



MCC LIBRARY FACT SHEET

APRIL 11, 2024

AFL 2024 ROUND 5

MELBOURNE V BRISBANE

THE BIRTH OF THE BRISBANE LIONS

The Brisbane Lions came into being in 1997 as a result of the merger between Fitzroy (founded in 1883) and the Brisbane Bears. While Melbourne had survived a proposed merger with Hawthorn in 1996, Fitzroy, after a defiant struggle, was forced to move north.

Privately owned clubs were established in Brisbane and Perth in 1986, and the Brisbane Bears and West Coast Eagles were admitted to the VFL competition for the 1987 season. While the Bears had to struggle to find players, the Eagles had a huge advantage over them because of the home grown talent that was at their disposal. While actor Paul Cronin was the front man at the Bears, the money was provided by businessman Christopher Skase. To the amazement of most, because of the club's lacklustre original list, the Bears, coached by Peter Knights, won their first two games (against North Melbourne and Geelong). This was a false dawn, however, as they eventually finished second last with six wins and 16 losses (one of their victories after Round 2 being a five-point win over Melbourne in Round 5 at Carrara). Meanwhile, the Eagles finished the 1987 season in eighth position with 11 wins and 11 losses. The Eagles made their first grand final in 1991 (losing to Hawthorn) and went on to win their first AFL premiership in 1992 (the VFL became the AFL in 1990) and another in 1994.

After a number of years in the wilderness, the Bears made the finals in 1995, and again in 1996, under the coaching of Robert Walls and then John Northey, but the club's financial position remained weak, and when Fitzroy could no longer continue as a separate entity, the merger took place at the end of 1996. Overall, the Bears played 222 games for 72 wins, 148 losses and 2 draws.

Among the former Fitzroy players who moved to Queensland in 1997 to play with the Brisbane Lions were Scott Bamford, John Barker, Brad Boyd, Nick Carter, Shane Clayton, Chris Johnson and Jarrod Molloy. Brisbane made the finals in its first year, but slumped to last in 1998, which resulted in the sacking of John Northey and the appointment of Leigh Matthews. Matthews coached the Lions to their first AFL premiership in 2001, when they defeated Essendon by 26 points in the grand final in front of a crowd of 91,482. They then extended their run to three consecutive premierships with flags in 2002 and 2003, defeating Collingwood in the grand final on both occasions (by nine points in 2002 and by 50 points in 2003). In the third of these premiership wins in 2003, Brisbane fielded three Brownlow Medallists in their grand final team – Michael Voss (1996), Jason Akermanis (2001) and Simon Black (2002).

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Brisbane Bears had winning records over only three teams during their membership of the VFL/AFL from 1987 to 1996. One of these was Fitzroy, the Bears winning 11 of their 17 games against the Lions before the two clubs merged. The Bears also had a winning record over Sydney with 10 wins in 16 games, and against Fremantle, which debuted in the AFL in 1995, winning two of the three games they played against the Dockers.
- The records of the Bears against the other teams they played in the VFL/AFL were: Richmond (8 wins; 9 losses); St Kilda (6 wins; 9 losses); Geelong (4 wins; 10 losses; 1 draw); North Melbourne (5 wins; 12 losses); Melbourne (5 wins; 12 losses); Essendon (4 wins; 11 losses); Footscray/Western Bulldogs (4 wins; 13 losses); Carlton (4 wins; 13 losses); Hawthorn (3 wins; 13 losses); Adelaide Crows (2 wins; 7 losses); West Coast (2 wins; 13 losses; 1 draw) and Collingwood (2 wins; 13 losses).

PLAYED WITH BOTH

John Fidge was one of the first players to represent both Melbourne and Brisbane. Originally recruited from St Peter's, East Bentleigh, Fidge was a talented, but at times inconsistent, forward, whose career was disrupted by injury. At Melbourne, Fidge registered 32 games and kicked 54 goals in seasons 1984 to 1986. From 1987 to 1989 he was a member of Brisbane's first sides, playing 27 games and kicking 38 goals. Fidge played 69 games with SANFL club Glenelg from 1989 through to 1993, where he booted 316 goals. He led Glenelg's goal-kicking in 1990 (124), 1992 (91) and 1993 (56). During his years with Glenelg, he tried out with Essendon, playing one pre-season game and four Reserves matches in 1991. John's older brother, Ted, played 42 games and kicked 61 goals with the Demons from 1982 to 1988.

THIS ROUND IN HISTORY – ROUND 5 ON THE MCG

The two highest scores in Round 5 matches on the MCG are Hawthorn's 31.19 (205) against North Melbourne in 1988 and Richmond's 29.25 (199) against Fitzroy in 1980. Richmond's winning margin of 118 points in the latter game is also the greatest on the MCG in Round 5. The best score in any quarter in Round 5 matches on the MCG was in the above Hawthorn-North Melbourne match when the Hawks kicked 11.7 in the third quarter to extinguish any half-time hopes of a North Melbourne victory. The largest attendance for a Round 5 match was set when 90,508 people gathered at the MCG for the 2007 Collingwood-Essendon ANZAC Day game. This bettered the previous record of 87,549 for the 1996 match between the clubs at the MCG on ANZAC Day.

STATISTICS FOR MELBOURNE V BRISBANE BEARS/LIONS

Melbourne v Brisbane Bears/Lions by venue

	Won By Melbourne	Won By Brisbane	Drawn
Adelaide Oval	1	0	0
Carrara	2	3	0
Docklands	1	1	0
Gabba	8	15	0
MCG	16	4	0
Marrara	0	1	0
Showgrounds	1	0	0
Waverley Park	1	0	0
	30	24	0

Highest Score

Melbourne	22.21 (153)	Rd 18	1987	MCG
Bris. Lions	25.16 (166)	Rd 14	2005	Gabba

Lowest Score

Melbourne	6.10 (46)	Rd 12	1996	Gabba
Bris. Bears	4.6 (30)	Rd 5	1994	MCG

Greatest Winning Margin

Melbourne	95 points	Rd 18	1998	MCG
Bris. Lions	85 points	Rd 12	1997	MCG

Last Time They Met – Round 18, 2023, MCG

	Melbourne	Brisbane
Quarter time	6.2	3.3
Half time	8.3	8.4
Three-quarter time	12.4	15.7
Full time	16.9 (105)	16.8 (104)

MELBOURNE'S FIRST GRAND FINAL

Melbourne has won 13 VFL/AFL grand finals. Melbourne's first grand final was in 1900, when they defeated Fitzroy at the East Melbourne Cricket Ground by four points. The final scores were Melbourne 4.10 (34) to Fitzroy 3.12 (30).

STATISTICS FOR MELBOURNE V FITZROY (1897-1996)

Melbourne v Fitzroy by venue

	Won by Melbourne	Won by Fitzroy	Drawn
Brunswick Street	23	38	1
East Melbourne	1	0	0
Junction Oval	5	5	0
MCG	45	30	2
North Hobart	0	1	0
Princes Park	4	5	0
Punt Road	2	4	0
Victoria Park	0	1	0
Waverley Park	5	4	0
Western Oval	3	0	0
	88	88	3

Highest Score

Melbourne	27.18 (180)	Rd 2	1991	PP
Fitzroy	36.22 (238)	Rd 17	1979	Wav

Lowest Score

Melbourne	0.2 (2)	Rd 16	1899	Bruns
Fitzroy	2.11 (23)	Rd 14	1901	MCG

Greatest Winning Margin

Melbourne	131 points	Rd 2	1991	PP
Fitzroy	190 points	Rd 17	1979	Wav

Most Goals in a Match (10 goals or more)

12	B. Merrick	Fitz	Rd 16	1919	Bruns
11	R. Osborne	Fitz	Rd 18	1989	PP

FACT SHEETS ON THE MCC WEBSITE

The MCC Library's matchday fact sheets can be accessed through the MCC website at:

<http://tinyurl.com/mcccatalogue>

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