

## SCENES FROM THE 1923 VFL GRAND FINAL



**Top:** Fitzroy attempts to break through Essendon's defence in the third quarter.

**Below Left:** Jim Tarbotton (Fitzroy) marks. **Below Right:** Play in front of the Essendon goal.

*Australasian*, October 27, 1923. [MCC Library collection]



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### 2023 AFL GRAND FINAL

#### 100 YEARS AGO: THE 1923 VFL GRAND FINAL – ESSENDON V FITZROY

The 1923 grand final was to be played on October 13, but such was the state of the ground, it was delayed one week. When the grand final did take place Essendon had only played one match in the last six weeks due to their having a bye in the final home and away round, and then only a single match in the finals. They made a selection surprise by including 33 year old George Rawle, coach of Essendon Juniors, for his first League game.

Essendon began the match well and were on top for the first 15 minutes or so. They kicked the first goal of the game when full forward Greg Stockdale posted his 67th major for the season – then a League record. A second goal in the quarter gave Stockdale 68 for the season. Fitzroy, with Jimmy Freake performing well up forward, gradually got back into the game and at quarter time they were one point ahead.

In general play, Essendon seemed to have the better of the second quarter but they missed several chances and managed only one goal and eight behinds. Fitzroy kicked two goals two and maintained their one point advantage at the long break. In the third quarter, Essendon added two goals through Justin McCarthy and Frank Maher, while Fitzroy were held goalless. Although the Dons had dominated the quarter they still only led by 10 points at the final break and Fitzroy went into the final stanza still feeling that they had a chance to take the flag.

Soon after the final term commenced Stockdale missed a chance to boot another goal for Essendon and, soon after, Clive Fergie of Fitzroy passed to Harold Carter, who registered a goal. Fitzroy were now only five points behind. The game see-sawed for a while but with less than ten minutes remaining, and Essendon still in the lead by four points, Charlie Hardy (Essendon) made a brilliant pass to Frank Maher, who dodged the pack and goaled. Further Fitzroy attacks were repelled by the Essendon defence and a goal on the run from George Shorten eventually sealed the game for the Dons. In the *Australasian* Jack Worrall, their football correspondent who was a famous former Fitzroy player and Carlton coach, summed up the game as follows:

“... while there was not much in it, Essendon was the better and more finished band. And strange as it may appear their bye at the end of the first round and the postponement on October 13, was all in their favour. Their brilliant little men were feeling the strain when the first round ceased, and needed a spell badly. The easing of strenuous Saturday matches had been the means of restoring their old-time brilliancy, and was a great factor in winning them the premiership. With Fitzroy the case was altogether different. They are big and solid players, and require a lot of work. As, in the previous season, they had timed their run nicely, and unmistakably gave evidence in their play last Saturday that they were going off. They played with much of their old-time tenacity, yet had lost a lot of that wonderful vim which is such a marked characteristic of their play. It was noticeable all through while the spirit was willing the flesh failed to respond in the old dauntless manner, and they were beaten by a better team on the day.”

	Essendon	Fitzroy
Quarter time	3-2	3-3
Half time	4-10	5-5
Three-quarter time	6-13	5-9
Full time	8.15 (63)	6.10 (46)

#### Essendon

Best: Shorten, McCarthy, Fitzmaurice, Maher, Garden, May, Watt, Hardy.

Goals: Maher (2), McCarthy (2), Stockdale (2), Jenkins, Shorten.

#### Fitzroy

Best: Collins, Bryant, Carter, Wigraff, Fergie, Tarbotton, Atkinson, Freake.

Goals: Freake (4), Carter, Rattray.

Umpire: Alex Mutch

MCG attendance: 46,566



Year				Venue	Attendance	Norm Smith Medal
1897	No Grand Final	Essendon Premiers		Geelong Runners-up		-
1898	Grand Final	Fitzroy	5.8 (38)	Essendon	3.5 (23)	Junction Oval
1899	Grand Final	Fitzroy	3.9 (27)	South Melbourne	3.8 (26)	Junction Oval
1900	Grand Final	Melbourne	4.10 (34)	Fitzroy	3.12 (30)	East Melb. CG
1901	Grand Final	Essendon	6.7 (43)	Collingwood	2.4 (16)	Lake Oval
1902	Grand Final	Collingwood	9.6 (60)	Essendon	3.9 (27)	MCG
1903	Grand Final	Collingwood	4.7 (31)	Fitzroy	3.11 (29)	MCG
1904	Grand Final	Fitzroy	9.7 (61)	Carlton	5.7 (37)	MCG
1905	Grand Final	Fitzroy	4.6 (30)	Collingwood	2.5 (17)	MCG
1906	Grand Final	Carlton	15.4 (94)	Fitzroy	6.9 (45)	MCG
1907	Grand Final	Carlton	6.14 (50)	South Melbourne	6.9 (45)	MCG
1908	Grand Final	Carlton	5.5 (35)	Essendon	3.8 (26)	MCG
1909	Grand Final	South Melbourne	4.14 (38)	Carlton	4.12 (36)	MCG
1910	Grand Final	Collingwood	9.7 (61)	Carlton	6.11 (47)	MCG
1911	Grand Final	Essendon	5.11 (41)	Collingwood	4.11 (35)	MCG
1912	Grand Final	Essendon	5.17 (47)	South Melbourne	4.9 (33)	MCG
1913	Grand Final	Fitzroy	7.14 (56)	St Kilda	5.13 (43)	MCG
1914	Grand Final	Carlton	6.9 (45)	South Melbourne	4.15 (39)	MCG
1915	Grand Final	Carlton	11.12 (78)	Collingwood	6.9 (45)	MCG
1916	Grand Final	Fitzroy	12.13 (85)	Carlton	8.8 (56)	MCG
1917	Grand Final	Collingwood	9.20 (74)	Fitzroy	5.9 (39)	MCG
1918	Grand Final	South Melbourne	9.8 (62)	Collingwood	7.15 (57)	MCG
1919	Grand Final	Collingwood	11.12 (78)	Richmond	7.11 (53)	MCG
1920	Grand Final	Richmond	7.10 (52)	Collingwood	5.5 (35)	MCG
1921	Grand Final	Richmond	5.6 (36)	Carlton	4.8 (32)	MCG
1922	Grand Final	Fitzroy	11.13 (79)	Collingwood	9.14 (68)	MCG
1923	Grand Final	Essendon	8.15 (63)	Fitzroy	6.10 (46)	MCG
1924	No Grand Final	Essendon Premiers		Richmond Runners-Up		-
1925	Grand Final	Geelong	10.19 (79)	Collingwood	9.15 (69)	MCG
1926	Grand Final	Melbourne	17.17 (119)	Collingwood	9.8 (62)	MCG
1927	Grand Final	Collingwood	2.13 (25)	Richmond	1.7 (13)	MCG
1928	Grand Final	Collingwood	13.18 (96)	Richmond	9.9 (63)	MCG
1929	Grand Final	Collingwood	11.13 (79)	Richmond	7.8 (50)	MCG
1930	Grand Final	Collingwood	14.16 (100)	Geelong	9.16 (70)	MCG
1931	Grand Final	Geelong	9.14 (68)	Richmond	7.6 (48)	MCG
1932	Grand Final	Richmond	13.14 (92)	Carlton	12.11 (83)	MCG
1933	Grand Final	South Melbourne	9.17 (71)	Richmond	4.5 (29)	MCG
1934	Grand Final	Richmond	19.14 (128)	South Melbourne	12.17 (89)	MCG
1935	Grand Final	Collingwood	11.12 (78)	South Melbourne	7.16 (58)	MCG
1936	Grand Final	Collingwood	11.23 (89)	South Melbourne	10.18 (78)	MCG
1937	Grand Final	Geelong	18.14 (122)	Collingwood	12.18 (90)	MCG
1938	Grand Final	Carlton	15.10 (100)	Collingwood	13.7 (85)	MCG
1939	Grand Final	Melbourne	21.22 (148)	Collingwood	14.11 (95)	MCG
1940	Grand Final	Melbourne	15.17 (107)	Richmond	10.8 (68)	MCG
1941	Grand Final	Melbourne	19.13 (127)	Essendon	13.20 (98)	MCG
1942	Grand Final	Essendon	19.18 (132)	Richmond	11.13 (79)	Princes Park
1943	Grand Final	Richmond	12.14 (86)	Essendon	11.15 (81)	Princes Park
1944	Grand Final	Fitzroy	9.12 (66)	Richmond	7.9 (51)	Junction Oval
1945	Grand Final	Carlton	15.13 (103)	South Melbourne	10.15 (75)	Princes Park
1946	Grand Final	Essendon	22.18 (150)	Melbourne	13.9 (87)	MCG
1947	Grand Final	Carlton	13.8 (86)	Essendon	11.19 (85)	MCG
1948	Grand Final	Essendon	7.27 (69)	Melbourne	10.9 (69)	MCG
1948	Grand Final Replay	Melbourne	13.11 (89)	Essendon	7.8 (50)	MCG
1949	Grand Final	Essendon	18.17 (125)	Carlton	6.16 (52)	MCG
1950	Grand Final	Essendon	13.14 (92)	North Melbourne	7.12 (54)	MCG
1951	Grand Final	Geelong	11.15 (81)	Essendon	10.10 (70)	MCG
1952	Grand Final	Geelong	13.8 (86)	Collingwood	5.10 (40)	MCG
1953	Grand Final	Collingwood	11.11 (77)	Geelong	8.17 (65)	MCG
1954	Grand Final	Footscray	15.12 (102)	Melbourne	7.9 (51)	MCG
1955	Grand Final	Melbourne	8.16 (64)	Collingwood	5.6 (36)	MCG
1956	Grand Final	Melbourne	17.19 (121)	Collingwood	6.12 (48)	MCG
1957	Grand Final	Melbourne	17.14 (116)	Essendon	7.13 (55)	MCG
1958	Grand Final	Collingwood	12.10 (82)	Melbourne	9.10 (64)	MCG
1959	Grand Final	Melbourne	17.13 (115)	Essendon	11.12 (78)	MCG
1960	Grand Final	Melbourne	8.14 (62)	Collingwood	2.2 (14)	MCG

Year					Venue	Attendance	Norm Smith Medal
1961	Grand Final	Hawthorn	13.16 (94)	Footscray	7.9 (51)	MCG	107,935
1962	Grand Final	Essendon	13.12 (90)	Carlton	8.10 (58)	MCG	98,385
1963	Grand Final	Essendon	15.19 (109)	Hawthorn	8.12 (60)	MCG	101,452
1964	Grand Final	Melbourne	8.16 (64)	Collingwood	8.12 (60)	MCG	102,471
1965	Grand Final	Essendon	14.21 (105)	St Kilda	9.16 (70)	MCG	104,846
1966	Grand Final	St Kilda	10.14 (74)	Collingwood	10.13 (73)	MCG	102,055
1967	Grand Final	Richmond	16.18 (114)	Geelong	15.15 (105)	MCG	109,396
1968	Grand Final	Carlton	7.14 (56)	Essendon	8.5 (53)	MCG	116,828
1969	Grand Final	Richmond	12.13 (85)	Carlton	8.12 (60)	MCG	119,165
1970	Grand Final	Carlton	17.9 (111)	Collingwood	14.17 (101)	MCG	121,696
1971	Grand Final	Hawthorn	12.10 (82)	St Kilda	11.9 (75)	MCG	118,192
1972	Grand Final	Carlton	28.9 (177)	Richmond	22.18 (150)	MCG	112,393
1973	Grand Final	Richmond	16.20 (116)	Carlton	12.14 (86)	MCG	116,956
1974	Grand Final	Richmond	18.20 (128)	North Melbourne	13.9 (87)	MCG	113,839
1975	Grand Final	North Melbourne	19.8 (122)	Hawthorn	9.13 (67)	MCG	110,551
1976	Grand Final	Hawthorn	13.22 (100)	North Melbourne	10.10 (70)	MCG	110,143
1977	Grand Final	Collingwood	10.16 (76)	North Melbourne	9.22 (76)	MCG	108,224
1977	Grand Final Replay	North Melbourne	21.25 (151)	Collingwood	19.10 (124)	MCG	98,491
1978	Grand Final	Hawthorn	18.13 (121)	North Melbourne	15.13 (103)	MCG	101,704
1979	Grand Final	Carlton	11.16 (82)	Collingwood	11.11 (77)	MCG	113,545
1980	Grand Final	Richmond	23.21 (159)	Collingwood	9.24 (78)	MCG	113,461
1981	Grand Final	Carlton	12.20 (92)	Collingwood	10.12 (72)	MCG	112,964
1982	Grand Final	Carlton	14.19 (103)	Richmond	12.13 (85)	MCG	107,537
1983	Grand Final	Hawthorn	20.20 (140)	Essendon	8.9 (57)	MCG	110,332
1984	Grand Final	Essendon	14.21 (105)	Hawthorn	12.9 (81)	MCG	92,685
1985	Grand Final	Essendon	26.14 (170)	Hawthorn	14.8 (92)	MCG	100,042
1986	Grand Final	Hawthorn	16.14 (110)	Carlton	9.14 (68)	MCG	101,861
1987	Grand Final	Carlton	15.14 (104)	Hawthorn	9.17 (71)	MCG	92,754
1988	Grand Final	Hawthorn	22.20 (152)	Melbourne	6.20 (56)	MCG	93,754
1989	Grand Final	Hawthorn	21.18 (144)	Geelong	21.12 (138)	MCG	94,796
1990	Grand Final	Collingwood	13.11 (89)	Essendon	5.11 (41)	MCG	98,944
1991	Grand Final	Hawthorn	20.19 (139)	West Coast	13.8 (86)	Waverley Park	75,230
1992	Grand Final	West Coast	16.17 (113)	Geelong	12.13 (85)	MCG	95,007
1993	Grand Final	Essendon	20.13 (133)	Carlton	13.11 (89)	MCG	96,862
1994	Grand Final	West Coast	20.23 (143)	Geelong	8.15 (63)	MCG	93,860
1995	Grand Final	Carlton	21.15 (141)	Geelong	11.14 (80)	MCG	93,670
1996	Grand Final	North Melbourne	19.17 (131)	Sydney	13.10 (88)	MCG	93,102
1997	Grand Final	Adelaide	19.11 (125)	St Kilda	13.16 (94)	MCG	98,828
1998	Grand Final	Adelaide	15.15 (105)	North Melbourne	8.22 (70)	MCG	94,431
1999	Grand Final	Kangaroos	19.10 (124)	Carlton	12.17 (89)	MCG	94,228
2000	Grand Final	Essendon	19.21 (135)	Melbourne	11.9 (75)	MCG	96,249
2001	Grand Final	Brisbane Lions	15.18 (108)	Essendon	12.10 (82)	MCG	91,482
2002	Grand Final	Brisbane Lions	10.15 (75)	Collingwood	9.12 (66)	MCG	91,817
2003	Grand Final	Brisbane Lions	20.14 (134)	Collingwood	12.12 (84)	MCG	79,451
2004	Grand Final	Port Adelaide	17.11 (113)	Brisbane Lions	10.13 (73)	MCG	77,671
2005	Grand Final	Sydney	8.10 (58)	West Coast	7.12 (54)	MCG	91,828
2006	Grand Final	West Coast	12.13 (85)	Sydney	12.12 (84)	MCG	97,431
2007	Grand Final	Geelong	24.19 (163)	Port Adelaide	6.8 (44)	MCG	97,302
2008	Grand Final	Hawthorn	18.7 (115)	Geelong	11.23 (89)	MCG	100,012
2009	Grand Final	Geelong	12.8 (80)	St Kilda	9.14 (68)	MCG	99,251
2010	Grand Final	Collingwood	9.14 (68)	St Kilda	10.8 (68)	MCG	100,016
2010	Grand Final Replay	Collingwood	16.12 (108)	St Kilda	7.10 (52)	MCG	93,853
2011	Grand Final	Geelong	18.11 (119)	Collingwood	12.9 (81)	MCG	99,537
2012	Grand Final	Sydney	14.7 (91)	Hawthorn	11.15 (81)	MCG	99,683
2013	Grand Final	Hawthorn	11.11 (77)	Fremantle	8.14 (62)	MCG	100,007
2014	Grand Final	Hawthorn	21.11 (137)	Sydney	11.8 (74)	MCG	99,460
2015	Grand Final	Hawthorn	16.11 (107)	West Coast	8.13 (61)	MCG	98,632
2016	Grand Final	Western Bulldogs	13.11 (89)	Sydney	10.7 (67)	MCG	99,981
2017	Grand Final	Richmond	16.12 (108)	Adelaide	8.12 (60)	MCG	100,021
2018	Grand Final	West Coast	11.13 (79)	Collingwood	11.8 (74)	MCG	100,022
2019	Grand Final	Richmond	17.12 (114)	Gws Giants	3.7 (25)	MCG	100,014
2020	Grand Final	Richmond	12.9 (81)	Geelong	7.8 (50)	Gabba	29,707
2021	Grand Final	Melbourne	21.14 (140)	Western Bulldogs	10.6 (66)	Perth Stadium	61,118
2022	Grand Final	Geelong	20.13 (133)	Sydney	8.4 (52)	MCG	100,024