

# MEDIA RELEASE

SWEENEY  
SPORTS

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## **1. Thorpe still the favourite as swimmers take plunge and Bogut, cricketers do well**

## **2. AFL grand final still the most important event**

**Statement by: Sweeney Sports Director, Martin Hiron**

Ian Thorpe remains the top sports sponsorship property according to Australians. The star swimmer's appropriateness rating\* of 81 places him clearly as the athlete thought most suitable to be paid to endorse brands and organisations.

The 20th summer edition of the Sweeney Sports Report, recognised as Australia's most comprehensive and authoritative sports survey (survey details at end) also shows that basketballer Andrew Bogut made the biggest impact between the summers of 2004-05 and 2005-06. His rating, in his rookie season in the NBA, increased by 14 points to 34, putting him in 44th position.

Mark Viduka, who became Australian soccer captain for the World Cup, posted the second largest increase for the period – 10 points – and can be expected to increase that rating further when the results of the next survey, which will include the Cup period, are collated. Fellow soccer star Harry Kewell lost 10 points, perhaps because injury restricted his appearances during the English season but he can also be expected to improve in later surveying.

Australia's cricketing stars have consolidated their positions in the top bracket of sports stars, with Australian captain, Ricky Ponting, increasing his appropriateness rating by five points to 71 and outright second place - he was equal fifth in 2004-05.

Other test cricketers Brett Lee and Glen McGrath (equal 5th) improved their ratings while the rating of Adam Gilchrist (4th) fell marginally.

Many swimmers' ratings declined during the 12-month period, a reaction to high post-2004 Olympic ratings. Jodie Henry suffered the biggest loss of any sportsperson – 18 points – while Michael Klim lost 14 points and Grant Hackett six points to drop from second to third place. Even Thorpe lost three points.

Steve Waugh, Pat Rafter and Cathy Freeman, all now retired, each lost ground but still maintained top bracket rankings, as did Greg Norman, showing that 'super stars' remain crowd favourites for some years after retiring from competition.

Rugby League (at 42%) is now well behind soccer in the proportion of people interested while Rugby Union has possibly plateaued (at 40% interest) after increasing its fan base virtually year after year between 1988 and 2004.

\* Sports appropriateness is a ratio calculated using the formula:

$$\frac{\text{Proportion of people who rate a sportsperson as worthy of being sponsored}}{\text{Proportion who are aware of the person}}$$

**Table 1: Sponsorship Appropriateness Ratio**  
**Source: Sweeney Sports Report 2005-06**

Leaders – more than 45 points			
		Points	Change 04-05 to 05-06
1	Ian Thorpe	81	-3
2	Ricky Ponting	71	+5
3	Grant Hackett	68	-6
4	Adam Gilchrist	65	-2
5	Glen McGrath	63	+3
6	Brett Lee	63	+4
7	Greg Norman	61	0
8	Steve Waugh	61	-5
9	Lleyton Hewitt	59	-10
10	Pat Rafter	58	-7
11	Cathy Freeman	56	-3
12	Andrew Gaze	56	+1
13	Kostya Tsyzyu	55	-2
14	Mark Skaife	53	+6
15	George Gregan	53	-10
16	Layne Beachley	53	-6
17	James Hird	52	0
18	Louise Sauvage	50	-2
19	Andrew Johns	50	-3
20	Craig Lowndes	48	-3
21	Harry Kewell	48	-10
22	Shane Warne	47	-2
23	Lauren Jackson	47	+2
24	Leisel Jones	46	-3
25	Alisa Camplin	45	+5

Main increases/decreases		
	Change 04-05 to 05-06	Total points
<b>Increases</b>		
Andrew Bogut	+14	34
Mark Viduka	+10	42
Mark Skaife	+6	53
Ricky Ponting	+5	71
Alisa Camplin	+5	45
Jason Akermanis	+5	44
Mark Philippousis	+5	31
Eloise Southby-Hallbish	+5	28

<b>Decreases</b>		
Jodie Henry	-18	41
Chantelle Newbury	-17	23
Michael Voss	-16	39
Ryan Bayley	-16	13
Matthew Lloyd	-15	35
Steve Larkham	-15	26
Anna Meares	-15	23
Michael Klim	-14	44
Alicia Molik	-13	33
Wendell Sailor	-12	32
Jana Pittman	-12	26
Mark Bradtke	-12	17
Lydia Ierodiconou	-12	13
Stephen Leaney	-12	12
Mark Webber	-11	43
Lleyton Hewitt	-10	59
George Gregan	-10	53
Harry Kewell	-10	48
Adam Scott	-10	38

### **Last Saturday in September’ retains top spot**

The AFL grand final has maintained its lead as the nation’s most important sporting event.

It was rated as top event by a quarter (25%) of respondents, and holds a seven-point lead over the Melbourne Cup, its biggest lead since 1998-99.

The Cup, after eclipsing the AFL’s ‘last Saturday in September’ in 2002-03 when 22% of people voted it top event, maintained last year’s 18% rating.

The Australian Open Tennis easily retained third place with a 12% rating, well ahead of the next most popular events:

- 5% - NRL rugby league grand final, State of Origin Rugby League
- 3% - cricket test series, Bathurst 1000km motor race, Australian Formula 1 grand prix, Bledisloe Cup rugby union.

**Table 2: Most Important Event – Trends (% of population)**  
**Source: Sweeney Sports Report 2005-06**

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-20	20-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06
AFL Grand Final	20	22	25	21	25	30	26	26	22	23	22	20	20	24	25
Melbourne Cup	12	13	12	12	11	12	16	12	17	18	18	22	21	18	18

## About the survey

The Report is the 20th summer edition of The Sweeney Sports Report, produced by Sweeney Sports, the sports and sponsorship arm of market research company Sweeney Research.

The Report is recognised as Australia’s definitive sports industry study.

The survey covered 50 major sports played or covered by the media.

Since 2003, interviewing for the Report has been conducted continuously throughout the year with about 170 interviews conducted each month.

For this summer report, data were collected between October 2005 and March 2006.

One thousand interviews were conducted, using computer-assisted telephone interviewing, in the six State capital cities and Canberra.

All respondents were aged 16 to 65 years with one third being aged 16 to 29 years, one third 30 to 44 years and one third 45 to 65 years. About half were men and half were women.

During analysis, the results were weighted by age and sex within each city so that the overall findings are fully representative of the populations in the major cities.

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