

Paul Roos

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Transcript

Chris Titley

Hello, it's Chris Titley here and welcome to this week's episode of Scoreboard and today I'm joined by Paul Roos. Paul, thank you so much for being part of this series. No worries, good to chat to you, thanks.

Chris Titley

Paul, I'm going to go straight to the crux. Australian Rules Football, AFL, can you tell the listeners out there why it's been so important or in your life from the early days as a young kid?

Paul Roos

I mean, probably a number of reasons.

Paul Roos

There's a reason of connection, which I think sport gives you a really good connection because we're all looking for, you know, trying to fit in, you know, whether that's at school, when I went to Dunbar High School or whether, you know, go to university or when you go to work.

Paul Roos

So I was really fortunate to play a lot of sport growing up. So I think the significance was firstly, yeah, just finding a group of like-minded people and going down to Fitzroy, I was able to do that.

Paul Roos

And then I guess it goes to the competition aspect, you know, you enjoy the competition, you enjoy winning, you don't enjoy losing too much. And then as it rolls on, it becomes more and more important because, you know, it's just saying to your family, you know, you're able to buy a house, you know, then you're in it coaching the Sydney Swans and it just becomes a massive part of your life.

Paul Roos

So it probably starts, as I said, as connection and it goes into different stages, really.

Chris Titley

As a kid, that connection that you just mentioned about, do you remember when it started and how it started?

Paul Roos

I think the sport always, I always felt connected to sport maybe because I was pretty good at it, but I always loved being outside. I always loved, I played basketball as well and tennis. I love tennis, I love basketball, I love football.

Paul Roos

To be honest, football was probably third. I loved basketball probably first and maybe then tennis and football equal second. But I just always loved running and competing and having fun and hanging out with my mates.

Paul Roos

And it seemed like a really good way to hang out with your mates, just shooting hoops and kicking the footy. and playing tennis. So I think from an early age I just felt really connected to the teammates really.

Chris Titley

And when you're growing up playing basketball did you have any aspirations as a kid to play professional basketball or professional football? Was that in the Paul Roo's dream?

Paul Roos

Well back then it was just play really.

Paul Roos

You know I think it's a little bit different today where I think players intentionally start to think about playing Australian rules football or you know playing for Australia in basketball or going there yes back then it was very much a game.

Paul Roos

You know I just played a game of basketball, a game of tennis, a game of football but I was lucky I made the state you know under 13s, 15s and 17s in basketball. So I was obviously a pretty good basketballer as well as footballer but I never really thought about what I could do with basketball probably because I got invited down.

Paul Roos

to play with Fitzroy. My contemporaries, Damien Keogh, was a year above me. Andrew Gaze was a year below. Both Olympians both, you know, played against them growing up more so Damien than Andrew.

Paul Roos

But I suppose for me it was just getting invited down to Fitzroy meant that that was what I was going to do. I never thought about basketball playing for Australia because I guess, yeah, to think about yourself as one of the best 12 players in Australia, but also the fact that I was down at Fitzroy as a 16 -year -old probably helped me make that decision anyway.

Chris Titley

And in regards to the enjoyment of the sport, which did you prefer at the time, at sort of 16?

Paul Roos

Probably basketball because you were able to, I mean, you played indoors and the game was over an hour, an hour and a half.

Paul Roos

And I remember going on tournaments where you'd play, yeah, five or six games a weekend, which I loved, you know, and you're able to train and you're able to shoot baskets and probably purely enjoyment.

Paul Roos

I actually enjoyed basketball more than football. Yeah, it was a line ball. But, you know, just for those reasons, you know, I just love playing basketball.

Chris Titley

And Paul, as an early sports person growing up, there's some traits that I've spoken to in my last episodes about the word resilience and how important that is.

Chris Titley

Can you talk about your involvement with resilience and potentially at a young age, I suppose, and not being picked in particular teams to drive you a bit harder?

Paul Roos

Yeah, I think sport always teaches you resilience because whether you're the best player or the worst player, you're on a team that wins or loses, you know.

Paul Roos

And I think one of the things that's been taken away from kids is that winning and losing. And we're now looking at participation and I think my boys start on the edge of, you know, the Auskick not scoring.

Paul Roos

And guess what? The first thing the kids said after the game, who won? I mean, everyone wants to know who won. And I always used to say, if I umpire the game, so I was a draw and the kids go, no it wasn't!

Paul Roos

wasn't. So everyone knows. So I think the very nature of sport teaches you resilience because we all have injuries, we all lose, even the most successful players lose at different stages and even the most successful players have injuries and challenges.

Paul Roos

So I think the nature of sport means if you lose in round one, you have to play again in round two. Even if you get to a grand final and you win the grand final, that happens very rarely. Leigh Matthews had a really good saying, even the most successful coaches have a win-loss ratio of 66% or 63%, so they're losing every third week.

Paul Roos

And even the best teams in the competition using Brisbane Lions, as an example, won three in a row and hadn't won until this previous. So I think sport just teaches you resilience because of the very nature of what it represents.

Chris Titley

And when you come off those games that you lose, Managed to have an element of fun out of it I suppose or is it you come off thinking okay, how can I improve and then you you lose again? You lose again.

Chris Titley

Is there a point where you go? Oh, this is just this is too hard I sort of want to throw in the towel ?

Paul Roos

Probably my time at Fitzroy was the hardest, you know, we had problems off field financially. I think we started out in 10 one year Players weren't getting paid on time So that taught me a lot about that and and the reality is you said you you had to keep on playing You you can't sort of go to the coach on Monday and say look we're zero nine or zero ten or whatever we were And I'm not getting paid.

Paul Roos

I'm not turning up on the weekend, you know, so those things You know teach you a lot about life and resilience Because even though, you know, my my payments were often due in March or July or December We got paid three times a year and it might be middle of April I hadn't got any money now It wasn't like I couldn't turn up the game on the weekend because everyone would have known or Paul Roos hasn't turned up I think I was captain of the club You know,

Paul Roos

so yeah, I remember those things and whilst they were frustrating at the time They certainly taught me really valuable lessons now When I look back and I realise not how fortunate I was because you're never fortunate when you're not getting paid Fortunately playing in a bad team but Yeah, I think there's a really good saying that you know "things happen, for you not too you" You know, the reason they happen was for me and what was the lessons I learned from them

Chris Titley

At your peak you're one of the great AFL players I'm interested to know what characteristics and traits that that you worked on the most during that time when you were at your peak Was it was it skills?

Chris Titley

Was it fitness? Was it eating? Was it all sorts of different things and how much I suppose was up here? (in your head)

Paul Roos

Yeah, it's a good question, I think it's sort of hard to analyse yourself, you know when I get asked that question I think my greatest strength was knowing what I was good at and what I wasn't good at and I think that's really important because sometimes we focus too heavily on the things we're not good at and then we start to work on them and work on them and I'm not suggesting you don't do that but I think they're really good players that I've seen know what they're really good at and make sure that they're absolute superpowers and I think that was my case.

Paul Roos

I wasn't a great athlete but I was a pretty good endurance runner so I made sure I run really hard in every game and tried to outrun my opponent. I think through basketball and tennis, through playing other sports, I was really smart and I could read the game really well and I used that to my advantage.

Paul Roos

So I think they were my greatest traits and I think when you say above the shoulders I think a lot of what I did was above the shoulders. Thinking through the games, thinking through my opponents and that was before we really get a lot of...

Paul Roos

analysis on our opposition. But I always remember, you know, if I'm playing on Steven Kernahan, he would do this. If I played

on Terry Daniher, he would do this. If I played on, you know, Peter Foster, you know, Wayne Carey, I had to play like this.

Paul Roos

So I think a lot of my game was played above the shoulders and I was able to translate that into, you know, almost visualising the game before visualisation became, you know, normal or normalised. What was the game going to look like and how was I going to have to play the game and play that out before I actually played on the weekend.

Chris Titley

And the night before games, what did you have a ritual? Were you superstitious? Were you nervous? Were you excited?

Paul Roos

Very superstitious. Most players are superstitious. You know, I'd get to bed at 9 .30.

Paul Roos

I'd eat spaghetti bolognese. I'd get up at 10 and have eight pieces of toast before. Yeah, everything's really, you know, really superstitious before a game. I was never really nervous. I was, I was pretty calm, probably more excited than nervous because I mean, you've got to remember back when I was playing, training was almost harder than the games.

Paul Roos

So when you got to game day, it was almost a relief. You've gone off fantastic. I actually don't have to train. I'm going to go and play a game today. And it was somewhat, yeah, cathartic just to be able to go out and play your own game without a, you know, a two and a half hour, three hour session on a Tuesday night, the coach screaming and yelling at you and then getting off and trudging home and eating dinner at about eight o'clock at night and getting to bed and going to work the next day.

Paul Roos

So so games were actually pretty cool because you're able to sleep in, you're able to get the footy on your own time, watch the seconds play, hang out with your mates and then and then run out in the field, which was pretty cool.

Chris Titley

Paul, I'm interested in your time at Fitzroy and then then moving to Sydney as an AFL, as a national game and your time at Sydney and the way that Sydney progressed through that became, you know, sort of became the city in terms of AFL and also now, you know, obviously from Brisbane and a Brisbane winning this year and a Brisbane Sydney Final - AFL is now a national game - do you look back at the impact that swans team had at the time?

Paul Roos

I think there's two things that I look back. I mean look there is more than two, but I think there's two significant things in my time. I think Tony Lockett going to Sydney was incredibly significant. You know, he was the biggest figure in AFL at the time and Ron Barrassi was up there, which was great.

Paul Roos

But then Tony coming, you know, he was the biggest player in AFL at the time. He was the biggest player in AFL at the time. He was the biggest player in AFL at the time. He was the biggest player in AFL at the time.

Paul Roos

He was the biggest player in AFL at the time. He was the biggest player in AFL at the time. He was the biggest player in AFL at the time. That's when the grand final in 1996, I think, really put the swans on the map as well as the performance of making the grand final in 1996.

Paul Roos

I think that was enormous. For the sport, we probably weren't ready to win a premiership because we started to gather support. Now obviously 2005, nine years after playing in a grand final, then we had a lot more bolted on supporters, a lot more credibility.

Paul Roos

A lot more consistent finals appearance with Rodney Eade coaching 96 and through his tenure and then myself. So I think we were ready to win it in 2005 as much as I would have wanted to love winning it in 96.

Paul Roos

I don't think the club was set up to win a premiership or the AFL was set up to win a premiership but in 2005 they were and when you look at the national competition now I think the 2005 premiership on the back of the Brisbane Lions winning at 01 -02 -03 and then Port wanted in 2004 but the northern states you know what Leigh Matthews did with his team in 1 -2 and 3 and then what we were able to do in 05 and 06 playing back to background finals I think significantly cemented you know the AFL as a truly national sport particularly in the northern states New South Wales and Queensland.

Chris Titley

Before we get into 05 I'm curious about 96 your experience looking back on it the whole day the whole fanfare of a grand final what you did on the day and I suppose the experience per se can you talk about that?

Paul Roos

Yeah well when I went to Sydney in 94 into 94 for 95 I didn't think we'd ever play in a grand final I thought we'd maybe make the finals you know with Tony coming up with Paul Kelly Andrew Dunkley Darren Creswell Mark Bayes some young players coming in some other really good players Kevin Dyson Stewie Maxfield Craig O'Brien so I thought we're starting the nucleus of the team but I didn't think we'd ever play in a grand final in 96 so that was amazing for me not having been able to do it Fitzroy played in preliminary final and it sort of then becomes your best footy day and your worst footy day rolled up into one you know which is pretty weird yeah your best footy day because you're playing in a grand final you're running out in the MCG you're absorbing the atmosphere which is just incredible and then the siren goes to start the game and the excitement of playing in the game and then there's a point for us in the last quarter we

Chris Titley

It sounds like a sport as the analogy, all in one day.

Paul Roos

It is. If you could put your career in one day, it probably is a great analogy of what it looks like. You get the highs, you get the lows, and if you win it, then it's extremely fortunate. If you lose it, you're disappointed. That's what sport teaches you. That's what sport's all about. As much as we want to win every game, as I said before, sport is a lot about bouncing back and losing.

Chris Titley

Paul, when you retired from AFL was it an easy decision and then I suppose the transition post AFL into thinking about becoming a coach?

Paul Roos

Yeah, pretty much 1998. I think I might have been able to get another year and I think the club might have said, look, what did you think about coming back?

Paul Roos

But I was pretty much done then. Your body, you know, can't do what your mind wants it to do. And yeah, when you become a, yeah, when you were a pretty good player and you start to lower your standard, that's pretty hard too, to sort of walk off the field knowing you can't do what you used to be able to do.

Paul Roos

So it's a pretty easy decision to retire. Then went overseas, lived with Tammy's parents for 10 months in America, which I enjoyed, did some research, a lot of sports I was able to go and visit, which is great.

Paul Roos

Came back in 2000, worked on the Olympics for C7, became a part-time coach. I probably wasn't until the end of that year, I started to become full-time assistant coach in 2001 that I started to think about, you know, did I ever want to become an AFL coach?

Paul Roos

But I didn't even really think about that until Rodney Eade gave it away. And then they asked me to do the job. I always thought, well, yeah, I'm an assistant coach now, I'll take the time, the opportunity to learn the ropes, and then eventually I'll make the decision with it, something I want to do.

Paul Roos

So even that decision came around really, really quickly.

Chris Titley

And then four years from there, you're in a grand final again. What was the feeling like as a coach in 2005, being on the other side, I suppose, not as a player and seeing all those players experience what you experienced as a player?

Paul Roos

Yeah, it's dramatically different. You know, like as a coach, yeah, you're relying on so many people, you know, your board, your CEO, your footy departments, you know, the players, obviously medical fitness, you know, everyone within the organization.

Paul Roos

As the player, you know, as much as you are relying on your teammates, there's no question about that. You know, a lot of what you do is individual, you know, you prepare yourself well, you eat well, you train well, you turn up and then you're relying on your teammates on game day, you know, so it's, it's dramatically different.

Chris Titley

Actually, I've got one final question, Paul. Are you proud of your career on the sporting ground?

Paul Roos

Paul Roos

Yeah. But to win a premiership as a coach was just amazing. And then you realise, as I said, how much time if it goes into it, not just the people of that year, but, you know, when you run on the ground and you see past players, past administrators, you know, it was 72 years, wasn't it like 70, 70 odd years?

Paul Roos

What's that?

Chris Titley

It was 72 years, was it?

Paul Roos

Yeah, 72 years. And at the start of 2003, we were picked to finish on the bottom of the ladder. So it wasn't like we were expected to play in a premiership during that time.

Paul Roos

So, yeah, 72 years of past players, past administrators, members and sponsors, and then to run on the ground and the current group of players. Yeah, I think it's a, you probably didn't realise the enormity of it at the time, you know, you mentioned 72 years, and obviously, you know, 69 years and 70 years and 71, and we'd heard the number over and over again.

Paul Roos

But I think until that happened, you probably didn't realise how many people were positively impacted by winning a premiership.

Chris Titley

And Paul, do you look back on that day? Do you have distinct memories of that day?

Paul Roos

Yeah, I do. I was really fortunate to... I sort of made a conscious effort the night before to try and, you know, enjoy the situation, win, lose or draw, you know. And because I'd done that, everyone talks about being present, but I was really present after the game and we stayed in the coach's box and we congratulated each other.

Paul Roos

I remember we were lucky. We actually coached during the time we were able to walk through the grandstand onto the ground, not go down the lift and then under the car park onto the ground. So I remember walking through the grandstand and seeing the smile of the fans cheering and hugging each other.

Paul Roos

And I remember getting on the ground, seeing family and friends and past players, administrators, current, and then getting the cup. And yeah, so the memories of the day are still very vivid in my mind, which is great.

Chris Titley

And Paul, the question around the end of your coaching career then about what to do after that. Now you've been a player and you've been a coach and did you have something in mind where you're working on something?

Chris Titley

You know, what's Paul Roos doing now?

Paul Roos

Yeah, well, I sort of always was interested in the leadership and got always asked a lot about how you create a high performing environment when I coached 2005 Premiership.

Paul Roos

But also when I went to Melbourne, I think people were really impressed by what we were able to do at Melbourne and take a really, really bad team over three years. And, you know, I think even some people said to me that it was probably arguably a better effort than winning a Premiership.

Paul Roos

You know, they'd won two games and we got over three years to win 10. And then in 2022, I think it was, Simon Goodwin took into a Premiership. So, yeah, now I'm involved in a company called Performance by Design, which is a leadership company.

Paul Roos

We take a lot of those principles that we use from Sydney and Melbourne and transform them into the corporate world, which I really enjoy doing.

Chris Titley

And Paul, the similarities between sport and the corporate world.

Chris Titley

The world, the sport, you have this one game, I suppose, every weekend, and the corporate world, you're there five days a week, and the weekend's the rest, but I'm sure there's a number of similarities.

Paul Roos

Yeah, absolutely similar now. I mean, sport became full -time for me when I went to Sydney, so there's a transition from a semi -professional environment in the early 80s, mid -90s to fully professional in the mid -90s towards the end of that, so very, very similar.

Paul Roos

I mean, everyone's trying to create a high -performing team. What is culture? We're trying to reward good behaviours. We're trying to challenge poor behaviours. We talk about a culture code. Have you defined your culture?

Paul Roos

Do you know what it is? Are you building really strong relationships within your group? Are you having honest conversations? And really, the fundamentals of a high -performing team are exactly the same, whether that's at the Sydney Swans, Melbourne Football Club, or some of the clients we work with.

Chris Titley

I'm going to touch on that for a second. Are you a goal -setter?

Paul Roos

More, more process than goal -setting, and I think I see them as the same thing, you know, yeah, we will sort of set the process of what are the goals on the weekend, what do we have to achieve in order to win, and if we win enough games, then our goal is to play finals, and if we win enough games in finals, then our goal is,

Paul Roos

so probably more around what is the process, which largely is about goal -setting, but what are the daily things we have to do in order to achieve our monthly targets, and then our monthly targets in order to achieve our yearly targets.

Chris Titley

And the big hairy audacious goal, do you have that in the back of your mind, or is it just week by week?

Paul Roos

Yeah, I think you've always got to know where you are trying to head, there's no question about that, you know, we always wanted to win a premiership, but we didn't largely talk about it, we always knew it was there, and I think that's the key to it, because sometimes big audacious goals scare people off,

Paul Roos

you know, if you've got a goal of winning a premiership, which every team does, but if it's written on the board every single day, and then suddenly it starts zero and four, you know, I think Brisbane are a really good example, you know, clearly they went into the season wanting to win a premiership, but at two and five or whatever they were, you know, I'm sure Chris Fagan would have broken it down,

Paul Roos

said guys don't worry about where we're going in September, we've got to start to worry about how we start to enjoy practice, how we start to practice what we want to do on the weekend, and then how we want to execute on the weekend, so they would have thought to break them down into a lot smaller goals, more process driven, and I think that's what we largely did.

Paul Roos

Yes, we had a goal of winning a premiership, that was okay, and everyone understood that, but we didn't really talk about it too much, because we had to work out what the things we did well on a daily basis, and the things we did well on the weekend, which allowed us to win games, and then allowed us to win the premiership.

Chris Titley

Paul, I'm going to throw some personality traits at you, and you can say yes or no in a quick answer just to finish things off. I'm going to start with the word competitive.

Paul Roos

And you're asking me am I competitive or do you need to be competitive?

Chris Titley

No. Are you competitive?

Paul Roos

Uh yeah, 100%. I think you can ask my wife and kids whether I'm competitive even now when I don't play sport. Um, you're absolutely competitive, yes. Uh,

Chris Titley

confident.

Paul Roos

Yeah, I think I'm confident, but confidence is an interesting word.

Paul Roos

I mean, confidence often comes through preparation, you know. If I'm prepared, I'm confident. If I'm not prepared, then I'm not confident. So my confidence comes through my preparation. Uh,

Chris Titley

serious.

Chris Titley

Yeah, some people would say I'm serious, some people would say I'm not, sort of thing.

Paul Roos

I think it depends on the setting. Uh, I think I have an ability to understand where I'm at and what I need to be. Uh, I've got self-awareness in my own personality and I think I've got self-awareness.

Paul Roos

other people. So sometimes I'm too serious and sometimes I'm not serious enough.

Chris Titley

When you're on the field, were you selfish slash arrogant? Did you have to be or not?

Paul Roos

That's a really good question. I think when you're a coach and look at playing differently, I think even the most selfless players are fundamentally selfish because you have to be to be the best you possibly can.

Paul Roos

But then you've got a scale of on the field being super selfless. Brett Kirk, the Stewie Maxfield. Where did I sit in that? Probably during my career, I thought I was pretty selfless. When I finished my career, I probably seen myself as more selfish player than a selfless player.

Chris Titley

Empathetic.

Paul Roos

Yeah, I think that was one of my strengths. I think as a coach and as a player, I always have the ability to understand what teammates were going through, understand how to get the best out of them, understand when to be critical of them, when to understand when I wrap my arms around them.

Paul Roos

So I think that was one of my strengths, definitely.

Chris Titley

Paul, on a final note, we've got kids that are playing footy and playing sport at the moment. What's some advice that you give to kids growing up playing AFL or basketball, whatever sport it is nowadays?

Paul Roos

I think there's probably a couple of things. Make sure you're getting enjoyment out of it, because sport should be as enjoyable as possible. And then whatever sport it is, just break it down to the fundamentals.

Paul Roos

I think when I was growing up, tennis for me was just hitting tennis balls over the net, going up. Sometimes I go up by myself and hit balls against the wall. I had a basketball ring in the backyard.

Paul Roos

I kicked the football all the time. So whatever the skills are, just practice. Sounds silly, but just practice the skills of the game. Don't get caught up too much in the strategy of the game when you're really young.

Paul Roos

The more you can work on your technique, the more you can... work on the basics of the game, the more you're going to enjoy it.

Chris Titley

Actually, I've got one final question, Paul. Are you proud of your career on the sporting ground?

Paul Roos

Yeah, I am. I mean, I don't reflect on it too much. Probably when I get on podcasts or when I get interviewed or I was able to go to the Hall of Fame night for the Sydney Swans and that, I think that really hit home to me when, when Kieran Jack, Kieran McRae, Nick Smith and Heath Grundy got inductors in the Hall of Fame. They didn't really talk about marks, kicks and handballs. They talked about the legacy that they learned from and trying to leave that legacy behind. So I think that was a night where you do reflect on the legacy you left. Yeah, Fitzroy enjoyed my time at Fitzroy, got great mates there and then I

think the legacy that we all left at Sydney still stands to this day under John Longmire which is fantastic.

Chris Titley

Paul, thank you so much for being on the Scoreboard podcast. I very much appreciate you taking your time. I'm looking forward to catching up.

Paul Roos

Thanks a lot, mate, really appreciate it.