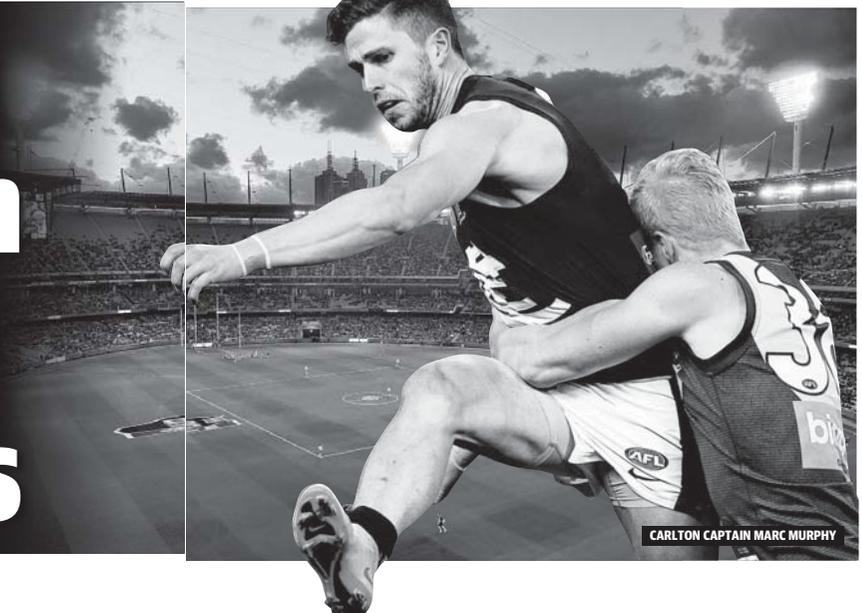




Nothing but joy in singing the Blues



CARLTON CAPTAIN MARC MURPHY



JOSH FRYDENBERG

AS we head into the first AFL game of the season, with the Blues playing the Tigers, I've been reflecting on my first memories of the great Carlton Football Club.

It was the 1979 Grand Final, the year we beat Collingwood, 11.16.82 to 11.11.77.

They were halcyon days, when

Mike Fitzpatrick dominated the ruck, Bomber Sheldon and Jimmy Buckley tore up the middle, Geoff Southby and the "Flying Doormat", Bruce Doull, were reliable as backs and Mark "Sellers" Maclure could be counted on for a few goals.

I was only eight, but sometimes it seems like yesterday.

I will never forget the crowds

roar "Jesaulenko!" as number 25, our captain-coach, leapt to grab another speccy. Every week Jezza's aerial dynamics made us believe he was the closest we had to a club deity.

Collingwood was defeated in '79 and the victory was sweet. In the post-match words of club president George Harris, there is only one



thing better than knocking off the Magpies by 10 goals — it's pipping them by five points.

The 1979 flag was the club's 12th, with premiership cups being added in 1981, 1982, 1985, 1987 and 1995. That is 16 since the club's establishment at the University Hotel on Lygon St in 1864.

But there is a lot more that makes this club great than its exemplary on-field record: it is Carlton's egalitarian nature and its grassroots community spirit. Names like Barassi, Silvagni, Bortolotto, Marchesani and, of course, Jesaulenko fill the honour boards while giving a window to the club's multicultural diversity.

At Carlton you are judged by what you do, not who you are and

it is for that reason the club boasts such broad appeal. Prime ministers and captains of industry may have been the club's No.1 ticket holders, but there is little doubt the more than 40,000 members are its heart and soul.

Speaking of prime ministers, there are two in particular — Robert Menzies and Malcolm Fraser — who had a long association with the club.

No matter where Menzies spoke, he wasn't afraid to fly the Carlton flag. Once, when he was speaking at the Collingwood Town Hall, deep in Labor territory, he told an already agitated audience: "I have two things to say: first, that the Liberals will win the next election, and second, that Carlton will win the premiership."

If there were a few votes on offer at the start of his speech, they weren't there at the end.

Long after Menzies left The Lodge, he was felled by a stroke. But even ill-health couldn't deter him from missing his beloved Blues.

Carlton built Menzies a special ramp behind the goals at Princes

Park so he could be driven up in his black Bentley and still watch the game. Rather than being frowned upon by the Blues

supporters, when the Bentley went up the ramp, so did the cheers from the faithful. Menzies was a true Carlton man and the supporters knew it.

LIKE Menzies, Fraser was a longstanding Blues man. Famously, after the 1981 Grand Final win, he played host to the team at The Lodge.

All was going well until a few of the boys pocketed some of the fine cutlery, salt and pepper shakers and nutcrackers crested with the Coat of Arms. Fraser demanded the return of his silver a few days later when it was discovered the cutlery was missing. Wayne Harmes said: "I think he (Fraser) knew when I shook hands with him when I was leaving that my top pocket was shaking like a cutlery cupboard."

Many Carlton players, more than 200, have served in the armed forces. Tragically, 16 paid the ultimate price. In the Boer War, there were six Carlton sons, 87 in World War I, of whom 11 never returned, and 132 in World War II, of whom five lost their lives. Their contribution to the nation forms an important chapter in Carlton's proud history.

In many ways Carlton is much more than a football club. It's a place of passion and history, where there is great pride in wearing the navy blue jumper.

These days I can't get to the games as often as I wish, but when I do I ride the bumps, get frustrated by the umpires and celebrate goals just as much as I did as an eight-year-old. I know I am not alone.

The final word goes to my father, Harry, who first introduced me to Carlton as a boy. He was born in Carlton in 1942 and attended the Princes Hill Primary School in North Carlton. He remembers vividly how the club used to give the teachers free junior memberships that were presented to well-behaved students for each weekend game.

For those weeks my dad didn't get a teachers award, he would enter the ground at three-quarter

time when the gates were opened to all. Some of my fondest memories are of my dad taking my sister and me to our regular seats at a Saturday game at Princes Park, just below the broadcast box. After what was invariably another win, we would sing the Carlton theme song all the way home, only stopping for our religious ritual, a hot jam doughnut. I will never forget those days — and those burnt lips.

Now a father myself, I have a responsibility to pass on that love of the Navy Blues to my daughter. My only hope is that she sees as much on-field success as I did and she appreciates it is the culture, values and history that makes the Carlton Football Club truly great.

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