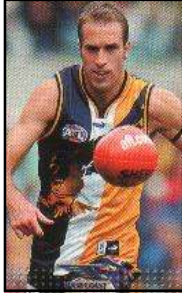


10 Key Attributes of being a consistent AFL player

(Nathan Buckley)

(See text on the back of this sheet)



Rate Yourself (5, 4, 3, 2, 1)

Name: _____

Rating .. a coach and/or self assessment

- 5: I have strengths in this area
- 3: I can and will improve
- 1: I need to make a greater effort

	Date:				
1. Clean Hands					
2. Win the Ball					
3. Efficient Ball use / right option					
4. High Work Rate					
5. Defensive Pressure					
6. Leadership					
7. Follow Game Plan					
8. A clearance player					
9. Speed Endurance					
10. Temperament / Focus					
Total:					

The only time you can't afford to fail, is, the last time you try.

Each attribute should be evaluated separately
the aim ...
in relation to each: **be the best you can be**

The Mirror Test
All that matters is that you can look in your mirror and HONESTLY tell the person you see there, that you've done your best

Born in 1989, Anthony Koukoufides dominated the AFL competition in a way very few have before or since.

He roamed the midfield, two sides and explosive for a taller, stronger opponent and ran tall and strong for more mobile midfielders.

Whatever I have played on Koukou, it always felt like you were holding back the tide.

There was nothing he couldn't do on the field, and you needed to be in the perfect position in every contest, just to give yourself a chance.

At the time, he was touted as the 21st Century footballer, the prototype for the next generation of footballers.

His best football was as good as I've ever seen, and, perhaps, as good as ever will be seen.

Fast-forward to 2005 and Koukou is still here and playing great football for the Blues. But where are the trophies?

Perhaps Cameron Bruce and Andrew Gabbey are in his mind? They have the ability to do it all in today's game, and it's difficult to understand why for the same reasons as Koukou is.

However, it's not that Koukou wasn't the right mould. It's just that it always has taken and always will take more than physical attributes to produce an AFL champion.

Many of Koukou's other qualities were undervalued because of the focus on his stature.

The other fact is that there are very few humans around with, dare I say it, the DNA capable of a similar balance of size, strength, speed and agility.

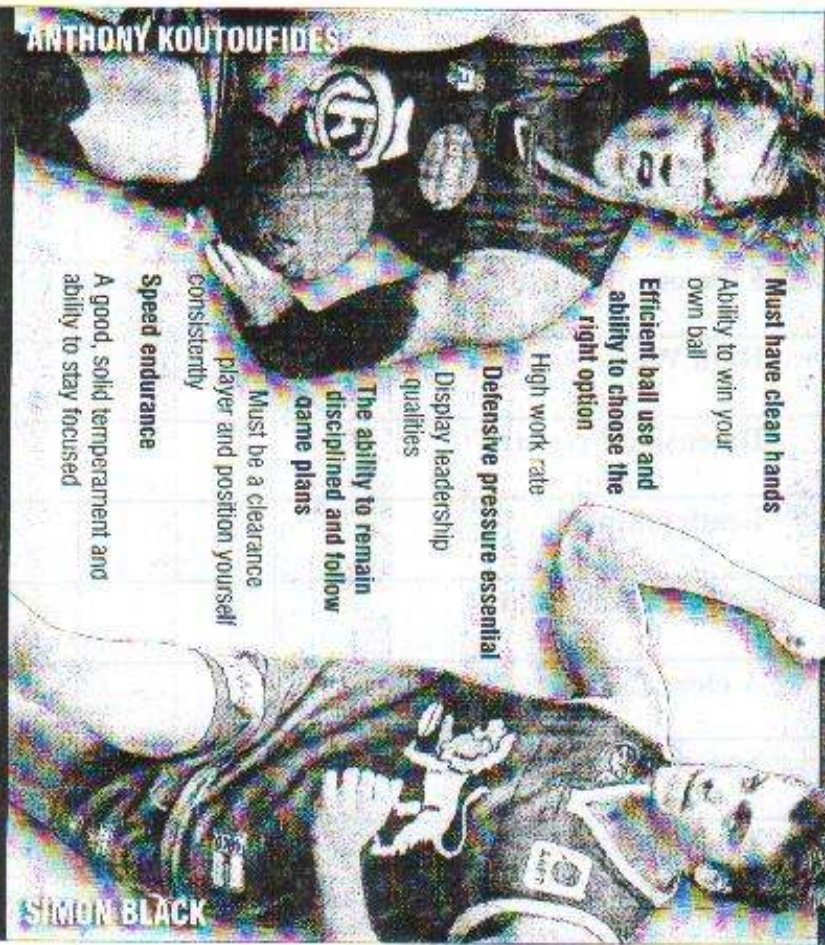
My point is that there is no particular size or shape that determines who earns the right to play this game at the highest level.

From the tallest player (Austin Scandolacci) to the shortest (Peter Della), and from the heaviest (Scott Hastings) to the lightest (Austin Morphet), each player has hand-icaps and advantages. It's how they use them that makes the footballer. It is interesting to consider this during the Australian under-18s carnival in Melbourne now.

Child recruiters are creating a keen eye over the best young talent in the land. And every club will have a different opinion as to what type of player will best adapt to changes in the game and who will complement the existing structure of its team.

So, what are the key attributes needed to become a consistent AFL player in the modern game?

BUCKS: 10 KEY ATTRIBUTES OF BEING A CONSISTENT AFL PLAYER



Must have clean hands

Ability to win your own ball

Efficient ball use and ability to choose the right option

High work rate

Defensive pressure essential

Display leadership qualities

The ability to remain disciplined and follow game plans

Must be a clearance player and position yourself consistently

Speed endurance

A good, solid temperament and ability to stay focused

There are 10 real secrets and, though attributes are easy to write down, they are more difficult to put in to action.

• **Clean hands:** The game is so fast, noisy and it will get faster. When the ball comes your way in the air or along the ground, you will often get just one crack at it before pressure arrives. A must.

• **Win your own ball:** There is one football in an arena filled with 20 men. It is the focus of the game, and the men is to have it in your hands

more than they have it in theirs. If you can't win the football when it's in your area, then you can't play at the highest level.

• **Efficient ball use:** Knowing your limitations as it turns part of efficient ball use. A player can be technically sound, but choose the wrong option and vice versa. If a team plays uncontrollable football, there are few more obvious and necessary is essential. If they are inbounding, there will be multiple targets, but choosing the right one becomes most important.

• **High work rate:** Every player needs to enjoy the hard work required to succeed at this level. It's not about endurance skills, strength, speed and endurance assets, and on-ward to utilize them. A player needs to have the ability to stay involved in the game at all times, either offensively or defensively.

• **Defensive pressure:** Once upon a time, getting the ball and kicking it was all that mattered. Almost every match now is decided by defensive pressure. It needs to be consistent

across the team, not or...to players drop off and it's detrimental. It doesn't mean only to tackle, spoil and harass, but also to account able and close off disposal options.

• **Be a leader:** The more the better. Communication on-field is invaluable. It assesses to set-ups, breaks in play and general play situations. Don't be afraid to use your voice to instruct and encourage. Clubs consider the personality of a prospective recruit to judge leadership potential.

• **Discipline:** Game plans are more complicated than they ever have been. Most clubs do extensive research of the opposition and attempt to implement a strategy to knock it over. Any lapse in concentration can cost an easy possession, a shot on goal and, ultimately, a match. Total team discipline is required.

• **Clearance work:** Some players are good in tight because they are strong, some because they are subtle, but most excel because they consistently position themselves well. It is a talent that will always be invaluable in the game.

• **Speed endurance:** You might have all the skill and football smarts in the world, but when you get to the top level so do most of your opponents. Closely linked with a high work rate, this feature relates more to being able to produce repeated sprints efforts for the entire match.

• **Temperament:** This feature tests all of a player's character. Aggression is a necessary part of the game, but if you lose your cool or drop your head out the field, you are no good to anyone. This aspect revolves around team orientation, because lack of temperament is due to selfishness. When looking at young talent for next year's draft, there is little doubt physical factors will come in to play. Perhaps a few Sam Mitchell, Peter Bellis and Lance Whitnall will be overlooked because of that.

Simon Black was passed over by every club at least once because he was deemed too slow.

But clubs are now interested in more than a player's physical aspects. Mental toughness and emotional equilibrium are difficult attributes to measure, but they are crucial personality aspects pivotal in assessing the potential of a player.

These were qualities we under-rated in Koukou when the tore the competition apart.

He has always looked and played like Taram, but he also has the substance inside to back it all up.