



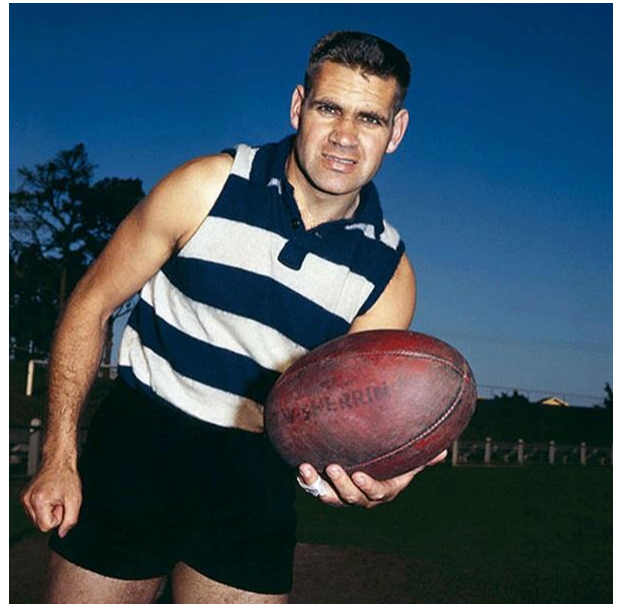
MCC LIBRARY FACT SHEET MAY 25, 2024

DREAMTIME AT THE 'G AFL 2024 ROUND 11 RICHMOND V ESSENDON

GRAHAM "POLLY" FARMER – ALMOST A TIGER

Many who regularly saw Noongar man Polly Farmer play would consider that he was the best of all time. Of course whether he was the greatest is arguable, but it is generally agreed that he permanently altered the way the game is played. Born in 1935, he began his senior football career with East Perth in 1953 and soon attracted interest from Victorian clubs. In fact he was signed by Richmond at the end of 1955, and actually crossed to Victoria in order to prepare for the 1956 season with the Tigers, but East Perth refused to clear him. Six years later, having won three Sandover Medals (1956, 1957 & 1960), he was cleared to Geelong where he played in the Cats' 1963 premiership team, and then captained the club before returning to WA in 1968 to captain-coach West Perth. In an article written in 2012, Western Australian journalist and author Nathan Jarvis put the case for Farmer being the greatest ever WA footballer:

“Consider this. Farmer was selected as the first ruckman in the AFL’s Team of the Century, the WAFL’s Team of the Century, the Indigenous Team of the Century and the respective Teams of the Century for the East Perth, Geelong and West Perth Football Clubs. He was the no-hesitation first ruck chosen in the Team of the Century for everywhere he played. He was a multiple best-and-fairest winner for every side he played in - 10 best and fairests in total. He received an MBE – the first time such an award was given to an Australian Rules footballer. He is an official legend in the Halls of Fame for both leagues he played in – one of the first 12 named as an AFL Legend. He won three Sandover Medals as the best footballer in WA and four Simpson Medals, an honour awarded to a Western Australian for standout performances in grand finals and state matches. He won a Tassie Medal for his performance in the 1956 Australian carnival. He was All-Australian three times. He played 356 league games in total – for 30 finals, 10 grand finals and six premierships. The teams he played for reached the finals in 15 of the 19 years he played.”



In October 1997, the then Western Australian Transport Minister Eric Charlton announced that the northern city bypass, as it was then known, “would be renamed the Graham Farmer Freeway to honour the extraordinary sporting achievements of a football legend.”

DID YOU KNOW?

The current Richmond Football Club was founded in 1885 and applied successfully for immediate membership of the VFA. The club joined the VFL in 1908 and reached the finals for the first time in 1916. Following the appointment of former Collingwood star Dan Minogue as captain-coach, the Tigers won their first VFL flag in 1920.

Essendon played their first recorded game in 1873, and became a member club of the VFA in 1878. They were the powerhouse of this competition during the 1890s, winning four premierships between 1891 and 1894 and experiencing a winning streak of 57 matches along the way. They won the first premiership of the newly formed VFL in 1897.

When in the VFA these clubs met 19 times between 1885 and 1896. Essendon won all these games between the clubs, and scored 150 goals to Richmond's 50. Since Richmond joined the League 1908, these clubs have met on 208 occasions, with Essendon winning 105 games, Richmond 99, and four matches have been drawn. The Bombers have averaged 89 points in those games to the Tigers' 86. They have met in just nine finals, Richmond winning five of those. There have been two grand finals, Essendon winning in 1942 and Richmond in 1943.

The following article is a summary of Chapter 6 of *Aboriginal People and Australian Football in the Nineteenth Century: They Did Not Come From Nowhere*, written by Roy Hay, which won the Australian Society for Sports History Book Award in 2022.

AGAINST THE ODDS - CUMMERAGUNJA

The story of the Cumeragunja football and cricket teams began at the Maloga Aboriginal Mission which was founded in 1874 on the New South Wales bank of the Murray River. Daniel Matthews and his wife ran the mission, taking a very strict approach to their duties. For example, regarding involvement in sport outside the mission, Matthews wrote the following in one of his reports:

For many years I have found cricketing, footballing, foot-racing, and athletic sports generally most injurious to the Aborigines. As a rule, it leads them into fast company, to drink, gambling, and every form of irreligion; and ultimately leaves the men a moral and physical wreck. For this reason I have strongly set my face against the men leaving the station for “matches” and “sports”, as they have a constant and increasing attraction for them, and the rising youth of our Missions.

Despite Matthews’ attitude, the Aborigines formed a cricket team. Then in 1888, following protests from residents of the mission, a new reserve was set up for the Yorta Yorta people by the NSW Government at Cumeragunja near Barmah. A football team was formed almost immediately and then a local draper put up the prize of a football if a team from Cumeragunja could defeat the Echuca football team. Initially they were unsuccessful, but by the late 1890s they were playing and defeating teams from all over Northern Victoria. A cricket team was also flourishing, and the football team was able to join the Nathalia District Football Association, going through the 1899 season undefeated. In 1901 Cumeragunja played a Ballarat team, drawing a bigger crowd to the game than a match between the Ballarat Association and a VFL team two weeks later. A *Ballarat Star* correspondent “Half-Back” wrote:

“...the visitor’s play was an education to some exponents of the game in Ballarat, especially in their facility in getting rid of the ball. In the language of the showman, there was no waiting or delay. It was evident that the aboriginals recognised that the ball was made to kick, not to nurse - and kick it they did. Their example might well be emulated by many of our local players, who have a great habit of attempting to break through two or three opponents in preference to kicking the ball, and thereby frequently do more harm than good.”

The team also travelled to the Bendigo region a number of times, in 1910 and 1911 playing matches against Eaglehawk and a district association team. After the First World War, Cumeragunja were too good for the other local teams and, after winning the premiership in 1921, were excluded from the league. Moving to the Western and Moira Riding League, they won pennants five times in six years between 1927 and 1931. Cumeragunja teams continued to play well into the twentieth century, despite increasingly harsh conditions which led to one of the first Aboriginal protests, 150 people walking off the station in 1939. Elsie Burrage, one of the children of teachers who were appointed to Cumeragunja in 1922, in later life recalled her experience of the days when she watched the team:

“The dark men were very good players. They were marvellous. They could run like hares. They used to play marking the ball - that sort of thing - and used to rise up you know. And they used to pass the ball right down the ground and they would shoot goals from any angle. The white men couldn’t stand it, I think.”

Sir Doug Nicholls, Fitzroy player in the 1930s, Aboriginal leader and later Governor of South Australia, was born at Cumeragunja and learned his football there.



The all-conquering Cumeragunja team c.1927.

DREAMTIME AT THE 'G

This annual fixture between Essendon and Richmond acknowledges and celebrates the role of indigenous Australians in football. The combined colours of Richmond (yellow and black) and Essendon (red and black) coincidentally match the Aboriginal flag (red, yellow and black) and are seen to add symbolism to the event. The Dreamtime at the 'G was first held on a Saturday afternoon in July 2005 as a part of National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week events but has been played at night since 2006. That year the Yiooken Award (pronounced yie-yoo-ken) was inaugurated and presented to the player judged best on ground. Yiooken means “dreaming” in the Woi wurrung language of the Wurundjeri people.

From 2007 the AFL has promoted an Indigenous Round which incorporated the Dreamtime at the 'G match. In 2016 the round was renamed the Sir Doug Nicholls Round. Since 2006 the Dreamtime match has been associated with former Essendon champion Michael Long's The Long Walk Trust, a charity inspired by Long's walk from Melbourne to Canberra in 2004 that raised awareness of social issues affecting indigenous Australians.

			Home Team		Away Team		Crowd	Yiooken Award
2005	July 9	Rd 15	Richmond	14.8 (92)	Essendon	9.12 (66)	49,975	-
2006	May 6	Rd 6	Essendon	13.17 (95)	Richmond	13.19 (97)	58,439	Dean Polo (Rich)
2007	May 26	Rd 9	Richmond	12.12 (84)	Essendon	12.20 (92)	61,837	James Hird (Ess)
2008	May 24	Rd 9	Essendon	10.12 (72)	Richmond	16.14 (110)	60,333	Nathan Foley (Rich)
2009	May 23	Rd 9	Richmond	12.13 (85)	Essendon	19.11 (125)	73,625	Jason Winderlich (Ess)
2010	May 22	Rd 9	Essendon	19.16 (130)	Richmond	14.11 (95)	64,709	David Hille (Ess)
2011	May 21	Rd 9	Richmond	16.9 (105)	Essendon	13.11 (89)	83,563	Trent Cotchin (Rich)
2012	May 19	Rd 8	Essendon	19.14 (128)	Richmond	15.19 (109)	80,900	Brett Deledio (Rich)
2013	May 25	Rd 9	Richmond	9.8 (62)	Essendon	13.13 (91)	84,234	Jobe Watson (Ess)
2014	May 31	Rd 11	Essendon	15.14 (104)	Richmond	7.12 (54)	74,664	Brendon Goddard (Ess)
2015	May 30	Rd 9	Richmond	10.12 (72)	Essendon	8.11 (59)	83,804	Brandon Ellis (Rich)
2016	May 28	Rd 10	Essendon	10.7 (67)	Richmond	16.9 (105)	56,948	Dustin Martin (Rich)
2017	May 27	Rd 10	Richmond	11.15 (81)	Essendon	10.6 (66)	85,656	Dustin Martin (Rich)
2018	June 2	Rd 11	Essendon	6.7 (43)	Richmond	17.12 (114)	81,046	Shane Edwards (Rich)
2019	May 25	Rd 10	Richmond	10.13 (73)	Essendon	6.14 (50)	80,176	Bachar Houli (Rich)
2022	May 21	Rd 10	Richmond	11.14 (80)	Essendon	7.6 (48)	70,226	Dion Prestia (Rich)
2023	May 20	Rd 10	Essendon	10.11 (71)	Richmond	10.10 (70)	78,300	Zach Merrett (Ess)

DREAMTIME NOT AT THE 'G

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 and 2021 Dreamtime matches could not be staged in Melbourne. Therefore, the Round 10 match between Richmond and Essendon that was to be played at the MCG on May 23, 2020, was delayed to August 22 for the Round 13 Doug Nicholls Round, and moved to Darwin's Marrara Oval. The evening was also commercially branded “Dreamtime in Darwin”. The June 5, 2021, match between the clubs in Round 12 was also relocated, this time to Perth Stadium and dubbed “Dreamtime in the West” or “Dreamtime in Perth”. Both were trumpeted as televisual and ceremonial successes despite their modest attendances. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last time a league match drew less than 5,500 to the MCG, as Marrara Oval had, was when 5,084 saw Melbourne play North Melbourne in Round 18, 1935. While Perth Stadium's capacity was unrestricted for its Dreamtime match, it drew a smaller crowd than all but the inaugural Dreamtime at the 'G.

			Home Team		Away Team		Venue	Crowd	Yiooken Award
2020	Aug 22	Rd 13	Essendon	10.1 (61)	Richmond	10.13 (73)	Marrara	5,401	Shai Bolton (Rich)
2021	June 5	Rd 12	Essendon	12.12 (84)	Richmond	19.9 (123)	Perth Stad.	55,656	Darcy Parish (Ess)

THE KEVIN SHEEDY TROPHY

Inaugurated in 1998, the Kevin Sheedy Trophy, a crystal vase, is for perpetual competition between Essendon and Richmond. It was established “...in recognition of Kevin's service for both clubs.” Sheedy was a three-time Richmond premiership player and four-time Essendon premiership coach, who has championed Indigenous footballers at all levels and was largely responsible for the Dreamtime at the 'G concept. The trophy was retired in 2013 but in 2014 it was revived for the games between the sides other than the Dreamtime at the 'G match.

THIS ROUND IN HISTORY – ROUND 11 ON THE MCG

The highest Round 11 score at the MCG is 25.11 (161) by Collingwood against St Kilda in 1995. The overall record is 25.29 (179) by Fitzroy against Geelong 8.8 (56) at the Brunswick Street Oval in 1944. The most goals in a Round 11 game at the MCG is 12 by Bob Johnson Snr for Melbourne against Hawthorn in 1933. The overall Round 11 record is 15 by Gordon Coventry for Collingwood against Essendon at Victoria Park in 1933. The highest score in a quarter in this round at the MCG is 10.5 (65) which has been achieved twice, both times by Richmond against Footscray. The first instance was in the third quarter of a 1970 clash and the second in the last quarter in a 1978 match. The overall Round 11 record for the highest score in a quarter is 11.5 (71) by Fitzroy against Geelong in the third quarter at Brunswick Street in 1944. The highest Round 11 attendance at the MCG is 87,653 in 1989 when Geelong defeated Essendon by 54 points. The overall Round 11 attendance record is 92,935 at Waverley Park in 1981 when Hawthorn defeated Collingwood by 46 points.

STATISTICS FOR RICHMOND V ESSENDON

Richmond v Essendon by venue

	Won by Richmond	Won by Essendon	Drawn
Albert Park	1	0	0
East Melbourne	8	4	0
Junction Oval	1	0	0
Marrara Oval	1	0	0
MCG	39	33	1
Perth Stadium	1	0	0
Princes Park	2	4	0
Punt Road Oval	22	26	1
Waverley Park	4	3	1
Windy Hill	20	35	1
	99	105	4

Highest Score

Essendon	25.20 (170)	Rd 2	1960	PR
Richmond	25.22 (172)	Rd 3	1982	MCG

Lowest Score

Essendon	3.4 (22)	Rd 8	1918	EM
Richmond	3.11 (29)	Rd 2	1911	PR

Greatest Winning Margin

Essendon	125 points	Rd 2	1960	PR
Richmond	74 points	Rd 21	1970	MCG
Richmond	74 points	Rd 18	1983	WH

Most Goals in a Match

11	Paul Salmon	Ess	Rd 19	1986	Wav
10	Dick Harris	Rich	Rd 3	1944	WH
10	John Coleman	Ess	Rd 18	1953	PR

Last Time They Met – Round 10, 2023, MCG

	Essendon	Richmond
Quarter time	4.1	3.5
Half time	5.7	6.6
Three-quarter time	6.10	8.10
Full time	10.11 (71)	10.10 (70)

DICK ROWAN – A FOOTBALL CAREER REFUSED

On May 4, 1893, the *Argus* carried an account of a recent meeting of Victoria's Aborigines' Protection Board. It in part read:

“An aboriginal from Coranderrk applied for permission to play football at South Melbourne during the coming season, but the board feared that the granting of the application might lead to numerous other similar requests, and refused it.”

The man whose footy career was summarily “refused” was likely Richard “Dick” Rowan. Born in 1861, he was a prominent footballer with the Healesville and Coranderrk clubs in the 1890s and played one match with South Melbourne on June 25, 1892. South was a dominant club in Victorian football, having been premiers in 1888, 1889 and 1890. Rowan's game against Williamstown did not count towards the premiership. The Town defeated South five goals to two before 2,000 spectators at Williamstown's scenic Point Gellibrand Oval. The football gossip columnist for the *Sportsman* wrote, “Rowan an aboriginal from the Coranderrk Station, played with the South Melbourne on Saturday. His kicking was first-class, but he kept clear of scrimmages.” Dick Rowan was somewhat of a local sporting legend in the Yarra Valley. As well as football for Healesville, Coranderrk, and Badgers Creek, he captained the Lilydale cricket team against the Richmond Cricket Club, rode racehorses and threw boomerangs competitively. He died in 1938.

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>

Fact sheets are prepared by MCC Library Volunteers David Allen, Eric Panther, Quentin Miller, Dennis Carroll, Ian Wilkinson, Gaye Fitzpatrick, and Edward Cohen, with MCC Deputy Librarian Trevor Ruddell and the assistance of Col Hutchinson of the AFL.

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