

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The treatment of Sydney Swans footballer Adam Goodes during the last three years of his playing career deeply affected me. Here was a champion footballer, an outstanding Indigenous leader and the 2014 Australian of the Year, being booed and taunted by fans at stadiums across the nation.

I was very disturbed by it, as it seemed to be racially motivated. But I was also confused. I didn't fully understand what had provoked the crowd's behaviour and why a person who had been considered the best and fairest AFL player in the land, was now the subject of constant vitriol.

During the 2015 season I also saw another side of Australians. I was at the game at the Sydney Cricket Ground late in the 2015 season when Goodes was noticeably absent from the Swans team. He'd taken leave after months of enduring what he called "negative energy".

Many fans carried banners bearing anti-racism messages and the SCG crowd of more than 30,000 stood as one to applaud "Goodesy" in his absence and show him how admired and respected he was.

For a brief moment everything seemed ok but when he returned to the field a week later, it didn't take long for the booing to resume. Nothing had changed. The booing only stopped because at the end of the season, Adam Goodes walked away from the game, and away from public life, without any of the fanfare he deserved.

As a filmmaker, I've tried to shine a light on aspects of Australian society that tell us about ourselves, and what kind of country we are. I wanted to know more about why, and how, Goodes had come to be at the centre of this storm that had led to such heated debate and divided the nation.

I decided to search for answers. My editor Sally Fryer and I started from the beginning, and looked at hundreds of hours of footage broadcast over a three-year period from 2013 to 2015.

We watched coverage of football matches, current affairs shows, talk shows, breakfast tv, panel shows and footy programs. Across the country, there was no more talked about sports person in Australia than Adam Goodes.

As I watched and listened to everything that was said, and everything aired, I realised there was a powerful story to tell and a film there that I wanted to make.

I felt the answers I'd gone looking for were actually in clear sight. Everyone had an opinion; from politicians to people in the street, they had expressed their opinions on Goodes and his actions, and their views on why he was being booed. I didn't feel the need to film any new commentary, new opinions or new conversations.

An accurate record of the time was there in the mountain of broadcast material that we'd assembled.

We decided to make the film entirely from archival material, an approach I'd never taken before. But I believed it would enable us to get closer to the truth.

I felt it was important to hold a mirror up to the nation, to listen again to what was said and what had been heard. Everyone had already revealed themselves.

While the booing of Adam Goodes deeply troubled me, I approached the making of this film with an open mind. I wanted to know more about the mindset and motivations of non-Indigenous Australians, and to try to learn more about the daily experiences of Indigenous Australians.

As Adam often said when he was Australian of the Year, if we don't understand something, we should ask a question.

I felt the film could be a window into aspects of Australian life we often don't want to talk about. I didn't want the film to lecture or accuse. I wanted the audience to see and hear for themselves what had happened, to ask their own questions and to come to their own conclusions.

As a filmmaker, I felt my best tool was to make a documentary that speaks primarily to white Australians, and enables us to question our own behaviour and that of our contemporaries.

With this film I want to encourage us to examine ourselves, and explore the levels of racism in all of us - whether overt or unconscious. I don't want it to judge, but to prompt us to reconsider what really happened to Goodes, and what was in the heart of those in the media who condemned him, and those in the stands who booed him.

There is some fear, I know, about what this film may stir up again. But the fact it may reignite uncomfortable debate and comment will be evidence that we still haven't yet adequately dealt with the events surrounding the treatment of Adam Goodes.

I want us to remember that if he hadn't retired from football, this treatment would not have stopped.

As a nation, we haven't finished the conversation about racism that Adam Goodes asked us to have.

My aim with this film is the same as that expressed in Adam Goodes' Australian of the Year acceptance speech, when he said, "The real reward is when everyone is talking to their mates, to their families and to their children, having those conversations and educating others about racism. What it looks like, how hurtful and how pointless it is, and how we can eliminate it."

Ian Darling - Director
THE FINAL QUARTER
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