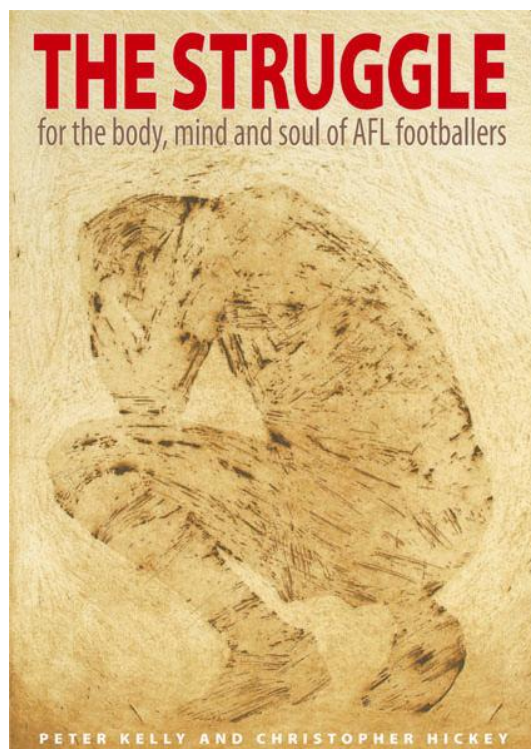


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THE STRUGGLE FOR THE BODY, MIND AND SOUL OF AFL FOOTBALLERS

Peter Kelly & Christopher Hickey



In a sports entertainment environment, where AFL players are sports celebrities, there is no place to hide—on or off the field. All areas of a player's performance and behaviour are constantly scrutinised by coaches, managers, the media and fans. Under this sort of scrutiny what it means to be a professional AFL footballer in the 21st century continues to provoke heated debate—in clubs and the media, and among fans.

Peter Kelly and Christopher Hickey claim that this debate is about the ongoing struggle for the body, mind and soul of the young men who dream of making it at the highest level. Drawing on research conducted at clubs with players, coaches and administrators the authors provide provocative insights into how this struggle shapes the lives of AFL players at different stages in their careers. In doing so they shed new light on the scrutiny of sports professionals; the art and science of talent identification and recruitment; the ways that the evolution of the game impacts on playing careers; the costs of the battle to make it at this level; the myth of the overpaid AFL footballer and the future directions of this struggle for bodies, minds and souls of AFL footballers.

This book draws on the findings of a research project funded by the AFL titled: *Getting the Balance Right: Professionalism, Performance, Prudentialism and Playstations in the Life of AFL Footballers*.

Dr Peter Kelly is the Head of Behavioural Studies in the Faculty of Arts at Monash University. Dr Kelly's research is currently focused on the professionalisation of workplace identities. He is interested in the benefits and the

costs that flow from being identified as professional—or not—in these circumstances.

Dr Christopher Hickey is the Associate Head of School (Research) in the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University. Dr Hickey has an international reputation for his research and scholarship in the ways that identities are shaped within the fields of physical education and sport. He is regularly called on through the media to provide commentary on issues related to sport and physical activity.

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