

Club History

HISTORY

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These colors were selected the dark blue of Oxford and the light blue of Cambridge because of the keen rivalry of the originators of the club, each University being equally represented on the Goldfields by former students men of great foresight who had the wisdom to come together and form one grand and happy club.

EAGLEHAWK FOOTBALL CLUB - EIGHTY- EIGHT YEARS 1880 TO 1968

Eaglehawk Football Club this weekend makes history in the Bendigo Football League In celebrating the 88th anniversary of formation.

The club was formed in 1880 as the direct result of a boy - Jim Steward- having his recently purchased football stolen by a rival group of lads.

From the keen rivalry between these two factions sprang the Eaglehawk Football Club.

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Few clubs, if any, in Victoria can lay claim to the record of distinction as that which Eaglehawk possesses. Right from the very outset the motto of the club has been "Win With Honor," and this has been carried in full for never once in the long and colorful history of the club has this motto been lowered by any who ever wore the "Two Blue" guernsey.

This guernsey has been worn with honor by many players who have left their mark on more than just the football field.

From the very beginning the home of the "Hawks" has always been Canterbury Park. This ground is still situated in exactly the same position as it was in 1880, the reserve then being formed virtually from a slum bank, the overflow of the Virginia Battery.

At the time of the formation of the Football Club, Eaglehawk was a flourishing town of 15,000 people, today its population is less than 5,000. To the credit of the "Eaglehawkites" throughout the years they have never forgotten the old "Two Blues", such is the heritage of these keen and loyal supporters who follow the club.

For many years the Melbourne Eaglehawk Society came back to Eaglehawk on what was termed "Railway Picnic Weekend" and one of the musts for all who journeyed from Melbourne was a visit to Canterbury Park to see the club in action.

Since joining in the Bendigo Football Association in 1881 the Eaglehawk Club has never once left the wing of that body - in fact it would be the only club in existence today which had an unbroken period of 87 years with the league.

Few clubs, if any, can boast of the loyalty and support of such fine sportsmen and sportswomen as those who have followed the Eaglehawk Football Club from the very inception. It is this traditional loyalty and support that has made the Eaglehawk Football Club what it is today a club steeped in tradition - honor glory the club of all club's the Old "Two Blues."

It is the love of the followers of the sport and the club in the heart of all, true "Eaglehawkite" that has made this club so famous and the great "carry on" spirit which pervades the town that Eaglehawk has risen to such great heights.

In the first 50 years the club had won no fewer than 16 premierships, the last 38 years have not been so prolific as we have only produced 5 premierships sides - but we have every hope of increasing this to 6 with the winning of the 1968 flag.

In the early days of the club many a player came straight from the depths of a mine to a waiting cab to be driven straight to the football ground. In those days there was no place for the weak and many of the miners of those times ate his meal whilst being driven to the ground - usually a large "Cornish" pasty that had been kept hot off the mine boilers. Quite frequently many star players were working the wrong shift and to play football it was left to the loyalty of a brother miner to work a double shift so that his workmate could play the match for the "Two Blues" - this loyalty of the supporter to the club still exists today. To any true supporter of the "Two Blues" the club comes first and foremost.

Throughout the long history there has been but one unfortunate split, in 1895, when the club was split over a minor detail of where the players should change. Eaglehawk lost eight of its most experienced and best footballers who went to North Bendigo, but the club was not downed for the count as they secured the services of the Sailor's Gully side a crack junior team and with "Wanger" Tregonning as captain went on to take out the premiership in that year. In this era the Eaglehawk club won no fewer than five consecutive premierships.

With the shut down of the mines after the first World War and the moving away of residents to other employment the club suffered far greater reverses than any other club in the Bendigo Football League, but such is the spirit of loyalty back sprang a new brand of footballers and the club went on to take out the premiership in 1922 and 1924.

In 1894 the Waterbury Watch Company offered 20 gold watches to the club kicking the most goals in 18 matches. Eaglehawk set out to win that coveted prize and comfortably won the 16 competition games. To make up the 18 matches Eaglehawk challenged the combined of Maryborough and Echuca suffice to say that this grand old club was the successful contendor with Essendon running second. Unfortunately none of the players received the gold watch as the vessel carrying the watches to Australia sank, so 40 nickel watches were presented, one for each player and his wife or ladyfriend.

Many famous names have been linked with the club in the past and it would not be just if some of the former greats of the club were not mentioned.

The late "Number" Esposito was one of these great players. He started with the club in 1886, and being only a lad did not possess such luxury as football boots, so he played his first matches barefooted. His sons played for Eaglehawk, perhaps the best remembered being Eddie "Moots" who played for Eaglehawk in the years 1924-1928 and 1932-1939. In the years 1929-1931 Eddie was playing with Melbourne as centerman under the astute guidance of the great coach Warne Smith. Few, if any, players could surpass Eddie on his day in the center or anywhere else on the field, his deadly stab passes always finding the chest of a teammate.

The late George McWilliams who died a few weeks ago at the age of 90 years.

This fine old gentleman played with the Eaglehawk side in 1902 and was Captain in 1904. About that time Fitzroy took him down to Melbourne to play each week for them.

Other great players in the early days were Jordan Hall, H (Dip) Hall, Dick Harvey, Anth Hall, "Geordie" Cairns, Bob Midsen, A.J. "Banger" Harris Charlie Clymo, "Wilkie" Stewart, Alf Baud, Fred Jinks. Clyde Holbrorn and Heyfield Harvey. Jim Steward. is it any wonder that with such players the club was able to establish the records that it holds.

The greatness of the club still continues to attract the best class of footballer and over the past forty years many famous players have donned the "Two Blues" jumper Reg (Pug) Collier, Hec Wales, Narky Smith George Ennor, the late Ian (Snowy) Chinn, the late Charlie Pascoe, Erie Paynter, Keith Dumble. Alan (Dookle) James, Herb and Ray Turner, Mancel Davies, A. (Nuts) Richards, Fred and Frank Crapper, the Crawford brothers, Jack Ted, Peter, Bill, Frank and Charlie. The Daly brothers, Alan, Keith, Roy, and Harold, Peter Pianto, Fred Hicks, Doug Palmer, Harry Morgan, George Ilesley, Harold (Wicky) Toma, Merv Bull Matt Lock, Abbie and Kevin Smith, Brian (Nunca) Harvey Ken (Shorty) longstaff and many others far too numerous to enumerate in the limited space available.

Fred Trewarne a local boy who commenced his football career with the Sailors Gully club. He went to Melbourne to join the police force and came back to play with Eaglehawk in 1923 and continued until 1948, a record of which Fred

can be justly proud. Fred was a great exponent of the lost art of 'Place Kicking' and many can still remember the gentle giant placing the ball on the ground for his kick at the goal.

Basil Ashman, the youngest playing coach to win a premiership in the Bendigo Football League. Basil is the grandson of the Treasurer In the early 1900's the late W. G. (Wingy) Ashman, another grandson Geoff is the present Secretary.

Perhaps of recent years, one of the best known throughout the League was George Ilesley a very illusive player who never let his player into the game. George, the 'Stormy Petrel' of the Bendigo League was like the "Scarlet Pimpernel". Illusive and evasive, with a casual, almost debonair, come what may approach to the game. With George on the field no quarter was given or asked. This club surely must hold some of the finest records of any in the whole State of Victoria, for what other club can boast of so many first premiership pennants.

In 1935 this club imported Eric Fleming at the astounding salary of \$30 per week. Eric was imported to stop the run that Sandhurst were then enjoying, that club wan six consecutive premierships, and just how successful was the move can be seen from the fact that Eaglehawk in 1935 took out the Premiership pennant. If one converts the salary that Eric Fleming was paid to present day purchasing power it would cost the club approximately \$180 per week, so that coaches today are not so highly paid when comparing with the standard set by Eaglehawk in the heart of the depression.

Many of the younger members of the club have often heard of the bad old days of "Flying Road Metal". Quite frequently in the past many a player left the field with a sore heart, sore head and sore feet. Sore heart because of the cost of winning the engagement sore feet and head from the effect of collecting a few of the flying "souvenirs", as with the mines in full blast ample supplies of Blue Metal were available to all matches. Many irate spectator of the opposing camp made sure that their teams opponents were amply "rewarded," especially when the games were played at "Back Creek."

Many well known district names have been linked with the club over the years. But few have finer records than W. R. (Bill) Crawford, president for 14 years. The late Frank Davies, secretary for 18 years, Ern (Soda) Munday, treasurer for 18 years - in fact, since 1935 the club has had only two treasurers, "Soda" Munday and our present treasurer Jack Taylor. Both these gentlemen kept a tight rein on the purse strings of the club and the present happy position that this club enjoys is in no small way due to the good work of the treasurers.

The present clubrooms were commenced in 1961, these fine rooms being the result of a rescinded motion passed in 1960 that \$2000 be spent on building rooms under the grandstand. Fortunately some members of the committee at that time had the foresight and vision to rescind the motion and the amended motion passed by these members that new club rooms be built, was carried.

In honor of the man who built most of the brickwork with his own sweat and labor of many hard, heart breaking weeks, the club decided to name the new club rooms the "Bill Crawford Pavilion."

It is the fervent hope of the present committee to carry on at some later stage and finish the pavilion as it was first envisaged a two-storied structure with the whole front of the first floor glassed so that it may serve as both grandstand, committee rooms and dance floor for all members.

In the many years of being to the forefront of Bendigo football, this club has never produced a best and fairest winner, the nearest being one or two second places. In the Reserves grade we have had but one winner, that being in 1958 when Arthur (Chuckler) Gilbert the chunky rover from Sandringham was the recipient.

Whilst we have not had any best and fairest medal winners, we have had many winners of the goal kicking award for the league. Frank Crapper, 1930 1932 and 1933; Mancel Davies, 1935 1936 and 1938; Harry Morgan, 1948, 1951, 1952 and 1953, and Merv Rick in 1961. Harry Morgan has the distinction of kicking 24 goals in one home and home match, this being against Rochester in 1953. Incidentally, Harry went off the field at three quarter time, so in fact had only three-quarters to get his goals. Mancel Davies kicked the elusive century in 1938. Frank Crapper holds the record for the Bendigo Football League with 154 goals in home and home matches, with 162 for all matches: this was in 1933. Harry Morgan notched 107 goals in 1953. It is interesting to note that all players kicked their highest tally in the final year that they won the goal kicking award.

With a club such as this and with such tradition, many highlights must have occurred which only those who were there at the time of the event would be able to recall fully. However, some interesting snippets are listed for the benefit of those following football today.

In 1905 the Eaglehawk club was worried about people who pulled their buggies up to the Simpsons Road end fence and looked over without paying. To the chagrin of those who followed their football in this fashion the club engaged a mounted constable to keep the vehicles in motion.

In 1948 five players bought a sponge cake for 1/3 (12 cents) and raised the staggering sum of £50 (\$100) by raffling it at 3d (2 cents) a ticket.

Then there was the player who led the lobster on a string down the main street of Portland. Being a rover he had some advantage over his taller companions.

Remember the kick of "Dookie" James the day that Eaglehawk defeated Sandhurst in the mud at Canterbury Park? "Dookie," possibly one of the worst kicks in the club was the recipient of a free kick right on the final bell lined up the goals and let go a mighty punt kick, which with every yard it traveled appeared to get straighter. It must have been a good 55 yards no mean effort with a water sodden ball at the end of 100 minutes of football.

Does anyone know where "One Eye Hill" is situated? Well, you ask an Eaglehawk barracker for to the true "dyed in the wool" Eaglehawk supporter it is sacred ground. The league should charge extra to all those who stand on this piece of territory. To be there and barrack against the old Two Blues will be worth on argument any old time, so next time, go there and take a chance.

This year our president is Mr E.J.(Ned) Flood, brother of Mr Tom Flood who played for the Borough side In the 1930's. Many on the committee this year are old players or supporters of very long standing. The recruiting committee has spent many long hours in bringing the team together and it is hoped that the fruits of this labor will be gathered at the end of the season.

Eaglehawk won its first premiership in 1882 and its last in 1957. The longest period without winning a premiership is 14 years between 1908 and 1922. The present gap is 11 years but we have no doubts as to the result of this year's premiership, and do not anticipate it being, 12 years between pennants. The following is the long list of premierships won by this magnificent club a club dedicated to the honor and glory of the Australian Rules code and a club whose supporters are amongst the 'most loyal followers of the code. Premierships years were: 1882, 83, 86, 87, 89. 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 1901, 03, 06,08, 22, 24, 35, 41, 46,53,57 - in all 21 premierships, the most of any club in the Bendigo Football League.

In addition the club has been runner-up on seven occasions since 1926-how many times, runner-up prior to this date would not be known.

This club has always been famous for the fact that it has always had many brothers playing for it over the years. This is still so today with the Gilbee brothers. Ken and Bill, the only set of brothers playing with the club at the present time.

The great spirit of patriotism to the Borough is exemplified in the terrific support that this club has always enjoyed and the solid supporters who are ever ready to "shower' dollars when the need of the club is greatest.

The full legend of legend of this grand old club could never be told as the writer does not know all the facts and figures. In fact I doubt whether sufficient space could ever be afforded the club to detail in greater length the great names of those who played or had any interest with the club in its long and colorful history. To those whose names have not appeared in this article goes the humblest apology, but no disrespect is meant, but that space was not sufficient.

This season the club is ably led by John Ledwidge, coach of the Senior 18, and Roy Keene, coach of the Reserve. Albert Clough has charge of the Under 18 combination.

To many who read this article, perhaps the one question that will be asked is "What about the Band?" Well, it never happened the way that many people think; if you have any doubts, ask any true and loyal Eaglehawk supporter. This club has never had to go the back way home: our proud tradition and heritage is far too great for such humiliation. Our motto is "Win With-Honor." Well defeat is no disgrace provided you do your best and this is what this club has always done.

The Bendigo Football League is always very happy when Eaglehawk is in the top four, as the coffers of the league will never be empty whilst this club controls the support of the numbers that come to see them play. The fact that Eaglehawk is in the finals means many dollars to the league more support than any other league club such is the loyalty of the true "Eaglehawkite." Eaglehawk is one of the top drawcards of the Bendigo Football League both in

finals and home and away matches. The amount of gate money taken at the grand final has only once surpassed that which was taken at one Eaglehawk grand final year.

This year the club is enjoying a great deal of success and the committee players, and supporters are hopeful that it will be another premierships year, and that the turnstiles of the Queen Elizabeth Oval will turn in record fashion with a record crowd in attendance.