

OLD FOES WENT TOE - TO - TOE



Carlton is back in the finals for the first time in a decade, but for many of the navy Blue persuasion, the club is simply back where it belongs as a feature act of the September action.

The recently released book *Brilliance and Brutality* by **DAN EDDY** recounts an era when the Blues were at their best, 1972 and 1973, when they traded blows with fierce rival Richmond in consecutive Grand Finals.

Carlton entered the 1972 Grand Final as a rank outsider, having lost three times and drawn another against the Tigers.

But something extraordinary happened on that afternoon at the MCG.

This excerpt from the book describes how the Blues piled on goal after goal in a magical first half of football. ▶

For the Blues, the goals kept coming, with their last 10 coming at the rate of one every three minutes.

At half-time, they led by 45 points, 18.6 (114) to 10.9 (69), and the crowd – well, half of them – offered a standing ovation to what had been the most breathtaking hour in Grand Final history.

Only Melbourne, in the 1941 Grand Final, had led by more at the main break – 57 points over Essendon.

Only a late ankle injury to defender Vin Waite could temper Carlton's jubilation as they headed for the dressing rooms and a well-earned rest.

Ruckman Peter ('Percy') Jones later marvelled, "It was amazing, just amazing. It hit you that we were having an afternoon out, just a day out, where everything fell into place. Everything went our way. Everything was just clicking – the team was playing at its optimum."

He knew his teammates would not drop back a gear in the second half. "You could sense around the rooms. This was not the mood of a side that would succumb like Magpies," a not-so-subtle dig at the 1970 collapse by Collingwood, which had led by 44 points, but succumbed to the Blues.

in reference to them beating us in that Grand Final."

Carlton's scoring spree throughout that first half has never been equalled. In the previous 74 Grand Finals, the most any team had scored in the first half was Melbourne's 11.9 (75) in 1941; in the 52 Grand Finals played between 1973-2022, the highest first-half score has been 12.10 (82), by Hawthorn in 1983.

As a standalone quarter, Carlton's second-term blitz of 10.2 (62) remains the most scored in the second quarter of a Grand Final; the next best is, ironically, Richmond's 8.3 (51) in 1973.

Of every quarter played in Grand Final history, Carlton's second term has only been topped twice: Essendon's third quarter in 1946 (11.8) and the Bombers' fourth term in 1985 (11.3).

Yet, despite conceding the highest ever half-time score, Richmond's tally of 10.9 (69) would have seen it in front in 111 of the 127 Grand Finals played throughout League history.

As a combined tally, the 28.15 (183) scored by Carlton and Richmond to half-time remains the most by opposing Grand Final teams. The next closest is 20.16 (136) between Melbourne (10.10) and Collingwood (10.6) in 1939.

Umpire Bill Deller said he was amazed by how few field bounces he had to make. "Both sides just attacked with everything and it went from end to end like greased lightning. They could almost have played the game without me.

"Footy was really starting to move by the early 1970s. Every team had good goalkickers and were playing an attacking style, meaning high scoring was the way it was at that time. But we weren't expecting what took place that day – 28

goals in the first half! Once you're out there though, you've just got to get through it somehow."

The two boundary umpires that day were Kevin Mitchell (one of his eight Grand Finals) and Geoff Lee (two), who, according to Deller, were top professional runners and very fit people.

"Yet, by the last quarter, they were going up and down in the one spot and were both

cramping. Fatigue had me by that time, too. I said afterwards, if I had have known beforehand how the game was going to be played, I don't know whether I would have been able to get through it.



BUSINESS MATTERS: Richmond coach Tom Hafey with club secretary Alan Schwab.

"Because in high-scoring games, there is a lot of running for an umpire and you'd be really spent by the end – there'd be nothing left in the tank. I was in that situation by three-quarter time!" he laughed.

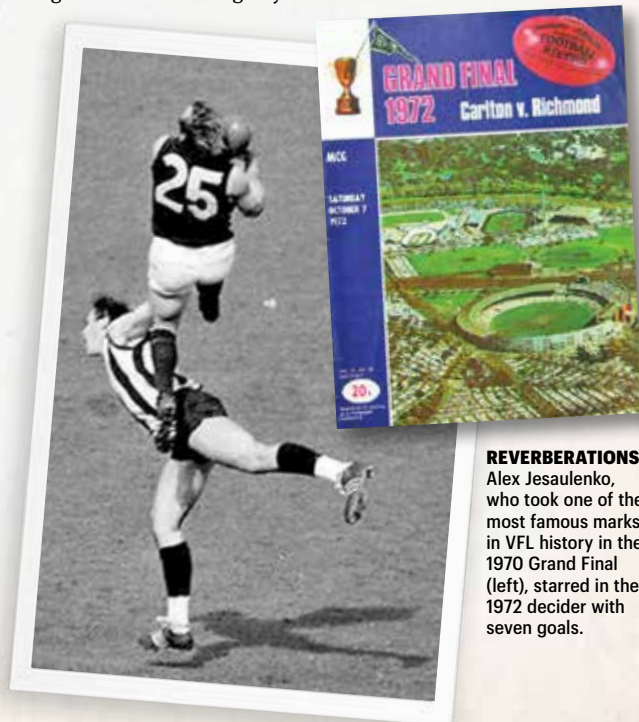
"You look at the scoreboard and see your name up there and you think, 'I don't want to have to go off on a stretcher in the last quarter.'"

For Cameron Schwab, son of Richmond secretary, Alan, the 1972 decider was his first as a spectator. By the second quarter, a day of dreams had become a nightmare for the eight-year-old.



INTIMIDATING: Carlton captain John Nicholls leads the Blues on to the MCG for the 1972 Grand Final.

Rover Adrian Gallagher recalled: "It wasn't that we were satisfied with it or that we were up, we knew they'd keep on attacking us and we had to keep on attacking them, and that was the whole philosophy of the day – we were going to outscore Richmond. At half-time we were in there all yelling at each other, 'We're going to outscore them, no matter what,' and 'Remember '69,'



REVERBERATIONS: Alex Jesaulenko, who took one of the most famous marks in VFL history in the 1970 Grand Final (left), starred in the 1972 decider with seven goals.

“I just remember sitting through the game crying; I bawled my eyes out. I went with my mum’s dad, who was English and didn’t really follow the footy, and he was just laughing at me. He couldn’t believe how much the football result was affecting me.

“I just cried and cried and cried. It was an extraordinary game, it really was. I mean, the amount of goals being kicked ... there wasn’t one player kicking 11, there were all different blokes kicking them. The Carlton players just kept coming and coming and we couldn’t stop it. And really good players of ours looked shithouse.”

Richmond’s Barry Richardson said it was the most helpless quarter he ever played in: “Look, it’s not easy to play in. It’s like you’re almost better off losing the preliminary final and not getting to the Grand Final, because once you’re in a Grand Final it’s really tough.

“You’ve got to be very careful about focusing on the result rather than the process. I think because we’re all taught to be so positive, when you’re about to play in a Grand Final, you go to sleep at night imagining yourself running around the ground brandishing the cup. You don’t ever think of the alternative, because that’s negative thinking – it would mean you’d go into the game non-positive.

“So, when it actually hits you that, ‘Shit, we’ve just blown this’, it’s a big loss to comprehend. That’s why you see players slumped on the ground, no good.

“In my life, I’ve been very lucky: I played in three winning ones and one losing one at Richmond. I also coached Old Xavs to three premierships and one losing one (in the Victorian

Amateur Football Association). I love the winning, but the losing is no bloody good. Particularly when you go in as favourites.”

Once Carlton got into the heads of the Richmond players, the game became as much about the mind as it did the body.

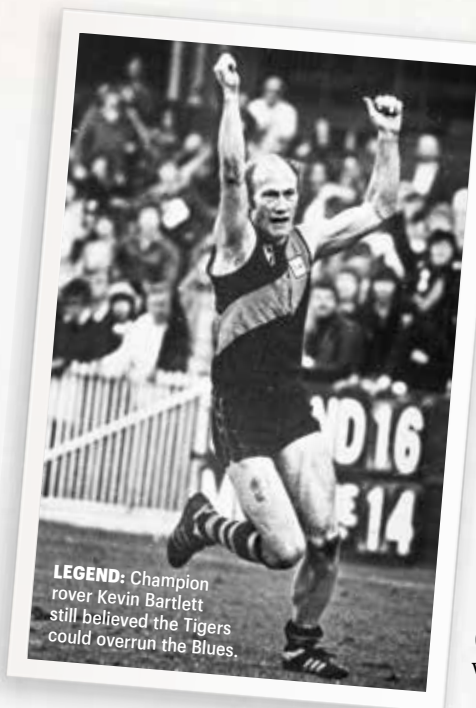
Richardson continued: “It’s that theme in sport of hunter versus hunted, which can be a very important theme in Grand Finals. How often do you see teams, at any level, go through the entire season undefeated but lose the Grand Final? Because of that reason.

“You get halfway through the second quarter and the other mob is winning or is close and you start to think: ‘Hang on, that’s not supposed to happen today.’ What happens then is, you actually try harder during that period, but your game-plan falls away.

“You’re all trying harder, but you’re now clashing heads rather than playing to the system that had been so successful throughout the year. And I think that happened a bit in 1972.

“When Carlton got a run on, you started questioning what was happening. Suddenly, halfway through the second quarter you realise it isn’t going to the plan. Then you’ve got panic. But you know what? We still had the belief that we could win at half-time.”

Richmond champion Kevin Bartlett said the Tigers had



LEGEND: Champion rover Kevin Bartlett still believed the Tigers could overrun the Blues.

tremendous belief that they could overrun Carlton, or any team, late in a game no matter the margin. Perhaps he didn’t realise that, to that stage, the biggest comeback from a deficit at three-quarter time was 44 points, by North Melbourne, in round eight, 1947. In a final such was unthinkable, although not to the Tigers.

Said Bartlett: “Even at the start of the last quarter, I think all of us thought we could still win because we’d had that great self-belief under Tommy (Hafey) that no matter what, we would still get home.

“We felt if we applied pressure for 100 minutes of the game, no side in the competition could withstand us, and no matter how far behind we were, we would overrun them somehow.

“And we probably could have pulled it off except they kicked 28.9. If they had just had a reasonable percentage of shooting goals to behinds, we probably would still have pulled it off.”

Carlton’s Ian Robertson wrote after the game: “Don’t think we got confident and relaxed in the last quarter when Richmond started piling on goals. We didn’t. I got pretty worried then, even though most of you in the crowd thought we had it won.

“I kept remembering our burst of goals in the second quarter and thinking, ‘We can’t let them do what we did to Collingwood in 1970.’”

The Blues had secured a famous victory, although forward David McKay – with his jaw and mouth throbbing – wanted to hear the final siren before he could celebrate for certain.

“We knew we were playing all right, but until you get to the championship quarter you can never be certain, particularly against Richmond. You were never sure until the final siren went, because they were always such a competitive side.”

“I just cried and cried and cried”

CAMERON SCHWAB, THEN AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD TIGERS SUPPORTER



SPOILS OF SUCCESS: Alex Jesaulenko and John Nicholls (far left) get up close and personal with the 1972 premiership cup and (left) Nicholls reminisces about the famous victory with the WEG poster in 2009.

Teammate Robert Walls remembers the moment he knew he had secured a third premiership medallion from his first five seasons in League football.

"I can remember with about three minutes to go, I looked up at the scoreboard and we were probably about 36 points in front, and I just knew that we had it. 'How good's this!' And it's always nice to play well in a big game.

"I knew John (Nicholls) had kicked a heap, 'Jezza' (Alex Jesaulenko) had kicked a heap and I'd kicked a few, so it was probably the best feeling that I ever had after a game."

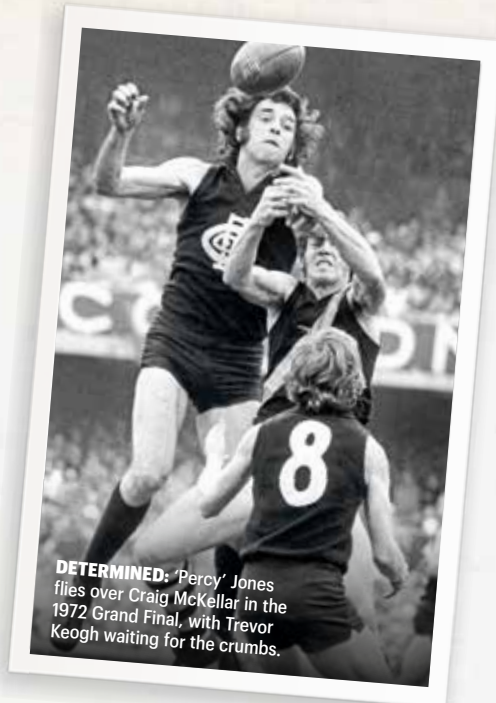
Richmond certainly did not give in, trying desperately late in the game to bridge the gap. Walls snapped for his seventh goal, but was sensationally coat-hangered by Brian Roberts.

Deller could not have been in a better position, just metres away and unimpeded in his view, yet he called play-on – a sure sign that fatigue had set in for the man in white after such a hectic two hours.

Walls said of the non-decision: "I reckon Bill was so tired he couldn't be bothered blowing the whistle."

The Tigers went the length of the field and Richardson missed a shot on goal. With that final shot of the day, Richmond's seven goals to three was not enough to rein in the Blues, but it was enough for them to equal the previous highest score in a Grand Final; yet they trailed at the end by 27 points: 28.9 (177) to 22.18 (150).

It was Carlton's first finals victory over Richmond since the 1920 semi-final, breaking a run of 11 consecutive finals wins (plus a draw) by the Tigers from their previous 12 clashes.



DETERMINED: 'Percy' Jones flies over Craig McKellar in the 1972 Grand Final, with Trevor Keogh waiting for the crumbs.

Richmond defender Dick Clay lamented: "We couldn't recover, and they had their tails up. The game was a bit surreal and having Jesaulenko kick seven goals on me, well, there was nowhere to hide.

"Tommy said afterwards it was down there so often he (Jesaulenko) should have kicked 12. So, I guess I didn't do too badly. But it was demoralising and I felt as though I'd let the side down."

Bartlett was philosophical when reflecting on the game in 2002.

"People think that Richmond didn't play well in that Grand Final – we played good footy, we played with a lot of heart and a lot of spirit, but we missed goals, and it is in the record books as an extraordinary

shootout with one side not missing."

There were two people in Bartlett's life who ensured he was always positive after a game, no matter the result, his parents.

Tiger teammate Mike Green recalled: "When we'd get beaten, we'd go have a shower and sit around, then you'd walk out of those rooms at the MCG where, in the tunnel waiting outside, the rest of the girls and families would be waiting.

"Mr and Mrs Bartlett would often be there waiting for 'KB' and, after we'd lost, his mum (Thelma) would say to him, 'Ah well, you were the best of a bad lot.' How positive is that?

"Obviously, growing up, his mum and dad (Charlie) were very positive. 'KB' was always the best, as far as Mrs Bartlett was concerned."

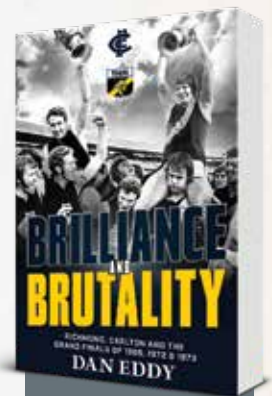
Hafey, however, took a more pessimistic view of what he described as a freak sort of a game.

"Particularly by Carlton. I don't think the scores were any real indication of the play, because I thought they outplayed us by many, many goals. I thought we were struggling all day long. And I know the scoreboard only showed 27 points at the end of the day, but I think we were even a bit blessed to get within that."

Clay concluded, "It was a waste of a year. We were top dogs and should never have lost it." **B**

“It's always nice to play well in a big game”

CARLTON'S ROBERT WALLS, WHO KICKED SIX GOALS IN THE 1972 GRAND FINAL



Brilliance and Brutality, by Dan Eddy, published by Slattery Media (books.slatterymedia.com) and is available from participating bookshops.

**BE NO ONE ELSE
— WITH A DESIGN
LIKE NOTHING ELSE**

THE LEXUS RX



LEXUS OF BRIGHTON | 99 Nepean Highway, Elsternwick | PH 03 9524 2099 | www.lexusofbrighton.com.au

Pre-production models shown. Final range and specifications may differ from those depicted.

LEXUS | BRIGHTON