



PRIME MINISTER

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW ON ABC GRANDSTAND, DARWIN,
20 OCTOBER 1990

E & OE - PROOF ONLY

INTERVIEWER: Well let's talk about sport. Politicians, of course, enjoy a high profile in sport. I think in the last couple of weeks we've seen Robert Ray on the front page of *The Age*.

PM: Not the most elegant picture was it.

INTERVIEWER: No not at all. Another politician, I think, on the front page of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and Paul Keating of course joining Collingwood. Is that because politicians like to get away from the hurly burly of Parliament and their electoral responsibilities; or is being involved with sport good for the image?

PM: Well, I think it's different things for different people. I mean, in my case, I've been a sports fanatic ever since I was a kid. It's been part of my life. I played first grade cricket in Western Australia for about six years before going to Oxford. I played baseball for the university and have always been very keen on tennis and now golf. I just regard sport as an intrinsically important part of a fully rounded life. I just love it. So it comes naturally for me. For others I think perhaps they think it does them some good to be seen with sporting people. You know, it's different things for different people but with me, I mean I just love sport myself and I love being with sporting people.

INTERVIEWER: inaudible

PM: Well I suppose with Paul he's a New South Wales bloke and getting involved with a Victorian Aussie Rules side gives him an extension. I know from talking to him that he really does like the game. With John Hewson, although he's my political opponent, from what I understand he's got a legitimate interest in sport. I think he's been a pretty good golfer in his time. So politicians, you know, when it comes down to the line they're not that much different to other people in terms of their likes. Australians generally are a people who like their sport.

INTERVIEWER: Sport, of course, being one of the great levellers, particularly up here in the Northern Territory with football. Football has always been regarded up here as the showpiece, perhaps, of Darwin society where Aboriginals and people from interstate and Europeans etcetera all mix together. Do you think that sport sometimes has more to offer some of the social issues than perhaps politics or legislation does?

PM: I think it's a marvellous part of bringing Australians together. You mention, for instance, our Aboriginal people there's just so many of them who just seem to bring a very special gift of timing and fleetness of foot and agility to football. Not only this code. We've got so many that come from here - [Maurice Rioli]. I was just having a yarn to Maurice out at the races today. I saw him in his last game ... in Perth in 1981. I saw him then and I said to people, God he'll be a star in Victoria. You see them in other codes too. Since I've been Prime Minister I've got to know about Rugby League. I've been living in Canberra and we've got the Raiders team there that's now won two years in a row. They've got that magnificent winger, Chicka Ferguson, I mean, just a magnificent athlete.

INTERVIEWER: Fabulous player. Not only for his fleetness of foot but his fitness for his age.

PM: Fitness for age. I know him quite well because he's the electrician at The Lodge. He comes in and he often pops in and you see him and you never pick him. This lazy loping around way but you see him on a field and he's the most elusive bloke you've ever seen.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. He's in fabulous form. In fact, his form in the Grand Final ... was terrific. You just wonder, for how many seasons will Chicka Ferguson go on?

PM: He's not going to play. He's finished now.

INTERVIEWER: Yes well he said that at the end of the season but he said -

PM: No I think he meant it.

INTERVIEWER: inaudible

PM: That's a bit rough David.

INTERVIEWER: inaudible

PM: About accurate.

INTERVIEWER: inaudible

PM: Yes. It's been a significant part of it. It's been pleasing, in one sense, to get the acknowledgement from President de Klerk and other, for instance, the head of the Reserve Bank there though. They've made it clear that the

pressures that have been put on by the rest of the world, including Australia, is the thing which has now brought them to the negotiating table. Of course, from my point of view, I hope that as soon as it's reasonable now we'll be able to lift the sanctions. We'll want to do that as soon as it's clear that the processes are irreversible. We've always wanted to not bring South Africa to its knees, as I've put it, but bring them to the negotiating table. It looks as though those processes are getting to the stage where they may well be irreversible and then when that happens well then these sanctions will be able to be lifted and they are a talented sporting people. Of course, when you get the integration of the much larger non-white population fully integrated into their sport well then you'll see a much stronger South Africa in all fields of sport.

INTERVIEWER: It's quite awesome to consider even South Africa's ability in cricket, for example, and it was segregated. If they open it up to their entire population they may well be unbeatable for years and years.

PM: They could be. Of course, they're great rugby union players. So if they, as you say, fully integrate their society and develop the talents of all their population they could be very, very formidable opponents.

ends