



WESTERN BULLDOGS PAST PLAYERS

Newsletter October 2020



The Two Dogs Podcast

Episode 7
Kevin Hillier interviews
Simon Beasley and Rick
Kennedy



<p>E.J. WHITTEN FOUNDATION PRESENTS</p> <p>MR CONRAD BISHOP - UROLOGIST</p> <p>ILIJA GRGIC - AFL FOOTBALLER</p>	

E.J. Whitten Foundation Presents . . .

On behalf of the E.J. Whitten Foundation, Ted Whitten, Executive Director and Founder of the foundation, made the necessary introductions to enable a Men's Health Awareness and Prostate Cancer presentation to take place online, via Zoom, on 24 September.

Urologist Conrad Bishop (pictured at bottom left) provided a comprehensive overview of the methods of diagnosis and the treatments available, while former player, Ilija Grgic (pictured at top left) spoke about his own battle with prostate cancer.

Those who attended online, via Zoom, found it invaluable. For those who were unable to attend, the recorded session is available via the link below.

LINK

Zoom Catch Ups



With Victoria in lockdown, regular Zoom sessions have been arranged to provide opportunities to catch up with people we might not get a chance to see otherwise.

Thanks to the following for making themselves available to share their stories in interviews to kick off the sessions.

Zoom #1 Lee Perussich, Laurie Sandilands and Wayne Foreman (all in Queensland)

Zoom #2 Laurie Sandilands (MC, Qld), Garry Baker (Tas), Bruce Reid (Bright, Vic.) and Neil Cordy (Qld)

Zoom #3 Doug Hawkins (MC, Vic.), Jim Sewell (WA), Tony McGuinness (SA), Michael McLean (NT) and Danny Del-Re (Qld)

Zoom #4 E.J. Whitten Foundation Presentation

Website

Our website now includes:

- previous editions of the newsletter
- podcasts
- Match Day information



The address is www.westernbulldogs.com.au/pastplayers

Western Bulldogs Past Players on Facebook

We will be using Facebook more to communicate information to former players and officials. It is a closed group. If you are not a member please go to Western Bulldogs Past Players and request to 'Join Group'.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting will be held online, via Zoom, on Wednesday 11 November. It will start at 7:00pm and conclude around 8:00pm.

Financial Full Members will be emailed a link and will need to click on that link to be admitted to the meeting.

Note: You do not need a Zoom account or a Zoom app if you wish to attend.

If you wish to be nominated for the committee, please download the Nomination form [here](#) and email it to Owen Madigan at belplas1@bigpond.com.

If you can't attend the Zoom meeting but wish to vote, please use the proxy form [here](#).

If you have any queries about the meeting, please don't hesitate to contact one of the committee members listed towards the end of this newsletter.

Giansiracusa in the Bubble



By NEIL CORDY

Neil Cordy played 235 VFL/AFL games with Footscray and the Sydney Swans. After his AFL career Neil coached and played for East Sydney. He worked for Network Ten for 15 years as a reporter/presenter and on their AFL coverage. He was the AFL Editor for the Daily Telegraph from 2011 to 2018 and is currently a member of ABC Grandstand's AFL broadcast team.

Daniel Giansiracusa hasn't seen his wife Kelly and children Ruby (11) and Otis (9) for more than three months.

It's been tough going for the dedicated family man but, as Gia says, he's not alone. Plenty of AFL personnel have made similar sacrifices to keep the game alive.

'It's been challenging. I miss them dearly,' Giansiracusa said. 'To be honest, it's a lonely existence. I've never been away from my family for this long, ever. Others are in a worse spot and have lost their jobs. You support your family in other ways but you have your moments, we bounce off each other here and, when one of us is down, the others try to help. That's where a footy club is at its best.'



It's been a tough road for the 265 game veteran and Footscray VFL coach but the Bulldogs have done better than most in the bubble, a run of three losses against the top three teams Richmond, Port Adelaide and Brisbane has been followed by a 5-1 winning stretch in the back-end of the season.

Gia says the difficult circumstances have played to one of Luke Beveridge's great strengths – his man management. 'Since Bevo came to the club he's been very strong on relationships,' Giansiracusa said. 'He was strong from the start of this [hub] that we were going to have every person and player in our organisation coming up. We weren't going to leave players at home. Every player came up. If you're part of our family, you're coming up; we're not leaving you back home.'

One of the biggest obstacles hub life presents is for players who need time away from the game but, living inside the hub, have nowhere to go.

Giansiracusa's observation is, 'Some players love the interaction of a footy club and others don't. There are players who have a talent and they like to play, do their best and leave. Ryan Griffen was one of my best mates and he played on instincts but he wanted time away and for him it was in the bush. That's the beauty of the game, everyone is different and that's our challenge – bringing everyone together.'

Welfare manager Brent Prismall and Player Development manager Jamie Maddocks have also had their hands full working overtime to keep everyone happy. They've tried to get players to reconnect with their love of the game which often disappears in the professional environment.

'We've tried to break it down to what you love about playing footy,' Giansiracusa said. 'It's about players remembering what it was like to play as a kid and embrace that side of things.'

Embracing your childhood is easier said than done and so is the perennial challenge for coaches of connecting with players from a different generation.

‘We look for inspiration from other sports,’ Giansiracusa said. ‘Bevo is creative in finding emotional hooks. Jamie (Maddocks) showed a video from Kobe Bryant. Bryant told the story of when he was an eight-year-old boy and how he loved the gamesmanship. It connected with many of the guys because they had idolised him growing up. If I talked about my favourite player Jason Dunstall it wouldn’t hit home to them. We need to connect with the now and the guys they looked up to growing up.’

Not surprisingly, it’s been younger players who have had trouble adjusting to the strange circumstances of life in the bubble as they also try to adjust to the life of a professional footballer.

‘Brent and Jamie have done a great job,’ according to Giansiracusa. ‘They’ve been staying in contact with families back home and encouraging them to call their sons. Some have grasped the challenge and others haven’t. But guys will come out the back of this next year and bounce back.’

One of the surprise successes has been pocket rocket Riley Garcia who has had plenty of obstacles to overcome in his first year in the AFL.

‘Riley was picked up late in the draft because of a knee injury (ACL) so wasn’t likely to play till the last third of the season and he’s from Perth so he’s a long way from home,’ Giansiracusa said. ‘He’s handled it extremely well and enhanced his reputation.’



Gordon Casey, Riley Garcia, Ted Whitten, Stephen Power

Another difference with life in a hub is sharing hotels with rival clubs. The Bulldogs spent their first three weeks on the Gold Coast at the Mercure with North Melbourne and Carlton. Then they moved into Royal Pines with Essendon who exited shortly after, when the Blues returned.

The round six loss to Carlton was a difficult one to deal with back at the resort the following day.

‘Carlton had the run of the resort after they smacked us,’ Giansiracusa recalls. ‘They had the pool and we kept out of their way.’

Footy Trip Tales



By ROSS BRUNDRETT

As a kid growing up in Footscray, Ross Brundrett wore Dave Darcy’s no.15 on the back of his Bulldog jumper and his main claim to footballing fame was being in the same year at Kingsville Primary School as Ted Whitten jnr.

His first job as a journalist was at the Footscray Mail where he covered Bulldog games for eight years, and for a further three years at the Western Times. He later wrote for the Sunday Press before spending the last 24 years of his career as a senior feature writer and columnist for the Herald Sun.

When your father is the legendary EJ Whitten, naturally you listen when he offers advice, especially when it's concerning footy and, for Ted Jnr, one particular piece of wisdom stayed with him: 'It was one of the first things my dad told me when I first pulled on a jumper for the Bulldogs – he said, "Never miss a footy trip' – and I never did" said the 144-game half-forward.

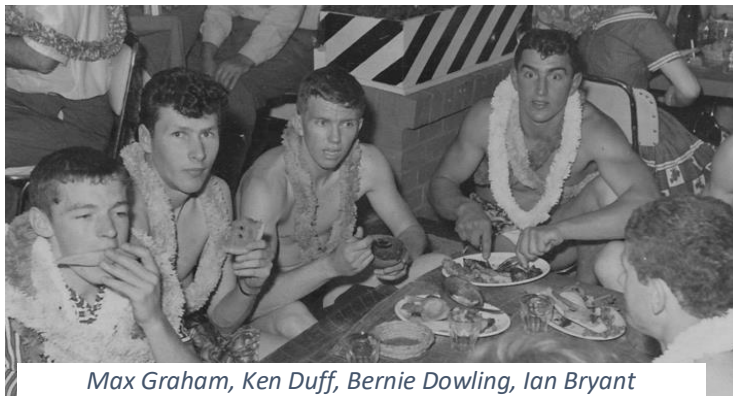
Ah! The footy trip! For decades it was the end-of-season reward for footballers and the stuff of nightmares for the footy administrators.



Ian Bryant, Graham Ion, John Clegg, Ted Whitten, Jim Gallagher, Bernie Lee

It goes without saying that many of the stories of footy trips will never be told because of the official Secrets Act (more commonly known as 'what goes on tour stays on tour') but some former players were happy to give a little bit of an insight into their footy trip experiences.

'In the 10 years I was playing I don't think I missed one trip and then, when I was on the match committee, I also took the trip when I could – so I hardly missed one from 1974 to 1994,' said Whitten Jnr.



Max Graham, Ken Duff, Bernie Dowling, Ian Bryant

'I loved them; I think they were really good for bonding a team together. We'd have to raise the money to get there so everyone worked together,' Whitten said. 'One year we organised a big gambling night in the changing rooms to raise the trip money but, unfortunately, three days before the big night, all the rooms were re-carpeted which wasn't ideal.

We got a big crowd in for the night and raised a good sum of money, but it was a hectic night and the carpet was doused in beer and covered in cigarette burns and absolutely ruined. It must have cost thousands to replace.'

Did the money raised from the gambling night go to new carpet instead? 'Oh no,' said Ted, 'It still went on the trip.'

'I think that was the year we went to Surfers and we had some fun and games there. We found a magic and novelty shop and bought some trick soap that released a blue dye when placed in water. I was sharing a room with 'Bluey' Hampshire and put the soap in the shower. When he came out, he couldn't work out why his hair had turned blue!'

Imagine that, a blue 'Bluey'.

Then there was the year the Bulldog boys hit Pattaya Beach in Thailand. 'We'd been on the drink all day and at 3:00am we came across a boxing club where you can take on a local and three of the boys thought that was a cracking idea.

Doug Hawkins was first in the ring and he went hell-for-leather for about 45 seconds and then this little fella slugged him in the stomach and that floored him. I immediately threw in the towel,' said Whitten, who wisely acted as the corner guy.

'Then Steve Macpherson jumped in and he also went like a thrashing machine and actually went almost three rounds until he got one in the guts and went down as well. I threw in the towel again. So, the third man in was Simon Beasley. You have to understand this was kick boxing and 'Beaser' is 6 feet 4 inches (195 cm) and his opponent is about 5 feet 8 inches (173 cm), but 'Beaser' doesn't try and knock him out or anything, he just keeps blocking the bloke with his long legs. In three



Simon Beasley and Ted Whitten

rounds, neither of them laid a fingernail on each other and the bout was declared a draw – which was good enough to get us a free drink card and we kicked on until dawn!'

While some players (the name Groenewegen springs to mind) are forever connected to footy trips for all the wrong reasons, Daniel Cross rates a mention for his heroics during a footy trip to Hong Kong at the end of the 2007 season.

'We were just walking along the dock in Victoria Harbour when we heard this commotion and we all ran over to the water's edge,' recalled Cross. 'I could see this woman in the water and nobody was doing anything and it looked as though she was drowning, so I jumped in.'

Teammate Tom Williams followed and soon they reached the drowning woman only to discover she didn't want to be saved.

'She was yelling "Let me go!"; the boys threw down a flotation device but she wouldn't grab it . . . but we managed to get her back to the steps anyway.'

She was identified as a 15-year-old schoolgirl who had personal problems, but Crossy said that her parents later thanked him and informed him that she had recovered well.

In Crossy's time, mild-mannered Dale Morris was the chief organiser of trips with Brian Lake his dedicated deputy, and it was usually all hands on deck.

'I went on six footy trips at the Dogs, I missed quite a few because of studies or operations in the off-season or because my wife was heavily pregnant. I think three of them were to Vegas, two to Hong Kong and one to Coogee.'

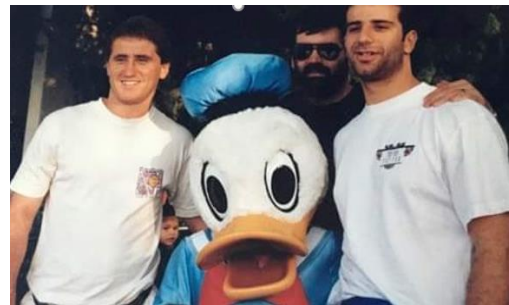


*Steve Macpherson, Jon Ballantyne, Nigel Kellett
celebrating surviving the bungy jump*

‘One smart thing we always did was take a chaperone with us. In my time it was usually Stuart Bailey, who was a former police detective and a real good bloke who managed to keep us out of any trouble.’

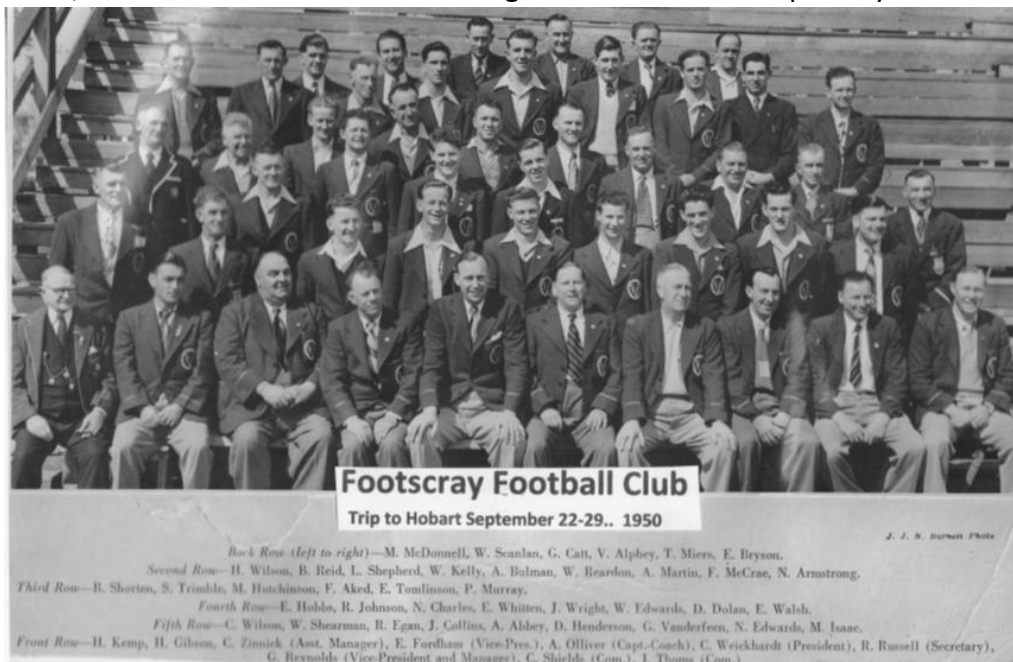
In the '90s, the US mainland, or Hawaii were the preferred destinations although the Bulldogs also managed one trip to Bali, another to the UK, and even went local one year with a trip to Cairns, which or may not have included a bungy jump challenge.

But, in earlier times, the clubs themselves arranged the trips and provided detailed running sheets to keep the players entertained, as proven by a souvenir timetable of the club's 1962 trip to the Beachcomber Hotel in Surfers Paradise. The Saturday after arriving the players had the choice of golf, trots at Southport or races a Doomben followed by tickets to a movie. Then on Sunday morning they had the choice of a church service at 7:00am, 8:00am or 9:00am . . .



*Mark Hunter, Donald Duck, Gary McGorlick,
and Danny Del-Re*

Back in the '50s interstate trips were the go. Players turned up in blazers, ties were expected, and formalities were enforced. The 1955 trip to Hobart even included a lunch at the Town Hall hosted by the city mayor, a duty made more palatable (as past player, the late Alan Clough told his son Gary) by the gift of 10 pounds to each player from an anonymous board member, as a reward for the club attaining a record membership that year.



Another former player, Bernie Lee, was so nervous before his first plane trip in 1956 that he was ill within minutes of take-off from Essendon airport. Teammates swear they hadn't passed Keilor Road, when he reached for the paper bag.

No doubt the trips instilled a deeper sense of camaraderie. In some years, particularly the years after the club stopped sponsoring the trips and before the players were full-time professionals, just raising the funds for a trip was a team effort of epic proportions.

Such was the case in 1976 when the club was making inroads under coach Billy Goggin but seemed unlikely to make it to the finals. A mid-season victory in the Escort Cup against Port Adelaide and North Melbourne at Norwood in SA saw the club pick up \$6000 in prizemoney and Goggin, a keen student of the punt, may have suggested the boys back themselves (at 5-2) to make the finals.

Not that the wager made anyone try any harder but, against the odds, the Bulldogs scrapped their way into contention, with Allan Stoneham kicking a goal after the siren to defeat Fitzroy in the second last game of the season and then 'Scray hung on to draw the last game against Carlton and sneak into the elimination final (which they lost to Geelong).

But at least they were able to lick their wounds on a holiday to Hawaii with the \$15,000 they collected!

These days, of course, the organised footy trip for the entire list no longer exists. Small groups of players still make the odd journey together but, more often than not, if a player goes abroad it's with his partner . . . not that there is anything wrong with that!

We'll leave the last word to Crossy. 'I don't suppose they are so important anymore,' he said, 'But I tell you what, I enjoyed them all. They were fantastic trips that I will never forget.'

Crossy at the Crossroads

**Daniel Cross, 210 games Western Bulldogs, 2002–2013
(39 games Melbourne, 2014–15)**

By ROSS BRUNDRETT

THE COVID pandemic has stalled the lives of so many and one of the Bulldogs' favourite sons, Daniel Cross, is yet another who has spent most of the year in limbo.



He started the year as the injury management coach at Melbourne Football Club, a position he has held at the club since ending his playing career with the Demons at the end of 2015.

But, like so many others, his position was put on hold when the pandemic turned the AFL competition upside down. 'I ended up finding work with an old mate from Albury, and for a while there I was travelling to Albury every week but now I'm able to work remotely from home so that has been a great help,' said the popular Sutton medallist.

But Daniel admits that it has been a struggle, juggling a new job, helping wife Sam home school their two children while still keeping an eye on the latest AFL movements . . . and maintaining a hope that he might reignite his coaching career once things get back to something resembling normalcy.



But he is aware that his five-year contract expires soon and all clubs will be streamlining football department staff to prepare for what is looking like a cash-strapped 2021 season. 'I'm hoping for the best, but I'm realistic enough to know there's a strong chance I might have to look elsewhere to continue my AFL journey,' said Cross, who played 210 games with the Dogs before being delisted and managing another 39 games in two years with Melbourne.

'I would love to stay involved in footy,' he says, before cheekily adding, 'Maybe they'll find a job for me back at the Bulldogs.'

Paul Dimattina ('Dimma')

131 games (1995–2003); guernsey number 28

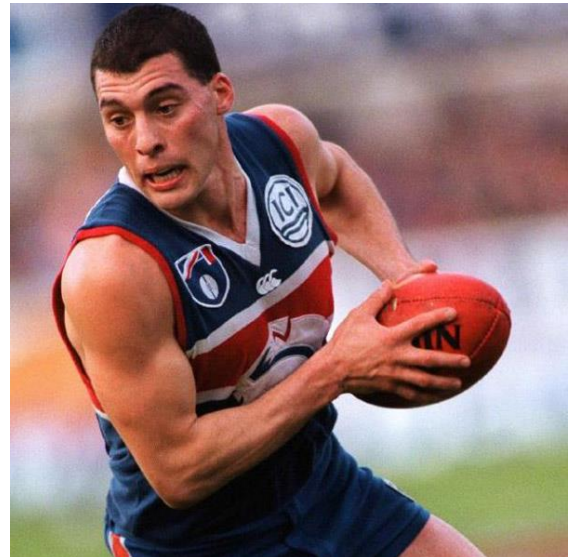


By **SCHARLAINE CAIRNS**

Editor of A History of the Footscray Football Club: Unleashed and The Bulldog Heritage Vol.1 and Vol.2 and long-time Player Sponsor

Football and hospitality are in Paul Dimattina's genes. In fact, the four 'F's, 'family, football food and friends', Paul used in his speech celebrating his father on the occasion of Frank's 70th birthday, could be used to describe Paul himself.

Paul's dad was the captain and best and fairest at De La Salle College in 1964 before his 42 senior games for Richmond (1964–68); and won Richmond's 'Most Determined' award in 1966. He also played 14 senior games for North Melbourne (1969–70), 64 games for Brunswick in the VFA (1971–74), and was captain/coach of Sorrento in 1975.



In the 1980s, Frank's restaurant Il Gambero became synonymous with the restaurant precinct of Lygon Street, Carlton, as did family-owned Dimattina's when it opened in 1994. No wonder his son was to follow in his footsteps, on and off the field!

Paul himself studied hospitality at William Angliss College and knew he wanted to play football since beginning at the Bulleen Football Club at the age of 10. He was playing Under-19s for Richmond at 16 years of age and, throughout his football career, worked part-time in the family restaurant business.

Paul's early AFL career was unsettled after the Tigers drafted him under the father/son rule in the 1991 national draft and he played reserves games for Richmond in 1992. He played games at Sandringham in the VFA in 1993, as well as three reserves game for Carlton, before

Essendon included him on their supplementary list in 1994. It wasn't until the pre-season draft for the 1995 season that Paul found his home at the Kennel. His debut against Carlton in August 1995 at Optus Oval was the beginning of a career that spanned nine seasons of which he has nothing but fond memories and 'loved every minute'.

During his time with the Dogs, Paul (with the assistance of club employee Jarrad Hanks) was the instigator and driving force behind what was to become the Bulldog Backyard program. Dimma's Backyard involved him purchasing memberships out of his own pocket for a crowd of underprivileged kids to attend games. He would sit in the bay with them if he wasn't playing on the day. For this altruistic endeavour he was awarded the Variety Club of Australia's inaugural Heart of Football Award. Recognising the merits of the program Paul had started, the club took over and continued his idea.

Paul missed the last game of the 2003 season after playing 21 of the 22 home-and-away games that year, so to say he was surprised to be delisted after the season is an understatement. He would have played every game if he hadn't injured his ankle in sodden conditions during the second last game of 2003, against St Kilda in Launceston. Being a businessman, he knows the decision was made because he was out of contract and it was financially wiser to keep a contracted player instead – but it was a hard blow for Paul, who lived and breathed red, white and blue.

Faced with his first real break from football in almost 15 years, Paul could focus on his hospitality business full-time, moving to Queensland in 2005 to run the newly acquired Mario's at Broadbeach on the Gold Coast with his brother Andrew. But an 'offer he couldn't refuse' from the Southport Sharks did see him pull on his boots once more, alongside Andrew (who had played 28 games for Collingwood, 1999–2002). Whatever the Southport offer was, the Sharks got value for money with Paul being best on ground and kicking six goals in Southport's 61 point defeat of Morningside in the 2005 Queensland State League grand final. He then decided to hang up the boots and return to Melbourne.

As well as involvement with the family's Bluetrain Café at Southgate, which his wife Karen managed, Paul opened a café a few doors from Dimattina's in Lygon Street for a short time with his former teammates and close friends Tony Liberatore and Jose Romero, before taking over Society Restaurant at the top-end of Bourke Street in 2007 – reopening a restaurant that had been founded in 1923 as The Italian Society and had moved from its original location in 1932. It was a huge project to restore the restaurant to its former glory and Paul enjoyed 10 years there before selling the building in 2017.

The 2005 Southport grand final wasn't Dimma's last football hurrah. After eight years out of playing regular football, he did make a comeback in 2014, at the age of 38, to play for Airport West in the Essendon District League, coached by his former Bulldog teammate and 'a legend of a bloke' Adam Contessa. Paul says he loved playing again but admits it was harder than football had ever been for him and, even though he had kept fit in retirement, his body just didn't recover quickly after games, making it hard to come up again week after week.

He played in seven EJ Whitten Legends matches (alongside 'Libba'), playing his last in 2018, after also playing in a Tasmanian/Victorian Rivalry game in Launceston to raise money for Muscular Dystrophy in 2017. He even played a few Super Rules games for the Marcellin Bald Eagles.

Off the field, Paul took on the senior coaching role at Bentleigh in the Southern Football and Netball League (SNFL) in 2015 and coached the team to a grand final in 2016, but had to

relinquish the role halfway through the 2017 season when his interstate business interests made it too difficult for him to continue.

All three of Paul's children are dedicated Bulldog supporters, but he describes his two girls as 'real fanatics'. Paul has coached all three of his children – Kai, Milla and Tiani – at St Kilda City Junior Football Club, continuing to assist with the underage teams on match days even when unable to coach.

Paul currently co-owns and manages Lamaro's Hotel in Cecil Street, South Melbourne. He believes that the key to hospitality is, if you give a little and treat people how they deserve to be treated, you get a lot back. This applies to his staff as well as his patrons.

Neither Paul nor his business are immune to the toll the COVID crisis has taken on the restaurant industry. Fortunately for Paul, his Queensland restaurants are still able to trade. In typical fashion, he has refused to wave the white flag here in Victoria and, while campaigning to avert the damage that lockdown is doing to the hospitality industry and those who depend on it for their livelihood, he has been thinking on his feet to keep Lamaro's trading in new ways so his staff (who he describes as like his 'own kids') can go to work every day and are financially protected.



Paul has always been a team player and, in support of his team, he has ensured that members of his staff who do not qualify for Job Keeper are still working, keeping Lamaro's open as a gourmet grocery and boutique wine cellar with orders able to be picked up, or delivered in the Albert Park, Middle Park and St Kilda West area.

Making the most of a bad situation, deliveries also provide an opportunity for son Kai to get his learner driver hours up – he drives and Paul knocks on the doors. This is not always time efficient when surprised customers open their doors to find Paul and naturally want a chat. Paul, being Paul and a people person, finds that hard to resist!

Anyone who has enjoyed Paul's hospitality in any of his or his family's restaurants will know what to expect from Lamaro's. Consider picking up an order during lockdown or having it delivered if you live close by.

When the COVID restrictions finally ease, Paul is also sure to make everyone very welcome again at Lamaro's Hotel, 273–279 Cecil Street, South Melbourne (phone: 9690 3737; <https://www.lamaroshotel.com.au>).

Where are they now?

Max Parker

5 games (1971), guernsey numbers 37, then 16

Recruited from Welshpool. Played last half of 1971, then pre-season games in 1973.

Where did you go after the Bulldogs?

Went to Woodville as part of the Ray Huppatz deal. Intended to stay a couple of years and come back. Ended up playing 300 odd games there.

Played four state games for SA. Ended up as playing coach in the Barossa Valley till I was 45.

Worked for thirty years in the fire brigade as skipper of the fire boat; pretty cruisy number.



Where do you live now?

Retired to Flinders Island in the middle of Bass Strait. Bought the general store at Lady Barron and have worked seven days a week for the last 15 years.

What are your thoughts on the modern game?

The modern game is pretty crappy, I'd like the interchanges to be severely restricted and the game lengthened again so the strong players are rewarded.

Who were the players you most admired during your playing days?

Good players; everyone at Footscray were champs in my eyes. Stephen Kernahan was probably the toughest opponent.

Other thoughts:

When I was at Footscray we all came from around Footscray or down Gippsland way. My time at Woodville was the same, a few recruits but generally all locals.

Football was terrific for me. The closeness I feel with everybody I played with will last forever. The non-player doesn't understand the trials that we all had to endure. The defeats, coaches' blasts, wet cold training nights, playing injured and the endless laps of the oval. Still there were plenty of great times and endless stories.

Fletcher Roberts: Plenty of life in this Bulldog yet!

51 games (2012–19), guernsey number 18



By RON COLEMAN

*Former Part Owner and Managing Editor of the Western Times.
Western Bulldogs Director 1989–95*

At 27, Fletcher Roberts is still young, fit and raring to go.

With a psychology degree, a steady job and a premiership medal around his neck, he could easily have hung up his boots when the Bulldogs delisted him last year. After all, he'd played

just 51 senior games in eight seasons since the Doggies snapped him up with pick 11 in the 2011 pre-season draft.

On the plus side, in a brief but effective footy career he:

- Helped Footscray get into the 2014 VFL Grand Final, taking a pack mark before the siren in round 20 against Richmond and goaling from 60 metres out. The three-point win put the Dogs second on the ladder, but injury forced him to sit-out Footscray's premiership triumph.
- Kept Jeremy Cameron goalless in that famous 2016 preliminary final against GWS.
- Combined with Joel Hamling to shut down Lance Franklin and Kurt Tippett in the Bulldogs' wonderful win over the Sydney Swans in the 2016 Grand Final, his 37th senior game.



But, after 10 games in 2017, Roberts found himself back in the Seconds, playing VFL footy with Footscray. It would be months before he was to notch up his milestone 50th senior match.

He spent most of 2018 in the VFL before his recall for his 49th game, the Dogs' round 19 match against Port Adelaide at Mars Stadium in Ballarat. Port won easily and Roberts was dropped again.

Fast forward to May last year and Roberts' solid work in defence and attack for Footscray was rewarded with his 50th senior game, at Mars Stadium again, against Brisbane. This time the Bulldogs won, with Roberts solid in defence.

His 51st game the next week, against Geelong, was his last for the Bulldogs, but his contribution to the club – including the 2016 Premiership – was recognised this year when he was awarded Life Membership alongside premiership teammates Clay Smith and Shane Biggs.

So, is Fletcher Roberts ready to retire (from footy) yet? No way! 'I still want to play at the highest level I can,' he says. 'I'm happy with what I've achieved, and hopefully I can play on.'

He was all set to run out for Essendon in the VFL this year until the coronavirus struck.

You get the strong impression that, should opportunity knock for him to play senior football again, Fletcher Roberts will quickly put his hand up. But, for now, he's focusing on his job as

Online Program Coordinator for Ladder, the AFL Players' official charity that provides housing support and personal development programs for homeless and disadvantaged youth in four states.



The Step Up pilot program that Roberts runs aims to help young people in crisis, aged 16 to 25, around Australia improve their lives through goal-setting, motivation and job preparation.

'It's been quite successful,' he says.

The same work ethic and drive Roberts has shown on the footy field is paying dividends for troubled youth around the nation as he helps them turn their lives around.

The De La Salle and Melbourne Grammar old boy is no stranger to stepping up and turning things around. He attracted the Bulldogs' interest kicking four goals in the final term of Sandringham Dragons' 2011 TAC Cup Victory, to be picked up in the pre-season draft.

Outside of football and his work with the Ladder organisation, Fletcher Roberts enjoys life in Maidstone with long-time partner Jaclyn, who's also a psychologist, which makes two psychology degrees under one roof!

Quick quiz for Fletcher Roberts:

Your first game?

'It was against Richmond and I was told just 30-minutes before the game, after Ryan Griffen suffered back spasms. My jumper was presented to me half an hour before the match and I came on as a sub 10 minutes into the third quarter. I grew up following Richmond! I played on Shane Edwards, helping out 'Roughie' in defence. I got eight to 10 touches.'

Early influences?

'My older brothers. I'm one of four boys and my brothers Nick and Nathan both played for Williamstown, and so did I (when Williamstown was aligned with the Bulldogs).

Toughest opponents?

'Hard to go past Franklin and Tom Hawkins. Franklin was so good at running around players and Hawkins usually won the wrestling matches and was so skilled.'

Best Bulldogs?

'Can't go past Matty Boyd and Dale Morris, they were such great leaders in defence, and I played with them. 'Moz' just played on anyone and was a great leader by example. And 'Boyd' was a great leader and positive influence.'

Coaches?

'From a line point of view I learnt so much from Rohan Smith as a defender. He contributed greatly to my development. 'Macca' (Brendan McCartney) was quite challenging at times. We learnt a lot of the contested side of the game from him. With 'Bevo' the emphasis was on zoning, defence and intercept marking.'

Your last game?

'It was against Geelong and I was on Tom Hawkins who got the better of me. He's strong and so hard to stop. I did a better job in the second half.'

Mates at the kennel?

'I enjoy playing golf at Mount Derrimut in Sunshine with a few of the boys including 'Jongy' (Lin Yong), Lachie Hunter, Tory Dickson, Josh Prudden, Matt Suckling and Bailey Dale. They're a good bunch.'

Congratulations

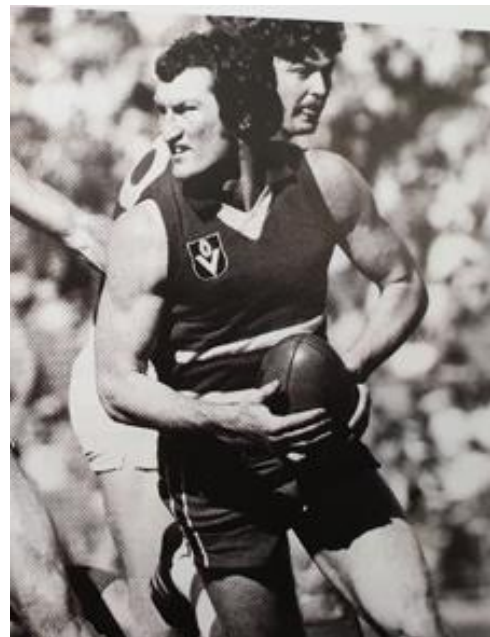
70th Birthday

Stephen Power

WB# 578, 177 games, 1969–79

Guernsey number: 39 (1969), and 21

Runner up 1974 Best and Fairest



80th Birthday

Graham Ion

WB# 459, 107 games, 1958–65

Guernsey number 17

Graham Ion (*centre front*) flanked by (*left to right*): Barry Ion (WB# 489, 40 games, 1961–65, guernsey numbers 38 and 21), trainer Syd Trimble, father Ron and brother Doug.

90th Birthday

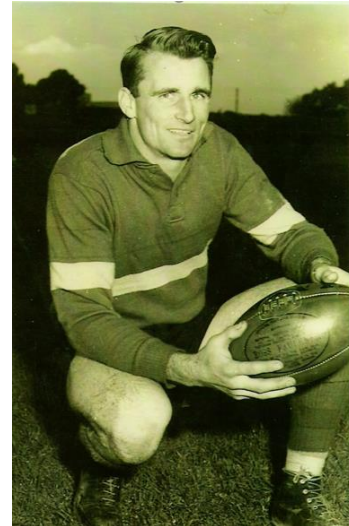
Herb Henderson

WB# 374, 130 games, 1950–58

Guernsey numbers: 1 (1950) and 25

1954 Premiership player

Full-back in the Bulldogs Team of the Century



90th Birthday

Ian Foreman

WB# 396, 2 games, 1952

Guernsey number 12

Life Member Western Bulldogs Past Players

Life Member Western Bulldogs FC

Ian (*left*) with Kevin White

90th Birthday

Geoff Vanderfeen

WB# 346, 13 games, 1948–51

Guernsey numbers: 25, 34, 9 and 10

Pictured, 1950 end-of-season trip to Tasmania.

Back: Norm Charles, **Geoff Vanderfeen**, Bill Kelly, Angus Abbey, Ted Whitten

Front: Reg Egan, Jack Collins, Don Henderson



Get Well Soon

Barry Round

WB# 572, Footscray 1969–75, 135 games

Swans 1976–1985, 193 games

Guernsey numbers: 14 (Bulldogs) and
25 (Swans)

Brownlow Medallist 1981

Barry with son David (WB# XXX, 2 games, 1997,
guernsey number 41) and grandson Nate.



Noel Long

WB# 446, 12 games, 1959–60

Guernsey number 34

Noel with his wife and three of their
children on the night of his induction into
the Ovens and Murray Football League
Hall of Fame in 2015.

LOST DOGS

**We would like to send our newsletter to
all Past Players and Officials.**

Keeping the database current is an ongoing
challenge as people change email
addresses. If you know the email and/or
mobile of any of the following, please
forward them to ross.abbey30@gmail.com.

*Colin Seery
Ian Williams
Lindsay Sneddon
Tony Fox
Dallas Patterson*

*Andrew Wills
Angelo Petraglia
Brennan Stack
David Allday
Colin Shaw*

*Michael Kelly
Michael Rolfe
Tony Campbell
Harry Skreja
Phil Cronan*

2020 Committee

President	Ross Abbey	0412 073 092
Vice President	Phil O'Keeffe	0402 007 270
Secretary	Owen Madigan	0408 105 151
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	Adam Contessa	0416 081 259
	Graeme Joslin	0412 771 235
	Matthew Mansfield	0439 336 939
	Gary McGorlick	0409 804 057
	Ilija Grgic	0413 677 736
ALFCPP Delegate	Jack Slattery	0425 746 148

Player Welfare

We strongly recommend past players join the AFLPA Alumni. Benefits include:

- up to \$500 refund on excess payments when in hospital if you are in a private Health Fund
- up to \$8000 refund for extra operation charges should you require surgery on body joints, including damaged teeth.
- an opportunity to seek funds from the Geoff Pryor Fund or an Injury and Hardship fund in the event of suffering financial hardship.

The one-off joining fee is \$50. To join, contact Chris Smith at AFLPA on 0400 019 391 or csmith@aflplayers.com.au.