



## Let's have a blockbuster for Viet vets

Only a few short weeks ago, I was drinking coffee with AFL chairman and el supremo Mike Fitzpatrick.

I hope I struck a chord with the big fellow and former teammate, as I put a few ideas to him of how I reckon the AFL could advance its brand in Asia.

I'm on my second trip to Vietnam, something of a new patch for me, and I've struck up a friendship with Phil Johns, chairman of the Vietnamese Swans (the Asian version of the Sydney Swans, and thus my old mob South Melbourne), headquartered in Ho Chi Minh City.

It is because of Phil that I think I have landed a blockbuster of an idea on Chairman Mike's desk.

On August 18, 1966 (bang in the middle of my stint with VFL team South Melbourne), thousands of Diggers fought an ugly battle in a lonely little rubber plantation in Long Tan, 27km as the crow flies from Vung Tau, in southern Vietnam.

It was a bloody and regrettable encounter.

Our boys were thoroughly outnumbered.

Eighteen Diggers lost their lives that day, and another 24 were wounded, while 245 Viet Cong also died in what was a decisive Australian victory.

I choked a bit when I visited the battle site, and believe me, it was worth the trip.

While not on the scale of Gallipoli, Kakoda, or the Battle



Austin Robertson with Vietnamese Swans' chairman Phil Johns in Ho Chi Minh City.

of Kapyong in the Korean War, Long Tan is an epic chapter in our history.

Phil and the Vietnamese Swans have proposed - and I passed it on to Mike - having an AFL blockbuster match on Vietnam Veterans' Day, Sunday, August 18, 2013.

Why 2013? Well, it's the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Australia and Vietnam.

There is still a very strong connection between our Vietnam veterans and AFL greats, like Kevin Sheedy and his brother-in-law, Kenny Earney, VFL umpire Ken James; and the fathers of Nathan Buckley, Glenn Archer, and Lenny Hayes.

When he was inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame a few weeks back, Chad and Kane Cornes' dad, Graeme Cornes, told of his experiences at Nui Dat.

I believe that the AFL are always on the lookout for a Blockbuster match.

Well, the Long Tan service on Vietnam Veterans' Day is held at 3.30pm (4.30pm our time), which is 6.30pm eastern.

The game in Australia could easily be scheduled to include a live telecast of the minute's

silence at Long Tan on to the MCG scoreboard prior to the match.

Building a match around Vietnam Veterans' Day would give the AFL a point of leverage into other markets like soccer, rugby and rugby league.

And just as the haunting notes of the Last Post are played several weeks into the season at the Anzac Day match, it could be played again several weeks prior to the end of the home-and-away season.

I believe using Australia's signature sport to promote occasions of national significance would further consolidate the AFL's credentials.

Is this a great idea, or am I missing something?

So far, all Mike has been able to tell me is that the AFL has yet to decide what its strategy might be about advancing its promotional thrust into Asia, which is precisely where all this started.

What better way could there possibly be than to have a football match honouring our Vietnam Vets in a correct, meaningful and what would certainly be a most emotional way on footy's biggest stage, the MCG?

• Visit Austin's blog: [ockerssportingpost.blogspot.com.au](http://ockerssportingpost.blogspot.com.au)

Austin Robertson's sporting POST

## What a match!

On many occasions, the expectant crowd and I have walked away disappointed and deflated from a contest that had been billed as the match of the year.

Not so last Saturday's Collingwood v Eagles match: it lived up to the pre-match hype all the way to the final siren.

Though they lost by a miserable three points, the West Coast Eagles showed enough for their members to confidently justify arranging their flights and accommodation for the last week in September.

The consistency of the Eagles' midfield, though over-run midway through the last quarter, was again on display.

Big Coxy the Brave and the following division outplayed the Magpies and in the end the big frame of the Magpies' key forward, Travis Cloke, was the difference between the two sides.

I reckon the Eagles missed Will Schofield as one of their key defenders, and one can only speculate on how much difference he would have made.

At Subiaco, the Purple Haze made a lot of noise when the Dockers put a 23-point gap between themselves and the Bombers in the last quarter.

The mob was ecstatic. Then the Bombers charged like the Light Brigade in the last 15 minutes and the Dockers' bubble went pop once again.

Interestingly, while not quite the shoot-out at the OK Corral, it was somewhat the opposite of what we've become accustomed to with the Lyon King's game plan.



In the end, Travis Cloke was the difference.

Even without the giant Sandy, Freo took it right up to the Bombers, and several of their tyros performed very well under pressure.

But where to from here for Rosco and the boys? Who would know?

## Try a lime

For those of you who may have cottoned on to Elizabeth Hurley's you-beat alcoholic weight-loss elixir, I must report that I have had an email from Warnie suggesting a slight change, to improve the taste.

According to the world's greatest-ever spin bowler, if you substitute the lemon with a lime you'll enjoy it more.

PS: Have any of you tried it with any effect?

