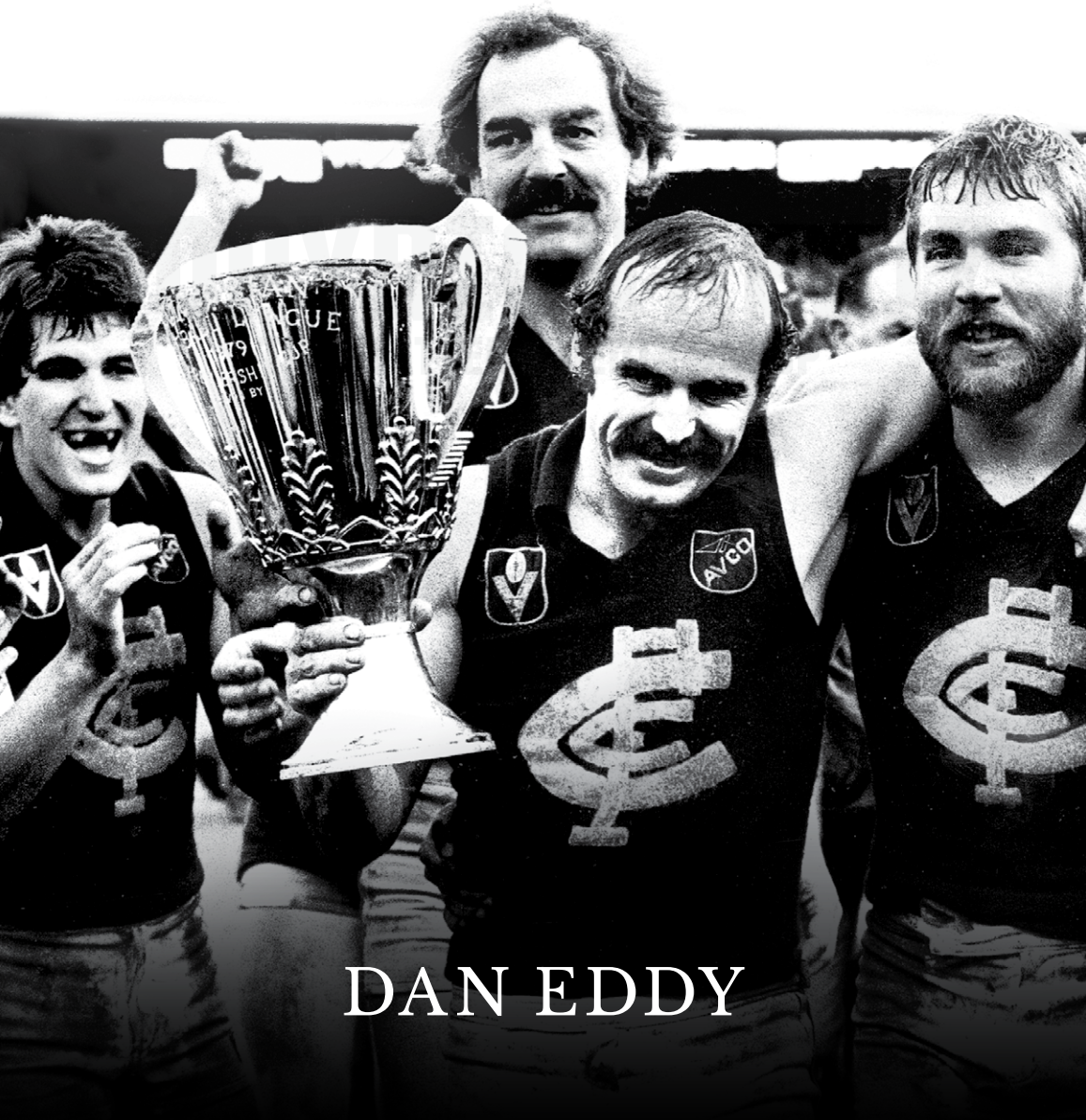


FREE SAMPLER

Larrikins & Legends

The untold story of Carlton's greatest era



DAN EDDY





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SOAKED IN SUCCESS: Carlton president Ian Rice, and Ken Sheldon, soak up the spoils of another premiership. © FAIRFAX PHOTOS



FOREWORD

Putting the Record Straight

By Mike Fitzpatrick,
Carlton captain 1980-83

The Carlton sides that took the field from the time Alex Jesaulenko became coach in 1978 to the Grand Final win of 1982, under David Parkin won 90 from 121 games—a win/loss ratio of 74%—and collected three Premierships in four years. Are these not performances that eclipse those of the mighty Barassi-coached Carlton teams of 1968 and 1970, and that of the Nicholls-led heroes of 1972? Yet the sides of the Jesaulenko-Parkin era are rarely compared with Barassi's teams, or those of Hawthorn and even Essendon of that period.

Dan Eddy has sought to make these great sides live again for the Carlton fans, recapturing the excitement of the Mosquito Fleet, 'Swan' McKay's high marking, Geoff Southby's long spiral punts from the goal square, Wayne Harmes' freakish skill and strength, the magic half-forward line of Wayne Johnston, Mark Maclure and Peter Bosustow, the courage of Ken Hunter, the football genius of the enigmatic Bruce Doull and in 1979, the aging authority of Jezza and Perc Jones.

Through meticulous research and long interviews with those who wore the navy blue in that period, he has reconstructed the atmosphere of the club, its winning culture, the multitude of personalities, the mutual respect, the commitment to each other, and the tightness of the playing group.

LARRIKINS & LEGENDS

He has also recorded the social cohesion of the team, the enjoyment of each other's company, the love of a good night out, the positive role of the wives and partners, and the celebration of a win or the picking apart a loss. And, he outlined in great detail the remarkable events of the summer of 1979-80, when ego and ambition claimed two great Carlton men.

There were no Brownlows in this group in this time, no competition-leading goal kicker, no single player who dominated in all three Grand Finals. These were not teams of stars but teams of talented players who worked hard for each other.

Only 'Perc' Jones and 'Bomba' Sheldon became senior League coaches and it took 'Sellers' Maclure 20 years to break into mainstream media. So without a flag bearer, these great sides have been perpetually underrated.

No more.

In his book, Dan Eddy brings back to life the legends, the larrikins, the stories, the dedication, the sacrifice and the belief in each other that made these teams among the greatest ever.



Mike Fitzpatrick,

April 2017

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1978

Jeza's Way

By 1978, Alex Jesaulenko had done it all as a player. Approaching his 33rd birthday he would take on the coaching role, and do it his way, applying 'brutal' training routines to instill discipline and character into his players.

Almost to a man, the Carlton players describe Alex Jesaulenko's coaching methods as brutal. Full-back Geoff Southby had played 148 games before Jesaulenko's elevation to senior coach, which came after a 31-point defeat to Hawthorn, at Princes Park, in the sixth round of 1978. "We had so much respect for Jeza as a friend and as a teammate, so when he was appointed coach we were very comfortable with it," Southby said. "Jeza' had to come up with a point of difference in his style in order to separate himself from just being a team member, and he did that by being relentless in his approach and his coaching style."¹

Relentless, persistent, unstoppable, sustained, severe, punishing, and strict: all these terms can be attributed to the coaching philosophy of Jesaulenko. The irony of the story is that, as a player, Jesaulenko wasn't recognised as the club's finest trainer, a sentiment echoed by a number of his former teammates. "That's fair enough," conceded Jesaulenko. "It's quite an understatement actually. As a player I hated training and I loved playing." For him it was a chore. "It would be cold and wet, but it had to be done."²

Mark Maclure says Jesaulenko was one of a kind. "Jeza was a star," he said.

¹ Geoff Southby, interview with the author, 2015.

² Alex Jesaulenko, interview with the author, 2015.

JEZZA'S WAY

“He was one of those unique human beings who could do most things with a minimum of training. But yes, he wasn't the greatest trainer of all time.”³

Adrian Gallagher played alongside Jesaulenko in his debut season, 1967. “We'd call him ‘Barassi's pet’ each time he went off the training track, and say, ‘What do you think you are, a superstar or something? Get out and train here with us!’

“But when he became coach he knew how Barass trained us back then, and he knew that they (the team) hadn't pushed themselves as hard as they could in the middle years of the 1970s. He knew what Carlton needed was hard training—for discipline and mental toughness—as well as getting them all fit. They'd gone soft in his opinion, and the one way to toughen them up was to train them as he did.”⁴

The Jesaulenko story is one of the truly remarkable tales in the annals of Australian Rules football. Born in a displaced persons camp in Salzburg, Austria, Jesaulenko migrated to Australia in 1949 with his Ukrainian-born father, Vasili (or Bill), and Russian-born mother, Vera, both of whom had seen first-hand the atrocities inflicted by Nazi Germany. “They both lost family members and were forced to leave their homeland and ended up in Austria,” Jesaulenko recalled.⁵

The Jesaulenkos (spelt without the ‘J’ and pronounced “Yessawoolenko”, but changed to Jesaulenko prior to their arrival in Australia, for reasons unknown to Alex) arrived in Australia and soon made their way to Canberra, which is where some ten years later, 14-year-old Alex had his first kick of a Sherrin football.

“My parents didn't know anything about Aussie Rules and they hardly ever came down to watch me,” he said:

I came from a rugby background. I went to St Edmond's Christian Brothers College in Canberra, and if anyone's been through a Christian Brothers' system you'll know how strict they were in all facets of your life, especially sport. If you were good at sport you had to play for the school, and their game was rugby. But I ended up watching Aussie Rules and loving it for the uncertainty: jumping on people's backs, doing strange things like bouncing the ball and running with it, that all interested me.⁶

Playing with firstly the Manuka-Yarralumla club in the Canberra Australian National Football League (CANFL), Jesaulenko began to get noticed when he

³ Mark Maclure, interview with the author, 2015.

⁴ Adrian Gallagher, interview with the author, 2015.

⁵ Ben Collins and Dan Eddy, *Champions: Conversations with Great Players & Coaches of Australian Football*, Slattery Media Group, 2016, p. 139.

⁶ Alex Jesaulenko, interview with the author, 2015.

switched to the nearby Eastlake Football Club: Manuka-Yarralumla's bitter rival. Proving a natural at the indigenous game, by the time he turned 19 Jesaulenko was the club's—and the CANFL's—standout player. As a consequence, he was being pursued by VFL club North Melbourne, which, illegally as it turned out, first signed him to a Form 4 in 1964 despite the Canberra region being a no-go zone for VFL clubs: it was deemed to be a football development area requiring special permission for a player to be approached.

"We were on an end-of-season trip to the Gold Coast and a couple of North people were harassing me, so I rang Jack Dorman, the uncle of my future wife, Annie, and said, 'I've got these bloody North Melbourne guys wanting me to sign this form.' He said, 'Yeah, sign it and get rid of them because it's null and void anyway.' I signed it and I was left alone, so I got to get on with having a good time on the end-of-season trip."⁷

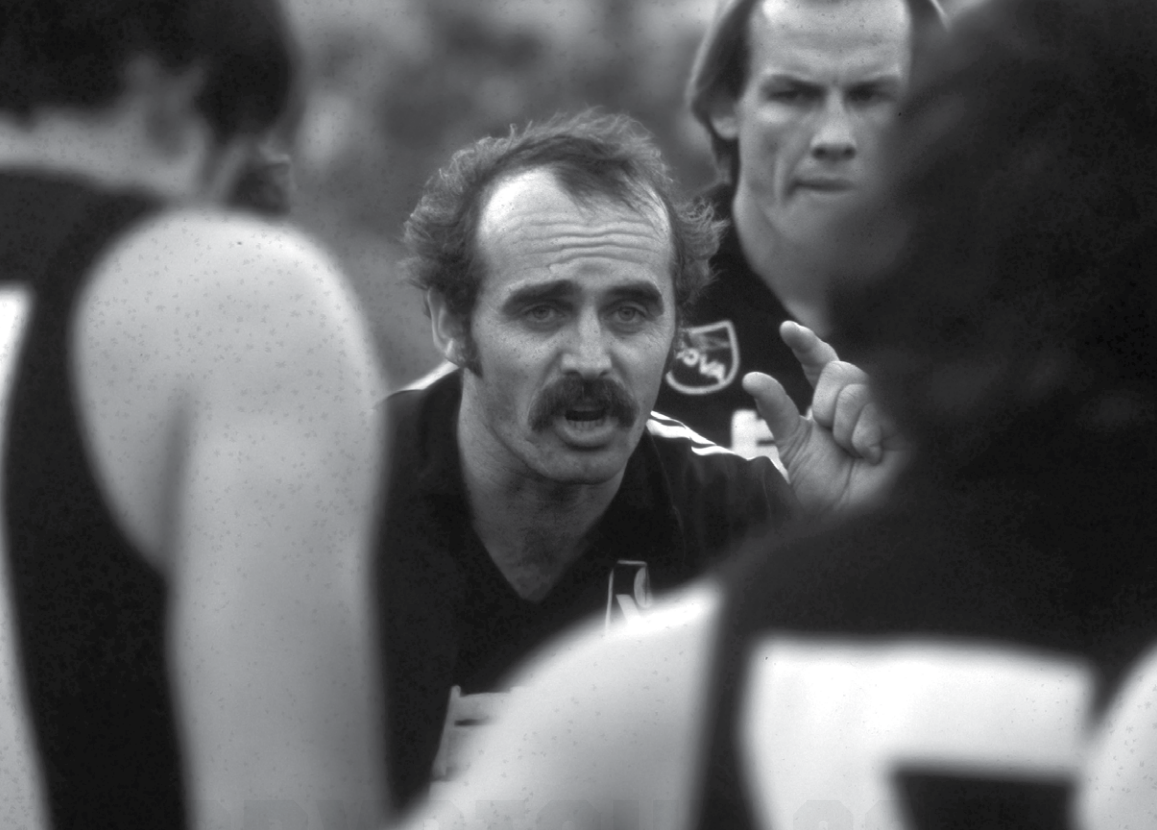
Two years later, with all VFL clubs chasing his signature, it was Dorman who suggested that Jesaulenko consider Carlton if he were to entertain a switch to the VFL. "Jack was a mad Essendon supporter, but he said, 'I think you should go to a club like Carlton because they're a fairly solid club, they'd look after you, they've got a good back line but they've got no forwards. You're a forward, so your best chance at making it at VFL level would be at Carlton.' Although I don't know for sure, I think the deal he made with Carlton was that I was to play the first six games. After that, we would see how we went."⁸

Between his debut match, in the opening round of 1967, through to round six of the 1978 season, when he assumed the role of captain-coach, Jesaulenko had played 222 games with the Blues, and was a key member of their 1968, 1970 and 1972 Grand Final victories. He also played in the losing Grand Finals of 1969 and 1973. In the '70 decider, he took what is still regarded as the iconic 'Mark of the Century', over Collingwood big man Graeme 'Jerker' Jenkin (think of Michael Williamson's famous call: "Jesaulenko! You beauty"), a moment which drove his team to reverse a 44-point half-time deficit into a 10-point victory; and, in '72 he top-scored with seven goals in Carlton's record Grand Final score of 28.9 (177) against Richmond.⁹ In 1970 he became the only Carlton player to kick 100 goals (115) in a single season—a club record that remains to this day. Then, following the retirement of Nicholls as a player after the 1974 season, Jesaulenko was named captain for both 1975 and '76, proving his versatility by winning his only club best and fairest award, in 1975, after Nicholls had decided to move his star forward into defence.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ As of 2016, Jesaulenko remains one of just 14 players to have kicked seven goals or more in a Grand Final: Gordon Coventry (Collingwood, 9 goals in the 1928 Grand Final), Gary Ablett (Geelong, 9 in 1989), Dermott Brereton (Hawthorn, 8 in 1985), Coventry again (7 in 1930), Norm Smith (Melbourne, 7 in 1940), Tom Reynolds (Essendon, 7 in 1943), Dick Harris (Richmond, 7 also in 1943), Gordon Lane (Essendon, 7 in 1946), Jack Collins (Footscray, 7 in 1954), Ted Fardham (Essendon, 7 in 1965), Jesaulenko (Carlton, 7 in 1972), Kevin Bartlett (Richmond, 7 in 1980), Jason Dunstall (Hawthorn, 7 in 1988) and Stephen Kernahan (Carlton, 7 in 1993).



FIGHTBACK: Few could have predicted the impact Alex Jesaulenko would have on Carlton as coach. The success of the club between 1979-1982 was instigated by Jezza's brutal training sessions. © AFL PHOTOS

Entering 1978, there was only one thing left for Jesaulenko to fill on his outstanding, and, considering his traumatic start in life, unlikely footballing resume: the role of senior coach.

Before Jesaulenko took over as coach of Carlton, ruckman Percy Jones had speculated to Stephen Phillips, in *Inside Football*, the type of leader he felt the Blues needed in order to move back up the League ladder. "We need someone who is hard with the players. A hard trainer. Someone who will look after the players both physically and mentally. An iron man like [former Hawthorn coach] John Kennedy or [Richmond and Collingwood coach] Tom Hafey. They need someone to respect."¹⁰ As it turned out, in the unassuming Jesaulenko the Blues had found their iron man.

"The training under Jezza was certainly difficult," recalled Rod Ashman, who had played 87 games before Jesaulenko took over as coach. "On a Tuesday night we'd train then we'd have to finish off with 20 laps of the oval," Ashman said. "If you were injured early in the week and didn't train, you

¹⁰ *Inside Football*, 11 May 1978, p. 5.

had to do all of the training on the Thursday and *then* run 20 laps to prove your fitness. It was unbelievable; an incredible time. And it was something that the guys really took on.”¹¹

Ashman admits that “there were times where we resented the way we were being flogged on the track, because it was the first time that we had all trained so hard.” Although there wasn’t a lot of science in what they were being asked to do, “it just developed our skills so much that we soon saw the benefit in it,” Ashman added. “We were a pretty skilful team already, but it took us to another level.”¹²

Jesaulenko smiled when he was told that his players felt that he trained them too hard. “Look, whatever they think about whether they trained hard or not, they didn’t train hard at all, *most* of the time!” The worst sessions came after losses, “*then* I would give them training! Not so much of the running, but the tackling, the smothering and the one-on-one contesting for the ball. I’d say to them: ‘If you don’t want to do them *on* the footy field during a game, you’ll do them *off* the footy field at training.’”¹³

Despite the increase in training loads, Mark Maclure was one of many Carlton players who immediately excelled under Jesaulenko’s coaching:

It was the first time I really started to talk to a coach. I had played with him, I knew him, I understood him, I’d trained with him and I really enjoyed what he brought to the table. Some people say that Alex was a poor coach; I think he was excellent. He knew what he had to do because he’d been there and done that. He had set sections of the ground and would say, ‘this is your role’ and ‘this is what we have to do, we protect this side’ or ‘we protect that line.’¹⁴

With Jesaulenko’s urging, Maclure was moved to centre half-forward, a position that he would command throughout Carlton’s next premiership era:

It was he who pushed me to play permanently at centre half-forward. I’d played there a few times, but he wanted me to consolidate a spot there. Jezza might say to me ‘I don’t care what you do, but take him (opponent) over there so he’s out of the play,’ and so you’d go out and do that. Or you’d run him into a space where he didn’t want to be. If they left you alone for whatever reason, then the team would use me. There were all sorts of things in place, and he was doing those things in those days that most other coaches weren’t doing and it was certainly foreign to us before him taking over.¹⁵

¹¹ Rod Ashman, interview with the author, 2015.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Alex Jesaulenko, interview with the author, 2015.

¹⁴ Mark Maclure, interview with the author, 2015.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

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Said Jesaulenko: "I knew we had the side, we just needed a little bit of toughening up...I knew them all; I knew all their little faults and their good points, and it was up to them how they took me. They responded quite well...I thought I was hard but fair."¹⁶ He wanted to separate the men from the boys. "I pushed them very hard through a lot of physical hard work: building up their weights and their strength," he said. "And a lot of players who were timid, as I call them, they did things that they didn't like doing: boxing and judo and karate, and pulling big tyres with bricks inside them, all those things. Not only a physical thing, but a mental toughening up program that we set for them.

"As a matter of fact, they all sort of enjoyed it after a while, but, it was bringing them success you see. They could take whatever you gave them. If they lost one I punished them for it, *if* they lost for a specific reason. If they didn't run in that particular game for example, well I made sure that they ran on the Tuesday. I made training harder for them during the week, and they would play [accordingly]."¹⁷

Carlton's first game in the Jesaulenko era was in round seven, 1978, at Victoria Park, against arch-rival, Collingwood. The Blues had won just one game from their first six, while the Magpies sat at 3-3 and had topped the century mark in each game to start the season (Carlton in comparison had only managed 100 points on three occasions: all losses, all with Serge Silvagni as interim coach.).

When Ron Barassi took over as Carlton coach in 1965, he faced a similar predicament as Jesaulenko: to teach the players what was required to win. He too was strict on discipline. It was something that stuck with Jesaulenko when he took over. "My first impression of Ron Barassi was how serious he was. I'm on this adventure, having come down from Canberra, and here's this raving lunatic screaming and yelling and being so serious," Jesaulenko said.¹⁸

Like so many of the Carlton players who played under Barassi, Jesaulenko was



FOCAL POINT: On the urgings of his coach, Mark "Sellers" Maclure made centre half-forward his own during Carlton's premiership era. He was also front and centre in the club's off-field frivolities. © CFC

¹⁶ Alex Jesaulenko quoted from an interview with John Malony for the National Library of Australia's oral collection, 9 June 1988.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Alex Jesaulenko, interview with the author, 2015.

greatly influenced by the super-coach. He was also influenced by Nicholls, who, from the time he took over from Barassi as coach of the Blues, in 1972, involved the senior players such as Jesaulenko, Kevin Hall, and Robert Walls, in matters regarding tactics, training, recruiting and the match committee. Nicholls had “unofficial leadership groups”, something Jesaulenko continued when he took over.

Jesaulenko also held 1954 Footscray premiership player, Roger Duffy—his coach at Eastlake—in high regard, and was determined to incorporate all of the different methods of his coaches into his own persona. “He [Duffy] was just a quiet man. He spoke to you quietly, not like a Ron Barassi who was fire and brimstone,” Jesaulenko said.¹⁹

Moreover, due to the fact he had played in almost every position on the field at some stage during his career, Jesaulenko felt that this afforded him further respect from his players: he had been there, done that, and he knew what each position required.

Determined to make an early statement about what was and what wasn't acceptable, before one game Jesaulenko singled out the highly spruiked recruit from Western Australia, Rhodes Scholar Mike Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick had missed the 1977 season studying at Oxford, after having played 36 games in 1975-6. “I had this rule. I told them, ‘Do not be late if we're having a meeting.’ I said: ‘If you're late, there are no excuses to me. You're late and you'll be dropped to the bench.’ So we go in the room this day, and you wouldn't bloody believe it: Mike was missing! He storms in and sits down and I said, ‘You're on the bench. Perc (Jones), you're in,’ and I don't think we talked for a little while after that. He was five minutes late. He got caught in traffic, but he was warned on the Thursday night, they all knew.”²⁰

Fitzpatrick, who was Chairman of the AFL Commission from 2007 until his retirement in 2017, said in 2015: “It was a pretty interesting introduction. Jezza was hard on us. I remember turning up late to the game because I was stuck in traffic in a borrowed car. I could have got out and run and made it on time, but I was nervous about leaving this other person's car on the side of the street, so I ended up being a couple of minutes late. Jezza just said, ‘Okay, you're on the bench,’ and I came on at half-time and got about 12 disposals and didn't play again that year.²¹ I went back into the twos and just couldn't find the footy. Yes, Jezza was very tough, but in the end he absolutely assessed what was wrong with the side.”²²

Trevor Keogh said: “Jezza was a mate to us all throughout the 1970s, right up until when he took over as coach in 1978: then he was the coach. There was a

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Fitzpatrick only played in rounds 16 and 18 of 1978, before playing every game in 1979.

²² Mike Fitzpatrick, interview with the author, 2015.

JEZZA'S WAY

noticeable difference then, even though he was still a good bloke. That coaching thing separated him from the players a little bit. He was tough.”²³

Greg Towns, who had played 37 games before Jesaulenko became coach, noticed his long-time teammate became more guarded once he took over the team. “If you tried to have a conversation with him after the game he still had his coach’s hat on. So, he was always very mindful of what he said when you had had a few drinks in your system.”²⁴

“There was no bullshit,” said Barry Armstrong. “Jezza had been one of our mates, and he stayed that way, and that’s what I really liked about him.”²⁵

Defender Rod Austin had played 95 games before Jesaulenko took over. “We all wanted to get behind him and do the work,” he said. “The early discipline really helped us because it was the hardest training we’d ever done. It was unbelievable! In fact, I think we were scared to get beaten because we’d get flogged at training: it was that sort of mentality. But all the players took it on board and ran with it and we got success out of it.”²⁶

But even though Jesaulenko could be strict, and he could be tough, much like Barassi, he also realised that he needed to be approachable, particularly in regards to the younger players and those on the cusp of selection: call it the Roger Duffy influence. Maclure, for one, saw a stark contrast between the approachability of Jesaulenko as opposed to Nicholls. “For a young player like I was at the time, John Nicholls was daunting and he was imposing. Was he approachable? I wouldn’t have thought so. I certainly wouldn’t have approached him.”²⁷

Like Maclure, Vin Catoggio says that he blossomed as a footballer once Jesaulenko took over. “When you’re young, you’re too scared to ask the coach why you’re not getting a game,” he said:

John Nicholls was a hard bloke to go up to and talk to. Jezza, on the other hand, was great to approach. He was fantastic for me because he really gave me a heap of confidence by telling me to play to my strengths. He said, ‘You get the ball and just keep running. You bounce it and you get around blokes because that’s what you’re good at.’ He said, ‘If you make a mistake I’ll let you know, otherwise just keep doing what you’re doing.’ He really made me as a player.²⁸

Realising that he needed a “point of difference”—as Southby said—Jesaulenko was tough when it came time to do the work. But, at the same time, he knew that by remaining approachable and accessible for his players, in order to get the best

23 Trevor Keogh, interview with the author, 2016.

24 Greg Towns, interview with the author, 2016.

25 Barry Armstrong, interview with the author, 2016.

26 Rod Austin, interview with the author, 2015.

27 Mark Maclure, interview with the author, 2015.

28 Vin Catoggio, interview with the author, 2015.

out of them, he needed to continue to share social gatherings with them as he had always done as a player. Indeed, it was one of the more enjoyable aspects of Jesaulenko's football career, that social get together after training or a game, and something Carlton as a club became famous for during their two premierships eras (1968-72 and 1979-82). "The social aspect of the club was there in the late 1960s when I was playing," Jesaulenko said.

I always loved my beer. I still love my beer! There was nothing better than doing pre-season running up and down the hills on a hot day, and then, when you finished, having a nice cold beer or two. I would get them all together every Saturday night and we would all go out, including the wives and girlfriends. Then we'd head back to Nicky's Nightclub in the Carlton social club (which was established by Nicholls in the 1960s as a space where players and their partners could socialise after a game) and be there till three or four o'clock in the morning, then we'd have to be up and at training by nine o'clock. We were all really good mates in those days. Most of the committee would come with us and so would our sponsors, the Carltonians: they'd all be with us. We all knew each other.²⁹

With Nicholls long gone by 1978, the Carlton players renamed their nightclub: "Jezza's Joint".³⁰ During those after-match gatherings, a select group of journalists and media performers (such as Jesaulenko's great mate, Michael Williamson, and the *Herald Sun's* Ron Reed, a Carlton fan) were welcome to tag along, off the record of course! "The club wasn't the easiest to deal with back then," Reed recalled in 2015, "but Alex was:"

I was at *The Herald* then, which meant I had to ring people during breakfast from time to time, and I was fortunate that I knew him because I don't think that I would have got the same warm reception if I had called John Kennedy at Hawthorn!

It was pretty wild up there, and they did a lot of drinking, not to mention all the characters that were at the club, like Perc for example. I would go drinking with Perc and 'Gags' (Adrian Gallagher) on a Friday night before a game, and Jezza was part of all that; he could drink with the best of them. When he became coach, he would go and drink with Perc on the Friday night, but then he'd play him in the Seconds. Perc would ask why, and Jezza would tell him he was a stone overweight. The only reason he was a stone overweight was because he was standing there drinking beer with the coach!³¹

²⁹ Alex Jesaulenko, interview with the author, 2015.

³⁰ The quote "Jezza's Joint" came from a Rod Ashman interview in Elliot Cartledge, *Footy's Glory Days: The Greatest Era of the Greatest Game*, Hardie Grant Books, 2013, p. 132.

³¹ Ron Reed, interview with the author, 2015.

JEZZA'S WAY

Maclure said: “We worked hard, we trained hard, and we played hard, on and off the field. We had an enormous bond that was unbreakable, where we didn’t want to let anyone down. And if you did, you wouldn’t be there. It was incredibly strong and powerful, and Alex was part of that ... It was about continual improvement and about leadership, selflessness and when it’s your turn you go, so it was also about sacrifice; those things that make a good footy club.”³²

That unique blend of discipline, hard training, socialising and confidence-building is integral to understanding what followed after round six. After winning just one of their first six, they went on a winning streak under Jesaulenko: in their next 42 matches, Carlton would win 35 times and lose just seven, and from a rudderless ship at the beginning of 1978 they were transformed into football heavyweights by the end of 1979. “I thought 1978 was a turning point for us,” Maclure said. “We played Collingwood at Collingwood in round seven and we won by 17 points, then we kept on winning. We realised that it wasn’t about personnel, it was about something else. We didn’t want to let Alex down, because he was one of our mates. And then it ballooned from there.”³³

Said Jesaulenko: “It was all about their mental approach. You’ve got to be skilful to play League football anyway, so, it’s just about changing your attitude. We remained mates and all stuck together, but I didn’t find it that hard to change and start telling them what to do.”³⁴

Indeed, on 13 May, 1978, in that round seven clash at Victoria Park, Collingwood’s spiritual home and one of the most intimidating venues in the VFL, the Blues, under Jesaulenko, finally found their mojo. Trailing by three points at quarter-time, Carlton kicked four goals to two in the second quarter. They were challenged by the home team in the third, but then, when putting in another admirable loss became a distinct possibility, Jesaulenko’s men drew on their new-found confidence in each other to kick away and record a stunning victory. In his regular weekly column in the *Canberra Times*, North Melbourne coach Ron Barassi wrote:

Fantastic to see Canberra’s favourite son, Alex Jesaulenko, pull off one of the football coups of the year in coaching Carlton to victory over Collingwood at their nest in Victoria Park. Believe me that takes some doing. It shows the depth of affection the Carlton players have for one of their finest warriors. Initially I thought Alex would not make a coach, and let’s face it, having been passed over as playing-coach for Ian Thorogood, Ian Stewart, John Kennedy

³² Mark Maclure, interview with the author, 2015.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Alex Jesaulenko, interview with the author, 2015.



and Neil Roberts³⁵ the Carlton Brains Trust must have had similar thoughts. However in thinking about Jezza's debut I realise I had forgotten one thing. When he was playing in Canberra he was a casual, happy-go-lucky, almost lazy player. He had many Canberrans tipping that he would not be able to accept the commitment, sacrifice and self-discipline needed to make the big time in Melbourne. They couldn't have been more wrong. As soon as he hit town he began training, dieting and getting super fit. At no stage did he revert to the amateurish player he once was. That will to knuckle down comes from inside Jezza, despite his carefree exterior. It could just be the force that takes him on to be a successful coach. One swallow doesn't make a summer but the Canberra kid couldn't ask for a better coaching beginning and I for one hope he goes on with the job. He has been an absolute ornament to the game.³⁶

Football's newest force, under Jesaulenko's brutal but accessible leadership, had arrived.

³⁵ Neil Roberts, the 1958 Brownlow Medallist, and long-term media commentator had also been approached to replace Ian Stewart.

³⁶ *Canberra Times*, 19 May 1978, p. 20.



WARNING: Alex Jesaulenko threatened his players with tougher training sessions when they trailed at half-time or three quarter-time. More often than not, they would storm home to win, but when they didn't they were flogged on the track. He is pictured here during his second stint as Carlton coach (1989-90). Hall of Fame champion Craig Bradley pictured in background.
© AFL PHOTOS

Peter Bedford had been a champion at South Melbourne during the 1970s, winning the 1970 Brownlow Medal. But at the end of 1976, having played 178 games and just one final (a losing semi-final in 1970), he left the Lake Oval and headed across town to Princes Park in the hope of finally playing in a premiership. “Jezza was pretty cool, calm and collected in how he went about things,” Bedford recalled. “He didn’t really raise his voice. There’s no doubt that I could sense that the club was on the cusp of something pretty exciting. Not only with the players they had, but then they brought in guys like Kenny Sheldon for example. They recruited pretty well and they had a really good mix of old and new. With guys like [Bruce] Doull and [David] McKay and Southby and the like, they had a group of about eight to 10 who were just outstanding. It was just a matter of bringing somebody in who could get them all to work together, which is what happened with Alex when he took over as coach.”³⁷

Unfortunately for Bedford, the ride that Carlton was about to embark on under Jesaulenko would leave the station without him: he suffered a serious ankle injury and managed just eight games over two seasons, retiring in 1978.

³⁷ Peter Bedford, interview with the author, 2015.



They were certainly a ragtag bunch of men and they partied hard. But boy, could they play! Over a four-year period (1979-1982), what Carlton achieved in winning three premierships ranks alongside the feats of modern-day powerhouses, the Brisbane Lions (2001-2004), Geelong (2007-2011) and Hawthorn (2012-2016). Yet, when discussion centres around the greatest teams of all-time, Carlton is missing from the conversation. Not anymore.

Aside from winning 78 per cent of their matches, it was the players who donned the famous old dark Navy Blue during those four years who set them apart. Think Alex “Jezza” Jesaulenko, Peter “Percy” Jones, his namesake Warren “Wow” Jones, Mark “Sellers” Maclure, Wayne “The Dominator” Johnston, Bruce “The Flying Doormat” Doull, David “Swan” McKay, Wayne “Piggy” Harmes, Vinny “The Cat” Catoggio, and of course “The Buzz”, Peter Bosustow. So many were larrikins who, guided by firstly Jesaulenko, then Jones, occasionally by Mike Fitzpatrick, and finally by David Parkin, became legends.

Through one-on-one interviews, exhaustive archival research, and his art as a storyteller, author Dan Eddy has now brought their deeds to life. After reading *Larrikins & Legends*, no-one will be left in any doubt that those Carlton teams of 1979-82 were among the finest in AFL/VFL history.

Relive Carlton’s finest era in AFL/VFL football in history, a must have for all football fans. *Larrikins and Legends*, is a Slattery Media Publication, under license from the AFL, will be published end of May, at a **RRP of \$39.95**

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