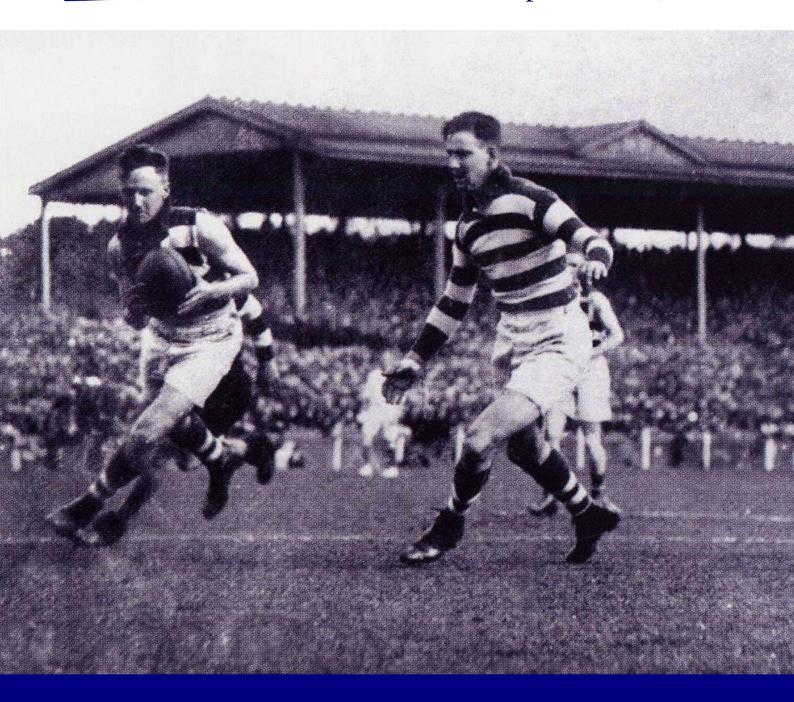
Library Record

September 27, 2025.



GEELONG V COLLINGWOOD



1925 VFL GRAND FINAL **RETROSPECTIVE**



ABOUT THE MCC LIBRARY RECORD

The *MCC Library Record* is an extension of the MCC Library's tradition of providing MCC Members' Reserve patrons with complimentary reading material such as the *MCC Library Fact Sheet*. A retrospective *MCC Library Record* was distributed at AFL grand finals from 2013 through to 2019 and from 2022 to 2024. Each looked at the grand final played 100 years earlier. Due to the COVID-19 outbreaks in Melbourne, and the removal of the 2020 and 2021 grand finals interstate, this practice was interrupted. Your Library instead produced retrospectives of the 1920 and 1921 grand finals for the opening rounds of 2021 and 2022. This AFL grand final day we hope you enjoy reading about the 1925 VFL grand final between Geelong and Collingwood. When in the Members' Reserve you are invited to visit the MCC Library on Level 3 of the Reserve or look out for *MCC Library Fact Sheets* on the MCC website at http://tinyurl.com/mcclcatalogue.

THE STATE OF FOOTBALL 100 YEARS AGO

In 1925 the Victorian Football League (VFL) consisted of twelve clubs, with the top four clubs at the end of the home-and-away season then competing in a finals series for the premiership. The Charles Brownlow Medal, first awarded in 1924, for the VFL's "fairest and best" player as voted by the field umpires after each game was won by St Kilda's Colin Watson with nine votes. Geelong's Edward "Carji" Greeves, the 1924 winner, received seven. Teams consisted of 18 players and there was no substitution for injured players. Footballers not selected for their VFL team played in the Victorian Football League second XVIII competition. Collingwood won the seconds premiership by defeating Fitzroy in the curtain raiser to the VFL grand final.

In interstate football South Australia defeated Western Australia $8.9\,(57)$ to $7.12\,(54)$ on June 20 at Perth's Subiaco Oval, and then, a fortnight later before a crowd of 34,000 at the Adelaide Oval, SA defeated Victoria 11.11 (77) to 11.8 (74). On July 25 Victoria belted WA 19.16 (130) to $8.10\,(58)$ at the MCG, with the Vics' Cliff Rankin booting 10 goals, and then on August 1 South Australia defeated the Sandgropers 12.22 (94) to $7.8\,(50)$ at the Adelaide Oval. Victoria reasserted their supremacy over SA on August 15 when the Big V defeated the Croweaters 12.16 (88) to $11.9\,(75)$ at the MCG. That day the Vics' second team lost to New South Wales 13.10 (88) to $13.9\,(87)$ before 10,000 spectators at Erskineville Oval, Sydney. In this game's curtain raiser the Federal Territory Football League (Canberra), founded in March 1924, lost to New South Wales' second team $8.10\,(58)$ to $7.8\,(50)$ in the Capital Territory's first ever representative match.

In the 1925 Victorian Football Association (VFA) grand final Brunswick 10.9 (69) defeated Port Melbourne 7.11 (53) before 18,000 at the Motordrome (Olympic Park). The Western Australian grand final was won by East Fremantle 10.10 (70) to Subiaco's 6.7 (43) at Perth Oval. It was Old Easts' 12th premiership. Norwood won its 17th South Australian premiership by defeating West Torrens 8.4 (52) to 7.9 (51) at the Adelaide Oval before 37,750 spectators. Norwood's Alick Lill won the Magarey Medal as the SA League's fairest and best player (Alick's son John would be the MCC's Secretary from 1983 to 2000). Tasmania's state premiership match was played at the North Hobart Oval, where Cananore (the south premiers) 20.17 (137) defeated North Launceston (the north premiers) 9.12 (66).

THE 1925 LEAGUE SEASON

The VFL competition consisted of 12 teams in 1925 with Footscray, North Melbourne and Hawthorn coming from the VFA to join Carlton, Collingwood, Essendon, Fitzroy, Geelong, Melbourne, Richmond, St Kilda and South Melbourne. Each team played six of their rivals twice and the other five teams once in the home and away rounds, there being 17 rounds.

Geelong lost its opening game at home to a newcomer in North Melbourne by eight points, but recovered to dominate the season, topping the League table from round seven. From this round Essendon, Melbourne, Fitzroy and Collingwood also jostled for positions in the top four. Fourth place seemed like it may go to Fitzroy, which defeated Collingwood by 14 points at Victoria Park in Round 16, to become equal on points with the Magpies with a slight percentage advantage. However, the next week, the final round of the season, the Roys managed just a two-point win over Carlton, while Collingwood belted South Melbourne by 65 points to overtake Fitzroy on the League table, and qualify for the finals, with Geelong, Essendon, and Melbourne.

Geelong finished on top of the ladder, and were minor premiers, winning 15 games and losing two during the home-and-away rounds. Essendon, which lost four matches, finished second. Melbourne with 12 wins, four losses and a draw was third, and Collingwood with 12 wins and five losses was fourth. Collingwood defeated Essendon in the first semi-final and Melbourne defeated Geelong in the second semi-final. The winners of both semi-finals met in the final where Collingwood then defeated Melbourne 8.15 (63) to 3.8 (26).

However, the premiership was not yet decided, as Geelong, a semi-final loser but the competition's minor premier, could challenge the winner of the final to a grand final. This match between Geelong and Collingwood, that was played at the MCG on Saturday October 10, would determine the 1925 VFL premiership.

GEELONG AND COLLINGWOOD IN 1925

Geelong and Collingwood met twice in the 1925 regular season. Neither club had qualified for the finals the previous year, finishing fifth and sixth respectively. Geelong had won both its encounters with the Magpies in 1924, winning by six points at Victoria Park and then 37 points at home on the Corio Oval. So, when the teams shaped up for their first game against each other in 1925, Collingwood had not beaten Geelong since May 6, 1923.

Their first encounter in 1925 was at Victoria Park on May 23. Both sides were sitting midtable with two wins from three games. Geelong kicked away early in the match and led by four goals at quarter time. However, the Magpies narrowed the margin to nine points by half time. A crowd of 16,000 witnessed Geelong hold off the fast-finishing Pies to win by three points. The second half was described by the *Geelong Advertiser* as being, "a high order of excellence."

Their next encounter was on August 29 at Geelong. Geelong sat first and Collingwood second on the ladder, and the top-of-the-table clash drew a record Corio Oval crowd of 26,025. As with the earlier match Geelong led throughout the afternoon, and went into the final quarter 25 points ahead. Collingwood restricted Geelong to a solitary point in the last term but the Pies only managed two goals and five points in the quarter to lose by nine points.

Rd 4 May 23 Collingwood 13.9 (87) lost to Geelong 13.12 (90) Victoria Park Rd 15 August 29 Geelong 11.8 (74) def. Collingwood 8.17 (65) Corio Oval

THE 1925 VFL GRAND FINAL

Geelong captain Cliff Rankin won the toss and decided to kick to the Richmond end that was favoured by the breeze. While Collingwood had most of the play in the early going, Geelong capitalised on a couple of their forward moves and had two goals on the board (both to Rankin) before Collingwood had registered a major. Collingwood missed a number of chances to goal early, one of these being from full-forward Gordon Coventry, who had a bad day, not kicking a goal during the whole game.

Reynolds Webb scored Collingwood's first goal just before the quarter was half over and another to Frank Murphy put the Magpies in the lead. Lloyd Hagger replied with a third goal for Geelong, however, and they led 3.2 to 2.5 at the first break.

The reporter for the *Argus* wrote that the first stanza had been "a grand quarter, hard and fast, and full of vigor and sparkle". Collingwood had had the better of the play, however, and most thought they would surge ahead with the aid of the breeze. Nevertheless, Geelong played their best football of the game in the second term, adding a goal from Jack Chambers soon after the quarter began. Frank Murphy replied for Collingwood, but goals to Denis Heagney and Rankin were an indication that Geelong was dominating the play, and that Collingwood was rattled and making a number of errors.

The Magpies soon regained their composure, however, and a goal to Len Stainsby had them back in the game. Before the quarter ended, Syd Hall added a seventh goal for Geelong and they held a handy 17-point lead at the main break – 7.8 to 4.9.

Geelong opened the third quarter strongly with the breeze but they could only kick behinds until Rankin added their eighth goal with "a beautiful left-foot shot". Geelong were now well ahead and Collingwood knew that they must mount a challenge if they were to avert defeat. Goals to Reg Baker and Reynolds Webb reduced Geelong's lead but Geelong kept attacking with the breeze and Rankin added another goal to extend their margin again. Collingwood defended desperately against further attacks and also mounted a few forward moves of their own, all of which resulted in no more than behinds. With the quarter almost over, Edward Stevenson converted a flying shot and Geelong went to the final break with a 25-point lead – 10.13 to 6.12.

Although Geelong held a good lead, there was still a feeling that the game was far from over with Collingwood having the benefit of the breeze in the final term. The Magpies opened the quarter well and a goal to Harry Chesswas was followed by another to Les Stainsby. With only six minutes having been played, Collingwood had reduced Geelong's lead to just 12 points and when Gordon Coventry marked within range another goal looked likely. Coventry missed

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badly, however, not even registering a behind and the game then see-sawed with both sides unable to score better than behinds. After a shot from Lawn hit the post "high up", the kick-in was marked by Charlie Tyson, who passed to Stainsby before receiving the ball back and adding Collingwood's ninth goal with a long kick.

Geelong now led by only eight points and needed to rally to ensure they won the game. This they did but they could only add a couple more behinds. Leading by 10 points as the game entered time on, Geelong seemed safe until Collingwood mounted another promising attack that was only thwarted when Dave Ferguson held onto a mark, while lying on his back. Geelong held on from there to take out their first VFL premiership.



Geelong's Tom Fitzmaurice shepherds his teammate George "Jocka" Todd during the 1925 grand final.

1925 VFL Grand Final

Saturday October 10, 1925, 3:00pm

Geelong	3.2	7.8	10.13	10.19 (79)
Collingwood	2.5	4.9	6.12	9.15 (69)

Best: Geelong - Chambers, Johns, Rankin, Rayson, Leahy, Warren, Hudd,

Greeves.

 $Colling wood-S.\ Coventry, Webb, Stainsby, Milburn, Chesswas, Dibbs,$

F. Murphy.

Goals: Geelong – Rankin (5), Chambers, Hagger, Hall, Heagney, Stevenson.

Collingwood - F. Murphy (2) Stainsby (2), Webb (2), Baker, Chesswas,

Tyson.

Umpire: J. McMurray Snr. MCG attendance: 64,288

1925 VFL GRAND FINAL TEAMS



Geelong

Navy Blue & White

Coach: Cliff Rankin



Collingwood

Black & White

Coach: Jock McHale

	G	В		*	G	В
3.	Dave Ferguson	••••	1.	Reg Baker	1	
4.	Syd Hall 1	••••	3.	George Beasley	•••••	
6.	Cliff Rankin (c)1.11.1.1.	••••	6.	Gordon Coventry	•••••	
8.	Jack Chambers1	••••	7.	Syd Coventry		
9.	Keith Johns	••••	9.	Harry Chesswas	1	
11.	Eric Fleming	••••	11.	Charlie Dibbs		
12.	Jim Warren	••••	13.	John Harris	•••••	••••
14.	Lloyd Hagger1	••••	15.	Jim Lawn	•••••	
15.	Edward Stevenson1	••••	18.	Laurie Murphy		
16.	Les Smith	••••	19.	Frank Murphy	.11	
19.	George Todd	••••	20.	Charlie Milburn	•••••	
20.	Edward Greeves	••••	22.	Les Stainsby	11	
23.	Tom Fitzmaurice	••••	23.	Jim Shanahan	•••••	
24.	Jack Williams	••••	25.	Charles Tyson (c)	1.	
25.	Ken Leahy	••••	26.	Ernie Wilson	• • • • • • • • •	
28.	Arthur Rayson	••••	27.	Reynolds Webb	11	
29.	Denis Heagney1	••••	28.	Leo Wescott	•••••	
31.	Bill Hudd	••••	29.	Bob Makeham	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	
Rush	ed		Rush	ed	•••••	•••••

Geelong Playing Positions

10 - 13

3/4

Final

10 - 19 (79)

1/2

3 - 2

B :	Smith	Johns	Ferguson
НВ:	Hudd	Fitzmaurice	Leahy
C:	Stevenson	Greeves	Williams
HF:	Rayson	Todd	Chambers
F:	Rankin (c)	Hagger	Hall
Foll:	Fleming	Heagney	Warren

Collingwood Playing Positions

6 - 12

3/4

1/2

2 - 5

Final

9 - 15 (69)

	8	,8	
B :	Beasley	Dibbs	Shanahan
НВ:	Tyson (c)	Makeham	Wilson
C:	Milburn	Chesswas	Wescott
HF:	Harris	F. Murphy	Lawn
F:	Stainsby	G. Coventry	Baker
Foll:	S. Coventry	L. Murphy	Webb

1925 VFL LADDER AFTER THE HOME-AND-AWAY SEASON

	TEAM	Played	Won	Lost	Drawn	For	Against	Percent	Points
1	Geelong	17	15	2	-	1564	1024	152.7	60
2	Essendon	17	13	4	_	1271	1065	119.3	52
3	Melbourne	17	12	4	1	1273	919	138.5	50
4	Collingwood	17	12	5	-	1377	1083	127.1	48
5	Fitzroy	17	12	5	-	1292	1028	125.7	48
6	St Kilda	17	8	9	-	1116	1120	99.6	32
7	Richmond	17	6	10	1	981	1131	86.7	26
8	South Melbourne	17	6	11	-	1089	1271	85.7	24
9	Carlton	17	5	12	_	1066	1349	79.0	20
10	North Melbourne	17	5	12	-	1030	1370	75.2	20
11	Footscray	17	4	13	_	1132	1368	82.7	16
12	Hawthorn	17	3	14	_	902	1365	66.1	12

THE ROAD TO THE 1925 GRAND FINAL

Under the Argus finals system, used by the VFL from 1902-23 and 1925-30, the team that finished second on the table after the home-and-away rounds played the team that finished fourth in the first semi final. The team that topped the ladder (the minor premiers) played the third-placed team in the second semi final the following week. The winners of both semi finals met in the final. Should the minor premiers win the final they were acknowledged as the premiers. Should the minor premiers lose the final or semi final they could challenge the winner of the final to a grand final. This match would decide the premiership.

First Semi Final – September 19, 1925 (MCG)

Collingwood	12.6 (78)	def.	Essendon	10.8 (68)	att. 60,055
Second Semi Fina	l – September 26	5,1925 (MCG)		
Melbourne	14.17 (101)	def.	Geelong	13.8 (86)	att. 51,256
Final - October 3, 1	925 (MCG)				
Collingwood	8.15 (63)	def.	Melbourne	3.8 (26)	att. 49,833

1925 VFL Grand Final Umpires

Field	Jack McMurray Snr.
Boundary	George Laity Walter Naismith
Goal	Ernest Jenkins David Wheeler

Curtain Raiser: VFL Seconds Grand Final

Collingwood 2nds	13	16	94
Fitzroy 2nds	11	4	70

The curtain raiser for the 1925 VFL grand final was the grand final of the VFL Second XVIII competition.

COLIN WATSON (ST KILDA) — THE 1925 BROWNLOW MEDALLIST



Born in Allansford, near Warrnambool, in Victoria in 1900, Watson was the best on the ground for South Warrnambool in the 1918 Warrnambool District Football Association grand final. He was enticed to come to Melbourne the following year and played seven games for Port Melbourne in the VFA, before returning home to play for South Warrnambool. St Kilda and South Melbourne 'star' Roy Cazaly, who coached South Warrnambool in the finals in 1919, 1920 and 1921, recognised that Watson had great talent as a footballer and Watson was invited to play for St Kilda in 1920.

He turned out for four VFL games with St Kilda that season before returning to South Warrnambool, where he was a member of their 1921 premiership team. Back at St Kilda in 1922, Watson was soon considered one of the best players in the League, playing in various positions but mainly on the half back or centre lines. He played for Victoria for the first time in 1923 and was outstanding in the 1924 interstate carnival.

After winning the 1925 Brownlow Medal, Watson accepted a job in Stawell and was appointed captain-coach of Stawell for the 1926 season. St Kilda would not give him a clearance, however, and he stood out of football for the whole season. He played and coached Maryborough to the 1927 Ballarat Football League premiership, without a clearance from St Kilda, and was subsequently disqualified by the VFL for three years. He played no football in 1928 or 1929, keeping fit by taking up competitive athletics.

Watson returned to football in 1930 and was captain-coach of South Warrnambool until 1932. He then went back to St Kilda in 1933 and was the club's captain-coach in 1934. He left St Kilda after the first game of the 1935 VFL season, again taking the role of South Warrnambool's captain-coach. He was captain-coach of the Cobden Football Club from 1936 to 1939.

Watson played 93 games for St Kilda during his VFL career, kicking 34 goals. In addition to winning the 1925 Brownlow Medal, he was club champion at St Kilda in 1924 and represented Victoria eight times. He was an inaugural inductee into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 1996 and St Kilda's Hall of Fame in 2003.

Commenting on his Brownlow win, an article in the Melbourne *Herald*on October 2, 1925, noted that after a first year at St Kilda that was "not out of the ordinary", he eventually became "the club's star and a popular favourite, not only for his brilliance, but for the manly manner of his play". The article continued: "Like the true footballer, he concentrated his attention on the ball, and let the opponents look after themselves. Fearlessness and fairness were his characteristics."

CLIFF RANKIN - GEELONG'S CAPTAIN

Born in 1896, Clifford Egerton Laure Rankin played for Chilwell before being recruited by Geelong. He played 153 games, and kicked 399 goals, for Geelong in a VFL career that began in 1915, was interrupted by war service as a gunner in France and then continued from 1919 to 1928. He played only four games in 1915, and six in 1919, so 1920 was his first full season with the club. A number of members of his family had previously played for Geelong, including his father (Teddy) and brother (Bert). A forward, Cliff Rankin was Geelong's leading goalkicker in 1920 and headed their goalkicking list again in 1921, 1922 and 1923. He was the leading goalkicker in the VFL in 1921 with 63 (including two goals kicked in the finals). Rankin was Geelong's captain-coach from 1925 to 1927, leading them to 45 wins in 57 matches. He kicked 43 goals for the club during their 1925 premiership season, his five goals in the grand final being his highest total for Geelong for the season. He represented Victoria on 14 occasions (kicking 30 goals), being



captain of the state team in 1926. After relinquishing the captain-coach position to Tom Fitzmaurice after the 1927 season, he played a few more games in 1928 before retiring from VFL football. Rankin died in 1975. He was named as an emergency in Geelong's official Team of the Century.

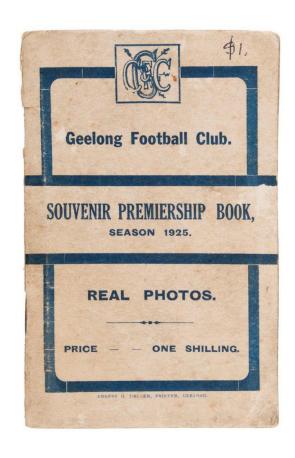
CHARLIE TYSON - COLLINGWOOD'S CAPTAIN

Although born in Victoria in 1897, Charles Edward Tyson came to Collingwood from the Kalgoorlie Railways team that played in the Goldfields Football League in Western Australia. Tyson's family was a leading football family in WA, his father having played for clubs in both the Goldfields League and the WAFL, and his six brothers all playing football to a high standard in WA or elsewhere in Australia. A half back flanker, Charlie Tyson made his debut for Collingwood in 1920. He played 106 games (42 goals) for the Magpies from 1920 to 1926. He was appointed club captain in 1924 and after Collingwood failed to make the finals that season, he led them in grand finals in both 1925 and 1926. After their 57-point loss to Melbourne in 1926, he was accused of 'playing dead' and fell out of favour with the club's administration. Disgruntled by the allegation, he sought a clearance to North Melbourne and was their leading goalkicker in 1927. He was subsequently appointed North's captain-coach for the 1928 and 1929 seasons. From 1927 to 1929, he played 38 games for North and kicked 38 goals. The North Melbourne Committee was not impressed when he was injured playing in a midweek competition during 1929 and he left the club to play with VFA side Yarraville. He coached Richmond's second eighteen in 1932. Tyson died in 1985.

ON THE TOWN IN SLEEPY HOLLOW — CELEBRATING GEELONG'S PREMIERSHIP

The *Argus* reported that "thousands of Geelong people went into an ecstasy of delight, when, after some tense moments, during which the announcer for (radio station) 3LO, at the M.C.C. grounds, had been describing Collingwood's heroic attempts to write off Geelong's lead, he broke off in the middle of a sentence and said 'Geelong has won the premiership'".

At night, a large crowd assembled at the railway station in Geelong in anticipation of the return of the team. When the special train carrying the players eventually approached the town it began to blow its whistle loudly and the signal was taken up by the drivers of all the engines in the station yards. Fire bells were also rung and as the train approached the station, the crowd cheered when more than 200 detonators were let off. They cheered again when the St. Augustine Orphanage band struck up a welcoming tune.



With around 10,000 people in vicinity of the station, the players were carried on the shoulders of admiring supporters when they alighted the train and cheered until they were placed in waiting motor cars. All the team were then driven to the town hall, except captain Cliff Rankin, who was carried by members of the crowd.

On the steps of the town hall, in front of 7,500 people, the mayor Councillor Ritchie congratulated the side on its "magnificent performance in winning the League premiership for the first time in the history of the League". He said that Geelong had waited nearly 40 years for such an event – a reference to the fact that Geelong had last won the VFA premiership in 1886. When captain Cliff Rankin was called to speak the crowd cheered for several minutes before he called for three cheers for all the players and thanked the crowd for the "wonderful reception". He added that: "I am the captain of a great side, in which every player has been the captain in his own part".

Later, the health of the team was toasted by the mayor in his room at the town hall. The *Argus* reported that there was sure to be another celebration the following night when the club's picture entertainment, in aid of its trip to Sydney, would be held.

WIRED FOR SOUND (with thanks to hidden footyhistories.org)

Radio was making inroads into society during the early to mid-1920s, and in 1925 this was clearly signalled in the football world by two radio broadcasts of the grand final. The first was on 3AR, which had also broadcast earlier finals, while on 3LO, Wallace 'Jumbo' Sharland provided a description of the grand final from the old Grey-Smith Stand, complete with crowd noise when excitement levels rose. Sharland had a special connection to the game. His nickname emerged courtesy of his height; at 191 cm, Sharland was a giant of the era. Sharland was a Geelong ruckman for 49 games between 1920 and 1925, until a wrist injury forced his retirement and saw his transition into journalism early in 1925. Sharland would go on to forge a stellar career, working not only as a writer for the *Sporting Globe*, but also as a radio commentator on both VFL and VFA games. This first foray into radio was a highlight for Sharland and all Geelong affiliated listeners, with the *Argus* later reporting on the way in which he delivered the highs and lows of the game to an eager audience listening in at Kardinia Park. They were described as "listening intently to the news from Melbourne, applauding any good play... growing despondent about injuries received, and cheering loudly the announcement of every goal by Geelong."

DID YOU KNOW?

- The crowd of 64,288 was a record for a grand final up until 1925.
- Tom Fitzmaurice, a member of Essendon's 1923 and 1924 premiership sides, became only the second player in League history to win consecutive premierships with different clubs when he played for Geelong in the 1925 grand final. Jim Martin had previously been a member of Essendon's 1912 premiership side and Fitzroy's premiership team the following year. Fitzmaurice did not play for Essendon again after they were defeated by VFA premiers Footscray in the 1924 Championship of Victoria charity match. After this game, suspicions were raised that some Essendon players had not tried to their full during the match.
- The 1925 grand final was the only time that Collingwood's champion full-forward Gordon Coventry was held goalless in a grand final. He eventually played in ten grand finals (1920, 1922, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1935 and 1937).
- The Victorian Junior League competition was renamed the VFL seconds in 1925. In the seconds grand final, played as a curtain raiser to the senior grand final, Collingwood District 13.16 (94) defeated Fitzroy 11.4 (70).

The MCC Library Record is the match day program of the Melbourne Cricket Club Library. The views expressed are those of the editors and authors, and are not necessarily those of the Melbourne Cricket Club.

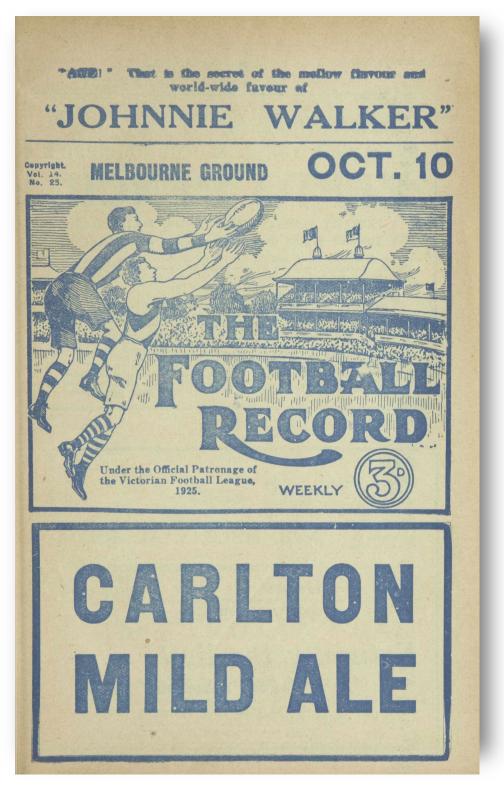
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Above: *Football Record*, Vol. 14, No. 25, October 10, 1925. **Cover:** Scene from the 1925 grand final.

