

Western Bulldogs Past Players



May 2023 Newsletter

1980s Reunion

We are inviting all players, officials and their partners from the 80s to come to the Cats game on Saturday the 3rd of June at Marvel at 7.25 pm. We have also organised dinner and drinks for Friday the 2nd June.

Venue: The Precinct Hotel, 60 Swan St Cremone (Luke Darcy is an owner)
Starts: 6.00 pm
Location: Beer Garden, under cover and heated
Food: Finger food
Drinks: Purchased at the bar
Pay to: Footscray Western Bulldogs Past Players
Cost: \$50 per person (partners welcome)

Due: Must be paid by 19th of May to reserve your spot

BSB: 633 000

Account: 199 932 344

Reference: 1980s Reunion and your surname



In the photo (left to right) are Rick Kennedy, Garry O'Sullivan, Michael Ford, Brian Royal, Kevin Hillier, Stephen Smith, Shane O'Sullivan, Simon Beasley, Mark Kellett, Wayne Walsh, Steve Wallis and Steve MacPherson.

Rick Kennedy, 0429 000 747
Steve Wallis, 0412 560 227
Simon Beasley, 0411 825 533
Andrew Purser, 0411 876 441
Mark Kellett, 0414 293 457

PRE-MATCH FUNCTIONS

Round 2 v St Kilda



Stewart Crameri with Kevin Hillier



Len Cumming and Jack Di Natale



Lynton Fitzpatrick & Phil O'Keeffe

Round 3 v Brisbane



Kevin O'Keeffe, ex-Fitzroy, Colin Boyd & Michael Sexton (co-author of the Neil Sachse story "Playing On")



Member of the Hall of Fame - George Bisset



Chris Hansen & Rick Kennedy

Round 5 v Port Adelaide



Darren Grant & Nathan Eagleton



Jordan McMahon, Darren Grant, Kym Koster & Gary Irvine



Darren Grant & Gary Irvine

Round 6 v Fremantle



Paul O'Connor, Ray Hupatz & Darren Grant



L-R Jim Sewell, Phil Cronan, Alister Ford, Gordon Polson,, Bryan Pleitner, Andrew Purser, Ross Abbey, Development Coach Jamie Maddocks & Rohan Smith



The Two Dogs Podcast

Season 4 Episode 2: Andrew Purser & Jim Sewell.

<https://omny.fm/shows/the-two-dogs-podcast/twodogs-ep402>



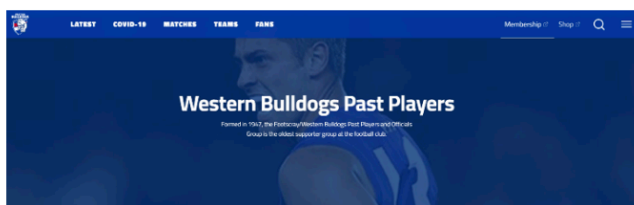
Website

Our website includes:

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

The address is:

www.westernbulldogs.com.au/pastplayers.



A Bomber who loved the Bulldogs

John Birt Playing Profile
D.O.B: 29/01/1937
Height: 174cm
Weight: 69kg
Club(s): Essendon
Games: 193
Goals: 303

It's no surprise to learn that footy legend John Birt's heart belongs to the Bombers. Afterall, he played his entire career with the club, along the way collecting two B&Fs and a couple of premierships, and was later declared one of the *25 Champions of Essendon*. But what might surprise some people, is that of all the other clubs that Birt has served, either in a coaching capacity or as a football administrator, the 86-year-old has no problem identifying which club comes next in his pecking order.

"Oh yes, it's the Bulldogs, no doubt," he says. "They're definitely my second team."

That's quite an admission for someone who, since first walking into Windy Hill, has devoted more than 65 years of continuous service to big league footy. These days his involvement revolves around his role as acting president of the Premiership Player's Club, but over the decades Birt built a reputation as one of the quiet achievers behind the scenes at several VFL and AFL clubs, including the best part of two decades at Collingwood, where he served in multiple roles in the football department and later in marketing and promotion. He also captain-coached West Torrens in SA before returning to coach Essendon and then joining the Dogs for five years as reserves and skills coach before moving on as skills coach at both Hawthorn and Carlton (winning premierships at both) and also spending three seasons at Fitzroy as their last CEO before the club merged with Brisbane.



With so many associations with other clubs, many for longer periods of time and more responsible positions, why the strong affection for the Bulldogs?

"I think I developed a soft spot for them when I was invited to the 1954 Grand Final by the Melbourne Football Club as a 17-year-old when they were keen signing me up. I was sitting at what I guess was the president's lunch before the game and on the next table was the former Prime Minister of England, Clement Attlee, but the thing I remembered most about that day was the way Teddy Whitten and Jack Collins just took over in that game. Wonderful."

Years later, when Birt was sacked after just one year coaching his Bombers (to make way for Des Tuddenham), the first phone call offering him a job came from Jack Collins who was seeking someone to assist new Footscray coach Bob Rose. "Bob Rose was a hero of mine, so I was thrilled," said John. "And it didn't hurt that they were offering me twice as much as I was getting as senior coach at Essendon!"

In those days, football was still a part-time pursuit and Birt, having secured a commerce degree at Melbourne University, had a day job as a teacher so it seemed natural that he was drawn to the younger players at the club who were still learning their craft.

“At one stage there I was coaching four or five sons of premiership players; there was Ross Abbey and John Collins and young Teddy Whitten and Jim Gallagher’s son and then there was Ian Dunstan whose father, Mocka, was a hero of mine when he was playing at Collingwood. We had a lot of good young talent there and I did see myself more as a teacher, I guess, telling them what I had learnt over the years.”

“I came from a different era of course. When I played nobody would kick the ball to the rover, so we had to chase the packs and learn to crumb. Barry Capuano I think was the only player to ever pass the ball to me. And he only ever did it once. At Essendon we had a fellow who trained five Stawell Gift winners, Fergie Speakman, and he worked with me and I would run lap after lap after training with a few of the others and even though I wasn’t fast my endurance improved so I could get to contest after contest and I won four B&Fs and finished third twice in my last six years of footy (at Essendon and West Torrens).”

Hard work and common sense were the cornerstones of the Birt ethos. Get to as many contests as you can and be in the right spot at the right time. “For example, at Essendon I would always get well in front of the pack when Daryl Gerlach was kicking because he would always try and drop kick and 90 per cent of the time it would go along the ground!”



“When I was with Bob Rose, there was just the two of us basically. We were a bit thin on numbers and a couple of times I had to suit up in the reserves and I was about 35 at the time. And we also had scratch matches when Bobby would also play and he was well into 40s. I remember one match I somehow gave big Barry Round a cut over his eye which caused some mirth. But it was very rewarding and there was a lot of talent to work with. I remember Alan Stoneham arriving as a teenager and getting Ted Whitten’s number 3 and young Teddy as well, so skilful on both legs ... I don’t think his dad had a left foot.”

“But when (new coach) Bill Goggin came it was a different story. About five of us would meet at team selection but then come Saturday the team would be different to the one we picked... I remember one red-headed lad in the twos who was best aground every week but couldn’t get a look-in – Glenn Gingell – and I felt terribly frustrated for him.”

His big regret at Footscray was when the reserves were well beaten in the 1974 grand final by Fitzroy, “I should have played Ian Robertson (a three-time premiership player at Carlton), that was a bad blue,” said Birt, who has remained in contact with many of his “baby” Bulldogs. While he may recall the odd regret, most of his memories from the game that he has served so well are happy ones. And the friendships he has formed along the way are testament to the person that he is.

Darren Grant, The One Hit Wonder

By Neil Cordy

Darren Grant Player Profile:
D.O.B: 25/04/63
Height: 191cm
Weight: 84 kg
Club(s): Footscray
Games: 1
Goals: 0

Darren Grant played just one senior game in his four years at the Bulldogs (1980-83) but says his time at the Whitten Oval set him up for life.

His solitary game was the hot topic of conversation at his 60th birthday celebrations in Adelaide recently. It wasn't the first time he'd heard the jibes about his date with destiny in the round 18 clash against eventual premiers Carlton at Princes Park in 1982. More than 40 years later, Darren still remembers it like yesterday.

"I got a phone call at 8am on the morning of the match after Kelvin Templeton failed a fitness test," Grant said. "I was playing in the forward pocket. Bluey Hampshire was coaching and he gave me one instruction -- keep out of Simon Beasley's way. I did that pretty well because Simon kicked seven. My day didn't start well when I saw Bruce Doull walking towards me. He must have been licking his lips when he saw me. I barely touched the ball so Bluey moved me to the full back line in the second half and I lined up on Peter Bosustow. It could have been worse, he only kicked one goal which was pretty good in a 129-point loss."

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. Neil now resides in the Gold Coast, working as a contributor to Code Sports and occasionally commentates on ABC and SEN radio.

And that was the end of that. Kelvin Templeton was back the following week and Darren's VFL career was effectively over. But as his mates rightly pointed out at his 60th birthday; that was one more VFL match than any of them had played. It's also worth highlighting the fact that Darren was only 19 at the time and had managed to play under 19s, reserves and seniors in the one season (1982).

His road to that lone game against the Blues was unusual to say the least.

"The Bulldogs had written a letter to my school, Sale Technical School (which also produced Neil and Brian Cordy), inviting anybody over six feet to try out in a practice match at the Whitten Oval. So me and two other big blokes jumped into mum's little car and made the three-hour trip. We were pretty stiff when we got out of the car but I did enough to get invited back. Alistair Ford did a similar try out at Moe and kicked 5 goals in one quarter. He came from Bairnsdale and we ended up living together in Braybrook in 1980."

It's fair to say Darren enjoyed the nightlife in his time at the Bulldogs. Well aware of this, his Under 19s coach Graham Calverly had a plan for him ahead of the 1981 Elimination final against Hawthorn. "Graham made me sleep at his place the night before the game," Grant said.

"It was a good idea because I did like to get out. Unfortunately we ran into a Hawks team which had Dermott Brereton and Chris Langford in it."

At the end of the 1983 season Darren was called into Shane O'Sullivan's office and told his time at the Bulldogs was up. It was a sliding door moment which could hardly have turned out better.

He was off to Adelaide to play with Central Districts. After two years under Kevin 'Cowboy' Neale he moved to Malcolm Blight's Woodville. "Playing under Blighty at Woodville was fantastic," Grant said.



Darren Grant & Nathan Eagleton

"Footy in Adelaide was huge, the Crows hadn't started yet and the SANFL was big news on TV, radio and the newspapers." Woodville had been perennial wooden spooners in the early 1980s but in 1986, Malcolm Blight had them flying. The Wood Ducks were travelling so well Darren couldn't break into the seniors after returning from injury. But a last round loss to the bottom team opened the door and Darren was picked for the elimination final against Norwood. The only problem was nobody told Darren. "Nobody told me I was picked so I thought I wasn't playing and went out on the Friday night before," Grant said.

"It was 2am and I was walking down Hindley Street and the newspapers were being delivered. I picked one up and read that I was in for the elimination final. I didn't tell anybody what I'd been up to and went home and got as much sleep as I could. We beat Norwood and then Port Adelaide in the semi but lost to Glenelg in the prelim."

Woodville went on to win the Escort Cup (night premiership) two years later under Russell Ebert in front of 33,000 at Footy Park. For the struggling club, it felt like they had won the day premiership and the boys celebrated accordingly. Darren was a key member of that team and now runs Woodville-West Torrens' very successful Past Players group. Ross Abbey was smart enough to recruit Darren to run the Bulldogs' Past Players group in SA in 2017 (when the 2016 premiership cup was on tour in Adelaide), and the one game veteran has staged a number of successful Bulldog functions since. "I've very passionate about both past players groups," Grant said.

"I only played one game at the Bulldogs but those four years there changed the course of my life. If I hadn't played there I wouldn't have been able to make the move to Adelaide. It set me up for life. My wife Kirsty and I have been blessed with three boys who are now young men, Declan 24, Jayden 21 and Cody 18. Cody is the only one who barracks for the Dogs."

Darren has been heavily involved in local football in Adelaide through the PHOS (Plympton High Old Scholars) Camden Football Club where he has coached all his sons, and many others, over the last 18 years. He is General Manager of AQUAessence which is part of the Beston Global Food Company.

Jumping Jack's Grand Final lament

By Mick Stevens

Jack Slattery Player Profile:

D.O.B: 23/03/37

Height: 183cm

Weight: 74kg

Club(s): Footscray

Games: 32

Goals: 41

Jack Slattery has the distinction of playing in the 1961 Grand Final amongst his 32 games with Footscray, but it was only a twist of fate that saw him play with the Bulldogs and not Geelong.

In fact, he did sign a Form Four with Geelong in 1957 after being guaranteed at least six senior games by coach Reg Hickey. But his home club, Eaglehawk, refused to clear him.

"I went back home and got carried off on a stretcher after I did my knee and was out for the season," Slattery recalled.

"The following season I went back to Geelong with my knee bandaged, and Hickey said I seemed to have lost confidence and that perhaps I should spend another year back home.

"In those days, a Form Four ran out after two years and the Bulldogs turned up. I had just got married (to Valerie, with whom he has been married 63 years) and they made me an offer too good to refuse. "Eaglehawk again refused to clear me, but they did give me three permits to play with the Bulldogs before permits closed in June."

Mick 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.



Slattery's debut game was against Essendon in round seven, 1959, where he was pitted against Alec Epis, before being moved to the centre on Jack Clarke, and his second was against Richmond the following week. "I was still living in Bendigo and so declined to use my third permit, but Eaglehawk finally cleared me the following year," he said.

In 1960, Slattery's VFL career got off to a rocky start when he dislocated his elbow after he was the "meat in the sandwich" in a tackle between John Schultz and Geelong's John Helmer and missed several weeks. He finished the season in the reserves, where he at least got to play in a semi-final and preliminary final.

In 1961, he was initially named on the club's supplementary list, but broke into the senior side in round seven and then did not miss a game for the rest of the season, culminating in a historic finals series, where the Bulldogs made the Grand Final. Playing at full-forward, Slattery helped the team reach the Big Dance by kicking four goals against Melbourne in the preliminary final, a record that

stood until 1997, when James Cook kicked six in that fateful clash against Adelaide. "I went to school with (Hawthorn great) Graham Arthur at Marist College in Bendigo and always told him I helped Hawthorn win the Grand Final because I kicked only three points," Slattery joked.

Slattery's recollection of the Grand Final is vague after all these years, but he said Hawthorn was a physically strong side, and centreman Brendan Edwards ran amok after half-time.

"Teddy (Whitten) tried to get him, but didn't hit him hard enough," he said. "I do remember one instance where I had the ball in clear space and took a couple of bounces, but the ball didn't come back to me, and I lost it in front of 108,000 people."

In 1962, Slattery played another 13 games for 13 goals to add to his 25 of the year before, but said by then he was being used more as a decoy for Whitten on the forward line.

At 183cm and 74kg, Slattery said he was probably too light to play in a key position, and when told by officials that he was unlikely to make the list in the following season, he decided to try his luck at Sunshine in the VFA. "We were only paid eight quid a week in those days and when Sunshine offered more money it was a no-brainer," he said.



He moved to Sunshine with good friend Ron Howard, with whom he shared back-to-back units in Hudson Road, Spotswood, and played under coach Bob Henderson (the former Fitzroy full-back) for five seasons. Coincidentally, when I spoke to Slattery for this story, he had only just heard that Howard had died. "It's very sad news," he said. Slattery moved back to Eaglehawk in 1968, which turned out to be a premiership year for the club, and the following year he won the club's best and fairest, playing on a wing, when Eaglehawk was runners-up.

Those feats were enough to have him named in Eaglehawk's Team of the Century, alongside other notable players such as Peter Pianto (Geelong), Rod Ashman, Des English, Ollie Grieve and Greg Kennedy (all Carlton) and Kevin Smith (Footscray).

Slattery, 86, is devoted to his family which consists of five children (a sixth died in a car accident at 18), 16 grand kids and four great grand kids, but still finds time to play the occasional game of golf at Rosedale Golf Club in Aspendale. "I have been told for 20 years to get my knee done, but keep putting it off," he admitted. "I have trouble walking and I don't hit the ball anywhere near as far as I used to."

Slattery's connection to the Bulldogs remains very strong. He has been a member of the Past Players' committee for the past 10 years, and is also the Past Players' delegate to the AFL Combined Past Players and Officials Association; roles which have earned him life membership of both organisations.

2023 Events Calendar

RD	Date	Opponent	Time	Function
8	Saturday 6th May	GWS (A)	5pm	Pre-match at Eastlake Football Club which is near Manuka Oval Canberra
12	Saturday 3rd June	Geelong (H)	6pm	Combined Bulldogs & Geelong Past Players
12	Saturday 3rd June	Geelong (H)	6pm	1980's REUION
13	Friday 9th June	Port Adelaide (H)	6.30pm	140 Year Celebration
	Saturday 10th June		6.30pm	Hall of Fame Dinner Centrepiece at Melbourne Park
	Friday 22nd September		12pm	AFLCPP Medallist Lunch at Hyatt on the Park
	Sunday 12th November		11am	AGM venue TBC
			12pm	End of Year Lunch following the AGM
	Sunday 19th November		10am	AFLCPP Bowls Day at Essendon Bowls Club

2023 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
	Len Cumming	0418 374 079
AFLCPP Delegate	Jack Slattery	0425 746 148

2023 Membership subscriptions

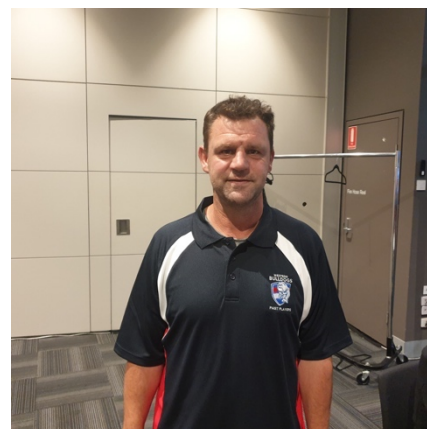
- Former Player or Official \$50
- Partner \$50

Please forward any changes to your address, mobile or email to Owen Madigan 0408 105 151 or belplas1@bigpond.com

Polo Shirts

Western Bulldogs Polo shirts are 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
To order - send the following information to westernbulldogspastplayers@gmail.com or 0418510635

Name
Postal address
Mobile
Shirt size - M L XL XXL XXXL



Adam Contessa photographed wearing the 2023 polo

How to Pay:

By EFT to: Footscray Western Bulldogs Past Players **BSB:** 633 000 **Account:** 199 932 344

Please use your surname as payment identification.

By credit card: Contact Treasurer Andrew Howlett on 0418 510 635

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.

Happy Birthday!

celebrating milestones

90th Birthday...

Norm Thompson
D.O.B: 15/05/1933
Club(s) played for:
Footscray (1953-1954),
St. Kilda (1956)
399th player listed



80th Birthday...

John Bradley
D.O.B: 10/05/1943
Club(s) played for:
Footscray (1963-1967)
508th player listed



80th Birthday...

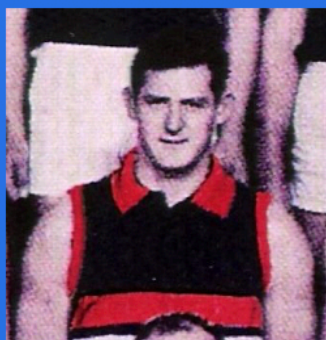
Bob Spurling
D.O.B: 10/06/1943
Club(s) played for:
Footscray (1963,1965)
507th player listed

70th Birthday...

Carl Vesty
D.O.B: 25/05/1953
Club(s) played for:
Footscray (1972-73)
606th player listed

80th Birthday...

Ivan Marsh
D.O.B: 24/05/1943
Club(s) played for:
Footscray (1963-69)
515th player listed



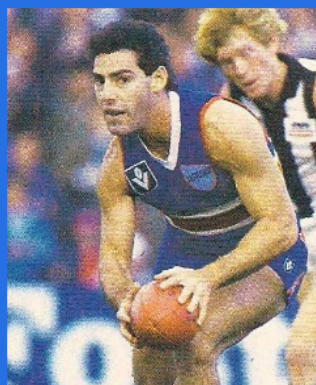
70th Birthday...

Glenn Gingell
D.O.B: 16/05/1953
Club(s) played for:
Footscray (1973-76)
620th player listed



60th Birthday...

Angelo Petraglia
D.O.B: 03/06/1963
Club(s) played for:
North Melbourne
(1984)
Footscray (1985-89)
760th player listed



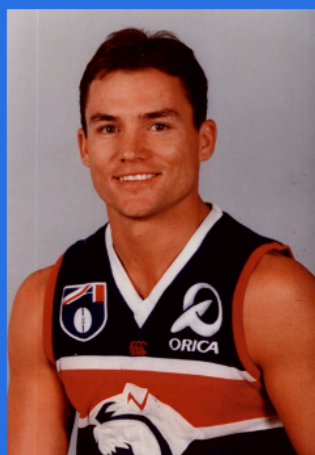
40th Birthday...

Andrew McDougall
D.O.B: 29/06/1983
Club(s) played for:
West Coast (2002-06),
Western Bulldogs
(2007)
924th player listed



50th Birthday...

Brett Montgomery
D.O.B: 01/06/1973
Club(s) played for:
Western Bulldogs (1997-
99, 2006-07)
Port Adelaide (2000-05)
Career highlights: All-
Australian (2002), Port
Adelaide Premiership
Player (2004)
868th player listed



40th Birthday...

Jordan McMahon
D.O.B: 27/05/1983
Club(s) played for:
Western Bulldogs (2001-
07), Richmond (2008-09)
890th player listed



50th Birthday...

Rohan Smith
D.O.B: 31/05/1973
Club(s) played for:
Western Bulldogs (1992-
2006)
Career highlights: All-
Australian (1997, 2003)
E.J Whitten medal
(1998)
824th player listed



Vale – Ron Blain

Ron died on 30th March aged 82. He was recruited from Terang, represented the Bulldogs in 1962-63 and played four senior games.





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Flash Fabrications specialise in customised architectural metal fabrication in the construction industry. It is a family-owned business run by Dave Marsh. It was established in 2004 and is in Hoppers Crossing. (Dave is the son of Ivan Marsh who represented the Bulldogs with distinction in 77 games between 1963-67)



Tosca have a wide range of products including hard and soft sided trolley cases, suitcases, wheels bags, cooler bags, wallets, backpacks, business bags, accessories and much more. It is a family-owned business run by Noel Pearce and his sons. It was established in 1996 and has a factory outlet in East Keilor.