



WESTERN BULLDOGS PAST PLAYERS

Newsletter February 2022

Season 2022 will be exciting – and challenging!

- Past Players' Room at Marvel Stadium:** The stadium is being renovated. The upgrade will be outstanding but, during the renovations, hospitality rooms and seating on Level 2 will be reduced. In Season 2022 the Past Players will use the Victory Room on the ground level and have 150 reserved seats between Aisles 15 and 16. The seats are in front of the room and you will need to enter the stadium via gates 8 or 9.



- Home matches at Marvel:** Kevin Hillier will host the pre-match functions. They will commence 90 minutes before the first bounce and will feature interviews with former players, as well as presentations of Recognition Jumpers. There will also be time to socialise with mates.

- **Interstate pre-match functions:** We plan to have pre-match functions in Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane and, possibly, in Sydney and Launceston.
- **2022 Recruits Dinner:** Our 2022 Recruits Dinner has, unfortunately, been cancelled due to COVID.
- **An exclusive club:** The Bulldogs have played in 97 completed seasons in the VFL/AFL. Jamarra Ugle-Hagan is just the 1031st player to have had the privilege to represent our club.
- **Western Bulldogs Past Players' polo shirts:** Past Players' polo shirts are now available for \$65 (including GST, postage and handling). Shirts for former senior players will include their player number on the shirt at no extra charge
- **Subscriptions:** If you haven't already paid your membership, please support us by paying promptly. [Click here to download the Membership Form.](#)



The Two Dogs Podcast

Episode 16: Terry Wallace and Phil Maylin

<https://omny.fm/shows/the-two-dogs-podcast/twodogs-ep301>

Website

Our website includes:

- previous editions of the newsletter
- podcasts
- match day information

The address is:

www.westernbulldogs.com.au/pastplayers.



Kylie Watson-Wheeler The Western Bulldogs' President

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.

October 8, 1989 is a day indelibly imprinted on the minds of many loyal Bulldog supporters. More than 10,000 fans flocked to the (then) Western Oval to take part in the Fightback rally which

ultimately saved the club from extinction – and watching it all unfold as she sat on the gravel behind the goals on that historic Sunday was an 18-year-old student who may well have been the only person in attendance who had bought her homework with her.

‘I was keen to go but it was the study week before my Year 12 exams and my father initially said “No”,’ recalled Kylie Watson-Wheeler. ‘It was only when I agreed to take my homework with me that I was allowed to go . . . although I don’t think I opened a book once I got there.’



But Kylie learned something pretty special that day just the same.

‘I saw this young Peter Gordon standing up and saving our club . . . that’s a pretty special part of our history,’ she said. ‘I look back now and I think that was one of the most important moments of my life.’

How fitting then that, more than 30 years later, Kylie should take over as president of the club from that same Peter Gordon – and what a first year as president she has had!

‘It’s been both exciting and challenging,’ Kylie remarks. ‘Our playing group was just electric and although we did not get to lift the cup, we still managed to get to a grand final for only the fourth time in our history, so I was enormously proud and inspired by their efforts.’

Just as the players had to overcome one hurdle after another (bouncing from one quarantine to another on their whirlwind Australia-wide tour of duty), so too did

Kylie and the club’s off-field team. ‘It was a season when a lot of challenges were thrown at us, and the AFL in general – doing a great job to keep the season going. To get there though, there was a lot of starting and stopping – and usually, immediately, without any warning. Put it this way, I spent a lot of my time in Zoom meetings. The bottom line is that we had to contend with a lot of things we have never experienced before and, hopefully, never will again.’

On the plus side, at least when Kylie was watching the Bulldogs’ games in her own home, she could channel her supporter mode rather than the more restrained version she maintains when representing the club at the ground on game days.

‘Oh yeah, at home I’m very loud,’ she laughed. Which is what you expect from a ‘dyed in the wool’ supporter.

Although Kylie was raised on the other side of Melbourne, she says her heart belongs to Footscray. ‘My parents both came from Footscray and both sides of grandparents lived in Footscray, so I have a very strong connection,’ she said.

She remembers, with some pride, that she was the only Bulldogs supporter in her time at Dingley Primary School and the only girl who wore a footy jumper on casual dress day (bearing the number 31 of her first Dogs’ hero, Kelvin Templeton).

Later she switched to sporting the number 6 jumper of Brad Johnson and, yes, she doesn’t mind admitting to still wearing a footy jumper to games when she reached her adult years.

‘I always loved my footy but, unfortunately, I couldn’t kick a ball to save myself.’

Kylie’s close involvement with the club is largely due to David Smorgon’s influence during his time as club president. She had already made a name for herself in the entertainment industry, working her way up to managing director and senior vice president of the Australian and New Zealand arm of the Walt Disney Company, after holding senior positions at other big corporations, such as Hallmark Cards and Coca-Cola Amatil.

‘Like all of us, when our beloved club taps us on the shoulder and asks for our help we say, “Sure, whatever it takes!” I knew David through some mutual business contacts and he asked me . . . to provide my marketing techniques to the club for a project they were working on, so I was working closely with the club’s executives. Peter Gordon then became president and was after specific skill sets, so he asked me to join the board, which I did. Then, after the 2016 grand final win, he asked me to become vice president . . . That’s how I find myself where I am today.’

As one of only three female presidents in the AFL, Kylie is mindful that equality in football is still a focus of discussion in some forums, but she believes it to be an issue that has resolved itself naturally at the Bulldogs. ‘Because Peter chose to pursue [people with] certain skill sets [for] the board it just evolved organically to a 50-50 [gender representation] situation. As a result of that there’s a real stability at the club.’

It was just one unique element of the 2021 AFL season that both grand final teams had female presidents, in their first years in the role. Kylie, having quarantined in a Perth motel room with just her laptop and a treadmill for company, recalls walking onto the ground after the game and meeting her Demon counterpart Kate Roffey. ‘It was quite special that the first person Kate came up to and hugged was me,’ she said.

With such a hectic lifestyle, balancing family, work and football business, Kylie admits that planning is important, but so is flexibility and the ability to juggle. ‘We all find a way to make things work. For me, aside from my family, my two jobs – at Disney and the Bulldogs – are both my true passions, so that makes it a lot easier. I’m doing what I truly love and my family are very supportive of that. My husbands and my kids are always supporting me.’

While her husband is a Tiger fan, her children (son 19 and daughter 15) are both Bulldog fans.

As for her goals in the job, Kylie simply says her role is being ‘part of a journey’. ‘I’m a great believer in that you should always aim to leave a business in better shape than when you started – although I guess, in this instance, for me the bar is very high and Peter Gordon’s shoes are very large [to fill] . . . I think ensuring the financial stability of the club for the long run is vitally important and perhaps to get a few premiership cups along the way, for both the men’s and the women’s teams.’

It would somehow be fitting to think of Kylie barracking loudly for the Bulldogs’ AFLW team at Whitten Oval – behind the goals of course, sitting on the gravel.

Jordan McMahon

114 games (2001–07); guernsey number 23

Also played 34 games for Richmond (2008–09)

By ROSS BRUNDRETT

Jordan McMahon was a forerunner (literally) of the modern defensive link-man. Lightly built but fleet of foot, McMahon made his name at the Bulldogs in the early 2000s with his dashing runs from half-back and his penetrating kicks. But his story has also been punctuated by a series of sliding door

moments that have impacted the destiny of more than one AFL club, starting with the way he got to the Dogs in the first place.

A South Australian by birth, McMahon was an outstanding junior footballer and after the Australian Under-16 championships was invited, along with fellow South Australian junior Alan Didak, to spend a week or two at the Carlton Football Club.



2021 Grand Final Eve in Perth Ryan Hargrave, Kingsley Hunter, Jordan McMahon, Peter Quil, I Nathan Eagleton and Brad Wira

‘It wouldn’t happen these days,’ he said, ‘but we got to play in a reserves match against Collingwood and we did pretty well . . . actually Didak tore it up. Anyway, a couple of years later, at the national draft, it was no surprise that Collingwood took Didak with their first pick and it was likely that Carlton would pick me at number 11, but the Bulldogs got in first at pick 10.’

So, McMahon could have easily ended up a Blue, which would have changed the football universe.

Fast forward eight years into Jordan’s AFL career and (following ex-Dogs coach Terry Wallace) he was traded to Richmond for pick 19, which the Bulldogs used to pick up a handy youngster by the name of Callan Ward. Then, in 2009, McMahon was the hero of Richmond’s narrow win over a struggling Melbourne with a goal after the siren. McMahon recalls: ‘Had they won that game Melbourne probably wouldn’t have got a priority pick. But they did, and they used it to pick Jack Trengove and Tom Scully who were the two standout draft picks that year – every club would have taken them if they had the chance. So that left Richmond to take Dusty Martin with pick 3.’

The final twist in the series of sliding-door moments that Jordan had started was when Callan Ward was snapped up by Greater Western Sydney, and the Dogs using the compensation draft pick the following year to snare a youngster by the name of Jack Macrae.

‘It’s funny how things work out,’ said McMahon.

He still remembers walking into Whitten Oval for the first time. ‘The club was struggling a bit at the time, but it was a real friendly atmosphere,’ he said. It took a while for Jordan to find his feet, and his position, at the club – but, once he was slotted into the back half, his career took off. ‘I found myself playing on some slippery fellas, like Leon Davis, but at least I had the pace to match them.’



2021 Pre Match Function prior to the Port Adelaide game Jordan McMahon, Shannon Corcoran, Nathan Eagleton, Tony McGuinness and Ray Huppatz

He credits Rodney Eade for improving his game. ‘He got players to understand their role and what was required – and that certainly worked for me,’ he said.

But after switching to the Tigers and enjoying some success in his first few years there, McMahon admits that he fell out of love with the game. ‘By then I had a daughter (Lila) and was looking at life after footy,’ he said.

He moved back to South Australia after his footy career ended at Richmond and played for a while at his old club Glenelg, but then turned his concentration to a new career.

‘At school, my two brothers were very high achievers -- I think their Year 12 marks were 98 per cent and 95 per cent – but all I concentrated on was my footy back then,’ said Jordan.

Jordan’s father, Phil, had his own real estate business, one of his brothers is a barrister based in London and the other spent several years in the army before establishing his own marketing business but, after football, Jordan had to reinvent himself at 30. ‘I went into sales and it turned out I was pretty good at it,’ he says, with a hint of surprise. ‘And now I’m working at Ray White real estate and really enjoying it.’

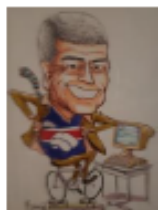
He also is raising his 16-year-old daughter ‘full-time’ so life is pretty hectic for him – but not so busy that he couldn’t manage to wrangle tickets for himself and Lila to watch the Doggies in both the 2021 preliminary and grand finals.

‘Oh yeah, we are both Bulldog fans – 1000 per cent!’ he said.

Gordon Casey: Repaying the debt

125 games (1969–75); guernsey number 10

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.

Gordon Casey says he will be forever indebted to the late Ted Whitten for his impressive career at the Bulldogs, which included 125 games over seven seasons in the 1970s, and then spanned another

10 years as an assistant coach and member of the match committee.

The opportunity for Casey to cross to the then Western Oval from Carlton, where he played one game in 1968, was initiated by Blues' coach Ron Barassi, who was good mates with 'EJ' Whitten and helped set up a meeting between the pair.

Whitten willingly gave Casey his second chance in the VFL and initiated his move to the backline, where he and full-back David Darcy formed a formidable combination.

But, at that time, Casey could not have envisaged the profound effect Whitten would have on his life off the field decades later.

This impact on Casey's life came about when 'EJ' was diagnosed with prostate cancer (which later claimed his life in 1995). Whitten's diagnosis prompted Casey to have regular blood tests to monitor his own wellbeing. Those blood tests led to Casey being diagnosed with lymphatic cancer in 2012, although he had not appeared ill beforehand.

The diagnosis resulted in 31 months of chemotherapy treatment and forever changed Casey's perspective on life. 'Not a day goes past that you don't think about it,' he said, during a catch-up over breakfast to talk about his career.



Gordon Casey, Riley Garcia, Ted Whitten, Stephen Power at the 2020 Recruits Dinner

Ironically, it was also 'EJ' who looked down on Casey during those long months of treatment in the E.J. Whitten Cancer Treatment Centre of the Western Private Hospital – a photo of Ted just happened to be positioned above the chair where Casey sat for treatment.

'It changed my life,' Casey says. 'Because the chemo affects your immune system, I was in virtual lockdown for a long time; couldn't go to the footy; couldn't catch up with mates – it affected my

whole family. The treatment was harsh, but what was worse was seeing young kids having the same treatment and knowing they weren't going to make it.'

Casey retired from work on the day he turned 65 – 25 March, 2015 – and he still enjoys his regular catch-ups with former teammates as a member of the Bulldogs past players, giving him an opportunity to reflect on his own stellar career, which I felt privileged to be hearing about when we met.

Originally from Speed, about 143 km from Mildura, Casey's career started with Tempy-Gorya in the Mallee League, where he played senior football from the age of 15. A bag of 113 goals, including six in the grand final, in the second of two premierships years, attracted the attention of then Carlton recruiting officer Newton Chandler and resulted in Gordon Casey being recruited by the Blues.

'I barracked for Melbourne as a kid, but I didn't mind going to Carlton because my mother's brother Jim Jones played there in 1945,' he said.



John Reilly, Gordon Casey, Stephen Power, Andrew Howlett

Casey won the Blues reserves best and fairest and was the side's leading goalkicker in 1967–68, playing his only senior game for Carlton in 1968, at the age of 18 years and 152 days. He remembers that game vividly. 'Cliff Stewart, who played on the wing, pulled out of the side at the last minute and I started on the bench in the ones,' he recalled. 'I then trained with the squad of 23 for the finals, but obviously didn't make the team. In those days players tended to be pigeon-holed, and I was thought of only as a forward. With players like Jesaulenko, Robertson, Quirk and Jackson in the team, Barassi thought I was going to struggle to get a regular game, and so initiated the meeting with Ted Whitten.' (But, having trained with the Blues' finals squad in 1968, Casey does continue to be invited to Carlton's 1968 premiership reunions.)

Whitten and Casey immediately hit it off at their first meeting and Casey played nine games with the Bulldogs in 1969, mainly as a forward and with an occasional run in the centre. When regular back pocket Ian Bryant retired, Whitten suggested Casey be tried as a defender and so started his significant alliance with full-back Dave Darcy.

‘I owe “EJ” a hell of a lot for giving me a second chance and I will be forever in debt to him,’ Casey said. ‘Darcy was a great footballer and we formed a very good relationship.’

Casey was a regular member of the side, playing at least 21 of a possible 22 games in each of the next five seasons, including the night premiership in 1970, and making the state side to play against Tasmania in 1973.

But in 1975, under new coach Bob Rose, he developed a groin injury, which restricted him to only 10 games that season – and he felt his time at the club might be up, even though he was only 25. ‘I knew they wouldn’t clear me to another VFL club and [former teammate] Stuart Magee had been appointed coach of Swan Districts, so I followed him there,’ Casey said. ‘I intended to stay three years and finished up staying five – and they were among the most enjoyable five years of my footy career.’

Those five years included playing off in the 1980 WAFL grand final and forming a great friendship with coach John Todd, with whom he remains in regular contact.

After moving back to Victoria, Casey joined some old Footscray Colts Cricket Club mates to play footy at Parkside, where Barrie Beattie, who was later to take the helm at the Bulldogs, was president. ‘Barrie was also manager [Town Clerk] at Essendon Council and I was able to get a job there, mainly driving trucks, for the next 26 years,’ Casey said.

Living in Hoppers Crossing, Casey’s stint at Parkside came to an end in 1985 and he had three years away from the game before succumbing to approaches by committeeman Doug Walker to take over as non-playing coach of Hoppers Crossing Football Club.

The club won a premiership in Casey’s fourth year as coach, with 95 per cent of the side comprised of local players.

When Terry Wheeler was appointed Bulldogs coach in 1990, Casey and Robbie ‘Bones’ McGhie were approached to help out as backline coaches and Casey joined the club’s match committee, where he remained for nine years (through the subsequent coaching appointments of Alan Joyce and Terry Wallace).

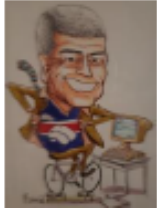
‘When “Plough” [Wallace] was appointed coach of Richmond, he invited me to join him there as an assistant coach and also be on the match committee,’ Casey said. That involvement finished after Wallace’s five-year stint at Richmond.

Casey now keeps himself fit with regular one-hour daily walks, his involvement with the Bulldogs’ past players, regular games of golf with former Parkside teammates – and, of course, those regular blood tests, initiated by Ted Whitten so long ago, which remain an essential part of his life.

Jeff Gieschen: No longer in pain

24 games (1974–78); guernsey number 27; also coached Richmond 1997–99

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.

Jeff Gieschen was only 18 years old when Leigh Matthews inadvertently fell across his left leg during a practice match against Hawthorn in Morwell in 1975. But the knee injury he suffered was to plague him virtually for the rest of his life, until he had a knee replacement in October 2020.



Kelvin Templeton, Jeff Geischen and Barry Capuano (Essendon PP) at the 2021 Recruits Dinner

‘There were no MRIs or X-rays back in those days and I didn’t know what damage I’d done to my knee,’ Gieschen recalled. ‘I was sent to a guy called Bill Mitchell, who was a manipulator, and I walked out of his place without crutches. But my knee was strapped for the rest of the year and, subsequently, I had ongoing issues, which meant I had six arthroscopes and eventually lost all my cartilage. In my forties, my knee was bone-on-bone and I had a bow in my leg like I’d been riding a horse. I couldn’t stand and I couldn’t walk.’

All of the arthroscopes were performed by surgeon David Young, who also did the eventual knee replacement (which Gieschen was able to have through the auspices of the AFL Players’ Association Lifetime Health Care Program).

Gieschen says of the Health Care Program, ‘It’s a great initiative by the AFL to help cover costs for players who require surgery for injuries suffered during their careers . . . Once you

have proof the injury occurred during your playing days, it is ticked off by a panel and every expense related to the surgery is paid. Mine was in the vicinity of \$3500, even though I had top health care cover. The knee replacement has given me my life back. I am walking an hour a day and am back in the gym.'

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@afplayers.com.au.

Tim Harrington (WB #805, 1989–90), pictured with Mitch Hannan at the 2021 Recruits Dinner, is the AFL Players' Association Football Operations Manager and Head of Alumni.



2022 Events Calendar

Sunday 20 March

9:30am

AFLCPP Bowls Day at Altona Bowls' Club
Contact Len Cumming: 0418 374 079

Friday 29 April

AFLCPP Golf Day at Settlers Run
Contact Jack Slattery: 0425 746 148

Congratulations!

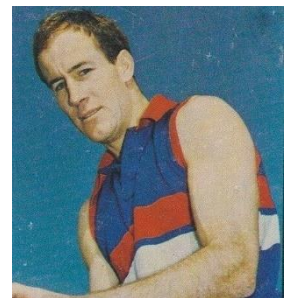
80th birthday



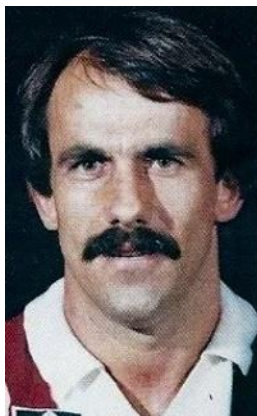
Bill Harrington
WB #495
21 games (1962–63)

Bob Turner
WB #485
4 games (1960)

John Reilly
WB #547
55 games (1966–69)
Also played 39 games with Carlton (1962–65)



70th birthday



Alby Smedts
WB #653
51 games (1976–79)
Also played 10 games with St Kilda (1980–81)

60th birthday

Murray Rance

WB #763

40 games (1986–87)

Also played 57 games with West Coast (1988–90)



Ross Christensen

WB #721

10 games (1982–83)

Also played 2 games with Geelong (1983)

Lindsay Sneddon

WB #722

2 games (1982)

Also played 2 games with Sydney (1985)



50th birthday



Matthew Dent

WB #865

63 games (1997–2000)

Also played 47 games with Fitzroy (1994–96) and 8 games with Hawthorn (2001)

Andrew Wills

WB #883

10 games (2000)

Also played 59 games with Geelong (1991–94) and 79 games with Fremantle (1995–99)



Darren Stanley

WB #822

3 games (1991)

40th birthday

Brian Lake

WB #901

197 games (2002–12)

Charles Sutton Medal 2007

All-Australian selection 2009, 2010

Also played 54 games with Hawthorn (2013–15)

AFL Premiership player 2013, 2014 and 2015

Norm Smith Medallist 2013



Vale Don Whitten



Don, the brother of Ted Whitten and uncle of Ted Whitten Junior, passed away on 28 December, aged 86. He played 24 games for the Bulldogs between 1956 and 1958. After his League career he played and coached with success at Casterton, Yarraville and Tocumwal.

Our sincere condolences are extended to Don's family and friends.

Vale Fred Cook

Fred passed away on Tuesday 1 February, aged 74. Fred was a loveable larrikin who played 33 games for the Bulldogs between 1967 and 1969, including every match in 1968, mainly playing at centre half-back. He transferred to Yarraville during 1969 and won the 1970 Liston Trophy. Moving to Port Melbourne the following season, he became an all-time great – playing 253 games, kicking 1210 goals and playing in six premierships. Our sincere condolences to Fred's family and friends.



2022 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

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 on Facebook and request to 'Join Group'.

Western Bulldogs Community Foundation

More than just a football club, the Western Bulldogs have a long and proud history as the community club of the AFL; delivering community programs with real outcomes.

The Community Foundation works closely with the club and utilises the Bulldogs brand as a platform to engage with a wide range of participants, helping them reach their full potential and ensuring they are accepted regardless of their gender, race or faith. The foundation celebrates diversity as an integral part of a united and cohesive community and aims to engage with multicultural, Indigenous and all-abilities communities via innovative programs.

While, like our players, our community can be courageous, strong and resilient, some members of the community do find the need for support to guide them towards finding the strength they need to face life's challenges. The club is proud that the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation is able to offer this support.

Find out more about the Community Foundation at www.westernbulldogs.com.au/Foundation or via social media @WBFCFoundation. If you are interested in donating to the Community Foundation please email fundraising@westernbulldogs.com.au.