



# MELBOURNE CRICKET CLUB

## ESSENDON FOOTBALL CLUB ~ 150 YEARS AFL 2022 ROUND 13 ESSENDON V CARLTON

## LIBRARY FACT SHEET JUNE 10, 2022

### ESSENDON'S FOUR FLAGS IN A ROW

Collingwood is the only club to have won four VFL/AFL premierships in succession (1927–1930). Some thirty years earlier, however, Essendon won four VFA premierships in a row during what was a golden era for the club. The Essendon Football Club began playing in junior ranks in 1873, having grown from a meeting held at the home of the McCrackens, a successful brewing family. It joined the VFA in 1878 and accepted an offer from East Melbourne Cricket Club to move to their ground in 1882. Following a concerted recruiting campaign in the late 1880s, the club became almost unbeatable between 1891 and 1894.

During an unusually wet 1891 season, Essendon lost just one match and drew two others to finish on top of the ladder and take the premiership. The season was not without controversy. During Essendon's win over Fitzroy they were accused of having an extra player on the field in the second quarter. The rather flustered umpire decided he would count the Essendon team at half-time, but, according to one report, a player donned a raincoat and escaped through a side window of the cricket pavilion. When the count was complete, it was found that there was no anomaly, so the umpire could do nothing more. In a team packed with star players, the great ruckman Charles "Tracker" Forbes was outstanding.

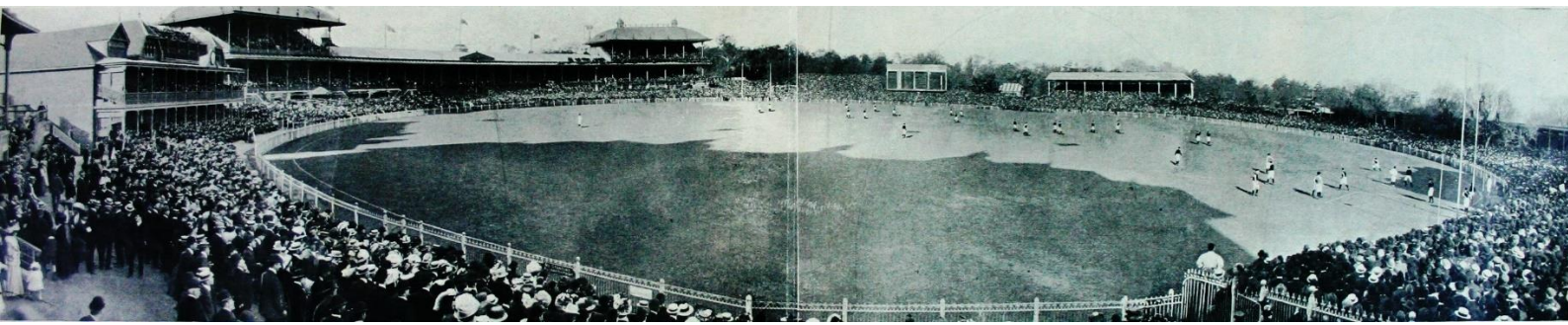
In 1892, an already powerful team added one of the greatest players of any era, Albert Thurgood (pictured), to its line-up. Thurgood booted 56 goals from centre half-forward to become the first player to kick over 50 goals in a single season. An *Age* reporter commented that: "Thurgood's achievement was in every way phenomenal and especially remarkable for a young player in his first season of senior football. Until the very last match of the season he never depended upon being fed but made his own chances, frequently securing the most brilliant marks, to the astonishment and discomfiture of two or three opponents who were 'set' for him." Among others to stand out in 1892, when the team lost just one match, were Alick Dick (half-back and captain), "Ned" Officer (full back), Bill Crebbin (centre) and Stewart Angwin (wing).

The third premiership on end came in 1893 when Essendon went through the season without loss, albeit draws were recorded against Melbourne and South Melbourne. Once again Thurgood was dominant, this time kicking 63 goals for the season, including a haul of 12 in the last game. Regarding this performance, an *Argus* reporter wrote: "A feature of the game was a fine exhibition of goal kicking by Thurgood to whom the whole side played. In getting twelve out of the fourteen goals he not only got the record for the greatest number scored by any player in a match in Victoria, but also the greatest number scored by any player in a season."

Despite Thurgood's performances, Essendon was not just a one man team, the club being well served by many other fine players such as Alex "Joker" Hall and George Vautin (rovers), Bill Finlay (half-back), George Stuckey (wing), along with Dick, Officer and Crebbin. William "Pos" Watson amazingly made the long journey from his home in Warmambool to play for the club each Saturday. Essendon lost just one match (against Geelong) in 1894 to take the premiership for the fourth year in succession. Again Thurgood was the star, his performance in August against Fitzroy, who led by five goals to one at half-time, drawing the following report in the *Argus*:

"And then Thurgood, the invincible, played a lone hand that simply drove the spectators frantic with admiration. He had played back, forward and on the ball, everywhere with infinite credit; but the four successive goals in a few minutes was the coping-stone – and one of those special feats of which Thurgood, alone, seems capable. Unquestionably we have never had such a goalkicker as Thurgood."





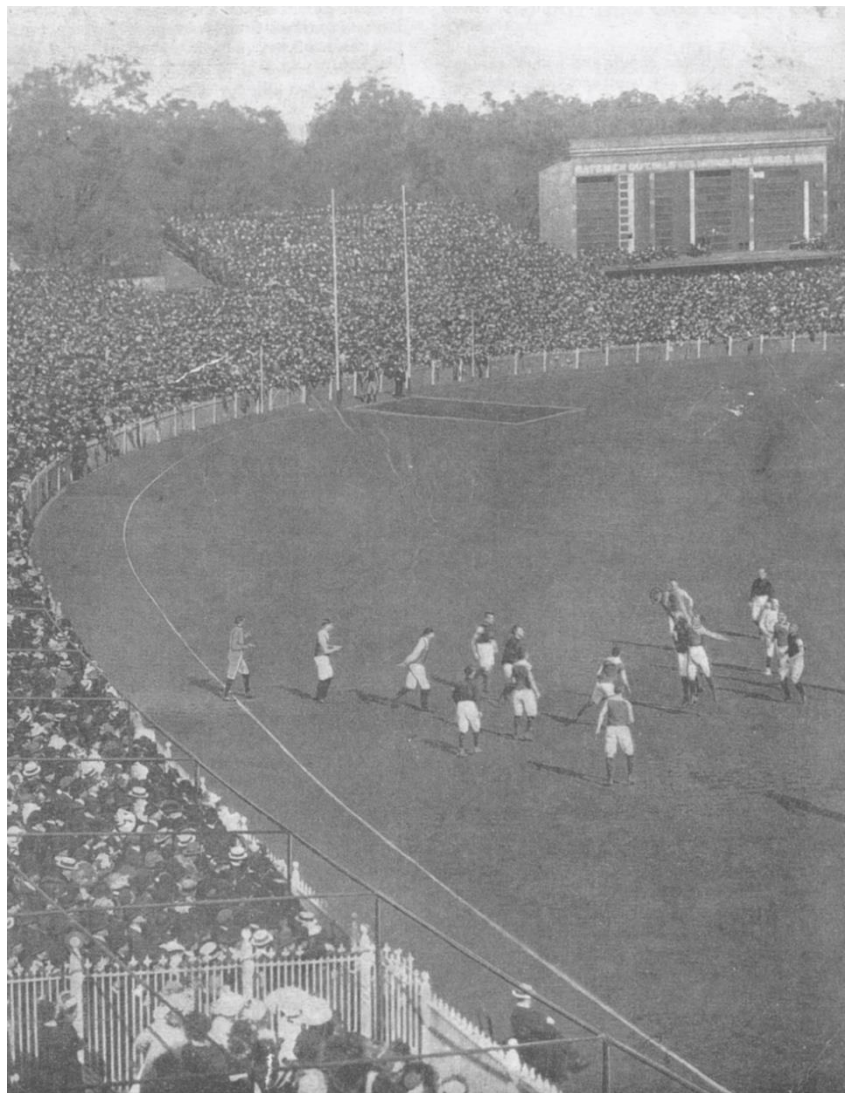
## FROM WOODEN SPOON TO A GRAND FINAL

Hard hit by injuries and losing several matches by narrow margins, Essendon finished last in 1907. But 1908 was a very different story, the club being able to recruit many leading players from North Melbourne and West Melbourne after those clubs had been banished by the VFA following their failed combined bid to enter the VFL. Richmond and University were the successful bidders, both teams joining the VFL in 1908. After finishing second on the 1908 ladder, Essendon beat Collingwood by 35 points in their first final, and then had to face hot favourites Carlton in the grand final (pictured).

It was the first time these two sides met in a VFL grand final. On September 26, 1908, 53,400 spectators turned up to witness a close encounter at the MCG. This match was designated the "Jubilee Grand Final", to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the game and was the first in the history of the game to top the 50,000 spectator mark.

The all-powerful Carlton side had won the two previous premierships, lost only one of their 18 home-and-away matches, and accordingly were hot favourites to win their third flag against the much younger and inexperienced Essendon side. Due to a number of injuries, Essendon, the only side to have defeated Carlton during the season, were forced to bring Wesley College schoolboy Harry Prout into their side for his first game.

Despite these disadvantages, on a windy day that made skilful play impossible, the Essendon side stuck with Carlton, and had several chances in the last quarter to take the lead. Unfortunately, their bad kicking for goal cost them dearly and Carlton, despite kicking only one solitary behind in the second half to Essendon's one goal four behinds, hung on to record their "hat trick" premiership by nine points, Carlton 5.5 (35) to Essendon 3.8 (26), making them the first side to do this since the establishment of the Victorian Football League in 1897.



## OVER TO YOU

Which team has won the most VFL/AFL grand finals?

## FACT SHEETS ON THE MCC WEBSITE

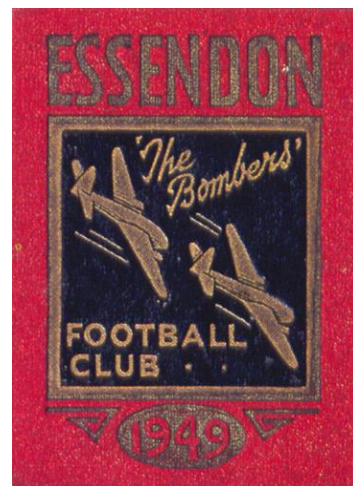
MCC Library's matchday fact sheets can be accessed through the MCC website at: <http://tinyurl.com/mcclcatalogue>



## ESSENDON'S COLOURS AND NICKNAME

The 1875 edition of *The Footballer* described Essendon's uniform as, "Colors—Blue guernsey and knickerbockers, red and black cap, and hose." In 1877 the same annual referred to the red sash in its uniform: "Colors—Blue jersey and knickers, red and black hose and cap, and a red sash over left shoulder." Essendon began to wear black jerkins with a red sash from the 1890s. In early days the club was known as "The Sash Wearers" or "The Sashites" because of their players' red-sashed guernsey and also, not surprisingly, "The Essendonians".

Subsequently the club became known as "The Same Olds". This appears to have been because supporters of the various clubs, if asked who would be premiers, are alleged to have answered "the same old club, Essendon." The nickname became so popular, it is said that supporters at Essendon matches would sing: "The Same Old Essendon we used to be / The Same Old Essendon we are, you see / You can take the straightest tip / That we'll win the premiership / Because we're the same old Essendon." The *Mercury and Weekly Courier* of August 10, 1893, reported on an Essendon-Melbourne game: "At half time the Essendon had a substantial lead of four goals to one, and the result appeared a foregone conclusion for the 'same old' although the red legs did not despair." The shortening of "Essendon" to "The Dons" has been used since the club's early days and is still used today. However, the club moved its home ground in 1922 to "Windy Hill" close to the airport in the suburb of Essendon, and during World War II, with the airport being used by the Royal Australian Air Force, this eventually brought about the use of the nickname "The Bombers". The first use of the bomber image on the Essendon membership ticket was in 1948.



## THE ESSENDON AND FLEMINGTON FOOTBALL CLUB

The Essendon Football Club played its first game in 1873. However, a short lived Essendon and Flemington Football Club played in 1862. One of its opponents was a club named Collingwood. The Essendon and Flemington Football Club, and the Collingwood Football Club are not related to their AFL namesakes. The Collingwood club, which played in Edinburgh Gardens, also dissolved after 1862. Below is a chronicle of the Essendon and Flemington Football Club.

### *The Argus*, May 9, 1862:

A meeting of the Essendon and Flemington Football Club was held on Wednesday, to enrol members and to consider a code of rules. Those of the Melbourne Club were adopted, an amendment to allow tripping being rejected. The entrance fee was fixed at 2s 6d. Already the number of members had increased to thirty-two. The first 'kick off' was appointed to take place to-morrow, the ground selected being near the terminus of the Essendon Railway. It was agreed that the distinguishing badge of the club should be a band of blue ribbon on the right arm. The proceedings closed with a vote of thanks to the chairman, Dr Tweeddale.

### *The Argus*, June 20, 1862:

A football match will be played tomorrow, on the Melbourne ground, between the Metropolitan and Essendon Clubs, fifteen to play on each side. The game is appointed for two o'clock, and a list of the men selected is posted at Marshall's. As the Essendon team have already had some kicks-off, a good match is expected.

### *The Argus*, June 24, 1862:

The football match on Saturday last, between the Melbourne and Essendon clubs, proved an extremely well contested one - no goal having been kicked on either side when darkness separated the combatants.

### *The Argus*, June 27, 1862:

The Essendon and Flemington and Collingwood Football Clubs play a match to-morrow afternoon, on the Melbourne ground-fifteen a side. Two o'clock is the hour appointed to kick off.

### *Bell's Life in Victoria*, June 28, 1862:

A football match between the Melbourne and Essendon clubs took place on Saturday afternoon, in the Richmond paddock. The sides were pretty evenly balanced, though the Melbourne team had the advantage in point of calibre, Messrs. Nicholls and J. Campbell being the captains. No advantage was gained by either party, though the fight was long and fierce.

### *The Argus*, June 30, 1862:

The football match played on Saturday between the Essendon and Collingwood Clubs, on the Melbourne ground was a well-contested and pleasant affair. Fortune first smiled on the Essendon, J. Campbell kicking a goal. The battle was again renewed, and shortly before dusk Davidson, of the Collingwood, obtained a goal. Several of the Essendon players then leaving, their captain picked some of the bystanders, and a scratch match was organized.

## This Round in History – Round 13 on the MCG

The highest score at the MCG is 29.18 (192) by Geelong against North Melbourne 17.13 (115) in 1992. The overall Round 13 record is 34.16 (220) by Fitzroy against North Melbourne 10.10 (70) at the Junction Oval in 1983. The highest score in a quarter at the MCG is 10.1 (61) by Geelong during the last quarter against Richmond in 1972. The overall Round 13 record for the highest score in a quarter is 13.2 (80) by South Melbourne against Carlton in the third quarter at the Lakeside Oval in 1934. The most goals kicked by an individual at the MCG in this Round is 11 by Doug Wade for Geelong against Richmond in 1972. The overall Round 13 record is 16 goals by Gordon Coventry for Collingwood against Hawthorn at Victoria Park in 1929. The highest Round 13 attendance at the MCG is 83,407 in 2009 when Essendon defeated Carlton.

### Statistics for Essendon v Carlton

#### *Essendon v Carlton by venue*

	Won by Essendon	Won by Carlton	Drawn
MCG	38	29	4
East Melb.	14	11	1
Princes Park	28	48	1
SCG	0	1	0
Victoria Park	0	1	0
Waverley Park	11	6	0
Windy Hill	27	30	0
	<hr/> 118	<hr/> 126	<hr/> 6

#### *Highest Score*

Essendon	28.14 (182)	Rd 21	2005	MCG
Carlton	27.13 (175)	Rd 14	1975	WH

#### *Lowest Score*

Essendon	2.2 (14)	Rd 10	1903	PP
Carlton	1.2 (8)	Rd 15	1898	EMCG

#### *Greatest Winning Margin*

Essendon	109 points	Rd 6	1985	WH
Carlton	102 points	Rd 2	1936	PP

#### *Last Time They Met – Round 7, 2021, MCG*

	Carlton	Essendon
Quarter time	4.2	6.4
Half time	8.5	8.7
Three-quarter time	14.7	12.8
Full time	19.9 (123)	16.11 (107)

Fact sheets are prepared by MCC Library volunteers David Allen, Eric Panther, Quentin Miller, Dennis Carroll, Ian Wilkinson, and Gaye Fitzpatrick with MCC deputy librarian Trevor Ruddell and the assistance of Col Hutchinson of the AFL

### ESSENDON'S FIRST MATCH

The Essendon Football Club was established in 1873. Its first secretary was Alex McCracken and its first president was Alex's father Robert McCracken, who held the position until 1885. Alex would later become the president of the club from 1887 to 1903, and also served as the first president of the VFL, from 1897 to 1915. On May 24, 1873, a columnist for the *Weekly Times* published the nascent club's fixture and commented:

"A scratch match of the above club [Essendon Football Club] was played on Saturday last between teams captained respectively by Messrs. James Robertson and J. McCracken, the result of which was an easy victory for the followers of the latter, they securing three goals without their opponents obtaining one. We may mention that this club has now one of the best grounds for play near Melbourne, Mr. E. Rigby having kindly placed his large paddock adjoining the New Market Railway station at the disposal of the club."

On Saturday June 7, 1873, Essendon played Carlton's seconds at Rigby's paddock. It was Essendon's first match against another club. The *Age* on Monday June 9 reported: "Essendon v. 2nd twenty of the Carlton ended in a victory for the local team, John McCracken securing the only goal kicked during the afternoon. Those who distinguished themselves for Essendon were Darchy, Robertson, and Geo. Miller, whilst Kennedy and McClure did good service on behalf of Carlton." John McCracken, Alex's brother, would be Essendon's first captain, and James Robertson would be the club's president in 1886. It would not be until 1878 that Essendon was regarded as a senior club and on a par with the likes of Carlton and Melbourne.

**OVER TO YOU ANSWER:** Carlton has won 16 VFL/AFL grand finals, the most of any club. Collingwood has won 15 and Essendon 14. Carlton and Essendon both claim 16 VFL/AFL premierships but the Dons' 1897 and 1924 flags were won under a round robin finals format and a grand final was not played.