Australian Identity, the Press and Major International Sporting Events

PhD thesis launch by Dr Rachel Payne
Edith Cowan University, Western Australia
Australian-staged Games Included in the Thesis:

- 1956 Olympic Games (Melbourne)
- 1962 British Empire and Commonwealth Games (Perth)
- 1982 Commonwealth Games (Brisbane)
- 2000 Olympic Games (Sydney)

Source: Sydney Morning Herald, October 6, 1982, p.8
Sampling Frames

November 22 - December 10, 1956

November 22 - December 3, 1962

September 30 - October 11, 1982

September 15 - October 2, 2000
1956 Melbourne Olympic Games: Australia’s growing self-confidence

Betty’s gold medal put lumps in our throats
Source: The Herald (Melbourne), November 26, 1956, p.16

Australia’s Hour of Games Glory
Source: The Age (Melbourne), November 27, 1956, p.11

Pretty Betty Wins Our Gold Medal
Source: The Herald (Melbourne), November 26, 1956, p.1

Source: National Library of Australia
Australia’s confidence grew after its record result at the 1956 Olympic Games (13 gold medals and third on the medal tally).

Expectations increased for the 1962 Commonwealth Games where Australia ultimately beat England (38 gold medals to 29) and finished first on the medal tally.

Australia’s “golden era” in the 1950s and 1960s made the Olympic and Commonwealth Games an important part of Australia’s sporting identity.
1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games: Australia’s gold medal frenzy

Gold sends crowd wild
Source: The Herald (Melbourne), October 4, 1982, p.1

The ecstasy of winning
Source: The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), October 5, 1982, p.2

More gold — we’re set
Source: The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), October 8, 1982, p.1

Source: Official Pictorial History of the XII Commonwealth Games, 1982, p.27
2000 Sydney Olympic Games: Introducing “new Australia”

The opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympic Games presented Australia as a new, multicultural nation.

Australia’s newspapers carried this theme throughout their coverage of the Games.

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 19, 2000, p.8

Source: *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), September 17, 2000, p.5
No Indigenous Australian athletes competed at the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games.

Three Aboriginal boxers were included in the Australian team at the 1962 Perth Commonwealth Games.

Bantamweight boxer Jeff Dynevor made headlines after winning a gold medal in 1962.

However, another Aboriginal gold medallist in the high jump, Percy Hobson, was not recognised as an Aboriginal athlete.
1982 Aboriginal land rights protests: a challenge to Australia’s policies and its role as Games host

Clashes during Games still a possibility

Source: The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), September 30, 1982, p.9

100 arrested after protest

Source: The West Australian (Perth), October 5, 1982, p.1

The black shadow over the Games

Source: Sydney Morning Herald, September 30, 1982, p.9
Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman: the face of Australia at the 2000 Olympic Games

Pride of the land

Source: Sydney Morning Herald, September 26, 2000, p.1

Freeman a symbol of Aussie unity

Source: The Australian, September 27, 2000, p.34
Comparison of the newspapers’* combined allocation of general, international and Australian-related Games items

* The total figures are derived from a study of four newspapers covering each Games.
## Countries with the greatest amount of coverage in Australia’s newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Games</th>
<th>Top 5 Countries* Covered/Total Number of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956 Olympics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962 Commonwealth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982 Commonwealth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Olympics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denmark and Iceland did not rank in the top 10 countries covered in 1956 or 2000, but they are included here for interest.
The “fallen athlete”

A recurring use of African, Caribbean and South Asian athletes to illustrate dramatic failure and ironic victory.

Source: The Age (Melbourne), November 28, 1956, p.14

Source: The West Australian (Perth), December 1, 1962, p.1

Source: The Courier Mail (Brisbane), October 8, 1982, p.22
The “antihero” and the “disadvantaged”

Equatorial Guinean swimmer Eric Moussambani’s story fit two criteria in Australia’s unconventional reporting of African, Caribbean and South Asian athletes.
The “exotic other” was a construct used in Australia’s Games reports to signify unfamiliar nations and cultures, therefore creating a binary of “self” and “other”, or “us” and “them”.

Source: The West Australian (Perth), November 23, 1962, p.29

Source: The Herald (Melbourne), November 30, 1956, p.1
The “entertainer”

Source: The West Australian (Perth), December 7, 1956, p.34

Source: The Herald (Melbourne), November 22, 1956, p.7
In 2000 Australia’s newspapers attempted to educate their readers about “exotic” nations participating in the Sydney Olympics.

- Note the incorrect placement and naming of Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2000). The country that is directly south of Equatorial Guinea is Gabon.

Source: *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), September 28, 2000, p.20
The Games in Australia: promoting a one-eyed nation or a new multicultural nation?

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 2, 2000, p.10