

Weekly wrap up

Friday, 29 May 2009							Home	Away
7.40pm		Carlton	vs.		West Coast	Etihad Stadium	\$1.20	\$4.25
Saturday, 30 May 2009								
2.10pm		Western Bulldogs	vs.		Sydney	Manuka Oval	\$1.65	\$2.15
2.10pm		Kangaroos	vs.		Brisbane Lions	Etihad Stadium	\$1.95	\$1.80
7.10pm		St. Kilda	vs.		Melbourne	Gold Coast Stadium	\$1.08	\$7.00
5.40pm		Fremantle	vs.		Richmond	Subiaco Oval	\$1.48	\$2.55
Sunday, 31 May 2009								
12.40pm		Adelaide	vs.		Hawthorn	AAMI Stadium	\$2.25	\$1.60
2.10pm		Essendon	vs.		Geelong	Etihad Stadium	\$5.75	\$1.12
4.40pm		Port Adelaide	vs.		Collingwood	M.C.G.	\$1.50	\$2.50

Buenos días, los aficionados de deportes...

Fear of swine flu seems to be everywhere nowadays. According to much hyped up media reports:

"Fremantle travelled home after last Saturday's loss to North Melbourne on the same flight as WA's first swine flu victim, raising concerns about possible infection. Initial reports said no Fremantle players or officials were seated near the victim, but subsequent investigations showed an administration official, who was not part of the official touring party, was seated close by."

That's it? I think the only thing this proves is that news spreads faster than swine flu and the impending aporkalypse is more representative of individuals contracting paranoia than H1N1. On Friday, St Kilda even took the precaution of supplying face masks for their flight from Melbourne to the Gold Coast.



Scientists think they have established a timeline of the spread of swine flu. They suspect the first outbreak occurred at a market after a customer bought some roast beef and took it all the way home

Meanwhile, we seem to be setting new lows in our footy tipping competition with Round 10 returning the lowest average winnings so far this season (\$6.65) and the lowest winning weekly prize (Patrick with \$9.10).

Fun & Games

AFL Fixture

Continuing with our investigation into the 2009 AFL Home & Away fixture, this week we examine opposition strength.

Since the AFL is not a perfect round robin tournament each team plays a different set of opponents each year. One way to target equity would be to balance out this mismatch over several years. There are, however, problems with this approach:

- It is sub-optimal in terms of revenue maximisation for the AFL, who benefit from scheduling popular match-ups multiple times every year (for example, Collingwood vs Essendon, Adelaide vs Port Adelaide, Fremantle vs West Coast, etc)
- With 16 teams and 22 rounds, it would require 15 years to balance out perfectly.

Regardless of whether a perfect round robin can be targeted over a number of years, we still desire fairness within each season. To measure this, I have declared each team's "strength" to be equal to the points they obtained in the prior years' premiership season and have tabulated "total opposition strength" for each team and for each of the last 5 AFL seasons:

Total opposition strength

Team	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	Av.
 Hawthorn	948	942	934	938	1000	952
 Collingwood	944	952	922	988	960	953
 Geelong	928	932	970	976	968	955
 Carlton	956	988	958	950	928	956
 St. Kilda	926	954	978	978	952	958
 Adelaide	996	936	924	958	992	961
 West Coast	980	986	946	956	940	962
 Port Adelaide	938	972	986	1002	932	966
 Essendon	990	938	1032	914	976	970
 North Melbourne	962	982	970	970	968	970
 Richmond	920	978	984	982	1000	973
 Brisbane Lions	996	956	972	988	960	974
 Melbourne	1016	996	948	990	968	984
 Sydney	1032	1022	990	916	960	984
 Western Bulldogs	962	966	1000	998	996	984
 Fremantle	994	988	974	984	988	986
Average	968	968	968	968	968	968
St. Dev	33.7	25.3	28.9	27.1	23.1	11.9

Some conclusions:

- Total opposition strength, averaged over the last 5 AFL seasons, is surprisingly even (see below for details)
- Essendon has had the equal hardest draw (in 2007) as well as the easiest draw (in 2006)
- North Melbourne and Fremantle have had the most consistent draws over the past 5 years

One very subtle thing with this analysis is that "total opposition strength" is negatively correlated with a team's own strength (since they don't play themselves). For example, Geelong finished with many more points on the 2008 ladder than everybody else, therefore it just seems like they have an "easy" 2009 draw. This also explains the high standard deviation in the 2009 fixture (which is due to the high standard deviation of 2008 ladder results).

After attempting to allow for this correlation, I have concluded that the AFL fixtures over the last 5 years have about 60% of the variance that you would expect if the non-round robin fixtures were chosen at random, meaning that the AFL have done quite a good job of standardising oppositions across teams.

Phooty lookalikes



Who says that Ben Cousins is a bad influence on young sporting supporters?



I love any opportunity to make fun of interstate teams, don't you?