ian** - I was at University High School and one of the teachers there, the chemistry teacher, was an umpire in the Amateurs. They needed some umpires to umpire the house matches that were played at lunchtimes, so he decided to start a little umpires club. I thought I'd have a go at that, and found I quite enjoyed it.

Then I applied to my local association, which was the Essendon District Football League, but they said I was too young, so I took on boundary umpiring instead. I ended up playing football in the mornings for the Essendon Baptist St Johns in the under fifteens and then boundary umpiring for their A Grade team in the afternoon. I was pretty average as a player; I was quite small, to boot. I kept applying to the Essendon District Football League to take me on as a field umpire, and eventually they did. So that's how I got started.

**Moat** - Do you remember your first league game?

**Ian** - It was 1971. I was 24. The game was between Melbourne & South Melbourne at the M.C.G. Melbourne won by a long way, so it wasn't a difficult game to umpire.

**Moat** - Were you nervous running out for your first game?

**Ian** - Oh yeah! I was nervous, but it was a pretty free flowing game. There were no real incidents. But I came down to earth with a thud in my second game, when I umpired St Kilda and North Melbourne down at Moorabbin, in the mud. Oh dear, I just lost control. There was only one field umpire in those days. I remember coming out after half time and paying lots of free kicks, just to get everything under control. I reported Sam Kekovich on that day (and Barry Breen, I think) and I remember having to separate Robbie Muir and Brent Crosswell, so I really knew what league football was all about. It was a lot different than the first week.

**Moat** - What type of training was required to keep up with the pace?

**Ian** - In those days, formally, we just trained two days a week, Tuesday & Thursdays, and most of the training was just short stuff, a lot of stop-start running, lots of repetitions. I did a lot of long distance running in between times. By the mid-eighties, I was running more than 100km a week. I'd take the day off before a game to freshen up.

I remember regularly running up to South Morang and back at lunchtime; just keeping the miles up.

**Moat** - You did your doctorate and worked at Melbourne Uni. What brought you to La Trobe?

**Ian** - What actually happened was, I was a lecturer at Melbourne Uni on what was called, a limited tenure appointment, and they appointed their first professor of Computer Science in 1975. He was a fellow called Peter Poole. He was in America at the time. So I thought I'd better write to him and find out what his plans were for the Department. I described the particular area of Computer Science that I worked in and I must say he was very blunt: he wrote back and said he didn't want that area in the Department and therefore would not be renewing my position. I saw an ad for a job at La Trobe and applied for it and fortunately I got it. In fact, it was the first advertised position at La Trobe in Computer Science.

**Moat** - Do you get much in the way of comments and feedback from students regarding your past?

**Ian** - Just about zero these days. The last game I umpired was the 1987 Grand Final, and when you think about it, that's seventeen years ago, and the



students are seventeen, eighteen, nineteen so they don't really know about my umpiring past. I might get a few comments now that I'm the AFL Video Reports Officer, possibly some helpful comments.

**Moat** - You umpired nine grand finals. Do you remember your first one?

**Ian** - Oh yeah! A lot of people do. That was 1973, when Neil Balme knocked out Geoff Southby. Before that, John Nicholls was bowled over by Laurie Fowler. It was probably only three minutes into the game. Nicholls took a mark about thirty or forty metres out and Laurie Fowler came flying through the air and crashed into him. These days it would be a report, but in those days it was just a fifteen-metre penalty. It actually knocked John Nicholls out, and he was a big man.

Nevertheless, John sort of got up, shook his head, went back and kicked the goal, but I think it would have affected him, being such a heavy knock.

There were a few difficult situations in that game. Vin Waite from Carlton was running around knocking a few blokes over and 'Balme' (Neil Balme) decided to take things into his own hands and he well and truly clocked Geoff Southby and Southby went off around half time and didn't come back.

Richmond won the game. They had a very good team, Royce Hart, Kevin Sheedy, Francis Bourke. They had a great centre line. A lot of Carlton supporters weren't happy, but I can't change what happened. So yes, I remember my first grand final very well.

**Moat** - Now, the 1980 night Grand Final, describe the tragedy that happened there.

**Ian** - (laughs) What happened was that Collingwood was a few points in front, just towards the end of the final quarter. Malcolm Blight of North Melbourne kicked a long ball to Kerry Good and he marked it about 50 metres out. I'd paid the mark, and a lot of people ran onto the ground. I thought they were getting a bit excited, a bit premature, and I just tried to keep an area clear around the mark. Kerry actually kicked it quite quickly. He kicked it a long way and it went through for a goal, putting North in front. People just continued to run onto the ground and a mounted policeman came up beside me. I said "Has the siren gone?" and he said "Yep", so we just walked off. I never ever heard the siren. I didn't know when it had gone either. Interestingly, Bill Deller and I walked up the race with the Collingwood players, and none of the Collingwood players said anything to us about the siren going. It turns out that the siren went before Goode marked the ball, so Collingwood should have won. I was subsequently told that the people organising the presentations after the game had unplugged the siren from the amplification system,

so the people in the stand where the siren was could hear it, but on the ground you couldn't. It's interesting how many players subsequently claimed to have heard it.

**Moat** - Do you remember your last game, and was it tough giving it away?

**Ian** - I remember my last game because it was a Grand Final too. It was 1987 between Hawthorn and Carlton. It was very hot and I can remember about ten minutes into the game that I'd had enough (laughs). It was more just the amount of effort to stay on top, because I was 41 then and there were a lot of younger ones coming through, and I wanted to go out on top.

**Moat** - What was it like being inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame?

**Ian** - I was very proud. The way they did that, I was one of the initial inductees. There was a category for ten umpires across all the senior State competitions in the country. It was just a question whether I would be included in that. I guess with 9 Grand Finals and over 350 games I had a reasonable chance.

**Moat** - This year you've taken on the new role as the video umpire. How did that come about?

**Ian** - I was approached by Adrian Anderson, the Football Operations Manager from the AFL, who asked me if I'd do it. He asked me to come in and talk to him about how the role would operate, and what they wanted from it. I saw it as a challenge and was pleased to be back in the AFL fold. I get the tapes of the incidents, not the whole game, and I recommend those cases where I feel there's a reasonable prospect that the tribunal will find that a reportable offence has occurred. I just fill in the standard report form that the umpires fill in and I fax it through to the AFL.

**Moat** - Describe your best and worst moments in football.

**Ian** - (Pauses) I suppose looking back that getting your first league game and getting your first Grand Final, they'd have to be the best, I think.

As far as the worst, it would probably be more off field incidents. Attitudes among the umpiring fraternity were extremely conservative when I started and, by comparison, I was a little bit of a rebel. I remember one time that I'd been across to South America during the off season and I'd bought some, what I thought, was really cool gear. My first game of the year was on a very hot day at Footscray and I wore this really cool, smart, casual gear, rather than the usual suit and tie that you were supposed to wear. They decided to punish me by taking marks off my umpiring. You got scored on how you umpired the game, and I was downgraded for what I wore to the game. That's fair enough if I'd let down the image of umpiring, but I thought that what I wore looked much better than their standard, not worse!

**Moat** - What about at the University, what would be the best and worst moments at La Trobe?

**Ian** - I think the best thing for me in general is the pleasure I get from seeing people learn. When you're teaching and you can help people who have a thirst for learning, that's the most rewarding thing.

I certainly wonder why some students are in the class. Maybe they've just chosen the wrong subject for them, but they don't seem interested, and that's not so rewarding. You have your disappointments and you get on with things. There is nothing I'd really classify as a 'worst moment'.

**Moat** - Would you change anything that you have done?

**Ian** - It's interesting because the football and the academic side have always gone side by side. When I was training and umpiring footy, the physical activity was a nice release from all the work as an academic. On the other hand, the academic side has been affected by the football because I had an opportunity to go to America to do a PhD and I didn't go because I was just getting into the football.

The typical pattern for people was to do their PhD overseas and perhaps get a post doc and then get an academic position in Australia. Had I done that, I probably would have gone further with my academic career quicker, but I don't regret that. I wouldn't change that. I still have a good academic career and I would have missed out on so much more.