

ESSENDON

Scandal brings test of loyalty

ESSENDON supporters suffered mental health issues and relationship break-ups as their club struggled through the four-year supplements saga.

In his new book *We Are Essendon*, author Rick Edwards tells a story of despair – that of his own and others.

He says “saga anxiety” was a real problem among Essendon diehards.

“Of the nine fans profiled in the book, at least two suffered mental health issues because of the strain of the endless stream of negative news com-

ing out about the club they love,” Edwards said.

“Add that to my own relationship breakdown I talk about in the book, then that’s almost a third who suffered mental health problems.

“So that could well mean a third of Essendon supporters – I’m talking about tens of thousands – were in the same boat.” Edwards, who works for Leader Community



News, said seeing 34 of the players go through the supplements ordeal led fans to depression and anxiety, which they carried into their own workplaces and homes.

“In the book, I identified 68 major events over the four years of the turmoil,” he said.

“Essendon fans were constantly reminded of this.

“It was in every paper, it was on every radio and TV news bulletin.”

We Are Essendon can be pre-ordered at books.slatterymedia.com/store/viewItem/we-are-essendon

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Staff writer, Moonee Valley Leader
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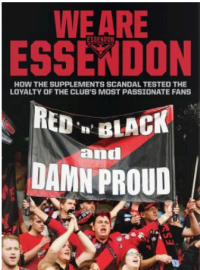
ESSENDON supporters suffered mental health issues and relationship breakdowns as their club struggled through the four-year supplements saga.

In his new book *We Are Essendon*, author Rick Edwards tells his and others' stories of despair.

He says 'saga anxiety' was a real problem among Essendon diehards.

"Of the nine fans profiled in the book, at least two suffered mental health issues because of the strain of the endless stream of negative news coming out about the club they love," Edwards said.

"Add that to my own relationship breakdown I talk about in the book, then that's almost a third who suffered mental health problems. So that could well mean a third of Essendon supporters — I'm talking about tens of thousands — were in the same boat."



The new book will be available from early next month. Picture: Supplied

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Edwards, who lives in Essendon and works for Leader Community News, said seeing 34 of the players go through the supplements ordeal led fans to depression and anxiety which they carried into their workplaces and homes.

"In the timeline in the book, I identified 68 major events over the four years of the turmoil," he said.

"Essendon fans were constantly reminded of this, there was no escape. It was in every paper, it was on every radio and TV news bulletin. Worse still, they were ridiculed wherever they went for following the Bombers."

Edwards said the book celebrated the resilience shown by most of the Essendon fans, who despite finding it a challenging four years decided to stick with the club.

"I find it a testament to the loyalty of the Bomber fans that 57,577 could sign up in 2016 when basically they weren't expected to win a game," he said.

Author Rick Edwards, a diehard Dons fan, talks about his own relationship breakdown in the book. Picture: Supplied

Brent Stanton is interviewed in-depth in the new book. Picture: Michael Klein

David Zaharakis also features heavily. Picture: Michael Klein

Scienceworks, Spotswood, Victoria

Today 10:00am

Kids Art Classes – Tweens and Teens

Art Class Melbourne Australia, Moorool...

Tomorrow 4:00pm

Storytime

National Archives of Australia, Barton, ...

Wed 8 Mar 9:30pm

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Essendon fans during last year's Make a Stand walk to the MCG. Picture: Alex Coppel.

We Are Essendon includes in-depth interviews with Brent Stanton and David Zaharakis, who went through the saga from different vantage points: one suspended and one free to play.

The book also reveals some of the ingredients of the 'New Essendon' built on shrewd recruiting decisions in the past four years.

"For the first time since 2012, Essendon supporters can go to the game knowing that whatever the players earn they can keep. We can't be penalised any more," Edwards said.

We Are Essendon is available from early March via Slattery Media Group or pre-order now <https://books.slatterymedia.com/store/viewItem/we-are-essendon>

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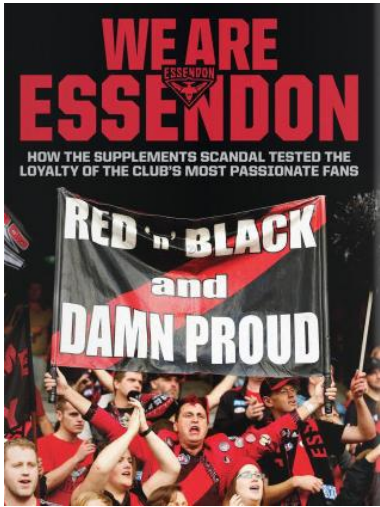
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Rick Edwards spoke to Rohan Connolly about his new book, 'We Are Essendon'

Radio interview with SEN Sports Radio. 26th February 2017

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MARCH 5 2017 - 4:36PM

SAVEPRINTLICENSE ARTICLE

James Hird maligners 'not good people' says David Zaharakis

Daniel Cherny

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David Zaharakis has bemoaned attacks directed at James Hird, suggesting that anyone who has chosen to "barrage" Hird in relation to the Essendon supplements saga in recent times is "just not a good person".

Zaharakis and Bombers teammate Brent Stanton both speak in detail about their experiences during the supplements saga in a new book set to hit shelves on Monday.

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Zaharakis famously chose not to be part of the injection program at the Dons in 2012 – a program that ultimately led to 34 current and former Bombers being suspended for all of the 2016 AFL season.

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Asked about Hird's treatment at the hands of the public in the wake of the club great's recent health problems, Zaharakis said that the unrelenting criticism was no longer acceptable.

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Former Essendon coach James Hird. Photo: Eddie Jim

"The time has passed where people can just give it to him," Zaharakis said in Slattery Media Group's new book *We Are Essendon*, written by Rick Edwards.

"If you want to say something, say, 'I didn't agree with what you did or what happened at the footy club' and that's it."

booktopia

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the new diggins

The new book aims to tell the story of the Bombers' saga from the perspective of the club's fans, including the detrimental health effects and strained personal relationships experienced by

FIXTURE

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AFL 2017 SEASON

ROUND 1

CAR	THU, 23 MAR 19:20 MCG	RIC
COL	FRI, 24 MAR 19:50 MCG	WBU
STK	SAT, 25 MAR 16:35 ES	MEL
SYD	SAT, 25 MAR 16:35 SCG	PTA
GCF	SAT, 25 MAR 19:25 MS	BR
ESS	SAT, 25 MAR 19:25 MCG	HAW
NTH	SUN, 26 MAR 13:10 ES	WCE
ADE	SUN, 26 MAR 15:20 AO	GWS
PRE	SUN, 26 MAR 19:40 DS	GEE

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Plays of the round

Bomber David Zaharakis famously chose not to be part of the injection program at the Dons in 2012. Photo: Vince Caligiuri

However, it also contains the stories of board member Paul Cousins and list manager Adrian Dodoro, who laments the missed opportunity to draft Patrick Cripps and Rory Lobb – now emerging stars at Carlton and Greater Western Sydney respectively – because of draft penalties handed down by the AFL as part of the league's punishments for the club's supplements program.

"I look back at that draft and we gave up two picks that would have finished us off beautifully," Dodoro said.

"We could have ended up with Cripps and Lobb (and Zach Merrett) in one draft and you're set. That's where it really hurts you. The AFL sanctions really hurt.

"It was devastating to lose those picks from both drafts because the team was in a position to start challenging. We were in a strong position, if you look at the team – [Cale] Hooker, [Jobe] Watson, [Dyson] Heppell – they were All-Australian players."

Zaharakis also revisited the AFL's decision to ban the Bombers from the 2013 finals series.

"You are the second-best team after 18 rounds, you'd like to think you would do something ... but they are all what-ifs. We definitely had a strong side that year and it (the sanctions) completely deflated everyone," Zaharakis said.

"We were playing for top spot in round 18. Then we end up getting kicked out of the finals. It was so frustrating, we were ready to be a successful club again. It's no accident you are playing for top spot, you have got a good side if you are doing that. The whole year we are getting told we won't be kicked out of finals. But all of a sudden you get that deflating blow, that punch to the stomach, you are not going to play finals that year. The whole club fell apart."

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'Down the drain': Bomber laments 'saga' impact

Callum Twomey | March 6, 2017 7:56 AM

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David Zaharakis says perhaps a third of his career will have gone 'down the drain' because of the supplements saga

ESSENDON midfielder David Zaharakis has lamented that a third of his football career will have gone "down the drain" as a result of the club's damaging supplements saga.

In new book *We Are Essendon*, a supporter's account of the past four years written by journalist Rick Edwards, Zaharakis recounted his emotions when 34 of his past and present teammates were hit with WADA bans ahead of the 2016 season.

Zaharakis was not a part of the club's injecting program due to an aversion to needles, but watched as the club was enveloped in controversy throughout the process.

The 27-year-old said when his teammates were hit with bans in January last year, and another season was ruined for the club, he couldn't help but think about the lost years for the Bombers.

"From a selfish point of view you're like 'it's f***** another wasted year at the footy club'. Four years of your career down the drain where you haven't had a realistic chance of winning a premiership," he said.

"Possibly a third of my career once I'm all done will be a waste, never actually being able to compete for a premiership. My peak years – 23 to 26 – to have that happen in those four years; you feel a bit selfish in that regard.

"But I'm not the only one in that situation, I know 40 other blokes thinking 'this is annoying me'; who think 'my teammates have done nothing wrong and I'm being affected here as well by them being suspended and they don't deserve to be'.

"You feel sorry for the guys suspended too, it's the same thing – they are missing their peak years."

Part of Zaharakis' frustration stems back to the 2013 season, when Essendon was kicked out of the finals for governance failures as part of the AFL's penalties against the club.

The Bombers played Hawthorn in round 18, with the winner to take top spot on the ladder, but six weeks later limped to the end of the year after being ruled out of September action.

Zaharakis said the punishment was hard to take and at odds with what the players were being told through the season.

"The whole year we are getting told we won't be kicked out of finals. But all of a sudden you get that deflating blow, that punch to the stomach, you are not going to play finals that year. The whole club fell apart," he said.

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David Zaharakis

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"The whole year we are getting told we won't be kicked out of finals. But all of a sudden you get that deflating blow, that punch to the stomach, you are not going to play finals that year. The whole club fell apart," he said.

"It sort of seemed like they punished us early. The other guys (the 34 served with infraction notices) didn't get punished till years later. That was very frustrating. They went very early on that, but you can't dispute it too much."

Zaharakis also said he was "shattered" for former coach James Hird that his tenure at the club had been full of such controversy.

"It's a very sad thing," Zaharakis said. "He wanted to be coach of a club he played for, to try and be a successful coach and now it's all come to this. It's a shattering end for what could have been something great for the footy club."

We Are Essendon by Rick Edwards (The Slattery Media Group, 2017) RRP: \$26.95. Available through the book trade, the Essendon Football Club, or via books.slatterymedia.com.

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I enjoyed your book Rick.

Thank you to all the people you interviewed for sharing their thoughts, emotions and opening their hearts, especially sharing some of their private life, you too (not an easy thing to do). Was chuffed, that a couple interviewed live in my area.

'A game, and a club, they live, and love.' (great line Rick).

I really liked the Zaka and Stants chapter for their views from the inside.

The football memories were great too, the one from Paul Cousins (one I'd forgotten) re that day at the MCG when Kernahan took a mark and the siren went. My brother and I were sitting in the Northern Stand (first time in the Northern stand) on a beautiful Autumn day. The 2 Carlton princesses sitting in front of us were ecstatic, my brother and I just looked each other unbelieving. When he missed, we just smiled and the princesses then sat there unbelieving. We left feeling good.

Think everyone who reads this book will relate.

Elly Davidson

Got my copy this morning. Photos are awesome. The telling is very much from the fan point of view, but there's also a big section from the player perspective courtesy of Zacka and Stants. Scattered through the book - especially in the Paul Cousins chapter - you'll find a potted summary of the saga, all the AOD9604/TB4 stuff, the vials, Andruska, WADA, you know the deal. So the book will serve as a record of the saga from the Essendon angle long after we've started to forget what got us so angry in the first place.

All in all this is an excellent piece of work, so big congrats to Rick. If you love the club and lived through the saga then you'll love this book. It's well worth the price so get into it!!

Luke Smith

Received your book in the mail today and only part way through it but I'm absolutely hooked! Thank you for writing such a brilliant book!

Daniel Prakash

You had me in tears just reading the preface. Tears of pride in being part of this loyal and passionate band of supporters of our wonderful club. Beautifully done, Rick. I cannot put this book down.

Jen Shaw