

St Kilda Saints Nude Photo Controversy



Figure 1. December 21, 2010, Herald Sun front page.

"Saints' Naked Fury" screamed a December 21, 2010 headline on the front page of the Herald Sun. "Defiant teenage girl vows to publish more photos" said a smaller headline. Anthony Dowsley's front page story contained a picture of three St Kilda footballers: Nick Riewoldt, Zac Dawson and Nick Dal Santo. (Dowsley, 2010, December 21) The front-page story sensationalized a situation that had been brewing for several months and had culminated in the release of nude pictures of the three aforementioned players on Facebook.

The story started back in May 2010, when an unnamed teenaged girl alleged that she had been sexually assaulted by two unnamed St Kilda players that she had met at school sanctioned football clinic held at her school. (Robinson, & Warner, 2010, May 26) (Parker, 2010, May 26) (Hinch, 2010, December 28) The girl also claimed that she had become pregnant with twins by one of these two players. (Robinson, & Warner, 2010, May 26) Police and Education Department investigated the case, because of the possibility of abuse by authority figures bound by duty of care laws. (Hinch, 2010, December 28) The AFL investigated the claim and determined that the girl did not meet the players at a school function. (Robinson, & Warner, 2010, May 26) Rather, she was introduced to the players following a March 27 game versus the Sydney Swans. (Robinson, & Warner, 2010, May 26) The St Kilda Saints alleged that the girl had misrepresented her age to the players, both in person and on Facebook. (Robinson, & Warner, 2010, May 26) After an investigation by the Victorian police, they too decided not to take any action in the case. (Robinson, & Warner, 2010, May 26) The girl later miscarried. (Munro, 2010, December 26) In the meantime, while legal and AFL investigation was ongoing, pictures of the girl dressed in a revealing St Kilda outfit had been forwarded by "St Kilda players, staff at the AFL Players Association, staff at the Department of Justice, the Transport Accident Commission and Melbourne Magistrate's Court." (Levy, 2010, June 4)

The lack of the players being named an issue that some people picked up on. (Parker, 2010, May 26) It would later be a factor when the story re-emerged with a new twist. In the meantime, the May 2010 pregnancy story had largely disappeared by the end of June.¹

In mid-December, the teenaged girl again made news when the Herald Sun reported that she had slept with a police officer who was investigating her claims of abuse. (Dowsley, 2010, December 21) Around December 18 or December 19, the unnamed now 17 year teenaged girl posted nude pictures of those three players to her Facebook wall and Twitter stream. (Butler & Millar, 2010, December 22) The pictures were allegedly posted after the girl tried and failed to sell them to Riewoldt's agent for \$20,000 (Butler & Millar, 2010, December 22) but were also allegedly posted as payback for the Herald Sun article. (Dowsley, 2010, December 21)² The girl alleged that she took the pictures when she was in a hotel room with the players. The AFL and Saints allege that she stole the pictures from the computer of a St Kilda player, Sam Gilbert.³ (Butler & Millar, 2010, December 22) (Dowsley, 2010, December 21) Newspapers such as the Herald Sun interviewed the girl and asked her why she published them. (Dowsley, 2010, December 21) The girl complained that she had been abused by the AFL and the Saints in their treatment of her during the earlier story. She felt powerless to take them on. By posting the pictures, she felt she could get her revenge on the organization that had tormented her. (Dowsley, 2010, December 21) By December 20, the Saints had been granted a restraining order, preventing the girl from publishing any more of the nude pictures she allegedly had in her possession. (Butler & Millar, 2010, December 22) The club promised to prevent her from profiting off any from the story, saying they would take legal action to ensure it. (Butler & Millar, 2010, December 22) By December 24, according to Twitter reports and ABC News, the girl had announced she would not post any more pictures. (ABC News, 2010, December 24) The girl went home to Queensland for the holidays, saying she had stopped posting pictures because she felt like she had victimized the players and felt guilty. (Munro, 2010, December 26) The story was largely over in the media by December 25.⁴ Australians continued to discuss the topic and a few bloggers tried to start a boycott of St Kilda's sponsors. (Stuchbery, 2010, December 28)

The second part of the controversy largely took place over six days: December 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25. Media attention then largely disappeared but the story continued to be discussed on Twitter under the hashtag #dickileaks. The media covered the story extensively on television, on the radio and in print. The story was the second nude photo scandal to happen in Australia in less than two months. There was a lot of social media

¹ A Google blog search helps support this assertion:

http://www.google.com/search?q=St+Kilda+Saints+pregnant+teenaged&hl=en&tbs=blg%3A1%2Ccdr%3A1%2Ccd_min%3A5%2F1%2F2010%2Ccd_max%3A11%2F1%2F2010

² Making the situation even more confusing, there are allegations on Twitter in Tweet's like

<http://twitter.com/anthonyqld/statuses/20381277014196224> and on blogs that there was never an attempt to sell pictures to the media, and that the story of selling the pictures was created by St Kilda and the AFL in order to promote their own cause.

³ Gilbert's pictures have been described by Riewoldt's agent as 'surprise' pictures, where the photographer took a picture without the person's knowledge of the event beforehand. (Hinch, 2010, December 24)

⁴ Google news searches showed only one story posted about the situation on the 25th, zero on the 26th and zero on the 27th:

<http://news.google.com/news/search?pz=1&cf=all&ned=au&hl=en&q=St+Kilda+Saints+teenaged+nude&cf=all&scoring=n>

buzz on Twitter and Facebook about the controversy, helped the fact that the story broke there and because the girl starting it had over 12,000 followers on Twitter. (Munro, 2010, December 26)

A third and largely unrelated part of the controversy occurred on the morning of January 1, 2011 when the famous AFL football player Brendan Fevola was locked up in a Brisbane jail for being a public nuisance and obstructing the police. (Pierik, 2011, January 1) Critics of the AFL and St Kilda were quick to pick up the story on Twitter and to tag it with the same hashtag, #dickileaks.⁵

The nude photo scandal is a recurring one in Australian sport.⁶ This one is a bit unique in that it involved three players having nude photos of them released, and the league and club's legal response in support of their players. It is also unique because of the backstory involved, and because of the revenge factor where the girl who released the pictures did so to get back, not at players, but at the club. The implications are thus possibly a bit further reaching in terms of a club's fanbase than the just the player.

Because of the complexities of this controversy, this chapter is broken up in four sections. The first will look at the impact of the controversy on the demographics of Zac Dawson's Twitter followers and the growth of fan pages about him on Facebook. The second section will look at how the controversy played out with Nick Riewoldt's fans on Facebook and LiveJournal. The third section will look at the Nick Dal Santo on smaller social networks followers and the growth of fan pages about him on Facebook. The last section will compare St Kilda to other teams in the AFL to see if the controversy impacted the club on Alexa, Twitter, Facebook, Ice Rocket and Google News. The purpose of this is to provide a comprehensive overview on how the situation impacted the four major players in the controversy: Zac Dawson, Nick Riewoldt, Nick Dal Santo and the St Kilda Saints.

Zac Dawson

Zac Dawson joined St Kilda in 2009, after playing for the Hawthorn Hawks 2005 to 2006, and Box Hill in the VFL during the 2007 and 2009 seasons. (Zac Dawson, 2010, December 20) In 2010, he played 20 games for St Kilda and played in all three Grand Finals matches that year for the team. (Zac Dawson, 2010, December 20) A December 27, 2010 search on Google.com. au for "Zac Dawson" brought up 212,000 results. Unlike the other two players involved in this controversy, he is the only one who has a Twitter account, @zacd_6. He is probably the least well known of the players involved in this controversy.

Of the three players who were visible in the photographs, Dawson's picture is probably the least problematic. Hinch (2010, December 24) described the picture and scene:

⁵ An example of this was the January 1, 2011 tweet by @Mel_bourne_oz at http://twitter.com/Mel_bourne_oz/statuses/21022325700825088 that said: "Was this the last person to see Brendan Fevola b4 his arrest <http://bit.ly/gorjr4> Its_k_isabella #dickileaks." Another tweet that made this connection was posted by @philquin: <http://twitter.com/philquin/statuses/21005757755432960> "Me and Fevola: the Obi-Wan Kenobi of Footy Flashers #Dickileaks: <http://wp.me/pYxCj-qY> "

⁶ Recent nude photo controversies included the Ben Cousins and Laura Bingle story, and the Joel Monaghan Mad Monday pictures. There was another photo controversy including Shane Warne.

Zac Dawson, who has been kept under the radar, is invading Riewoldt's space, grinning (a little self-consciously) at the snapper and holding what looks like a blue condom wrapper only centimetres from his skipper's kipper.

This section will look examine the effect that the controversy had on Zac Dawson's Twitter followers, looking at growth and to see if the controversy changed the profile of who followed him. Beyond that, this section will look at the growth of Facebook fan pages featuring Dawson. The purpose of doing this is to understand how Australian sport fans on Twitter respond when a major athlete is involved in a negative controversy as Dawson is one of several Australian athletes on Twitter to have gotten negative attention as a result of controversy in the past four months.⁷ Athlete accessibility on Twitter is seen as a positive by many fans as it removes the media barrier. On the other hand, athlete accessibility is often seen as a negative by clubs and leagues as it can cause public relations and sponsorship issues for them. The other purpose is to understand growth and contractions patterns in response to controversy: Do peripheral players see similar growth or contraction as major players who have a higher profile? How will this situation effect Dawson's personal brand and how may Dawson's involvement in this scandal impact St Kilda?

Part of the backdrop to the St Kilda nude photo controversy was the level of fame that the teenaged girl at the heart of the controversy has achieved, with one of those levels of fame being measured by the total number of followers that the girl has accrued on Twitter. This number topped 12,000 by December 25, 2010. (Munro, 2010, December 26) In terms of Australian sport figures and organizations on Twitter, this puts her close to the Australian Open tennis event,⁸ Wendell Sailor of the St. George Illawarra Dragons,⁹ the Australian triathlete Daniel MacPherson,¹⁰ and the Rugby World Cup.¹¹ Of roughly 900 Australian sport related Twitter accounts identified, the teenaged girl's account would rank in the top 20.¹² As the media controversy went on, she continued to update about her feelings and what her actions would be.

It is against the backdrop of the teenaged girl's action that Zac Dawson's Twitter account needs to be viewed. Figure 2 shows a screenshot of Dawson's Twitter updates around the period that the controversy took place.

Figure 2. December 29, 2010 Screenshot of Zac Dawson's Twitter Profile.

⁷ Two athletes other athletes are the cricketer Shane Warne, who gained a lot of attention because of his relationship with Elizabeth Hurley. Some of his flirting with her occurred over Twitter. The other athlete who received a lot of attention was Stephanie Rice, who said made a slur against gays on her Twitter account. This statement was picked up by the media. Another St Kilda player was involved in an alleged sexual assault that took place six years earlier, with the investigation taking place in October 2010. The player made a Tweet that was viewed as being "rape apologist," in that it did not condemn rape.

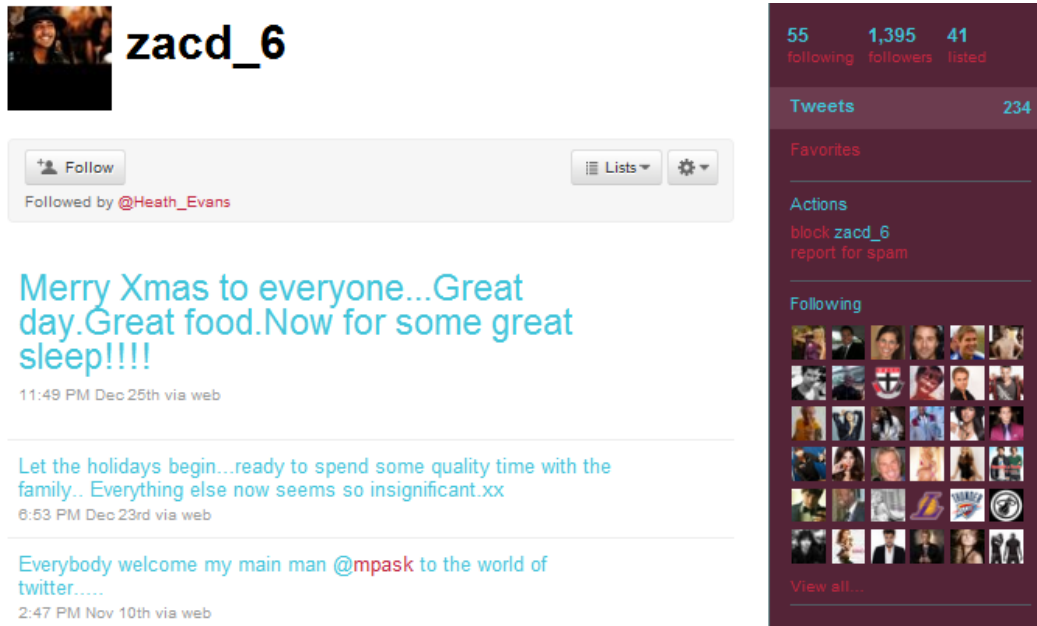
⁸ The Australian Open is @australianopen on Twitter and, as of December 29, 2010, had 13,711 followers.

⁹ As of December 29, 2010, Sailor, found on Twitter at @RealBigDell, had 12,957 followers.

¹⁰ Daniel MacPherson, found at @DanMacPherson, had 12,151 followers on Twitter.

¹¹ As of December 29, 2010, @rugbyworldcup had 11,999 followers on Twitter.

¹² See Appendix 14, December 29, 2010, Australian and New Zealand Twitter Account Follower Totals, for a partial list of those 900 accounts. Only accounts that had more than 1,000 followers were included.



Dawson updated and his December 23 tweet could be seen as referencing the ongoing controversy. That he updates, even if irregularly, probably gave navel gazers, fans and haters a reason to follow him while the story continued.¹³ For the media, it gave them another possible outlet to get details regarding the story and Dawson's involvement in it and reaction to it.

The first way that the effect on the controversy as it pertains to Zac Dawson's Twitter account will be looked at is by tracking his follower growth compared to St Kilda's official account, St Kilda fansites and other St Kilda players not involved in the controversy. This data can be found in Table 1 for the period between December 15 and December 26, 2010.¹⁴

Table 1 .

St Kilda Twitter Account Follower Totals.

| Date | zacd_6 | stevenb aker10 | gramsy_ 1 | go_saints | njbrown 17 | Robeddy 40 | RWBFooty | Saints_FC | stkildafc |
|--------|--------|-------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 15-Dec | 1290 | 2776 | 352 | 319 | 1089 | 859 | 142 | 197 | 5668 |
| 16-Dec | 1295 | 2784 | 352 | 319 | 1092 | 861 | 142 | 197 | 5682 |
| 17-Dec | 1296 | 2790 | 359 | 319 | 1095 | 863 | 142 | 197 | 5684 |
| 18-Dec | 1299 | 2796 | 426 | 320 | 1099 | 867 | 141 | 197 | 5683 |
| 19-Dec | 1301 | 2803 | 436 | 321 | 1104 | 869 | 141 | 197 | 5688 |
| 20-Dec | 1301 | 2807 | 448 | 321 | 1113 | 870 | 141 | 197 | 5697 |
| 21-Dec | 1326 | 2849 | 493 | 328 | 1125 | 879 | 142 | 198 | 5738 |
| 23-Dec | 1369 | 2967 | 679 | 356 | 1144 | 907 | 142 | 203 | 5906 |
| 24-Dec | 1380 | 3000 | 702 | 368 | 1147 | 912 | 142 | 204 | 5946 |
| 25-Dec | 1387 | 3012 | 707 | 374 | 1152 | 921 | 142 | 206 | 5972 |

¹³ This is pure subsection on the author's part. A correlation was run for all accounts with 1,000+ followers found in Appendix 14. The correlation was 0.09. This implies that there is no/random relationship between the total number of status updates and the number of followers.

¹⁴ Extended data for the period between December 1 and December 29 can be found in Appendix 13.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|------|------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 26-Dec | 1389 | 3012 | 709 | 374 | 1154 | 924 | 142 | 206 | 5981 |
|--------|------|------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|

In the period leading up to the controversy, December 15 to December 20, Dawson saw an increase of 11 total followers. In the period from when the story broke on the 20th until most of the media attention faded on the 26th, Dawson saw an increase of 88 followers. The slope for follower acquisition during the period from the December 15 to December 20 is 2.71. The slope for the period during the controversy between December 21 and December 26 is 12.71. The controversy clearly gave Dawson a bump in the total number of followers. Jason Gram's slope was 24.2 and 42.2 over the same periods respectively. He has been on Twitter for a shorter period of time than Dawson and has been updating more frequently.¹⁵ Dawson's slope during the controversy was six times amount of the period preceding it. In comparison, Gram's slope was only twice that during the controversy. Steven Baker, not implicated in the scandal, had a slope of 6.6 prior to and 33.11 during. His numbers closely resemble that of Dawson's. Nick Brown and Rob Eddy had slopes of 3.70 and 2.60 before, and 5.77 and 9.03 during it. Thus, of the Saints players identified on Twitter, Zac Dawson's slope really stands out when compared to his teammates. His total number of new followers also stands out, with only two of the other four having beaten him: Baker and Gram. Most signs point to people having followed Dawson in response to the controversy.

Assuming that the data is right, that Zac Dawson saw an increase in followers as a result of the controversy, the next question worth asking is who is now following him and how did the population following him change from the population that followed him prior to the controversy? On November 18, December 18 and December 28, the ozfollowers.pl script found in Appendix 5 was run. This script got a list of all the followers for Zac Dawson, recorded the total number of followers, follows, lists they have. It also recorded their profile description, language, timezone and user inputted location. The user inputted location was run against an 80,000 plus long list of user created locations and standard names found in Appendix 4. The purpose of this list is to identify what city, state and country Dawson's followers are from. If a person's location was unknown or was left blank, an attempt was made to identify their state or country location using their time zone information. For November 18, a city was identified for 578 of Dawson's 1,223 followers. For December 18, a city was identified for 598 of 1,300 followers. For December 28, a city was identified for 655 of Dawson's 1,396 followers. After this data was gathered, the total number of followers per city was tabulated. The complete list of city totals can be found in Appendix 13. Table 2 shows the cities that had a follower total change between December 18 and December 28.

Table 2

Twitter Follower by City Location Difference

| City,State,Country | 18-Nov | 18-Dec | 28-Dec | Difference 18-Nov to 18-Dec | Difference 18-Nov to 28-Dec | Difference 18-Dec to 28-Dec |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--|--|--|
| Melbourne,Victoria,Australia | 346 | 362 | 391 | 16 | 45 | 29 |

¹⁵ Like Dawson, he also referenced the controversy in an oblique way, saying " Nothing will break the saints, no matter what crap people try" in a Tweet found at http://twitter.com/gramsy_1/status/16727832835129345 .

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Geelong,Victoria,Australia | 1 | 1 | 12 | 0 | 11 | 11 |
| Perth,Western Australia,Australia | 23 | 25 | 30 | 2 | 7 | 5 |
| Adelaide,South Australia,Australia | 30 | 32 | 35 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| Brisbane,Queensland,Australia | 10 | 10 | 12 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Sydney,New South Wales,Australia | 18 | 21 | 23 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| East Devonport,Tasmania,Australia | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Geelong,Victoria,Australia | 11 | 11 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Gold Coast,Queensland,Australia | 3 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| London,England,United Kingdom | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Montrose,Tasmania,Australia | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Seattle,Washington,United States | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Werribee,Victoria,Australia | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Parkdale,Victoria,Australia | 3 | 2 | 1 | -1 | -2 | -1 |
| Warrnambool,Victoria,Australia | 5 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 | -1 |

The difference in Twitter follower by locations does not show any strong patterns of unfollowing. The two cities that saw negative growth were both in Victoria, which could be seen as potentially problematic in that Victoria and the Melbourne suburbs are traditional strongholds for the AFL. If St Kilda has a similar pattern of contraction around the area, then this could signal larger problems that Dawson's data suggests. Dawson's growth does suggest national and international interest in the controversy: Dawson gained followers in all states, not including the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory. Dawson also picked up followers from the United Kingdom and the United States. If Dawson's involvement is what these followers know of the Australian game, it might hinder the growth of the game internationally.

Twitter follower data can also be determined by state, where there are fewer unknown locations. In the case of the November 18 data, state location was available for 728 followers, 764 for December 18, and 820 for December 28. The same methodology for cities was used to get this information for states. In some ways, this data is less useful because it can mask unfollows that take place. Still, it is worth looking at in order to see how the story was received nationally and internationally in terms of gaining or losing followers across a wider population. The complete list of states can be found in Appendix 13. States that saw a gain or loss can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Twitter Follower by State Difference

| State,Country | 18-Nov | 18-Dec | 28-Dec | Difference 18-Nov to 18-Dec | Difference 18-Nov to 28-Dec | Difference 18-Dec to 28-Dec |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--|--|--|
| Victoria,Australia | 535 | 562 | 596 | 27 | 61 | 34 |
| Western Australia,Australia | 42 | 43 | 50 | 1 | 8 | 7 |
| South Australia,Australia | 42 | 43 | 47 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| New South Wales,Australia | 40 | 45 | 48 | 5 | 8 | 3 |
| Queensland,Australia | 25 | 26 | 29 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Tasmania,Australia | 22 | 23 | 26 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| England,United Kingdom | 6 | 5 | 6 | -1 | 0 | 1 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Washington,United States | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Here again it is apparent that the controversy was picked up nationally and internationally. Most of the additional follows were in Victoria, the AFL stronghold. All states saw an increase in the total number of followers, save the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. These patterns largely support the conclusions based on the city data.

Beyond the difference in location, it is worth looking at how Dawson's followers use Twitter and if there was a difference in the type of Twitter user follow Dawson before the controversy and after the story was mostly being ignored by the media. The mean, median and mode was calculated for followers, friends, listed and status updates for all of Dawson's followers on November 18, December 18 and December 28. This data can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Zac Dawson Twitter Followers Stats

| Date | Math | Followers | Friends | Listed | Status Updates |
|----------------|------|-----------|---------|--------|----------------|
| 18-Nov-10 Mean | | 183.86 | 307.44 | 6.99 | 965.23 |
| Median | | 31 | 160 | 0 | 95.5 |
| Mode | | 2 | 61 | 0 | 0 |
| 18-Dec-10 Mean | | 184.70 | 319.74 | 7.03 | 911.05 |
| Median | | 32 | 166 | 0 | 86 |
| Mode | | 2 | 118 | 0 | 0 |
| 28-Dec-10 Mean | | 177.54 | 312.46 | 6.61 | 895.11 |
| Median | | 31 | 162 | 0 | 79.5 |
| Mode | | 2 | 33 | 0 | 0 |

Between the period before the start of the controversy and the period after the controversy was largely over, there was a small but significant change in the type of person following Zac Dawson on Twitter. New followers had fewer people they followed, updated less often, appeared on fewer lists and had fewer friends. In social media terms, these are the followers people want: Messages sent on out by those they follow will more likely be read than if the people followed more accounts. Dawson's new followers are likely the kind that Dawson's sponsors and St Kilda want as these new followers are going to read what he says. The problem though is if these people are following to see how Dawson responds to the controversy; people looking for negative brand message are not good for Dawson's or St Kilda's brand.

The controversy appeared to result in a growth of Twitter followers for Zac Dawson. These followers were located across Australia and internationally. They followed fewer people and updated less often. While these numbers could be construed as positive, against the backdrop of the teenaged girl's total followers, the numbers suggest navel gazing behavior, which could have long term negative consequences for Dawson's personal brand and St Kilda's goodwill amongst fans in the AFL.

Early on the morning of December 21, before the controversy had fully gained steam, a search was done on Facebook to identify Facebook groups featuring Zac

Dawson. Thirteen groups were found. From December 21 to December 28, each group had the total membership checked at 7:00 AEST using a script, facebook_followers.pl, found in Appendix 13. The results for the full period are available in Appendix 13. An abbreviated version of the results for the period between December 21 to December 25 are found in Table 5. Groups that had no change were removed.

Table 5

Zac Dawson Facebook Groups

| Name | Type | Url | 21-Dec | 22-Dec | 23-Dec | 24-Dec | 25-Dec | Difference |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Give Zac Dawson a FRIGGIN game! | Common Interest | gid=26587636537 | 107 | 107 | 107 | 107 | 106 | -1 |
| who is zac dawson? | Just for Fun | gid=117682938271903 | 280 | 280 | 279 | 279 | 279 | -1 |
| ZAC DAWSON | Sports & Recreation | gid=198619550653 | 292 | 290 | 291 | 291 | 291 | -1 |
| Zac Dawson for All-Australian Fullback of the Century | Sports & Recreation | gid=22974254446 | 64 | 64 | 64 | | | |
| zac dawson should get facebook | Just for Fun | gid=159043742851 | 62 | 250 | 250 | 250 | 250 | 188 |

Of the thirteen groups, three lost members, one switched from public membership to closed membership and another group added 188 members. The latter group, because of the consistent membership totals at 250, was likely done as a result of one person using multiple accounts to get to a specific number. This assumption is made because the total got to 250 and then did not change over the course of a week.

The Facebook contraction indicates that Dawson's involvement in the controversy was perceived as slightly unfavorable by some of his supporters, who left and thus disassociated themselves from him. Dawson did not see any benefit as a result of increased interest on fan pages and groups that were created by fans. His fan base on Facebook groups was small and overall, was largely not impacted by the event.

As a peripheral player in this controversy, Zac Dawson did not generate a large amount of interest. He only got 88 new followers on Twitter in response to the controversy. The location of his follower growth was spread across the country. The followers that Dawson got on Twitter followed fewer people and updated less often. There was some contraction of Dawson's fanbase on Facebook. As a non-famous athlete not being focused on as much by the media, Dawson appeared to get more of a free ride by fans that continued on in their lack of interest of him. For other less famous athletes involved in similar situations, this may be good news as they are likely to avoid similar culpability. Dawson's presence on Twitter did not appear to aggravate the situation, which supports the idea that athlete accessibility is good. Beyond that, there are some minor indicators that Dawson's involvement may hurt his personal brand and that it may have long term negative consequences for St Kilda's brand.

Nick Riewoldt

Nick Riewoldt is one of the superstars of the AFL. In 2009, he broke up with long time girlfriend Stephanie McIntosh, a well known Australian actress and singer. (Stephanie McIntosh, 2010, December 22) A December 27, 2010 search on Google.com.au brought up 258,000 results when the search term "Nick Riewoldt" was used. A search for Riewoldt Kilda brought up 383,000 results. As of December 26, 2010, a Nick Riewoldt fan page on Facebook has over 4,000 fans. When he went down with an injury during the 2010 season, so important is he to that team that people wondered how the team would do with out him. He has the popularity, all around good looks and television presence that he regularly appeared as an analyst while convalescing. He is the current captain of the St Kilda Saints. Of the three players involved in this controversy, he had the most visibility prior to the start of the controversy. During the controversy, he was the player that the press chose to focus on above all others including Sam Gilbert, the player who took the pictures.

Riewoldt's pictures was described by Hinch (2010, December 24) of 3AW News Talk radio:

Riewoldt says Gilbert snapped the unauthorised pic of him naked as he got out of bed. Sleeps in the nude like most people.

Look at the picture. As thousands of you have. What do you notice, apart from the fact that Riewoldt has waxed his pubic area. And, perhaps, that he is well-endowed.

Any normal man, sprung like that, would instinctively, inherently, try to cover his genitals. Riewoldt does not. His hands are on each side of his penis. As if posing.

The picture is not as bad as that of Nick Dal Santo, and is worse than of Zac Dawson.

Beyond the release of the picture featuring Riewoldt, the player has had greater visibility and involvement during the controversy because of his actions in response to the controversy and because of the alleged actions of his agent. His involvement in the situation has also been elevated because St Kilda drew the greatest amount of attention to the picture involving him, choosing to ignore the more sexually explicit picture of Nick Dal Santo that showed Dal Santo masturbating. Riewoldt held a press conference on December 21 to explain the pictures. A club spokesperson was quoted by Bryce Corbett (2010, December 22) on *The Punch* as saying: "Let's not forget" that "he is the five-time best and fairest winner of this football club and was all-Australian captain last year". During the press conference, Riewoldt told reporters "This photo was taken on a holiday by a teammate when I got out of bed over 12 months ago ... by a teammate who I trust. And I asked that it would be deleted then and there and clearly wasn't. And I'm bitterly disappointed at my teammate for that." (Brodie, 2010, December 21) During Riewoldt's press conference, St Kilda's CEO jumped in to clarify that Riewoldt's picture was taken from Sam Gilbert's computer with out Riewoldt's knowledge or consent. During Riewoldt's press conference, aired live on some Australian television and radio stations, Riewoldt also affirmed his support for his team mate and the club: "Sam and I are both professionals, and we will both give everything we've got to the St Kilda football club and we will have a great working relationship going forward." (Brodie, 2010, December 21) While this saga was going on, Riewoldt's agent repeatedly referred to the 17-year-old

girl at the heart of the situation was "that woman." (Hinch, 2010, December 24) This type of phraseology aggravated a number of people observing the situation. (Hinch, 2010, December 24)

Riewoldt's fame, Riewoldt's full frontal nudity, Riewoldt's press conference and St Kilda's actions as they pertained to Riewoldt's involvement are likely contributing factors in how the controversy played out. These variables provide a backdrop from which to explore how the controversy effected Riewoldt's fan base, and by extension, St Kilda's fan base. This section will explore demographic changes, community size changes, and comparative growth of pro-Riewoldt and anti-Riewoldt groups on Facebook and LiveJournal. Facebook was chosen over other social networks because it is Australia's most popular social network and because the controversy started there. Outside of Twitter, it is probably the social network that is most involved in discussing the situation. Twitter's lack of groups for people to join, lack of demographic data available on the site and the necessity of doing more of a textual analysis are why it is not explored more in this section.¹⁶ Beyond Facebook, LiveJournal is the only other site to be analyzed as it provides some demographic information about its users. The purpose section is to understand who Riewoldt's fans are and how the controversy effected or did not effect demographic shifts.

Facebook provides demographic details about people who are interested in keywords that advertisers enter on their "What do you want to advertise?" page located at <http://www.facebook.com/ads/create/>. On December 20, 26, 28 and 30, this page was checked, with various demographic data collected about people on Facebook who are interested in Nick Riewoldt. This data can be found in Appendix 13. Facebook's data is pulled from people who list people on their profile, group membership and fan page likes. Given that, it is fair to assume that some people who are counted as Riewoldt fans may belong to anti-Riewoldt groups; the two types of fans cannot be separated. At times, numbers do not add up, such as the total number of Australian men and Australian women interested in Riewoldt may not add up to the total number of people in Australia interested in Riewoldt. This is because not everyone puts all their demographic details in their profile. The absence of this may skew actual results, but it is the authors belief, despite the lack of evidence, that non-inclusion of demographic data is consistent across all groups; consequently, the author draws conclusions based on that assumption.

The first group to be looked at is the international reception for Riewoldt. On December 20 and 30th, the total number of fans in New Zealand and the United States were checked. For New Zealand, on December 20, there were fewer than 20 fans of Riewoldts. This was unchanged by December 30, 2010. In the case of the United States, there were also fewer than 20 fans on December 20. By December 30, this number had changed to 100. Interest in Riewoldt had not grown in New Zealand, but it had grown in the United States, where the AFL has been trying to grow the game and where the local leagues have been semi-successful in using social media to help Australian expatriates play and to get Americans interested in playing the game. That Americans took an

¹⁶ When the story first broke, the author attempted to find Riewoldt fansites on their own domains in order to explore how the controversy impacted on their traffic. None were found. Beyond that, Riewoldt data was collected alongside Zac Dawson and Nick Dal Santo information on smaller sites. Some of that data is available in Appendix 13. As the numbers did not change much, the author felt it would mostly be a repeat of the conclusions reached in the Dal Santo section and thus did not complete a similar analysis for Riewoldt.

interest in Riewoldt may be a negative, because it could hurt the league's ability to grow their international audience by making a joke of one their most visible players.

Across the whole of Australia, there were 11,880 people on Facebook who were interested in Riewoldt on December 20. By December 26, this number had gone up to 12,060. It went up again on December 28 to 12,180. By December 30, the number was again down to 11,880. The overall fluctuation was 300 total people, or 2.46% of totals fans based on the December 28 high. That number is not particularly significant. It is when Australian fans are broken down more that the results get more interesting.

Across Australian states, there was no change in the total number of people on Facebook interested in Riewoldt between December 20 and December 30 in the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, a 20 person increase in New South Wales, and an 80 person increase in South Australia. The two states that saw growth in interest in Riewoldt are very different in terms of their relationship with the AFL: One is a traditional AFL strong hold and one is not. That interest in Riewoldt was not higher in New South Wales is likely a good thing because the AFL is hoping to grow the game there, with an expansion team from the area set to start playing in the league in 2012.

Information about the total people interested in Riewoldt on Facebook was also collected on December 20 and December 30 for the following cities: Adelaide, Alice Springs, Broome, Cairns, Darwin, Devonport, Goulburn, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth, Rockhampton, Townsville, Warwick. Of these cities, three saw a change in the number of people interested in Riewoldt: Adelaide and Melbourne both saw an increase of 20 people, and Hobart saw an increase of 40 people. The other cities remained unchanged. These three cities are all in AFL territory. Riewoldt originally being from the city may explain the increase in interest from people living in Hobart. (Nick Riewoldt, 2010, December 23)

The controversy appeared to create additional interest in Riewoldt amongst women. There were 5,400 female Australian fans on December 20, 5,520 on December 26, 5,420 fans on December 28 and 5,560 female Australian fans on December 30, 2010. This is an increase of 2.87% and, percentage wise, is slightly above the overall interest increase. The numbers for women interested in men remained unchanged. The numbers for women interested in women increased by 20. Thus, homosexual female fans were more likely to be interested in Riewoldt as a result of the controversy than their heterosexual counterparts. This may suggest that heterosexual female fans were more upset by the controversy than their lesbian counterparts because they did list Riewoldt as an interest at the same rate as the whole Australian population.

Interest in Riewoldt by Australian men on Facebook moved around: 6,340 on December 20th, 6,540 on December 26th, 6,540 on December 28th and 6,360 on December 30, 2010. Interest by men went up by 200, only to come down and be 20 more than on the day before the controversy. For homosexual men, the numbers did not change. For heterosexual men, the total number of people interested in Riewoldt increased by 20. This situation is an inverse of women and suggests that responses by gays, lesbians, heterosexual women and heterosexual men were different and that all had different concerns regarding various aspects of the controversy.

For college graduates in Australia, the total number of people interested in Riewoldt prior to the scandal on December 20th was 1,060, on December 26th when the

scandal began to be ignored by the media was 1,140 and remained that amount of December 30th. For people in college, the number was 460 on December 20th and was 380 on December 26th and December 30th. The total number of people in high school interested in Riewoldt was consistent across all three dates: 1,080. During the scandal, Riewoldt gained fans who had finished college, lost fans who were in college and remained unchanged amongst high schoolers. Like orientation, this suggests that these three different peer groups had different concerns over the scandal. The loss of fans from the starting period amongst those in college is one of the only groups to experience loss amongst all populations and may signal institutional problems for St Kilda and the AFL in how its responded to the controversy. It suggests that this group of soon to be wage earners who the club and league will be dependent on in the future for revenue may dislike the tactics used. Losing this group could also be a problem because historically, the Australian rules has been depicted as the sport for the more educated and middle class while rugby league has been portrayed as the game for the more working class.

Another way at looking at Facebook demographic data for Riewoldt involves looking at the ages of fans. This data was gathered on December 20 and December 30. For the group between 20 and 29 years old, there was an increase of 140 fans over that period. For the group between 30 and 39, there was a decrease of forty fans over that period. For the group between 40 and 40, there was no change between December 20 and December 30. For the group between 50 and 59, there was an increase of sixty people interested in Riewoldt. For the group between 60 and 64, there was an increase of forty people. Older fans were more likely to be interested in Riewoldt in the period after the controversy, whereas people in their 30s were less likely to be interested in Riewoldt.

When all the Nick Riewoldt Facebook demographic data is examined together, it suggests that there are institutional problems for either the St Kilda Saints or the AFL based on who stopped being interested in Riewoldt or who became interested in Riewoldt. Heterosexual women did not respond but heterosexual men did. University students lost interest but college graduates gained interest. 30 to 39 year olds lost interest but the cohorts below and two levels above them gained interest.

Beyond Facebook's demographic data, another way of understanding how a fan community responded is by looking at fan page and group expansion and contraction. This data was collected for Nick Riewoldt from December 20 to December 30th. The December 20th data was collected at 18:00 AEST and was found doing a search on Facebook for Nick Riewoldt. On that date, 202 total fan pages and groups were found. From December 21 to December 30th, the total number of members was recorded at 7:00 AEST using a script, facebook_followers.pl, found in Appendix 13. The results can be found in Appendix 13. The total number of groups was much higher than the total for both Dal Santo and Dawson, confirming the interest in and popularity of Riewoldt.

Of the 202 groups, at least one was subsequently deleted and two others moved from public to private. Thirteen saw a loss of between one and four members. Eighty-nine saw no growth or contraction in membership. Forty-six saw an increase of one or two followers. Five saw a growth of one-hundred members or more. Of the five that saw one hundred plus increases, two have names that suggest they are pro-Riewoldt: Nick Riewoldt and Nick riewoldt fans! The other three have names that imply a negative Riewoldt sentiment: I never cry. lol jk I'm Nick Riewoldt., I can kick a goal from 1 metre out lol jks im Nick Riewoldt, and Whats red, white and black and crys like a little girl??

NICK RIEWOLDT. Of the other groups in the top ten for most membership gains, four express a negative sentiment towards Riewoldt in their names and one implies a positive sentiment. If the membership growth of the pro-groups and negative groups, the total is 813 and 953 respectively: Negative sentiment Riewoldt groups grew faster than positive sentiment groups.

Facebook users had a mixed reaction to Riewoldt related groups. A number of them joined pro groups and anti-groups. On the other hand, most groups did not see much membership change as a result of the controversy and very few saw losses. If liking or joining a fan page or group is seen as expressing allegiance or solidarity to a group or expressing interest in a specific, more people were willing to do that than the inverse of disassociating from groups by quitting them. That group willing to express an opinion is the important part here: A lot more people were willing to align themselves with some Riewoldt sentiment than they were to disassociate. The vocal support of both issues probably indicates larger problems for Riewoldt and his club: People are less content to disassociate and quietly leave but rather feel the need to be vocal in their position. This means that the issue likely will have a longer shelf life than if people had chosen to remain quiet or disassociate.

LiveJournal is a popular Australian blogging site. Its characteristics are discussed more in the section about Nick Dal Santo. One of LiveJournal's features is that it allows people to list interests, and many people list very athletes. On December 20 and December 30th, the total number of people interested in Nick Riewoldt was checked. There was no change in totals or composition of the six people who listed Riewoldt as an interest. Of the six who listed as an interest, two listed Nick Dal Santo as an interest, with a crossover of 33%. Of the six who listed Riewoldt as an interest on LiveJournal, only one has updated since the scandal broke¹⁷ and in her recent updates, she has not mentioned the situation. Location wise, only two of the six list a city of residence and both are from Melbourne. Five of the six list a country of residence and all of those are from Australia. Four of the six list a year of birth: 1983, 1989, 1990 and 1990. This puts the mean year of birth at 1988 and the mean year of birth at 1989. The demographic composition puts them into a group of college-aged fans who are likely ideal fans in terms of who the AFL is trying to cater to.

Facebook showed a small demographic shift in terms of who was interested in Nick Riewoldt: Fans were gained for people between 50 and 64 years of age and between 20 to 29 years of age. Both men and women became fans of Riewoldt in the period after the controversy, with relatively big gains for lesbian women and heterosexual men. Riewoldt also gained fans amongst college graduates on Facebook. Interest increased around Hobart, Riewoldt's home town. While those groups gained, Riewoldt lost fans in college and fans whom were between the ages of 30 and 39. These shifts occurred while people were active in joining groups and fan pages in support or condemnation of Nick Riewoldt. Over on LiveJournal, Riewoldt's fans are in their early 20s and their stated interest in the athlete did not change as a result of the controversy but neither did it lead them to state a position, unlike their peers on Facebook. If LiveJournal is ignored, the Riewoldt data suggests that this is a controversy that effected his fanbase and will have long lasting consequences, as people did not remain silent, instead choosing to take sides for him or against him.

¹⁷ This user is <http://queeniegalore.livejournal.com/> .

Nick Dal Santo

Nick Dal Santo was drafted by St Kilda at the start of his career and has been an important component to the team since his 2004 season. (Nick Dal Santo, 2010, December 25). A December 27, 2010 search on Google.com. au for "Nick Dal Santo" brought up 325,000 results. As of December 28, 2010, he had 3,660 fans on Facebook.¹⁸ Of the three players, he is the second most popular.

Of the players photographed, Dal Santo's picture is probably the worst. Hinch (2010, December 24) described the picture and scene:

Then there's the other photo of Dal Santo, presumably taken by 'artist' Gilbert. Apparently the Bill Henson of the footy set. The club hasn't even attempted to explain this one.

Dal Santo is captured, with his penis exposed, playing with himself.

This section will look at the size of the fan community for Nick Dal Santo on Facebook and on a selection of other, smaller social networks and websites to see if the controversy resulted in a response amongst them. Smaller sites are important because they give an idea as to the wider world's awareness of Australian sport events and insight into how niche communities view them. Sites referenced include 43 Things, Alexa, bebo, BlackPlanet, blogger, Care2, delicious, digg.com.au, ebay, Facebook and LiveJournal.

43 Things is a goal setting site. As of December 28, 2010, Alexa ranks the site as the 2,833 most popular in Australia. People use the site to goals related to athletes, including ones like "Meet Michael Jordan"¹⁹ and "See Lebron James play."²⁰ On December 21, 26 and 28, the author search 43 Things for the phrase "Dal Santo." There were no search results. On December 28, in order to verify that there was nothing related to Dal Santo on 43 Things, a Google search was done using the phrase: "Dal Santo" site:43things.com. This too resulted in zero results. Nick Dal Santo was not popular enough to rate a goal before the event; his involvement did not rate highly enough for 43 Things's users to create one.

When the controversy first happened, Google was searched in an attempt to identify Nick Dal Santo fansites or a personal site. In addition, the AFL website and Wikipedia were both checked. No fansites were found. If they had been found, it would have been possible to try to get data from Alexa regarding fansite rank.

Bebo is a social network owned by AOL. As of December 28, 2010, Alexa ranks it as the 874th most popular in Australia and 159th most popular in New Zealand. The Australian sport community on bebo has become mostly inactive, despite a high point where groups like the Canberra Raiders dance squad had their official internet presence on it. Early on December 21, 26 and 28, Bebo was searched for Nick Dal Santo. On

¹⁸ The number comes from <http://www.facebook.com/ads/create/> . When Zac Dawson was put in, the name was not included as an interest. Riewoldt 12,180 fans.

¹⁹ Goal can be found at <http://www.43things.com/things/view/91151/meet-michael-jordan> . 37 people have this as a goal on December 28, 2010.

²⁰ Goal can be found at <http://www.43things.com/things/view/842695/see-lebron-james-play> . 4 people have this as a goal on December 28, 2010.

both dates, 2 people and 1 group were found. The group was a general group dedicated to the St Kilda Saints. The two people were both female and one listed her age as 18. The picture of Nick Dal Santo masturbating did not activate the bebo community; no one decided to add or remove him as an interest in response.

BlackPlanet is a niche social networked geared towards African Americans and other non-Asian, non-Caucasian minorities. The size of the Australian sport community on the site is small but growing, with one person having listed the NRL as an interest early in 2010 and four people having listed it as an interest by early December 2010, zero people had listed the AFL as an interest and by December four people had. BlackPlanet's user profile search was used on December 21, 26 and 28th to search for people who listed Nick Dal Santo as an interest. On all three dates, the total results was zero. BlackPlanet's community was not activated in such a way as to add Nick Dal Santo as an interest.

Blogger is a popular blogging service run by Google. According to Alexa on December 28, it is the ninth most popular site in Australia. Users can list their interests on their profile page and a number of Australians have done that in relation to their favorite leagues, clubs and athletes. On December 20, 21, 26 and 28, a profile search for Nick Dal Santo was conducted.²¹ On all four occasions, no one was found to have listed him as an interest. The controversy did not activate any of his fans, new or old, to list him as an interest.

Care2 is a social networked aimed at people who want to do good and help make the world a better place. It offers its members the ability to blog, to upload pictures, to create petitions, to personalize their profiles, to join groups, and to create and send e-cards. Nick Dal Santo was searched for on December 20 and December 26, 2010. On both occasions, there were zero search results across all content types. This means no one blogged about the situation, nor created a petition to express an opinion regarding Dal Santo's actions. This suggests that the community either was not aware or did not care.

Delicious is a social bookmarking site. In December 2010, Yahoo announced they were looking for a buyer for the site and if they could not find one, they were planning to close it. This decision was made despite the fact that Alexa ranked the site as one of the top 250 sites world wide in December. There has been an active Australian sport community on the site since at least 2008, if not earlier. As of December 28, St Kilda's website has been bookmarked by 35 different users. On December 23, 26 and 2, Nick Dal Santo was searched for. On all three days, the search result was 1 bookmark. This bookmark did was posted prior to October 2009, was bookmarked by one individual and did not reference the controversy. No one was interested enough to add a bookmark about the controversy. The lack of new links may partly be a result of Yahoo's decision to possibly close the site, but is also probably a result of lack of interest as witnessed by behavior on other sites.

Digg is a social news site. Users can submit news stories that other users can vote up or down. As of December 28, 2010, Alex ranked it as the 109th most popular site in Australia. The site is important enough that the AFL have an official account, where they submit their own news stories. The dig page about the link includes how many diggs the link has, the date the link was submitted and allows people to make comments on the link. A search was done for "Nick Dal Santo" on December 28, 2010. There were 11

²¹ The search can be found at <http://www.blogger.com/profile-find.g?t=i&q=Nick+Dal+Santo> .

search results. Of these, two were submitted in the period after the controversy broke. Figure 3 shows a screencap of these two submissions.



Figure 3. Screenshot of Nick Dal Santo related Digg submissions.

One article was dugg three times and one article was dugg once. Most of the site looked at so far are sites where people would list Dal Santo if they were a fan of his or where they would join a group to express displeasure regarding his actions. Digg is different and caters to an audience of people looking for news. Thus, it is less surprising that people referenced him here, where they might not otherwise. Despite the submissions though, no one was interested enough in the topic on the site to comment on the two submissions.

ebay.com.au is a popular Australian auction site. As of December 28, 2010, there are over 500 items on sale or auction related to the St Kilda Saints. A search was run for Nick Dal Santo on December 23, 26 and 28. There were 49, 53 and 51 results respectively. It is hard to interpret what this means as most auctions last one week. Auctions ending on the 23 would have been listed the 16th, four days before the start of the controversy. Items ending on the 28th would have been listed on the 21, the day the controversy started. This monitoring period included a holiday, which could have complicated item pick up and sales. This could have discouraged people from listing items, despite the potential interest in Dal Santo items as a result of the controversy. In this case, no conclusion can be made regarding what the number of listings mean in terms of how it relates to the controversy.

Around 6:00 AEST on December 21, a search was done on Facebook to identify Facebook groups and pages that mentioned Nick Dal Santo. Ten groups and pages were found. From December 21 to December 28, each group had the total membership checked at 7:00 AEST using a script, `facebook_followers.pl`, found in Appendix 13. The results for the full period are available in Appendix 13. An abbreviated version of the results for the period between December 21 to December 25 are found in Table 6. Groups and fan pages that had no change were removed.

Table 6

Nick Dal Santo Facebook Group and Fan Pages

| Name | Type | Url | 21-Dec | 22-Dec | 23-Dec | 24-Dec | 25-Dec | Difference |
|--|---------------------|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------|
| nick dal santo | Sports & Recreation | gid=6067599314 | 245 | 245 | 245 | 246 | 246 | 1 |
| Nick Dal Santo appreciation! | Sports & Recreation | gid=1547703677 52 | 86 | 86 | 86 | 85 | 85 | -1 |
| Nick Dal Santo Wanging Out | Page | Nick-Dal-Santo-Wanging-Out/1752557991 62886 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| NICK DAL SANTO WIN A FUCKIN HARD BALL GET FOR ONCE | Sports & Recreation | gid=2029949029 99 | 36 | 36 | 36 | 35 | 35 | -1 |

Like Zac Dawson, the scandal did not have much of an effect on the size of Facebook groups and fan pages featuring Nick Dal Santo. The one group that saw growth was likely created in response to the situation and only gained four members, topping off at six. That membership increase is hardly notable. Thus, while the pictures of Nick Dal Santo were the most problematic, he was not punished by having the fan base for him on Facebook contract significantly.

LiveJournal is a popular blogging service with elements of social networking involved like the ability to add friends, join communities and customize a user profile. As of December 28, 2010, Alexa ranks the site as the 103rd most popular site in Australia. The site has a number of Australian sport communities, including ones for the Socceroos, Brisbane Lions, Collingwood Magpies, NRL and Tim Cahill. A profile search was done on December 20 and 28 for Nick Dal Santo. The total result was 5 on both dates. Of these five accounts, only one had updated since the controversy broke and that user did not post a public entry referencing it.²² Of the five people who listed him as an interest, three listed their hometown as Melbourne, one listed their hometown as Canberra and one did not list a hometown. All five listed their year of birth; the group's mean year of birth was 1988.8, the median year of birth was 1989 and the range was 1986 to 1991. Amongst that demographic of almost 20-something fans, none were so outraged by the situation that they felt compelled to remove Dal Santo as an interest or to update their LiveJournal about him. Like other networks, there was no real activity.

The examination of smaller networks show that Nick Dal Santo does not have a large fan base. The fan base that he did have was not motivated to disassociate from the athlete as a result of the controversy. On sites that allowed picture uploading like Care 2, no one uploaded images related to Dal Santo. Of the sites with blogging components like Care 2 and LiveJournal, no one updated to reference the situation. Ebay results were too ambiguous to draw a conclusion about. Digg and Facebook were the two sites that saw the largest amount of activity around the time of the controversy, and both did reference it. The level of activity was small, and in the case of digg, did not necessarily get referenced by fans or haters of the player and league. On the whole, niche communities,

²² The LiveJournal account that was updated was <http://kei-sainter.livejournal.com/>.

smaller social networks and websites did not react to Nick Dal Santo's involvement in this latest AFL controversy.

St Kilda Saints

St Kilda has been at the heart of this controversy. Its players have been splashed in print in publications like the Melbourne's Herald Sun with photographs of players in their St Kilda jumpers. The girl at the heart of the scandal has been branded as the "St Kilda Girl." (Herald Sun Editorial Staff, 2010, December 29) When the scandal involving the girl broke in June, St Kilda was implicated in ways its player were not with the press referring to the situation involving two unnamed St Kilda players. (Sheahan, 2010, May 27) (Newstalk ZB, 2010, May 27) (Riley, 2010, May 30) These links between alleged victim, players, club and league continued on as the story broke again with the release of pictures in late December. (Dowsley, 2010, December 21) (Phelan, 2010, December 20) (AAP, 2010, December 21)

Dating back to May, there were two narratives, two perspectives being put forth both by the media and fans. There was the perspective of the players, St Kilda Saints and the AFL, and there was the perspective of the teenaged girl. Back then, columnists like Riley (2010, May 30) of the *Herald Sun* took the side of the teenaged girl. This battle of two perspectives, of who did what, whom was guilty and who was to blame extended into December, when the pictures were released. People again took sides. Singh, (2010, December 28) a journalism student at the University of Sydney, had her editorial in support of the teenaged girl posted on *The Age's* website. The *Herald Sun* editorial staff took the side of the players and club, citing the invasion of privacy as part of their rationale, saying that "The best outcome may be for the girl to apologise for what she has done and accept counselling." (Herald Sun Editorial Staff, 2010, December 29)

As the story wound down in the media, it was continuing to gain traction with a number of social media activists claiming that St Kilda had victimized the girl, that the league and club were engaging in misogyny in their attempts to keep their all important female and family friendly audience (PQ, 2010, December 28) (Hinch, 2010, December 29) and perception of superiority over rugby league because of their moral superiority. (Tedeschi, 2010, December 23) There were allegations that AFL and St Kilda or their supporters were "astroturfing," trying to derail legitimate conversations about the scandal in order to silence critics of the league, team and players.²³ (Foale, 2010, December 31) There were claims that the AFL and St Kilda were behaving like bullies, who sought to destroy the reputation of a 17 year old girl in order to protect their own reputations. (Kim, 2010, December 28) Derryn Hinch posted several blog entries critical of the AFL and St Kilda's actions. Links to these posts were shared on social networking sites like Twitter. People following the controversy could and did keep up with new blog posts and the

²³ These allegations also made their rounds on Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/AnthonyQLD/statuses/20137700006830082> dated December 30, 2010 says "AnthonyQLD: @vidposter @its_k_isabella Tough men hiding behind fake twitter accounts to harass a 17yo girl -Their mothers will be very proud #dickileaks"

<http://twitter.com/eunce/statuses/19874436001824769> dated December 29, 2010 says: " eunce: RT @philquin: fake twitter a/cs for defending sexual predators and vilifying teenage girls suggests evolution still has work to do #dickileaks" <http://twitter.com/aussiebluejade/statuses/19622374638886912> dated December 29, 2010 says: " aussiebluejade: @pauldwilkie @adam_m_smith @HumanHeadline @CatherineDeveny Wondering why Paul needed to use a fake Twitter for that tweet #dickileaks "

discussion by following the #dickilieaks hashtag. The message shared in some of the blog posts was one that clearly painted St Kilda in an unfavorable light:

The comparison to Vatican cover-ups of sex abuse seems more and more apt. As with the Catholic Church, the institution of AFL football has lost its moral bearings over Dickileaks in the scramble to protect its reputation from outside attack. And, like the Vatican, the Saints (and the AFL and its flunkies in the media) become complicit in the crimes they seek to cover up. (PQ, 2010, December 28)

After having held a press conference on December 21 and responded to media requests, St Kilda and its spokespeople became mostly silent on the topic by December 24, 2010. They did not subsequently mention the controversy on their Twitter account again and, as of December 31, there was only one reference to the controversy on their home page. After December 24, the official method for handling continued discussion appeared to be silence and ignoring it.

It is against this backdrop that the impact of controversy on St Kilda needs to be examined as the Internet played a key role in the distribution of pictures, publicity regarding that dissemination, why the mainstream Australian sport media picked up the story, and the refusal of the story to die despite the club's silence. This section will explore the impact that the St Kilda nude photo controversy has had on the club's fanbase and try to determine if the story will have an impact beyond the team to the league. This section will also seek an answer to how effective St Kilda's crisis management strategy was in terms of managing the online fan response. This will be done by looking at behavior by fans and non-fans as it pertains to St Kilda and the AFL in the period prior to the release of the photos, in the period between December 20 and December 25 when the story had the most media play, and the period between December 26, 2010 and January 1, 2011 when the story largely continued unreported on social media sites like Twitter and on blogs like Derryn Hinch's website. Google News's chart tracking mentions of the story will be looked at to provide additional context for media interest as it pertains to other online discussion. IceRocket, a site that tracks blogs, will also be looked at in order to compare historical interest in teams across the blogosphere. When all these things are looked at as part of one picture, it should become clear as to how the club impacted and was impacted by this latest scandal.

Google News.

Google provides many charts and ways to visualize information on the content found in its archives and how users try to access that content. One such visual tool that Google provides shows how many news story were posted around a specific event and the total number of stories posted by date. For this controversy, Google News grouped articles around two stories. The first grouping is around Riewoldt and the nude photos

with the chart available in Figure 4. The second grouping involves the teenaged girl and the chart is in Figure 5.

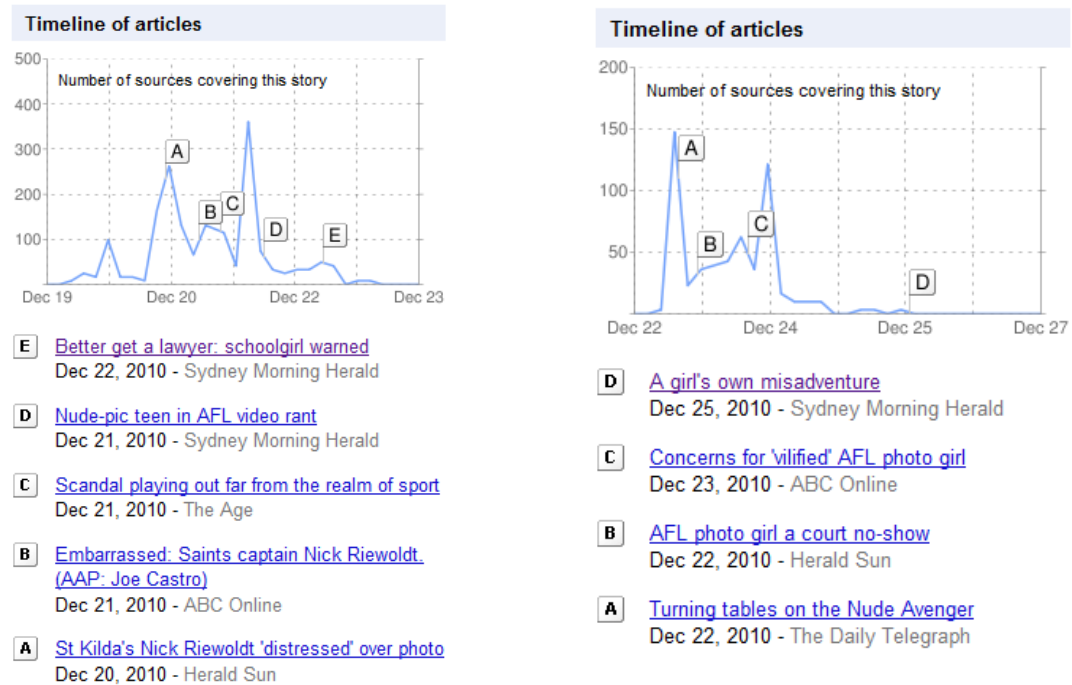


Figure 4. Google News total story count for Riewoldt pictures.

Figure 5. Google News total story count for teenaged girl.

These Google News charts confirm that the story started around December 19, when the girl announced her intended actions on Facebook and Twitter, picked up a huge amount steam in the media very late on December 20, early on December 21, peaking again later on December 21 after Riewoldt gave his press conference. The picture story was done in the media by December 23. The first peak on the teenaged girl aspect of the story peaked when the media and the AFL launched an attack on the girl's credibility and peaked again late on December 23, early on December 24 when the media began to question attacks on the girl. The teenaged girl story then ended largely ended by early on December 25. This data supports the author's observations and assumptions in this paper regarding media coverage of the story.

IceRocket.

IceRocket is a blog search engine. One of the search tools IceRocket provides is a way to visualize the total number of blog posts by day for the past 30 days that mention user inputted keywords. Like the Google News charts, IceRocket's charts provide another way of viewing how the scandal played out. IceRocket's search results pull from a different content type, blogs, that do not include as much media coverage. Instead, it could be said that IceRocket represents a wider perspective based on Australian and international bloggers. "St Kilda", "Australian Football League", Nick Riewoldt, Zac

Dawson and Nick Dal Santo were searched for and the resulting graph can be found in Figure 6.

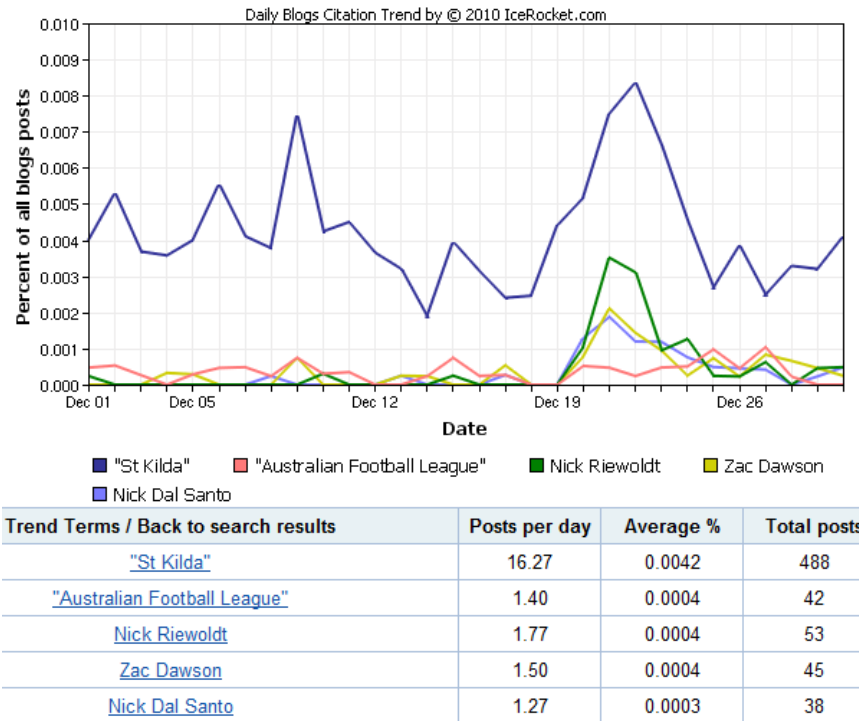


Figure 6. IceRocket trends chart.

Like Google News, the story appeared to peak in the period between December 20 and December 24, 2010. The number of mentions at the height of the controversy was not much greater than a peak around December 9. The difference is that the peak lasted longer during the period of the controversy. The other difference is that discussion of players peaked during the later period, while the peak did not around December 9. There appears to have been a second smaller peak related to the controversy around December 26, which coincides with Twitter data referenced later in the St Kilda section. Blog posting volume related to St Kilda immediately dropped on the 27th of December before increasing again. After the 26th of December, discussion of the three players continued at a rate elevated from the pre-controversy period. Against the backdrop of the Google News data, this suggests that interest in the St Kilda nude photo controversy continued even after media interest dropped off.

Twitter.

Twitter played a central role in this the St Kilda nude photo controversy, with a large part of the public discussion taking place on the network. It is through Twitter that some journalists like Derryn Hinch have been promoting their continued coverage, coverage that their own media outlets won't publish, of the St Kilda story. It is also the platform that the teenaged girl at the heart of the controversy interacts with journalists

and others on, helping to further her own narrative involvement. There are many ways to look at Twitter. One way is to look at who is tweeting about the controversy using the popular controversy related #dickileaks hashtag and what those users have tweeted about sport wise prior to this. Another way is to look at the volume of tweets being posted about the controversy using the #dickileaks hashtag. A third way to look at the controversy is to use a venn diagram to see what sort of associations people are making when they tweet about parties involved in the controversy. A last way to look at the controversy is to look at the differences between followers of the AFL, St Kilda and the teenaged girl at the heart of the controversy.

TwapperKeeper is an application that allows users to archive tweets across the whole of Twitter based on keyword and hashtags. One a user a notebook for keywords and hashtags, Twapper Keeper plugs into Twitter's API and attempts to pull the last 1,500 tweets from search. (FAQ, 2010, October 27) The archives are then accessible to several applications that allow for tweets to easily be analyzed. Prior to December 29, 2010, the author had created 121 archives for tags and keywords related to Australian sport.²⁴ On that date, notebooks were created for #dickileaks and #dikileaks. On December 30, notebooks were created for Nick Dal Santo, Nick Riewoldt, #skfc, #stkilda and @stkildafc. On December 31, notebooks were created for #dalsanto and #riewoldt.

One application that TwapperKeeper powers is Summarizr. Summarizr tracks the total number of tweets for a hashtag or keyword, total number of people who Tweeted it, total hashtags found in those Tweets, top ten people who Tweeted that hashtag, top ten @ replies including that hashtag, top ten conversations between people involving that hashtag, and top ten urls mentioned in Tweets including that hashtag.

The people who tweeted, were recipients of @ replies and engaged in conversations is one of the most important pieces of information that Summarizr provides. #dickileaks was the hashtag adopted by critics of the controversy early during the stage involving the photos being released.²⁵ The top ten people across various categories can give an idea as the relative interest the participants had in the AFL prior to and during this controversy based on the other archives there were included in. The top ten tweeters of this tag as of the morning of January 1, 2011 were AuxiliaryEgo (90),²⁶ AnthonyQLD (45), Blackmask_13 (44), JanetJane89 (40), MsMirf (37), tradrmum (37), Ian__P (31), fishcoteque (29), NakedSaints (27), and yamiexup (26). The top ten recipients were HumanHeadline (292), CatherineDeveny (123), Its_K_Isabella (121), mikestuchbery (72), MichaelByrnes (59), LeslieCannold (56), aussiejustice (53), MsMirf (45), AuxiliaryEgo (40) and AnthonyQLD (34). The top ten people conversations with pairs of Twitter users using this tag were (12) Blackmask_13 <--> MsMirf (9), (5) MsMirf <--> tradrmum (10), (13) AnthonyQLD <--> Its_K_Isabella (1), (5) mollyfud <--> tradrmum (3), (3) AnthonyQLD <--> MsMirf (5), (3) cyclingscotty <--> tradrmum (5), (5) MsMirf <--> rob_jj (2), (3) Blackmask_13 <--> mollyfud (4), (2) mollyfud <--> SharpContrast (4), and (4) aussiebluejade <--> pauldwilkie (1). With the exception of

²⁴ A list of all the notebooks created by the author can be found at http://twapperkeeper.com/allnotebooks.php?type=&name=&description=&tag=&created_by=purplepopple

²⁵ Summarizr's information about the #dickileaks hashtag can be found at <http://summarizr.labs.eduserv.org.uk/?hashtag=dickileaks>. A screenshot of this information from January 1, 2011 can be found in Appendix 13.

²⁶ The number in (brackets) indicates how many tweets they made, received or used in a discussion with some one featuring the #dickileaks hashtag as of the morning of January 1, 2011.

@Ian__P,²⁷ @mikestuchbery²⁸ and @MichaelByrnes, the rest of the Twitter users on that list only appeared in the #afl notebook²⁹ or did not appear in any other sort related notebooks found on TwapperKeeper. The lack of the most active users of the #dickileaks tag using other Australian sport related tags suggests that the outrage came from outside the AFL and St Kilda's existing fanbase. This can be perceived as a positive for the AFL and St Kilda in that they did not offend their existing fanbase. It can also be perceived as a negative for the AFL and St Kilda as it likely will make it more difficult for the both to grow their fanbases.

Another tool that can be used to analyze Twitter hashtag usage is What the Hashtag?!. Like Sumarizr, it provides statistics regarding hashtag usage. One statistic it provides is the total count of tweets using a #hashtag for each day of the last seven. The total uses for #dickileaks for the period between December 25 and December 31 on What the Hashtag?! were available on the site.³⁰ A graph of this data can be found in Figure 6.

Stats for the last 7 days

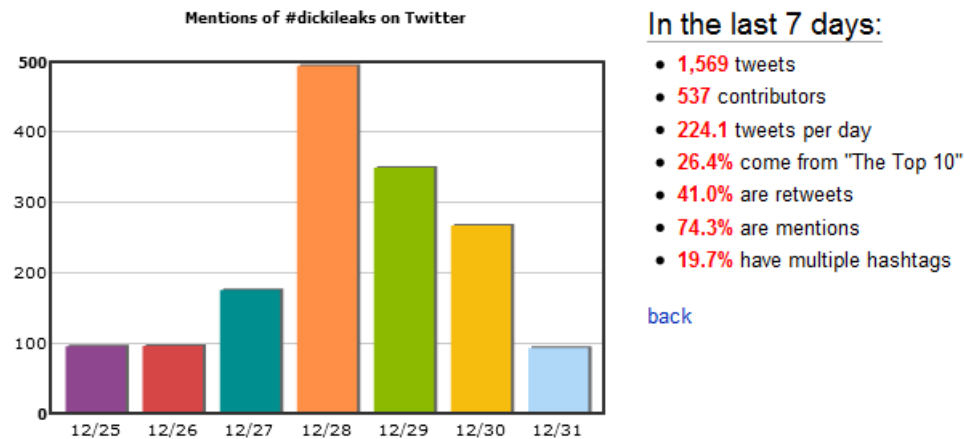


Figure 7. What the Hashtag?! screenshot for #dickileaks

This chart shows that interest in the scandal, using this hashtag, peaked on December 28, a few days after the media had gone silent on the story. December 31's hashtag usage total was only 6 less than the total for December 26. Based on this hashtag alone, this suggests that Twitter interest in the controversy peaked later than media and blogger interest as expressed in the Google News and IceRocket graphs.

Another tool available to do an analysis of the content of Tweets involving the controversy is TwitterVenn. TwitterVenn creates Venn diagrams based on keywords that

²⁷ @Ian_P appeared in the #nrl and #cricket notebooks.

²⁸ @mikestuchbery appeared in the #dreamteam and #fevola notebooks. DreamTeam is an AFL fantasy football site. Fevola is a famous AFL player involved in his own share of scandals in the past.

²⁹ AuxiliaryEgo, @JanetJane89, @tradrmmum, @fishcoteque, @NakedSaints, @yamiexup, @Its_K_Isabella, and @LeslieCannold were the Twitter users who appeared in the #AFL notebook. These were separated out from other tags like #nrl or #cricket or #theashes because the author observed that many people using the #dickileaks hashtag were also including #afl in their tweets.

³⁰ <http://wthashtag.com/Dickileaks> is the location of What the Hashtag?! 's #dickileaks information.

a user selects. The service uses Twitter's search API to find Tweets that mention the two or three teams the user selected, determines if the terms were used together or independently, counts the total Tweets and then creates the Venn. (Clark, 2010) TwitterVenn's usage of Twitter's search API suggests that it can only pull the 1,500 most recent Tweets for each of the keywords searched for. Figure 8 shows the total references to St Kilda, AFL and dickileaks as they pertain to each other.³¹

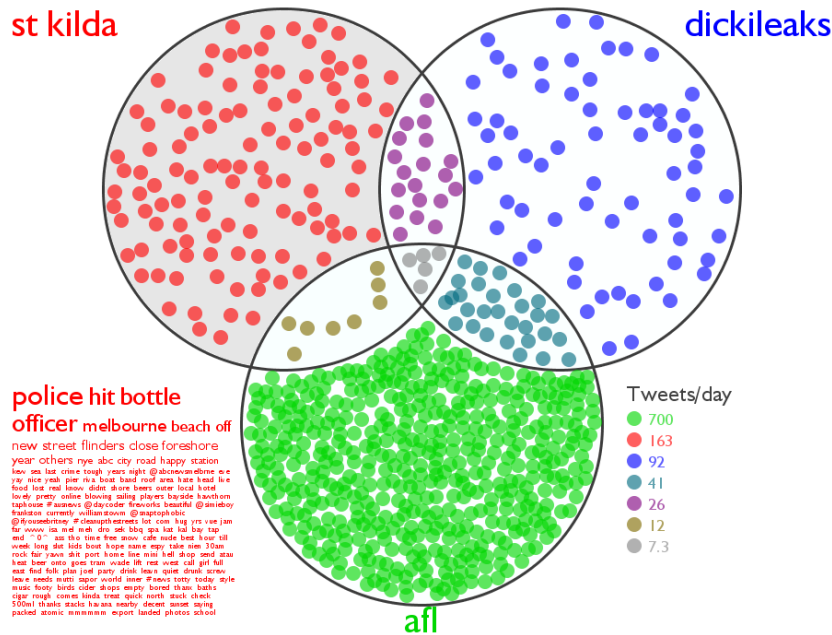


Figure 8. TwitterVenn for St Kilda, AFL, Dickileaks

This Venn suggests that more people Tweeting about the controversy associated the scandal with the AFL than they associated it with St Kilda.³² If this is true, it suggests that the scandal may have longer-term consequences for the AFL in terms of reaching new audiences than St Kilda has. The good news for the AFL though is that there is a lot of discussion involving the league and comparatively little of it involves the scandal or the St Kilda Saints; most people tweeting about the topic aren't doing so involving an AFL damaging hashtag.

While content analysis provides some insight into how people think about a topic, more useful data may involve who follows a topic, what people are happy to have others know who they follow, who people identify with in terms of who they follow. One way of processing that information is to compare the people on Twitter that follow the major

³¹ This Venn can be found at <http://www.neoformix.com/Projects/TwitterVenn/view.php?q=st+kilda,dickileaks,afl> and was created at 10:00 AEST on January 1, 2011.

³² This may be a bit misleading because there are more ways to make short hand references to St Kilda than there are ways to make references to the AFL. Tags that have been used for St Kilda include #skfc, #gosaints, St Kilda Saints, Saints.

parties involved in this controversy: the teenaged girl, the St Kilda Saints and the AFL. Follower data for all three was gathered using ozfollowers.pl, a script found in Appendix 5. The teenaged girl data was gathered on December 28, 2010. The AFL and St Kilda Saints data was gathered on December 26. Once this done, the total followers by city was calculated, along with the mean, median and mode for total followers, friends, list appearances and status updates for all followers of those three accounts. This data is available in Table 7.

Table 7

Teenaged Girl, St Kilda, AFL Statistics for Twitter Followers

| Account | Math | followers | statuses | friends | listed |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Girl | Mean | 787.4375 | 658.2617 | 230.4234 | 13.57498 |
| | Median | 12 | 20 | 49 | 0 |
| | Mode | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| St Kilda | Mean | 1962.346 | 1033.214 | 1910.21 | 44.42562 |
| | Median | 27 | 42 | 92 | 0 |
| | Mode | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| AFL | Mean | 170.0228 | 608.3221 | 246.3457 | 5.990682 |
| | Median | 19 | 30 | 74 | 0 |
| | Mode | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

This data suggests that each party involved in the controversy has its own unique audience. Followers for the teenaged girl³³ do not appear on many lists, they follow fewer people than the AFL and Saints and are followed by more people than the AFL. Her followers are less active than Saints fans but more active than AFL fans. Based on this data, if all three parties were to post a message on Twitter, the girl and the AFL would have a better chance of their message being received than the Saints. The girl's audiences updates and likely reads her. That is probably worth knowing and may explain why the Saints and AFL attempted to discredit her: Her audience can easily listen to her.

Another way of looking at follower data is to compare what cities each account's followers come from. This data is picked up when OzFollowers.pl is run. The program looks at the user inputted location and compares that to a list of human and machine generated conversions to city, state and country. Once this was done, the total followers by city for each account were tabulated. Table 8 shows the top ten follower cities by account.

³³ Her account had roughly 12,600 followers when it was checked on December 28, 2010.

Table 8
Total Followers for girl, St Kilda, AFL by City

| Location | girl | Location | stkildafc | Location | AFL |
|---|-------------|---|------------------|---|------------|
| Melbourne, Victoria, Australia | 2299 | Melbourne, Victoria, Australia | 1270 | Melbourne, Victoria, Australia | 3335 |
| Sydney, New South Wales, Australia | 696 | Sydney, New South Wales, Australia | 138 | Perth, Western Australia, Australia | 590 |
| Perth, Western Australia, Australia | 321 | Perth, Western Australia, Australia | 100 | Sydney, New South Wales, Australia | 537 |
| Adelaide, South Australia, Australia | 318 | Adelaide, South Australia, Australia | 90 | Adelaide, South Australia, Australia | 509 |
| Brisbane, Queensland, Australia | 249 | Brisbane, Queensland, Australia | 73 | Brisbane, Queensland, Australia | 365 |
| Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia | 99 | Geelong, Victoria, Australia | 45 | Geelong, Victoria, Australia | 143 |
| Geelong, Victoria, Australia | 68 | Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia | 37 | Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia | 141 |
| Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia | 67 | Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia | 28 | Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia | 130 |
| London, England, United Kingdom | 42 | Hobart, Tasmania, Australia | 21 | London, England, United Kingdom | 79 |
| Hobart, Tasmania, Australia | 31 | London, England, United Kingdom | 20 | Hobart, Tasmania, Australia | 68 |

The girl has a larger audience in Melbourne than the Saints. She has many more followers than the AFL and Saints have in Sydney. Aside from that city, she does not have more followers than the AFL in any of their respective top ten. The girl has more followers than St Kilda has in every city on the list of top ten cities. That the girl's popularity by city tracks well with the AFL and Saints; it is not a good sign for either organization. The matching rank of popularity by city confirms national interest in the story. Interest in the controversy was not contained to a small geographic area around where the girl was from or Melbourne where the media appeared to give the story the most attention; interest paralleled the AFL's market on Twitter.

Twitter follower location data can also be looked at from the perspective of Australian state. The script that gathers locations can fill in country and state information if the location field is blank or is determined to be unknown. It does this by using the time zone field. Twitter's time zones for Australia are state, not time zone specific. This means that there are fewer unknowns on that level. The totals can be visualized in Figure 9.

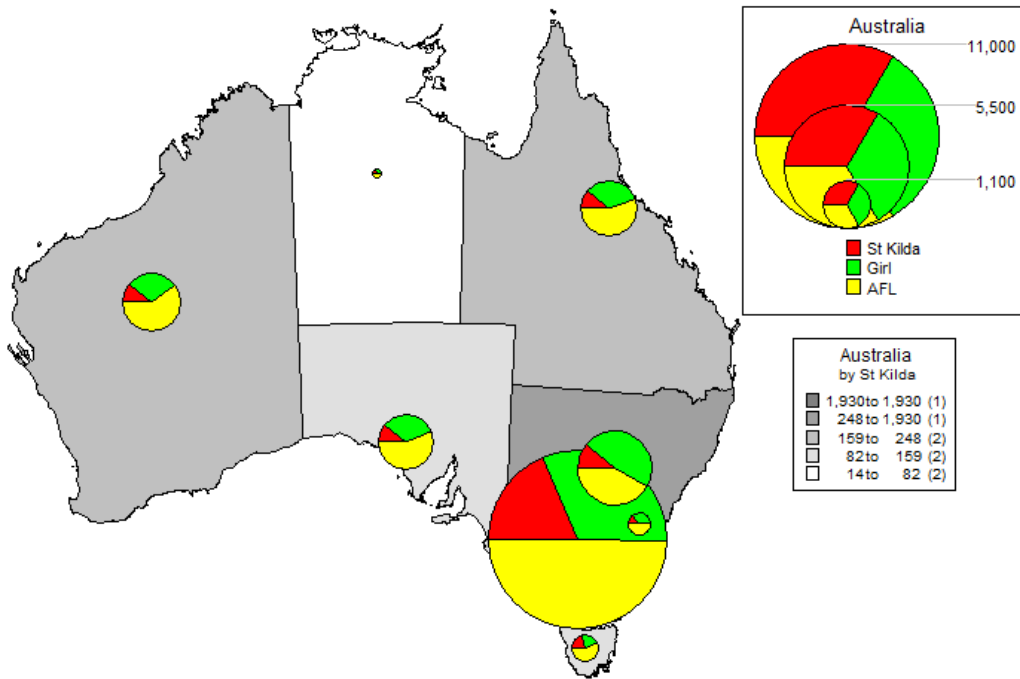


Figure 9 . Twitter Followers for Girl, St Kilda and AFL by Australian State.

With the exception of New South Wales, the follower totals by state mirror that of the top ten total followers by city. New South Wales differs because there are more followers in New South Wales for the girl than there is for the AFL: 1080 to 952. The difference is 128. The AFL has an expansion team planned for the Sydney area that will join the league in 2012. Negative associations for the AFL in the New South Wales are especially problematic for them if they hope the team will be successful. If locals associate the league with the actions of St Kilda's organizational response and the player's alleged treatment toward the girl, this could have far-reaching and negative consequences.

Overall, Twitter suggests that the results are not ideal when it comes to how users reacted to the controversy. The most popular people discussing the controversy using the #dickileaks tag did not appear to be fans of the league, not having participated in other on Twitter conversations featuring Australian sport related hashtags. While the team and the league may have started to ignore the controversy by the 24th of December, Twitter users continued to discuss it with peak usage for the #dickileaks hashtag happening on December 28, 2010. More people were using the #dickileaks hashtag in connection with the AFL than they were using it in connection with the Saints, signaling that participants connected the players to league wide attitudes rather connecting it to institutional problems inside a single club. The follower statistics for the girl, St Kilda and the AFL suggest that of the three, the girl has more ready access to the audience that follows her because they update frequently and follow fewer people than St Kilda; this means they are more likely to see her on message tweets than St Kilda followers are. The girl has

more followers in every city of the top ten cities she is popular in than St Kilda. This reinforces the idea that St Kilda's ability to share its message to current and future fan base is difficult because the girl has greater reach in those cities. When looking at follower data by state, there appear to be institutional problems for the AFL as the girl has more followers than in New South Wales than the AFL does. If New South Wales's potential fans make the connection between football players and sex, this may make it harder for the AFL to market the GWS Giants because of negative associations. The ability for the AFL and St Kilda to reach a new market on Twitter as a result of this controversy was likely severely damaged.

Facebook.

Facebook is Australia's largest and most popular social network. Size alone makes it worth considering in order to understand how the sport community on the site responded to the controversy. This section will look at Facebook data from two perspectives: Demographic shifts in the Saints fanbase on Facebook, and growth of the Saints Facebook official fan page compared to other teams in the league.

Facebook provides demographic information about its user interests at <http://www.facebook.com/ads/create/>. Details regarding the methodology and issues involved in using this can data are outlined in the Nick Riewoldt section. For this section, that data was collected on December 20, December 26, 2010 and January 2, 2011. The complete data set for this information is available in Appendix 13.

One of the first numbers worth looking at is the total number of fans who are interested in the team. On December 20, this number was 47,960. By December 26, this number was 47,880. On January 2, 2011, this number had contracted to 47,220. Since the day the story broke, the St Kilda Saints have seen a gradual erosion in the total number of people interested in the team.

The total number of fans can also be broken down by gender. For women, the total number of fans on December 20 was 23,580, on December 26 was 23,540, and on January 2, 2011 was 23,340. For men, the numbers were 23,880, 23,680 and 23,660. The losses for the whole club were not just contained to a single gender: They saw a decline in interest amongst both genders.

Gender data can be further broken down by sexual orientation: Men interested in men, men interested in women, women interested in women, women interested in men. Like gender, not everyone makes their orientation information available on their profile so the numbers will not add up to the total number of fans for St Kilda. For men interested in men, the total number of fans remained level at 260 on all three dates. For men interested in women, the totals were 13,040 fans on December 20, 13,220 fans on December 26, 13,080 on January 2, 2011. For women interested in women, the number remained consistent on all three dates: 920. For women interested in men, the total for December 20 was 8,440, and for December 26, 2010 and January 2, 2011 was 8,380. The size St Kilda's GLBT fanbase was unchanged, declined amongst its heterosexual female fanbase and saw a small increase amongst heterosexual male fanbase.

A third way of looking at this data involves looking at level of education: College grad, in college and in high school. For the first group, the total number of college graduate St Kilda fans was 5,240 on December 20, was 5,280 on December 26 and was

5,220 on January 2, 2011. For St Kilda fans in college, the total was 760 fans on December 20, and was 800 on December 26 and January 2, 2011. For high school fans, the total was 1,560 on December 20 and 26, and 1,580 on January 2, 2011. Amongst college graduates and those in college, there was a slight decline. For high school fans, there was a slight increase.

Overall, the Saints saw a small contraction of their fanbase on Facebook. In general, they saw similar small contractions across most of the groups looked at including men, women, women interested in men, college graduates, and those in college. They saw no change for women interested in women, and men interested in men. They saw small increases amongst men interested in women, and current high school students. That they saw a contraction at all probably is bad news for the club. That it is the loss occurred between men and women is also a problem. That they did not see any significant growth for these sub-populations is probably even worse. It suggests that however Facebook fans got their information about the scandal, the story did not resonate with any of those populations in such a way that they felt a need to show solidarity with the club and become fans of them on the network.

A second way to look at Facebook is to compare St Kilda's official Facebook fan growth with that of other clubs in the league to see if St Kilda's fan acquisition rates differed from other AFL teams. Use the facebook_followers.pl found in Appendix 12, the total number of fans for official fan pages was recorded on December 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31. The complete table can be found in Appendix 13. Table 9 shows a selection of these teams from the period between December 11 and December 31.

Table 9

AFL Facebook Page Growth December 11 to December 31

| Date checked | St. Kilda Saints | Carlton Blues | Geelong Cats | GWS Giants | Hawthorn Hawks | North Melbourne Kangaroos |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 11-Dec-10 | 59,252 | 53,529 | 7,413 | 974 | 32,580 | 19,588 |
| 15-Dec-10 | 59,644 | 53,930 | 7,423 | 1,078 | 32,699 | 19,784 |
| 16-Dec-10 | 59,761 | 54,059 | 7,429 | 1,086 | 32,713 | 19,828 |
| 21-Dec-10 | 60,145 | 54,495 | 7,443 | 1,115 | 32,837 | 20,012 |
| 22-Dec-10 | 60,274 | 54,567 | 7,453 | 1,121 | 32,873 | 20,040 |
| 23-Dec-10 | 60,352 | 54,617 | 7,460 | 1,133 | 32,896 | 20,068 |
| 24-Dec-10 | 60,427 | 54,662 | 7,463 | 1,141 | 32,921 | 20,087 |
| 25-Dec-10 | 60,495 | 54,700 | 7,464 | 1,147 | 32,938 | 20,102 |
| 26-Dec-10 | 60,519 | 54,730 | 7,474 | 1,150 | 32,946 | 20,114 |
| 27-Dec-10 | 60,565 | 54,773 | 7,477 | 1,153 | 32,961 | 20,129 |
| 28-Dec-10 | 60,611 | 54,819 | 7,479 | 1,153 | 32,978 | 20,135 |
| 29-Dec-10 | 60,671 | 54,862 | 7,471 | 1,155 | 32,987 | 20,139 |
| 30-Dec-10 | 60,738 | 54,915 | 7,477 | 1,158 | 33,004 | 20,137 |
| 31-Dec-10 | 60,758 | 54,937 | 7,471 | 1,161 | 32,999 | 20,132 |

In the period between December 11 and December 16, before the controversy happened, St Kilda gained 509 fans. In the period between December 21 and December 26, at the height of the media coverage of the controversy, St Kilda gained 374 new followers. In the period between December 27 and December 31 after most of the media coverage had died down, St Kilda gained 193 new fans. Both in terms of difference growth and percentage growth found in Table 10, St Kilda matches up with compare Melbourne based AFL clubs like Carlton, Hawthorn and North Melbourne.

Table 10

Math for Facebook AFL Fan Growth

| | St. Kilda Saints | Carlton Blues | Geelong Cats | GWS Giants | Hawthorn Hawks | North Melbourne Kangaroos |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Diff: Dec-11 to Dec-15 | 509 | 530 | 16 | 112 | 133 | 240 |
| Diff: Dec-21 to Dec-26 | 374 | 235 | 31 | 35 | 109 | 102 |
| Diff: Dec-27 to Dec-31 | 193 | 164 | -6 | 8 | 38 | 3 |
| % Diff: Dec-11 to Dec-15 | 0.85% | 0.98% | 0.22% | 10.31% | 0.41% | 1.21% |
| % Diff: Dec-21 to Dec-26 | 0.62% | 0.43% | 0.41% | 3.04% | 0.33% | 0.51% |
| % Diff: Dec-27 to Dec-31 | 0.32% | 0.30% | -0.08% | 0.69% | 0.12% | 0.01% |

The data in Table 10 suggests that the controversy did not adversely effect the Saints in terms of getting followers for their official fan page.

Facebook's demographic suggests the controversy hurt the team in key demographic groups like men, women and amongst the college educated amongst the population of Australian users on the site. At the same time that St Kilda appeared to lose broad interest on the site, the Saints ability to acquire new fans for their official fan page did not appear effected; St Kilda acquired these new fans at similar rates to other teams in the AFL.

Conclusion.

If St Kilda's organizing of a press conference and later silence could be interpreted as controlling the narrative that the media and fans consumed, St Kilda was mildly successful: Google News shows the media stopped reporting on the story shortly after the court action was suspended for the holidays and when St Kilda stopped talking to the media, and updating their Facebook and Twitter account with their version of events regarding the controversy. On the other hand, St Kilda appears to not have controlled the narrative using IceRocket and What the Hash?! data. Fan discussion on blogs appeared to peak around the time that St Kilda was actively involved, but blog discussion levels for the club and its players plateaued at a higher level than in the period prior to the controversy. On Twitter, the level of conversation peaked several days after

media interest peaked. The timelines suggest St Kilda was not prepared to effectively control the fan response to the story and. The timeline also suggests the club failed to anticipate how the social media community would respond and they were unprepared to deal with Internet fall out.

A textual analysis of Twitter data suggests that Twitter users connected the nude photo controversy more with the AFL than with the Saints. Looking at who was tweeting about the controversy suggests they are not the same people that are interested in Australian sport: The #dickileaks Tweeters are a potential fanbase for the Saints and AFL; they are not part of the current fan base. Looking at the profiles of who is following the AFL, the Saints and the teenaged girl on Twitter, the AFL appears to have problems as the girl has more followers in New South Wales, where the AFL has a new expansion team, than the league has. St Kilda has its own problems in that their followers average number of people they follow is high when compared to the teenaged girl, meaning that she can more effectively share her message with her 12,000 followers than the Saints can share with their 6,000 followers. The girl's comparative Twitter reach could cause problems for the AFL and St Kilda as they try to grow the AFL fandom on Twitter.

On Facebook, the Saints both lost fans and gained fans. Demographic data made available from Facebook's advertising information shows that the club lost fans, both men and women, college students and college graduates. During the controversy, St Kilda continued to gain fans on their official fan page at a rate comparable to their peers. Facebook data shows the club did not benefit from the controversy by growing their fanbase at a higher rate.

When looked at together, the picture that emerges suggests potential long-term problems for the club. They were not able to control the online narrative. Fans associated the photo controversy with both the club and the league. The team saw small losses on Facebook in important demographic bases. The Saints could not use the situation to leverage their Facebook position. As legal action continues in the New Year, the club will have to weigh these issues when making decisions if they do not want to continue to potentially harm their fan and consumer base. Those decisions will need to be made in conjunction with the AFL as the controversy has led numerous people to drawing negative associations about the league and its management.

Conclusion

What impact did the St Kilda nude photo controversy have on Dawson, Riewoldt, Dal Santo and the St Kilda Saint's fan communities? How did the scandal impact the AFL's fan base? Do peripheral players see similar growth or contraction as major players who have a higher profile? How will this situation effect Dawson's personal brand and how may Dawson's involvement in this scandal impact St Kilda? Was there and what was the demographic shift for Nick Riewoldt, one of the AFL's stars, in response to a controversy featuring a vindictive teenaged girl publishing pictures of Riewoldt in the nude? How do fans on smaller networks respond when a major controversy breaks featuring a well known but not super famous player like Dal Santo? How well did St Kilda manage the controversy online in terms of getting positive results for their team's fan base? These are a few of the questions that have been asked and answered by this chapter.

As a peripheral participant who was not the focus of major media attention, Zac Dawson largely did not benefit from this. On Facebook, there was a small contraction in the total number of fans. On Twitter, Dawson's growth pattern was higher than that of his less popular teammates. His new followers came from around the country, followed fewer people and updated less often. Zac Dawson's involvement probably hurt his personal brand some, but it probably hurt St Kilda and the AFL more as the media and Twitter fans clearly associated him with those organization.

As a major star, Nick Riewoldt's involvement was played up by St Kilda, the media and fans on Facebook and Twitter. His fanbase was effected by the controversy with shifts in who was interested in him. Riewoldt gained fans who were between 50 and 64 years of age and between 20 to 29 years of age, amongst college graduates on Facebook, gained fans in his home town of Hobart. Despite these gains, the total number of people joining anti-Riewoldt groups in the period after the controversy broke was greater than people joining pro-Riewoldt groups. The fandom shifts on Facebook suggest that there will be long term consequences for Riewoldt's involvement and not all of them are positive.

Despite being better known than Dawson, Nick Dal Santo's fanbase on smaller networks is not very large. Despite having the most potentially damaging picture of the three athletes involved, the small community for him that does exist did not respond by disassociating from him. At the same time, the community did not respond by uploading content related to Dal Santo, by blogging about Dal Santo or by adding him as an interest. On the whole, niche communities, smaller social networks and websites did not react to Nick Dal Santo's involvement in this latest AFL controversy.

The controversy was not good for St Kilda on Facebook or Twitter. On Facebook, the team saw a loss of interest in important demographic groups like men, women, women interested in men, college graduates, and those in college. The contractions for the club were different than the ones for Riewoldt. On Twitter, users clearly associated the players with the club, the league and the controversy. The timeline of activity suggests that St Kilda was not successfully able to control the online social media narrative regarding the controversy.

The results of the controversy were almost universally negative. Online fans did not respond by showing solidarity with the team. The anti-community related to St Kilda and its players grew. The narrative could not be controlled. Female fans were lost on Facebook. People associated the actions of the players with the club and the league. Being a less well-known player only provided a little shielding from the online blowback. The fanbase on smaller networks was not activated. The indicators suggest that more controversies like this will do more harm to the AFL and its clubs than they can afford if they hope to grow their market.

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