

# Podcast 105 – Basketball in Australia

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack

***Podcast Number 105 – Basketball in Australia***

<http://traffic.libsyn.com/slowenglish/podcast105.mp3>

Hi,

Our climate in Australia means we can play outdoor sport all year round. Cricket in the summer and football in the winter are two classic outdoor examples. Some sports are played indoors as well as outdoors. One of the most popular sports also played indoors in Australia is basketball. In this podcast, I would like to tell you a little about this popular sport in Australia.

<http://australia.basketball/>

Basketball was first played in Australia in 1897, in Adelaide. That is only 6 years after the game was invented by a Canadian, James Naismith, in 1891. So basketball has been played in Australia for a long time. Today, we have the National Basketball League (the NBL) and the Women's National Basketball League (the WNBL) which are the major professional basketball competitions in Australia. The NBL started in 1979 and the WNBL 2 years later. Each league has 8 teams (as at 2018) which generally come from each of the different states or territories of Australia. Interestingly, the men's league includes a team from New Zealand but, as yet, there is no team from Tasmania in either the men's or women's leagues.

In the NBL, the Perth Wildcats have been the most successful team, winning 8 championship titles since they joined the

league in 1982. In the WNBL, the most successful team so far has been the Canberra Capitals, which have won 7 championship titles.

My local NBL team is called Melbourne United. It was previously called the Melbourne Tigers but the name was changed to Melbourne United in 2014. When our two boys were young, I can remember taking them to see the Melbourne Tigers play at a large indoor arena here in Melbourne. It was colourful, exciting and fast and I can remember that our boys really had a great time. At that time, the best player for Melbourne Tigers was Andrew Gaze.

Andrew Gaze is one of the best known basketball players in Australia. He played 20 seasons with the Melbourne Tigers and played 612 games, with an average of 30.9 points per game. He also played overseas, including in Europe and in the National Basketball Association (the NBA) in America, where he played for the Washington Bullets and the San Antonio Spurs. He was also a key player in Australia's national men's basketball team and played in no less than 5 Olympics games for Australia. That is an amazing feat. Andrew now coaches the Sydney Kings, one of the current NBL teams, and is a very popular figure in the Australian sports media. He is, without doubt, my favourite Australian Basketball player and personality.

The national men's basketball team is called the Australian Boomers. Boomer is a term used in Australia to describe a large male kangaroo, so it was a great name to choose for our men's team. The Australian Boomers have been quite successful in competitions such as the Olympics and the World Cup. They are currently ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the world, although this varies from year to year. Their best result in the Olympics has been 4<sup>th</sup>, which they achieved in 1988, 1996, 2000 and 2016.

The national women's basketball team is called the Opals.

They are named after a colourful gemstone, the opal, which is found in Australia, mostly in outback South Australia. The Opals currently rank 4<sup>th</sup> in the world and their best result at the Olympics has been second, which they achieved in 2000, 2004 and 2008.



The Opals – Australia's Women's National Basketball Team, the winners of the FIBA (International Basketball Federation) World Championship in 2006.

(By FIBA [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons)

Basketball is also a very popular team sport for children in Australia. According to a recent survey by the Roy Morgan Research Institute in Australia, around 33% of children play basketball. The only team sport played by more children in Australia is soccer, with around 46% of children playing. It is so easy to find a competition where your children can play basketball. For example, in my local area of Doncaster in Melbourne, the Doncaster Basketball Club organises teams for children who want to play basketball.

[http://websites.sportstg.com/assoc\\_page.cgi?c=7-92-0-0-0](http://websites.sportstg.com/assoc_page.cgi?c=7-92-0-0-0)

Children from the age of 5 years can join a team and have a

lot of fun playing basketball. There are excellent venues all over Melbourne where, every weekend, you will find hundreds of boys and girls playing basketball and having a lot of fun.



### Mullum Mullum Stadium

A modern basketball centre for the local community in the suburb of Donvale, Melbourne.

Both our boys played basketball when they were in primary school and they enjoyed it a lot. They got excellent coaching from volunteer coaches. The competitions are run by parents and other interested volunteers who help out to make sure the competitions run smoothly and are safe for all children. The Roy Morgan Research Institute reports that an estimated 840,000 children between the ages of 6 and 14 play basketball in Australia.

With so many children playing basketball, it is no wonder we

have produced so many good players like Andrew Gaze. Other famous Australian basketballers include Ben Simmons, Matthew Dellavedova, Lauren Jackson and Luc Longley, just to name a few. It's great that so many Australian men and women can reach the top in world basketball. But I think it is even better when so many Australian children, from a young age, can enjoy the fun and friendship that playing in a basketball team brings.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at [rob@slowenglish.info](mailto:rob@slowenglish.info). I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

## **Podcast 105 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?**

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

**Start quiz**

### Vocabulary

according to = when someone else or a group has said something important

achieved = completed

Adelaide = the capital city of South Australia

amazing = when people find something hard to believe. When something is very, very good

arena = a large building where sports are played

Association = a group of people who have a common interest

average = the middle number in a range of numbers. To calculate an average, add all the numbers and then divide the total by how many numbers you have

championship = a competition where the best players or teams play

classic = something of quality, a good example

climate = the weather

coaches = people who give advice to help sports people to play better

competitions = when teams or people try to win in a game or sport

describe = to say how something looks or what it means

estimated = guessed

feat = to achieve something, to do something very difficult to do

figure = person

gemstone = a colourful piece of stone found in the ground, for example, diamonds, rubies, opals

includes = things or people that are in the same group

indoors = inside a building

invented = made or created for the first time

joined = to become part of a group

League = a competition with many teams

local = nearby

major = large or important

media = includes television, internet, newspapers, radio

National = when things are at a high level, at the level of a country or a nation

no wonder = when something is expected

organises = to put things in order, to make things work

outdoor = away from a building, in the open air

overseas = not in Australia, in another country

personality = (here) a famous person

previously = earlier

primary school = a school for children aged from 5 to 11 years of age

professional = (here) when the people are paid money to do something that others might do for no money

quite = (here) rather, when something is neither very good nor very bad

ranked = when you put things in order, for example from lowest to highest

recent = just a short time ago

Roy Morgan Research Institute = a company who does research to find out new information

seasons = (here) that part of the year when a sport is played

states = an area of Australia which has its own government, for example, Victoria

successful = when you reach your goal, or your aim, or you get the job done

team = (here) a group of players in a sport who play together to win

term = a word used to describe an idea

territories = a region under the control of a higher government

titles = the name given to describe the winner of a competition, for example, World Champion

venues = places where events are held, for example, sport events.