



PAST PLAYERS



Once a Bulldog, Always a Bulldog!

JUNE 2026 NEWSLETTER

Second Past Player's Day - Sunday July 12



This exclusive event welcomes all past players and officials to catch up and reminisce

In this issue:

Kelvin Templeton's tribute to Ron Simmons

Neil Cordy talks to Tiarna Ernst

Michael Steven's interview with Matt Boyd

Ross Brundrett catches up with Easton Wood

R11 v Melb Gallery

- Round 18 Western Bulldogs vs West Coast
- Date: Sunday 12 July
- Venue: Rogers Room (Level D -Aisle 46) Marvel Stadium
- Time: 11.40am–4pm
- Cost: FREE to Past Players and Officials plus one guest each, with additional tickets available tickets available (\$80 per person) from Rhys Contessa (rhys.contessa@westernbulldogs.com.au)
- Includes: Stadium access, access to the Rogers Room, premium level 2 seating, the chance to reconnect with former teammates, bistro food and drinks available to purchase via the private bar (card only facility), half time footy food
- MCs: Kevin Hillier & Tom Boyd
- To attend you must register using the link below, RSVP closes **Tuesday, 7 July** (The tickets will be emailed by the club by Thursday 9 July)

Ross Abbey,
Western Bulldogs Past Players & Officials

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Events calendar

Second Past Players Day - Round 18 v Melbourne

Date: Sunday 12 July
Pre-match: 11.40am
Match time: 1.10pm
Venue: Rogers Room, Marvel Stadium
Contact: Ross Abbey (0412 073 092)

Round 19 v Gold Coast

Date: Sunday 19 July
Pre-match: 1pm
Match time: 3.15pm
Venue: Emerald Golf Club, Carrara
Contact: Neil Cordy (0419 116 315)

Round 21 v Fremantle

Date: Friday 31 July
Prematch: 6pm
Match Time: 8.10pm
Venue: Inglewood Hotel, 803 Beauford St, Mt Lawley WA
Contact: Andrew Purser (0411 876 441)

Annual General Meeting & Lunch

Date: Sunday 8 November
AGM: 11am
Lunch: 12pm
Venue: Altona Bowls Club, 113 Civic Pde, Altona
Contact: Owen Madigan (0408 105 151)



How Easton won the West

By Ross Brundrett

Just about every aspiring sportsperson faces a hurdle or two along the way and for Easton Wood, the first one came very early when he was cut from the Geelong Falcons under 15 squad.

“I thought that was my AFL dream done,” he said. “But I was really enjoying cricket then. I was playing representative cricket and I was probably performing better in that space ... just trying to bowl fast.”

Easton Wood

Age: 36
Years: 2008-2021
Games: 188

But then came a second major obstacle for the teenager. “I had stress fractures in my back in year 12 and that kind of derailed my cricket ... I didn’t get to play for that year.”

Finally though, luck started to turn his way. “My back injury was kind of misdiagnosed and with footy the symptoms were manageable and because I was on a scholarship at Geelong Grammar I continued to play,” he said.

And the scouts were always on the lookout to spot talent that wasn't playing in the TAC Cup and we were playing against young stars like Cyril Rioli at Scotch and Lachie Henderson at Geelong College." Perhaps the luckiest moment of all was when then Bulldog recruiter Scott Clayton decided to catch a game and saw Wood "take a flyer over someone".

And just like that, Wood's AFL dream was back on track. "I mean I hadn't attended any draft camps or state screening or anything ... and suddenly I had a manager and the Dogs were telling me they would draft me (pick 43).

His time at Whitten Oval started with a shoulder reconstruction which put him further behind which, coupled with the fact he weighed barely 72kg, meant that his footy journey at the club started in the Williamstown reserves.

After being a midfielder throughout his junior years, he was stuck in defence to develop "game awareness" as a tagger. "I was just playing for survival. I would have done whatever they told me," he said.

"That was kind of my first six or seven years at the club, until Luke Beveridge came along – I'd only played 50 games in seven years and been pretty much invisible – and he wanted us to play in front which was absolutely outrageous to us at that time. "And then two things happened. One, forwards loved the fact that you weren't (playing them from behind) so they'd run back away from the ball.

"And two, I learned that I could read the play and actually get to more contests... and have a clear run and jump.

"And that became the defining characteristics of my career. Before Bevo, my best finish in the best and fairest was 17th and the year that Bevo came along I won the best and fairest."

What followed next season was even more remarkable. A premiership and for Wood, the extra honour of holding the cup as the acting captain of the Bulldogs.

But Easton is quick to put that into perspective. "When I was made acting captain in 2016, all I did was be captain for two hours on the weekend, you know, Murph was the captain for every other hour of the week."

The club will be celebrating the 10 year anniversary of that premiership with a few events, and Wood is looking forward to catching up with the old gang. "They're such a great bunch but life gets in the way and you don't see as much of each other but its always great to catch up Blokes like Shane Biggs, we're totally different people, but we connected so well , we all did."

The end of Wood's AFL journey came in 2021, a season where he suffered three more hamstring injuries and long stints in recovery.

"You know I did 20 hamstrings in my career (and missed about 100 games) yet I did everything in my power to try and work through it. We had skilled people looking after me, the best medical science at the time but ultimately, and I hate to say this, but I just don't think I carried fatigue that well. And being a power athlete, I just think I took longer to recover."

Wood now works for the Hasset group helping recruit people in the accounting and finance field. He travels to Melbourne and interstate for work and then drives home to Geelong where his wife runs a marketing agency and they raise their two boys.

And as for his hamstrings..."Well, I've started playing basketball just to keep my energy up and to try and have something to do during the week and I've already done three hamstrings in the last two year



Vale Ron ‘Simmo’ Simmons

By Kelvin Templeton

On April 7 at the Whitten Oval, a large crowd gathered to celebrate the life of Ron Simmons, a man whose influence touched many. Peter Welsh, Doug Hawkins, Ted Whitten, and I, all spoke about our love and affection for Simmo.

Ron began with the club in 1970 at Victoria Park. Half an hour before the game between Footscray and Collingwood, EJ Whitten asked him to be the club runner. Ron remained in this role for the next 15 seasons, working with eight coaches and finishing with Mick Malthouse.



Ron’s passion for the club was unmatched. He was truly a player’s man. In 1972, he demonstrated this devotion by running over 100 kilometres from Ballarat to Melbourne to raise money for Stephen Boyle, whose football career was cruelly cut short.

When I joined as a new recruit in 1974, Ron quickly offered to help me with extra fitness and strength training. That’s how our close friendship and many summers of training together began. If someone needed help recovering from an injury, getting fitter or losing weight, wanted a running partner, or simply needed encouragement and support, Simmo was always there. Simmo loved running and was a great runner. Rocky Stoneham told me he once beat Simmo in a distance run, but as far as I know, that was the only time.

Ron believed in discipline and hard, honest work, both in life and in sport. When you trained with him, he expected you to give your best. One irrevocable rule he had was to never be late. My lifetime obsession with being on time probably stems from all my early-morning sessions with Simmo, who had no tolerance for lateness. I remember once we planned to meet for an early morning run in an industrial area of Sunshine, and I had trouble finding it. He saw me driving along the road toward him, but as soon as the time ticked over, he took off across the paddocks, and I had to sprint to catch up.

Listening to Welshy, Ted, and Dougie share stories about Ron only reinforced how much he was loved. We will all miss him deeply. The players' end-of-season trips with him remain unforgettable, so too his passions: the Bulldogs, his family, Williamstown, saunas and sunbathing, bounce ball, running, and having a casual punt on the races. Simmo touched countless lives for the better, mine included. If a good life is measured by the difference one makes, Ron succeeded—and then some. He will be greatly missed.



Tiarna Ernst, over-achiever

By Neil Cordy

Tiarna Ernst has already achieved more in her life than most people could dream of.

When she came to the Bulldogs in the AFLW's inaugural season (2017) she was already working as a doctor trained in obstetrics and gynaecology. The following year she was a key member of their history-making 2018 premiership. Teammates, like her good friend Nicky Callinan, marvelled at her ability to juggle two very demanding careers.

"Tiarna was such a great teammate," Nicky Callinan said. "Working as a Doctor made her schedule crazy but she was such an elite performer. She worked so hard to balance her two very demanding careers.

"Her work ethic was impeccable and her commitment to her training was inspiring. To top it all off she was such a great teammate and did anything for them." Footy and medicine may have appeared to be polar opposite careers but for Tiarna there was some common ground. "Clean hands on the footy field works well when you're trying to catch a baby," Tiarna joked.

In a time where mental health is such a prominent issue Tiarna also found benefits with life balance. "Being an athlete also flowed into my professional life," Tiarna said.

"They complimented each other. I didn't self-obsess over my performances on the footy field. My footy also helped me become a strong doctor. Medicine is a sink or swim industry and the drive, grit and resilience I learned in footy helped with that. It was funny when I took all my annual leave one year. I went crazy because I had too much time on my hands."

After three seasons at the Bulldogs (2017-2019), Tiarna returned to her home state of Queensland to become a foundation player at the Gold Coast Suns in 2020.

Her pioneering spirit has been with her for most of her life. She was born on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait and spent most of her childhood in Bamaga at the tip of the Cape York Peninsula, before moving with her family to Julatten near Port Douglas for her high school years.

Tiarna was only introduced to Aussie Rules when she studied at James Cook University in Cairns and took up the game with the Manunda Hawks. Now a mother of two girls Charlie (3½) and Piper (2), Tiarna is living in Brisbane and working as a fertility specialist.

"I'm proud of my playing career but I'm now focussing on giving back to the game off the field," Tiarna said. "I'm an advocate for good women's health education and that is where I want to make my mark now."



The rookie who rose to the top

By Michael Stevens

It's fair to say Matt Boyd's celebrated 292-game career and Bulldogs Hall of Fame status is something prospective teenage draftees only dream about.

Between 2003 and 2017 Boyd won three Charles Sutton Medals (2009, 2011, 2012), captained the side (2011-13), was named All Australian (2009, 2011 and 2016) and was a prominent member of the club's 2016 premiership success. Yet his introduction to the AFL was not all smooth sailing.

After being overlooked in his initial draft year, and then again in 2000, Boyd spent time at Frankston before being named at No.23 in the 2002 rookie draft by the Bulldogs.

Even his debut game, at 20 years and 257 days, against Fremantle, in round seven, 2003, left a lot to be desired as the side was thrashed by 83 points before copping a spray from then club President David Smorgon.

Boyd says he took the news of initially being overlooked stoically. "I was never a great player as a junior, more a bit of a trier," he said. "But I had confidence in my own ability and thought I was an outside chance of being drafted.

"In 2000, I had an English exam the next day and a couple of boys at my level got drafted, so I guess I was more disappointed at missing that draft."

Boyd got his opportunity after coming under the eye of then-Bulldogs recruiting manager Scott Clayton and Chris Bond, who was coach of Werribee. Boyd wore Number 42 in his first four seasons at Whitten Oval and then took over the No.5 guernsey from another celebrated player, Rohan Smith.

That change coincided with the arrival of Rodney 'Rocket' Eade as coach in 2006, which changed the dynamics of the side, according to Boyd. "We used to train at Yarraville Gardens and one night 'Rocket' got the players together and said he wanted all those who considered themselves senior players to stand on the left," Boyd said.

"The group on the left included such stars as Brad Johnson, Chris Grant and Luke Darcy, and then 'Rocket' looked at the rest of us and said, 'How are we going to field a team if you guys don't believe in yourselves?'

"From then on, myself and Daniel Cross and some of the others considered ourselves as senior players. "In 2006, we won an elimination final against Collingwood and we started to believe in our ability to play at that level."

Preliminary finals in 2008, 2009 and 2010 followed under Eade's reign and Boyd was a prominent member of all those finals campaigns as he amassed 120 games in a row between 2006 and 2012/13. But Boyd said things started to fall apart at the end of the 2014 season when some prominent players, including captain Ryan Griffen departed the club.

However, the players' belief in themselves returned with the appointment of Luke Beveridge as coach in 2015 when the Bulldogs finished sixth before being knocked out of the finals race in an elimination final by Adelaide.

What followed in 2016, when the Bulldogs produced a scintillating month of football to capture the club's first premiership since

1954 will be forever etched in our memories. But, strangely, Boyd had some misgivings about whether the side could achieve such greatness because the team included "a bunch of ratbags" to quote his words.

"They were off the charts, loopy, but they were so tight that the older guys had no choice but to blend with them and guide them in the right direction," Boyd added.

During the past month Boyd has had the opportunity to reflect on that 2016 premiership during the club's 10-year celebration and he says the experience was uplifting. "I haven't reflected much on it during the past 10 years," he said. "You have kids and life moves on. But during the past couple of weeks, it has been really nice to see the people you did it with, and the staff.

"That month of football was a month of real effort and I feel we went beyond our capabilities because we wanted to do it for each other." Boyd was relatively injury-free throughout his career, with his most serious injury coming towards the end in a pre-season practice game in 2017 when he suffered a bad concussion and nearly lost the top half of his right ear after coping an accidental elbow from Peter Wright.

"It was scary for my wife (Kate) to be watching that on TV," he said.

After his final game in 2017, against Hawthorn (in which he amassed 33 disposals and kicked one goal at the age of 34 and 363 days) Boyd took on a development coaching role at Collingwood, where he forged an indelible friendship with now Fremantle coach Justin Longmuir.

"Longmuir is one of the best people I've met in footy," Boyd said. "I worked closely with him in 2018-19 as his senior assistant and he helped develop me as a coach."

That friendship saw him move to Fremantle at Longmuir's behest in 2021 before returning to Collingwood as midfield coach in 2025 for the sake of his children's education.

Asked if he had aspirations to one day become a senior coach in his own right, Boyd said he was really keen to immerse himself in the management side of the game. "That's where I hope a long-time path might take me, but in the meantime, I'll continue to invest in the players and myself to be a better coach," he said.

Past Player's Day – vs. Melbourne (R11, May 24)



L-R: Mitch Wallis & Alex Keith



Phil O'Keeffe, Dave Marsh, Geoff Jennings & Lynton Fitzpatrick



Tom Boyd, Shane Biggs, Luke Dahlhaus, Alex Keath & Mitch Wallis



Bernie Quinlan & Ian Morrison



Andrew Hooper & Jordan McMahon



Lauris Sandilands, Alex Keath & Max Linham



Chris Burton & Steve Wallis



Michael McKenna, Alister Ford, Craig Knox & Mark Komp

Upcoming Birthdays

<p>70th Birthday Daryl Collins D.O.B: 15/07/1956 Years at Bulldogs: 1974 Games played: 1 Jumper number: #22 Debut number: #628</p>	<p>70th Birthday Ross Gallagher D.O.B: 08/09/1956 Years: 1975-76, 1981 Games played: 11 Jumper number: #41 Debut number: #647</p>	<p>70th Birthday Jeff Gieschen D.O.B: 22/09/1956 Years: 1974-78 Games played: 24 Jumper number: #27 Debut number: #640</p>
<p>70th Birthday Kelvin Templeton D.O.B: 30/09/1956 Years at Bulldogs: 1974-82 Games played: 143 Jumper number: #31 Debut number: #632</p>	<p>70th Birthday Simon Beasley D.O.B: 26/07/1956 Years at Bulldogs: 1982-89 Games played: 154 Jumper number: #18 Debut number: #715</p>	<p>60th Birthday Stuart Nicol D.O.B: 30/09/1966 Years at Bulldogs: 1988-89 Games played: 7 Jumper number: #37 Debut number: #794</p>



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