

Heath Black

Former AFL Player, Motivational Speaker & Author

Former Fremantle Dockers player Heath Black has had his fair share of battles on and off the field.

Subjected to daily performance critique, he had to overcome anxiety associated with fear of failure and a battle with depression. Heath also had to deal with separation, divorce, alcoholism and termination of employment.

Heath understands the parallels between the business world and the world of competitive sports. He can relate to the importance of planning, training and team work and knows success only comes before work in the dictionary.

Heath's story of a man hell-bent on his own destruction is very personal and compelling and he uses his experiences to motivate audiences to overcome the obstacles that life puts in their way.

More about Heath Black:

Heath was recruited at number 12 in the 1996 AFL Draft as a 17 year old from Oakleigh Chargers Football Club and began his career with the Fremantle Dockers in 1997. He received a nomination for the Norwich Rising Star award in his first year. After spending five seasons at the Dockers, he finished Runner-Up Best and Fairest to Peter Bell in the Doig Medal. He was then traded to St Kilda. In Heath's second year at St Kilda, he was added into the Leadership Group.

At the end of 2004, Heath was traded back to the Dockers and was immediately included in their Leadership Group. Heath was one of the few consistent players in a mediocre season for Fremantle. In 2005, Heath was selected to represent Australia for the International Series against Ireland and was awarded Best Clubman for the Dockers in 2007. Heath retired from the AFL in August 2008 at the age of 29.

In his tell-all memoir, *Black*, released in 2012, Heath tells his story, revealing the depths of his dark days in 2009, his struggle to get his life back and finally his triumph of learning to live with his conditions.



In 2011, Heath was formally trained to facilitate 1Life Suicide Prevention presentations and travelled through WA with other 1Life representatives in conjunction with the WA Football League to speak with communities affected by suicide.

Heath's speaking engagements include keynote speaker for the 2011 Men In Black ball, alongside Ernie Dingo, guest speaker at the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia 2012 Men's Forum and keynote speaker at the 2012 Australian Disability Employment Conference.

In February 2012, Heath was invited to be an Ambassador for Headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation and takes part in public forums, mental health literacy training and is also a spokesman for headspace campaigns.

During 2011 and 2012, Heath received training from the AFL Players Association (AFLPA) to facilitate workshops on Stress Management, Healthy Choices and Respect & Responsibility. He works with AFLPA to deliver Playwell and Playwise programs to AFL clubs around Australia. The Playwise program is targeted at the AFL Leadership Groups to help them better recognise mental illness within their clubs and among their teammates as well as to prepare first and second year players for AFL careers and to make good decisions with regards to drugs, alcohol and other social situations.

Heath Black talks about:

- Importance of Teamwork
- Importance of Leadership
- Accepting and learning from Criticism
- Working with diverse personalities
- Physical and Mental Wellbeing
- Overcoming life's obstacles & recovering from rock bottom.

Client Testimonials



Heath was an inspirational speaker at the recent Men in Black Ball to raise funds for men's mental health.

Medical Forum WA



The AFL Players Association Wellbeing Service has been fortunate enough to be able to have Heath Black facilitate several of our programs including PlayWise, a Mental Health Literacy program delivered to AFL leadership groups, and PlayWell, a resilience and stress management program delivered to first and second year AFL players. Heath's personal battle with mental health and his subsequent story of managing his illness provides valuable insight for the players partaking in the programs and without a doubt increases the engagement of our participants. He's honesty and humility when telling his personal journey encourages young men to engage in conversation on an issue which is often considered taboo. I can't thank Heath enough for his contribution to our Wellbeing programs.

AFL Players' Association



The North East Business Forum, a networking business group, engaged Heath's services to present on the importance of identifying mental health in the context of a business environment. He is honest, engaging and concise and we have no hesitation in recommending him to any business or group seeking an informed and memorable speaker.

North East Business Forum



Heath presented an honest and sombre yet overall positive account of his life both before, during and after his high profile AFL career. Often dogged with controversy, he openly discussed his demons and the steps he took to understanding, embracing and managing the issues in his life. His story was a sobering one, but showed plenty of hope through opening up and talking about the issues. Heath's group workshop was well planned and very beneficial to our members. The feedback I received to his session was all extremely positive. We look forward to having Heath back next year.

State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia

Client Testimonials



Depression is a serious condition that many people suffer today. Depression among men is still a very taboo subject as men really struggle with coming to terms with the condition and learning to talk about it. I had the honour of meeting Heath Black who was a truly inspirational man who talked very honestly and frankly about his battle with his own mental health issues and the constant challenges he endured in gaining a correct diagnosis and also “just being understood” ... Thank you Heath for speaking out, we need more people like you who can recognize those at risk and speak to the general public. You certainly had an impact on many people at The Association for the Blind!

Guide Dogs WA

[VIEW SPEAKER'S BIO ONLINE ▶](#)