

# AGAINST ALL ODDS

A PICTORIAL RECORD OF THE WESTERN BULLDOGS' HISTORY-MAKING SEASON 2016



INTRODUCTION BY PETER GORDON





**THE PRESENTATION:** The mountain has been conquered and the celebrations begin—some spontaneous, some organised. After the presentation of the Premiership Cup, players and coach pose for a team photo as streamers in team colours are shot from a cannon. This has become a modern AFL tradition.

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**BRILLIANT BULLDOGS (COVER):** 22 Bulldog warriors went into battle on Grand Final day, and they came away with the spoils of a hard-fought 22-point victory—a premiership cup that had eluded the club for 62 long years. Their 22 beaming grins represented the joy and celebration of not only themselves but everyone who had worked for, represented and supported the club through the decades.





**BRUSHING OFF THE BLUES:** Playing his first game in the red, white and blue, former Brisbane captain Jed Adcock celebrated by kicking a goal early in the first quarter as he helped the Bulldogs to a solid six-goal round-four win over Carlton. It was an encouraging response to the heartbreaking loss to Hawthorn (and the loss of Bob Murphy for the season) a week earlier. The win lifted the Dogs back up to second on the ladder. Adcock retired at the end of the season, having joined the Bulldogs as a rookie in 2016 after 12 seasons with Brisbane.



**WE WILL BE STRONG:** Luke Dahlhaus celebrates a goal against North Melbourne in round six. Dahlhaus was a model of consistency once more in 2016, burrowing under packs to rack up contested possessions almost at will. He regularly featured in the best players and collected seven Brownlow votes, a figure that undoubtedly would have been higher had he not missed five games with a knee injury. He had 23 touches and laid eight tackles in the Grand Final win.



**FIRST ONE'S A CHARM:** Having missed 12 weeks with a serious hamstring tear, Jason Johanissen made every post a winner in his first game back against Sydney in round 15, collecting 20 touches and laying four tackles off a half-back flank. Not content with that, 'JJ' sneaked forward in the dying seconds of the match to accept a pass from Marcus Bontempelli and calmly slot through a goal that gave the Bulldogs a thrilling four-point victory, one which put the Dogs' season back on track after a heavy loss to Geelong in their previous game.







**FISTS OF FURY:** The Bulldogs won 15 games in the home-and-away season, but victories didn't always come easily. Richmond led the Dogs early in the final term of their round 16 match and Easton Wood and his fellow defenders had to work hard to spoil the Tigers' party. Their efforts and some late magic from Jake 'The Package' Stringer saw the Bulldogs get over the line by 10 points.

**THE AGONY:** Sadly, the Bulldogs' serious injury woes did not end with Bob Murphy and Jason Johannisen in rounds three and four. In round 18, a dirty Saturday night for the Dogs ended not only with an unexpected loss to the Saints but also the loss of Jack Redpath and Mitch Wallis to long-term leg injuries. Redpath suffered his third ruptured ACL while Wallis sustained breaks to both his fibula and tibia in a horrific accident in the last quarter. Wallis' immense pain was immediately obvious and lasted until well after the end of the match, his haunting screams in the rooms moving many of his teammates to tears.







**THE MOMENT:** With five minutes remaining in the last quarter, the Bulldogs led by just nine points and the Grand Final hung in the balance. Sydney superstar Lance Franklin grabbed a loose ball near the centre of the ground, ready to launch the Swans forward. Enter Dale Morris, whose defensive efforts all day had been heroic. "Mozz" dragged Franklin to the ground, the ball spilling free to be picked up by Tom Boyd. Franklin could only look on helplessly as Boyd launched a long bomb from inside the centre square. The ball pitched in the goal-square, seemingly pausing for dramatic effect, before bisecting the goalposts, virtually sealing a Bulldogs premiership.





**SIREN:** The final siren has sounded and a 62-drought has been broken. Caleb Daniel—having already removed his helmet, a permanent part of his game-day uniform since he was nine years old—joins Shane Biggs, Marcus Bontempelli, Lachie Hunter, Tory Dickson and the rest of the pack in premiership celebration.



**VICTORY FROLIC:** About three quarters of the way through the players' victory lap, skipper Easton Wood took a sudden turn away from the boundary line and made a beeline for the club logo on the 50-metre arc. His sprint ended as he collapsed joyously on to the turf logo, flapping his arms and legs from side to side, throwing red, white and blue streamers into the air like a child in heaven. What was a private captain's moment of celebration was witnessed and cheered by thousands of euphoric fans in the stands.





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**T**he story of the 2016 AFL season is one for the ages, with the Western Bulldogs breaking a premiership drought that stretched 62 years. Players, coaches and fans alike have endured countless broken dreams since the Dogs last triumphed in 1954, as they have fallen agonisingly short of an elusive flag many times over.

In 2016, as the club formerly known as Footscray garnered unprecedented support and goodwill from across the nation, the long wait for a premiership finally ended. But the remarkable aspect of the Western Bulldogs' 2016 season is that a flag rarely seemed possible at any stage along the way, with injury after injury presenting seemingly insurmountable hurdles to the Dogs' aim for another grab of football's silverware.

*Against All Odds* tells the story, through photographs selected from official AFL Media, and from the Bulldogs' collection, of the Bulldogs' 'impossible' season, from the hard slog of pre-season training on sweltering summer days, to the moment coach Luke Beveridge and captains Easton Wood and Bob Murphy lifted the premiership cup—at last—on Grand Final day.

Chronicling a tale of heartache, hope and ultimately unbridled joy, *Against All Odds* captures the defining moments of the Bulldogs' 2016 season—including a finals campaign that saw them as underdogs in every final against more experienced teams week after week, from coast to coast, as they overcame each and every setback to achieve a goal that many, if not most, thought impossible.

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