

## Makeham's Old Dictum Explains the Lot (MODEL)

$$\text{GM per ha} = Y * P - V$$

Where:

GM = goals margin

Ha = laugh (for joker or punter)

Y = "?" the fundamental question, the great unknown

P = performance or "form"

V = velocity of the wind howling across the field

Betting on the footy is now clearly out in the open. Whether it be Betfair or Sportsbet or at the local tote it is completely legal and very easy to bet on football. And the odds are announced publically in all media outlets. But it was not always so, yet betting has been an integral but often unstated part of the game at all levels for much of its history.

Back in the 70s in the New England competition based on the university of the same name in Armidale in northern NSW, the larrikin professor of agricultural management, Jack Makeham (aka JPM), used to run a book on local games.

For the young and generally novice punters at the university he liked to keep the odds simple: "5/4 on each of two, who bets!", but this required calculating a "goals margin" (GM) for the less fancied team.

So it was form leading up to the game (P), in combination with that unknown element (Y) - are they on song? do they look a bit flat today? Throw in the prevailing climatic conditions (V) and Jack could come up with a number big enough to entice some but not so small that it would discourage others. It involved science as well as art and the social sciences.

Further insight into the model was unveiled by JPM in the definitive farm management text, *The Farming Game*. The chapter on risk is simply called “Who Bets?”

Using the medium of radio Jack used to broadcast the odds on my 2AD Footy Show hosted by Doug Mulray (the same Doug Mulray who went on to become a mega-star on Sydney radio). Doug wasn't that interested in sport so he would introduce us and then grab the newspaper and say he was going to the “library” out the back of the studio.

At the end of our show I would then have to flick the switch to 2UE in Sydney at exactly 10.30 for Three Way Turf Talk with the doyens of race-calling Des Hoysted in Sydney, Bert Bryant (Melbourne) and Bert Day (Adelaide). Often Doug would not return in time so I'd have to operate the panel for the next pre-recorded local sporting segment. Meanwhile, Jack and I would sit and chat about footy and his life. His uncle, Bob, who had bought him up, had played in Collingwood's premiership “Machine” in the 1920s.

Given the prevailing laws in relation to betting on football at the time the odds had to be given in code, Jack would give the odds in rainfall so when asked about the game in Coffs Harbour he might say they'll get 10 points of rain on the coast – code for 10/1 for the visiting team. While for the game in Tamworth he might say 2 points of rain - code for 2/1 for the opposition, and at Uralla it never rained - code for evens!

When the former players, officials and supporters gathered at UNE this past season to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the football club there was no-one fielding on the game... However, things have changed. The club now plays on the main oval which has a small grand-stand, change-rooms, canteen and a bar in the club-rooms.

This is a far-cry from when the students turned up for their first practice at the far-end of the university's playing fields in 1962 where they found that ground staff had erected goal-posts but instead of marking out an oval shape they had made a rectangle!

Nobody other than Victorians, South Australians and a sprinkling from the Riverina and Broken Hill who were studying at the university knew anything about the game. The

nearest football competitions were in Brisbane or Newcastle. There was no footy on TV or in the newspapers. It was only rugby league in that part of the world with the rugby union competition also based on the university.

How the position has changed in NSW. The Sydney Swans are the reigning AFL premiers and there is a team in Greater Western Sydney. There are now football leagues all over the state and kids now get a chance to play the Australian game in school through Auskick and/or various competitions such as the Paul Kelly Cup.

I believe the Swans and the Giants have the potential to develop the type of intense rivalry of the traditional clashes between Melbourne and Collingwood, Adelaide and Port Adelaide, and West Coast v Fremantle with the same sort of social edge to it. This was not the case this season with the Swans proving far too good for the fledgling GWS in both matches.

The first clash played as the opening to this season's AFL season attracted a crowd of over 38,000 more than double the number that attended the much-hyped initial A-League soccer "derby" between Sydney FC and the Western Sydney Wanderers. I reckon the AFL has first-mover advantage over soccer in the west of Sydney.

The Giants boutique stadium in the Sydney Showgrounds precinct has been tailor-made for footy and provides a cauldron-type atmosphere. I went to see the Giants take on Collingwood in a twilight fixture in July and there's not a bad seat in the house. It had changed a great deal from my previous visit - the finish of the Modern Penthalon at the Sydney Olympics.

Although well and truly thrashed by the Pies the young Giants never turned it up. The much-maligned Issy Folau won a heap of centre bounces against Cameron Wood (Darren Jolly was out injured). A great shame Collingwood didn't unveil young giant ruckman Jarrod Witts who hails from the nearby Hills district.

The Swans supporter base is in the inner city, eastern suburbs and on the north shore while the Giants are reaching far and wide for supporters from the western suburbs to Canberra and southern NSW. It's a wide net and intrudes among some traditional

Swans space, particularly the Riverina, which has been a rich source of players and supporters for the club over the years.

Paul Kelly, Brett Kirk, Leo Barry, and Jason Mooney, are just a few from recent years. Amazingly there were no Riverina players in this season's premiership winning team for the Swans (except for the coach!), yet there were three in the Hawthorn team – Matt Suckling (Wagga), Luke Breust (Temora) and Isaac Smith (Cootamundra).

The Riverina connection with the Swans goes back to the days of zoning introduced in 1967 by the VFL. It proved a major recruiting zone for South Melbourne and produced such wonderful players as Rick Quade, Jim Prentice, John Pitura, Colin Hounsell, Doug Priest, Ross Elwin, Greg Smith, Terry and Anthony Daniher, David Murphy, Paul Hawke, and Wayne and Dennis Carroll.

The football community in the Riverina has traditionally followed the Swans. Now it's been proclaimed Giants' territory by the AFL.

There was huge controversy during the season when it was revealed the City of Wagga Wagga had become sponsors of the Giants. Not so much from the AFL community, but the rugby league fraternity went up in arms about it, and then NRL CEO David Gallup went to see the civic leaders. He didn't get much of a hearing mainly because when the Leagues Club went bust a few years ago the NRL did little about it and let the prized Wiessel Oval and the surrounding fields for juniors get sold-off to developers. Rugby league has had to make a new home in Wagga at the Equestrian Centre.

Meanwhile, Robertson Oval, the home of the Wagga Tigers, is getting a major make-over to become the centre of football in the region with funding from the AFL, the city council and both the state and federal governments. This is the same sort of strategy that the AFL has successfully undertaken in Sydney and secured a bevy of new and exclusive grounds for football in the winter.

There was similar outrage in Sydney during the season when it was revealed the local council was considering allocating the historic Birchgrove Oval in Balmain to the AFL for

junior football. This was the scene for the first-ever rugby league match in Sydney in 1908. The AFL wisely backed-off and happily accepted alternative playing fields.

Grounds, or the lack of them, particularly enclosed arenas has been a bug-bear for the code from the get-go, but now football is really gaining ground in Sydney and elsewhere.

When I first moved to Sydney from Wagga in 1984 I immediately switched my allegiance from St Kilda to the Swans. I used to go to every home game and back to the Southern Cross club in Randwick for the after-match functions. All the players would be in attendance and buy their own drinks; it was no different to being in Wagga, even more so since I knew more than half the team who came from the Riverina!

I recall “kicking on” one night after a glorious Swans win over Fitzroy in 1984 with Paul Hawke, “Ants” Daniher and Greg Smith – they were the party boys – to favourite club haunt *Archies* in Bondi Junction. “Ants” had played with my old club, Turvey Park, “The Fox” had come from Wagga Tigers while Smithy was originally from Ardelthan.

Greg loved a drink and you’d always run into him at the Rules Club in Wagga on Friday nights then he’d blitz them the next day. A “Collingwood six-footer”, he booted four match-winning goals playing centre half – forward for East Wagga in the Farrer league grand final in 1979. He could get more hard ball gets than a brass monkey in a Siberian swimming pool.

I had to take an early flight to Melbourne for work on the Monday morning. Travelling down Botany Road in a taxi who should I spot at 6.30 am doing his bread run, but Smithy. He was phenemonal!

I had been highly involved in the administration of football in the country and after a few seasons with Sydney University I retired to join the inaugural NSW AFL Commission. This was during the tumultuous “Edelsten–error”; the Swans were more like a circus than a football club.

The inaugural chairman of the new Commission was Boys’ Own Hero, Keith “Nugget” Miller, the famous Test cricket all-rounder, ex St Kilda, Victorian and NSW footballer, and war fighter pilot. He was the VFL general manager Alan Schwab’s hero; no team

photos of the Richmond premiership teams under Tom Hafey in his office, just a small print of Miller making a sweep shot. “Schwabby” got “Nugget” to take on the job.

There are lots of stories about Keith’s heroics. But the one I like best is how he turned up late for a Sydney Naval football game at Trumper Park, Paddington after being at Randwick races came on and booted a drop kick goal from centre half-back!

The meetings used to be held at the Swans owners, Powerplay’s office in historic Woolloomooloo. Keith and I used to meet at the pub opposite for a few drinks before the meeting. There were only five of us on the board – two from the Swans and two from the NSW AFL with Keith as independent chairman. Keith would usually ask me to chair the meetings while he sipped a scotch and soda and read the form guide!

There were constant squabbles over the Development budget. Under the terms of their licence from the VFL, Powerplay had to fund development and we administered the program using mostly Swans players going out to do clinics in schools and junior clubs.

One meeting when reviewing the list of employees I spotted the name, M. Neagle, whom we had never seen at work and who was also being provided with a motor vehicle and fuel. When he was recruited Merv had been told that he was not required to do any work but to concentrate full-time on football. This was how things were run by the Swans at the time to fit players under the salary cap.

Merv was a terrific fellow and a super player who was tragically killed in a truck accident during the season when returning to Walla from a load to take footy training. He gave a helluva lot back to footy in NSW, and in addition to Walla, he coached North Albury, Mangoplah-Cookardinia United and Balranald as well as Eastlake in the ACT AFL and country clubs in Victoria, SA, WA and the Northern Territory. R.I.P. Merv.

How the Swans have changed!

The red and whites have just won their second premiership in eight years and have fully established their credentials as a real football club such that players want to come to the club for the “football culture”. For years we witnessed some of our best players return to Melbourne for the very same reasons.

The rise and rise of the Swans can't be put down to one event or one person. Although Swans chairman Dick Colless openly credits Paul Roos with "making this club", I think that the whole Swans journey since they came to Sydney has been instructive. Dick has been chairman for nearly twenty years and has actively overseen the transformation of the Swans from a sideshow to the main act in the AFL.

I only got to see the Swans play once this season. Fortunately, it was the grand final. Like so many Swans fans I didn't dare to hope until Goodsey kicked that goal to put us in front with four minutes to go. But we just knew Kieran Jack was going to chase down Clinton Young! Like father, like son. The old man was a terrific tackler in rugby league.

I read a reference in the media to the game being like the movie, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* - such that Butch remarks about the posse relentlessly chasing them down, "Who are those guys?" That was the Swans in 2012. No names. Team.

I took the \$2.75 on offer for the Swans to win the grand final albeit without a great deal of confidence given the might of the opposition but more the attraction of the odds. The \$2.25 for the qualifying final against Adelaide was "money for jam". I was also confident to take the shorter odds against Collingwood of \$1.60.

I applied what I had been taught at university. I simply followed Jack Makeham's old dictum that explains the lot. A simple model based on the fundamental question of the market, the great unknown. Uncertainty and unpredictability, that's what makes footy so magical.

Rod Gillett

South Vietnam

