Their First MCG Encounter

The first VFL/AFL game between Melbourne and the West Coast at the MCG took place on Friday, August 21, 1987, in Round 21 of the Eagles' inaugural season in the VFL. A crowd of 21,048 attended the night game. Earlier, in Round 9 of the 1987 season, the Eagles had defeated the Demons by 16 points in the first VFL game between the teams at Subiaco Oval.

The Round 21 clash was an important one for both clubs because Melbourne sat in seventh position on the ladder with ten wins for the season, while West Coast was in eighth, also with ten wins but with an inferior percentage to Melbourne's. The winner of the contest would still be in the running for a final five position, while the loser was probably out of the finals' race.

Melbourne began the game strongly but poor kicking meant that their lead was only 27 points at quarter time (3.10 to 0.1). West Coast put three goals on the board in the second quarter, but Melbourne added a further four goals three to lead by 36 points at the main break (7.13 to 3.1). Melbourne increased their lead to 46 points at the final change (12.15 to 6.5) and eventually ran out winners by 61 points. The final scores were Melbourne 18.21 (129) to West Coast 10.8 (68). The major goalkickers for the Demons were Greg Healy (4), Robert Flower (2), Stephen Newport (2) and Brian Wilson (2). Ross Glendinning booted three goals for the Eagles, while David Hart, Don Holmes and Laurie Keene kicked two each. The Brownlow Medal votes all went to Melbourne players – Sean Wight (3), Steven Stretch (2) and Brian Wilson (1). Melbourne's win over Footscray in Round 22, coupled with other favourable results, put the Demons into fifth place on the ladder and ensured their first finals' appearance since 1964. The Eagles defeated St Kilda by 88 points in Round 22 and finished their inaugural VFL season in eighth place on the ladder with 11 wins and 11 losses.

Played For Both

Darren Bennett was a full forward who played for East Fremantle in the Western Australian Football League (WAFL), before being recruited by the West Coast Eagles for their inaugural season in the VFL (1987). Bennett's WAFL career had been curtailed by knee injuries but his good form late in the 1986 season, and in the finals, impressed the Eagles and he lined up in their side for the first four rounds of the 1987 season (kicking 7 goals). A serious knee injury then curtailed his career at the Eagles and he was released at the end of the 1988 season. He was subsequently picked up by Melbourne, where he played 74 games, and kicked 208 goals, from 1989 to 1993. He was a member of the Demons' victorious night premiership team in 1989 and leading goalkicker at the club in 1989 and 1990. He represented Western Australia in interstate football in 1990 and was second on the AFL goalkicking list that year, 11 behind North Melbourne's John Longmire. Strongly built at 196cm and 98kg, his safe marking and long, accurate kicking were features of Bennett's game. Injuries eventually brought his AFL/VFL career to an end and he played his last game for Melbourne in Round 14, 1993, against St Kilda at Waverley Park.

Bennett's professional sporting career was not over, however. While on his honeymoon in California in 1994, he contacted the San Diego Chargers and requested a tryout as a punter. After spending the 1994 season as a member of the Chargers practice squad, he was sent to the Amsterdam Admirals in Europe during the spring of 1995. After showing good form in Europe, he became the Chargers' regular punter in the National Football League (NFL). His impressive kicking saw him become a respected punter with the Chargers until 2003 and with the Minnesota Vikings in 2004 and 2005. He was selected to play in two Pro Bowl (All Star) games, named in the Chargers' 50th Anniversary Team in 2009 and inducted into the Chargers Hall of Fame in 2012. He is also credited with introducing the Australian Rules "drop punt" kick into the NFL, and helping inspire a number of other Australians to try out as punters in the NFL.

Did You Know?

In Round 1, 1991, at Subiaco Oval, Melbourne kicked 2.8 (20) against the West Coast Eagles. This is the lowest score by the Demons against the Eagles, and is still the lowest that West Coast has ever conceded. At half time the Demons had just 0.1 (1) on the scoreboard. At full time West Coast had scored 14.15 (99) and the Eagles' best goal kicker for the match was Peter Sumich with five. The Demons' two goals were kicked by Garry Lyon and Glenn Lovett. In this game Melbourne fielded two League debutants in David Schwarz and Allen Jakovich. Both would go on to be prominent Demons' players. Schwarz played 173 games and kicked 243 goals for Melbourne, and was adjudged the Demons' best and fairest player in 1999. He retired from AFL football in 2002. Jakovich played just 47 games with Melbourne but kicked 201 goals over four seasons for the club, and he led the club's goal kicking in 1991 (71 goals), 1992 (40 goals) and 1993 (39 goals). He was delisted after the 1994 season and sat out 1995 with a back injury. He managed one year at Footscray in 1996, where he played seven games and booted seven goals.

This Round in History – Round 17 on the MCG

The highest score at the MCG in Round 17 is 28.17 (185) by Richmond against St Kilda 14.18 (102) in 1982. The overall Round 17 record is 36.22 (238) by Fitzroy against Melbourne 6.12 (48) at Waverley Park in 1979. The most goals by an individual is 12 by two players: George Margitich for Melbourne against North Melbourne in 1931 – Melbourne kicked 18.15 (123) to win by 44 points – and Norm Smith for Melbourne against Footscray in 1941 when Melbourne kicked 17.20 (122) to win by 17 points. The overall Round 17 record is 13 by Doug Wade for Geelong against South Melbourne at the Lakeside Oval in 1967. Geelong kicked 21.13 (139) to win by 76 points. The highest score in a quarter is 10.6 (66) in the last quarter by North Melbourne against Melbourne in 1998. North kicked 22.20 (152) to win by 65 points. The overall Round 17 record is 14.2 (86) in the second quarter by Adelaide against Fitzroy at Football Park (Adelaide) in 1996. The Crows kicked 26.10 (166) to win by 99 points. The highest Round 17 attendance at the MCG is 85,831 on July 16, 1994, when Carlton defeated Collingwood by 43 points.

Statistics for Melbourne v West Coast

Melbourne v West Coast by venue

	Won By Melbourne	Won By West Coast	Drawn
Princes Park	1	1	0
Docklands	1	1	0
Marrara Oval	0	1	0
MCG	7	9	0
Perth Stadium	4	4	0
Subiaco Oval	6	15	0
Traeger Park	0	1	0
WACA	0	4	0
Waverley Park	1	2	0
	20	38	0

FACT SHEETS ON THE MCC WEBSITE
The MCC Library's matchday fact sheets can be accessed through the MCC website at:
http://tinyurl.com/mcclcatalogue

Highest Score

Melbourne	26.14 (170)	Rd 22	2000	Subi
West Coast	27.15 (177)	Rd 3	2013	MCG

Lowest Score

Melbourne	2.8 (20)	Rd 1	1991	Subi
West Coast	5.15 (45)	Rd 20	2008	MCG

Greatest Winning Margin

Melbourne	74 points	Rd 9	2022	PS
West Coast	108 points	Rd 2	2012	Subi

Last Time They Met – Round 10, 2024, Perth Stadium

	West Coast	Melbourne
Quarter time	4.3	2.1
Half time	7.8	6.1
Three-quarter time	12.8	9.8
Full time	16.9 (105)	10.10 (70)

Vale – John Todd
1928–2024

The Australian football public was saddened to learn of the death of Western Australian football legend John Todd on June 4. He played 132 games for the South Fremantle Football Club in the Western Australian National Football League (WANFL/WAFL) although his playing career was hindered by a serious knee injury suffered in his second season. However, he commenced a stellar player/coaching career in 1955 with South Fremantle which he led over various periods for 172 games, but, because of the injury, he was forced to stop playing in 1964. He also coached East Fremantle for 87 games and Swan Districts for 417 games. In 1988 and 1989 he coached the West Coast Eagles, leading the club to its first finals series in 1988. He totalled 721 games as coach with these four clubs. He took the three WANFL/WAFL sides to seven grand finals, winning six of them. He also coached the Western Australian state team on 14 occasions and the Australian International Rules side twice. As a player, Todd won the Sandover Medal in 1955, South Fremantle's best and fairest award in 1955, 1958 and 1961 and was selected in the All-Australian side after Western Australia's success in the 1961 Australian National Football Carnival in Brisbane. He was inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame as a coach in 2003 and was named as an inaugural Legend in the West Australian Football Hall of Fame in 2011. The Western Australian Premier, Roger Cook, when announcing that a state funeral would be held for Todd said, "He was a leader and a motivator whose legacy extends across generations – a prominent Western Australian who did our State proud."

West Coast's First Final

Both Melbourne and West Coast made the final five in 1988 with the Eagles finishing fourth and the Demons fifth. As a consequence, the two teams met on Saturday, September 3, in the elimination final at Waverley Park. The game, played before a crowd of 43,438, had an exciting finish with Melbourne 11.7 (73) defeating West Coast 10.11 (71). Murray Wrensted of the Eagles ran into an open goal in the dying minutes of the game but, unfortunately for his team, kicked a point. Melbourne went on to defeat Collingwood by 13 points in the first semi final and Carlton by 22 points in the preliminary final to gain a place in the grand final. In this game, the Demons were thoroughly outplayed by Hawthorn, losing by 96 points.