



**Bill Shorten
National Secretary
The Australian Workers' Union**

**Australian Netball Players' Association Inaugural Ball,
10 September 2005**

I am happy to join you tonight in what will go down in netball history as the first time all the players in the National Netball League are gathered in one room and the greatest demonstration of players' interest in the history of netball.

Tonight is dedicated to these elite athletes.

Without you, the players, there can be no National Netball League.

You are the irreplaceable actors in a sport with 500,000 registered participants.

Tonight shows that the APNA - led by Liz Ellis, Eloise Southby-Halbish and their fellow directors - supported by the AWU has value – long overdue value.

Look at these great players.

Who here does not consider it a highlight of their year to associate with the players, even for one evening?

This speech is going to make you roll your eyes and smile – you are going to wonder what quick, super optimistic words can a union secretary say of interest to us.

Ok! Here comes a challenge you didn't even know you had!

Each one of you is going to start planning now for the next five and ten years.

Planning for \$40,000 plus salaries, superannuation, full health insurance, 10-12 teams in ANZ competition, commercial and pay television rights, post-netball careers supported by netball, control of the use of your image and professional status generally – underpinned by a collective players' contract.

Plan for a time when your professional performance and commitment on court is matched by professional treatment off court (just like the blokes).

Turning to the awards for a moment.

In the history of netball, there are a few events that are legendary, identifiable by simple descriptions:

This season in netball, there were some spine-tingling outcomes, the clock beaters, the last second goals, the stunning upsets, the come-from-behind-victories.

In some instances, these events were the realisation of hard hours and tough year round pursuits of excellence.

In others, they were simply a singular fateful moment in time, when all the right elements aligned.

It has become popular these days to rank the greatest athletes or the greatest athletic moments in all sports.

Our goal tonight is to simply provide you with a scrapbook of memories of some of the more special events this season – told by the players in their votes, video clips and comradeship tonight.

Netballers have taught me you don't have to play all these sports yourself to have enjoyed the moments.

You need only to have watched and listened to the players on court or on TV or here tonight.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing two hopes for our winners.

My first hope is that this award will inspire you to achieve still more, and to desire even greater satisfaction from it. May this evening prove to be a beginning, not an end.

And second, my hope is that this evening – the 10th of September 2005 – will prove to be the happiest of evenings for you - unclouded by worry.

People who achieve much tend to be their cruellest bosses – give yourself tonight off.

Don't worry about the next training clinic or that next selection or that next season.

Enjoy tonight, you have truly earned it.