

Swans soar for their Marx

> YOU may not think Bobby Skilton and Vietnam's infamous "Hanoi Hilton" prison have much in common.

But when the ball is first bounced in tomorrow's Grand Final, cheers will go up in the Bobby Skilton Room at the former North Vietnam war prison as members of the Hanoi Swans Football Club urge on their beloved Bloods.

The triple Brownlow medallist's name is above the door at a five-star bar on the site of the old jail.

In 2003, a group of expats in Vietnam revived the defunct Hanoi Hawks Aussie rules team. They renamed them the Swans and adopted the red and white jumper.

Michael Francis, brother of former Richmond and Collingwood player Matthew, is the heart and soul of the Hanoi Swans.

Even though he's a Carlton



Skilton

tragic, he introduced the Bobby Skilton Trophy for the 2003 tri-nations series in Hanoi between the Swans, Hong Kong Dragons and eventual winners Thailand Tigers that re-established Australian footy in communist Vietnam.

With a tournament motto of "Hanoi footy: took Marx, got hammered and sickled", the Swans raised the Aussie rules flag on

bamboo goalposts after a last-minute search for a ground.

"With 48 hours to go until the rebirth of Aussie rules in Hanoi, we didn't have an oval," Francis said.

"We ended up going to a Japanese industrial park outside Hanoi and asking a young Vietnamese bloke in the management office if we could use the soccer ground.

"Bugger me, the first thing this young bloke said was, 'Are you sure it's big enough for Australian football? It's nothing like the MCG'.

"Turns out he'd studied in Melbourne and had been to a few games. So we were saved and since then we haven't looked back.

"The blokes are busy selling tickets for the Bobby Skilton Room on Saturday to raise money for the revenge trip to Bangkok to take on those fluky Tigers."

HOW THE MIGHTY HAVE FALLEN

THE finishing positions on the 2005 ladder show just how dramatically the AFL power base has shifted. The teams who ended below halfway have won more than twice as many flags as the eight who made the finals. But imagine what the figures would be if Melbourne hadn't squeezed into the eight in Round 22 at the expense of the Bulldogs.

2005 TOP 8

	Flags won
Adelaide	2
West Coast	2
Sydney	3
St Kilda	1
Kangaroos	4
Geelong	6
Melbourne	12
Port Adelaide	1
Total	31

2005 BOTTOM 8

Western Bulldogs	1
Fremantle	0
Brisbane	3
Richmond	10
Essendon	16
Hawthorn	9
Collingwood	14
Carlton	16
Total	69

KD/Herald Sun 23/9/05

'G racks up its century

> FOOTY is full of stats, but here's one that almost sneaked through unnoticed. Tomorrow's Grand Final will be the 100th at the MCG.

The MCC and AFL could have made a big deal of the milestone, had they realised it sooner.

Grand Finals have also been played at Junction Oval, the East Melbourne Ground, Lakeside Oval, Waverley Park and Princes Park.

The first two Grand Finals, in 1898 and 1899, were played at Junction Oval.

East Melbourne was home to the 1900 Grand Final and South Melbourne's Lakeside Oval staged the 1901 match.

The MCG hosted the big day for the first time in 1902 and continued to stage the Grand Final (including two replays) until 1990, except for the war years of 1942-45 when it was held at Princes Park and the Junction Oval (1944).

Waverley Park, since bulldozed and turned into a housing estate, was used in 1991 because of the construction of the MCG's Southern Stand.

“Only two things can happen on the weekend . . . you either win or you lose.”

... none that let the excitement of Grand Final week affect his coach's peak.