

Oxford Australia Word of the Month

October 2008

falcon – *n.* a hit on the head by a ball
v. to be hit on the head by a ball

Australian National Dictionary Centre

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falcon

The story behind the Word of the Month

In May 2008 participants in an [Australian Football League forum](#) on the web responded to the following issue:

I was watching on the box where players missed marks and got Falconed. ... So tell me, have you been falconed?

Responses included:

Looking up at someone's high bomb, straight into the sun and having it go straight on my head. Knocked cold and out for the game.

The only time I have been falconed was with another round ball sport. I went to do a soccer volley and I scored myself on the musch. I was stunned for a few secs but otherwise the only thing hurt was a bit of pride.

Never been falconed ... never heard that term actually.

In the same month the *Australian* newspaper reported on the St Kilda AFL club, after St Kilda had been defeated by the Port Adelaide team:

The review of the loss to Port Adelaide match was serious business but the \$5 fines meted out to players for various misdeeds around the club were played for comic value. Hayes said the biggest laugh was reserved for the Saint who scored a 'falcon' at training; a ball taken flush on the head.

This newspaper article feels the need to explain the term **falcon** ('a ball taken flush on the head'), and the third comment on the Web forum ('never heard that term actually') indicates that the term was not known to all those interested in AFL football.

This is not surprising, since the term **falcon** had its origin in rugby league. Mario Fenech played for South Sydney 1981–90, North Sydney 1991–94, and South Queensland 1995. Fenech was nicknamed 'the Maltese Falcon' from his Maltese ancestry. Following an occasion when Fenech was hit on the head by the ball during a match in the 1980s, such an unfortunate incident came to be known as a **falcon**. The Rugby League 'Footy Show' began a tradition of giving an annual 'Falcon Award' for the best such incident:

Brumbies prop Ben Darwin's effort last Friday night in taking a line kick from his own team flush on the face must be the early favourite for the 'Falcon' awards, care of the rugby league's 'Footy Show', which honours players hit on the head by the ball. (*Canberra Times*, 27 February 2001)

While the term **falcon** had its origin in rugby league, it has now spread to other ball games, including games such as netball: 'In the fourth quarter, Cox's Falcon moment, copping the ball full in the face, did not derail the Swifts and they went on to register their fourth win of the season' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 2008). It has also spread to any activities involving a ball: 'It was fun standing with the Shire jobs on beer hill and seeing people get falconed with a beachball' (2007 Web forum).

The fact that a rugby league term is now widely used outside rugby league, including in the 'enemy territory' of the AFL, indicates that this new sense of **falcon** is now firmly a part of Australian English.

metrosexual
weapon
of mass
destruction
karrack
glycaemic
burka
index
barbecue
stopper
senior
moment
Sudoku
hornbag
dishlicker
witlof
cyberstalking
Naltrexone
pear-
shaped
yakitoni
Bioterrorism