

TRADE NEWS

Grape Expectations

Just to throw a cat among the pigeons, or some MOG into the crusher to use a wine analogy, after a record harvest last year, 2005 is set to go one better with above average yields and above average quality in most regions, which is expected to set another harvest record when the fat lady sings.

Viticulturally speaking, it would be unusual to expect another large crop in 2006. Given the low rainfall in the major grape-growing areas, one could assume an average or below average national harvest. If export demand for Australian wine holds its course, particularly in the USA and Canada, equilibrium could be achieved by 2008.



After several 'small' odd-year vintages following bumper even years, the wine surplus situation has been more or less under control but with the bulk wine market bursting at its tank seams, 2005 is set to put further downward pressure on future grape prices and bulk wine prices. With new plantings coming 'on-stream', some sensibly planned by the wine industry, some by pie-in-the-sky investment and superannuation schemes, the wine flow could soon become a raging rapid. The surplus gives rise to musing.

It sounds good in theory but what of the groaning inventories in the bulk wine market? The over supply scenario on the bulk wine market has given rise to the idea of 'shopping' for select parcels and making bulk blends, which is becoming more attractive to larger wineries considering the low prices currently available. It's hard to justify that the resulting wines have been 'made', rather - that they have been blended. Wineries that have strong grower relationships, their own estate vineyards and who crush,

ferment and mature their own wine onsite at the winery, can lay claim to having complete control over the wine from start to finish. They know exactly what fruit they're buying, where it comes from; and ultimately these choices gain the trust and confidence of their customers at all levels of the supply chain.

The current over supply situation is being addressed with the re-launched Wine Brand Australia program by the Australian Wine Export Council, which aims to re-invigorate our image to jaded British journalist palates, as well as other export markets. A major focus of the program will be promoting the fact that Australia isn't just one homogenous wine growing region, but a menagerie of individual regions (plus sub-regions) that make us truly unique.

It is hoped that educating the trade and consumers about the diversity of Australia will lead to increased sales of premium wines at the pointy end of the market with a strong focus on the importance of varieties working in particular regions - so that the Barossa is known for its Shiraz & Semillon, Coonawarra champions Cabernet Sauvignon and Tasmania fights the fizz and Pinot cause, and so on.

By no means should there be a DOCC or appellation controlee system. Australia has built its reputation on being revolutionary and experimental but the concept of certain varieties in certain areas certainly works. Focusing on regionality is the next step for export markets to achieve better prices for Australian wines.

This is good news for wine exporters and consumers overseas but in the domestic market, wine is struggling to win new consumers. Under the guise of the Wine Equalisation Tax, (which appears to be more equal for some than others!) the Ready To Drink market has springboarded into the stratosphere. No longer are drinkers being introduced to wine by enjoying a cheap Lambrusco and moving up in quality from there but instead are turning straight to the sugary fizz in a can. If the tide isn't turned soon then a complete generation of wine drinkers will be lost to RTDs.

Talk of a domestic wine promotion program is in its infant stages. The issue has been discussed in the bowels of the Australian Wine Centre in Adelaide but as yet the snow-ball hasn't started to roll. A new communications manager has been appointed and insiders have fingers crossed that this will give domestic consumption a helping hand.

For too long the Australian Wine Industry has accepted that domestic sales remain steady while everyone rides the export sheep's back. It's time to look in our own backyard and give local wine consumption a wriggle on.

KEY REGIONAL VINTAGE REPORTS

Big & Better in '05

Great Southern

Great Southern experienced a dry growing season resulting in very low yields. A cool summer was perfect for aromatic varieties such as Riesling and Chardonnay while early ripening reds also enjoyed the weather, developing strong colour, good acidity balanced with ripe fruit. Early April rain affected later ripening varieties but with most grapes already picked, 2005 promises to be an excellent white wine vintage.

Margaret River

Winter rainfall was below average followed by a moderate spring with fine to warm weather, while summer started with high temperatures. Late January saw perfect growing conditions with warm and dry conditions in conjunction with cool nights. Natural acidity and flavour ripeness were in balance, with Shiraz and Semillon leading the way.

Clare

Good rains during summer and mild temperatures maintained healthy vines with good fruit condition, producing fruit with intense varietal character. Riesling looks excellent, with high natural acidity, good structure and finesse. Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon enjoyed the even, mild ripening season with vintage starting two weeks early for these varieties. In the barrel, the reds are exhibiting very expressive fruit with rich concentrated flavours.

Barossa

The cool and dry vintage in 2005, complemented by the favourable winter and growing season, produced grapes that retained lovely natural acidity, balanced and full flavours, no disease and an earlier picking date to the average years. Cool nights were great for flavour retention, warm days were good for ripening and vine health - the result being a fourth great vintage in a row for whites, while reds are also looking extremely good due to ideal vintage conditions. Shiraz and Cabernet are of a particularly high standard - wonderfully rich wines with strong colours and flavours. Grenache reached flavour ripeness at lower than average Baume levels which should lead to lovely balanced wines.

Wrattonbully Coonawarra

The vintage in the South-East was one of the earliest on record. A cool summer with moderate sunny weather brought vintage on with a rush. A lot of fruit was sugar ripe early but waiting for flavour ripeness lead to higher alcohol levels. Shiraz has spicy peppery characters while Cabernet Sauvignon displays lots of ripe berry flavours - early indications are very positive. 2005 should break the "good even year, bad odd year" hoodoo that has been occurring in the South East.

Tasmania

Tasmania experienced ideal weather, with no significant rain from January onwards with clear, cool, sunny days resulting in zero disease pressure and perfect ripening conditions. The vintage was early and very short, finishing a full month earlier than in 2004 due to low yields of very high fruit quality. The Pinots are particularly stunning while Chardonnay is also a standout. 2005 in Tassy is looking good for sparkling and still wine.

Southcorp, Rosecorp, Foscorp, Dead corpse?

Just when Southcorp looked like turning the corner after a tumultuous stretch of corporate rationalisation, Fosters have stepped in and given the 'potter' another stir.

Debate has been rife on how the take-over will affect the wine industry and particularly on winery job cuts in the Barossa, level of service in the retail and restaurant trades and how small to medium wineries will position themselves in the market place.

"At least it's still Australian," has been a common and patriotic conclusion to dinner table discussion.

David Matters from Best Cellars in Sydney believes the independent retailer and small to medium wineries will be able to do more business together than with the (new) "big three".

"I see it as a case of how the supermarkets will react - will it be a case of the supermarkets saying 'Fosters need us more than we need Fosters' or vice versa. I can see the supermarkets holding off before jumping into bed with them and then only once they've got the price structure they've demanded," David said.

"The supermarkets have the muscle and the temperament to do that and I see Fosters working hard to gain support from the independents in the initial stages. I don't see the smaller guys jumping in to support them as I imagine they will squeeze us on price with the adverse affect of us all slowly going broke.

"But it's still a case of Fosters needing the numbers to show shareholders their sales figures, so they will have to jump into bed with the

supermarkets," David said. The response from the trade will differ depending on how people prefer to operate.

"Fosters will be able to provide a one stop shop for those people who like to deal with one wholesaler, but they can't be reactive to those who are looking for service and knowledge, or giving us information in a short turn-around time," David said.

From a customer point of view, David believes there are better alternative products to the Southcorp range.

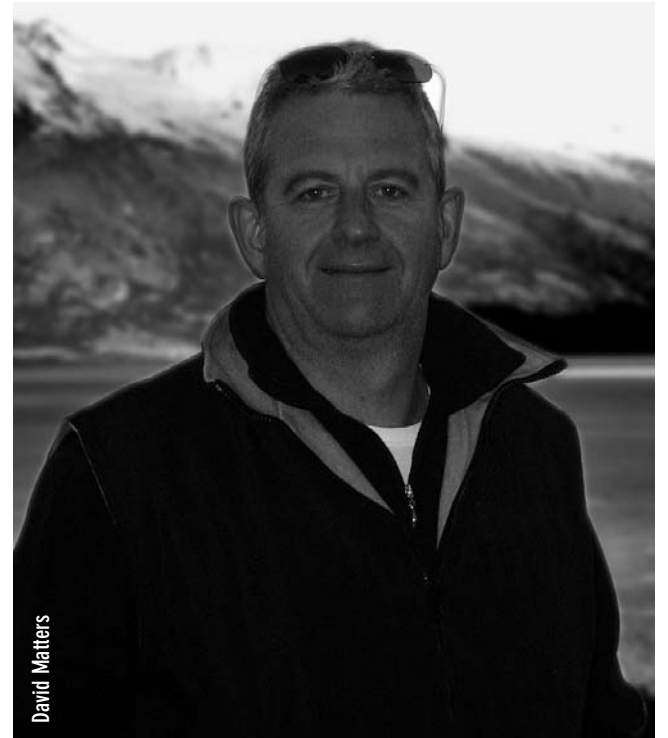
"Tried and true Southcorp labels used to be great value in the early nineties, but during the export boom each price point was replaced with a label pushed up from below," David said.

"From our business point of view we try and provide an alternative offer that delivers better quality at that price and customers are receptive to that because they are sick of reading about the state of Southcorp in the wine and business pages of their daily paper."

The future of smaller labels in the mega portfolio has also been a major talking point.

"There will have to be some rationalisation to the detriment of some labels. It's not about loyalty to the brand but again delivering what the bean-counters and shareholders want," David said.

Who could have imagined 30 years ago that a winery on the Sturt Highway known as the chicken shed would grow like a hormone fed battery hen and buy out the Barossa's leading premium red wine producer, Southcorp. The eagle has landed and is ready to rule the roost.



David Matters

KEY DATES - WINE SHOWS IN AUSTRALIA

Wine show	Judging Dates	Dinner Date	Awards Date	Exhibitors Tasting
Barossa Wine Show	20-Sep-05 - 21-Sep-05	22-Sep-05	22-Sep-05	23-Sep-05
Perth Royal Wine Show	4-Sep-05 - 8-Sep-05	8-Sep-05	8-Sep-05	9-Sep-05
Great Australian Shiraz Challenge	3-Oct-05 - 4-Oct-05	28-Oct-05	28-Oct-05	
Hyatt National Riesling Challenge	19-Oct-05 - 20-Oct-05	21-Oct-05	21-Oct-05	
Hyatt/Advertiser South Australian Wine of the Year Awards	25-Jul-05 - 26-Jul-05	26-Aug-05	26-Aug-05	TBA
Limestone Coast Wine Show	25-Oct-05 - 26-Oct-05	27-Oct-05	27-Oct-05	28-Oct-05
National Wine Show of Australia	14-Nov-05 - 17-Nov-05	24-Nov-05	24-Nov-05	25-Nov-05
Royal Adelaide Wine Show	26-Sep-05 - 29-Sep-05	7-Oct-05	7-Oct-05	
Royal Hobart International Wine Show	19-Nov-05 - 23-Nov-05	24-Nov-05	24-Nov-05	25-Nov-05
Royal Melbourne Wine Show	21-Jul-05 - 26-Jul-05	11-Aug-05	11-Aug-05	12-Aug-05
Royal Queensland Wine Show	10-Jul-05 - 14-Jul-05	14-Jul-05	14-Jul-05	15-Jul-05
Rutherglen Wine Show	TBA			
Sydney International Wine Competition	11-Oct-04 - 16-Oct-05		25-Feb-05	
Tasmanian Wine Show	17-Jan-05 - 18-Jan-05	21-Jan-05	21-Jan-05	22-Jan-05



Life In The Fast Lane

You might think I am pushing the bow on the violin a tad hard but what happened to that time between the autumn edition and winter, you know those 90 days between then and now. Time has flown since last we spoke, or as Ricky Gervais said, "I thought I saw the light at the end of the tunnel but it was just another bastard with a torch, bringing me more work."

I've been busy with this and that for quite some time not looking at the clock.

It does make you think though. How many times when you were a kid, did you hear someone say, "The older you get, the faster the days go." I'm thinking it's true and I'm thinking I know the answer; I know the culprit.

Pardon me while I take a nostalgic stroll among the trees.

When I officially started out in life, the fastest communication device was a telephone, actually a very heavy, black, bakelite device with a small silver turning handle on its face. Turn the handle, make small talk with the operator, if you were calling someone in the bush or interstate, make small talk with many operators and request your desired number.

In time the handle was replaced by a dial with numerals and letters in the

finger holes and all the operators got the raspberry sarse. In more time, the dial was replaced by individual push buttons and all the bakelites went to the tip. Then mobile phones arrived! Today we have a blend of desk top button phones with portable handsets and go anywhere mobile phones.

Stay with me! I know where I'm going.

Become a child of the late 60s and early 70s again. Working life revolved around writing letters and making and receiving phone calls at your desk. Send off a quote for a job, go to lunch for three or four days and await the reply. No urgency, totally normal behaviour, not much happened in the film industry after lunch. Messages piled up on your desk and mail piled up in the in tray. If you wanted to be busy, you would call the office and they would list off the names and numbers of the people who had called. The mail could look after itself. Simple.

Then the facsimile machine reduced the response time of letters and lunching became a one or two day affair.

Then email and mobile phones made you 100 per cent contactable 100 per cent of the time and suddenly you spend 100 per cent of your time at your desk, dealing with the immediacy and the urgency of a plethora of stuff ranging from important to trivial. RIP lunches! Except when you travel. When you travel they can talk to you but they don't know where you are!

Sorry, my phone is ringing, be back in a second..... Hello?

Well you're not going to believe this.....OH&S just asked if I would like a GPS chip inserted under the skin on my arm, traceable to within a metre anywhere on the planet, locatable, findable, totally visible 24/7/52/2050.

I'm heading back to festival hall, without my mobile, to stand in the queue waiting for the Jethro Tull tickets to come on sale. Unless you're joining me, keep your heads down and wear long sleeves. See you all in the spring.

Cheers, Peter Sawrey

BIT ON THE SIDE

A guy with a black eye boards his plane and sits down in his seat. He notices immediately that the guy sitting beside him has a black eye too. He says to him, "Hey what a coincidence, we both have black eyes, mind if I ask how you got yours?" The other guy says, "Well, it just happened. It was a tongue twister accident. "See, I was at the ticket counter and this gorgeous blonde with the most humungous breasts you have ever seen served me and instead of saying, I'd like two tickets to Pittsburgh, I accidentally said, two pickets to Tittsburgh and she socked me right in the eye." The fellow traveller replied, "Wow, this is unbelievable! Mine was a tongue twister accident too. I was at the breakfast table this morning and I wanted to say to my wife, Honey would you mind passing me the sugar? But I accidentally said you've ruined my life you shrivelled old bag."



A Floral Arrangement



If you rolled together the phrases, "good things come to those who wait" and "patience is a virtue", then you would sum up Peter Barry's efforts to get his hands on "The Florita" trademark.

The Barry family bought "The Florita" Riesling vineyard in Watervale from Leo Buring in 1986, who renewed the trademark 'The Florita' even though they no longer owned the vineyard. Meanwhile Peter bit his tongue and got on with making wine.

"The Florita" trademark became available on 11 October 2002 and sensing a change in the wind, Peter

re-applied for the name five days later. Leo Buring were given a year's grace to renew the trademark but when that lapsed, the wait was over and the Barry Family officially registered "The Florita" in February 2004, just in time for a cracker Riesling vintage in Clare.

It was a twenty year wait but well worth while according to Peter. "You can wait 20 years to drink a stunning aged Riesling so waiting to get the rights to use the name of our Florita vineyard was a similar experience," Peter said.

The 2004 Jim Barry "The Florita" Watervale Riesling is a micro batch super premium wine from fruit where individual rows were selected on terra rossa and loam barely covering the deep limestone base.

To guarantee the freshness of these precious grapes, only the required amount was picked to precisely fill the membrane press in the chill of the night. Only the finest 40% of the juice (the free run) was used in this pristine, beautifully citrus Riesling - a stunner!

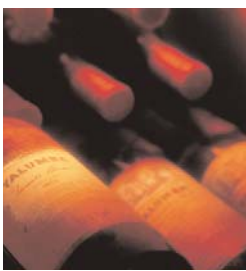
2001 Yalumba Signatory Announced

Since 1962, "The Signature" accolade has been bestowed on the best Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz blend of the vintage. This special wine is also personalised to honour an individual who has made a significant contribution to the traditions of Yalumba and this 2001 vintage release honours Geoffrey R. Linton, Technical Manager, Yalumba.

Corpulent and round he sits, carefully filling a spoonful of lemon curd tartlet, crème fraise and blackberry coulis, the pizza and scallops are long gone.

"...so Geoff, why a lifetime fascination with matters scientific?"

"...it's a fact of life that the most interesting things in the world are actually in the world of the sciences. Everything in my world has an answer, a solution. It's a fact of chemistry or physics or natural science. I find people infinitely more challenging plus I have a dreadful memory for names.



Imagine me in sales. Human relations terrify me. Sparkling wine is still a great passion and right now I'm looking at ways to unlock more of the flavours of wine, the terpenes and thiols."

Geoff, loving husband of Ros and father to Sarah and Rachael and a mad motorcyclist to boot, has been the titan of technology at Yalumba and a key member

of many Australian wine industry technical institutions for over 30 years. He loves good food and wine which he deserves and we happily provide! "...shall we have a cheese plate or perhaps another pudding?" he enquires.

Spontaneity



Samuel Smith & Son's John Herrmann isn't one to do things by the book, particularly when it comes to marriage. John proposed to girlfriend Marika on Valentines Day and they were married the next day in the "city that never sleeps" - The Big Apple, New York.

In attendance were work colleagues

Greg Pullen (Best Man), Matt White from ALM and ex US employee Ben von Doussa.

"It was a bit of a surprise to everyone. It was unplanned but we got caught up in the romance of the 'Big Apple' and luckily Marika said yes," John said.

The foursome had a private ceremony followed by plenty of Pol Roger and dinner in conjunction with Greg's 50th birthday.

It's great that Valentines Day will have true meaning to a great couple, while John should have no problem remembering his anniversary!

Cracker Reds Under \$20

The sub \$20 red sector is getting very crowded with a menagerie of labels. Fortunately at SS&S we have this area well and truly covered with some fantastic wines that "punch above their weight," "over deliver", or to be more frank, are "bloody honest wines".

2002 Forest Hill Shiraz

Fruit for this wine was selected from mature, dry grown, low yielding vines in the Forest Hill vineyard near Mount Barker. A cool, dry growing season resulted in a classic cool climate Shiraz that combines elegance with power. Complex aromas of violets, liquorice and red berries are complemented by subtle mocha, vanilla and spice notes.

The palate is rich, elegant and softly textured with long-lingering raspberry, blackberry and eastern spice flavours enhanced by fine tannins and well integrated oak. It can be enjoyed now but has the intensity of flavour and structural complexity to cellar for five to eight years.



2001 Jim Barry McRae Wood Shiraz (new packaging)

In 1964 Jim Barry purchased 70 acres of prime land from Duncan McRae Wood and planted his first vineyard with Shiraz. The 2001 displays excellent fruit with intense, rich flavours, good structure and mature ripe tannins.

Deep red with purple hues, this wine displays generous aromas of dark cherry and menthol with a background of toasty oak. The palate is rich and concentrated showing sweet coconut oak and dark cherry. The finish is long with firm coating tannins.



2002 Peter Lehmann Barossa Cabernet Sauvignon

The Barossa experienced the coolest summer on record in 2002 with ripening conditions that were perfect for this noble variety. This intensely coloured wine oozes ripe black currants, has a richly textured palate, superb length and fine tannins. There is a velvet richness with flavours of black currant with well integrated oak.. "Probably the best Cabernet vintage I've seen in the Barossa." Andrew Wigan, Chief Winemaker, Peter Lehmann Wines.



2002 Vasse Felix Cabernet Merlot

A medium to full-bodied style, this wine shows aromas of blueberry pie, red currents, cassis, mocha and cedar, with soft up front fruit sweetness and a savoury core of cedar - typical of Cabernet from Margaret River. The tannins are tight, firm and long. Overall an elegant structured wine with perfect balance and moderate alcohol. The oak is well integrated and provides complexity and structure. A wine that is ready to drink or cellar for three to four years for maximum enjoyment.



2002 Yalumba Barossa Shiraz

The 2002 vintage has again been enhanced with a splash of Viognier, adding a sweet floral lift on the nose combined with cloves, spice, plum and dark cherries. There is a rich mouth feel with a silky texture and a perfumed nose of plums, dark berries and clove, surrounded by vanilla oak. An elegant wine with a palate of dark berries and licorice finishing with a spicy savoury note.

The 2002 Yalumba Barossa Shiraz has been awarded the Kemeny's 'Best Value Red Wine' Perpetual Trophy at the 2005 Sydney International Wine Competition.



Winter Warmers

Fluffy Rice by Martin Boetz, Longrain Restaurant & Bar, Sydney

INGREDIENTS

500 grams jasmine or longrain rice
 Cold water

METHOD

Wash 500gms of jasmine or longrain rice 2-3 times through a collander

- o Place the washed rice into a heavy based pot onto the stove.
- o Cover the rice with cold water so that the level of the water is a measure of one finger indentation above the rice.
- o Bring the rice to the boil.
- o Cover the rice with a lid after it has come to the boil and then simmer the rice on a low heat for 20 mins with the lid slightly open.
- o Take the pot off the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes with the lid on.
- o Remove the lid and simply "fluff" the cooked rice with a fork before serving.
- o This is called the absorption method.

Longrain Melbourne is due to open this winter in the Melbourne CBD.
www.longrain.com.au

Potato Purée - Sandor Palmai, Barr Vinum Restaurant, Angaston

INGREDIENTS

1 kg potatoes, scrubbed and unpeeled
 (choose potatoes of approximately equal size)
 125ml whole milk
 125ml cream
 200g butter, chilled and diced
 sea salt

METHOD

- o Place the potatoes in a saucepan and cover with cold salted water. Bring to the boil and simmer until tender, approximately 25 minutes.
- o Drain the potatoes and peel as soon as they are cool enough to handle.
- o Warm the milk and cream and set aside.
- o Pass the peeled potatoes through a mouli or ricer back into a heavy bottomed saucepan. Stir over a low heat to remove any moisture.
- o Add the butter slowly, beating well with a wooden spoon. When all of the butter is incorporated begin adding the heated cream and milk mixture, stirring until the desired consistency is achieved. The amount of milk and cream necessary will vary according to the starch content of the potatoes. Season to taste.

CRICKET - ASHES TOUR 2005

A Text Message from Shane Warne



You can tell the Ashes Tour isn't far away. The bloody whingeing Poms are at it already. Although I did see one the other day who almost smiled!

Did you hear I got whacked for sledging? All I said was "Can I leave my wallet under your cake of soap so it doesn't get nicked". Before you know it, front bloody page of The Times.

Before this latest one it was the remarks I'm supposed to have said about Ronnie Irani's Mum...they reckon I said "your Mum's a whore" and what I really said was "what did your Mum do in the war". Bloody hell.

I can't wait til the Tests start. We'll have a new look batting line-up that really loves getting among the runs.

And what about our line up of quicks...the Poms are already practising ducking and weaving. They'll think they're in Baghdad. We should buy

some shares in an English underpants maker. I just hope they leave a few for me and...what's his name...you know, the other spinner.

And here's a tip, keep your eye on the South Aussie kid Shaun Tait. I reckon he'll get a Test and boy is he quick. Fresh undies please Ponsoy!

Sad to see me old mate Boof won't be coming along, I quite enjoyed having a choof and a glass or two with him. But I tell you the batting line-up looks pretty damn awesome. Langer and Matty Hayden will have a picnic against their bowlers. That Harbison is pretty quick but he's all over the joint, look for a few sixes square of the wicket and a few up and overs.

Next is Punter and you reckon he's not dark about the Poms having a shot about the black strip on his bat. I'm predicting a huge season for the Skipper.

And then, if he's lucky, Mr. Elegant...Damien Martyn gets a whack, followed by the Pup, Michael Clarke, in for a huge tour, next please (three days later) calling Mr. Simon Katich to the crease. And then the one I'm really looking forward to... "Ear we go, ear we go"...Adam Gilchrist. Even if we're 6/78 when Gilly comes in we'll end up 7/324.

Me next...have a slog, protect the texting finger. Then...bugger, what is his name?

Dizzy, Big bum Kaspas and bring out the light roller...here comes Pigeon!

Can you see what odds you can get about a four win and a draw from Curley Seal. I'll send you the pitch reports as soon as I get them...let Mark and John know as soon as possible.

Better close now, I've got a few more text messages to send.

Yours tweakingly,
Shane.

GOLF

British Open players challenged by width and length

Changes have been made to the Old Course for this year's British Open on 14 - 17 July, taking the total length to 7,279 yards for this year's championship, 164 more than when Tiger Woods won the title in 2000.

Five new tees have been constructed to bring traditional hazards back into play.

"We are restoring rather than changing the course," said Peter Dawson, Chief Executive of The R&A. "Modern equipment and the greater athleticism of leading players has led to many of the Old Course hazards being taken out of play.

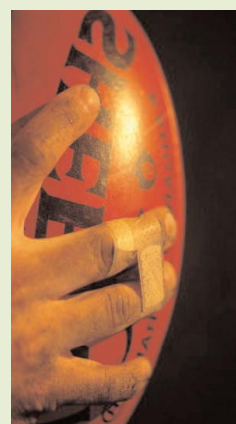
"We're not looking to be a big hitter's paradise. We are committed to staging a championship that isn't just for golfers who hit the ball a long way. The course has proved many times that it is subtle enough to provide a strong challenge.

"We are not trying to change the character of the course - we just want to re-instate the old decisions players had to make." Peter said.

Taking the tee back 37 yards at the 14th hole will bring the Beardies bunkers back into play and emphasise the need to target the fairway between the bunkers and the out-of-bounds wall on the right. Against the wind the infamous Hell bunker will again challenge the second shot. The hole will now measure 616 yards, making it the longest on any Open Championship course.



AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL



AFL Footy Tips

Just what is going on here? Is everyone on drugs in season 2005? There used to be a time when a home-ground advantage was a clear indicator to a winner, when four teams always won, four teams went in and out of form and eight teams always got flogged. Picking at least six winners was easy, seven winners happened about ten times a season and eight winners about four. Nowadays you have to watch out for injuries, who's been dropped, coach's birthday, player milestones, wind direction and toss of the coin.

It's not easy being a tipster in 2005. Here we are, more than halfway through the season, with a possible score of 104 points on offer and the current leader of the Yalumba Footy Comp is battling along on 66 points (averaging approx five points per round).

Caffeine, testosterone levels, mind games and milestones.

Has AFL football been reduced to this? What is going on?

Last year's 22 top tipsters have been decimated in 2005. It appears that at the split round, only three players from 2004 are in the top 22 of 2005.

Perhaps if it starts raining, everything will return to normal. Football was designed for the mud, howling winds, rain and umbrellas. Hands so cold, you had to use your Four 'n Twenty pie bag to hold your beer. Nose so red 'n shiny 'n sensitive that if you accidentally tapped it with your beer-can your eyes would water with the pain. Adversity was the name of the game but we all survived, indeed most of us went back week after cold, dark and rainy week and it is this stoic attitude that will shine again in season 2005.

Against all odds, the tipsters of 2005 will overcome adversity. Throw away your No Doze and drink red, buckets of red, gallons and gallons of red. And don't forget, when you're standing in the rain, cold, wet and miserable, put your thumb over the mouth of the bottle.

Push on, good luck to all.

RUGBY UNION



Wallabies Season

This year's Wallaby squad on paper is potentially the strongest since the early 1990s.

In key positions there are up to four quality players vying for the one spot. For Fullback its either Latham, Rogers, Hewat or Gerard, and for Hooker - Cannon, Jeremy Paul or Freier.

On 25 June it's down to Melbourne to play Italy at Telstra Dome, which could result in a cricket score. Expect to see a lot of new caps blooded for this one. Australia could win by 50!

On 2 July in Brisbane "Les Bleus" present our first challenge to the representative calendar. Typically this game is hard to predict as the French can be brilliant or woeful depending on how much foie gras they have consumed on the plane. My tip - Wallabies by 11 points with some 'Champagne' Rugby!

The first Springbok test is in Sydney on 9 July and the Mandela Plate is up for grabs. The second match on 23 July is across the pond in Johannesburg, South Africa. The tip is both teams will win at home with South Africa set to retain the Mandela Plate, which will no doubt result from poor refereeing in SA!

Trying Times set For Tri Nations

**TRI NATIONS TABLE
(Including the Bledisloe Cup)**

July 30th	Springboks vs Wallabies in Pretoria SA
August 13th	Wallabies vs All Blacks, Telstra Stadium Syd
August 20th	Wallabies vs Springboks, Subiaco in Perth
September 3rd	All Blacks vs Wallabies in Auckland

Unfortunately I can only see one outcome for both the Tri-Nations and the Bledisloe Cups with the All Blacks having the best team on paper since the all conquering 1986 squad, which was captained by Buck Shelford. Remember the likes of Michael Jones, Grant Fox, Joe Stanley and Sean Fitzpatrick (with Zin Zan Brooke on the bench). I expect the Wallabies to perform admirably and Eddy will be building for the 2007 World Cup. Go the Wallabies! Prove me wrong!

This is how my team would look;

Chris Latham; Lote Tuqiri, Clyde Rathbone, Stirling Mortlock, Matt Giteau, Stephen Larkham, Chris Whitaker, Phil Waugh, David Lyons, George Smith, Nathan Sharpe, Justin Harrison, Matt Dunning, Brendan Cannon, Al Baxter.

Reserves: Frier, Young, Elsom, McMeniman, Henjak, Turinui, Rogers NB.Gregan, Vickerman, Flatley (out injured) Tuqiri maybe suspended! The British and Irish Lions are touring New Zealand this year; the All Blacks should win all three tests. I don't think Johnny can save them this time, as the All Blacks will put too many points on them.

The tourists will be great for the Kiwi economy and they will be safe in numbers unlike walking around Christchurch with Waratah's colours after the Super 12 final!

A quick reminder to all Rugby nuts; if you intend to go to the next World Cup ensure you book now. Inside information is that accommodation and tickets are already selling fast.

Good luck.
Greg Pullen