



FOOTSCRAY, VICTORIAN FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS, 1924 – A surging crowd of 46,000 enthusiasts saw the Association premiers win the exalted title by defeating Essendon in a great charity match on Saturday. As a result, the incapacitated soldiers appeal funds will be augmented by the splendid sum of £2,806 (1) Dolan (F) beats Hardy (E) for the ball right in front of goal. (2) Essendon's mascot looks dejected. (3) The two captains, Barker (E left) and McCarthy (F) tossing before the start. (4) The championship pennant given by The Sun (5) A bed-ridden Digger watching the match. (6) Father and son keenly interested (7) Another disabled Digger. (8) McCarthy (F, No. 1) seems to have taken advantage of a team mate's back to beat Becton (E) for the ball. (9) The Essendon team cheering their opponents before the match.



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100 YEARS AGO: THE 1924 CHAMPIONSHIP OF VICTORIA

This match, that pitted VFL premiers Essendon against VFA premiers Footscray, was organised to aid Dame Nellie Melba's Appeal for Limbless and Disabled Soldiers. Therefore, it was really a charity fundraiser that assumed great importance as the means to measure the strength of two rival football bodies. In the *Argus* of Monday, October 6, "Old Boy" (Reg Wilmot) stated that the Association had always been keen to play in such a game, but the League had not been willing "to give its rivals a chance to show their worth". Wilmot added that "it was not until Dame Nellie Melba made an irresistible appeal on behalf of the limbless and disabled soldiers that the League abandoned its policy of aloofness and consented to the match".

Wilmot noted that the fact that Essendon had been able to win the VFL premiership without needing to play a grand final had left a Saturday free for the game and that agitation for the inclusion of Footscray in the League had added interest; "...but the moment it was announced that the match would be for the championship of Victoria its success was assured."

Essendon captain Syd Barker won the toss and his side kicked to the Richmond end of the MCG with the help of a slight breeze. Essendon had the first goal on the board within a minute when Tommy Jenkins scored with a beautiful dropkick. After this, Footscray did most of the attacking but many of their attacks were thwarted by the strong Essendon defence. Making the most of their chances up forward, Essendon scored a second goal, again by Jenkins, before good play by Footscray resulted in goals to Vic Samson and Les Punch. An attack by Essendon toward the end of the quarter led to a goal by Charlie May, which put the VFL side four points up at the first break.

According to Wilmot, the second quarter was a repeat of the first, "full of brilliant football, with Footscray the better side." Nevertheless, Essendon's strong defending continued to limit Footscray's scoring opportunities and their only goal for the quarter was kicked by Tom Mullens. Essendon failed to score a goal during the second term but two late behinds put them in front by a single point at the main break.

Footscray asserted their authority after half time with clever handball leading to Punch scoring their third goal early in the third term. They continued to use handball throughout the term but some of their efforts lead to errors which Essendon failed to capitalise upon. The Dons only managed three behinds for the quarter and a late Footscray goal from Jack O'Brien put them up by two goals at the final break.

The final stanza saw Footscray get right on top after some early chances for Essendon only resulted in three more behinds, a shot by full forward Greg Stockdale hitting the post. Tom McHenry booted Footscray's sixth goal soon after and a "beautiful left-foot shot" from Mullens brought up their seventh. Another goal to McHenry put the game out of Essendon's reach and a late goal to George Shorten was, according to Wilmot, greeted with "hardly a sound". A third goal to Punch, from a long snap, gave Footscray victory by 28 points. After quarter time, Essendon had added 1.11, while Footscray had kicked 7.7.

Overall, Footscray was the better team on the day. Their use of handball to move the ball was a major factor in their success, although their technique was considered borderline illegal by some reporters at the time. Essendon's defence played admirably, but many of its midfielders and forwards were ineffective.

	Footscray (VFA)	Essendon (VFL)
Quarter time	2.3	3.1
Half time	3.4	3.5
Three-quarter time	5.8	3.8
Full time	9.10 (64)	4.12 (36)

Footscray (VFA)

Best: Samson, Laidlaw, Eason, Punch, McCarthy, Ford.

Goals: Punch (3), Mullens (2), McHenry (2), O'Brien, Samson.

Essendon (VFL)

Best: Watt, Fitzmaurice, Donaldson, Maher, Stockdale.

Goals: Jenkins (2), May, Shorten.

Umpires: J. McMurray (VFL) & J. Lehney (VFA) MCG attendance: 46,103

