

Good evening everybody .. and thank you - for giving me the chance to talk about my good friend .. Bruce McAvaney.

One thing we need to establish - right from the start - is that .. Bruce McAvaney .. is “special”.

Bruce - has been the voice of Australian SPORT since the 1990's. He's been the Gate-Keeper!

And that really is a tough gig — Bruce has been called on - to find THE words - to describe - so many of Australia's - BIGGEST sporting moments.

WORDS - that need to be - TIMELY - yet TIMELESS.

Which means of course - Sport itself is TIMELESS.

Broadcasts of MAJOR sporting events can re-surface for decades. Which means - LONG AFTER a broadcaster has GONE — they STILL get the chance to embarrass THEIR family.

I don't OFFER - too much advice these days - but when a young Basil Zempilas - asked me about the Olympic Games - I remember telling him - “in a tight

finish - just call The Australian first .. if THEY come

2nd — we'll never see THAT race again.”

Isn't that Sport today?

** One thing's for sure - THE McAvaney family - will

NEVER be embarrassed.**

Bruce - was born in South Australia.

Growing up - both his parents loved racing ..

and so did he.

His broadcasting hero was Bill Collins -

and HIS ambition - was to call The Melbourne Cup.

Bruce subsequently - went on - to broadcast 4

Melbourne Cups.

I recall - he once told me - about the 'pressure'

of calling a Melbourne Cup - and made the point -

“you can nail EVERY OTHER race, but if you get the

Melbourne Cup wrong .. your name is mud.”

Well - he survived ok - he's here tonight - and there's

no sign of mud.

** But I digress. Let's go back to the VERY early days because LIKE anybody WHO gets their 'dream job' Bruce needed a bit of luck.

His luck came - when he took a 'sickie' - and a plane ride to Melbourne/ to have a bet.

He was a young public servant BACK then.

Telstra - are probably STILL chasing him - regarding that sickie .. amazing .. they can't find him.

ANYWAY - on that flight - he found himself sitting along-side - racing writer - Keith Hillier.

Bruce says it was "coincidence" - please!!

Regardless - AS they say AT the races .. "he was off .. and running".

But it wasn't all about racing - He just loved SPORT.

Bruce's Dad - was a League Goal-Umpire .. so footy was always on the agenda too. (pause)

AND, at Woodville High - Bruce was captain

- Of BOTH the Football - and Cricket teams.

I can see him at first slip .. with the RACING GUIDE

In his pocket. I reckon he'd have a bit to say too!!

His first media job was on radio - with 5DN in SA.

Within a short time - he had his own show -
and was calling the races. Bruce moved to television
in 1978 - he joined Channel 7 in Adelaide - alongside
another wonderful broadcaster .. Sandy Roberts.

Coincidentally - I'd worked with Sandy - on a Perth
radio station in 1970.

In 1983 - Bruce - moved to Channel 10 in Melbourne.

In 1988 - his star was the ascent - when he hosted
the 1988 - Seoul Olympics.

Fair to say - he loved the Olympics.

So much so - that in 1989 - he followed them - from
Seoul back to Channel 7 .. in Melbourne.

And tonight - here we are - almost 5
decades on .. IN the sporting times of - Shaq,

Ronaldo and Tom Brady - and Bruce's love affair with
sport - continues to burn brightly.

He loves to 'call it' - he loves to talk it

AND - he loves to write it. (pause).

Just recently - I lent a COPY of Bruce's book-
'Learning from Legends' - to a mate of mine in
hospital. It's a coffee-table book - 255 pages - and
this bloke read it .. in less than 2 days.

Either - he 'didn't' read it .. or he loved it.

He assured me it was the latter. (pause)

One of the things I miss most in retirement - is
chatting to Bruce .. on those chilly winter nights - at
the footy.

We got into some deep - and meaningful
conversations .. from time to time.

I remember one in particular - when WE spoke
about.."the anxiety - AND- the calm".

We BOTH felt it - we BOTH had it.

I think - we were BOTH glad - somebody else had it.

It's part of the build-up - to a big event.

It's the night before ——— and THEN the day.

It's a feeling - that CAN only be CALMED - by

CALLING the event ITSELF - and the tranquility /

that comes with it !

Suddenly .. you feel - you're back where you
belong ..

It's your NATURAL habitat. (pause)

It's - Cathy Freeman's gold Medal in Sydney - (pause)

It's - Empire Rose's stirring - Melb Cup win in 1988.

- such calls - don't happen in a vacuum.

Bruce - has a wonderful body of work - with much
more to come - including the Tokyo Olympics in July.

He's missed only 1 Summer Olympics - since

Moscow in 1980. (pause)

I think WE all know that Bruce ..

isn't a stats man -

but I do have some figures on our broadcasting
relationship.

Josh Kay tells me -

Bruce and I have broadcast - well over 500 AFL
games together.

With 57 Finals together .. and 12 Grand Finals.

But .. so unlike Josh - he missed the best stat of all.

Not ONE harsh word.

Bruce McAvaney - is much more than - just an
iconic Australian sporting figure - He's an
approachable good bloke — who .. as we learnt last
year - loves to dance..

And once again TONIGHT — he will make his family

PROUD

L & G Bruce McAvaney