

The MCC Library Record

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Richmond v Carlton 1921 Grand Final Retrospective



ABOUT THE MCC LIBRARY RECORD

The *MCC Library Record* is an extension of the MCC Library's tradition of providing MCC Members' Reserve patrons with complimentary reading material such as the *MCC Library Fact Sheet*. A retrospective *MCC Library Record*, had been distributed at AFL grand finals from 2013 until 2019. Each looked at the grand final played 100 years previously. Unfortunately, with the Covid 19 outbreaks in Melbourne and the removal of the 2020 and 2021 grand finals interstate, this practice was interrupted.

However, to celebrate the return of footy to the MCG in 2022, and Melbourne raising its 2021 premiership pennant in Round 1, your library has produced this retrospective on the 1921 grand final for the opening round. We hope you enjoy reading about the contest between Richmond and Carlton of a century ago.

When in the Members' Reserve you are invited to visit the MCC Library on Level 3 of the Reserve or look for the *MCC Library's Fact Sheets* on the MCC website at <http://tinyurl.com/mcclcatalogue>.

The State of Football One Hundred Years Ago

In 1921 the Victorian Football League (VFL) was in its 25th season. The competition consisted of nine clubs, necessitating a bye each round. The season began in the second week of May and clubs played one another twice (16 matches in total). The top four clubs at the end of the home and away season then competed in the finals series for the premiership. At the time teams consisted of 18 players and there was no substitution for injured players. Footballers not selected for their VFL team would play in the Victorian Junior Football League (VJFL), which was in its third season. Essendon Juniors won the VJFL premiership, when it defeated Collingwood District 10.9 (69) to 8.13 (61) in the curtain raiser to the Richmond v Carlton grand final at the MCG.

The strength of the Victorian Football Association (VFA), the state's other senior competition, was compromised when a leading club, North Melbourne, disbanded mid-season. In the VFA grand final Williamstown 8.9 (57) defeated the reigning premier Footscray 5.9 (39), before a crowd of 20,000 at the Brunswick Street Oval, Fitzroy. It was the third game the teams had played in three weeks, because the final was abandoned during the third quarter due to a hailstorm and had to be replayed.

The Australian Football Council staged a carnival in Perth during August 1921. The expense of sending teams across the continent meant that only Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia competed. Western Australia won the tournament, and its match against South Australia at Perth Oval attracted a state record crowd of 26,461.

In interstate club football, Glenelg was admitted to the South Australian league. Port Adelaide won its ninth South Australian premiership defeating Norwood 4.8 (32) to 3.6 (24) at the Adelaide Oval before a ground record 34,800 spectators. The Western Australian grand final was won by East Perth 5.9 (39) to East Fremantle 4.8 (32) at Subiaco Oval. It was the third of five consecutive premierships for East Perth. Subiaco's Tom Outridge was awarded the inaugural Sandover Medal, on countback, as the fairest and best player in the Western Australian league. Tasmania's state premiership match was played at the Upper Cricket Ground, Hobart, where Cananore, the south premiers, 13.14 (92) defeated City, the north premiers, 8.8 (56).

The 1921 VFA Crisis

The Victorian Football Association (VFA) faced a crisis when North Melbourne folded on June 30. Essendon's East Melbourne Cricket Ground home was slated for demolition after 1921 and the 'Dons favoured relocating to North's Arden Street Oval. North's committee, viewing this as an opportunity to have a league club in their suburb, proposed a merger with Essendon and then promptly disbanded. The VFA, fearing it would lose an inner-suburban venue, protested to the Minister for Lands who denied Essendon's move to Arden Street. The 'Dons displaced the VFA's Essendon "A" team at Windy Hill instead. North was reinstated by the VFA for 1922, albeit with a new committee.

The 1921 League Season

The strongest clubs asserted themselves early in the year and from Round 4 the top four teams were unchanged. Carlton gained top spot from Collingwood after it defeated the 'Pies by 24 points in the top-of-the-table Round 9 clash at Princes Park. The Blues would maintain that position for the rest of the year. The Magpies finished third, and Richmond and Geelong were second and fourth respectively. There was excitement at the other end of the ladder owing to a final round play-off for the wooden spoon. Essendon had just a half-game buffer from St Kilda when they met at the Junction Oval. The Saints trailed for much of the afternoon, yet they snatched victory by two points. The Saints' winning goal was kicked in the last two minutes of the match before a frenzied 10,000 strong crowd.

Richmond and Carlton in 1921

Richmond and Carlton had met in 31 league games prior to the start of the 1921 season. Richmond entered the league in 1908 and had only won three games against the Blues. Nor had Richmond won a final against Carlton. The clubs opened the 1921 season at Richmond's Punt Road Oval, with Carlton victorious by nine points before 32,000 spectators. Their more significant home and away clash was in Round 10, when the Tigers demolished the ladder-leader by 51 points in the return match at a packed, 42,000 capacity, Princes Park. After Carlton and Richmond won their respective semi finals, they met in the final. It will later be remembered as the "hailstone" final.

Had Carlton won the match they would be declared premiers, whilst a Richmond victory would entail a play-off between the clubs in a grand final the following week. A crowd of 42,866 attended the match at the MCG. In near perfect conditions the Tigers had a handy 13-point lead over the Blues at half time, 5.5 (35) to 2.10 (22). However, during the break a heavy hailstorm swept across the ground, and when the players re-entered the arena the surface was white with hailstones, and the ground was so sodden that parts were inches deep in water. The Blues adapted to the conditions quicker and slid and soccered their way to draw equal with Richmond, and were even three points to the better of the Tigers at the final break, 7.14 (56) to 8.5 (53). The final quarter was played in a downpour. Richmond scored two goals early. They then held Carlton to just three points to win by eight points, and book a rematch in a grand final.

Rnd 1	May 7	Richmond	7.11 (53)	lost to	Carlton	8.14 (62)	Punt Road
Rnd 10	July 9	Carlton	14.15 (99)	defeated	Richmond	6.12 (48)	Princes Park
Final	October 8	Richmond	10.7 (67)	defeated	Carlton	7.17 (59)	MCG

The 1921 VFL Grand Final

After the hail storm the previous Saturday, the grand final was played on a muddy MCG with further rain falling during the match. Somewhat surprisingly Carlton decided to kick against the wind after winning the toss. Nevertheless, the move paid off as the Blues were able to outscore the Tigers in the first quarter. Richmond scored the first goal of the game after a long shot by Morris rolled through an unguarded goal but Carlton then took control, Duncan and McLatchie scoring majors to give the Blues a six-point lead at the first break 2.2 to 1.2.

Carlton continued to hold sway in the second quarter but the strong Richmond defence ensured that their lead increased to just 13 points at half time, 3.4 to 1.3. The only goal for the quarter was scored by Carlton's Boromeo when a shot by Clover fell short and he marked close to goal. According to a reporter for the *Argus*, both sides were making mistakes but Carlton's long game was superior to the Tigers, which led them into attack for most of the quarter. Some of the play was "tough and unpleasant" with both sides going in very fiercely. The Tigers really had their backs to the wall but their defence didn't weaken and they were not completely out of the game.

After half time, Carlton's long game slipped a little and Richmond's big men began to be more influential. The *Argus* reporter wrote that the match's faults were shed in the second half and it developed into a "very fine game" despite the wet conditions. It was now more of a "ball hunt" than the "man hunt" of earlier stages, he claimed, and there were plenty of thrills for the crowd. Richmond opened the third quarter sensationally when Minogue and Morris got the ball to Bayliss, who goaled with a beautiful left-foot shot. After the Blues repelled further Richmond attacks, Bayliss scored his second major to bring the Tigers within a point. The remainder of the quarter saw the play swing up and down the ground with neither side being able to score a major. Carlton still held a two-point lead at the final change 3.6 to 3.4, but it was clear that either side could now take the premiership.

Not long after the final quarter began Richmond's Hughie James scored a goal to put his side in front. Both sides then fought hard to gain a decisive advantage but with a quarter of an hour gone in the quarter Richmond were still just five points ahead. They kept up the pressure, however, and a mark to Turnbull, following a pass from Herbert, resulted in the Tigers' fifth goal. They now led by 11 points but the Blues would not give in and after a series of attacks, a pass from Fisher found Stephenson on his own and he put a long shot through to reduce the margin to less than a goal. There was now less than ten minutes to play and Carlton went into attack a number of times, only to be repelled by the strong Richmond defence. With only a little time left on the clock, a pass to Carlton's Duncan seemed certain to be marked not far from goal but Richmond's Hislop intercepted and raced the ball out of the danger zone. The final bell sounded soon after and the Tigers had held on to win by four points and capture their second consecutive VFL flag. The final score was Richmond 5.6 (36) to Carlton 4.8 (32).



Scenes from the 1921 VFL grand final as published in *Melbourne Punch*, October 30, 1921, p.26.
[MCC Library Collection]

1921 VFL Grand Final Match Summary

Richmond	1.2	1.3	3.4	5.6 (36)
Carlton	2.2	3.4	3.6	4.8 (32)

Best: Richmond – Richmond – Hislop, Smith, Taylor, McIntosh, James, Minogue, Hughes, Hall, G. Weatherill.

Carlton – Boromeo, McLatchie, O’Brien, Fisher, Jamieson, Greenhill, Hiskins.

Goals: Richmond – Richmond – Bayliss (2), Morris, James, Turnbull.

Carlton – Duncan, McLatchie, Boromeo, Stephenson.

Umpire: Jack McMurray Snr.

MCG attendance: 43,122

1921 VFL Grand Final Teams



RICHMOND

Colours: Yellow & Black

Coach: Dan Minogue



CARLTON

Colours: Navy & White

Coach: Norman Clark

	G	B
1. Barney Herbert		
2. George Bayliss.....	1	1
3. Norm Macintosh		
4. Hugh James.....	1	
5. Vic Thorp		
7. Ernie Taylor.....		
9. Bob Carew.....		
11. Mel Morris.....	1	
12. Dan Minogue (c).....		
13. Norm Turnbull.....	1	
15. Bob Weatherill.....		
17. Donald Don.....		
22. Clarrie Hall.....		
28. George Weatherill.....		
29. Max Hislop		
30. Jimmy Smith.....		
32. Frank "Checker" Hughes		
33. Frank Harley		
Rushed.....		

	G	B
1. Horrie Clover		
2. Percy Daykin		
3. Jack Stephenson.....	1	
4. Ernie Jamieson.....		
5. Rupe Hiskins.....		
6. Jack Greenhill.....		
7. Charlie Fisher		
8. Newton Chandler		
10. Paddy O'Brien		
13. Billy Blackman.....		
15. Croft McKenzie		
16. Gordon Green (c)		
18. Wally Raleigh.....		
20. Alex Duncan.....	1	
21. Stuart McLatchie.....	1	
22. Harry Toole.....		
25. Frank Martin.....		
27. Bill Boromeo.....	1	
Rushed.....		

1/4	1/2	3/4	Final
1 - 2	1 - 3	3 - 4	5 - 6 (36)

1/4	1/2	3/4	Final
2 - 2	3 - 4	3 - 6	4 - 8 (32)

Richmond Playing Positions

B:	G. Weatherill	Thorp	Taylor
HB:	McIntosh	Hislop	Smith
C:	Harley	Morris	Carew
HF:	Don	B. Weatherill	Turnbull
F:	Herbert	Bayliss	Hall
Foll:	Minogue (c)	James	Hughes

Carlton Playing Positions

B:	Toole	Jamieson	McKenzie
HB:	Raleigh	O'Brien	Greenhill
C:	Stephenson	Blackman	Chandler
HF:	Duncan	Clover	Boromeo
F:	Fisher	Daykin	Green (c)
Foll:	Hiskins	Martin	McLatchie

1921 VFL Ladder (after the home-and-away season)

	TEAM	Played	Won	Lost	Drawn	For	Against	Percent	Points
1	Carlton	16	13	1	2	1265	891	142.0	56
2	Richmond	16	12	4	-	1132	975	116.1	48
3	Collingwood	16	9	7	-	1066	953	111.9	36
4	Geelong	16	9	7	-	1118	1054	106.1	36
5	Fitzroy	16	6	8	2	957	921	103.9	28
6	Melbourne	16	6	8	2	1096	1149	95.4	28
7	South Melbourne	16	5	10	1	908	1073	84.6	22
8	St Kilda	16	4	11	1	998	1295	77.1	18
9	Essendon	16	3	11	2	965	1194	80.2	16

The Road to the 1921 Grand Final: VFL Semi Finals and Final

Under the *Argus* finals system, used by the VFL from 1902-23 and 1925-30, the team that finished second on the table after the home-and-away rounds played the team that finished fourth in the first semi final. The team that topped the ladder (the minor premiers) played the third-placed team in the second semi final the following week. The winners of both semi-finals met in the final. Should the minor premiers win the final they were acknowledged as the premiers. Should the minor premiers lose the final or semi final, however, they could challenge the winner of the final to a grand final. This match would decide the premiership.

In 1921 Richmond defeated Geelong in the first semi final and Carlton defeated Collingwood in the second semi final. Richmond then defeated Carlton in the final. As Carlton had been minor premiers they were able to challenge Richmond to a grand final match.

First Semi Final – September 24, 1921 (MCG)

Richmond 16.19 (115) def. Geelong 6.18 (54) att. 41,649

Second Semi Final – October 1, 1921 (MCG)

Carlton 9.11 (65) def. Collingwood 7.10 (52) att. 37,813

Final – October 8, 1921 (MCG)

Carlton 7.17 (59) lost to Richmond 10.7 (67) att. 42,866

1921 VFL Grand Final Umpires

Field	Jack McMurray Snr.
Boundary	Victor Belcher Richard McKay
Goal	John Swift Ernest Jenkins

Curtain Raiser : 1921 VJFL Grand Final

Collingwood District	8	13	61
Essendon Juniors	10	9	69

The curtain raiser for the 1921 VFL grand final was the grand final of Victorian Junior Football League.

Horrie Clover

Horace “Horrie” Clover was a star player for Carlton in the 1920s. A high flying, long-kicking, centre-half forward, he played 147 games for the Blues from 1920 to 1931, kicking 396 goals. After his playing career was over, he became one of Carlton’s longest serving administrators.

Originally from Maryborough in central Victoria, Clover enlisted in the 1st AIF in September 1915 and after basic training, embarked for France in January 1916 with reinforcements for the 7th Battalion. He was soon involved in the horrors of trench warfare but in September 1916 was transferred to a machine gun company and promoted to the rank of Corporal.

He was struck down with acute appendicitis on Christmas Day 1916 and evacuated to a field hospital for emergency surgery. He was then transferred to London for specialist treatment and months of recuperation. Pronounced unfit for further front-line service, he was repatriated to Australia in August 1917, and honourably discharged in May the following year.

Having recovered, Clover was keen to play senior football, and trained with Richmond and Melbourne before Carlton gave him an opportunity at VFL level. His first match was in Round 2, 1920, against Richmond. He kicked three goals from centre half-forward in this game and by the end of his first season he had established himself as one of the Blues’ top players. In addition to his high marking, Clover was renowned for his glorious running drop kicks for goal. In Round 12, 1921, he slotted 13 goals in a game against St Kilda, which is still a club record.

Clover was Carlton’s top goalkicker in each of his first four seasons, and was the league’s leading goalkicker in 1922 with 56. He was appointed Blues’ captain in 1922. He took on the dual role of captain-coach for part of the 1922 season, and in 1923 and 1927. Despite his stellar career, Carlton’s loss to the Tigers in the 1921 premierships decider proved to be his only grand final appearance.

A debilitating illness meant that Clover played only a few games at the start of the 1924 season and none at all in 1925. Unable to pull on the boots, he took on the job of club secretary, and continued in that position when he returned to the field in 1926. When he resumed playing, he and a young Harry “Soapy” Vallenge formed a powerful Carlton forward line with Clover at centre half-forward and Vallenge at full-forward. Clover was the Blues’ leading goalkicker again in both 1926 and 1928, and in 1929 captained Victoria against WA in his ninth and final game for the Big V.



Following his retirement as a player, Clover was elected Carlton's vice-president in 1932 but retired after one year. He stood again in 1935 and served the Club in this role for the next 20 years. He became President in 1956 and spent two years in the job.

Horrie Clover died on January 1, 1984. Three years later, he was among the first to be inducted into the Carlton Hall of Fame. He was inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame in 1996 and in May 2000 was named as one of four emergencies in Carlton's Team of the Century.

Vic "Flippa" Thorp

Victor Charles Thorp played 263 games for Richmond from 1910 to 1925. At full back, he established himself as one of the Tigers' early champion players following their admission to the VFL in 1908. A natural defender who showed great judgement, superior ball skills and fierce concentration, Thorp had many celebrated battles with Collingwood's star full forward Dick Lee.

Thorp grew up in Richmond and played his early football with the Beverley club in the Metropolitan Football Association. After a trial with St Kilda did not lead to senior selection, he joined Richmond in 1910, making his VFL debut in Round 1 against South Melbourne. He played all 18 games for the yellow and blacks in 1910 and impressed with his fine judgement. During his career, he was known for his ability to read the play and he rarely seemed to be caught out of position. His kicking skills stood out and he regularly thrilled crowds with glorious long drop kicks to clear the Tigers' defensive area.

By the outbreak of the Great War, Thorp was a veteran of five seasons during which he had missed just four matches. He decided against enlistment and continued to play for the yellow and blacks – Richmond, Collingwood, Carlton and Fitzroy being the only VFL clubs to play throughout the war years. While Richmond made the finals for the first time in 1916 when only four clubs competed, it was not until 1919 that they really established themselves as a premiership threat. Thorp was in career-best form that season, gaining life membership of the club and representing Victoria for the first time when interstate fixtures resumed after the war.

Richmond made the 1919 grand final but lost to Collingwood by 25 points. The following year, ex-Collingwood skipper Dan Minogue took over as playing coach at Richmond, creating a strong rivalry between the Tigers and Magpies. After finishing on



top of the ladder, Richmond defeated Collingwood in the grand final to take home their first VFL flag. At the business end of the 1921 season, Thorp dominated during the Tigers' semi final thrashing of Geelong and was one of their best players in the two wins over Carlton that secured a second premiership. Richmond did not make the finals in 1922 or 1923 but in 1922 Thorp became the first Tiger to play 200 VFL games.

Richmond returned to finals action in 1924 when, despite beating Essendon in their last finals match, they did not win the premiership because Essendon had the better record in the round robin format that determined the premiership that year. Richmond had lost to Fitzroy earlier in the finals and trailed Essendon on percentage at the end of the round-robin tournament. In 1996 Thorp was elected as an inaugural member of the Australian Football Hall of Fame. He was also an inaugural inductee of the Richmond Football Club Hall of Fame in 2002, and was named at full back in the club's Team of the Century selected in 1999.

Richmond's First Skin and *The Tiger Hunt*

Richmond's win against Carlton in the "hailstone" final had a profound effect on the club's confidence in the week preceding the grand final. It also excited many supporters, residents and businesses in Tigerland.

In the lead-up to the grand final the Richmond Furnishing Company offered to donate a Bengal tiger skin valued at 50 guineas to the club if the Tigers won the 1921 premiership.

The skin was displayed in the shop's window that week along with the 1920 premiership pennant, the 1920 grand final ball and photographic items.

A poem titled *The Tiger Hunt* was also displayed in the window. It celebrated the Tigers' win over Carlton in the "hailstone" final.

The Tiger Hunt

The old Blues came from out of the North
To a jungle green and fair;
'Midst joyful cheers they sallied forth
To hunt the Tigers there.

They never dreamed in their pride serene
That aught their progress could stem;
But, ere they had been very long on the scene
The Tigers were hunting them.

Then the old Blues called on some god unseen
To help win the Tigers' scalps;
So the god soon made the jungle green
Like a snow-scene 'midst the Alps.

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the Blues, "we've got them now,"
As they faced the ice—a bit late;
But they groaned in dismay when they found somehow
That the bally Tigers could skate.

Then the god changed the ice to a deep dark lake
And the Blues sailed in with vim;
But, alas! they had soon to the fact awake
That the bally Tigers could swim.

An animal that can run, swim and skate
Is a difficult thing to lick — .
More especially when you discover too late
That a bally Tiger can KICK.

Did you know?

- Vic Belcher, one of the boundary umpires in 1921 grand final, had previously had an illustrious playing career with South Melbourne. Belcher played 226 games for South from 1907 to 1920. He was a Victorian representative in 1919. Belcher was captain and coach of South in 1914-15 and 1917, including their 1914 grand final loss to Carlton. He later coached Fitzroy in 1922-24 and 1926-27, taking them to the VFL premiership in 1922. Belcher had two stints as an umpire. He was a boundary umpire in 16 games in 1921 and a further one game in 1930. He was also a field umpire in VFA seconds matches for a season and umpired country matches when placed on the VFL field umpire list in 1930. At that time the VFL appointed one field umpire to senior matches as a boundary umpire in case of emergency. Belcher officiated as a boundary umpire in this capacity in Round 5, 1930. He was field umpire in one country match in 1931 before retiring after being elected to the committee of the Brunswick Football Club (VFA).
- Dick Grigg (right), who was a member of Geelong's 1921 first semi final team that was defeated by Richmond, had played 192 games for Geelong from 1904 to 1914. He played one game after the 1914 season (Round 18, 1921, against Melbourne) before turning out for what proved to be his final match for Geelong in the 1921 semi final.
- During the 1921 grand final Carlton's Jack Greenhill was knocked unconscious behind play. There was no report made but Richmond player Donald Don was subsequently disqualified for eight weeks after the matter was raised at a VFL meeting some six weeks after the grand final.
- Richmond's 1921 premiership was the club's second in the VFL. Fitzroy was the most successful club in the VFL at the time, having won six premierships, 1898, 1899, 1904, 1905, 1913 and 1916. Carlton and Collingwood had each won five premierships, Essendon four, South Melbourne two and Melbourne one. Geelong and St Kilda, who had been VFL members since its formation in 1897, were yet to win a premiership, while University did not win a flag during their membership of the VFL from 1908 to 1914.



The *MCC Library Record* is the match day program of the Melbourne Cricket Club Library. The views expressed are those of the editor and authors and are not necessarily those of the Melbourne Cricket Club.

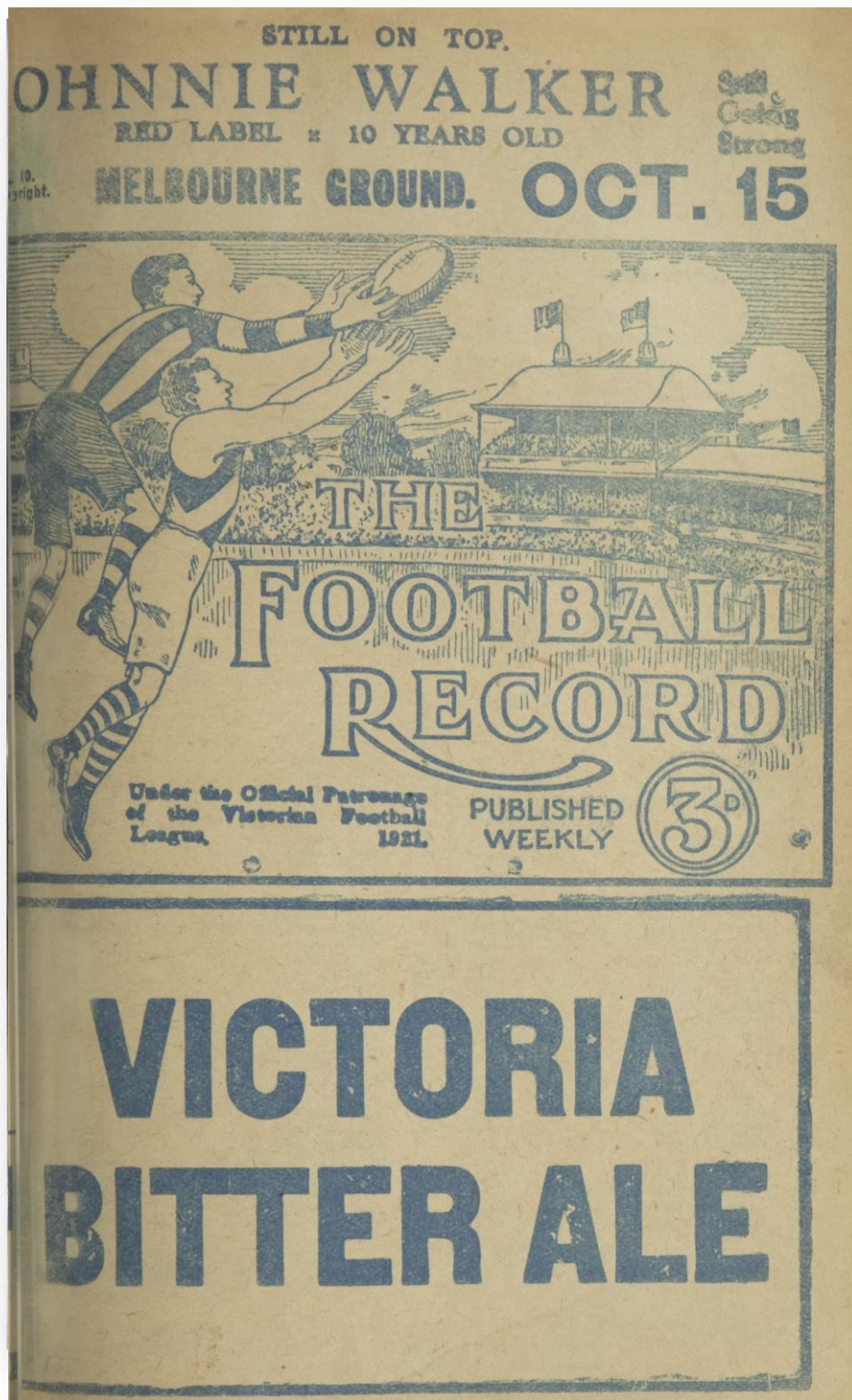
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Above: *Football Record*, Vol. 10. No. 24 [grand final], October 15, 1921.

Cover: The ball spills off Richmond's Hughie James (4) in the 1921 VFL "hailstone" final against Carlton. *Melbourne Punch*, October 23, 1921. [MCC Library collection].



MELBOURNE CRICKET CLUB