

## **Graham Rickman - Watch the roof Cazaly!**

A Perth entrepreneur has come up with a novel idea to bring the game of Aussie Rules inside and make it easy for anyone to play.

Graham Rickman has called his game Indoor Rules. It's a novel extension of Australian Rules Football which, while it has obvious similarities with the outdoor game, has a number of differences making it more social and accessible for casual players.

"My idea is to construct a dedicated indoor environment, scaled down to suit a seven-a-side competition, with a scaled football which fulfills all criteria including limiting the distance of kicks to 15 metres," Mr Rickman said.

"The game itself has modified rules but maintains the essential nature of Aussie Rules with kicking, handball, marking and tackling. The in-house rules are designed to ensure a fast, continuous game which is shorter, cleaner and safer. It's a social activity which unskilled people, of either gender, can play."

Since he came up with the concept two years ago Mr Rickman has been busy quietly putting patents in place to protect his idea.

"My introduction to the concept of patenting was through a simple phone call via the Yellow Pages. The first, very good advice I got was to keep everything secret and get the general idea down in writing and apply for a provisional patent.

"I set about doing this with basic diagrams. I also authorised an Australian-wide novelty search to ensure that no previous patent existed. Once the provisional patent was filed I was able to openly pursue quotes and detailed construction ideas."

"My intention is a dedicated environment which incorporates the patented playing area with a football atmosphere. Teams, of all ages, can play in mini-league fixtures, wearing AFL replica jumpers hired on site."

"The playing area will be about 55 by 25 metres with shock absorbing artificial turf. The perimeter will be enclosed and padded with netting overhead to ensure the ball remains continuously in play," Mr Rickman said.

Indoor Rules is a very simple recreational form of Aussie Rules which can be enjoyed by those who love the game but are put off by the rigours of the competition and outdoor training. It has the potential to be an immensely popular recreational activity and, given that sport and recreation are one of the most marketable services in Australia today, it's surprising that no one has thought of it before.

Mr Rickman is yet to construct his first 'field' and is now looking for partners to help set up the first facility.

"This is turning out to be the hardest part of the whole project. The only real difficulty with defining and protecting the idea was getting familiar with the legal jargon and the patenting procedure. These problems are insignificant compared with the difficulty of getting technical support and quotes for a yet-to-be-produced project," Mr Rickman said.

"Because it's a unique concept, many people are wary of investing in an untried venture. Most trades people are only interested in short term sales; where scaled prototypes are required to test the feasibility of an idea, it's difficult to get people to make a small order which has limited immediate financial gain."

Like a true entrepreneur, however, Mr Rickman remains persistent and his advice to others starting out on a similar course is to be aware that "things do not move as quickly as you would like and will probably cost more than you expect.

"Maintaining secrecy until you have legal protection for your idea means that some areas of development have to wait until you can be free to seek outside help but I believe that with persistence and patience, all barriers can be overcome."