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## Intro Music

Hello and welcome to Grand Final history, in this episode we go back to 1930, the 33rd season of VFL. 1930 was a very tough year for supporters, players and administrators as the Great Depression disrupted previously settled lives. Unemployment, already around 10% in 1929 would rise to 20%. Inner suburbs like Collingwood suffered even higher rates of unemployment, up to 31% by the end of the 1930 season.

In many households the question 'What's for tea, Mum?' was likely to draw an ironic response. 'Bread and duck ..... under the table' – meaning bread and nothing else – was all that was on offer.<sup>1</sup> On Christmas Day Sidney Myer, of the famous Myer Department stores, hosted Christmas lunch for 10,000 unemployed and destitute people at the Exhibition Building. There were five separate sittings, from 10.00am to 2.00pm, every child received a present and the tram to the lunch was free, if you showed your invitation, but you had to pay your own fare home.<sup>4,5</sup>

As unemployment increased, more people crowded into inner Melbourne slums, where life was especially hard. THE harsh conditions are revealed by collection of photos of slum life captured by social reformer F. Oswald Barnett who was a campaigner for improved housing. His efforts would eventually lead to the establishment of the Housing Commission. I will put a link to the photos on display from the State Library on the Grandfinalhistory.au website.<sup>2</sup>

League footballers and umpires would make a contribution to unemployment relief, along with all other employed Victorians, as the State government introduced a new tax, or more accurately, a new stamp duty, of one penny per pound of wages.<sup>39,40</sup>

There were moments of bright news during the year. The Australian cricket team was touring England for the Ashes and a 21 year old Don Bradman was generating enthusiastic attention in a record breaking tour. As Paul Kelly once said, Leeds was an event, Bradman was 105 at lunch, 220 at tea, and 309 at stumps on the first day in 3rd Test, and that was just one day of that special English Summer for the Don.

Another Depression sporting hero made their mark in November, Phar Lap, the Red Terror, won his first Melbourne Cup. Sixteen wins from eighteen races in the lead up had the four-year-old at the shortest-price odds of any favourite in the race's history. An extraordinary attempt to shoot Phar Lap three days before the race generated even more interest.<sup>3</sup>

Melbourne continued to grow and the newspapers reported the city's population, measured in a 10 mile radius from the GPO, exceeded 1 million people, an increase of more than 200,000 people since the early 1920's.

A small but significant landmark was also added to the city's transport infrastructure with the Spencer street bridge across the Yarra opening in 1930, now a convenient option for many players on their way to Crown Casino for Brownlow Medal counts.

You might be surprised to hear that Victoria had a referendum on prohibition in 1930. The compulsory poll was to decide if licensed premises should be closed down. The 1922 Liquor Licensing Act required a statewide poll every eight years and this was the first such poll. A successful "No Licence" result would see the vast majority of pubs shut down by the end of the year. Given the dramatic change, the "No Licence" position required a 60% majority.

The phrase "Sport and politics shouldn't mix" is well known but the anti prohibitionist campaign were up front in using Jock McHale, famous for both his long playing career as well as his coaching role at Collingwood. He also worked a full time job as a store-man at the Carlton and United Brewery in Bouvery street Carlton.

There were multiple large ads in the Sporting Globe in the weeks leading up to the vote. Adding to the intersection of Sports and Politics was the fact that the ads were authorised by the secretary of the Liquor Trades Defence Union. A hotel owner by the name of John James Liston, president of the Williamstown Football Club and later president of the VFA. The J J Liston Trophy was awarded to the best and Fairest player in the VFA from 1945 and is still awarded in the current VFL competition that took over the VFA.

If you are wondering, the Prohibitionist campaign failed but you might be surprised that 43% of the voting population supported the proposal, a long way off the 60% required but more than I was expecting. <sup>21,22,23</sup>

Around the world there were many events that continue to echo down the ages. In colonial India, Mahatma Gandhi began his 300km Salt March to protest the British Government's monopoly and tax on salt, an early, pivotal moment in the non violent protest campaign led by Gandhi for Indian independence.

Another initiative in the USA in 1930 had nothing to do with politics but we see its impact today in footy sponsorship and advertising. Colonel Harland Sanders founded the Sanders Court & Café in Kentucky which, in time, would become the famous Kentucky Fried Chicken or KFC fast food chain. A brand found on many footy jumpers, TV ads and occasionally eaten by supporters as they watch a game of footy today.

But not every day in 1930 was exciting nor eventful. On April 18 the BBC announcer for the 8.45pm news report said "There is no news" and played music instead.

But in Melbourne, no mater what time of year, footy was always in the news

Collingwood supporters picking up the 22<sup>nd</sup> January Herald were in for a disappointing shock, while in the Western Suburbs, cheers were ringing out. Syd Coventry, the premiership captain for the last three seasons had applied for, and been appointed captain coach of Footscray for £10 per week, a significant sum given the average weekly wage at the time was about £4 16/ and Collingwood players were all on the same rate of £2 10/ after the pay cut in 1928. The Argus reported that Coventry was one of eleven applicants for the job. There had also been loud and persistent rumours that both Coventry brothers were going to Northcote in 1930.<sup>9,10</sup> But it wouldn't happen, Collingwood refused to clear Coventry and he played the rest of his career with the Magpies, without any ill will for the short lived ambition to move to Footscray.

The February papers all carried news of the Prodigy from Albury, the young 19 year old, Haydn Bunton. Having starred in four successive premierships in the Ovens and Murray league it seemed nearly every club in the VFL wanted this budding champion. One club offered £70 up front and £10 per week, another £100 up front and £10 per week. Eventually it was Fitzroy who announced they had gained the services of possibly the best player ever to come from the Albury region.

Then it got messy. Too many offers and too many conditional acceptances and perhaps too many frustrated clubs when, in April, the Umpire and Permits committee, staffed by many of the club delegates who had been making similar offers to lure Bunton to their club, decided that Fitzroy and Bunton had breached the rules. Fitzroy had paid Bunton £222 up front (about A\$19,000 in today's value), which was illegal under VFL rules.

Bunton would have to sit out the 1930 season. He was eventually allowed to play for West Albury in 1930 and played in a fifth Grand Final but lost to Hume Weir. Several VFA clubs made attractive offers to Bunton during 1930, including Williamstown, who offered a brand new car, but Haydn would stay true to Fitzroy and we will more about him in the next episode and beyond.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

In what was already a big month of football news two landmark recommendations were debated at the delegates meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, no Valentine's dates in 1930 for these officials. The first proposal was to further regulate recruiting. The Chair of the Umpire and Permits committee, Richmond's Percy Page, explained that there were currently three forms in use, one for clearances, one for country players and one for interstate players. The recommendation was for a new fourth Form. Twentytwo of these new forms would be issued to clubs on July 1 each year. Fifteen forms could be used to recruit metropolitan players and the remaining seven for interstate or country players. Any player who signed the form would be bound to that club for 12 months<sup>15</sup>. It seems, because this was the fourth form after the three mentioned earlier, they would, in time, become known as the famous "form Fours" that were used in recruiting up to the 1980's when various versions of the draft were introduced. Happy for anyone to confirm or correct me on that.

Perhaps an even bigger innovation was the recommendation by the sub committee led by Melbourne's Gordon Coulter regarding player payments. All players except the captain to be paid a maximum of £3 10/. No lump sum payments were allowed. Clubs to pay a bond of £200 as a guarantee the new terms would be implemented. Any complaints to be investigated by a police magistrate.

Penalties to include forfeiture of the bond and premiership points and disqualification for life of any offending player. Repeat offences would see the clubs position in the league reviewed. Considerable discussion ensued. Perhaps ironically, given their history of salary cap breaches, the club that voiced the most opposition was Carlton<sup>15</sup>. There would be some fine tuning, payments were capped at £3 but if a player was unemployed a club had the option of paying an extra £3, but most clubs could not afford this additional payment.

Despite all his efforts to get the payment rules agreed, which would forever be known as the Coulter Law, his time as a delegate was over, the Melbourne club had decided to elect Harry Parkin as their delegate, replacing Gordon Coulter.<sup>16</sup>

And March brought further changes, the long awaited agreement of the leagues representing each state in the Australian Football Council to allow a 19<sup>th</sup> man as a substitute for a player at the discretion of the captain. WA was the only dissenting state.<sup>17</sup> There were some who were unhappy that Substitutes were not just limited to replacing injured players. What if a captain replaced a player who was having an off day and then there was an injury. And some clubs like Hawthorn declared they would only use the 19<sup>th</sup> man for injuries. The general consensus was that this was a long overdue innovation.<sup>30</sup>

Collingwood held their Annual General meeting in March and were the first club to be presented the E. L. Wilson Shield, an award created by the League for the premiership team to honour the inaugural VFL Secretary who had resigned in 1929 after 33 years of service. Given Edwin Wilson was also one of the founding committee members of the Collingwood Football club it was even more appropriate that the Magpies name be the first inscribed upon the shield. The E. L. Wilson Shield is still on display at AFL head office. It was somewhat forgotten after 1979 when there was no more room for premiership winners but refurbished in 2016 with space now for many more years. As well as presenting the premiership pennant and Wilson Shield, the premiership coach was given a Medal by the VFL President and was anointed the Prince of Coaches. Given premiership coaches today win the Jock McHale medal I am not sure if the medal given to McHale even had a name.<sup>18,19,20</sup>

There was sad news in March with the sudden death, at just 42, of Syd Barker, Premiership captain coach at North Melbourne in the VFA and Premiership captain coach at Essendon in 1923 and 24. He returned to North to play a season as Captain Coach in 1927. The Best and Fairest award at North is named after their popular and successful captain.<sup>24</sup> A memorial tablet was unveiled at Arden Street before the North Melbourne Essendon game on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August.<sup>44</sup>

Practice matches were in full swing by mid April and as always, promising recruits were being trialled, lists were being trimmed and transfer applications were being made and country leagues were complaining that VFL clubs were pirating players away from the regional centres.<sup>27</sup> Business as usual for the start of the season.

In the season previews Collingwood were, again, considered to have a strong chance for a fourth flag in succession with challenges likely from Carlton and Richmond.<sup>28</sup>

A new holding the ball rule was creating difficulties during practice games. In previous seasons when a player was tackled he was allowed to drop the ball, something that would be penalised in the modern game. As of Round one in 1930, dropping the ball was outlawed, the ball had to be kicked or hand-balled. The aim was to keep the ball in motion rather than letting it drop and a pack forming. <sup>29</sup>

One final change to the way the VFL operated was approved on the Friday before the season started. Henceforth the allocation of umpires would be done by an independent committee. A move that had been proposed for a number of years, the new committee would take the role away from the Umpire and Permits committee which was made up of delegates from each club. While the allocation of umpires to games, even by the Umpire and Permits committee, was at random, the pool of eligible umpires for each round was decided by these club delegates. This had created an impression that umpires were reluctant to upset clubs, fearing they may be dropped back to country leagues if, for example, they reported a player. The new, independent committee had no club ties, so this apprehension could be removed.

Just as in Season 1929 there were six new coaches taking on the job in the VFL. No change at Carlton, Collingwood or Essendon but at Fitzroy Colin Niven, in his second year at the club coming from Maryborough would be the playing coach, succeeding Doug Rigrose who had stepped into the role during the last season. At Hawthorn Albert Chadwick was out after one season and John Jiggy Harris had transferred from Collingwood. Hawthorn, like many clubs, were hoping some of the Jock McHale Magpie magic would transfer with him. North Melbourne would look to tough ruckman Johnny Lewis, in his 10<sup>th</sup> season at the club to take over as playing coach as they tried to mould a large number of recruits into a successful team.

The Saints moved on from George Sparrow, the only man to get them into a Grand Final way back in a previous coaching stint in 1913, and turned to champion full back Bill Cubbins as playing coach. South Melbourne had not been happy with their original appointment for 1929, Jim Caldwell, sacking him early in the season, they now went for former player Paddy Scanlon He had coached Footscray and Richmond seconds before returning to the Lakeside oval in 1930. Footscray would rely on Allan Hopkins as their playing coach

The 1930 opening round, played in ideal weather, was an identical fixture to Round One, 1929. Only the Fitzroy Footscray game had a different result, with the Maroons defeating the Bulldogs by one goal in what was a tight game all four quarters. Most of the games were close, In the grand final replay at Punt Rd, Collingwood continued their habit of beating Richmond, Carlton at home were just too good for Essendon and the only blow out was at the Corio oval where Geelong beat North by over 100 points. That game looked close at quarter time with Geelong ahead 3.3. to North on 2.2 but in the remaining three quarters North only managed another 5 behinds while the Cats kicked 15 goals. North Melbourne had nine players making their debut, it was a tough start to a tough year for North.

It was a record opening round in terms of attendance and gate takings. Over 120,000 people going to VFL games along with 23,000 at VFA games demonstrating an appetite for footy even in these difficult economic times.

It was also a tough day for new Richmond Recruit Hope Collins from Nathalia. He was the first ever player substituted under the new 19<sup>th</sup> man rule after he injured his leg. Ralph Empey, Richmond's 19<sup>th</sup> man was the first ever player to go onto the field as a substitute. But the day got worse for Hop Collins. He shared a house with Collingwood brothers Francis and Leonard Murphy and was getting a ride home after the game, with Francis Murphy driving the car.

They were involved in a crash on the corner of Collins and Exhibition streets. The car was overturned, and the players stuck underneath. Freed by passerby's Collins was taken by ambulance to hospital, followed by the Murphy brothers in a police car. Francis Murphy had bruised ribs, Len Murphy abrasions and Hop Collins injured his shoulder and had abrasions to add to his leg injury. Len Murphy missed Round 2, Frank missed Round 2 and 3 but poor old Hop Collins never played another VFL game. That has to have been one of the tougher debut games. (Hop did return to the Richmond reserves in June for his first game since the accident but never made it back to the seniors.)

And before we leave the topic of the new 19<sup>th</sup> man, it was the ever focused Collingwood football club that first provided their 19<sup>th</sup> man with what became the traditional dressing gown worn on the bench. The Argus reported on the innovation, noting the gown was made from thick wool and displayed the colours of a magpie. But no sponsorship logos in these early years.

Some of you might think there is already too much advertising at modern AFL games, with loud music drowning out conversations with friends. In 1930 during the third round spectators were showered with leaflets dropped from planes flying overhead. It was a promotion for the Aerial Pageant at Moonee Valley and if you got a lucky specially marked leaflet from the sky you could win a free flight.<sup>34</sup>

May also saw a forward looking article in the Sporting Globe addressing the issues of VFL clubs raiding country Victoria for players and creating tension with country clubs and leagues. The article suggested the following remedies.

1. Setting up an independent board of directors to run the VFL instead of club delegates who would be forever conflicted between their VFL role and club role. Only took about 60 more years and several expensive consulting reports for this to occur.<sup>35</sup>
2. Setting up country Zones for the VFL. This would happen in the 1960's more than 30 years later but the article pointed out the flaw that locking a region to a specific club might not suit either party

Round six completed the first third of the season and things were looking different to recent years. Carlton was the undefeated team on top of the ladder, with Melbourne just one game behind. Essendon and Collingwood had won four games and five teams were sitting just a game out of the four on three wins. But the season was already looking bleak for Hawthorn and North with just one win and South had lost six games in a row

Collingwood were not the dominant force of previous seasons in this early part of 1930. They unfurled their premiership flag in Round 2 but only just managed to beat Hawthorn, a team that only won four games in 1929. And rounds four and five saw the Magpies lose consecutive games to Geelong and then Fitzroy. Something that had not happened since 1927. Jack Worrall writing in the Australasian suggested the team needed “fresh blood”.<sup>37</sup>

Round 7 saw an experiment at South Melbourne’s home ground that would eventually be implemented but not for another 20 years. An electric siren was used to signal the end of quarters.<sup>38</sup> Not sure why it was not taken up sooner

By Round 12 the ladder was starting to look more familiar with Carlton still on top having only lost one game but Collingwood was making a move and they were now second with 9 wins. The Blues and Magpies played one of the games of the season, if not the decade in their Round 10 game at Princess Park, 40,000 people managed to fit into the ground to see a thrilling game with Carlton just finishing in front by four points. The Magpies were lifting their intensity and in their round 12 game at Victoria Park, Gordon Coventry, dubbed the Don Bradman of Football by Kickero in the Herald, broke his own goal kicking record, 17 goals off his own boot in a record breaking score of 25. 17 to Fitzroy's 13 goals 16 Behinds. The Maroon’s might have thought their score respectable but for the fact they lost the game by 73 points. Richmond were also on the move, they lost the first 3 games of the season but then won 9 in a row to move to third on the ladder. Melbourne were fourth on percentage also with 9 wins. Essendon were 5<sup>th</sup> two games behind and Geelong were three games out of the four but hopeful of still making a move in the last third of the season.

The Triennial interstate Carnival was held in Adelaide. The Victorian team had to make do without champion full forward Gordon Coventry, he was unable to get leave from his employer, Colourful Racing Identity Jack Wren, and had to withdraw from the team. Not an excuse that we would see used in the modern game.<sup>41</sup> While Gordon Coventry was not at the Carnival another famous name would be there. Roy “Up There” Cazaly had moved to Launceston in 1928 as captain coach of the City Club and in 1930 he would be representing Tasmania, the oldest man playing at the carnival at 37 years. He was still holding to his unusual routine of “drying out” before a game to improve his performance. He would have his last drink of liquid on Friday morning and not consume any fluids until after the game on Saturday afternoon.<sup>43</sup> Not a strategy that would be approved by modern sports science but it seemed to work for Roy “Up There” Cazaly. Victoria went through the Round Robin Carnival undefeated, beating South Australia in the final game to take the national championship for the third time in a row. Frequent rain and all games being played on the Adelaide Oval meant the ground was a mud heap which reduced the spectacle. Crowd numbers were down perhaps because of the rain and perhaps because of the depression, which resulted in a loss of £200-300 for the Australian Football Council. NSW performed better than expected which was attributed to the selection of Broken Hill players for the first time in many years.<sup>45</sup>

While the Carnival was on the VFL went into recess for two weeks. Fitzroy travelled to Tasmania for some exhibition games. Essendon went to Ararat but must have been in holiday mode because the Wimmera combined League team beat the Red and Black visitors. Perhaps the Essendon players were more focused on their visit to Seppelts Great Western Wine Cellars on the Sunday after the game.

Richmond and Carlton went all the way to Brisbane to play games in the Northern States to promote the national code. Their first game in Brisbane at the showground in front of 12,000 curious spectators was a draw.<sup>46</sup> The teams travelled to Sydney for a game on the following Saturday with 17,000 people seeing Richmond win, and another step was taken in the growth of Australian rules in the Northern states.<sup>48</sup>

Round 13 saw the new holding the ball rule that penalised a player for dropping the ball, mandating it must be kicked or handballed. repealed and the old law that allowed a player to drop the ball returned. The new rule was designed to simplify the often disputed holding the ball holding the man decisions that have been a challenge from the earliest years of the game. But this change had not gone down well with players, umpires, officials or spectators. The VFL had initiated a motion to repeal the law and it had been approved via a letter being circulated through all members of the Australian Football Council representing all states.<sup>42</sup> Unlike modern times, the VFL, at this stage, did not allow itself to set rules of the game on its own.

Just as the interstate Carnival in Adelaide had been marred by rain and a muddy Adelaide Oval, August saw significant rain and grounds were suffering. The Herald noted that Victoria Park was in the worst conditions seen for 20 years. Mid week games had been cancelled and even though the VFL had paused for two weeks to allow for the interstate games, there were fears of further delays.<sup>49</sup> As the competition resumed the consensus was that Carlton were safe on top of the ladder and the Collingwood, Melbourne and Richmond would stay in the top four. There was only the faintest of hopes for Geelong or Essendon to squeeze into the finals but supporters of those two clubs held on to faint hope.

But the last six weeks of the season did not go as expected. Round 17, the penultimate round had interest across multiple games as the four, which had looked so settled earlier in the season, was now open to a number of changes. Collingwood hosted Carlton at Victoria Park and a four goal win to the Magpies saw them take top spot on the ladder, displacing the Blues who had been top of the table since Round 2. Not only had the Magpies won but Gordon Coventry again kicked 100 goals for the season and later in the game took his career tally to 700, with many more to come. If you are wondering, nobody rushed onto the ground when Coventry scored his 100<sup>th</sup> goal. Richmond, Geelong and Essendon all level on ten wins were battling for fourth spot. The Tigers had the better percentage and a win over Melbourne saw them climb to third and both Geelong and Essendon lost their games, which allowed Melbourne to just hold onto fourth spot.

The final round would now decide all positions in the four. Carlton and Collingwood were level on 14 wins each but Collingwood had the better percentage. Carlton's last game was against 11<sup>th</sup> placed Footscray while Collingwood took on Essendon who needed to win for a chance to take Fourth spot, although their percentage was a problem. So in the battle for top spot the question was, could Carlton have a big enough win to improve their percentage to leap over Collingwood. The Magpies did what was expected, a comfortable 43 point win over the Dons. The Blues held Footscray to 3.8 and had 32 shots at Goal which might have been enough for the percentage booster, except for their dreadful accuracy. 10 Goals 22 Behinds was always going to be enough to beat Footscray but they needed many more goals than behinds to improve their percentage. Collingwood, for the fourth year in a row finished the season on top of the ladder with the all important, right of challenge.



Richmond lost their last game of the season to St Kilda but they stayed third, Melbourne just needed to win against the lowly Hawthorn to hold their spot but trailed all day at Glenferrie. The Mayblossoms could not make the finals but they could help shape them and they did, defeating the Red Legs. And Geelong, finishing their Season with five wins from the last six games made the fourth spot to play in the finals for the first time since 1927.

Carlton would play Geelong in the first Semi Final and after playing three premierships deciders in a row Richmond would have to face Collingwood in the Second Semi Final

The Permits Committee met on the Wednesday night after the end of the home and away season to count the Brownlow votes but were left with a dilemma when three players, Collingwood's Harry Collier, Footscray's Allan Hopkins and Richmond's Stan Judkins all received the same number of votes. One vote had been declared invalid because it only said Collier with no clarification if it was meant to be Harry or his brother Albert. Many thought Harry had played the better game that day and should have got that vote but the committee were firm in calling it an invalid vote so the tie was stuck. Umpires only gave one vote per game at this point and all three players received four votes. The committee had a long discussion on how to resolve the dilemma before passing the problem on the full meeting of the league<sup>50</sup> with a recommendation that no Brownlow be awarded for the year.<sup>51</sup> But the League President, Dr McLelland made the ruling that Richmond's Stan Judkins should win the award because he had played the fewest games<sup>52</sup>. The irony of this decision was that Judkins had been dropped for poor form, hence played fewer games but won the Brownlow.

But that was not the end of the story, there was a surprise development 59 years later. In February 1989 Harry Collier, was 81 years old but still full of the energy that saw him play 254 games, 27 finals and win four premierships, two as captain. So when he went up to give a speech at a the VFL annual dinner, where he was receiving a National Football League Merit award for a lifetime's service to football, he was not going to let the assembled dignitaries, VFL Commissioners and other guests off with the usual assortment of reminiscences and thank yous.

Harry Collier demanded to know, given the VFL had decided in 1980 to award Brownlows to all winners in the event of a tie, why he and all other previous tied winners had not also been awarded a medal. As he said, even though he played in the dim dark ages, he was just as entitled to a Brownlow Medal as Robert DiPierdominico and Greg Williams who were joint winners in 1986.

It seemed at the time this passionate call was destined to fall on deaf ears. But in April 1989 the VFL board of directors voted to allow retrospective Brownlows to the six players who had been denied on count backs after a tied vote. 59 years after the first Brownlow Tie and only two months after his unexpected by passionate speech at the League's AGM Harry Collier had achieved justice for himself and five other players.<sup>53,54</sup> But Harry was not done talking yet. In August there was a special dinner to present the six retrospective Brownlows, five players had survived and Nell Hutchinson accepted on behalf of her husband, Essendon's Bill Hutchinson. Harry Collier got so carried away with his speech and jokes that he had to apologise for almost losing his teeth. Compare Sandy Roberts tried to wind him up but Harry just said he would throw in an extra quid for going over time. It had taken him 59 years to get his Brownlow and he was going to make the most of every moment.<sup>66</sup>

Back to 1930. The First Semi Final was played on 20<sup>th</sup> of September. Geelong taking on Carlton. It was Geelong's eighth time in a semi final and they had yet to win a single one. Even in their premiership year of 1925 they lost the second Semi and relied on their Top of the ladder right of challenge to play in the Grand Final. The Cats supporters hoped and prayed, surely this year, the semi final hoodoo would be broken. But Carlton stood in their way, having finished second on the ladder with 15 wins to Geelong's 11. If the Blues had kicked a little straighter in the final round they might have been on top of the ladder. Geelong had only just made the finals when Melbourne lost to Hawthorn. The teams had met twice during the season with Carlton winning both games. But the Cats had been in fine form in the last third of the season after a slow start and they had to win a semi final at some point, surely.

In the previews in Friday night's Herald the Blues were favoured by Kickero and most of the panel of expert players, officials and coaches from other clubs.<sup>55</sup> There was an old superstition amongst some from Geelong that when the team's train passed the You Yang ranges on the way to Melbourne their courage dropped. Stan Thomas, an old Geelong player used to draw the blinds down over the windows to hide the view of the dread You Yangs.<sup>56</sup>

48,000 people were at the game and for the first quarter it looked as if the expected script was going to play out. Carlton had three goals on the board and Geelong could only manage a couple of behinds. The Semi Final Hoodoo was unfolding yet again for the Cats. And the Blues dominated the second quarter as well, all over the ground but wasted their shots at goal. Rather than putting the ball through the big sticks the Blues managed to kick twelve behinds in a row, frustrating players, officials and their supporters. They went into the half time break having been the better team but only leading by 15 points.

After half time it was Geelong playing the more settled football, they started kicking the ball long, Centre Half Forward Jack Collins kicked 3 goals for the quarter and The Cats were 9 points up. Geelong supporters were making their voices heard, the Blues barrackers were beginning to wonder if kicking 7.16 behinds was going to cost them. And the last quarter belonged to Geelong, another 3 goals and a strong defence stopping the Carlton attacks, delivered a well deserved 20 point win. In their 34<sup>th</sup> season in the VFL after eight separate attempts Geelong had won a Semi Final, they could look at the You Yangs with pride.<sup>57</sup>

The second semi Final was a replay or the last three premiership deciders Collingwood and Richmond taking up the challenge again. Collingwood had started the season slowly, according to their high standards, but finished well to take top spot. Richmond had been struggling since their trip north to Brisbane and Sydney losing three of their last five games. The Friday night Herald expert panel was heavily in favour of the Magpies to continuing inflicting pain on Richmond.<sup>58</sup>

40,000 were at the game, well down on the previous year. Those who were at the game saw one of the finest and closest semi finals in years. The day was wet, the play was hard and both teams looked like potential winners at different stages. After an even first quarter Richmond looked to have taken control, kicking seven goals in a row to lead at half time 9 goals 3 to Collingwood on 5 goals 5.

Jock McHale was renowned for his half time speeches, but he would also spend time during the break talking to individual players, giving them advice, noting what they had to change or, when required, giving a bit of a tongue lashing but in private, not in front of others. Then the team would gather for the collective message<sup>59</sup>.

Whatever he said at half time in the second Semi with the Magpies 22 points down, it had the desired effect. Collingwood kicked eight goals to one in the third quarter and it seemed that history was repeating. Halfway through the last quarter Richmond were twenty eight points down and some Tiger supporters would be forgiven if they had started to leave the ground, but four goals in seven minutes had them right back in the play. In the final minutes Richmond Forward Pocket Maurie Hunter, having already kicked five goals, had a shot to put the Tigers in front but missed. The Bell rang moments later, somehow a game that had looked all over half way through the quarter had turned into a three point thriller. Richmond's efforts to get to a Grand Final were over, Collingwood still had the opportunity for a fourth premiership in a row. They had to beat Geelong in the final.

For Geelong to win the premiership they would have to defeat Collingwood, holder of the Right of challenge for finishing on top of the ladder, twice in the Final and then there would be a Grand Final

Collingwood were confident of a win and to help their cause enthusiastic Magpie supporters were asked to bring megaphones if they had them and to congregate in the concrete stand, where Community singing would be conducted by a Mr Kinake<sup>61</sup>. Geelong were also ready to make a musical impact by bringing Scottish pipers to play bagpipes on the ground.<sup>62</sup>

There was also a chorus of rumours doing the rounds that the Magpies would deliberately lose the Final to have an additional game for the much needed money to be distributed to clubs. It was a hardy annual, dating back to the earliest iterations of the Amended Argus System of finals, the benefit of a second chance at the Grand Final for the team finishing on top invited sceptical reaction whenever that team lost, forcing a Grand Final game. Collingwood's president, Harry Curtis spoke directly to this gossip after defeating Richmond the week before saying "Collingwood is and always will be a club that has taken to the field to win on every occasion."<sup>63</sup> Collingwood were favoured by the majority of experts in the Friday Herald panel but there were a solid contingent that thought the Cats, who had barely scraped into the finals, could defeat the all conquering Magpies

42,500 were at the game, 20,000 less than 1929's preliminary final. And while Collingwood may have entered the ground with every intention of winning it was the Geelong Pipers swirling out the cheerful tunes and the Collingwood community singers were very subdued. The Cats led by four goals after the first quarter and even with something of a comeback in the third quarter, the winning margin for Geelong was still four goals. Geelong played a fast, game with accurate passing that left Collingwood undone.<sup>64</sup> A happy day for Geelong with their second 18 winning the reserves' premiership in the curtain raiser. It would have been a cheerful ride home on the train to Geelong and maybe the curtains stayed up as they passed the You Yangs.

Reduced of attendances at the finals was resulting in lower revenue for the league. While the gate fees for the home and away season was slightly up from 1929 the poor finals turnout saw the league about £2,000 down before the Grand Final which would mean a reduced payout to VFL clubs that were already struggling with a downturn in memberships. Tough times.<sup>65</sup>

Geelong's captain coach for 1930 was Arthur Coghlan, in his second year in the role. He had joined the cats in 1922 and missed out on their 1925 premiership, being suspended after the infamous 1925 game against North Melbourne at Arden street, for the remainder of 1925 and all of 1926 for escalating an all in brawl. Nicknamed Bull he was a hard hitting, big ruckman who could also hold down a key position if required. It had been a topsy turvy season for the cats but he had got his team to the Grand Final

Syd Coventry would lead his beloved Magpies into his fourth Grand Final as captain. Despite looking to leave the club at the start of the season he was still the inspiring leader he had always been. Coventry was confident of Collingwood's chances for their fourth flag in a row, interviewed earlier in the season he was clear that he expected Collingwood to be premiers again. No "taking it one game at a time", or "relying on the process" as stock answers to media interviews for Syd Coventry. He agreed it would be tough and predicted Richmond or Carlton as their likely foes but it would be Geelong they would have to overcome. And he had predicted they would be dangerous on the Melbourne ground as they had already beaten Collingwood at Victoria Park in Round 4. Although that was in Collingwood's slow start to the season. Coventry also dismissed the allegation that Collingwood was an old side. While he was 31 most of the other players were much younger than him, perhaps not even yet in their prime. Syd was also keen to give credit to coach Jock McHale, saying "No club has ever been served by a more zealous and conscientious official than McHale"<sup>67</sup>

But the ever conscientious McHale would not be at the 1930 Grand Final. The man who had coached Collingwood since 1912 had contracted pleurisy and influenza and was at home in bed all week. Somehow he had got through the game on Saturday but on the Sunday he arranged for some of the selection committee to meet at his Brunswick home to review the game and plan the week ahead. On the Tuesday club secretary Frank Wraith was given specific detailed instructions, The players were not to use a football on either Tuesday or Thursday night training. Jock was satisfied the players had too much football and were leg weary. There were critics but McHale took full responsibility and his instructions were followed.

McHale could only listen to the ABC radio coverage, an innovation only started in 1925 when Geelong won their first Grand Final. The commentators were former Geelong player Jumbo Sharland and ex Tiger Mel Morris

Taking the coaches seat for Collingwood was Bob Rush. A former school mate of McHale's, from Parade College and team mate in the first decade of the VFL Bob Rush was also a dedicated committeeman and delegate to the VFL. But Grand Final day 1930 would prove to be one of the most important responsibilities that he took on for his beloved Collingwood.

The Field Umpire was Robert Scott, for his second Grand Final in a row. He had started his career in the VFL in 1921 when he was 20 years old but done the country and Tasmanian games for many seasons before gaining a regular spot in 1929 and now had the confidence of the Umpires committee to take on the biggest game of the season. He was interviewed upon his retirement in 1936 and suggested a rule change that only took 83 years to be introduced. Scott wanted a rule that penalised players for being out of position when the ball was bounced. The 6-6-6 rule, at least after goals and the start of quarters requested by Scott in 1936, was introduced in 2019. It could be tough doing the country games, at one time Scott hired a motorcycle at Frankston to get to a game at Balnarring. During the return trip in the dark he came off the bike and was found unconscious on the road. From that time on for games on the peninsula he hired a pony and cart from former South Melbourne player Joker Cameron, then a blacksmith in Frankston.<sup>72</sup>

Kickero's review in the Herald praised Geelong for their efforts to go so deep into the season and he also noted that in the last game Collingwood, aiming for their fourth premiership would have known they would still have a chance if beaten but in the Grand Final the premiership was really at stake. In the end Kickero still tipped Collingwood.

Geelong had one change from what is now considered the Preliminary final, Ed Baker, after playing every game of the season, was out injured, into the team came Len Metherel. Originally from Subiaco in WA Len was in his first year at Geelong and had played the entire home and away season but missed the two finals.

Collingwood spent longer than usual over selection, making three changes. George Gibbs had injured his ankle and was out, ending his career. Leo Bird had played 15 games in his second year at Collingwood but he was dropped from the Grand Final team and, despite his father and brother playing with the club, he left to play with Fitzroy in 1931. The family and club connections were not completely broken though, Leo would still be able to win a 50 yard goal kicking competition for past players held in the early 1970's, more than 40 years after his last game at the Magpies.<sup>69</sup> Also missing out was Frank Kelly after playing 12 games in his first year at the club. In to the team came Bill Aldag, despite only playing two games. McHale wanted some strength added to the team, Bruce Andrew was also included. Two years earlier, a diving accident at a picnic to celebrate the 1928 premiership almost left him paralysed. Despite making it back at the start of 1929 other injuries ended that season after 4 games, He only played 10 games in 1930 but had been in the Semi Final win against Richmond and was back for the Grand Final. He was joined by Horrie Edmonds, Goal kicking decoy hero of the 1929 premiership, he had also missed the preliminary final but was also back for the big game.

It was a relatively small crowd of 45,000 for this Grand Final, almost 20,000 down on the 1929 match between Collingwood and Richmond. Perhaps a combination of the economic times and the fact that Geelong were from outside of Melbourne. Or maybe people were tired of seeing Collingwood in Grand Finals. The last time these two teams played in a Grand Final in 1925 there were 65,000 at the MCG.

No doubt for some it would be one of the best days in their life when their team won. But tragedy can strike any day. During the afternoon an 11 year old boy was hit by a motorcycle on Johnston Street Collingwood. His parents were at the Grand Final. A notice was put up on the Scoreboard and they rushed to the hospital but sadly the boy died

before they got there<sup>71</sup>. A reminder that there are many things more important than a football game

Because the reserves competition had finished a week earlier without the need for a Grand Final, the curtain raiser was a return to earlier years, like 1918 or before, with schoolboys taking the field. Middle Park defeated Footscray to claim the honour of champion Victorian Schoolboys team.

The weather was cloudy and sultry, the ground green, soft and perfect for football. It was time to decide the 1930 VFL Premiership

From the start of the first quarter Collingwood looked to apply pressure and stop the fast free flowing Geelong game that had been their undoing a week earlier. It was a fierce start but it was fair. There was no real breeze favouring either side. If Collingwood thought Geelong would quickly fade they were to be disappointed. The Magpies had a small lead at Quarter time, 3.2 20 to Geelong's 2 goals 5 17. The second quarter caught everyone by surprise. The mighty Collingwood Machine did not score a goal while Geelong were consistently in attack. Old Boy writing for the Argus said Geelong showed "Wonderful work everywhere but in the essential portion of the field and made Collingwood look second rate." But the one part of their game that let the Cats down was their kicking. They scored four goals but it could have been so much more. Geelong supporters were cheering loudly at the half time bell. Geelong 21 points up, 6 goals 10 46 to Collingwood 3.7 25. If Magpie supporters were feeling down, imagine how Jock McHale felt, sick in bed in his Brunswick home, listening on the radio, unable to do anything.

From Old Boy again, "The Collingwood room at half time was a very serious place. There was no repining, no blaming the other fellow but they all felt they had done their best and been defeated."

But Bob Rush was having none of that. Rush gave a passionate, rousing speech, lifting the tired players by reminding them of what McHale was expecting, what the club with all its traditions was expecting. Harry Collier called it one of the most inspirational speeches he had ever heard. The roar from the players as they left the room told anybody listening that the team was ready to make the game and history theirs.

The first substitution in a Grand Final saw Collingwood's 19<sup>th</sup> man Fred Froude, playing just his seventh game, replace the injured Len Murphy. Froude wasted little time assisting Gordon Coventry to kick the Magpies seventh goal. It was the start of a stunning turn around that no one had seen coming and no one would forget.

In possibly their best quarter of football across four dominant seasons Collingwood kicked eight unanswered goals, Geelong was left to watch the performance, almost like the spectators on the other side of the fence and could only mangle one behind. It was a masterful performance from the Collingwood Machine, in the air, on the ground, in the packs wherever the action was.

In the final quarter Collingwood took a conservative defensive approach, playing Frank Murphy as an extra defender but Geelong were spent. Both teams managed three goals but everyone sensed they were playing out time, waiting for the final Bell so Collingwood could celebrate an unrivalled triumph. Gordon Coventry picked up another seven goals in a Grand Final, following up the nine he kicked in the 1928 Final.

The hopes of Geelong players and supporters had turned to a crushing loss. It would be another quiet trip home to Geelong, perhaps once more the curtains would be drawn to hide those cursed You Yang mountains.

For Collingwood it was celebration time. Bob Makeham was awarded the best player trophy. Geelong's president Morris Jacobs expressed the club's congratulations to Collingwood, saying they took their hats off to a club that won four premierships in a row and also gave specific recognition to the Coventry Brothers. Geelong's Captain coach Arthur Coghlan also paid his respects in the winner's dressing room and was warmly cheered. And the VFL president Dr McLelland added his voice to the chorus of praise saying the players were a credit to their club.<sup>73,74,75,76</sup>

It was time to party in Collingwood, after celebrations at Victoria park on Saturday night the Collingwood Town Hall was booked for Monday night for dancing and speeches with more events to follow in the week. Eleven days after the Grand Final, when Jock McHale was returned to health, another celebration was held at the Town Hall in his honour. Brunswick who were the VFA Magpies invited their VFL brothers to Gala on October 25 which was followed by a weekend trip to cap off the good times, with just 5 months before it would all start again<sup>77</sup>, could the Magpies dream of a fifth premiership in a row? They already led the league with 9 premierships, two ahead of neighbouring rivals Fitzroy.

For anyone who was not a Collingwood supporter, the main topic of conversation was the need to revise the system for deciding the premiership. Immediately after the Grand Final the Age published an article reporting the majority of supporters wanted eliminate the Grand Final. No more right of challenge, just two semi finals and a Final. How this would recognise and reward the team that topped the ladder was not explained. But as much as Collingwood's achievement was recognised there was a feeling that the top of the table team had too big an advantage.<sup>70</sup> The Sporting Globe declared the folly of a system that allowed a team to be thrashed one week and then a week later they win a game and they become premiers. It declared the Grand Final nothing but a money spinner for the league.

But Old Boy and Kickero defended the current system as the best of many efforts that had been tried. Old Boy in the Argus provided an alternative explanation of the process. He said we should consider the premiership as a competition of two rounds. The home and away season was the first Round and the finals were the Second Round. The team on top of the ladder at the end of the home and away season was the winner of the first round. If they won the second round, that is the Finals, the premiership was decided. If not the Grand Final would decide the premier.<sup>78,79</sup>

But the voices for change were gaining traction. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of October Jumbo Sharland in the Sporting Globe published a scheme, from an enthusiast, proposing a new Final System with two semis, a preliminary final and a Grand Final. With no incentive for the top ranked team to lose a game and clarity on how many games would be played in the final series.<sup>81</sup> More on this issue next episode.

It was also the end of an era in the newspapers. The Herald's Kickero, Mr Tom Kelyknack was putting down his pen and retiring after 41 years of service. He had reported on Football in Melbourne since the 1880's and seen the game develop in popularity and sophistication becoming a professional game and a big business.<sup>60</sup> We will have to get by without his Friday night forecasts and post match reports in future podcasts.

In December Kickero was the first journalist to be honoured by the VFL with a presentation, that being a silver tray and crystal set<sup>82</sup>. Despite this honour and 40 years of service reporting the game from it's earliest times Tom Kelyknack is not in the media section of the Australian Football Hall of Fame. Another victim of the "recency effect" in Hall of Fame nominees, where it seems players and officials and journalists from the early decades are often forgotten. I have plans for a supplementary episode to celebrate the print journalists who brought the game to the masses in the early decades of the VFL. It will be available soon ish.

And just before we finish this 1930 episode it is appropriate that we review the extraordinary efforts of the Collingwood football club. They may have had a slower than normal start to the 1930 season and there were some suggestions that even though the club had won its fourth premiership the team was getting tired and not demonstrated their normal level of dominance. However, let us review some of their achievements. From the top

- Fourth premiership in a row and sixth Grand Final in a row
- Second time in a row they they had the triple of premiership, leading goal kicker and, albeit retrospectively, Brownlow medallist
- Scored 100 points or more in 13 games in 1930, a new record for the VFL
- Scored a total of 2,190 points in the season, beating their 1929 league record
- Top of the ladder for the fifth time in a row
- Gordon Coventry broke his own record, kicking 17 goals in the game against Fitzroy
- Gordon Coventry also broke the VFL goal kicking record, taking over from Dick Lee, ending the season on 708 goals across 12 seasons. Dick Lee took 16 seasons to set his record but did miss many games through injury.
- Over four seasons Collingwood played 82 games for 70 wins, 1 draw and only 11 losses, they had three Brownlow medallists and four leading goal kickers.

It was a good time to be a Magpie barracker.

Next episode we will look at the 1931 season with a new finals system, Collingwood trying to do even more and Haydn Bunton comes to town.

If you have enjoyed Grand Final History please leave a review wherever you get your pod cast from. The more goals we kick the easier it is for others to find the podcast.

If you have questions or want to leave feedback please email me at [info@grandfinalhistory.au](mailto:info@grandfinalhistory.au) or check out the [grandfinalhistory.au](http://grandfinalhistory.au) website or Facebook and twitter for more grand final history.



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