



WESTERN BULLDOGS PAST PLAYERS

Newsletter March 2021



The Two Dogs Podcast

Episode 10, Kevin Hillier interviews

Gary Merrington and Robert 'Bones' McGhie

Website

Our website now includes:

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

The address is

www.westernbulldogs.com.au/pastplayers.

Season 2021 Ticketing



Tim Harrington & Mitch Hannan

Electronic ticketing will be used for all of Season 2021. There will be no opportunity to walk up to the ground and buy a ticket. Matches early in the season are likely to have a maximum of 50%-75% of capacity as directed by the Victorian Government.

We have a block of the best seats at Marvel Stadium on level two between aisles 24 & 27 and the use of the Danvers Room.

To be able to enjoy these facilities you need to have a club membership and be a financial member of the Western Bulldogs Past Players. If you haven't paid your annual subscription, we suggest you do so promptly. You can go to the membership form at westernbulldogs.com.au/pastplayers

The Recruits Dinner was a sell out

Our fourth Annual Recruits Dinner on Tuesday 2 March was a sell out.

Kevin Hillier interviewed Adam Treloar, Stefan Martin, Mitch Hannan, Jamarra Ugle-Hagan, Dominic Bedendo and Lachlan McNeil. He also interviewed Club Board member Luke Darcy and Jon Ballantyne who recently completed the Neil Sachse Foundation Three Day Discovery Ride.

In attendance were former players who represented the club in a combined total of **3721 games**.

There were

- Four club captains
- Eight Best & Fairest winners
- Three Brownlow Medalists
- Two Coleman Medalists
- Two Senior Coaches and
- Three Assistant Coaches



Luke Darcy & Adam Treloar



Scott West, Jamarra Ugle-Hagan & Josh Hill



Kelvin Templeton, Jeff Gieschen and Essendon Past Players President Barry Capuano



Stefan Martin will wear number 8 in 2021. Ian Morrison worn number 8 with distinction during his career between 1973-80



*Tim Harrington (ex #30) Dominic Bedendo (#26) Don McKenzie (ex #30) Lachlan McNeil (new #30)
Ross Abbey (ex #30)*



Back Ian Rickman, Des Randall, Michael Fitzgerald

Front: Phil O'Keeffe, Ted Whitten, Jamarra Ugle-Hagan Gordon Casey



Simon Beasley Terry Wallace Stefan Martin Steve Wallis Brian Royal



Barry Harvey Graeme Cook John Schultz John Reilly Ron McGowan



Back: Adam Contessa Adam Treloar Gary McGorlick Front: Gary Dempsey Ilija Grgic Jon Ballantyne

Simon Beasley

Games 154, goals 575 (1982–89); guernsey number 18

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.

As far as first games go, Simon Beasley's debut as a Bulldog was the stuff of nightmares.

He recalls, 'It was the opening game of the 1982 season and Essendon absolutely belted us. I played on Ronnie Andrews and he gave me a hard time. I couldn't manage to kick a single goal and they beat us by more than 100 points . . .' [Essendon 29-60 (191) defeated Footscray 11-15 (81)].



A younger player might have been discouraged enough to pack his bags and head back home to Perth with his tail between his legs. But Beasley was a twenty-five year old at the time who, with a mature head on those pale shoulders, had already decided his future lay in Melbourne, both on and off the field. 'I also knew that Footscray were pretty devoid of key forwards so I would be given every chance to make a go of it at full forward, which worked out well for me. I certainly took a while to find my feet – I kicked about 25 goals [24] in the first half of the season – but things started to click, for me and the team, in the second half and I must have booted about 55 [58] goals in the back end,' he says.

From there, he went from strength to strength. Brilliant on the lead, deadly accurate and a surprisingly strong mark (often playing in front), Beasley became a focal point for the Bulldogs, averaging almost four goals a game in his 154 game career.

Just how effective he became can be measured by the fact that in the 1980s, a decade which spawned three of the game's greatest full forwards in Lockett, Dunstall and Ablett, history records that it was Beasley who kicked the most, with 575 goals. 'It's a stat that sports' quiz masters often throw up as a trick question,' jokes Beasley – but it is an achievement he is justly proud of, along with his Coleman Medal win in 1985 when he topped the ton, reaching 105 goals for the season in the see-sawing preliminary final against Hawthorn which the Dogs lost by a heartbreaking 10 points.

'I still believe we could have beaten Essendon if we had made the [1985] grand final because we matched up pretty well against them and had a good win over them during the home-and-away season. I reckon Sheedy breathed a sigh of relief when we got rolled by Hawthorn,' Beasley remembers.

He believes he was at the top of his game in that 1985 season, as were a few of his team mates. 'Brad Hardie had come over and won the Brownlow in his first year, Andrew Purser was dominating in the ruck

and another West Australian in Jim Sewell became another important player for us . . . Doug Hawkins had come back (from injury) in devastating fashion and was just a beautiful user of the ball and [Les] ‘Lelly’ Bamblett was brilliant up forward.’

Bamblett and Beasley booted 156 goals between them for the season to be one of the most potent two-pronged attacks in the game, but injury and misfortune robbed them of the chance to repeat their double act in the seasons that followed. Bamblett only managed another six games before retiring, while Beasley finally succumbed to persistent back pain and a nagging knee injury halfway through the 1989 season.

‘By then I was thirty-two and I knew I was at the end of my playing career, plus my work as a stockbroker was taking more of my time. We were only part-time professional footballers back then and, by that time in my life, heading off in the middle of winter to training after a long day in the office was wearing a bit thin,’ Beasley explains.

Does he regret not having had a crack at the VFL until he was 25? ‘Not at all, although I had the chance to come over after winning the best player medal at the Australian Amateur’s championships when I was eighteen. Melbourne, Carlton, Geelong and Hawthorn were other clubs who were interested in me back then, but I just knew my body hadn’t developed enough and I wanted to play senior footy at Swan Districts first anyway.’

‘As it turned out, Footscray was the club that maintained an interest in me, although they had to trade a ‘Form 4’ from Essendon to get me in the end. Some of my WA footy mates gave me flak for not going to one of the big clubs like Richmond or Carlton, but I liked the idea of playing for a blue collar club like Footscray and the people there were very nice . . . Tony Capes [then president] and Ken Ryan were really genuine people to deal with and I always felt welcome there.’

Beasley played on some of the most celebrated defenders the game has known, such as Chris Langford and Bruce Doull, but he nominates Swan’s fullback Rod ‘Tilt’ Carter as his toughest opponent.

As for his most memorable moment in the game, despite bags of 12 goals, and his heroics in the 1985 season, it has to be his intercept mark in front of Greg Phillips against Collingwood the year prior to that when he sealed a 5 point victory with the last kick of the game. ‘That’s the game I get reminded of the most, no doubt,’ he says.



These days Beasley still dabbles in bookmaking with an online business called beazabet.com and he maintains an active interest in the Western Bulldogs’ past players’ association.

‘I like to get back to Whitten Oval when I can and meet up with regulars like Peter Welsh and Terry Wheeler . . . the ground has such fond memories for me . . . I think it was an under-rated ground, it was always a really good surface to play on.’

He also keeps in touch with old team mates such as Rick Kennedy ('we're both members at the Kingston Heath Golf Club') and, whenever he returns to WA, he catches up with Andrew Purser ('a genuine good bloke'). 'Mark Kellett I still meet up with as well,' he adds, 'Oh, and I also enjoy chatting with Dougie Hawkins whenever I get the chance.' Which is the way it should be for two celebrated members of the club's Team of the Century.

Peter Featherby

**Games 42 (1975–76); guernsey number 5
(and 93 games for Geelong [1979–83]; guernsey numbers 6 and 11)**

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.

Before Gary Ablett Junior and Tom Mitchell were giving statisticians repetitive strain injury, there was a bloke called Peter Featherby who was pumping out similar numbers, but with none of the fanfare.

'Feathers' played with Footscray (1975–76) and Geelong (1979–83). In those days thirty disposals in a game was rare but, for the silky-skilled centreman from Subiaco, those sorts of numbers were par for the course.

In just his second game, he had 33 possessions against Fitzroy and then produced another four 30-possession-plus games before the 1975 season's end, including 41 in Round 22 against Carlton (in a losing side) at the Western Oval. There are even reports that his tally was actually 55 disposals (and not 33) against the Lions in Round 2, but rumour has it that none of the official statisticians knew who he was, so had allocated his stats to other players.

What isn't in dispute is 'Feathers' ability to find the footy. He was an old-fashioned 'ball magnet'. In the words of the great Tommy Hafey, 'He was so good at finding the pill it would follow him up the race at half-time.'

Peter says it was all about being in the right place at the right time. 'I could read the play pretty well . . . [and] got to where the ball was going. I learned to find the footy in juniors and I played in the centre for almost all my career which helped.'

Surprisingly, Peter's first season at the Bulldogs passed with him being given little recognition, despite it being one of the best debut years in VFL/AFL history. In 1975, he finished fourth in the competition for



This poster of Peter Featherby appeared in the Footscray Mail in 1975 and is reproduced here courtesy of Ron Coleman.

disposals, with 506. Only Barry Davis (North Melbourne; 609), Norm Goss (South Melbourne; 544) and Kevin Bartlett (Richmond; 535) fared better. Imagine what Featherby's numbers would have been if the statisticians has been able to recognise him!

But, as good as his first season was, he and his wife Yolanda were struggling with the challenges of their move across the country and having a young family. 'I had more trouble adjusting in my second year,' Featherby said. 'I think it was because Yolanda and I were new parents and we were isolated. It's not like now where we've got the internet and easy communications. Airfares were also horrifically expensive to get to Perth. When we first moved across it was still in the days of writing letters. We didn't know a soul in Melbourne other than the people at the footy club. It was just hard.'

Peter played one more year at the Bulldogs before the strain of living away from family and friends finally told. 'Some people are more mature than others, and I wasn't,' he says. 'If I had come to the club a couple of years later, I probably wouldn't have left.'

While their stay at Footscray was short, the Featherby's will always have lifelong memories of their time at the Bulldogs after the birth of their first child Jason. 'Jason was born in the Footscray Hospital,' Featherby explains. 'He has been a lifelong Bulldogs' supporter and so has his son Josh. I think they must have injected him with something at the hospital'

After three years back at Subiaco, Featherby was ready for another crack at the VFL and returned in 1979 to play for Geelong. His ability to attract the footy hadn't diminished. In Geelong's 1981 Round 16 match against Melbourne, he had an epic day out, finishing with 40 kicks, 8 handballs and 11 marks. The *Geelong Advertiser* described the performance as 'statistically the best ever by a Geelong player'. At the time it was one of the best efforts in the VFL since triple-Brownlow-Medallist Bob Skilton had 46 possessions for South Melbourne in a 1967 win over St Kilda.



Peter and Yolanda with Jason in 1975

Remarkably Peter has very little memory of that performance. ‘When people ask me about that game I’ve got no idea about it,’ he says. ‘In the end I was trying to get away from the ball – I was standing there and it would fall into my hands. It was one of those days when the ball was just there.’



Peter and his wife, Yolanda, have retired and live on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, where he is an avid golfer.

Neil Sachse Foundation Discovery Rides

By **MICHAEL SEXTON**

Michael Sexton is an award-winning journalist, producer and sports writer with over 30 years experience. He is based in Adelaide but his work has taken him across Australia and internationally with leading media organisations the ABC, BBC and Channel Nine. He co-authored Playing On with Neil Sachse.

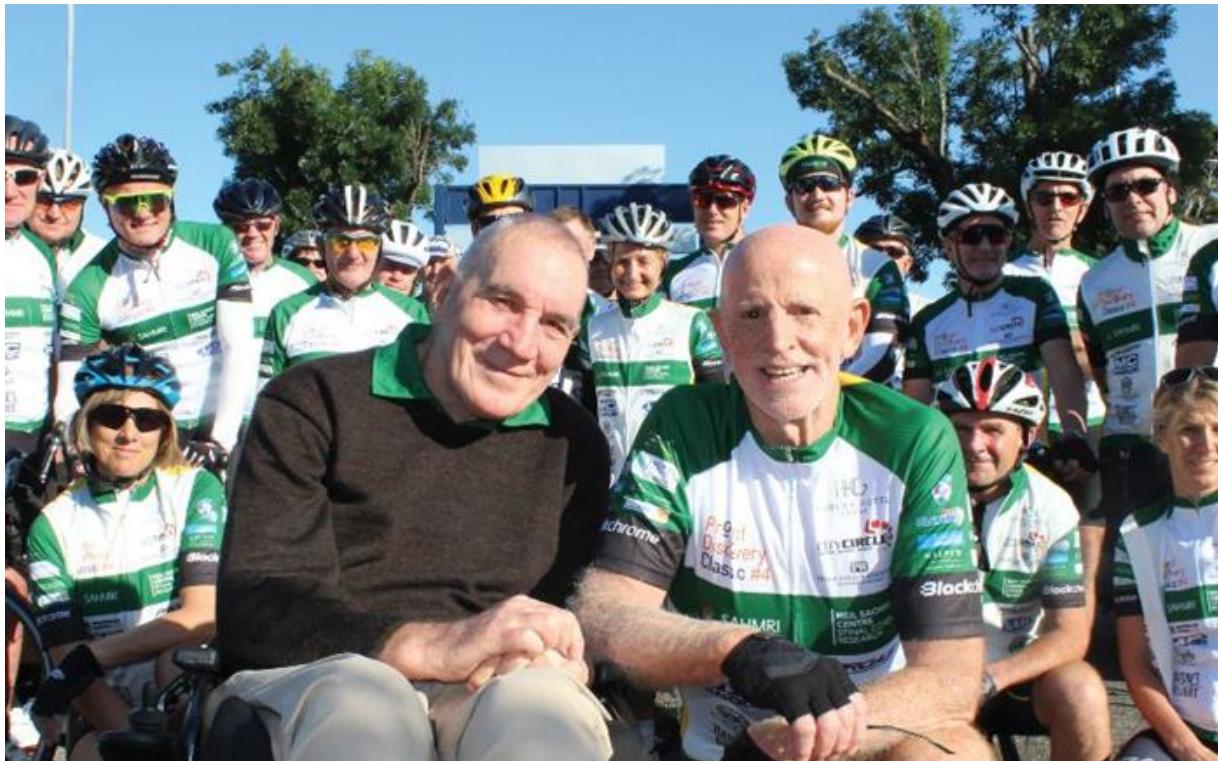
In September 2016, Neil Sachse was wheeling himself back home through the streets of Adelaide’s CBD after meeting a friend for a coffee. As he turned a corner he passed a tyre centre where a bloke wearing overalls was wiping his greasy hands. When the bloke saw who was in the wheelchair, he shouted. ‘HEY NEIL – GO YOU DOGGIES!’

A few days later the red, white and blue triumph on the MCG was celebrated as joyfully in Neil’s apartment as anywhere in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Although he played most of his football (and created his legend as a no-nonsense utility) at North Adelaide, Neil loved Footscray and held his brief time with the club dear to his heart.

He had every reason not to – given that, in his second match, he suffered a fractured spine that left him a quadriplegic. He chose very early on not to allow himself to fall into self-pity, instead fighting to find the light in life and a purpose for his catastrophic injury.

The light in his life was his family and his purpose was to create awareness of spinal injury and to work toward effective treatments and diagnostic tools.



Neil Sachse and Kevin O'Keefe at the start of Discovery Ride 4 in November 2019

Like everything, it all began in a small way. Neil spoke to those suffering similar injuries, when they were in hospital or in rehabilitation while working in what was known as a 'sheltered workshop'.

He was always an advocate and always gently nudging conversations towards achieving gains for those in wheelchairs. By the 1980s he began serious fundraising with a view to channelling money into research for a cure for spinal injuries. This included funding research projects in Australia and abroad. Eventually he established a centre of excellence for spinal injury research at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), named the Neil Sachse Centre in his honour.

Neil was open to all sorts of fundraising options. He held race days, pasta nights, attracted sponsorship from companies and unions, spoke at service groups and, most recently, organised a regular cycling tour through South Australia known as The Project Discovery Classic.

The Discovery Rides have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars with cyclists coming from across the country to take part. Neil would always act as starter to drop the flag to set them off on day one and always made sure the route took those in the saddle through some of South Australia's finest wine regions. The event was made even more special for him with the enthusiastic support of former Bulldogs Colin Boyd, Cameron Wright, Ross Abbey, Jon Ballantyne and Paul O'Connor.

There was also another regular who was significant. Kevin O'Keefe from Fitzroy brought a group of riders and sponsors with him every year. He and Neil liked to say they had met 'by accident' on the Western Oval in Round 2 of season 1975 – an experience that changed both their lives. The sight of the two of them together was deeply moving for everyone involved.

The money from the bike rides funded a cutting edge project at SAHMRI, fine tuning the diagnostics that doctors use to assess spinal injury. After Neil was injured he endured the crude test, which involved having needles stuck into his limbs until he could feel them. That was the only way doctors were once able to tell the extent of a spinal injury. Project Discovery has been designed to use scanning techniques to show exactly where there is nerve damage and how it is responding to treatment.

Doctors know that nerves will grow past the point of injury but, before Project Discovery, there was little ability to gather real-time evidence of whether the treatments were working, or how.

In August 2020 Neil paid a visit to the SAHMRI research centre for what he thought was a catch-up session. While he was there the staff surprised him with the news that the first patient had been scanned successfully the night before and that the years of preparatory research were now coming to fruition. His emotions spilled over, just as they did on that Saturday afternoon in 2016 when the Bulldogs collected the premiership and small tears of joy formed.

There were more tears several weeks later when Neil passed at the age of 69. His memorial service was a symbol of his priorities. His sons, Ben and Sam, spoke beautifully and at times comically about their father. A photo montage featured a brood of grandchildren surrounding Neil and Janyne the previous Christmas.

Dr Ryan O'Hare Doig, the head of the Spinal Cord Injury Research Centre spoke about the breakthroughs that had been achieved in recent months and the promise of a better future for those with spinal injuries. 'I lost a great mentor and an even better friend,' he said, 'Thank you for everything you taught me and for every single opportunity you gave me.'

Neil's two sons and his two brothers (Dennis and John), along with North Adelaide team mate Bohdan Jaworskyj, carried his coffin from the service. It was draped with his North Adelaide, South Australian and Footscray jumpers and a Bulldogs' Past Players' scarf.

Mark Alvey

Games 45 (1998–2003); guernsey number 31

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*

Awarded a football scholarship, sixteen-year-old Mark Alvey left his home in Wentworth, NSW, for the Bendigo Pioneers to follow his footballing dream.

He had played his junior football from the age of seven for Wentworth Kangaroos, developing a passion for the game from a very young age. At eleven and twelve years of age he played on Sundays, but his parents dropped him off on Saturdays to watch the seniors play. At thirteen, he had earned himself the 1993 Sunraysia Football League's Under-13 Hynes Medal.

By the time he was sixteen, Mark had represented NSW in the 1994 Under-15 team, the 1995 All Schools team (gaining All-Australian honours), the 1995 Under-15 state team (as captain) and the 1996 Under-16 team. He also gained TAC All-Australian selection as a 'bottom-aged' player.

The move to Bendigo saw him leaving his football club, team mates, school friends and family to be billeted with a Bendigo host family and to play for the Bendigo Pioneers Under-18s in the TAC Cup competition. But Mark was only in Bendigo for 12 months, and had won Bendigo Pioneers' best and fairest, before he was drafted by the Bulldogs as a seventeen year old in the 1997 end-of-season draft (when clubs were allowed to draft one player of that age).

His great mates from the Bendigo Pioneers, Chris Tarrant and Dean Solomon (both also seventeen), were drafted the same year (Tarrant to Collingwood [pick 8], Mark to the Dogs [pick 18], and Solomon to Essendon [pick 20]). Solomon had been selected with Mark in the 1997 TAC Team of the Year. The three

watched the draft together, with the added pressure of a news crew filming their reactions. Thankfully they were all drafted early!

In his first year with the Dogs, Mark played in the 1998 Reserves premiership so experienced playing in a premiership on the MCG early in his career. The next season he was again at the MCG in September, playing a qualifying final against West Coast with the senior Bulldog side – but it was not with the success of the year before [West Coast 9-11 (65) defeated Western Bulldogs 8-12 (60)].

It took Mark a couple of years to establish himself as a senior player. His standout season was undoubtedly 2002, when he played every game in the senior side and kicked 18 goals.

There had been plans afoot to trade him to Essendon at the end of that season but, although he had signed the necessary forms at 12:45pm, the paperwork did not make it to the AFL until two minutes past the 2:00pm deadline due to a fax machine ‘logjam’. But Mark says he was ‘happy to stay’ with the Bulldogs.



Mark Alvey, Bulldogs player

Ironically, it was against Essendon in Round 4, 2003, that he would injure his knee (ACL) and play his last game for the Dogs. After a knee reconstruction Mark was traded to Essendon, where he played a further 14 games (2004–05), thirteen of those games alongside his mate Dean Solomon, whom he had also lived with in 2002.

When Mark’s AFL career ended, he admits he lost his passion and love for the game. Going home to Wentworth and reconnecting with his old friends and team mates helped him recover it. But that wasn’t without its trials, due to injury.

Mark was the Wentworth Kangaroo’s assistant coach in 2006, his first year back at the club, but broke his leg in his first game. This did give him a chance to watch the team from off the field, which he thinks helped him as a coach. In his second game back from that injury, he had his jaw broken in three places. There was also a second serious broken leg during the 2012 season. It seems it was never meant to be easy!



Mark Alvey with his 2012 coaching award

Mark became the playing coach of Wentworth in 2007, taking the team to the finals that year, then a preliminary final in 2008 and, in 2009, a premiership victory – significant for the whole Alvey family because Mark’s dad, himself a Wentworth premiership player and Life Member, was president of the club at the time.

Mark continued as Wentworth’s playing coach for seasons 2010 and 2011 before the broken leg in 2012, which meant he missed the 2012 premiership as a player – but he was still the coach, enjoying more premiership success. That year Mark was also the V/Line Cup’s Under-15s coach, coaching some of the best Under-15 players as they vied for state section, and was named as the Coach of the Year in the Northern Mallee Sports Star Awards. He continued as Wentworth’s coach for a further two years, till the end of 2014.

Mark then coached Mildura Football Club for three seasons – as playing coach for the first two seasons (2015–16) and as non-playing coach in 2017. In those three years, the team played in a preliminary final,

lost a grand final and played in another preliminary final. In 2015, Mark and Ryan O'Callaghan (joint coaches at Mildura) were named as the Sunraysia league's Senior Coaches of the Year.

After eleven years of coaching, Mark stood down in 2018 to recharge his batteries. Then, in 2019, he took on the challenge of coaching the Tooleybuc-Manangatang Saints in the Central Murray League, which involved travelling a four-hour round trip from Mildura twice a week. Tooleybuc-Manangatang had played two poor seasons (one as wooden-spooners) when Mark arrived, but the club had a much better year in his first season as coach, qualifying for the finals and winning a finals game. But then COVID-19 put an end to the 2020 season and, with it, Mark's coaching career.

Teams Mark coached had played finals in eleven of his twelve seasons as a coach. But Mark's sporting prowess away from football was also evident in 2015 when he hit a hole in one on the 15th hole at Red Cliffs' Golf Club in the Tri-State Masters Golf Tournament – for which he won himself a Harley Davidson XG500 Street bike.

Mark is now the commercial manager of SEN's first regional radio station, SENTrack 89.1FM Mildura, seeing it as a great opportunity, carrying with it a lot of responsibility.

Speaking to Mark, it is clear that the friendships he made through football are important to him. He firmly believes that friendship is the greatest thing about team sports and clubs and says that he had six 'wonderful years' at the Kennel, forming lifelong friendships.

Chris Isherwood, one of Mark's player sponsors from his time at the Dogs has remained his very close friend, driving distances so the Isherwood family can spend time over the Christmas break with Mark, his wife Bianca and their two daughters, Isabel who is now twelve and Olivia who is nine.

But the closest of the friendships Mark forged at the Bulldogs is, undoubtedly, with Rohan Smith. Mark lived with Rohan and his wife Alison, who Mark says are the most genuine people he knows and became family to him (while he was like 'another child for them'). The Smiths have always done everything they could to support the club and the players, including their famous Thursday night dinners at which they would host ten to twelve players every week. Today they remain among the most special people Mark has met in 'life or footy' and Rohan is one of his best mates. Mark has a group text set up with Rohan, Brad Johnson and Lindsay Gilbee – all firm friends from the time he spent living at Rohan's house.

It is because of this friendship that Mark's lasting memory of the Western Bulldog's 2016 premiership win is of Rohan Smith's reaction to it. The release of emotion he witnessed from Rohan, having played an active and significant part in that victory as a coach after the years of missing out as a player, is something that Mark found deeply moving and he says will remain with him for the rest of his life.

Ilija Grgic:

A man mountain, but safety and boots came first

62 games (1993–96); guernsey number 1

By MICHAEL STEVENS



After a short stint playing Under-19s and reserves with Footscray in the 1960s, Michael Stevens completed a cadetship at the Footscray Mail before starting a long career in sports journalism, which ended in 2007 after 27 years at the Herald Sun.

At a strapping 203 cm (6 foot 8 inches) you would think Ilija Grgic was always destined to play league football, but that certainly wasn't the case. First, he had to overcome two major obstacles: first to



Hole in one!

convince his widowed mother, Perka, that he wouldn't get hurt; and then to find a pair of size 14 boots.

The first obstacle was overcome when the deputy principal of Melbourne High School wrote a letter to his mother stating that Ilija should play for the school side, and the second was dealt with when he walked into Whitten Oval and met Garry O'Sullivan and Gary Merrington, who put him in touch with EJ Whitten at Adidas.

After an apprenticeship in the Under-19s and Reserves, Grgic made his AFL debut, at the age of twenty-one years and twenty-nine days, against Melbourne in Round 2, 1993. His most vivid memory of that game is the subterfuge beforehand, when he supposedly injured his hamstring at Thursday night's training – which was just an elaborate ploy to hide the fact he would be a late inclusion.

His debut was marked with goals from his first two kicks – and the rest, as they say, is history.

Grgic's great hand/eye coordination and nous around the ground saw him play nine games in his first season for a return of 19 goals, including a bag of 6 goals against North Melbourne at the MCG, earning him a nomination for the AFL Rising Star award.

In 1994, an injury to Scott Wynd saw Grgic take over the number one ruck role and he blossomed with 217 hit-outs and 27 goals in 23 games over the course of the season, for which he polled nine Brownlow Medal votes.

His final game for the year was the qualifying final against Geelong, when the Cats prevailed due to a goal after the siren from Bill Brownless [Geelong 15-16 (106) defeated Footscray 15-11 (101)]. Grgic dislocated his ankle in the first 15 minutes of that game and he says a critical 50 m penalty just before half-time resulted. 'I stumbled across the mark because I couldn't control my feet and David Mensch was the recipient,' he said.

Grgic was unable to take the field in the semi-final loss to Melbourne the following week.

The Bulldogs also lost the 1995 qualifying final to Geelong [Geelong 24-11 (155) defeated Footscray 10-13 (73), at the end of a season in which Grgic played 21 games for a return of 39 goals and more than 100 hit-outs.



Gary Dempsey and Ilija Grgic at the 2019 Mid-season Lunch

He was always in competition with Scott Wynd for the premier ruck role. 'I had offers from Richmond and Melbourne, but I stuck around because his knees were supposed to give out, but it was 10 years before they did,' Ilija said with a laugh.

Luke Darcy arrived on the scene around the same time and Grgic, struggling to get a regular game in 1996

after Terry Wallace took over as coach from Alan Joyce, accepted a trade to West Coast.

After a strong pre-season with the Eagles, he played 22 games in 1997 before injuries took their toll. 'I had another back operation at the end of the season and struggled to get into the side in 1998 because the Eagles had Charlie Gardiner, Ryan Turnbull and Jason Ball coming through,' he said.

In 1999, Grgic found himself at Windy Hill, where it was difficult to break into a strong Essendon line-up, but he played in the flag-winning Reserves team coached by Terry Daniher. 'He was a very different sort of coach, but I enjoyed the year immensely,' Ilija recalls.

Another back injury during the 2000 pre-season finished his career and he called it quits at the relatively young age of twenty-seven. But he had a chemical engineering degree to fall back on and he also completed a Master of Business Administration to add to his off-field talents, enabling him to have long and successful careers with ICI and Shell before branching out on his own with a couple of mates into construction and property development.

Ilija Grgic relished his time at the Bulldogs and can see the irony of getting paid to get hurt playing football, while the opposite applies in the highly-regulated and dangerous oil and gas industry where he was paid not to put anyone's body on the line.

A long-time Yarraville resident with wife Catherine and sons Hugh and Harrison, Grgic is still in regular contact with footballing mates Chris Grant, Steve Kolyniuk, Darren Baxter and Jon Ballantyne, and is chairman of the board at Westbourne Grammar, where his sons go to school.

Sadly, neither of his sons are interested in following in their father's footsteps at Whitten Oval.

Tree Changes, Sea Changes and New Opportunities

By ROSS ABBEY



*Footscray 1971–1981, 124 games, 67 goals
President of the Western Bulldogs Past Players*

Tree changes, sea changes and new opportunities await the nine players who left our club at the end of 2020.

Jackson Trengove has opted for a tree change, buying a farm near where his wife grew up and signing with the Barooga Hawks. He will help run the family-managed retirement village as well as chasing after his four-year-old daughter and two-year-old twins (son and daughter).



Jackson and Stephanie Trengove with their children.

Brad Lynch and Billy Gowers spent much of 2020 in the COVID Hub on the Gold Coast. They must have both enjoyed the lifestyle because they have signed with Southport and will play in the expanded VFL East Coast competition. Brad is working for a window furnishing company.



Fergus Greene celebrates with Toby McLean

Fergus Greene is continuing his business studies and is working at the Railway Hotel in Yarraville. Callum Porter is continuing his Teaching Degree and hopes to do some part time work at Whitefriars College. Both Fergus and Cal have signed with Box Hill Hawks and are excited about the prospect of being coached by Sam Mitchell and Andy Collins.

Matt Suckling will play for

Ormond in the VAFA. He had a more relaxed Christmas than he has had for the past fourteen summers and is looking forward to getting back to grassroots footy. Bulldog gun Matthew Robbins played his junior football with Ormond and has returned there since the end of his AFL career. He predicts Matt will be kicking goals from the half-back line. Off-field, Matt Suckling is involving himself in the fashion industry as well as doing further study.



Matt Suckling

Sam Lloyd, who has qualifications in Construction Management from RMIT University, Certificate 3 in Carpentry, and Certificate IV in Building and Construction, has joined Eltham-based builders Marbuilt. He will play for Bundoora Football Club this season.

Tory Dickson's main focus is to get his son Riley settled in Year 7 at Haileybury, the school Tory attended as a teenager. He is keeping fit but is unsure whether he will play football in 2021.

All the players mentioned above will receive a complimentary 2021 WBFC membership, a 2021 Western Bulldogs Past Players Membership and an open invitation to the Danvers Room at home games.

Lachie Young has transferred to North Melbourne. We wish him all the best with the Kangaroos and wish all our former players all the best in whatever they undertake.

2021 Events Calendar

Note: The mid-season function has not yet been arranged.

Tuesday 2 March	6:30pm	Recruits Dinner at Barkers Cafe
Sunday 14 March	9:30am	AFLCPP Bowls Day at Altona Bowls Club (Contact Len Cumming: 0418 374 079) Flyer available at westernbulldogs.com.au/pastplayers
Friday 16 April	8:15am	AFLCPP Golf Day at Settlers Run Golf Course (Contact Jack Slattery: 0425 746 148) Flyer available at westernbulldogs.com.au/pastplayers
Weekend of 15 May v Port Adelaide	TBC	Pre-game Function in Adelaide

Weekend of 5 June v Fremantle	TBC	Pre-game Function in Perth
Weekend of 26 June v West Coast	TBC	Pre-game Function in Perth
Weekend of 17 July v Gold Coast	TBC	Pre-game Function in Gold Coast
Sunday 7 November	11:00am	AGM at Barkers Café
	12:00noon	End of Year Lunch at Barkers Café
Sunday 14 November	9:30am	AFLCPP Bowls Day at Altona Bowls Club (Contact Len Cumming: 0418 374 079)

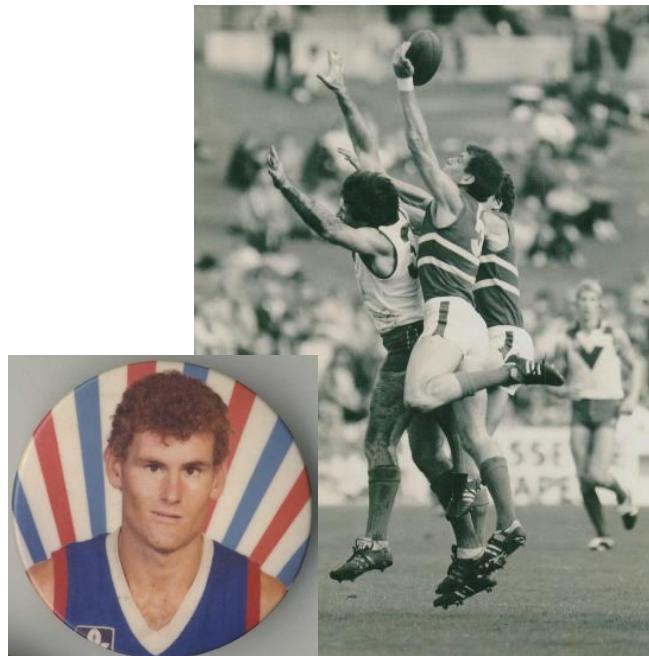
Western Bulldogs Past Players Facebook

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 on Facebook and request to 'Join Group'.

Get Well Soon

Ian Williams

WB #738, 1983–85, 33 games

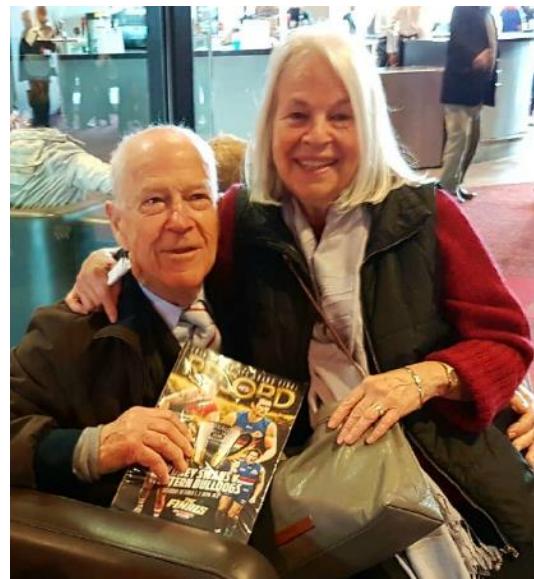


Congratulations

90th Birthday

Jim Gallagher

WB #382, 1951–60,
151 games, including the 1954 Premiership



Jim and Cheryl Gallagher



Jim Gallagher with his 1954 Premiership team mates at the 2016 grand final.

Back row: Don Ross, Ron Stockman, Harvey Stevens, Jim Gallagher, Doug Reynolds, Angus Abbey

Front row: Shirley Ross, Norma Stockman, Elva Stevens, Dorothy Abbey, Shirley Reynolds, Cheryl



70th Birthday

Harry Frei

WB #618, 1973, 6 games

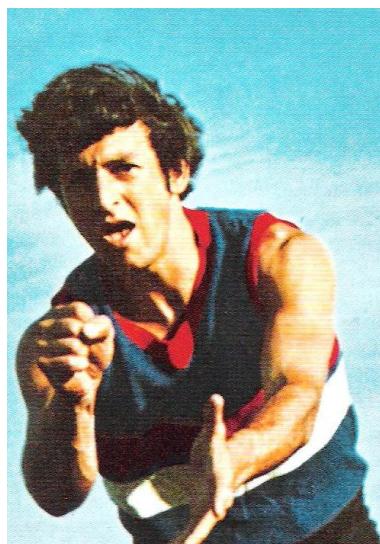
Harry played first-class cricket for Queensland (1982–86) as a left-arm fast–medium bowler, taking 91 wickets.

70th Birthday

Charlie Pagnoccolo

WB #585, 1970–73, 46 games
(1 game for Melbourne 1974)

Charlie was a speedy rover who won the league's Best First Year Player Award in 1970.





60th Birthday

Dean Chiron

WB #773, 1986, 1 game

(19 games for St Kilda [1983–84]
and 17 games for Melbourne [1987–89])

LOSTDOGS

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 address and/or mobile number of any of the following, please forward them to ross.abbey30@gmail.com.

*David Allday
Colin Shaw
Lindsay Sneddon*

*Andrew Wills
Angelo Petraglia
Brennan Stack*

*Michael Kelly
Michael Rolfe
Harry Skreja*

2021 Committee

President	Ross Abbey	0412 073 092
Vice President	Phil O'Keeffe	0402 007 270
Secretary	Owen Madigan	0408 105 151
Treasurer	Andrew Howlett	0418 510 635
Committee	Les Bartlett	0416 485 652
	Adam Contessa	0416 081 259
	Graeme Joslin	0412 771 235
	Gary McGorlick	0409 804 057
	Ilija Grgic	0413 677 736
AFLCPP 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.

Tim Harrington (right) (WB #805, 1989–90) is the AFL Players' Association Football Operations Manager and Head of Alumni



Western Bulldogs Community Foundation

Benefits of joining Sons of the West

- Learn about health, with experts covering topics including nutrition, mental health, alcohol, gambling, skin cancer, bowel cancer, and prostate and testicular cancer.
- Get active with a range of exercises to suit everyone's fitness levels.
- Get involved with a community of great people and meet other locals.
- Plenty of support along the way.
- More accessible than ever, with options to complete the 2021 program online.
- For more information, go to:
<https://www.westernbulldogs.com.au/foundation/programs/sons-of-the-west>