

One day in early Nineteen Eighty Five I was returning home from a pleasurable sculling session on the Yarra River when I drove past the intersection of Elizabeth Street, Flemington Road and Royal Parade and noticed a huge white flag pole lying on the ground on the small park there. My immediate observation was that it looked like a giant goal post, and the idea crossed my mind that I could make a film about football, and use this flag pole as one of the goal posts. I made a few enquiries and before long I was on the roof of a nearby building with my sixteen millimetre Bolex camera and tripod and filmed this enormous flag pole being made up right and fastened to the ground. It was to become the tallest flagpole in the Southern Hemisphere, and the climax of my most successful film in terms of Melbourne culture, and reawaken the dormant desire and passion I had for Australian Rules Football. And finally it would confirm and immortalise, in artistic terms anyway, the spectacular mark I took at school flying over the shoulders of dual Premiership Hawk player, John Hendrie.

That year was also Melbourne's One Hundred and Fiftieth since settlement, and so I called the film '150 Goals', and decided to make it about eight minutes long. It had a story, but it was really like a sequence of play, and the action was not on a field, but across Melbourne, starting near Victoria Park on the rise around Studley Park overlooking the city. I had been going to a lot of dramas at The Mill Theatre in Geelong that were directed by James McCaughey and a few of my actors from Seventy Six had gravitated to his theatre company, including Barbara Ciszewska who played the part of the central umpire. I thought Collingwood should be one of the teams and I dropped in on the club and spoke to Bill Cook and he supplied all the Collingwood and Fitzroy jumpers, also the heritage ones, umpires flags, whistles and everything at the first meeting. Sidney Sherrin, who coincidentally had gone to school with me since I was six although I hardly knew him, and was from the Sherrin dynasty, gave me a bag of about ten brand new footballs and I invited Ernie Gray and Rob Draffin from The Mill Theatre to be the main players.

The film was a breeze to make beginning with Ernie being reported for wasting time and the free awarded to Draffy who went on a long run and bounce past Collingwood Football Club where he did a blind turn and boarded a train at the Victoria Park railway station and the game emerged from Flinders Street Station with short passing taking it onto the lawn that had been laid right along Swanston Street to celebrate Victoria's 150th year. Here a brawl breaks out and, for no apparent reason, the umpire awards Ernie a free. He kicks the ball so high that it goes back in time and he reappears in 1910 outside the Collingwood Town Hall, and filmed in black and white, he hails a vintage car and the play continues past Treasury Place where he hand balls it from the vintage car to Ian Scott who kicks it out to Colac where the two wingman there are alerted by the Magpie runner, zinky, who had recently won the Sydney to Melbourne marathon, and the ball is kicked back to Parliament House where Ernie stops his car, which shirt fronts the pack, gets out and marks the ball and continues on his way to the State Library where three of them run into the Planetarium. Here the film switches to cut-out photo colour animation as they fly into history and the game becomes a tapestry of football action played out through civilisation until the ball returns to present day Swanston street and is marked by Matthew Paine and he takes a run then boots the ball to the top of the Rialto Building, at its final stages of construction. Here Teresa Blake, and other members from Circus Oz decked out in footy gear and with safety helmets, takes the highest mark in Australian history and then kicks the ball to near the Victoria Market where Ernie is waiting and he marks it and starts a run and bounce up Elizabeth Street towards the giant goal post. There he dodges and weaves and directly in front of goal he kicks, but hits the post and the goal umpire, Justin McDermott, waves a single flag for a point. Ernie is mortified and tries to strangle the umpire at the end of the film.

Tony Patterson, who had edited the first 'Mad Max' film starring Mel Gibson, helped me record and mix the soundtrack at his Melbourne Film Facilities outfit in Glenhuntly, and he was such a good operator and easy guy to work with and when he recorded the sounds of the football kicking or being bounced we recorded them in a nearby park and he managed to create a very good 'bass' sound, exactly what I wanted, and he also supplied some excellent music for the 1910 sequence called, 'The Good Old Fashioned Way'.

The visual look of the film was terrific, and still is, and for year's I waited patiently for a Collingwood Versus Fitzroy Grand Final. This match finally happened in 2002, and I took the film to the ABC '7.30 Report', but alas, Marcos Bass, the Producer, told me he liked the film but Fitzroy was now the Brisbane Lions, and anyway, my film was just a connected series of locations around Victoria, and they declined to use it. In that Grand Final, which Brisbane won, Brownlow Medallist zinky kicked a point and the ball bounced back from the goal post and he marked it again, which I thought was quite funny. At any rate, in 1985, everyone loved '150 Goals' and it was screened three times in the Melbourne International Film Festival and was also the first piece of entertainment to kick off the start of the long running Fringe Festival and the Minister for the Arts, Race Matthews, attended this screening. I gave a copy to Randal McDonald, the President of Collingwood at the time, and he loved it, and so did Jack Hamilton, the VFL President and occasionally I would sight this legend running along the riverbank in his Collingwood jumper. Teresa Blake, from Circus Oz, played the part of a good looking male when she stood on the shoulders of the other Circus Oz acrobats on top of the Rialto Building to take the mark, and she looked so beautiful in her Collingwood jumper with a safety helmet on and a few years later she created her own drama company called Magpie Theatre. My mother and older sister, Hilary, both extreme die hard Magpie loyalists loved the film and didn't really mind that the film finished with the ball hitting the post, since missing the post and getting a goal would have spoiled the drama, however, ever since making this film when I watched an important match I always felt a twang of guilt when Collingwood hit the post. As for the start of the film when Ernie Grays socks start going up and down by themselves and he is reported for wasting time, my father said to me just before the start of the 1985 Grand Final, "I bet Hawthorn kicks a goal within fifteen seconds", and they did just that.

The household I was living in, in Pigdon Street, North Carlton, began to disintegrate after this film. Barbara had already moved out, for her own reasons, and there had been some female students from the Victoria College of the Arts and film critic, Lawrence Zion, had moved in and seemed to eat out the household and the 'kitty' was increased, apparently to feed him, and they all became a bit confused about this film since making a motion picture on football was creating a drama within a drama and they kicked me out.