

# From a humble little footy club to

Collingwood are on top in more ways than one. The AFL ladder leaders are also Australia's most valuable football club, writes **Daniel Ramus**.

It was Eddie McGuire's meeting with the New England Patriots five years ago that signalled Collingwood had arrived as a world sporting power.

"They were basically paying us lip service for the first 20 minutes and were being very nice and polite," the Magpies president recalled. "Then they said to me, 'What's your average crowd?' and I said, 'Just a tick under 80,000,' and they nearly fell over. Suddenly they sat down and we went for dinner and we had about four hours with them."

The AFL premiers have been named Australia's most valuable football club by entertainment and trademark lawyer Wayne Covell, who compiled a table of the top 10 across the four codes. Covell was astonished at the comprehensive nature of Collingwood's dominance.

"For a team that was in doldrums just over a decade ago, they have really risen from the ashes," Covell said. "It's one thing to win a grand final, but it is really another to turn that performance into brand value."

Collingwood also finished first on Covell's table last year and were valued at \$263 million – their nearest rivals Geelong at \$238 million. This year the Magpies have surged to a valuation of \$344 million – a whopping \$87 million ahead of the second-placed Cats.

The following factors have given McGuire's club the edge over all others in the land:

■ The most-watched Australian football club on television in 2010, replacing the Brisbane Broncos in 2009 with a cumulative audience of 27 million;

■ A long list of ground-breaking sponsorship deals, including the reported seven-year \$14 million jumper deal with insurance giant CGU. The club also enjoys long-term partnerships with Westpac (five years), adidas (10 years) Emirates (since 1999) and McDonald's (since 2006).

■ Significant members' discounts with sponsors, including on flights, clothing, mobile phones, theme parks, movies, retail stores and fast-food outlets.

McGuire said the club was not just a giant on the Australian sporting landscape. "We run basically 11 Rol-

ling Stones concerts a year, we're the biggest restaurant in Australia with 2500 or 3500 plates per week at our games, we're No.1 for ratings, and I think last year we had four or five games over 90,000 people," he said.

"From a humble little footy club that started off in the worst socio-economic area of Melbourne, it's been fantastic. On a world scale, it's big-time."

Earlier this year, *Forbes* magazine released a list of the world's top 20 most valuable soccer clubs. Ger-

“It's been fantastic. On a world scale, it's big-time.” Eddie McGuire

man club Hamburg SV (14th) were valued at \$US340m, which is just below Collingwood, and Manchester City (15th) were also less than the Pies at \$US291m.

AFL's chief executive, Andrew Demetriou, was full of praise for McGuire and the Magpies for turning the tables on what looked to be a bleak future not so long ago.

"Collingwood's success has come about through more than a decade of hard work, which is often forgotten by many sections of the football community," Demetriou told *The Sun-Herald*. "When Eddie McGuire took over the club in the late 1990s, the club was in severe trouble with its books and was also struggling on the field. Over the last decade, the Collingwood administration has worked extremely hard in building its financial position and re-connecting with all sections of its fan base.

"On the field, the coaching staff led by Michael Malthouse has built a side over a six to seven year period that is now as strong as any team in the recent history of the game."

A major factor that allowed Collingwood to increase their lead at the top of Covell's table was their premierships last year, which included the dramatic sub-plot of having a drawn grand final against St Kilda that was replayed.

## Australia's top 10 most valuable football clubs

1	Collingwood Magpies (AFL)	\$344m
2	Geelong Cats (AFL)	\$257m
3	Essendon Bombers (AFL)	\$224m
4	St Kilda Saints (AFL)	\$209m
5	Carlton Blues (AFL)	\$208m
6	Fremantle Dockers (AFL)	\$200m
7	West Coast Eagles (AFL)	\$192m
8	Hawthorn Hawks (AFL)	\$187m
9	St George Illawarra Dragons (NRL)	\$183m
10	Brisbane Broncos (NRL)	\$178m

### How the list was compiled

- The top 10 list is based on six key indicators – TV rights, sponsorship, merchandise, hospitality, membership and ticket revenue projections for the next five years.
- Four football competitions were considered: AFL, NRL, Super Rugby and the A-League.
- Each valuation is based on the value of the sports team to the trademark owners (AFL or NRL) and the franchisee (the club).
- The AFL's TV deal was renegotiated in 2011 and is reported to be worth \$125 billion. The next NRL deal is being negotiated and is reported to be worth at least \$1b.
- The clubs' proportionate share of TV deals is based on Television Audience Comparison figures provided by Repucom International.

## Long-awaited premiership success propels

**Daniel Ramus**

THE mantle of the NRL's most valuable club has been taken by St George Illawarra.

The Dragons were listed ninth on trademark lawyer Wayne Covell's table of Australia's most valuable football clubs, overtaking last year's NRL top dogs, Brisbane.

According to figures from Repucom International, the Dragons had the third-highest television audience share of any football club last year, behind Collingwood and St

Kilda. Dragons chief executive Peter Doust said his club might have fared even better if the AFL teams had not squared off in a second title decider.

"If they hadn't have played two grand finals it might have been a different score," he said.

St George Illawarra's merchandise revenue was particularly strong – superior to that of Geelong, Essendon, St Kilda and Carlton. Its 2010 sponsorship revenue was slightly above Hawthorn's at \$6.1 million.

Their first premiership as a joint venture and the first by a Dragons

side in 31 years was crucial to their off-field success. "It's no surprise, I suppose, that we have been judged a lot on our lack of achievement on the field over three decades," Doust said. "To put that one down on the on-field scoreboard was a significant achievement for the club and it does drive business, there's no doubt about it, success on the field."

Doust believes the Dragons have a national reach unrivalled in the NRL. "The tradition of St George, where there's a lot of people around Australia and internationally that do

## TENNIS

# Stosur edges Petrova in her own New York marathon

**Gillian Tan**

**NEW YORK:** In-form Australian Samantha Stosur believes she has what it takes to win her maiden grand slam title at the US Open.

Brimming with confidence after grinding out a gutsy three-set win in the longest women's US Open match in the open era against 24th seed Nadia Petrova, the ninth seed said she was keen to keep the momentum rolling.

"Now I think I'm really playing well, I've got this great belief and confidence behind me that I can win and I've got to keep believing that in the next match," the 27-year-old Queenslander said. "I've got to expect a tough match," she added of her fourth-round clash against 25th seed Maria Kirilenko, who is into the final 16 at Flushing Meadows for the first time.

The 24-year-old Russian trails Stosur 2-3 in their career meetings.

Stosur's coach Dave Taylor acknowledged his charge would be the favourite. "I think she has to really play her style of tennis, a lot of big serving, setting her forehand up off her serve, staying in points with her backhand, all the things she does well and the reason why she's a top player," he said.

Having bowed out in the third round of the Australian Open and French Open, and the first round of Wimbledon, Stosur was glad to be finally living up to her ranking at a major. She is the second-highest seed remaining in her half of the draw, following early exits by 2006 champion Maria Sharapova and 12th seed Agnieszka Radwanska.

"Even though some of the big names are out, someone beat those

## Jarmila stung by abuse

**NEW YORK:** She's ranked 31 in the world and has amassed \$1.5 million in prizemoney but Australia's second-highest ranked tennis player Jarmila Gajdosova is far from happy. The 24-year-old – who was upset in the second round of the US Open by American Vania King – announced she would be shutting her Twitter account after receiving offensive tweets, which she shared with her 7000 followers. The worst sledge said: "You're a f---ing joke, get out of Australia and go home you refugee", while others described her straight-sets loss as "gutless" and "pathetic". Gajdosova said she slept for only three hours after reading the insults from complete strangers.

big names, too," Stosur said. "Even though Maria's gone doesn't mean it's a walk in the park and that's the same when any big seed loses."

"As Sam has said, it's really a waste of energy to look anywhere beyond your next match because you don't control anything other than that," Taylor said. "When you're really winning a big volume of matches you do look towards the pointy end of the draw, but there's nothing taken for

women's tennis at the moment. There's a lot of good players out there that, I think, aren't scared any more and no one has that aura of invincibility like you used to see."

Taylor said he was impressed with Stosur's ability to maintain her position in the top 10.

"I think the great thing is that Sam's made huge steps forward to being a legitimate contender at grand slams to then not living up to her own expectations, but then, at the end of the day, she's still No.10 in the world," he said. "She really hasn't had a major dip and she's still around so now's the time to learn from that and put it to good use. She's obviously doing a lot more things at a higher level to be ranked that high for that long."

**Victory at last ... Samantha Stosur.** Photo: AFP

Gillian Tan

# \$344m giant



Coach Mick Malthouse and the Collingwood team celebrate in 2010 after winning the club's first premiership in 20 years.

## 'Soccer is boring': why high-rise Harry puts his money into league

Daniel Lane

HARRY TRIGUBOFF, one of Australia's richest men and the Wests Tigers' major sponsor, will never funnel any of his billions into football because "soccer is boring".

The Tigers have surged into third among rugby league teams in the annual list of most valuable football clubs in Australia and just missed out on a berth in the overall top 10.

Triguboff aired his view as supporters of the A-League hailed the recruitments of Socceroo pair Brett Emerton and Harry Kewell as a masterstroke that would ensure the competition gained unseen levels of corporate and media support. Triguboff - who as boss of property group Meriton has poured \$1 million this season into the Wests Tigers on top of the money he ploughed into the club since he became a Balmain supporter many years ago - said nothing could entice him to invest in football.

"I think soccer is boring," he told *The Sun-Herald*. "I look at it all day and [the players] pretend to get hurt, they get a penalty and maybe - somehow - they score. In league, the players are always on the go. I can see the flow of the game; it's exciting to watch. I am sure soccer is skillful, but it is slow."

Triguboff, 78, said he was constantly amazed by the ability of rugby league players to back up from pummellings. He revealed part of the appeal in his being a sponsor stemmed from a deep admiration for the courage players needed to display.

"They have guts; that's very important," he said. "To stand up to all the people against me in business is courageous; sometimes more courageous than clever. Guts is important in life, and they have it. I like that."

While he is an astute businessman, Triguboff said proof his support for the Tigers came from the heart was that he actually doubted it encouraged sales of his apartments.

"It depends what business you're in," he said of the benefits of sponsorship. "I don't think that in my business, where I mostly sell to Chinese, it helps me a lot. We have to convert them [to league]. But generally, in public, it is very important because people come up to me and talk about the team. If the team is going good, they are happy. If the team is going bad,



Brand exposure ... Harry Triguboff's company, Meriton, is prominently displayed on the Wests Tigers' best-selling jersey. Photo: Jon Reid

they ask what I can do about it?"

"It's as though I am running the team. I'm very happy I can talk to [supporters]. They are very happy with my knowledge of rugby league. I have got to know other teams, so I can talk to them on their level. I like it."

Repucom International, a brand analysis specialist, estimated that through their sponsorships of the Wests Tigers, Meriton and motor

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In league, the players are always on the go. Harry Triguboff

The Tigers have invested a lot of time in designing this year's jumper so the sponsors would be prominently displayed. Last-minute adjustments to ensure the sponsor's happiness meant a delay in stocking this year's design.

"We designed ours with the sponsors at the forefront of our thinking. We positioned Meriton higher on the chest so it won't be lost in the fold-over, Hyundai received a black panel to ensure their brand wasn't lost in a mish-mash of colours. We weren't happy with the first batch of jumpers, and while the redesign meant delays in getting it into shops, this year's jumper has been our fastest-ever seller," Clarke said.

Tigers players have been told not to fold their arms for photo shoots to ensure their sponsors get invaluable exposure.

Wests Tigers chief executive Stephen Humphreys said any company that sponsored a sporting team made their objectives and expectations clear from the outset.

"Clubs are under a scrutiny," he said. "And that's good for everyone. It means we're under a clear understanding of what we are trying to achieve for one another and that leads to good business practice."

Triguboff, who joked the more the Tigers won the more he shelled out, insisted his expectation had not changed since he "signed on" again at the end of last year. "Win," he said. "I expect them to win."

## Dragons ahead of Broncos

know our brand, has I think helped in that respect and underpinned our brand development. That St George Illawarra brand across that region in NSW has given us a good solid core of support. I think those two go together to put us at the forefront of rugby league and sport."

NRL boss David Gallop was generous in his praise of the premiers.

"They are pretty unique in terms of their history - 11 straight premierships, their present state - they hold all the silverware in the game at the moment and their future looks

bright with new stadium improvements at Kogarah and Wollongong," Gallop told *The Sun-Herald*.

The Broncos increased in value by \$9 million this year, but slipped from fifth to 10th on the list. Broncos chief executive Paul White outlined the importance placed on the club's relationship with its members. "You can't say [members are] valuable and not provide the right service for them or supply forums where you're able to listen to them," he said.

The Sydney Swans and Wests Tigers were just outside the top 10.

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