

The MCC Library Record

Vol.9 No.2.
September 24, 2022.



Fitzroy v Collingwood
1922 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. Your Library instead produced retrospectives of the 1920 and 1921 grand finals for the opening rounds of 2021 and 2022. The MCC Library is glad to resume publishing an *MCC Library Record* for the 2022 AFL grand final. We hope you enjoy reading about the contest between Fitzroy and Collingwood 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 1922 the Victorian Football League (VFL) was in its 26th season. The competition consisted of nine clubs, necessitating a bye each round. The season began in the first 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 fourth season. Collingwood District won the VJFL premiership, when it defeated Essendon Juniors 8.10 (58) to 1.9 (15) in a spiteful curtain raiser to the Fitzroy v Collingwood VFL grand final at the MCG.

The Victorian Football Association (VFA), the state's other senior competition, admitted a new club administered by the Geelong and District Football Association. Called Geelong, but unrelated to the VFL side of the same name, it played at Kardinia Park. Prior to the VFA grand final bribes were allegedly offered to four Port Melbourne players to play dead. This attempt fell flat. It was reported by the Port players and Port won the VFA premiership 9.6 (60) to Footscray's 8.10 (58) before a crowd of 20,000 at Arden Street. The VFA would ban Footscray player Vern Banbury for life as a result.

The VFL played two matches against South Australia. Victoria 9.10 (64) defeated the Croweaters 5.12 (42) on July 8 at the MCG, but on August 12, South Australia bettered the Vics by one goal, 7.14 (56) to 6.14 (50).

In interstate club football, the Western Australian grand final was won by East Perth 7.13 (55) to West Perth 5.9 (39) at Subiaco Oval. It was the fourth of five consecutive premierships by the Royals. East Perth had also toured the eastern states in August and defeated Norwood and West Adelaide, who were soon to be South Australia's grand finalists. Norwood won its 15th South Australian premiership when it defeated Westies, 9.7 (61) to 2.16 (28) at the Adelaide Oval before 31,000 spectators. Tasmania's state premiership match was played at York Park, Launceston, where Cananore, the south premiers, 28.22 (190) defeated City, the north premiers, 9.8 (62). The North Hobart Oval, headquarters of southern Tasmanian football throughout the remainder of the 20th century, hosted its first Tasmanian Football League match on May 6, 1922.

The 1922 League Season

Essendon, the wooden-spooner of 1921, opened its new home at Windy Hill against Carlton, the previous season's grand finalist, with an 18-point win. The 'Dons, aided by four new players, spent the entire season in the top three places on the premierships table. Mid-way through the season Essendon hit a slump following some injuries, and Collingwood inflicted the 'Dons' first defeat of the season in Round 9. Fitzroy, which had also shown great form throughout the year, eclipsed Essendon at the top of the league table after Round 11. In Round 14 Fitzroy had a bye and toured Western Australia, where it was beaten by the Western Australian Football League side at Perth Oval, and the Kalgoorlie-based Goldfields Football Association team. Fitzroy suffered a form slump upon its return, and would lose to Richmond and Collingwood. The minor premiership came to a head in the final round of the season, with the top-of-the-table clash between Collingwood and Essendon at Victoria Park. A crowd of about 36,000 squeezed into the venue, however, an hour before the first bounce, a downpour ruined any hope of a skilful exhibition. Although the match was played in atrocious conditions the scores were close throughout, and as full-time approached Harry Chess was booted his fourth goal for the afternoon to place Collingwood four points up at the final bell. The Magpies were now firm favourites to win the premiership.

Fitzroy and Collingwood in 1922

Collingwood finished third in 1921, having lost to Carlton in its semi final, while Fitzroy had finished fifth and missed the 1921 finals altogether. The clubs, based in neighbouring suburbs, had been keen rivals ever since the Collingwood Football Club was founded in 1892. Within a few years the Maroons and the Magpies were established among Victoria's leading clubs – Fitzroy winning the 1895 VFA premiership and Collingwood won its first flag in 1896. The following year both clubs were inaugural members of the secessionist VFL. The clubs first met in a final in 1898, and before 1922 they had played off in the VFL grand final on three occasions – Collingwood winning by two points in 1903 and 35 points in 1917, while the Maroons won by 13 points in 1905.

The clubs' first meeting of 1922 was at Victoria Park, Collingwood. The Magpies led all day to win by 35 points. Fitzroy also lost the second encounter at their own Brunswick Street Oval, after the Magpies broke away early with a 6.3 (39) to 0.6 (6) first quarter. However, Fitzroy whittled down the lead to lose by 17 points. Collingwood finished the home and away season on top of the league table to claim the minor premiership, and a second chance in the finals. The 'Pies were hot favourites when they met the third-placed Fitzroy in the second semi final. Collingwood went into the half-time break with a two goal lead, but a sudden downpour changed the complexion of the game. The MCG became sodden and in the scramble that characterised the third quarter, Fitzroy put on 4.1 to the 'Pies' solitary point to enter the final quarter two goals ahead. While Collingwood got a goal back in the final term, the 'Roys held on to win by four points. The result kept Fitzroy's finals hopes alive as they would meet Essendon in the final the following week. Collingwood, however, was not out of it either, and could make preparations to meet the winner of the final in a grand final.

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|----------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| Rnd 7 | June 17 | Collingwood | 15.10 (100) | def. | Fitzroy | 10.8 (68) | Victoria Park |
| Rnd 16 | Sept. 2 | Fitzroy | 8. 14 (62) | lost to | Collingwood | 11.13 (79) | Brunswick St |
| Semi Final | Sept. 30 | Fitzroy | 6.10 (46) | def. | Collingwood | 5.12 (42) | MCG |

The 1922 VFL Grand Final

In contrast to earlier finals games in 1922, the grand final was played in fine and warm conditions. Collingwood got off to a good start with their first goal coming from legendary full forward, Dick Lee, and their second from his eventual successor, Gordon Coventry. Fitzroy then answered with two goals from Percy Parratt. Parratt had played 175 games for Fitzroy from 1909 to 1921 (he missed the 1918 and 1919 seasons due to being overseas serving in the army) and been a member of their 1913 and 1916 premierships teams. He had decided to retire at the end of the 1921 season but was persuaded to return late in the 1922 season when the Maroons were struggling with injuries to forwards and playing sluggishly after an extended mid-season trip to Perth. Parratt scored his first goal from a free kick and his second came when he raced through a pack of players, scooped up the ball and steered it through the goalposts. In general, the first quarter was dominated by the strong defences of both sides, Fitzroy holding a two-point lead at the first break.

Collingwood scored the first goal of the second quarter after rover Ted Baker shanked a Fitzroy hit-out. Fitzroy then seemed to be getting on top when full forward Jim Freake received a pass from Len Gale and booted their third goal. The ball spent a good deal of time in the Maroons' forward line during the second term but they wasted their chances and a "towering punt" from Gordon Coventry after he had taken a good mark produced a Magpie goal and gave them a five-point half time lead.

Fitzroy came out strongly after the break and were able to kick three goals in just six minutes. Freake booted the first two of these and a third came from rover Clive Fergie after he received a hit out from ruckman Gordon McCracken. Parratt then added the Maroons' seventh goal to give them a very handy lead. Collingwood fought back when Syd Coventry found his brother. Gordon registered the Magpies' first major of the quarter, but further goals to Freake and McCracken had Fitzroy in front by more than four goals. Collingwood responded with two late goals, but Fitzroy had kicked 6.4 to 3.2 during the quarter to hold a 15-point lead at the final change.

The early part of the final quarter was mainly a battle of the defences. Fitzroy tried to keep the ball on the flanks in an effort to ensure that Collingwood couldn't get back into the game. Fitzroy wingman Fred Williams eventually registered the first goal of the quarter but the Magpies answered soon after with a goal from their captain, Tom Drummond, which reduced the Maroons' lead to 11 points. A goal to Len Wigrift after a series of passes finally sealed the game for Fitzroy and in a fitting end to a magnificent career, Dick Lee kicked the final goal of the game – his 707th goal in 230 games for the Magpies. At the final siren Fitzroy emerged victorious by 11 points and secured their seventh VFL premiership.



Scenes from the 1922 VFL grand final as published in the *Australasian*, October 21, 1922. Number 17 for Fitzroy is Jim Atkinson while number 6 is Len Gale. Collingwood's number 3 is Edward Baker. [MCC Library Collection]

1922 VFL Grand Final Match Summary

Saturday October 14, 1922, 2:50pm

| | | | | |
|-------------|-----|-----|------|------------|
| Fitzroy | 2.5 | 3.6 | 9.10 | 11.13 (79) |
| Collingwood | 2.3 | 4.5 | 7.7 | 9.14 (68) |

Best: Fitzroy – Taylor, Fergie, Atkinson, Molan, Jenkin, Wigraft, McCracken, Parratt, Freake.
Collingwood – Drummond, Wescott, Baker, Tyson, G. Coventry, S. Coventry, Brown, Lee.

Goals: Fitzroy – Freake (4), Parratt (3), Fergie, McCracken, Wigraft, Williams.
Collingwood – G. Coventry (3), S. Coventry (2), Lee (2), Baker, Drummond.

Umpire: Jack Elder.

MCG attendance: 50,064

1922 VFL Grand Final Teams



FITZROY

Colours: Maroon & Blue

Coach: Vic Belcher



COLLINGWOOD

Colours: Black & White

Coach: Jock McHale

| | G | B |
|-----|---------------------------|--------------|
| 2. | Stan Molan..... | ..... |
| 3. | Clive Fergie..... | 1..... |
| 4. | Horrie Jenkin..... | ..... |
| 5. | Ern Elliot..... | ..... |
| 6. | Len Gale..... | ..... |
| 7. | Gordon Rattray..... | ..... |
| 8. | Bert Taylor..... | ..... |
| 9. | Jimmy Freake..... | 1.1.1.1..... |
| 10. | Len Wigrافت..... | 1..... |
| 12. | Chris Lethbridge (c)..... | ..... |
| 17. | Jim Atkinson..... | ..... |
| 18. | Clarrie Sherry..... | ..... |
| 19. | Fred Williams..... | 1..... |
| 24. | Gordon McCracken..... | 1..... |
| 27. | Tommy Corrigan..... | ..... |
| 28. | Steve Donnellan..... | ..... |
| 29. | Goldie Collins..... | ..... |
| 30. | Percy Parratt..... | 1.1.1..... |
| | Rushed..... | ..... |

| | G | B |
|-----|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. | Charlie Brown..... | ..... |
| 3. | Edward Baker..... | 1..... |
| 5. | Gordon Coventry..... | 1.1.1..... |
| 6. | Syd Coventry..... | 1.1..... |
| 7. | Eric Cock..... | ..... |
| 8. | Tom Drummond (c)..... | 1..... |
| 13. | Dick Lee..... | 1.1..... |
| 15. | Laurie Murphy..... | ..... |
| 16. | Charles Pannam..... | ..... |
| 18. | Harry Saunders..... | ..... |
| 19. | Maurie Sheehy..... | ..... |
| 23. | Harry Chesswas..... | ..... |
| 24. | Charles Tyson..... | ..... |
| 26. | Ernie Wilson..... | ..... |
| 27. | Reynolds Webb..... | ..... |
| 28. | Leo Wescott..... | ..... |
| 29. | Bill Twomey..... | ..... |
| 30. | Percy Rowe..... | ..... |
| | Rushed..... | ..... |

| | | | |
|-------|-------|--------|--------------|
| 1/4 | 1/2 | 3/4 | Final |
| 2 - 5 | 3 - 6 | 9 - 10 | 11 - 13 (79) |

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| 1/4 | 1/2 | 3/4 | Final |
| 2 - 3 | 4 - 5 | 7 - 7 | 9 - 14 (68) |

Fitzroy Playing Positions

| | | | |
|--------------|----------------|-----------|---------|
| B: | Atkinson | Jenkin | Taylor |
| HB: | Lethbridge (c) | Molan | Elliot |
| C: | Williams | Corrigan | Sherry |
| HF: | Parratt | Donnellan | Rattray |
| F: | Wigrافت | Freake | Gale |
| Foll: | McCracken | Collins | Fergie |

Collingwood Playing Positions

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| B: | Murphy | Saunders | Wilson |
| HB: | Tyson | Brown | Twomey |
| C: | Drummond (c) | Pannam | Wescott |
| HF: | Chesswas | G. Coventry | S. Coventry |
| F: | Baker | Lee | Cock |
| Foll: | Rowe | Webb | Sheehy |

1922 VFL Ladder (after the home-and-away season)

| | TEAM | Played | Won | Lost | Drawn | For | Against | Percent | Points |
|---|-----------------|--------|-----|------|-------|------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1 | Collingwood | 16 | 12 | 4 | - | 1178 | 922 | 127.8 | 48 |
| 2 | Essendon | 16 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 1147 | 1028 | 111.6 | 42 |
| 3 | Fitzroy | 16 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 1091 | 1003 | 108.8 | 42 |
| 4 | Carlton | 16 | 10 | 6 | - | 1232 | 1092 | 112.8 | 40 |
| 5 | Richmond | 16 | 7 | 9 | - | 1039 | 1129 | 92.0 | 28 |
| 6 | Melbourne | 16 | 7 | 9 | - | 1005 | 1131 | 88.9 | 28 |
| 7 | St Kilda | 16 | 5 | 10 | 1 | 1090 | 1164 | 93.6 | 22 |
| 8 | Geelong | 16 | 5 | 11 | - | 1080 | 1285 | 84.0 | 20 |
| 9 | South Melbourne | 16 | 4 | 11 | 1 | 1127 | 1235 | 91.3 | 18 |

The Road to the 1922 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 they could challenge the winner of the final to a grand final. This match would decide the premiership.

In 1922 Essendon defeated Carlton in the first semi final and Fitzroy defeated Collingwood in the second semi final. Fitzroy then defeated Essendon in the final. As Collingwood had been minor premiers they were able to challenge Fitzroy to a grand final match on October 14, 1922.

First Semi Final – September 23, 1922 (MCG)

Essendon 5.9 (39) def. Carlton 4.10 (34) att. 64,148

Second Semi Final – September 30, 1922 (MCG)

Fitzroy 6.10 (46) def. Collingwood 5.12 (42) att. 43,045

Final – October 7, 1922 (MCG)

Fitzroy 9.14 (68) def. Essendon 6.9 (45) att. 50,021

1922 VFL Grand Final Umpires

| | |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| Field | Jack Elder |
| Boundary | Wally Naismith Richard McKay |
| Goal | Jack Monohan Ernest Jenkins |

Curtain Raiser : 1922 VJFL Grand Final

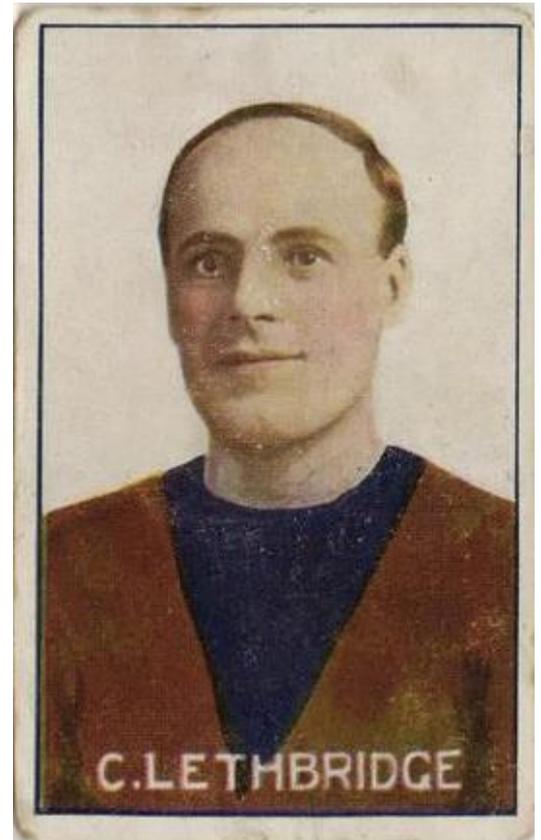
| | | | |
|----------------------|----|---|----|
| Collingwood District | 10 | 8 | 58 |
| Essendon Juniors | 1 | 9 | 15 |

The curtain raiser for the 1922 VFL grand final was the grand final of the Victorian Junior Football League.

Fitzroy's Captain:

Chris Lethbridge

Although born in Melbourne, Lethbridge grew up in NSW after his family moved to Wagga early in his life. He played for the YMCA in Sydney and was selected for NSW. He was recruited by Fitzroy in 1913 and made his debut for the Maroons in their Round 7 game against South Melbourne that year. Later in 1913, he was selected in the back pocket in Fitzroy's grand final win over St Kilda. He recorded 149 games for the Maroons from 1913 to 1922, and captained the team for part of the 1921 season and all of 1922. He did not play in Fitzroy's 1916 grand final win over Carlton, having been injured in the final the previous week. He did play in the grand final the following year, when the Maroons were defeated by Collingwood. A fine high mark, who was able to kick long down the middle of the ground, Lethbridge played three games for Victoria. After retiring as a player at the end of the 1922 season, Lethbridge returned to Fitzroy as their non-playing coach in 1925. At the start of the 1925 season the *Sporting Globe* reported:



“The announcement of his appointment caused genuine pleasure, for few players enjoy the popularity that Lethbridge does. It was in 1922 he led the Fitzroy team to the premiership and his fearless play as a half-back made him famous wherever the Australian game was played. Lethbridge is a renowned footballer, and he has the reputation of being one of the toughest men the game has known. A fighter of great courage, it is a wonder his fearlessness has never cost him serious injury, but he generally emerged unscathed.”

He coached just the one season for 12 wins and five losses, and led the Maroons to fifth place, failing to make the finals by just 0.6 of a percent.

Jack Elder's Final Game

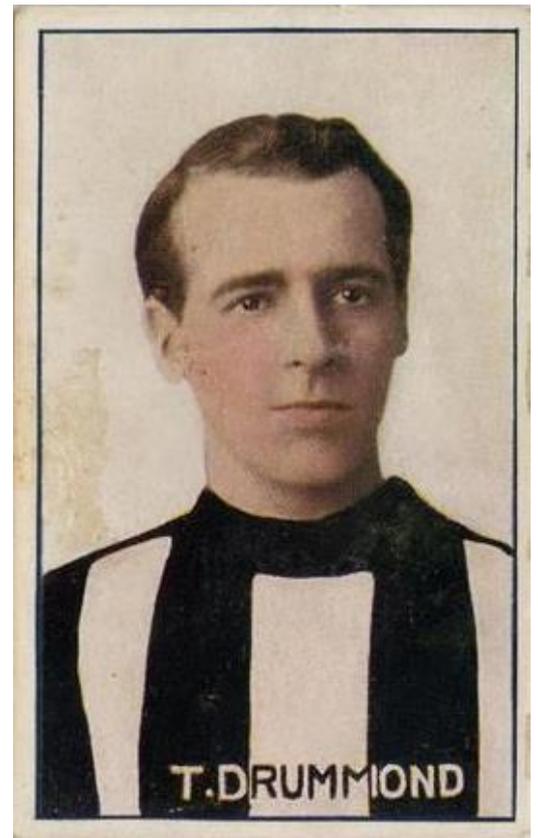
The 1922 grand final was the final game for field umpire Jack Elder. Elder officiated 295 VFL games as the central umpire from 1906 to 1922, including 39 finals and 10 grand finals. He also ran the boundary for seven games between 1906 and 1909. He was an umpires' advisor in 1923. Elder was an inaugural inductee into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 1996.

Collingwood's Captain:

Tom Drummond

Thomas "Chick" Drummond made his senior debut for Collingwood in 1916, having previously played for the Collingwood Districts side that won a flag in 1915. He always seemed likely to end up at Victoria Park, as his uncle Dave Drummond had played for the club in the 1890s. Although small and relatively lightly built, Tom was unfazed by his elevation to senior ranks. After making his debut in Round 5, 1916, against Carlton, he missed only one further game for the year. The *Winner* later commented that:

"He marks well for his height, handles the ball cleverly, and always turns his opportunities to the best advantage. He is a young player who improves with every game. He has a sure pair of hands, and rarely fails to hold the ball if he can touch it."



Drummond played mainly on the wing and in the late 1910s and early 1920s formed a very strong Magpie centreline with Bill Twomey Snr on the other wing and Charlie Pannam Jnr in the centre. Drummond was a sure ball-handler, especially in the wet, and very good at evading players. He was a hard working player, who was probably a little more consistent, but less mercurial, than his "flashier" colleagues Twomey and Pannam. Drummond played on the wing in Collingwood's 1917 and 1919 premierships and enjoyed a particularly fine season in 1921. This seems to have contributed to him being selected to take over from Dick Lee as captain in 1922. He totalled 94 games and six goals for the Magpies from 1916 to 1922 but then decided to leave the VFL to take up coaching.

He was appointed coach of VFA club Williamstown, but a delay in him obtaining a permit to play for the Seagulls led to the job going to former Magpie player Charlie Laxton instead. Drummond headed first to Benalla as coach, and then to Albury. Interestingly, both Twomey and Pannam had also left the club for big money coaching opportunities after the 1922 season. Drummond played some practice matches with the Magpies in 1926 but ended up at South Melbourne, where he played five matches alongside his old colleague Pannam, who was coaching the side. After the 1926 season Drummond returned to coaching in the country and was back in Benalla in 1932, leading them to a premiership.

The Coaches:

Vic Belcher (Fitzroy)

Born in Tasmania, Belcher's family moved to Victoria when he was young and he eventually joined his older brother Allan at VFA club Brunswick. He was recruited by South Melbourne and he totalled 226 games for South from 1907 to 1920. Playing as a defender and in the ruck, he was a member of South Melbourne's losing 1907 grand final side, and their 1909 premiership team. He was captain and coach of South in 1914-15 and 1917, including their 1914 grand final loss to Carlton. After a brief stint as an umpire in 1921, Belcher was appointed coach at Fitzroy in 1922, and steered them to the premiership. He coached them again in 1923 and 1924, finishing runner-up in 1923 and third in 1924. Belcher played for the City Football Club in Launceston in 1925, but returned to Fitzroy as non-playing coach in 1926 and 1927. He moved to East Brunswick as playing coach in 1928, and after a further stint as an umpire was elected to the committee of the Brunswick Football Club before being appointed coach in 1932.

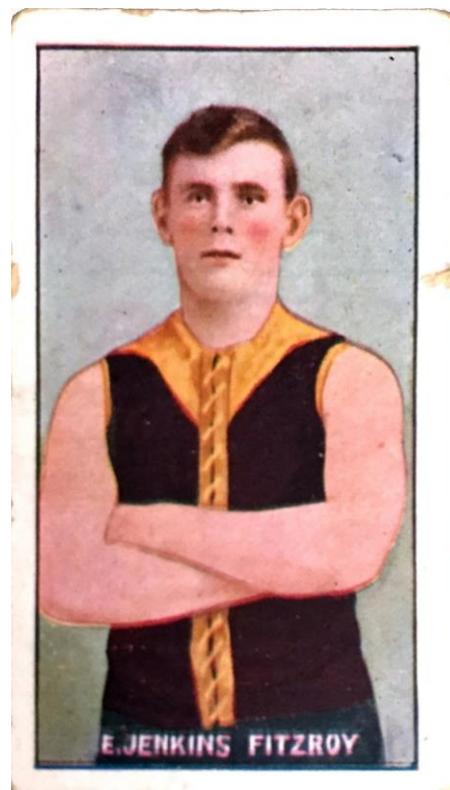
Jock McHale (Collingwood)

Arguably the VFL/AFL's greatest ever coach, McHale, pictured right during the 1920s, played 261 games for Collingwood from 1903 to 1920. He was a member of the Magpies' 1910 premiership team as a player and captain/coach of their 1917 premiership side. He then coached Collingwood to seven further premierships in 1919, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1935 and 1936. (Although he played one game in 1920 he did not play at all in 1919.) Overall, he coached the Magpies in 713 games for 466 wins, 237 losses and ten draws. He oversaw three enormously successful periods at Collingwood: 1) 1917–1922 (five grand finals in six years and two flags); 2) 1925–1930 (six successive grand finals and four flags); and 3) 1935–1939 (five successive grand finals and two flags). McHale was named coach of Collingwood's Team of the Century and was inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame when it was established in 1996. He was elevated to "Legend" status in 2005. Since 2001, the AFL premiership coach has been awarded the Jock McHale Medal, which honours his outstanding coaching record. The AFL has retrospectively made this award to each premiership coach since 1950, the year after McHale retired as a coach.



Did you know?

- The 1922 grand final was the final league game for Collingwood's champion full forward Walter Henry 'Dick' Lee. Lee played 230 games for the Magpies from 1906 to 1922 and kicked 707 goals. He was the club's leading goalkicker 11 times (1906-1910, 1914-1917, 1919, and 1921) and the VFL's leading goalkicker seven times (1907-1909, 1914, 1916-1917, and 1919). He was a member of Collingwood's 1910, 1917 and 1919 premiership teams, and captained the Magpies in 1920 and 1921. He played 19 games for Victoria, was an inaugural inductee into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 1996, and was selected on the half-forward flank in Collingwood's Team of the Century in 1997.
- Both boundary umpires and both goal umpires who officiated at the 1922 grand final had played league football. Boundary umpire Wally Naismith played 143 games for Fitzroy from 1902 to 1910 and 36 for Melbourne in 1911 and 1912, while Richard McKay (whose real name was McCabe) played 24 games for Fitzroy in 1897 and 1898, 73 with St Kilda from 1899 to 1903, and 51 for South Melbourne from 1904 to 1907. The goal umpires were Jack Monohan and Ernest Jenkins (pictured). Monohan played 171 games for Collingwood from 1897 to 1907, while Jenkins played 182 games for Fitzroy from 1897 to 1910.
- Fitzroy's 1922 premiership was the club's seventh, making it the most successful club in the VFL at the time. It had previously won premierships in 1898, 1899, 1904, 1905, 1913 and 1916. By 1922, Carlton and Collingwood had each won five premierships, Essendon four, South Melbourne and Richmond two and Melbourne one. Geelong and St Kilda, two members of the VFL since its formation in 1897, were yet to win a flag.



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.

Editor: Trevor Ruddell

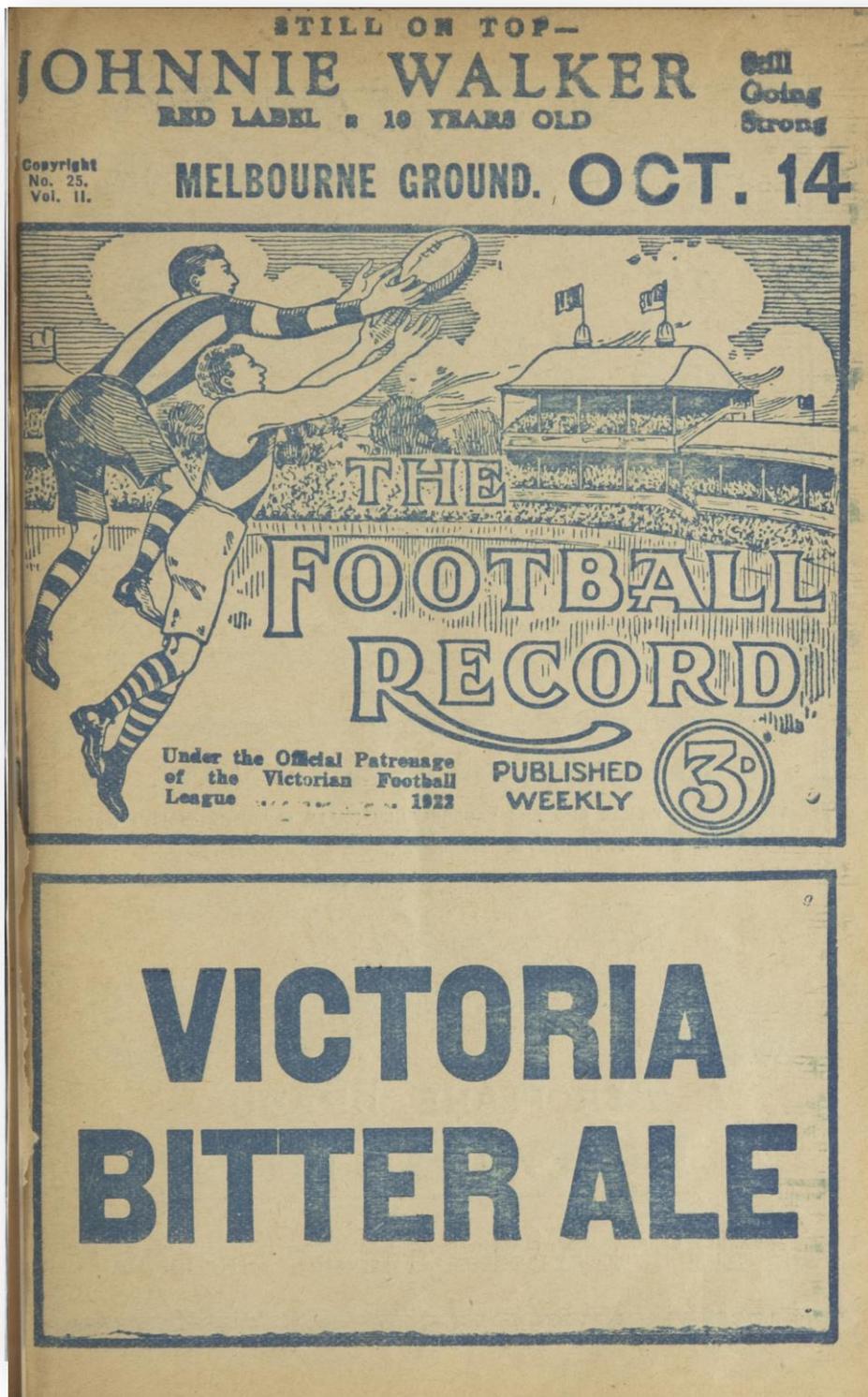
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Above: *Football Record*, Vol. 11. No. 25 [grand final], October 14, 1922.

Cover: *Australasian*, October 21, 1922. [MCC Library collection].



MELBOURNE CRICKET CLUB