

WORD OF THE MONTH OCT 2012

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Barry Crocker

– *noun*: Rhyming slang for *shocker*, usually applied to something poor or disappointing.

THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH

'To have (or do) a **Barry Crocker**', occasionally shortened to 'to have (or do) a **Barry**', is first recorded in Australian English in the 1990s. A rhyming slang term, it comes from the name of the Australian singer and actor, Barry Crocker (b. 1935). Crocker had his own television show, *The Barry Crocker Show*, from 1966 to 1967, and also hosted a television program called *The Sound of Music*, for which he won a Gold Logie. He has released many albums, starred in several movies, including the Bruce Beresford movie *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972), and performed in a number of stage productions.

The term is first recorded in 1994 by Peter Fitzsimons:

So the Raiders are going to win, Ray. I really think they're dead-set certs. The only thing that worries me is the refereeing. I mean ... what about that McCallum, Ray? Mate, did he have a **Barry Crocker** in the final or what? *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September, p. 66.

In the late 1990s and into the 2000s, it can be found regularly in print. Often it is used in reference to sporting performances, especially Rugby League and AFL, but also a variety of other sports such as golf, cricket, and boxing.

Although it first appears to have been used in the context of sport, it is now found in more general use, such as in this 2004 article:

Natalie – the stylist – took one look at my hair and sucked her teeth. She couldn't bad-mouth her colleague in front of me, but her face said it all: that cut was a total **Barry Crocker**. *Sydney Morning Herald* (Good Weekend Supplement), 6 March, p. 63.

The shortened form 'to have a **Barry**' is also used, although less frequently. Again, it is often found in reference to sporting performances, such as in this article from 1998:

Brisbane and Australian Test player Darren Lockyer revealed that bed time was not so much fun after his shocker in the Trans Tasman loss to New Zealand last week. He did have a **Barry**. *Illawarra Mercury*, 1 May, p. 2.

Barry Crocker is still often used, and is an example of rhyming slang that not only is of recent origin, but also continues to be in popular usage. At the end of 2011, Labor MP Craig Thomson's year was described in the *Sunday Age* as 'Having a **Barry Crocker**'. (11 December, p. 10)

The last word perhaps belongs to Barry Crocker himself. Asked how he felt about the way his name had come to be used, he commented: 'I suppose it could be worse. I'd rather have my name referred to as a shocker than a bodily function like the old jockey Edgar Britt.' (quoted in *Daily Telegraph*, 4 December 1996, p. 5)

Barry Crocker will appear in the next edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*.