

# SPORTSMAN'S NIGHT

Inspired by the real life events of a country footy team banned by their competition for on and off field violence, Sportsman's Night, brought Damian's character narratives to a bigger audience.

The show resonated with football fans and haters alike as it affectionately exposes life in a country town where footy rules all. Bodgy Creek is a town that has seen better days. The population is dwindling; the local timber industry is under threat; and now to top it all off the footy club has been banned for their involvement in a 'harmless melee.'

To raise money for their impending legal appeal, the club has organised a "Sportsman's Night". A traditional social occasion best described by the 9 year old Neil Barlow as "... a night when whole lot of people who aren't very good at sport come along to listen to people who used to be good at sport."

It is through Neil's innocent eyes that the story is told. As an aspiring documentary film-maker Neil films the "Sportsman's Night", but also takes his camera on a journey to paint a broader picture of life in a dieing town.

However, the "Sportsman's Night" itself doesn't follow the traditional path due mainly to the conflicting ideals of the coach and president. President Bull Barlow is a bully patriarch, loved and feared by all at the club. He has brought one of the clubs former stars back to coach after a stint in the big smoke. However Troy Carrington comes back a changed man. With new found new age sensibilities he sets about trying to change the traditionally violent and narrow mindset of the players.

## SHOW HISTORY

**2000** Melbourne Fringe Festival – Best Comedy

**2001** Melbourne Comedy Festival – Barry Award Nominee

**2001** Theatre Season – Upper Ferntree Gully

## REVIEW

**Fiona Scott-Norman**

**The Age – April 3rd, 2001**

if we are used to one thing in Melbourne it's footy humour. If there's one thing we are not used to, it's subtle clever footy humour that doesn't rely on blacking up or sarcasm.

Damian Callinan has achieved the seemingly impossible; a thoughtful, intelligent representation of a redneck, country-town footy club with a proud history of fist fights' logging and knocking back a six pack of beer before taking the field.

Callinan, on a plain stage, plays all the characters, shifting simply and distinctly between all of them; failed new age coach Troy Carrington, the blood and guts Patriarch of the club, a spoken word performer mistakenly hired at the entertainment, an overweight jockey, and 10 year old Neil Barlow, a local lad who fancies himself as a documentary film maker.

Callinan won Best Comedy Award at last years Fringe Festival for this show and it is no wonder. This a fine, tight, substantial show, well conceived and performed. Callinan's script exaggerates enough to be satire, but his performance is grounded and genuine, which gives the show emotional depth as well as humour.