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David Sygall

Adam Goodes and Michael O'Loughlin have experienced the biggest highs in football but away from the public glare they are working on a project that gives them satisfaction they say is the equal of any grand final win or Brownlow Medal.

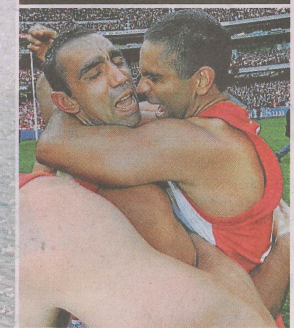
It is a project that reminds them of their humble beginnings, raised by single mothers who did their best. It acknowledges the scores of people in and out of football over the years who assisted them to achieve their dreams. And, it's about "giving back", a term so loosely used by sportspeople but in this case appropriate.

"You stand on the podium at the 2005 grand final, the 2012 grand final, and you're bloody proud," O'Loughlin says. "But then you talk to these parents who say 'Thank you so much. There is no way we could do this for our kid without your help'. It just blows me away."

O'Loughlin and Goodes are the founders and figureheads of the GO



Double act: O'Loughlin and Goodes are founders of the Go Foundation, which helps Indigenous children. Main photo: Quentin Jones



Learning curve: Swans greats find own way of 'giving back'

Foundation, which is currently paying full education fees for 11 Indigenous children, six girls and five boys, at some of Sydney's top schools. Using their profiles and contacts they have enlisted support from corporate sponsors and government and intend to grow the

program. Crucially, whereas scholarships for Indigenous students have often been tied to sport, Goodes' and O'Loughlin's assistance is based entirely on academic aptitude. "We don't care if you play footy, rugby, netball or nothing," O'Loughlin says. "Sport's been

amazing for Goodes and me, but we need more of our mob in suits and ties and running organisations. We need more CEOs, doctors, lawyers, teachers. We need more women in those positions, too. That's the aim of our foundation."

GO began in 2009 but tried to do

too much too quickly. When O'Loughlin suggested to Goodes they focus solely on school fees and partner with the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, he was all in. "We want to give back, not just in a token way, we want to change lives through education,"

Goodes says. "Michael's the coach of the Swans Academy and I have my own academy where we coach 60 Indigenous boys, so we're already doing work around sport. This way we can focus on just education and help create the next batch of role models.

"We look at our own lives and how many people helped us get to where we are. Hopefully we can be a couple of people along the line who help some kids get to fulfil their dreams. Every kid should have that opportunity. With some mentoring and financial support hopefully we can do that."

O'Loughlin says there is no shortage of applicants for the scholarships, which are for day schools only, not boarding schools, a point close to O'Loughlin's heart.

"Growing up in Salisbury North in Adelaide - Adam was born around the corner then moved at a young age - our fathers were in and out of our lives," he says.

"They had their own personal issues they were dealing with, which you don't understand as a young kid. So me, being the eldest, I had to be the man about the house and help raise the kids. Life was pretty tough. We always had food

and clothes and plenty of love, but we missed out on a lot of things."

One was going to the good school nearby. "We lived across the road from a prestigious school but mum had no money to send me there and I went to a school five kilometres away," he says. "It was a great upbringing but I just thought 'why should a kid be left out?' If he lives around the corner from a great school, why can't he go there? A lot of kids live near amazing schools but they don't go because it costs too much. This way they can go to the good school across the road and come home to mum and dad."