

# ABORIGINAL RULES

## SYNOPSIS

**Aboriginal Rules** is a (1x55min and 2x26mins versions) documentary from Warlpiri Media Association, the producers of the original award-winning *Bush Mechanics*. It is a rare, behind-the-scenes look at the grassroots Aboriginal football experience that you may have heard about, but never seen before.

**Aboriginal Rules** follows a year in the life of the Yuendumu Magpies Football Team. Their season begins in the remote Central Australian community of Papunya where the battle lines are drawn in the red dirt of the football oval. The dust, hard knocks and chaos of a bush footy grand final are all part of the complicated inter-tribal rivalry that is played out when any two teams meet. Where that old man talking on the microphone about the early days when they used to fight with spears and boomerangs is not so different to the footy fan holding a meat pie screaming his lungs out in the 'outer' of the MCG.

Three-time premiers in the Alice Springs 'Country' Cup, the Yuendumu Magpies are considered favourites to win this highly prized competition again. But there are problems in the team and they have a new coach – Adrian 'Simba' Nelson. Passionate and charismatic, Simba struggles to keep the team together, to get players to attend training and ultimately to achieve their goal of winning a fourth consecutive premiership on community football's biggest stage.

In an attempt to get back on track and restore pride to the team, Simba and Team Captain Sherman Spencer take the players hundreds of kilometres to Pukatja Sports Weekend in South Australia. As the team's difficulties continue, they regroup in the lead up to Yuendumu Sports Weekend where they will battle their Warlpiri brothers, the Lajamanu Swans, in an attempt to uphold the Yuendumu Magpies name.

**Aboriginal Rules** challenges many of the stereotypes of young Indigenous men being portrayed in the mainstream media. It is an opportunity to share in the lives of young Indigenous footballers, whose dreams of playing in the AFL are less important than family and maintaining culture; and where being a proud member of a successful football team is closely linked to being a member of a strong community.

**Aboriginal Rules** is an invitation to discover what it means to be a young Warlpiri Warrior fighting for a place in the team in a changing culture. And it also contributes to the ongoing debate on the origins of Australian football, as community elder Crocodile Johnson introduces us to purlja, a game like football that the Warlpiri have played for thousands of years. The culture might be 40,000 years old, but now the rules have changed, and football is the new Dreaming that holds the balance in young men's lives.

A new version of an old ceremony has emerged in the remote Aboriginal community of Yuendumu. It's called football. And it's definitely more than a game.